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Second-tier Diplomacy.

Hans von Gagern and William I

in their Quest for an

Alternative European Order, 1813–1818

The Congress of Vienna heralded the beginning of an age in which the body of diplomats, experts and other professional agents steadily increased. Through informal meetings and *salons*, standing commissions, arbitrations, exchanges of letters and reports, institutionalised modes of exchange and negotiation were forged. Discourses of collective threat emerged and mutually shared norms and attitudes were developed regarding the appropriate use of force, the ways and means to handle conflicts and disputes and the settlement and defence of shared interests.<sup>1</sup>

This article aims to demonstrate how two secondary agents in the field of transnational diplomacy and security, the «free-lancing» nobleman Hans von Gagern and the hereditary Prince of Orange, William Frederick, found each other in their struggle to make inroads into the power block created by the victors of the Napoleonic Wars and in mobilising protests against the great powers' hegemony. They hoped to expand their own sphere of influence by creating an enlarged, so-called «Third Germany» (a federation of smaller German states, not dominated by Prussia) in combination with the newly formed Kingdom of the Netherlands. They hoped in this way to modify and accommodate the growing new order in their middle-European ideals; an order informed by constitutionalism, sovereignty, independence, and guaranteed by a restoration of the Austrian imperial crown.

I will reconstruct their exchanges, ideas, and cultural perspectives on the political and geographical rearrangement of the continent, in particular with respect to the position of the lands of the former United Republic of the Netherlands as well as of the principalities of the Rhine Federation and Prussia within that order. By analysing Von Gagern's and William's efforts, which in the end proved only partly successful,

1 M. Schulz, *Normen und Praxis. Das Europäische Konzert der Großmächte als Sicherheitsrat, 1815–1860*, München 2009. See also W. Pyta (ed.), *Das europäische Mächtekonzert. Friedens- und Sicherheitspolitik vom Wiener Kongress 1815 bis zum Krimkrieg 1853*, Cologne/Vienna/Weimar 2009; P. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics 1763–1848*, Oxford 1994; C. Holbraad, *The*

*Concert of Europe. A Study in German and British International Theory*, New York 1971; H. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, New York 1994, 78–102; A. Zamoski, *Rites of Peace. The Fall of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna*, London 2008; D. King, *Vienna 1814. How the Conquerors of Napoleon Made Love, War and Peace at the Congress of Vienna*, New York 2008.

I aim to elucidate the dynamic and contested process of creating a new European order. Although the Dutch efforts are seldom referred to in the classical concert of Europe studies on the Congress of Vienna, when they are mentioned they are viewed as being totally dependent and docile towards the English plans for a European balance of power system. In the only seminal work to date on the special relationship between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, William I is depicted as a free rider on Castlereagh's train (and Von Gagern hardly figures in at all).<sup>2</sup> This article, however, supplements these Anglo-dominated views and attempts to historicise the Conference of Vienna by focusing more on its beginnings, on alternative scenarios of a Dutch-German union, and on the process of diplomatic bargaining by secondary agents than on simply its results and their outcome. Likewise it provides a new perspective by coupling Dutch material to findings from the Von Gagern archives, thereby also putting the German-Dutch cooperation in Vienna in a wider context.

### 1. William of Orange and Freiherr von Gagern: First Encounters: 1802–1813

Freiherr Hans Christoph Ernst von Gagern (1766–1852) has received some attention in German literature; first of all owing to his substantial contributions to German historiography: numerous treatises, voluminous memoirs and a lively, detailed narrative of his undertakings before and during the Congress of Vienna.<sup>3</sup> He met the rulers of the day in person, including Napoleon Bonaparte, Prince Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, Prins Klemens Wenzel von Metternich, Alexander I of Russia, Baron Heinrich vom Stein, and Wilhelm von Humboldt; he spoke fluent French, Italian and English, and could read Dutch. Von Gagern's role within the context of the German Federation has been described by authors in the past, in 1996 by Hundt and in Rössler's biography from 1958.<sup>4</sup> But his cooperation with the Dutch Prince of Orange from the perspective of the creation of a new European order and security culture has not been studied before.<sup>5</sup>

Von Gagern's connection with the House of Orange was forged when he was appointed *Regierungsrat* at the court of Duke Carl von Nassau-Weilburg, a friend of his father in 1787.<sup>6</sup> Although only being in charge of a small county (35,000 inhabitants),

2 N. van Sas, *Onze Natuurlijkste Bondgenoot. Nederland, Engeland en Europa, 1813–1831*, Amsterdam 1985. John Bew does not mention their work either in: *Castlereagh. A Life*, Oxford 2012. Neither does W. D. Gruner in: *Großbritannien, der Deutsche Bund und die Struktur des europäischen Friedens im frühen 19. Jahrhundert*, Munich 1979.

3 See for example: H. von Gagern, *Mein Antheil an der Politik. Vol. I: Unter Napoleons Herrschaft*, Stuttgart, Tübingen 1823; Idem, *Mein Antheil an der Politik. Vol. II: Nach Napoleons Fall. Der Congress zu Wien*, Stuttgart, Tübingen 1826.

4 M. Hundt, *Die mindermächtigen deutschen Staaten*

*auf dem Wiener Kongress*, Mainz 1996; H. Rössler, *Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion. Ein Lebensbild des Reichsfreiherrn Hans Christoph von Gagern 1766–1852*, Göttingen, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main 1958.

5 Nor is it mentioned in the new biography on William I by Jeroen Koch which, although very well researched on the domestic front, repeats the Anglo-dominated view on the Viennese Conference as laid down by Van Sas. J. Koch, *Koning Willem I, 1772–1843*, Amsterdam 2013.

6 Rössler, *Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, 43.

the Duke of Nassau could boast an extended network and wide recognition through his family ties to the other Nassau Dukes (in Usingen and Saarbrücken), and to the House of Nassau-Orange in the Netherlands. When the new Duke, Friedrich Wilhelm, took over from his father in 1789, he asked his old friend Hans in 1790 to become his minister-president. Von Gagern accepted and was confronted with the revolutionary upheaval and wars against France after only two years of working in administration. Shocked by the havoc wreaked on German lands by the French occupation, he developed his ideas on the future of Germany in his most important work on the German «*Nationalgeschichte*».<sup>7</sup> He set his hopes on the «federation of the great Germans», a «Third Germany» in between Austria and Prussia. However, Von Gagern's goal of combining the sovereignty of smaller principalities on the one hand, and of unifying disparate German lands through the restoration of the Austrian imperial crown on the other, did not materialise. Instead, the two German superpowers made their peace with the French armies, and in 1795 Prussia concluded a peace treaty with France.

That same year, the House of Orange – the main branch of the House of Nassau – from which Von Gagern had expected a leading role, was expelled from its dominions in the Netherlands and a Batavian Republic was created. The hereditary Prince of Orange, William Frederick (1772–1843), adhered to the same ideals of independence and national sovereignty for the smaller and middle-size states in Europe and he also shared Von Gagern's hopes for a «German» solution for Europe (as opposed to French dominance). But at the same time William was still very much the authoritarian monarch who, even without much land and only with claims and promises in his pocket, was instilled with a sense of destiny and ambition for the restoration of the House of Orange.

