



Prince Bernhard shown here on the left boxing, date unknown.

Historians quarrel about prince's role in Indonesia coup

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By Bart Funnekotter

The late prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, husband of former queen Juliana, was party to an attempted coup against the government of the young Indonesian republic in 1950, a book published this Monday asserts.

The Dutch writers, historian Harry Veenendaal and journalist Jort Kelder, base their conclusions on evidence that has been available to other researchers: archived diaries of a court secretary and military police reports describing the attempted coup d'état which mention the prince's name in relation to the coup.

Prince Bernhard, the father of the reigning queen Beatrix, has always been a source of controversy. In 1976, after being accused of accepting bribes from the American aeroplane manufacturer Lockheed, he was stripped of his military titles. He also fathered two children with women other than his wife during their marriage.

The charges now levelled at Bernhard are the latest in a string of more and less substantiated claims concerning his supposedly unprincely conduct. By 1950, Indonesia had gained its independence from Dutch rule and normalised relations with its former colonial power. That a rag-tag crew of former Dutch and Moluccan soldiers nevertheless tried to oust the leadership of the young republic in a failed coup attempt on the Indonesian island of Java is a given. But whether the prince was involved remains open to debate.

While Kelder and Veenendaal claim the matter has been subject of a cover-up conducted by the royal family, historian Cees Fasseur came to very different conclusions drawing on mostly the same evidence. Fasseur published a biography of prince Bernhard and queen Juliana last year. According to Fasseur "There is no evidence implying the prince was complicit" in the attempted coup. Veenendaal in turn has accused his colleague of behaving as if he were "prince' Bernhard's lawyer," and his conclusions "ridiculous".



Background

Rwanda



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Dykes



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Baghdad



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