Memorial of Guyana
Annex 5
valueless, belong to the Dutch: (b) the deepest channel as those along the Dutch shore of the lower reaches, whereas islands, shoals and sandbanks are along the British shore; and (c) if the Netherlands Government agrees to accept the deepest channel as the boundary, but cede the islands to the west of it to the British, its demarcation would be a long and costly affair, as soundings would have to be taken to locate it and permanent marks be erected on each side of the channel. The channel which existed at the time of the demarcation would be the boundary for all time, no matter what changes occurred in the position of the deepest channel afterwards. The final suggestion is, therefore, that the extreme low water mark along the British or west bank should become the boundary, and that free navigation rights should be assured over the whole river beyond that zone for British and Dutch nationals.

As regards (B), the far more important question, the situation is briefly as follows: The Netherlands Government in 1889 objected to the definition that the boundary of British Guiana extended "to the source of the Courantyne called the Cuturi river", and suggested that the New River should be regarded as the boundary. Mr. Chamberlain definitely stated in 1900 that the Secretary of State could not assent to this suggestion that the New River should henceforth be regarded as the main source of the Courantyne river, and therefore as the boundary between.
Dutch and British Guiana. After describing the discovery of the Rupari in 1843 by Schonburg, Mr. Chamberlain drew attention to the publication of a map with the permission of the Dutch Government in 1899, showing the New River as the main source of the Courantyne, the New River having been discovered by Mr. Barrington Brown in 1871. The Secretary of State then set forth His Majesty's Government's opinion as at "A" on page 11 of enclosure B to 14. In 1910, Lieutenant Ruyer of the Royal Dutch Navy discovered on the Eastern side of the Courantyne a third branch which he called the Lucie River, the Rutari thereafter forming the central branch of the three. This river has since been embodied in the 1909 and 1924 maps of British Guiana. No further representations were made by the Netherlands Government in regard to the Surinam boundary until 1923 and 1924, when their attitude was disclosed in statements made at the Hague and forwarded by His Majesty's Minister.

The following extracts indicate the trend of opinion in the Netherlands in these years:

"Monsieur de Graaf then turned to the question of the boundary of the colony of Surinam which is formed by the Courantyne River and to the doubtful point as to the extent to which the upper course of this river should be regarded as being continued in the Curini River or in the so-called New River. He admitted that this was a problem which might give rise to differences of opinion in any future regulation of this boundary."

His Majesty's Minister at the Hague, in forwarding another statement made by the Netherlands Minister
... the latter part of the statement leaves the impression that it is so drafted as to avoid excluding the possibility of reviving the Dutch claim that the New River should properly constitute the upper portion of the boundary instead of the Coteri-Guruni. Any revival of such a claim would be in direct opposition to the statement to the First Chamber made by the Netherlands Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1913."

The Netherlands Minister for the Colonies, in his statement referred to above, said: "As regards the boundary line between Surinam and British Guiana, there is no doubt that ever since Surinam was restored to Netherlands authority in 1916, the Coteri has always been regarded as a boundary river. That the left bank forms the boundary line and that the full width of the Coteri together with the islands situated in it belong to Netherlands territory, has long found confirmation in practice. .........

In 1898 the arbitral award was given in the case of the delimitation of the boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela. Besides fixing the boundary between these two countries, the award designated the Coteri river as the upper reaches of the Coteri.
could not in any way prejudice our rights to regard the New River as the boundary between the two Guianas. The British Government replied to this that as a definite boundary had been long accepted in good faith by both parties, they did not feel able to enter into an argument with regard to the true source of the Corentyne as a matter which might affect the boundary between the two countries.

The succeeding Governments have had no reason for reverting to this question."

In 1925 His Majesty's Minister was of the opinion that the Netherlands Government had no intention of raising the boundary question at that time. In July, 1925, the Netherlands Minister for the Colonies made the following statement:-

"...... it is very doubtful whether a boundary dispute may be spoken of. But whatever the case may be, the relations as they are at this moment, de facto, leave no room for the assertion that we are faced here by an uncertain situation calling for immediate action. The desire may be cherished that at a future date it may transpire that the New River will be regarded on both sides as the right boundary, but to base political claims to it, on the existing state, seems to me to be precluded for the present."

The question appears to have died down from that time until at present, when the reported discovery of oil in Surinam and in British Guiana in the vicinity of the Corentyne river, together with the decision to demarcate the British Guiana-Brazil boundary, led to proposals from the Netherlands Minister for a definite fixation by treaty.
treaty of the frontier between British Guiana
and Surinam.

The vexed question of the true source
of the Courantyne is evidently receiving a
good deal of attention in the Netherlands at
the present time, see the enclosing to B here-
in, and to 16 in 65073, which has gone to the
O.A.D. No reply has yet been received from
him. The British Guiana - Brazil Boundary
Commission does not appear to be concerned with
ascertaining the true source of the river
Courantyne. But I submit that the chief point
at issue is to ascertain His Majesty's Gover-
ment's reply to the question "Assuming there
is any doubt as to whether the Poteni is in
fact the true source of the Couran-
tyne river, and assuming that the New River
may be finally determined upon as the main
source or sources, is it the intention of His
Majesty's Government to deviate from the
attitude adopted towards this matter by the
Secretary of State at the end of 1908?"
That is to say, are we prepared even to discuss
any change of boundary with the Netherlands
Government? And in putting this point to
the Foreign Office, I think we should answer
this question for our part in the negative.