William's visions for a new order, which he developed during his long exile in England and Germany, were somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, following his father's flight to England in 1795 and the creation of the Batavian Republic as a client state to the French Empire of Napoleon, he still hoped for the restoration of the reign of his House over the Netherlands. On the other hand, he was realistic enough to foresee only a future as German sovereigns within the old German Empire for himself and his children, where they could rule their hereditary lands of Nassau.<sup>8</sup> He had visited these lands in 1789 with his father, William V, and had become highly enamoured by the idea of being part of the German empire.<sup>9</sup>

These two visions could – with some optimism – reinforce each other. This reinforcement was provided by the desire of the hereditary Prince to reclaim as much land as possible perhaps even uniting the Netherlands through expansion towards the east with his Nassau lands. However, being a German Prince (his wife, Friederike Louise Wilhelmine of Prussia (1774–1837), was King Frederick William III's sister and his

7 Von Gagern, *Die Nationalgeschichte der Deutschen*. Vol. I: *Von der uralten Zeit bis zu dem Gotenreich unter Hermanrich*, Vienna 1813.

8 H. T. Colenbrander, *Willem I. Koning der Nederlanden. Part I: 1772–1815*, Amsterdam 1931, 58.

9 *Idem*, 25.

mother Friederike Sophie Wilhelmine (1751–1820) was the late Frederick the Great's favourite niece) joining the old German Empire, the Rhine Federation or, after 1813, the German Bund implied a different relation towards Prussia, and hence towards England, than keeping aloof from the Federation and retaking a position within the English sphere of influence through unity with the Belgian lands to the south. In short: being an English ally could well be at odds with becoming a smaller sovereign among other German states within a Prussian and Austrian dominated continent.<sup>10</sup>

William's dynastic and territorial ambitions merged with Von Gagern's enlightened, constitutional and pan-German ideals – at first sight an unlikely combination. Von Gagern, who described himself in not very modest but truthful terms as possessing great «*Höflichkeit, Gastfreyheit, Eleganz, Weltkenntniss und Verstand*»,<sup>11</sup> was in many respects the counterpart of William, whom contemporaries saw as «avaricious», secretive and rigid.<sup>12</sup> However, they soon were dynamically combining old fashioned courting schemes and diplomatic rituals with strategic insights and a managerial style. Both also abhorred Napoleon's disrespect for old lineages and their possessions, and – although mixed with awe and admiration – found his revolutionary wars and ruthless overthrow of monarchs and sovereigns deeply disturbing.<sup>13</sup> A new European order should not be built on brute force and arbitrary will alone, but had to be legitimised through historical claims, just compensations, and moral and legal principles, as Von Gagern had learned from his readings of Kant, Mirabeau and Von Pufendorf.

### *Bargaining with Napoleon*

Before Von Gagern and William found each other in the slipstream of the English and Prussian plans for a new European order, they had experienced some heavy clashes, brought about by their conflicting territorial aspirations. Von Gagern, sitting in his Weilburger mansion with the Prussian-French frontlines cut straight through the Weilburger lands, lost all hope of uniting the smaller and middle-sized German principalities in one coalition; all the more so when the Austrian Archduke Carl concluded a peace treaty with Napoleon at Campo Formio in 1797 that brought about the collapse of the First Coalition.<sup>14</sup> Around the same time, in April 1796, William left his refuge at Hampton Court in London and took up residence in Berlin, where he hoped to convince the Prussian King, Frederick William II, and his November 1797 successor Frederick William III, to lobby the French for a restoration of the Dutch *Stadthouderate*. But Prussia was not inclined to see the House of Orange restored to its former position, preferring rather to incorporate the illustrious family as a small satellite within the Prussian sphere of influence in Germany.

10 Letter to princess Wilhelmine, 28 January 1796. H.T. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken der Algemeene Geschiedenis van Nederland van 1795 tot 1840*. Rijks-geschiedkundige Publicaties. Vol. II, The Hague 1906, 892, footnote.

11 Rössler, *Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, 141.

12 Colenbrander, *Willem I. Vol. I*, 27.

13 Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil I*, 77.

14 Rössler, *Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, 63.

The importance of William's role grew when his younger and much-admired brother Frederick died in January 1799 after having taken part in the last battles in Italy and Stiermarken, where he served as *Feldzeugmeister* in the Austrian army. Following a final, futile attempt to liberate the Batavian Republic with a joint English-Russian force in September/October 1799 and to incite a revolt against the French, William had to accept the current state of affairs. Increasingly, he came to cherish the idea of advocating his cause with Napoleon himself in Paris,<sup>15</sup> and even started to admire the First Consul for his *grandeur*.<sup>16</sup>

At this point, William and Von Gagern found themselves in similar positions. The question they shared was whether their German possessions on the left bank of the Rhine, the territories of Belgium and the Netherlands were gone for good, or if some chance remained to reclaim these lands, and if so, who the Dukes of Nassau and the House of Orange could turn to for support in that quest. One idea was to go to Vienna in order to advocate their idea of creating a federation of German middle-states as «bridge» between the two German superpowers. But Emperor Franz declined politely, and Von Gagern had to accept the «horrible peace» with France.

The next step was to try to bargain with Napoleon himself. After the battles of Marengo and Hohenlinden in 1800, the Treaty of Lunéville of 9 February 1801 had given France control of the left bank of the Rhine.<sup>17</sup> The three branches of the House of Nassau decided to dispatch Hans von Gagern as their plenipotentiary to Paris to renegotiate their losses and to discuss the aforementioned compensations on the right bank. Loaded with maps and charts that depicted the income and number of «souls» lost to the Dukes, Von Gagern left Saarbrücken in 1802 to establish himself in Paris.<sup>18</sup> He cooperated closely with his colleague, the diplomat d'Yvoy, who had been sent over from London in 1801 by William to probe whether Napoleon would be inclined to appoint the hereditary Prince as first consul over Holland and to defend the Prince's possessions in Germany.<sup>19</sup> According to Von Gagern, the old name of William III, the forebear of Prince William VI, still had a powerful reputation.<sup>20</sup> In the Parisian salons of the Ladies De Staël and Flauhaut, Von Gagern steadily expanded his network and was accepted in the circle close to Napoleon's foreign minister, Talleyrand, as a recurring partner at the Whist table.<sup>21</sup>

Yet Napoleon and Talleyrand were masters in creating discontent amongst their manifold petitioners and managed to sow discord between the House of Orange and

15 William, «Mémoire sur la conduit à tenir», 6 July 1797. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken. Vol. II*, 961; Colenbrander, *Willem I*, 67–68.

16 Kinckel to Thomas Grenville, 10 March 1800. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken. Vol. III*, 1104.

17 See Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil II*, 96.

18 Weilburg: 15,500 souls and 78.000 fl., Usingen: 60.000 souls and 447.000 fl. Rössler, *Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, 75.

19 See D'Yvoy to William, 15 June 1801. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken. Vol. III*, 1154–1157.

20 Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil I*, 98, 100.

