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The second Anglo-Dutch war (1665-1667) : international raison d'état, mercantilism and maritime strife

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CHAPTER 4

The road to war: the escalation of Anglo-Dutch tension in the European powerplay

Increasing mercantile strife in 1664

In 1664 commercial confrontations between the Dutch Republic and England grew even more hostile than during the previous three years. In the autumn of 1663 Major John Holmes commanded a 22-ship squadron and he had received orders 'to protect' English interests in the African trade. In May 1664 it became clear to observers in Europe that he had been very thorough in carrying out this assignment. He had captured the fort of Cabo Verde on the Guinea Coast and confiscated a number of Dutch West Indische Compagnie vessels. Obviously this enraged Dutch merchants and officials.¹ The WIC immediately sought governmental support against the raid. Holmes's action caused a serious deterioration in Anglo-Dutch relations. Many more individual ships had been confiscated and trade had been obstructed, yet this was a major operation with English governmental support in which hostility was clearly demonstrated. It was obvious that some kind of reprisals or sort of agreement would have to be reached because it could not simply be ignored or forgotten. The province of Zeeland even proposed the equipping and sending of a Zeeland fleet under Jan Evertsen. A twenty ship-force would suffice to restore Dutch property in Africa.²

Meanwhile the case of the ship *Wapen van Amsterdam* had become the source of some debate as well. The vessel had been intercepted in the Atlantic by five English ships carrying Portuguese flags and had then been taken to Virginia. The States General demanded restitution and wanted the perpetrator to be punished. Sir George Downing was not in the least inclined to lend his assistance. He advised Henry Bennet, secretary of state, to delay any official reply as long as he could.³ This would be an appropriate way of dealing with complaints of the Dutch, who,

1 PRO SP 84/170 f174 Richard Duke to Williamson 30-5-1664 "they are now more insensed since ye taking of Cape Verde by Major Holmes and since the demands of our merchants are so extravagant as they say." NA SG 5767 II LWIC, WIC to the States General 5-7-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 24-5-1664 and 5-6-1664.

2 ZA States of Zeeland, Minutes of the States of Zeeland 2.2/80, 30-5-1664, 12-8-1664 and 13-8-1664.

in Downing's view, were dragging their feet in cases of English protests. In February Downing stated that the *Wapen van Amsterdam* was in fact the *Merchants' Delight* which had been taken by the WIC off the Guinea Coast in August 1661.⁴ The merchantman had only been retaken and justice had been done.

Downing's conduct in this single event illustrates just how determined the English ambassador was to support and uphold English mercantile interests. He thought of himself as the person best suited to bring all cases to a satisfactory end, and he became the most visible figure in the English struggle for commercial and maritime supremacy. He understood this and appreciated this role. Charles, understanding how Downing felt about Dutch primacy, exploited the diplomat's dedication to pressure De Witt and the States General.⁵ Yet Downing was not simply a tool in the official line of policy because although he could be over-ridden, he knew how and was in place to react quickly to De Witt's moves. He often acted on his own account and as he saw fit, even in major questions. He was convinced that he could force De Witt to give in to his demands by exerting sufficient pressure.⁶

He benefited from the fact that after 1662 no official Dutch ambassador resided at Whitehall. There had been no permanent and formal Dutch representative in London after the delegation that negotiated the Anglo-Dutch treaty had left in 1662. Traditionally the province of Zeeland nominated the Dutch ambassador to Whitehall and Holland picked the delegate to France. Zeeland had not fulfilled its duty because a number of candidates refused to accept the job and in November 1663 Holland threatened to send somebody to London if Zeeland would not quickly do so. The States General too understood the importance of the mission and repeatedly urged Zeeland to quicken the procedure. Finally Michiel van Gogh, a former official in Brazil and native of Zeeland, was chosen for the delicate task.⁷

Pieter Cuneaus, the secretary of the Dutch delegation that had negotiated the treaty in 1662, had remained in London and acted as official temporary delegate. This was a rather common practise but on this occasion it was used by the English to virtually monopolise Anglo-Dutch diplomatic dealings. In November 1663 Cuneaus was told by English officials that he could no longer represent Dutch interests and that only an appointed ambassador would be acceptable. Until then all official diplomatic business would be handled by Downing.⁸ Obviously this position gave Downing even more opportunity to do things his way. His chosen

3 PRO SP 84/169 f24 Downing to Bennet 25-1-1664 and f32 States General to Charles 26-1-1664.

4 CSP Clar 365 Downing to the States General 5-2-1664; NA SG 5905 LE, Downing to the States General 13-2-1664; PRO SP 84/169 f82 Downing to the States General 15-2-1664.

5 Rowen, *John de Witt*, 451-459.

6 Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 151-155.

7 ZA States of Zeeland, Minutes of the States of Zeeland 2.2/80, 19-1-1664, 24-1-1664, 25-1-1664 and 19-3-1664; PRO PC 2/57 f73 2-5-1664; PRO SP 84/172 f191 Van Gogh to the States General 12-9-1664; Rowen, *John de Witt*, 244 and 459-460; CSP Clar 345, Downing to Clarendon 16-11-1663; NA SG 3269 and 3270 RSG, 29-12-1663, 18-1-1664, 22-3-1664 and 28-4-1664.

8 NA SG 12589.120 SKE, Cuneaus to the States General 2-11-1663.

method was an aggressive one; he believed threatening the Dutch with war would eventually make them give in to his demands. Giving De Witt no elbow room would produce results. He stated that 'it is our own fault if matters be not brought to that issue they ought to be but as long as Mr Dewitt sees a possibility of sailing between Scylla and Charibdis – a breach on the one hand, and giving satisfaction on the other – he will eternally shuffle and cut capers with me.'⁹

Throughout 1664 the negotiations about past and present rivalry in the African commerce continued. In February 1663 the English vessel *Mary* was forced to abandon its position off the Guinea Coast. The *Gulden Leeuw* had chased away the English merchantman and it had been impossible to make a profit. Downing demanded compensation for these losses.¹⁰ Meanwhile Dutch officials were busy drawing up a list of complaints and losses that could be used to counterbalance English claims. A number of cases were brought forward, some dating back from the 1640s and 1650s.¹¹ The most important issue, however, was still Holmes's raid on Cabo Verde. In June 1664 Charles stated that it had happened without his knowledge and approval, and promised to look into the matter. Obviously he did not want to admit his involvement with this act of clear aggression and would not appear to the public as the instigator. Two months later Downing gave assurances again that Charles had not been informed, but he admitted to Bennet that he required information and clarification about Charles's plans.¹² Obviously the king did not involve himself in acts of open hostilities. He did however, lend ships to the Royal Adventurers understanding that these would be used to fight the WIC. Holmes's orders to 'protect' English interests were not very specific and Charles must have suspected that it would lead to a considerable confrontation but not to outright war. He had probably not yet decided whether this would be opportune to his regime. The financial and naval support of the company was meant to pay off and provide Charles with profits. His denial was therefore probably not very sincere.

