

The “ERA” SERIE - The story behind a Cinderella

by Hans Kremer

As a member of the Netherlands Philatelic Circle in Great Britain I received their January 2008 Newsletter, with in it a copy of illustration # 1. It had the following text: “Adrian Keppel has written: -I've attached a scan of a cinderella featuring Wilhelmina that I would like to know more of. I haven't gotten a clue why this was produced and who the man on the right could be. I would think it might have something to do with the war or crisis effort at the time of WWI.”



Illustr.#1
Queen Wilhelmina and ?

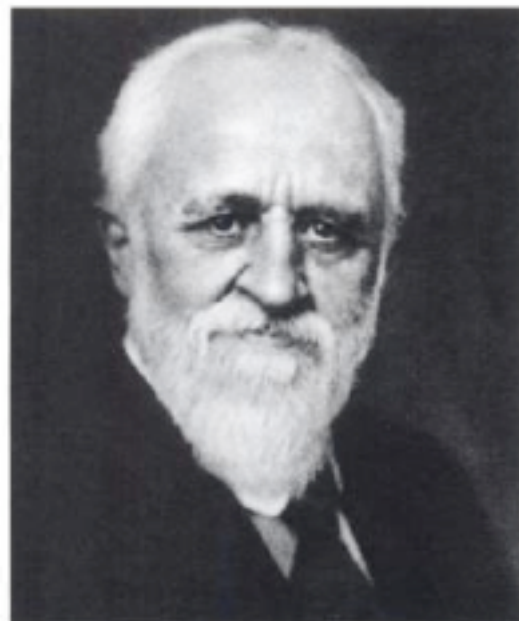
I was intrigued by this cinderella and started looking in Google but I didn't get anywhere. Next I passed on the illustration to PO&PO and their Webmaster posted it as Question # 186 on the PO&PO Vraagbaak section on the Website. No reaction whatsoever.

I thought that “WIJ ALLEN LATEN” might have some magical meaning, but there too I didn't get anywhere.

It sat there for a couple of months until I picked up a biography of Queen Wilhelmina (Wilhelmina, De jonge Koningin by Cees Fasseur) where on page 506 I noticed a painting described as “The Cort van der Linden Cabinet” with in the center of the group picture a man with a pointed goatee that reminded me of the ‘other person’ on the cinderella. The same painting is shown on page 533 of “Geschiedenis van de Lage Landen” by Jaap ter Haar. Back to Google to see if I could find a better picture of Mr. Cort van der Linden (this is his last name, first name was Pieter). Sure enough there I found illustration # 2, which in my opinion shows such

a likeness to the man in the painting that I'm convinced it is him.

Illustr. # 2
Pieter Cort van der Linden



But of course that was only part of the mystery. What was the ‘ERA SERIE’ about and what did that “WIJ ALLEN LATEN” mean?

I informed Adrian Keppel of my findings and he agreed that indeed it must be Mr. Cort van der Linden.

Adrian also told me that he had found out that ERA had been a shoepolish company in the city of Deventer in the Netherlands. This was another clue that put me on the road to solving the mystery. I had an extra interest here since during the 1950s I went to high school in the city of Deventer. Adrian also mentioned that Marktplaats.nl (the Dutch equivalent of Ebay) had another ERA cinderella for sale. I contacted the seller and managed to buy the sticker for €1. It

only heightened my curiosity because it not only showed two different people, but the text at the bottom was also different. It read "SCHOENCREME" instead of "WIJ ALLEN LATEN". The seller did not have any additional information about this cinderella.

Back to Google once more and here I came upon a Website (<http://users.edte.utwente.nl/jong/blikkies/poetsmid.htm>) set up by a collector of shoe polish cans and bottles etc. (why not?). It showed a number of ERA items, but not the cinderella I was looking for. It did however, show an email address. I contacted Ton de Jong (the man behind that Website) and he gave me a bit more information about the Era factory but not much more about the cinderellas. He also mentioned that currently (until September 14, 2008) in Deventer there is an exhibit about Deventer Adverting (1870-1950) (<http://www.deventer.nl/bezoekers/musea/historisch-museum-deventer/deventer-maakt-reclame-1870-1970>). Ton suggested I contact the man behind that exhibit. I did and that's where the breakthrough came. René Berends attached a scan of all five cinderellas and now the text suddenly makes sense. Putting the cinderellas in the right order one can put the texts of all five together and then it reads "WIJ ALLEN LATEN ONZE SCHOENEN POETSEN MET DE BESTE SCHOENCREME *ERA*", which translates as "We all have our shoes polished with the best shoe polish *ERA*).

All that remained to be solved was identifying the other persons on the last four cinderellas. Adrian came up with a Website: <http://www.parlement.com/9291000/modules/g5p13un7> that included portraits of all members. By matching up the portraits with the pictures on the cinderellas we are pretty sure that we've managed to identify everybody. All persons shown (except of course the Queen) were a member of the original Cort van der Linden cabinet put together in August 1913. Since Mr. Bertling resigned during October 1914, these cinderellas most likely also appeared during this period (Aug. 1913 - October 1914).

I would like to thank Adrian Keppel, Ton de Jong and René Berends for all their help. Without them this story could not have been written.



Queen Wilhelmina and Pieter Cort van der Linden
(Color: Black)



Mr. Lely (L) and Mr. Bertling (R)
(Color: Blue)



Mr. Ort (L) and Mr. Rambonnet (R)
(Color: Grey)



Mr. Treub (L) and Mr. Pleyte (R)
(Color: Grey)



Mr. Bosboom (L) and Mr. Loudon (R)
(Color: Brown/Red)