21 Rössler, *Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, 80–81. Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil I*, 98, 103–104.

the other Nassau branches.<sup>22</sup> When the Prince arrived in Paris in 1802,<sup>23</sup> he treated Von Gagern with «*Vernachlässigung und halber Ungnade*». According to William, his envoy should now step aside, since he himself was head of all three Nassau families, and he should be in command when it came to the negotiations. Von Gagern, who really tried to reconcile the claims of both Houses (Nassau-Weilburg and Nassau-Orange), urged William to abandon his monarchical haughtiness and to join the choir of smaller sovereigns who bent to Napoleon's will, but to no avail.<sup>24</sup> In the end, William lost his hereditary possessions. He did not take it very well and blamed Von Gagern for Napoleon's game of *divide et impera*.<sup>25</sup> The Weilburger and Usinger Nassaus increased their possessions from 75.000 inhabitants and 27 square miles to 156.000 and 55 square miles respectively, and instead of 156.000 fl. annual income, they now made 920.000 fl. William of Orange lost his Nassau lands but received as compensation the duchies of Fulda, Corvey, Dortmund, and a few other small allotments: a total of 46 square miles, 120.000 inhabitants and 700.000 income.<sup>26</sup>

Soon, Von Gagern and William both discovered that, in Von Gagern's words, Napoleon's re-compensation politics were part of his «treacherous policy».<sup>27</sup> Then, in July 1806, after an intermittent period during which William found some fulfilment in bringing Fulda's administration in order, Napoleon created the Federation of the Rhine. Von Gagern urged William to join the federation and renounce all his ties with other powers, notably with England and Prussia. But William refused to join Napoleon against Prussia. «*Je ne serais pas digne du sang qui coule dans mes veines*», he wrote to the Prussian king Frederick William III.<sup>28</sup> He dismissed Von Gagern's advice (who tried to offer the Prince some consolation and help): «After the way he acted towards me, he could not inspire any confidence in me anymore», he wrote to his mother.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, the emperor reclaimed William's possessions in Fulda and Berg and bestowed them on his brother-in-law, Joachim Murat. «*Von solchem politischen Tod steht man schwer wieder auf*», Von Gagern commented.<sup>30</sup> Contrary to William, he and the other Nassau Dukes had opted to join the Rhine Federation and become subject to French rule.

22 Rössler, *Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, 83.

23 Colenbrander, *Willem I. Part I*, 105.

24 *Ibid.*, 106–107.

25 Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil I*, 123–126; Colenbrander, *Willem I. Part I*, 113; Prince William to the Princess-Mother, 21 June 1806. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken. Vol. IV, part 2*, 765.

26 Cf. Ch. M. Talleyrand, Rapport no. 1306. *Fait au premier Consul, en Sénat, par le ministre des relations extérieures, concernant le règlement des*

*indeminités germaniques*, 7. August 1802. Hessisches Staatsarchiv Darmstadt (HStD) O11 B104.

27 Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil II*, 10.

28 William to the Prussian King Frederick William III, Fulda, 24 July 1806. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken. Vol. IV*, 767.

29 Prince William to the Princess-Mother, 24 July 1806, Fulda. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken. Vol. IV*, 765–766.

30 *Idem*, I, 151.

*On the march again*

William, whose father had died in April 1806, was now prey to the vagaries of fate. As successor, and after King Frederick William III's declaration of war on Napoleon in October that year, he chose the side of Prussia and the fourth coalition and became general in the Prussian army. When a victorious Napoleon entered Berlin, the Orange family fled to the east. William retired to his possessions in Posen and Silesia, and then joined the fifth coalition as an officer in the Austrian army. After the lost Battle of Wagram in 1809, he dedicated himself completely to mobilising a sixth coalition.

At that time, Von Gagern also lost his position within the Rhine Bund.<sup>31</sup> Then, in 1811, Napoleon forced the German inhabitants of the left bank of the Rhine to accept French nationality. Those who refused were dismissed and prohibited from further employment within the French sphere of influence. Von Gagern, as thoroughbred German knight, could not bring himself to relinquish his nationality. He left his family at a small castle along the Rhine and fled to Vienna. There he plotted for the future of Europe and that of his family and started composing his grand *Nationalgeschichte der Deutschen, von der uralten Zeit bis zu dem Gotenreich unter Hermanrich* – thus historically grounding his aspirations for a new European order. For him this order could only be upheld by restoring the sprayed lands of Germania, including Belgium and the Alsace, Switzerland and the Netherlands under some sort of federative rule. Such a broad loose federation was clearly the red thread throughout German history, «*der ächte Germanism*».<sup>32</sup>

Around that time, in December 1812, the Prussian Lieutenant-General Ludwig Yorck von Wartenburg capitulated and signed an armistice with Alexander I at the Convention of Tauroggen. After the Treaty of Kalisz on 28 February 1813, a reluctant Prussian Frederick William III finally joined forces with the Russian army and started the sixth coalition. Von Gagern came at exactly the right time. In Breslau, a letter from the Prince of Orange awaited him, asking whether he would assist the Prince in lobbying for the restoration of the Orange rule in the Netherlands and reclaiming the hereditary lands in Germany.<sup>33</sup>

## 2. Restoration and Renovation of the European Order, 1813–1815

### *March 1813 – October 1813: Preparing for the liberation of Europe*

In Berlin and Breslau, Prince William immediately stepped up his activities to push for the restoration of his House. He appealed to the Prussian King to accept his service and sent emissaries to London.<sup>34</sup> William found a willing ear in Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh and Earl (later Marquess) of Londonderry, who became Britain's

31 Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil I*, 191.

32 Rössler, *Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, 131.

33 Letters William to Von Gagern, 20 March, 27 March 1813, Berlin. HStD OII B32.

34 William, Instructions for Van Heerd, 24 March 1812, Berlin. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken. Vol. VI*, part 3, GS 17, 1828–1829.

new Foreign Secretary in 1812.<sup>35</sup> For Castlereagh, European order and tranquillity required a political equilibrium, a balance of the larger continental powers.<sup>36</sup> From this perspective, the Netherlands in their reunited form would constitute a safe «barrier» against France and prevent Prussia from becoming the dominant state on the mainland.<sup>37</sup>

Prussian Chancellor Hardenberg likewise announced that he valued a contribution of the House of Orange to the liberation wars and a corresponding role in the envisaged new order. For him and for Stein, who was Tsar Alexander's advisor on German affairs, Europe's security and tranquillity would be fostered by a stronger Prussian state, in which the separate parts of the Prussian dominions were merged and parts of Poland and Saxony incorporated. A restoration of the House of Orange in the Netherlands would serve as an important lynchpin in this new European defence system against France. As for Austria, the idea of restoring the Belgian provinces to Habsburg rule was still an option for Castlereagh, but Metternich soon made clear that he favoured an argumentation in the south over an imperial overstretch and watchdog function against France in the north.<sup>38</sup>

In alliance with these scheming titans, William sought to get his House in order by attempting to manipulate these schemes for interests that surpassed those of Castlereagh and Hardenberg. First of all, with an eye to advancing his ideas on the restoration of sovereignty and the expansion of territories, William needed to commit himself to the sixth coalition and to contribute to it with troops and military operations. Lacking funding, he appealed to Castlereagh to support him in mobilising Dutch and Nassovian troops.<sup>39</sup> Secondly, advised in part by Stein and probably also by his mother Wilhelmine, he asked Von Gagern to become his plenipotentiary on the continent. Von Gagern was a well-known and seasoned diplomat, had defended the interests of the House of Nassau in Paris, Vienna and Warsaw, and also enjoyed good relations with Stein. Wilhelmine saw an old, loyal family friend in Von Gagern, someone who could guarantee and defend the relation between the House of Orange and the German states, including Prussia.

On 29 March 1813, having arrived at the Breslau headquarters, Von Gagern was surprised to receive a royal request from William, who had just left for Berlin (on his way to Sweden and Britain) to represent his House in Vienna.<sup>40</sup> For William, Von Gagern's experience and his extensive network and language skills made up for the disagreements they had had in the past.<sup>41</sup>

35 Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, 42–48.

36 Cf. Michael Mandelbaum, *The Fate of Nations. The Search for National Security in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Cambridge 1988, 18–19.

37 Van Sas, *Onze Natuurlijkste Bondgenoot*, 41.

38 *Idem*, 112.