Anglo-Dutch economic rivalry continued in other trades as well. To protect the Dutch cloth industry the States General imposed an official ban on the import of foreign manufactured cloth. Obviously this proclamation damaged the Company of Merchant Adventurers' interests. The merchants immediately sought governmental support and requested Charles to use his influence. They claimed their ancient privileges were being ignored.¹³

The Dutch attempt to protect their domestic markets and industries was a reaction

9 PRO SP 84/170 f35 and f149 Downing to Bennet 18-4-1664 and 23-5-1664.

10 NA SG 5905 LE, Downing to the States General 26-2-1664; CSP Clar 372 Downing to the States General 26-2-1664.

11 NA SG 12576.82 Lok.E.

12 PRO SP 84/170 f168 Downing to Bennet 30-5-1664; PRO SP 84/171 f208 Van Gogh to the States General 27-6-1664; CSP Clar 409-410 Downing to Clarendon 1-8-1664.

13 PRO SP 84/167 f248, 250 and 254, 14-8-1663.

to the English protectionist legislation that was intended to drive the Dutch out of English trades. The strengthened Act of Navigation and the Staple Act were an important part of English mercantilist policy. Their enforcement became much more strict and effective and as a result the Privy Council had to deal with numerous petitions and requests from both English and foreigners requiring the release of forfeited ships and goods. Representatives would be sent to the colonies in the West Indies to make sure laws would be observed there as well. On many occasions Michiel van Gogh, the new ambassador in London who had been appointed in February 1664, had to plea for the release of Dutch vessels. Often these merchantmen had attempted to get round English mercantile regulations and had been caught in the act.

The case of the ships *Bonna Esperanza* and *Henry Bonadventure* that had been captured by the VOC in the 1640s continued to plague Anglo-Dutch relations. Downing kept pressing De Witt and the States General as he believed it to be a justified claim. Giving up, he thought, would only encourage the Dutch to refuse in other cases as well. The States General were equally determined and replied that the claimants could apply to the appropriate court of justice in the Republic. Officially they considered it to be a legal matter rather than a political one.¹⁴ Obviously this meant that they would not co-operate with Downing on this issue.

Run, center of nutmeg trade, remained a matter of conflict as well. In March 1662 John Hunter and John Dutton, agents of the EIC, left Bantam to claim possession of the island. Governor General Johan Maetsuycker had attempted to gain time by stipulating a number of bureaucratic conditions. This convinced the English that the VOC and the States General were not at all prepared to surrender Run. This assumption was probably correct. The Dutch were merely delaying the matter.¹⁵ All these cases contributed to the further deterioration of Anglo-Dutch relations causing the development of a potentially explosive situation.

The Dutch Republic was not only threatened by English mercantile pressure. Louis and Colbert had decided to expand their discriminatory policies against competitors and understood that the Dutch Republic would be most severely affected. In 1663 and 1664 Franco-Dutch economic rivalry increased significantly. Already in 1662 the French government had decided to impose export and import duties. Dutch merchants trading in French wine, brandy and salt complained about these extra costs. Louis and his minister Colbert believed the introduction of these tariffs to be part of royal prerogative. The French state recognised mercantilist policies as an important tool to strengthen its financial and political power. Encouraging French maritime trade would yield funds, ships and seamen that would help in-

14 NA SG 3270 RSG, 4-6-1664; NA SG 12589.121 SKE, Van Gogh en Van Hoorn to the States General 30-5-1664.

15 NA SG 5738 II LVOC, Johan Maetsuycker to the States General 25-1-1664; PRO SP 84/172 f34 De Bacquoy to Bennet 20-9-1664; Coolhaas, *Generale missiven*, 380, 383, 401, 407-408.

crease Louis's influence. In France national government was very much the source of mercantilism.¹⁶

Early in 1663 Louis decided to give an official monopoly to a French whaling company that should be established. Extra import duties were levied on products like whale oil and fat.¹⁷ The Dutch were the traditional supplier of these commodities. Obviously this was cause of much concern in the Dutch Republic. The States of Zeeland even issued a ban on renting whalers and equipment to foreigners.¹⁸

French duties caused much anger among Dutch traders. They stated that the tariff was much too high and they threatened to import salt from Portugal instead of France. The Dutch used great amounts of salt from Bourgneuf to prepare the herring for export or domestic sale. Shifting imports to Setubal in Portugal would affect French exports severely. The quality of the Portuguese salt was already superior to the French product. Meanwhile various Dutch officials had started imposing similar duties on French ships entering Dutch harbours by raising licenses. They had been ordered to do so by the various admiralties. Willem Boreel, the Dutch ambassador in Paris, was then ordered to negotiate the removal of all duties. His diplomatic attempt failed however and the issue continued to cause tension.¹⁹

Paris too decided to use the complaint of the Order of Knights of Malta to exert diplomatic pressure on their Dutch allies. The Knights demanded restitution of their goods and estates that had been confiscated during the Dutch Revolt. The States of Utrecht and the States General refused to give in on this issue. Louis presented himself as the defender of the catholic faith and ordered his ambassador D'Estrades to benefit from this, following Downing's application of pressure techniques. D'Estrades and Downing did not co-operate in this case. The French believed that playing this card would possibly cause the Republic to back down on other more important issues.²⁰

Louis and Colbert decided that, like the Dutch and the English, France should also participate in rich colonial trades. Establishing government-supported companies would be the best way to create a foothold in the West and East Indian trades. Like England and the Dutch Republic, France too required the possession of tropical islands and factories that would produce valuable commodities and spices. France should be able to compete against other Europeans and grab a share of the potential richness. In February 1664 the French decided to establish a colony, Cayenne, near the Amazon Estuary. The WIC protested against this plan and claimed it already owned that coast because the Dutch had arrived there before the French.²¹ A more important mercantilist policy was the setting up of a French East

16 Elzinga, *Voorspel*, 32-36.

17 NA SG 12587.166 SKF, Boreel to the States General 19-1-1663 and 2-2-1663.

18 ZA States of Zeeland, Minutes of the States of Zeeland 2.2/80, 21-1-1664 and 22-1-1664.

19 NA SG 6780 I LF, Boreel to the States General 30-3-1663; PRO SP 84/167 f170 D'Estrades to the States General 25-5-1663; NA SG 12587.166 SKF, Boreel to the States General 20-7-1663; NA SG 3270 RSG, 27-5-1664.