39 Prince William to Castlereagh, 20 February 1813. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*. Vol. VI, part 3, 1857.

40 William to Von Gagern, 20 March 1813, Breslau; 27 March 1813, Berlin. HStD OII B32.

41 Von Gagern to Fritz, 30 March 1813, Breslau. Heinrich von Gagern, *Das Leben des Generals Friedrich von Gagern*. Vol. I, Leipzig, Heidelberg 1856, 83; Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil II*, 5.



In April, William left for London to meet Castlereagh and advocate his plans again,<sup>42</sup> while Von Gagern stayed in Breslau representing his interests with the allied powers (with whom he himself corresponded frequently).<sup>43</sup> Von Gagern soon managed to convince Stein to admit him into the Central Commission (*Verwaltungsrat*), an instrument of the Allied Powers that was designed to take over administration of the territories liberated from France. Von Gagern represented both the House of Nassau and Orange and was also called upon by the *Kurfürst* of Hessen to defend his interests at the council. Von Gagern, the German reformist conservative he was, used his mandates to immediately start a lobby for a German federation, in which both Prussia and Austria would partially participate and which would include (parts of) the Netherlands and perhaps even Switzerland and Belgium.

For Von Gagern, undoing Napoleon's injustice against the old rulers was an important goal, but not by merely reverting to the old order. His aim was the creation of a unified Germany, a truly German Federation, underpinned by international law and guaranteed by the Austrian Emperor. In this Federation not dictators or absolute sovereigns but member states could deliberate among each other. Appending Switzerland and the Netherlands to this Federation would create a counterweight to Prussia and Austria. Such a federation was the only way to help prevent new «internal wars in Germany».<sup>44</sup>

In July 1813 Von Gagern travelled to London,<sup>45</sup> where he received clear instructions from the King's cabinet with respect to his future kingdom: (1) to confirm and solidify the reunification of the southern with the northern parts of the Netherlands, (2) to push for an extension of the Dutch lands eastward, and (3) to keep the monarch's hold over his hereditary lands of Nassau.<sup>46</sup> On 7 October 1813, Prince William recommended his envoy Von Gagern to Metternich and assured the Austrian Chancellor of his warmest support for some sort of restoration of the German Imperial Crown, also on behalf of his cousins in Nassau.<sup>47</sup> On 2 November 1813, he broke the good news to Von Gagern that the Prussian envoy Constans Philipp Wilhelm Jacobi and Castlereagh had discussed the future of the Netherlands, and that Castlereagh had expressed his preference for a resurrection of the Orange rule in a form «plus monarchique» than ever before.<sup>48</sup> Everything was set for a return to the continent and a restoration of his rule. But the initiative had to come from the Dutch inhabitants themselves.

42 William to Castlereagh, 9 April 1813, Stockholm. Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken*. Vol. VI, part 3, GS 17, 1869.

43 Letter William to Von Gagern, 13 April 1813, Stockholm; idem, 18 April Gothenburg, Sweden. HStD O11 B32.

44 Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil II*, 81.

45 Letters Von Gagern to Friedrich, Stralsund, 12 July 1813. Von Gagern, *Das Leben des Generals*, Vol. I, 88–89.

46 Letter William to Von Gagern, 14 November 1813, including a memorandum by Von Phull. HStD O11 B32.

47 William to Metternich, 7 October 1813, London. Colenbrander, Vol. 6, Part 3, GS 17, 1893.

48 Letter William to Von Gagern, 2 November 1813, London. HStD O11 B32.

*November 1813–30 May 1814: Reviving the Burgundian Circle*

On 17 November 1813, sympathisers of the House of Orange, the counts Hogendorp, Van Limburg Stirum and Van der Duyn Maasdam, issued their proclamation to the «People of the Netherlands», which one-sidedly announced the re-installment of an independent government, headed by the Prince of Orange, but based on a new, liberal constitution. On November 19, Van Hogendorp sent his famous letter to William, calling him back «home» and offering him the sovereign rule over the Netherlands (not yet the Crown). He sent couriers to London and Frankfurt, since no one knew the whereabouts of the Prince (who was on his way to England at that time). Von Gagern, as William's plenipotentiary, took the liberty of accepting the writing and responded to it.<sup>49</sup> Von Gagern, together with Castlereagh, announced in Frankfurt (where the Allied Powers had convened to discuss the future European order) the resurrection of the state of the Netherlands, sending a copy of Van Hogendorp's letter to all the allied parties, including Sweden, as a *de facto* confirmation and proclamation by the people of the Netherlands of William's sovereign rule.<sup>50</sup> Authorised by William, who was busy restoring his rule in the Netherlands, Von Gagern negotiated and consequently signed the treaties that recognised the Netherlands as ally in the battle against Napoleon in December 1813.<sup>51</sup> These were major accomplishments for a country that still was not liberated from the French, was financially exhausted and had no army to speak of.

As the allied coalition marched towards the Rhine, the Napoleonic monarchy of Westphalia and the Duchy of Berg lost their French ruler, Joachim Murat. Thanks to Von Gagern's efforts in the *Verwaltungsrat*, to Castlereagh's support in Frankfurt and to William's lobby in London, the Houses of Nassau and Orange could reclaim their ancestral homelands Dillenburg, Siegen, Diez, Hadamar, and Beilstein.<sup>52</sup> In the meantime, Von Gagern, installed again at the Dillenburg, was appointed minister-president of Nassau (*dirigierender Minister*) and diligently took over its administration. Together with Von Humboldt, he signed a treaty accepting the sovereign rule on behalf of William of Orange.<sup>53</sup> While Castlereagh was paying out cash through Aber-

49 Letter Van Hogendorp to William, The Hague, 19 November 1813. HStD. O11 B 108.

50 Letter Von Gagern to Hogendorp, Frankfurt, 30 November 1813. HStD. O 11 B108.

51 Cf. Letter William to Von Gagern, 1 December 1813. HStD O11 B 32; Letter Van der Duyn van Maasdam, also on behalf of Van Hogendorp (the then Secretary of State and member of the triumvirate that proclaimed the Dutch independence on 17 November) to Fagel, 8 December 1813. National Archives The Hague (NA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1813–1870, pl.nr. 2.04.01, inv.nr. 747.

52 See *Mémoire & Annexe Extraits des articles séparés & secrets du traité, fait à Francfort le 23 Novembre 1813 entre L.L.A.A. S.S. les Duc et*

Prince de Nassau et L.L. M.M. l'Empereur d'Autriche & de Russie et S.M. le Roi de Prusse; Copy of the full declaration by the Austrian Emperor. HStD O11 B 104; Gagern to William, 21 December and 29 December 1813. HStD O11 B32.

53 Treaty between William of Orange and the Prussian King, signed by the plenipotentiaries Von Gagern (on behalf of William of Orange) and Von Humboldt (on behalf of the Prussian King), 11 December 1813. HStD O11 B 104; See also Royal Decree, issued by Von Gagern on behalf of William, announcing the restoration of the house of Orange within the hereditary lands of Nassau and calling the population to arms, 20 December 1813. HStD O11 B138.

deen to fund the Dutch uprising against the French,<sup>54</sup> Von Gagern started recruiting regiments from the lands of Nassau in order to offer some substance to the newly-acclaimed allied status and to assist the German troops under the Duke of Coburg Main and General von Bülow.<sup>55</sup>

To forge an even stronger union and relationship, and as proof of his loyalty to William, Von Gagern recalled his son Friedrich officer in the imperial army of Austria and sent him to the Netherlands where he joined the newly erected Dutch armed forces in January 1814. William accepted the offer and added his envoy's son to the general staff and appointed him as his personal *Ordonnanzoffizier*.<sup>56</sup>

Until peace would arrive, Von Gagern worked hard to satisfy the Prussian generals' demands for more troops. He tried to provide regiments to Blücher and Gneisenau, in the lucid conviction that the best leverage for participating in the creation of a new Europe lay on the battlefield. As a diplomat, he also commissioned Wilhelm von Humboldt, the Prussian envoy at the imperial court in Vienna, to represent the interests of the House of Orange. Von Gagern was given free reign by William, which empowered him to develop even greater plans. France should be rolled back within the borders of 1790, and a German federation should be restored to the old *Avulsa imperii*, «wo unsre Sprache, Sitte und Reich, der Hang zu uns einst war», including the Dutch provinces «Holland» and «Brabant».<sup>57</sup>

The Treaty of Chaumont of 9 March 1814 effectively sealed the Alliance against France. It was much more than a mere peace treaty, it suggested that after the peace was concluded «the principal Powers of Europe» should bind themselves mutually to protect and support each other.<sup>58</sup> With this treaty, binding multinational agreements, standing conferences and instruments of deliberating, monitoring, mediating, and administration entered European politics. The importance of this new security culture, directed against unilateral despotism and arbitrary will power, was instinctively understood and grasped by the smaller powers, the ones who had hoped to profit from it, such as Von Gagern and William. Indeed, the Treaty of Chaumont guaranteed William and Von Gagern a solid place as second-order power among the allied forces, the restoration of the House of Orange in the Netherlands and in Germany, and even promises for a further expansion of William's lands to the east.

Once the first Treaty of Paris was signed on 30 April 1814, William did return to Von Gagern and asked him to represent him at the Congress of Vienna.<sup>59</sup> The Congress, envisaged for the next autumn, would be the venue where the future of Europe

54 Zamoyski, *Vienna*, 131.

55 Exchange of letters between Von Gagern, William, Fagel, December 1813/January 1814. HStD O11 B 32.

56 Von Gagern, *Das Leben des Generals*, Vol. I, 95–96, 124–125.

57 Von Gagern, *Berichtigungen einiger irrigen politischen Ideen*, Am Rhein 1813.

58 Letter William to Von Gagern, 15 February 1814. HStD O11 B32; Rössler, *Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, 147–148; Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, 138–141, 167.

59 See Von Gagern's mandate signed by William I, 1814. HSt Darmstadt, O 11. B 25.

would be developed in more detail – and where William and Von Gagern could work towards their idea of reviving an enlarged «Burgundian Circle».

*July 1814–November 1814: Hacking into the Pentarchy*

On July 3, the King's Commissioner for the southern provinces, Baron Godert van der Capellen, reported from Brussels that the Prussian troops had left the country and that Belgium was now solely in the hands of the Dutch administrative caretakers.<sup>60</sup> The underlying fear of having to return parts of these provinces to Prussian rule abated. Politically, economically and geographically, William was the de facto ruler in the United Netherlands. It was now up to Von Gagern to consolidate the gains, augment and integrate them within a legal European order.

In July 1814, in preparation for the Congress of Vienna, Von Gagern wrote his wife to send him her best cooking maid and various crates of the best bottles of Rheingau wine.<sup>61</sup> By organising dinner parties and dances at his place on the Unteren Bräunergasse, only a few metres from the Hofburg, he opened his diplomatic overtures to convince the gathered European envoys and princes of his and William's version of a new European order.<sup>62</sup> Von Gagern was to take the lead in matters regarding Prince William's interests with respect to the Nassau lands and the German Empire; for his part, the Dutch envoy Spaen de Voorstonde, Foreign Minister to the Sovereign Prince (as William was now called), would be the first in defending the interests of the United Netherlands. Yet Spaen soon satisfied himself with matters of a more concrete nature (commerce, navigation), whereas Von Gagern stood at the forefront in renegotiating the reclamation of lost lands and the expansion towards new frontiers with the superpowers.<sup>63</sup>

Von Gagern did his best to make the most of his position; he adamantly tried to work his way into the circle of the pentarchy and create leverage within the larger power negotiations. Upon arrival in Vienna, on 15 September 1814, after arranging his quarters and catering, he set about to organise a proper public church service in order to mark the beginning of the conference. He managed to get a protestant pastor and a bishop to perform the religious blessing of the assembled monarchs and princes – although the Prussian King left halfway through the sermon, as Von Gagern later remarked poignantly. As the Congress was convened by the Chaumont signatories, the directing committee was first comprised of only the four allied powers. In

60 Letter Van der Capellen to Foreign Minister Anne Willem Carel Baron Van Nagell, Brussels, 3 July 1814. National Archives The Hague, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1813–1870, pl.nr. 2.04.01, inv.nr. 738.

61 Von Gagern's wine supply had survived the French looting and pillaging during the Napoleonic wars. H. von Gagern, *Mein Antheil an der Politik. Vol. I: Unter Napoleons Herrschaft*, Stutt-

gart, Tübingen 1823, 66; Cf. Rössler, *Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, 151.

62 See Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil an der Politik. Vol. II*, 19–20. Rössler, *Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion*, 151.

63 Idem, 20–21; Letter Van Nagell (Foreign Minister) to Von Gagern, 18 August, 15 Octobre 1814. HStD O11 B32.

January 1815, France was invited to join them. The three second-order powers, Sweden, Spain and Portugal were taken on as well. But Holland was left out. Von Gagern complained repeatedly about this directorate.

Von Gagern was not the man to accept a second-rank position. What he could not get through territorial power or allied performance, he tried to gain through informal channels and steady lobbying. He collected rumours and paid repeated respect to the Viennese princesses and *salonnières*, such as the «intriguing» Duchess Wilhelmina de Sagan, who was courted by both Metternich and Alexander.<sup>64</sup> He did not celebrate Christmas with the Hardenbergs, but with Castlereagh. He helped Spaen by feeding him strategic insights on matters of navigation and commerce. He also contributed to the Conference of Vienna's Statistical Committee (an imported institution tasked to assure that names, numbers, charts, and maps were drafted and collectively agreed upon) by providing Castlereagh, a member of the committee, with coloured maps of the contested lands (Fulda, the Duchy of Berg, the Nassau lands) listing the number of «souls» (inhabitants), their income, taxes, and square acres – as a kind of bargaining chip, one might say.<sup>65</sup>

He moreover tried to actively influence members of the German Committee that convened in October 1814 and represented the five larger German powers (Austria, Prussia, Bavaria, Hannover, and Württemberg). Historical literature on the German Committee pays tribute to Von Gagern's attempts to organise a revolt of the 33 «lesser German states» against the dominion of the larger ones.<sup>66</sup> Together, these smaller German powers drafted a plan for a resurrection of a German federation, headed by a «*Reichsprotektor*». During a meeting at Von Gagern's apartment on 16 November 1814, he collected signatures of 29 petty princes and issued a protest declaration against the consortium of the five larger German states to preserve the autonomy and independence of the smaller ones within a constitutional federation.<sup>67</sup> However, this revolt brought all negotiations to an end, thus preliminarily and unwittingly aborting the road to a «German solution» for William's compensation claims and desire for expansion.

*November 1814–February 1815:*

*Creating the United Kingdom of the Netherlands*

Von Gagern was not the man to dwell on a dead-end. At international level, he still harboured the prospect of becoming a beacon for universal law and freedom in a newly forged Kingdom. In November/December 1814, he advised William to stand

64 Letter Von Gagern to Van Nagell, 28 October 1814, Vienna. HStD O11 B32.

65 See «Landesbeschreibungen, statistieken en handelsregisters», B 105/1–3. Familienarchiv Von Gagern. Bestand O 11, Hessisches Staatsarchiv Darmstadt.