20 NA SG 3269 RSG, 24-12-1663; PRO 84/167 f57 D'Estrades to the States General 19-3-1663.

India Company. Denzil Hollis, the English ambassador in Paris, commented that 'they are much sett here now upon the East India trade, and forming a company to carry it on, having sent for merchants from all parts, some from Holland.' Understandably the States General ordered Boreel to protest against this as these Dutch merchants were evading the VOC monopoly.²² Obviously the VOC was not looking forward to encountering yet more foreign competition.

The outbreak of a contagious epidemic plague in the western provinces of the Dutch Republic had given other states a good reason and excuse to put an embargo on Dutch shipping. In November 1663 the English government forbade Dutch vessels to enter the Thames Estuary. France and Spanish authorities took similar steps to protect their people from the disease. Dutch diplomats tried to get embargoes removed. Yet in January 1664 Boreel wrote that Colbert used the outbreak to put more restrictions on Dutch trade in order to stimulate French commerce.²³

Throughout 1663 and 1664 difficulties about Asian forts continued to trouble relations between the Dutch Republic and Portugal as well. Officially peace had been concluded but this would only take effect once it had been published in Asia. This meant that hostilities would continue for months. A small number of Dutch merchantmen was captured and taken to Jersey and Guernsey by English captains carrying Portuguese Letters of Marque. This complicated matters because the islands were separate jurisdictions and were not subject to any English courts. Officially the interception of vessels was no longer legitimate as peace had been signed by Portugal and the Republic. Yet abuse of old licenses continued and was conveniently ignored by local authorities. In October 1663 the *Mol* from Middelburg was intercepted by a Flemish captain and taken to Jersey. The master was taken to Normandy and released without papers.²⁴

Yet the real difficulty was not privateering but the fort and harbour of Cochin. Portugal requested restitution of this recent Dutch conquest claiming that the peace agreement had already been signed. The States General were unwilling to abandon the VOC and replied that the status of Cochin depended on the date of publication of the treaty in Asia. In February 1664 the news was finally received in the colonies and so in December negotiations were still dragging on. The Dutch still refused to restore Cochin to its former owners claiming that the conquest had been legal. The Portuguese, in turn, decided not to pay the sum of money they agreed on in the peace treaty.²⁵

21 NA SG 12587.169 SKF, Boreel to the States General 8-2-1664; Heijer, *WIC*, 91-92.

22 NA SG 12587.169 SKF, Boreel to the States General 30-4-1664; PRO SP 78/118 f228 Hollis to Bennet 22-5-1664.

23 NA SG 5904 II LE, Cuneaus to the States General 9-11-1663 and 30-11-1663; NA SG 3269 RSG, 13-12-1663, 14-12-1663, 14-3-1663; NA SG 12587.169 SKF, Boreel to the States General 4-1-1664; ZA States of Zeeland, Minutes of the States of Zeeland 2.2/80, 31-1-1664; PRO PC 2/57 f45 2-4-1664.

24 NA SG 12589.120 SKE, Cuneaus to the States General 19-10-1663 and 26-10-1663; NA SG 5905 LE, Cuneaus to the States General 4-1-1664; NA SG 7012 II LP, Van der Houve to the States General 26-9-1664.

25 NA SG 7012 I and 7012 II LP, Francisco Rebello to the States General 13-10-1663, Casper Barlaeus to

Careful manoeuvring and positioning

Early in 1664 rumours about a forthcoming French attack on Spain and the Spanish Netherlands spread throughout the diplomatic sphere of Europe. Although Philip IV was still alive, there was ground for this as De Lionne, the French minister of war, informed D'Estrades that Louis would soon be sending his armies 'over the mountains'. Some people believed Louis could no longer contain himself and would want to secure his wife's future inheritance. The message of the possible invasion became public knowledge and caused many observers in the Republic to believe a Dutch-Spanish alliance would soon be concluded. Obviously this would be unrealistic because the French treaty was vital to Dutch international interests, but such people were correct in assuming that French aggression would threaten Dutch maxims of state. They understood that De Witt and the other regents did not want the Spanish Netherlands to be conquered by France.²⁶ The Republic, in their opinion, would eventually be forced to sign a treaty with Spain as the alternative option would be completely unacceptable and had to be prevented. The rumours caused the government in Brussels to decide that more attention and money should be spent on the fortifications along the French border.²⁷ Sooner or later a French offensive would be launched and urgent preparations were required to organise effective defence against it. Yet after the Peace of the Pyrenees Spanish authorities understood that merely investing in military means would not suffice against Louis's ambitions and military force. Creating an alliance with another major European power would be required to protect the Spanish Netherlands. It would however, be very difficult to achieve this as other governments saw the potential conflict they might get involved in. Defending the Spanish interests meant opposing Paris. To Madrid the Dutch Republic seemed the most likely and desirable ally, especially since England seemed unwilling to bring a real end to the local and unofficial hostilities in the West Indies. The States General were the only alternative option to Charles to safeguard their territorial integrity. At several occasions De Gamarra proposed a defensive alliance between both states, anticipating the forthcoming death of Philip IV.²⁸ Obviously Louis wished to avoid this scenario. He strove to isolate Spain. For this reason he hoped to avoid a confrontation with Charles as this would cause England to side with Madrid. In his opinion it required careful manoeuvring to prevent the Dutch and English from assisting Philip IV.

De Witt never considered a Spanish treaty to be a serious option though. Spain would be a relatively weak and very vulnerable partner in the arena of European politics. Moreover, official co-operation with Spain would practically nullify the

the States General 4-4-1665; NA SG 5738 II LVOC, Hendrick van Wijck to the States General 15-2-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 1-12-1664.

26 PRO SP 84/168 f216 Downing to Bennet 3-1-1664; CSP Clar 362, Downing to Clarendon 18-1-1664; Brown, *Letters*, 224-225, De Lionne to D'Estrades 1-2-1664.