66 See H. Nicholson, *The Congress of Vienna. A Study in Allied Unity 1812–1822*, London 1946; especially Hundt, *Die Mindermächtigen*, 111–149.

67 Idem.

up to Prussia «when it is irritating and frightening the other peoples», and to stand up for the «security and interests» of the other, smaller states and peoples.<sup>68</sup> William responded by urging Von Gagern to exert continuing pressure on the five powers to keep communicating with each other, to preserve the alliance and to prevent new ruptures.<sup>69</sup> He knew that especially such a vulnerable new power as the Kingdom of the Netherlands would suffer most from a new outbreak of war and a termination of the multilateral negotiations. As Metternich had put it to Von Gagern in his own characteristic manner: «The Netherlands were the lapdog of the larger powers.» Therefore, when it appeared that the Polish and Saxon question was about to turn nasty and the rumour of new wars started to spread, Von Gagern doubled his efforts to keep the alliance and the conference's «ties of friendship» intact by hosting numerous dinners, after-dinner parties and Whist evenings.<sup>70</sup>

In effect, once Alexander I was rewarded his share of Polish territories, he abandoned the collision course he had pursued together with Prussia, and left his Eastern ally to press for the territorial incorporation of Saxony on its own. On 14 February, Von Gagern broke the news to his King: «*Le Sort en est jetté! La Monarchie de Pays-bas fixée!*». Clancarty, Castlereagh, Van Capellen and Von Gagern had worked hard to prepare the final notes, and although Clancarty's command of the French language was not perfect, Von Gagern nevertheless thought highly of the outcomes on which they worked through the night until six o'clock on the morning of 15 February, almost up to Castlereagh's departure from Vienna for London.<sup>71</sup>

«*Lord Clancarty tenoit la plume.*» He not only managed to incorporate the «*lisière de la Meuse*», but also the province of Limbourg and Luxembourg. These notes served as initial concept for the articles of the Final Act regarding the Netherlands.<sup>72</sup> Even the Prussians were finally satisfied. Castlereagh reported to Von Gagern that Chancellor Hardenberg and King Frederick William had expressed their warmest wishes to be considered «*l'ami et l'appui des états du Nord*», more than their «*terreur et fléau*».<sup>73</sup>

### *March 1815–September 1815: Becoming a Second-Order Superpower*

At this point, almost all of the envoys, princes and plenipotentiaries went on vacations. Von Gagern subserviently asked William for permission to take a three-week break to Italy, to recuperate from all the strenuous work and the many parties and

68 Von Gagern to William. Rapport III, 26 November 1814, Vienna; William to Von Gagern, 14 December 1814, Brussels. Staatssecretarie en Kabinet des Konings, inv.nr. 6356. Deutsche Angelegenheiten betr. National Archives, The Hague. See Correspondence between William and Von Gagern in: Familien Archiv der Freiherrn von Gagern. HStD OII B24.

69 Von Gagern, Note of 1 February 1815, printed in: Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil II*, 118.

70 Idem, 119.

71 Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, 414–418; Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil II*, 133, «Projet de declaration», 320–324.

72 Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil II*, 122–132.

73 Idem, 126.

balls that he had organised and attended. But Napoleon intervened. At the news of his landing on the beach of Golfe Juan in Southern France on the afternoon of 1 March 1815, the entire Congress immediately returned to Vienna.

Von Gagern tried to bargain for a place for the Netherlands within the coalition of the great powers. He pleaded with Wellington and all other key players he could think of. According to Von Gagern, the Congress as a whole and not just the superpowers, should sign the declaration of war against Napoleon. And although Wellington made it clear that the eight powers of the Treaty of Paris were to take the lead, he nevertheless promised Von Gagern that he would defend the Dutch interests as much as he could.<sup>74</sup> In several bilateral meetings with Metternich, the Austrian and the Russian emperors in March and April, Von Gagern and Spaen were assured of the importance that the Viennese superpowers attributed to the participation of the new monarchy in the coalition.

For the Netherlands, it now was time to live up to its ambitions as a «second-order superpower». On 16 March 1815, Prince William proclaimed the official reunification of the northern provinces with the southern (Belgian) parts and the creation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. With the return of Napoleon it was even more important, the now King William I announced, to have at a key position in Europe a state that served to uphold «*la tranquillité et à la sûreté générale*». With this declaration, the newly proclaimed King introduced himself to the European powers, to his northern and to his southern provinces.<sup>75</sup>

The only spoiler to this joyful moment was the fact that the reunion of the northern and southern provinces came with strings attached: the Prussians took away the hereditary lands of Nassau and integrated them into their state. William did not take that lightly, and blamed Von Gagern for giving preference (once again) to the other branches of the House of Nassau over his lineage.<sup>76</sup> However, not Von Gagern, but the Prussian envoys, most notably Von Humboldt, were the ones that had taken away his ancient lands. Von Gagern took solace in the fact that the King's mother, Princess Wilhelmine, wholeheartedly supported him and understood the inevitability of the Nassavian loss and the importance of strengthening the German Federation.<sup>77</sup>

In the meantime, Napoleon's return offered new possibilities for the House of Orange to look southwards for the expansion of their territories. The hereditary Prince William Frederick still commanded the Subsidiary Army, which was established in 1814 by Brits and Hannoverians and created to defend the borders and assist in the formation of the new country. When Wellington issued his orders on 11 April 1815, assuming command of the allied forces in the northern and southern part of the

74 Idem, 143–145.

75 Royal Declaration, 16 March 1815. Signed by A.R. Falck (secretary to the King). HStD O11 B 104.

76 Cf. Letter William to Von Gagern, 19 February 1815, The Hague. HStD O11 B 32.

77 Letter Wilhelmine to Von Gagern, 17 January 1815, 4 April 1815. HStD O11 B32.

Netherlands, he sought to reinforce this army with troops from Great Britain, Hanover, Brunswick, Nassau, and the Netherlands. His former aide-de-camp, now general Prince William of Orange, commanded his force. Von Gagern, with a new mandate from William,<sup>78</sup> did what he could to – again – recruit his Nassau inhabitants for the Anglo-Dutch Army under Wellington.<sup>79</sup>

Amidst this disarray of mobilising troops, raising money and reorganising the alliance, the Final Act of Vienna still had to be drawn up – a task notably engaged by the loyal Gentz, secretary to the Congress. On 13 April 1815 he assured Von Gagern that, regarding the Dutch question, he would diligently edit the British-Dutch notes (compiled in February) into the Final Act upon reception.<sup>80</sup> On 9 May, Metternich and Franz Joseph ceded their claims to the Burgundian Netherlands over to the Sovereign Prince.<sup>81</sup> Next to the official establishment and confirmation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Von Gagern and Spaen booked a series of smaller, but not less noteworthy results. Especially Von Gagern left his imprint on the Congress's outcomes.

First of all, in June 1815 the European Commission of the Rhine was created. With this Commission, the Netherlands and the other smaller principalities along the river compelled Prussia to accept a legal constitution and a supranational court to settle disputes and conflicts along the Rhine. They thus prevented Prussia (or France) from pursuing unilateral interests, stopped «petty despots» from restricting free passage and fought smugglers together.<sup>82</sup> With this Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine the arguably oldest, still functioning transnational security regime was established amongst the states bordering the Rhine. The commission introduced legal standards and international provisions that required ratification by the Member States and hence acted as «Europe's first example of supranational integration».<sup>83</sup>

Secondly, Von Gagern was requested, both by King William and by Castlereagh, to sit on the Committee for the Duchy of Bouillon; his first active role was as a participant in a subcommittee to the Directing Committee of the Conference. Here, he managed to negotiate the Duchy's retreat from France and allocation to the Duchy of Luxembourg, thereby functionally attaching it to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

78 Royal Decree, 12 April 1816. HStD. OII. B109.

79 Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil II*, 168.

80 Gentz to Von Gagern, 13 April 1815. Excerpt in Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil II*, 177.

81 Deklaration Kaiser Franz I von Österreich über die Grenzen der Niederlande. 9 mei 1815. Abschrift. HStD OII B116/1.

82 Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil II*, 134; Treaty of the Rhine Commission: *Rheinurkunden. Sammlung Zwischenstaatlicher Vereinbarungen, Landesrechtlicher Ausführungsverordnungen und sonstiger wichtiger Urkunden über die Rheinschiffahrt seit 1803*. Vol. 1, Munich 1803, 42–50. See also advocacy for

a more liberal and standardised Rhine regime by Dutch «commissioners for navigation on the Rhine» to the Secretary of State, 4 August 1814. National Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1813–1870, pl.nr. 2.04.01, inv.nr. 740.

83 R. M. Spaulding, «Anarchy, Hegemony, Cooperation. International Control of the Rhine River, 1789–1848» [2007], 2. [http://www.ccr-zkr.org/files/histoireCCNR/21\\_anarchy-hegemony-cooperation.pdf](http://www.ccr-zkr.org/files/histoireCCNR/21_anarchy-hegemony-cooperation.pdf); idem, «Revolutionary France and the Transformation of the Rhine.» *Central European History* 44 (2011) 2, 203–226.



Thirdly, Von Gagern actively contributed to the German Committee, as highlighted above. After a five month interlude, the committee convened again in 23 May 1815. For him, the outcome was a restoration of the House of Nassau, now enlarged with the parts of Dietz and Hadamar that previously belonged to the House of Orange. For his master, King William I, he managed to claim a seat at the diet on behalf of the Duchy of Luxembourg.

Only after the Founding Act of the German Federation was completed and signed, Gentz could complete the 121 articles for the Final Act of the Congress. It was finished on 8 June and signed during a grand gathering in the great reception hall of the Hofburg on the evening of 9 June.<sup>84</sup> All contracting parties were present. Von Gagern and Spaen both signed the treaty on behalf of the Netherlands. Only a week later, the new Kingdom consolidated its position with blood. Crown Prince William (the later William II) commanded the Allied Corps at the Battle of Quatre Bras and the Battle of Waterloo where he was wounded – an instance of heroism that was seized immediately by the Dutch royal propaganda and implicitly served the Dutch bargaining position in the second round of negotiations after Vienna.<sup>85</sup>

#### *Loose ends: 1815–1816*

During the negotiations of the Second Treaty of Paris, Von Gagern was again invited to act as plenipotentiary on behalf of the King and was moreover requested to take a seat as the Dutch representative at the Federal Diet of Frankfurt. In his instructions of 1 December 1815, King William asked the Baron to arrange for the consolidation and integration of the newly ceded French fortresses of Condé, Philippeville, Charlemont, and Mariembourg into his Kingdom, and to assure their participation in the military line of defence against France. He was also commissioned to negotiate with the allied powers the compensation of 60 million francs (to which the Dutch King felt entitled). Finally, Von Gagern had to take care of the establishment, maintenance and support of the fortresses of Luxembourg which were added to the House of Orange, and to work with the Prussian King and German Diet to integrate them into the German line of defence and to appoint a military commander.<sup>86</sup>

At the Frankfurter Diet, Von Gagern advocated this Prussian-Dutch cooperation.<sup>87</sup> However, forging a military cooperation with respect to Luxembourg proved to be a strenuous assignment. In the end, William had to accept the fact that the Prussian King would be the one appointing the military commander and governor of

84 Von Gagern, *Mein Antheil II*, 485.

85 P. Hofschroër, 1815: *The Waterloo Campaign: Wellington, his German Allies and the Battles of Ligny and Quatre Bras*, London 2006, 137, 200; E. van Loben Sels, *Précis de la campagne de 1815: dans les Pays Bas*, The Hague 1849.

86 Van Nagell (foreign minister) on behalf of Wil-

liam, Instructions Spéciales pour Monsieur le Baron de Gagern, 1 December 1815. HStD O11 B128.

87 *Anrede des Königlich Niederländischen Gesandten Freiherrn von Gagern bei der Eröffnung des Bundestags*, 5 November 1816, 2. HStD O11 B130.

Luxemburg, thus safeguarding a more solid integration of Luxemburg into the German line of defence against France.<sup>88</sup> King William showed his gratitude: on 18 November 1815 he decided to appoint Von Gagern as commander in the Order of the Dutch Lion and grant him Dutch citizenship (in August 1816).<sup>89</sup> And on 20 March 1816, the newly knighted Von Gagern could add to that the honour of the *Grand Croix de l'Ordre du Faucon* (The Grand Cross in the Order of the White Falcon), bestowed upon him by the Grand Duke Charles August of Saxony. Only 42 of these Grand Crosses were awarded between 1815 and 1828, a sign that not only in the Netherlands Von Gagern was held in great esteem but also in Germany.<sup>90</sup>

Although Von Gagern was dismissed as Dutch plenipotentiary in 1818 over some Dutch misgivings regarding his sometimes soloistic behaviour and all too liberal ideas on constitutional reforms, Von Gagern and his family remained within the orbit of the House of Orange. He kept offering his unsolicited advice at regular intervals and, though perhaps not always by the King, he was at least warmly appreciated by Prince Frederic, the second son of King William I.<sup>91</sup>

### 3. Conclusions

Vienna did not restore the «conservative order» but negotiated a new outlook on peace and security rooted in the notion of «political equilibrium»<sup>92</sup> and an incipient sense of a *Pax Europæana* in which common European interests had to be defended together and be protected in a new kind of order. Fundamental conditions needed to be established and institutionalised to protect this newly realised «status quo» and expanded body of *Jus Publicum Europæum*.<sup>93</sup>

While the great powers deliberated, Von Gagern and William pursued their own alternative version for Europe. What stood out in their vision was the mixture of old and new. At a first glance, William appeared to be a traditional monarch, who merely aspired to restore his dynastic possessions and to reinstate his family's name. But his preference for a centralised, monarchical reign (although he was the last to publicly acknowledge his *monarchical* aspirations, for fear of resurrecting old grudges) did not at all mirror the status ante quo prior to the French take over. Rather than reverting to the old Republican federation of the seven provinces, he favoured a reunification of all seventeen Dutch lands under a highly centralised regime. Von Gagern and

88 Treaty of 8 November 1816 between Prussia and the Netherlands.

89 Royal Decree, 18 November 1815; Royal Decree, 24 August 1816. HStD OII. B 45.

90 Letter Falck to Von Gagern, expressing King William's permission to wear the Grand Cross. 20 March 1816. HSt Darmstadt. OII. B 45.

91 Letter Prince Frederic to Von Gagern, 1 July 1822, Het Loo. HStD OII B32.

92 Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics 1763–1848*, Oxford 1994; E. Kraehe, *Metternich's*

*German Policy. Volume II: The Congress of Vienna, 1814–1815*, Princeton, NJ 1983, 3–17.