27 NA SG 7058 LS, Sasburch to the States General 2-4-1663 and 30-4-1664.

28 NA SG 12588.75 SKS, Secret Resolution 19-6-1664.

Franco-Dutch alliance. Louis had agreed to the Dutch treaty in 1662 in order to isolate Spain, and it represented a major setback to Spanish diplomatic efforts.²⁹ Louis was clearly succeeding in his aims concerning international politics. He had threatened to side with England in case the Dutch concluded an alliance with Spain. His position was especially strong as De Witt and the Republic became increasingly dependent on his support. Anglo-Dutch relations deteriorated by the day and his friendship with the Dutch was, in his view, the only thing that kept London from declaring war on their rivals.³⁰ Thus from the Dutch point of view the Republic's position in European politics became more and more complicated. The Dutch needed French support indeed in case of an English war. Yet they would have to find a way to prevent Louis from carrying out his territorial plans concerning the Spanish Netherlands.

Meanwhile England tried to strengthen its ties with Sweden and Denmark. Downing hoped to negotiate a commercial treaty with both Stockholm and Copenhagen that would practically exclude the Dutch from all Baltic trade and shipping. He hoped that English merchants could replace their rivals altogether. Both Charles and James supported this plan. King Charles XI of Sweden was interested in monopolising commerce as well.³¹ The Danes too saw opportunities to profit at the expense of the Dutch from the growing tensions with England. King Frederick III of Denmark had borrowed huge sums from the Republic and had mortgaged the Sound tolls. These debts crippled his regime and he hoped to free himself from this financial burden and dependence. To Downing these Scandinavian ambitions were useful to create more international pressure on the States General. Competition between the Republic and the Scandinavian states about African interests could be exploited to put De Witt in a difficult situation. The WIC had used excessive military and naval force in Africa to protect its interests against the Danish company. In May Charles interfered in the affair demanding that the Dutch would compensate Denmark for the losses sustained in Africa. Understanding the tense Anglo-Dutch relations he suggested linking negotiations about the loans to the issue of the lost African possessions. Obviously he hoped to exchange one for the other. Harald Appelboom, the Swedish delegate in the Republic, in turn brought up complaints about the aggression of the WIC as well. Trying to profit from the diplomatic difficulties between England and the Dutch he believed to be able to secure reparations.³² Both northern kingdoms hoped to profit from increasing Anglo-Dutch tension. Their policies were a clear indication that they would go further if war broke out.

29 NA SG 12588.78 SKS, Sasburch to the States General 30-4-1664; Lynn, *Louis XIV*, 32-34.

30 Brown, *Letters*, 253-257 Louis to D'Estrades 23-4-1664.

31 CSP Clar 382, Clarendon to Downing 28-3-1664, 383 30-3-1664.

32 Seaward, 'The House of Commons Committee', 444-447; NA SG 5905 LE, Downing to the States General 8-5-1664; PRO SP 84/170 f95 Downing to the States General 8-5-1664 and 84/171 f46 De Bacquoy to Williamson 28-6-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 12-6-1664 and 27-6-1664.

In 1664 the Restoration regime was ready to plot a strong anti-Dutch mercantilist course that left little room for compromises. The new lobbies and factions at Court had by now taken shape and had connected with the mercantile groups in the City. They were now prepared to mount pressure on the Republic in order to advance their own and what they regarded as national interests. In March certain important government officials persuaded the House of Commons to order that a parliamentary committee already dealing with a petition about cloth trade, undertake a more general investigation into the depression that supposedly plagued English commerce and shipping. The committee was taken over by Bennet's and James's factions and was now chaired by Thomas Clifford, who was knighted in the summer of 1664. A significant number of their political friends and clients were member of the committee. It ordered all companies and guilds to report on the state of their trade and on problems they encountered, and to suggest possible solutions to overcome these obstacles.³³

In early April the Levant Company stated that it suffered from Dutch competition in cloth trade. Dutch rivals and North African corsairs caused much damage. But London shopkeepers and interlopers obstructed commerce as well as they infringing on the official monopoly. The company suggested a total ban on the export of wool to the Republic as this raw material was manufactured there and then used to compete against English cloth. The Company of Merchant Adventurers shared this last complaint and hoped to bring an end to interloping as well. The Royal Adventurers trading into Africa declared that the WIC was the only important rival and that their trade would prosper if constant Dutch interference and aggression were ended. The Muscovy Company too had to deal with a depression in commerce. The merchants trading with France had to pay high French tariffs and face Dutch rivalry.³⁴ A financial inventory of sustained losses was then drafted. The East India Company had been wronged for some 225,000 pounds and the loss of Run cost some 4 million pounds. The Levant Company claimed 110,500 pounds. These statements led the committee to declare 'that the wrongs inflicted by the Dutch are the greatest obstruction to foreign trade, and that His Majesty should be moved to take a speedy course for their redress.' This resolution was approved by Parliament and an official request to Charles would be made.³⁵ These claims were all genuine and reflected the difficulties English commerce had to face. The actual sums of money demanded were highly exaggerated.

Clifford, an impecunious politician with no considerable background, was making

33 CSPD 531 26-3-1664 and 535 31-3-1664 The Common Council of the City of London had encouraged the cloth merchants to submit their petition to Parliament. Sainsbury, *Calendar*, 26 5-4-1664; PRO SP 29/98 f35-70 5-4-1664; PRO SP 105/113 f208 9-4-1664; NA SG 5905 LE, Cuneus to the States General 11-4-1664; Hartmann, *Clifford*, 35-36.

34 PRO SP 105/144 f282 Levant Company to the Commission on Trade 11-4-1664; PRO SP 29/96 f6 11-4-1664.

35 CSPD 561-562 and 582 19-4-1664 and 21-4-1664; Historical Manuscript Commission, *Heathcote*, 150-152 2-5-1664.

a career as a client of Bennet and seized the opportunity to gain influence by serving the king's political interests in Parliament and at Court. The committee shaped an official anti-Dutch policy, allowing Clifford to become the rising star at the political firmament. He addressed the House of Commons about the economic damage that had been suffered due to supposedly unfair Dutch competition. He asked the House to give its full support to Charles in the regime's attempt to improve matters. His efforts were very successful. This pleased Bennet who was responsible for leading the royal interest group in the Commons and was now in charge of handling the affair on behalf of the king. Bennet stated that 'His Majesty having considered the address made to him by his two houses of Parliament is very well pleased with the great zeale they have expressed for the removing of all obstructions which may hinder the same being thoroughly convinced it is that which will contribute most to the honour and glory of this nation and the prosperity of his people.'³⁶

This turn of events clearly illustrates how the regime hoped to mount pressure on De Witt by demonstrating to him that Parliament would not oppose but encourage a tougher policy on foreign competition. The faction of ambitious young politicians had clearly taken over the making of foreign and economic politics, clearly indicating that a full-frontal collision with the Dutch was sought. Charles let both Houses know that he would gladly support any mercantilist policies as long as they would keep their promise and assist his regime 'with their lives and fortunes'. He told his sister Henrietta Anne that 'Sir George Downing is come out of Holland, and I shall now be very busy upon that matter. The States keep a great bragging and noise, but I believe, when it comes to it, they will look twice before they leap. I never saw so great an appetite to a war as is, in both this town and country, especially in the Parliamentmen, who, I am confident, would pawn their estates to maintain a war. But all this shall not govern me, for I will look merely what is just and best for the honour and good of England, and will be steady in what I resolve.'³⁷ More and more it became clear that plotting a mercantilist course was best for him. It gained him much political support that would strengthen his government. It could even yield large sums of money that would stabilise his regime.³⁸ Charles, being a political opportunist, understood perfectly well which way the political wind blew. Going with the tide, but making it clear that this must be on his own conditions, would satisfy Parliament and the City. This would then tie these groups to himself and his policies. It would also commit them to voting the necessary funds.³⁹

To many people, especially the Dutch, Sir George Downing was to blame for the

36 NA SG 5905 LE, Cuneaus to the States General 23-5-1664.

37 CSPD 572-573 29-4-1664; Bryant, *Letters*, 158-159 Charles to Henrietta Anne 12-6-1664.

38 Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Ormonde*, 177-178 14-8-1664 'Proposals for further reduction of His Majesty's Household expenses.' The need to reform the royal finances illustrates how Charles was still struggling to settle his financial affairs.

39 In July 1664 Sir Edward Turner, Speaker of the House of Commons, received 5,000 pounds. This was a payment for his services and a financial token of the king's gratitude for his political support. CSPD 656.

deterioration of relations and the threat of war. He believed the Dutch could be pressed into submission and would never dare to fight. He was 'sure they doe dread a warre as ye Devill, but if braving can doe it, and putting a good face upon it, they would fight all ye world.' Yet Downing was a tool rather than policy-maker. The Dutch incorrectly mistook him for the deviser of anti-Dutch policies. The mercantilist Parliamentary resolution was clearly constructed by the king's officials and was intended to threaten the States General into submission.⁴⁰ Charles clearly used Downing and Bennet to shape, prepare and execute his own policies. He did not publicly commit himself explicitly to a war against the Dutch so as to widen his field of manoeuvre. Yet he was very clear to his sister about his intentions when he wrote that 'I am now sending Sir George Downing into Holland to make my demands there. They have never yet given me only satisfaction for all injuries their subjects have done mine, only given good words and nothing else, which now will not be sufficient, for I will have full satisfaction, one way or other (...)' Both Bennet and Downing did not in the least mind their role in the king's plans. Downing was certainly not informed about all the king's plans. This explains why he was often conceived as the fanatic mercantilist who overplayed his hand. Even Alvisé Sagredo, the Venetian ambassador in Paris, was fooled into believing that Charles was sincere in his attempts to calm bellicose sentiments and really hoped to maintain peace at all costs.⁴¹

The king's stated intention to assert his rights led to the take-over of the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, which he conveyed to his brother James. This settlement had made it possible for neighbouring English settlers in America to evade the Staple Act by selling their products to Dutch traders. English protectionist legislation could only become really effective with the conquest of the Dutch settlement. Already in February 1664 Sir John Berkeley, William Coventry and Sir George Carteret reported that only three ships would be required to capture the colony. In May Richard Nicholls received orders to set sail and to force the Dutch to surrender, and Charles ordered the colonists of Massachusetts to assist Nicholls in his mission. The English argued that no hostilities were being committed in times of peace, they were merely asserting the king's rights.⁴²

Cuneaus was very concerned about the clearly hostile mercantilist developments in London and reported this to the States General.⁴³ Downing believed that the demonstration of political co-operation between Court and Parliament sufficient-

40 Seaward, 'The House of Commons Committee', 450-452.

41 PRO SP 84/170 f145 Richard Duke to Williamson 23-5-1664; Lister, *Life*, 322 Downing to Clarendon 23-5-1664; Bryant, *Letters*, 161-162 Charles to Henrietta Anne 21-7-1664; Colenbrander, *Bescheiden*, 154-155 Downing to Bennet 20-1-1664; CSPV 19-20 Sagredo to the Doge and Senate 27-5-1664.

42 Schoolcraft, 'The capture of New Amsterdam', 687-688; Ormrod, *Commercial empires*, 40 and 310-311; NA SG 5767 II LWIC, WIC to the States General 21-1-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 23-1-1664; BL Egerton MS 2395 f387; CSPC 183-184 Report from Berkeley, Carteret and Coventry 8-2-1664; *ibidem* 190 10-3-1664, 200 3-5-1664; *ibidem* 202-202 Charles to the governor of Massachusetts 3-5-1664.

43 CSPC 197 1-5-1664; NA SG 5905 LE, Cuneaus to the States General 2-5-1664.

ly frightened the Dutch who now became convinced war was likely to break out.⁴⁴ The States General still actually hoped to avert an armed confrontation and sent Van Gogh to continue negotiating all cases.⁴⁵ Yet the Dutch did not give in to Downing's demands which they found outrageous. The case of the *Bonna Esperanza* and the *Henry Bonadventure* was the most ridiculous one of all and, according to many Dutch, only served as a pretext to exert pressure. They refused to be threatened into submission and would rather fight. De Witt believed that making concessions would be counterproductive. It would provoke further demands and more hostility. It would cause serious damage to the Republic's position in international politics. Other governments like the Swedish and Danish would be encouraged to confront the States General over all sorts of issues. According to De Witt's *raison d'état* it was not at all opportune to pay up. Facing the English would perhaps be inevitable but would also be preferable.⁴⁶

Early in 1664, with clear signs that English pressure was increasing, the States General decided that more, and more powerful naval ships should be built. After the defeat during the First Anglo-Dutch War the States General had undertaken extensive building programmes that enabled the fleet to retake its dominant role on the seas. A standing navy had been created, which ensured that the Dutch would not again be taken by surprise as had happened in 1652. Dutch admiralty officials began creating stocks of gunpowder and naval supplies. The new men of war were to be larger than the older ones with more and heavier guns. The States General tried to create financial reserves as well.⁴⁷ A renewal of activity by Barbary corsairs gave the States General an excuse to increase the strength of the Mediterranean squadron in response to a request for protection by the Levantsche Compagnie. In May the province of Holland urged the admiralties of Zeeland and Friesland to prepare their men of war as quickly as they could in order to send the 30 ship fleet southwards under command of Cornelis Tromp.⁴⁸ Maintaining this force in the Mediterranean would provide certain strategic advantages in case of war.