93 J. L. Klüber (ed.), *Acten des Wiener Congresses in den Jahren 1814 und 1815*. 9 Vols., Erlangen 1815–1835, here: Acten II, 530–537. «Repose» or «tranquility» were Metternich's favourite words. See Metternich to Franz Georg, 8 June 1815. Metternich family papers. Rodinný archive Metternissky. Acta Clementina, Correspondance politique Autriche. Cart 49, vol. 5. Státní Ústřední Archiv (SUA), Prague. Cf. Schulz, *Normen und Praxis*, 74, 559, Fn 90.

William both admired Napoleon for his centralised and modern rule, overcoming factions, ecclesiastic denominations, and party rivalry to forge the country together. This new rule should, however, not be installed by mere force or arbitrary will power, but by some sort of popular consent in light of ancient historical claims and legitimised by a new, enlightened constitution. Both knew very well that the exact boundaries of this state, its territorial, political and international coordinates, depended on the outcome of the liberation wars, on William's involvement to them and on their diplomatic skills. They had therefore much to gain from the establishment of uniform norms and standing practices that would allow smaller powers to participate in decision making processes and that honoured other principles beyond those supported by military or pecuniary power alone.

In this process, Von Gagern turned out to be William's main diplomatic facilitator. He advocated new ideas, supported Castlereagh, functioned as *trait-d'union* between the English/Dutch parties and the German middle powers. He placated the British's desire to consolidate their spheres of influence in the Netherlands. He befriended Castlereagh, Von Stein and Humboldt, and courted the Viennese *salonnières*. Opinions differ as to whether Von Gagern was indeed the great European mediator that he so eloquently portrayed himself to be in his writings, or whether he was just putting on airs for his descendants and contemporaries, wanting to write himself into history.<sup>94</sup> This article is not intended to analyse Von Gagern's character or talents, but only to tease out his endeavours to introduce alternative scenarios and to penetrate the Viennese pentarchy.

In a tenuous relationship with his sovereign, King William, he managed to extend the support for Castlereagh's attempts in Vienna to create a united Kingdom of the Netherlands. Of course, Von Gagern's and William's visions of a Third Germany or an enlarged Burgundian Circle had little chance of success. Von Gagern's idealism conflicted with Prussia's lust for territorial expansion. William's expansive ambitions eastward were frustrated by Prussia as well, and by England for that matter. However, some of Von Gagern's ideas did persist below the surface. Von Gagern's constitutionalism and call for national unity were planted and they prospered in the years to come. Heinrich von Gagern became the first president of the German National Parliament in Frankfurt in 1848.<sup>95</sup> That same year, William's son William II accepted the first democratic constitution for his Kingdom. Across the continent, norms for creating a viable international *Jus Publicum Europaeum* emerged and smaller nations were also taken into account.

Most importantly, Von Gagern substantially contributed to the instilling of new diplomatic forms and norms that were tested in Vienna. He could cite older legal

94 Nicholson, *The Congress of Vienna*, 208; Hundt, *Die Mindermächtigen*; J. C. Boogman, *Nederland en de Duitse Bond. 1815–1815*, Groningen, Djakarta 1955, 9.

95 F. Möller, *Heinrich von Gagern. Eine Biographie*. Habilitationsschrift, Jena 2004.

paragraphs, but supported and shored them up with enlightened, universalistic principles. He admired emperors and kings, but was the first to make use of informal channels and settings, and abandoned the pomp and circumstance of the ancient regime courts (that had been reintroduced under Napoleon's reign). He contributed to the invention of traditions by embedding the House of Orange within a larger scheme of pan-German developments, likening the German-Dutch alliance to the medieval marriage of Mary of Burgundy with Archduke Maximilian of Austria in 1477.<sup>96</sup> His balls, dinners and great wines served to create informal occasions for his negotiations; his «bavardages» were the currency with which he «paid» the *salonnières* and noblewomen for their goodwill, lobby and invitations.

The legacies of Von Gagern and William I are contested. They have been portrayed as free riders on the British train, or are simply absent in the history books altogether. Contemporary German publicists held the expansion of the Netherlands with the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg against Von Gagern. His less than modest self-representation in his memoirs was ridiculed by contemporaries as well.<sup>97</sup> As for William I, the loss of Belgium was used as a «proof» against his statesmanship. There is a different story to tell in that regard, but it suffices to say here that the territorial and socio-economic conditions could not have been better for the House of Orange to build a «second-order state» on Europe's western rim. The tandem William I – Von Gagern served to create these conditions, amid many conflicting aspirations from the Prussian, Austrian and Belgian populations. Von Gagern's persistence in working towards institutionalised, reasonable and legitimate means of settling disputes and negotiating conflicts, and hence his contribution to the emergence of an institutionalised European security culture is the historical legacy he left behind.

96 *Anrede des Königlich Niederländischen Gesandten Freiherrn von Gagern bei der Eröffnung des Bundestags*, 5 November 1816, I. HStD OII B130.

97 H. von Gagern, *Das Leben des Generals*, Vol. I, 149–228; See also Zamoyski's criticism on the Belgian question, *Rites of Peace*, 564.

## ABSTRACTS

**Second-tier Diplomacy:  
Hans von Gagern and William I in their Quest for an  
Alternative European Order, 1813–1818**

This article supplements Anglo- or Prussian dominated readings of the Vienna Conference by focusing more on its beginnings, on alternative scenarios of a Dutch-German union and on the process of diplomatic bargaining by secondary agents. Based on new archival material, German-Dutch cooperation in Vienna is traced and placed in a wider context. Vienna did not restore the «conservative order» but negotiated a new outlook on peace and security rooted in the notion of «political equilibrium» and an incipient sense of a *Pax Europæana*. While the great powers deliberated, two secondary agents in the field of transnational diplomacy and security, the «free-lancing» nobleman Hans von Gagern and the hereditary Prince of Orange, William Frederick, pursued their own alternative version for Europe, both geographically and politically. By analysing their efforts, which in the end proved only partly successful, this paper adds more insight to the dynamic and contested process of creating a new European order and an accompanying security culture.

**Nachrangige Diplomatie:  
Hans von Gagern und Willem I. und ihre Suche nach  
einer alternativen europäischen Ordnung, 1813–1818**

Dieser Aufsatz ergänzt die englische und deutsche Forschungsliteratur zur Wiener Konferenz, indem er deren Anfänge, die diplomatischen Initiativen nachrangiger Akteure und alternative Szenarien unter dem Vorzeichen eines deutsch-niederländischen Schulterschluss analysiert. Gestützt auf neue Archivmaterialien wird diese deutsch-niederländische Zusammenarbeit in Wien in einen größeren Zusammenhang gestellt. Die Wiener Konferenz restaurierte nicht einfach die alte Ordnung, sondern suchte nach einer neuen Konzeption von Frieden und Sicherheit, in der Ideen über ein «politisches Gleichgewicht» und ein neues Gespür für eine *Pax Europæana* eine nicht unbedeutende Rolle spielten. Während die Großmächte verhandelten, verfolgten zwei untergeordnete Akteure, der unabhängig agierende Reichsritter Hans von Gagern und der oranische Erbprinz Willem Frederik, ihre eigene alternative Version einer europäischen Friedensordnung. Ihre diplomatischen Initiativen, wenngleich nur teilweise erfolgreich, beleuchteten den dynamischen und umstrittenen Schöpfungsprozess einer neuen europäischen Ordnung und Sicherheitskultur aus einer neuen Perspektive.

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