The English government dispatched a similar squadron commanded by Sir John Lawson for the same reason. Naval and financial preparations were undertaken as well. Charles borrowed 100,000 pounds from the City of London for these purposes. The Act of Navigation was suspended temporarily for the Norwegian and Baltic trade. Anyone could transport naval supplies and timber to England without

44 PRO SP 84/170 f92 Downing to Bennet 9-5-1664.

45 NA SG 3270 RSG, 4-6-1664 and 5-6-1664; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, IV 305-306 Van Gogh to De Witt 27-6-1664.

46 PRO SP 84/170 f122 De Bacquoy to Williamson 10-5-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 12-6-1664; Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 145-148.

47 CSPD 505 E. Curtis to Bennet 4-3-1664; *ibidem* 517 17-3-1664; CSPV 29-30 Alvisé Sagredo to the Doge and Senate of Venice 8-7-1664; Oudendijk, *Johan de Witt*, 88-91.

48 NA SG 12587.166 SKF, Boreel to the States General 3-8-1663; NA SG 5905 LE, Cuneaus to the States General, various letters February and March 1664; *ibidem* Downing to the States General 13-2-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 20-2-1664 and 15-5-1664; CSPV 10-12 and 24 Sagredo to the Doge and Senate 19-4-1664 and 17-6-1664.

legal or financial obstructions. An official order was issued to all English, Scottish and Irish sailors abroad to return home. Charles and James both inspected the fleet to inform themselves about the progress of preparations and to display their commitment in public.⁴⁹

In May 1664 the English government decided to enforce its claims against the Dutch Republic by publicly taking reprisals. No letters of reprisal were issued yet but the navy was set to work. Reprisals were usually only taken when all legal procedures had failed to provide a satisfactory solution, and were considered an act of open hostility between two states. A number of ships in English harbours was detained as well. This caused the Dutch admiralties to set out fast vessels to warn all merchantmen about the potential threat. Convoying warships were set out to protect shipping. The VOC stock dropped to 449 and then to 438 percent due to the deteriorating relations and rumours about an English attempt to intercept its return fleet. Yet despite the serious state of affairs and the outbreak of plague in Holland and Zeeland, most Dutch ships and busses continued operating as usual.⁵⁰ It seemed that many Dutch still hoped for the crisis to blow over.

Both governments however, understood that the probability of war grew larger all the time. Political, diplomatic, naval and financial preparations were now urgently required to maintain or improve positions in the increasingly competitive arena of international politics.

On the brink of war

In the second half of 1664 Holmes's attack on Dutch possessions in Africa triggered in the inevitable escalation of Anglo-Dutch rivalry. The Royal Adventurers had petitioned for yet more governmental support to meet the Dutch reprisals that were likely to take place. Such an attempt would almost certainly lead to a declaration of war.⁵¹ In August Downing presented the States General with a statement expressing the hope that 'matters may not come to extremities, but accomodated in an amicable way.' Van Gogh's letters to De Witt contained similar warnings when he reported that 'the nation [the English] must have more trade and shipping, or peace can not continue.'⁵² It had come to a situation in which breaking was more likely to happen than bending.

49 NA SG 5905 LE, Cuneaus to the States General 23-5-1664, 6-6-1664 and 13-6-1664; CLRO JOR 45 f389b, 398 and 423b June and July 1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 10-6-1664 and 23-6-1664; PRO SP 63/19 f101 1-4-1664.

50 PRO SP 84/170 f96 Downing to Bennet 9-5-1664 and f130 De Bacquoy to Williamson 12-5-1664; PRO SP 84/171 f4 De Bacquoy to Williamson(?) 7-6-1664; PRO SP 119/36 f52 Newsletter 26-6-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 13-5-1664; NA SG 5905 LE, Van Gogh to the States General 26-9-1664 and 29-7-1664; CSP Clar 401 Downing to Clarendon 23-5-1664.

51 CSPD 617 15-6-1664; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, IV 308 De Witt to Van Gogh 4-7-1664.

52 Scheurleer, *Brieven*, IV 321-324 Van Gogh to De Witt 25-7-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 6-8-1664; NA SG 5905 LE, Downing to the States General 5-8-1664; PRO SP 84/171 f84 Downing to Bennet 4-8-1664.

Trying to gain time and improve the Dutch diplomatic position in Europe De Witt required Van Gogh to continue negotiating with Charles and his ministers. Van Gogh's promise that more concessions could be made, confirmed Charles's opinion that the Dutch actually feared war and could be forced into submission.⁵³ The States General were in fact still prepared to discuss all cases but not to accept all conditions. In September catalogues of complaints were exchanged. This led Denzil Hollis to think a peaceful solution was still possible. Yet to the English the Dutch list was unrealistic and impossible to agree with.⁵⁴

Legal justification of the Dutch cause was necessary to demonstrate that they were victims of aggressive diplomatic intimidation and that as a result the States General might be forced to invoke the 1662 treaty with France. The States General now supplied foreign ambassadors with copies of their correspondence with Downing. It prepared the way for the order to Van Gogh to propose to Charles that mediation by the Paris parliament or a German court of justice should be sought.⁵⁵ This served to publicly display Dutch willingness to solve the dispute peacefully. Neither side would want to be labelled 'aggressor' as this gave other states a reason to assist the opponent. Van Gogh's proposals were completely unacceptable to London, but despite the refusal the States General wanted to continue negotiations.⁵⁶

Relations had by now deteriorated to an extent that war was almost inevitable. Hostilities were being carried out and justified by both governments. A number of new cases contributed to the tension. The Dutch complained about the capture of the WIC vessel *Wapen van Groningen*. Downing in turn requested compensation for the hampering of the ships *Hopewell* near Cochin and *Sampson* off the Guinea Coast.⁵⁷

These new issues however, were completely insignificant compared to the impact of De Ruyter's voyage to Western Africa. Charles had tried to soothe Dutch complaints about Holmes by promising to look into the matter, but he also threatened that any violence would be answered. The issue was dragged on and no Dutch request was complied with. In August De Witt and the States General became more and more convinced that the English would never return the forts and ships Holmes had captured. Van Gogh was then informed that Holmes's action was justified because the Dutch had refused to make any concessions to English demands and claims.

In response to this statement a squadron consisting of twelve ships was prepared

53 Bryant, *Letters*, 160-161 Charles to Henrietta-Anne 7-7-1664; CSPV 26-27 Sagredo to the Doge and Senate 1-7-1664.

54 Sainsbury, *Calendar*, 72-73 Downing to Bennet 5-9-1664; BL ADD MS 22920 f46 Hollis to Downing 12-9-1664; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, IV 352-353 Van Gogh to De Witt 19-9-1664.

55 NA SG 3270 RSG, 9-10-1664 and 13-10-1664.

56 *ibidem* 13-11-1664.

57 NA SG 12589.124 SKE, Van Gogh to the States General 22-8-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 25-7-1664 and 11-9-1664; NA SG 5905 LE, Downing to the States General 25-9-1664; PRO SP 84/171 f178 Downing to Bennet 5-9-1664.



Michiel Adriaanszoon de Ruyter, commander of the Dutch fleet (De Ruyter Foundation, www.deruyter.org).

in secret to sail to Guinea. De Witt managed to pass a secret resolution in the States General ordering admiral Michiel de Ruyter to revenge the WIC and recapture all forts and ships that had been lost. The pensionary organised some of his best trusted political allies and he succeeded in confusing other members about the actual contents of the proposed resolution. Some key informers of Downing were lured away from the vote by De Witt's supporters and the actual proposal was formulated rather vaguely. This meant that the order was legal and was kept secret from Downing and others.⁵⁸ Charles received official confirmation that De Ruyter had been sent to Africa from the Dutch authorities on the 29th of September. He was promised that the naval vessels would only serve to protect WIC ships and was guaranteed that De Ruyter had peaceful intentions. Reports from English agents in Spanish harbours were only received in October.⁵⁹

The Earl of Sandwich had been patrolling the Channel in order to intercept any Dutch squadron. De Witt anticipated this and sent orders to De Ruyter who commanded the fleet in the Mediterranean. A direct *casus belli* was therefore avoided and Downing only found out in September that the Mediterranean squadron had been sent to Africa.⁶⁰ Van Gogh then informed Charles about De Ruyter's intentions. This enraged the king who told his sister that 'they [the Dutch] have always hitherto made the first step in preparations for warre, so I am resolved they shall now send first [their fleet to Guinea], that all the world may see I do not desire to begin with them, and that if there comes any mischief by it. They have no great need to provoke this nation, for except mysef I beleeve there is scarce an Englishman that does not desire pationatly a warre with them.'⁶¹ Obviously this letter served a diplomatic purpose and to provide Louis with a legal excuse to withhold his assistance from the Dutch Republic.

Meanwhile both England and the Dutch Republic had undertaken diplomatic efforts to win French political and military support for the ever more likely war. This contest for French assistance was very clear to neutral observers.⁶² Charles used his sister Henrietta Anne to pass on diplomatic messages to Louis XIV on an informal level. His private correspondence with her provided a perfect excuse to maintain open communications with the French king. She could also watch and serve English interests at Court. Already in January 1664 Charles hoped to improve relations

58 Rowen, *John de Witt*, 460-462; Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 150-151; Verhoog and Koelmans, *De reis van De Ruyter*, 17-20; Prud'homme van Reine, *Rechterband*, 130-131; PRO SP 84/171 f97 Downing to the States General 6-8-1664; CSP Clar 413 Downing to Clarendon 15-8-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 9-8-1664, 16-8-1664, 25-8-1664, 28-8-1664 and 11-9-1664.

59 NA SG 3270 RSG, 29-9-1664; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Heathcote 166*, Sir John Lawson to Sir Richard Fanshaw 7-10-1664.

60 CSP Clar 420 Downing to Clarendon 12-9-1664; BL ADD MS 22920 f48 John Webster (?) to Downing 13-9-1664.

61 NA SG 12589.124 SKE, Van Gogh to the States General 19-9-1664; BL ADD MS 18738 f114 Charles to Henrietta-Anne 29-9-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 29-9-1664.

62 CSPV 41-43 Sagredo to the Doge 23-9-1664.

with France and offered Louis an alternative option to the Franco-Dutch alliance: 'There is nobody who desires more to have a strict friendship with the King of France than I do, but I will never buy it upon dishonourable terms. And I thank God my condition is not so ill but I can stand upon my own legs, and believe that my friendship is as valuable to my neighbours as theirs is to me.'⁶³

Charles's assumption, that an Anglo-French treaty would be preferred by Louis to his having to co-operate with the Dutch, shows that he did not fully grasp French intentions concerning the Spanish Netherlands. Bennet does not seem to have passed on to him information received that many Dutch now favoured an Anglo-Dutch alliance to protect the Spanish Netherlands, probably because this could hardly be reconciled with the increasing mercantile tension between the two maritime states.⁶⁴

The state of Anglo-Dutch relations provided certain advantages to France, particularly making commercial progress at the expense of the Dutch. Charles clearly understood this, pointing out to Henrietta Anne that 'I see you are as hott upon setting up an east india company at Paris, as we are heere upon our Guinny trade.'⁶⁵ Attractive as these economic opportunities might be, Louis was not at all content with the developing threat of war. He considered it unnecessary and undesirable to France. It would obstruct his own plans and could require French military involvement. He was prepared for action when Philip IV died. This could happen at any time and he therefore offered his mediation in the Anglo-Dutch conflict.⁶⁶ This might just prevent total eruption. His position was one of comparative luxury: his support was wanted throughout Europe and he had the means to aim for his political and territorial ambitions.

This led Denzil Hollis, ambassador at Paris, to remark that 'all seems to make for the greatness of France: the weakness, divisions, ill counsells and ill successes of the undertakings of all other nations, princes and states are the elevation of this young king, who may be raised so high that his brains may turn. (...) Yet he hath certainly great advantages of his own, besides what his neighbours contribute to make him great; a clear understanding, a good judgment, an indefatigable industry, then a vast treasure and absolute power within his kingdome; all of them necessary qualifications for one, that will carry on great designs. Our war with Holland will be no hindrance to him, and may give way to his growth up at sea, (...) and he knows it.'⁶⁷ The English diplomat was right in all but his last observation. Denzil Hollis did not fully understand Louis's ambitions concerning the Spanish Netherlands. These plans were of much more importance to the French king than the increase of his

63 Bryant, *Letters*, 150-151 Charles to Henrietta-Anne 7-1-1664.

64 PRO SP 84/172 f19 De Bacquoy to Bennet 13-9-1664.

65 NA SG 12587.169 SKF, Boreel to the States General 9-5-1664; BL ADD MS 18738 f105 Charles to Henrietta-Anne 30-6-1664.

66 Brown, *Letters*, 280-282 Louis to D'Estrades 11-7-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 17-7-1664.

67 PRO PRO 30/24/4 f127 Hollis to Morice 19-7-1664.

naval power. A strong navy could be a vital tool in foreign politics but all Louis's plans were centered around the issue of the Spanish Netherlands.⁶⁸

The States General thanked Louis for his offer to mediate but England refused to accept this. Willem Boreel was also ordered to express the Dutch willingness to maintain the peace. He reported to Louis and his ministers an account of Holmes's action in Africa hoping to convince them of England's aggressive intentions. De Witt communicated similar messages to D'Estrades. It would be vital to the States General that France would support them against the English. The Republic could only afford to risk war with England once its back was covered by France. Officially the 1662 treaty provided support but in reality practical military aid was required. A strong ally was needed for political and economic survival in Europe, as De Witt had already foreseen. France's position as arbiter in the German Empire, established at the Peace Conference of Westphalen in 1648, enabled French diplomacy to assist the States General. The Bishop of Münster failed to convince other German princes to join him in the conflict with the Dutch.

It was by no means certain that Louis would live up to the agreed treaty though. He had his own interests to consider. Maritime and economic difficulties between France and the Republic, although on a minor level compared with these with England, continued to disturb relations. In August the Duke De Beaufort, the French naval commander, brought the vessels *Croon* and *St Augustin* up to French ports because of the ongoing disagreement about customs. In November a French squadron attempted to capture a WIC colony in Cayenne on the coast of South America.⁶⁹ The outbreak of plague in Holland and Zeeland provided a new source of friction. An embargo on Dutch shipping was issued by French authorities. In August some twenty vessels were arrested for ignoring this quarantine. At various occasions Dutch officials hoped that the ban would be lifted. Louis refused however, and stated that it would only be revoked once the disease had disappeared.⁷⁰

Charles repeatedly tried to bridge the gap with Paris by means of his sister. He wrote to her stating that 'nothing can hinder this good alliance and friendship (...) [between France and England], but the King, my brother, giving the Hollanders some countenance in the dispute there is between us. (...) I confess I would be very glad to know what I may expect from France, in case the Hollanders should refuse me all sort of reason and justice, for upon that, I must take my measures accordingly.' He also told Henrietta Anne that 'I do in the first place desire you to use your

68 Lynn, *Louis XIV*, 32-34; Lossky, *Louis XIV*, 117-120.

69 NA SG 3270 RSG, 11-8-1664; NA SG 12587.169 SKF, Boreel to the States General 15-8-1664, 31-10-1664 and 4-11-1664; NA SG 6780 II LF, Boreel to the States General 29-8-1664; Brown, *Letters*, 302-303 and 315-318 D'Estrades to Louis 2-10-1664 and 30-10-1664; PRO SP 84/172 f168 Van Gogh to the States General 5-9-1664.

70 NA SG 3270 RSG, 26-8-1664, 5-9-1664 and 20-11-1664; NA SG 6780 II LF, Boreel to the States General 12-9-1664; Brown, *Letters* 328-329, Louis to the States General 28-11-1664.

interest and credit to remove all jealousies of any change in me, or that I am less warm in my inclinations towards a firm friendship with France, than I have professed to be.⁷¹ His message to Louis was that the Franco-Dutch alliance harmed Anglo-French relations. The conflict would be inevitable and Louis was required to determine his position. Obviously Charles benefited from his family ties to invite his fellow monarch to communicate his terms for co-operation. Yet the French king did not choose a side in the Anglo-Dutch strife and continued to remain neutral and independent.

Meanwhile, in 1663, political tension between the Dutch Republic and the Bishop of Münster, Christoph Bernhard von Galen, almost erupted into an armed conflict. The prelate claimed the territory of Borculo in the province of Gelderland and threatened to invade the country with his armies. He argued that all Catholics in these regions were subjects of the church province of Münster. The Gelderland and Overijssel States asked the States General to support and protect the provincial interests. In May 1664 the ownership of Fort Deyler was contested as well. The Dutch wished to conquer the strategic position in order to secure the Republic's territorial integrity. Four thousand Dutch troops were sent in a successful attempt to capture the fort. Downing believed that Von Galen would attack the Republic in case of an Anglo-Dutch war. He urged Bennet to benefit from this diplomatic opportunity by forming a co-operative alliance with the German prince.⁷² This would put more political and military pressure on the Dutch. In a further attempt to create a large alliance against the Republic, English diplomats were sent to Sweden and Denmark as well.⁷³

The Dutch were still busy enlarging their fleet and supplies as the English began their diplomatic preparations. De Witt was aware of the dangers this offensive implied for the Republic. In September the States General decided to spend an additional two million guilders on ships, sails, guns and gunpowder.⁷⁴ Downing however, did not believe the Dutch would be ready to set out their vessels as the plague had weakened the financial state of the Republic.⁷⁵ This misconception caused some English politicians to believe that a war could easily be won. Both sides shared this sense of confidence, and public opinion in England and the Republic became more and more enthusiastic about war as the outbreak drew closer.

71 Bryant, *Letters* 162-164 and 165-167, Charles to Henrietta-Anne 2-9-1664 and 27-10-1664.

72 PRO SP 84/167 f194 De Bacquoy to Williamson 6-7-1663; PRO SP 84/170 f6 and f111 Downing to Bennet 11-4-1664 and 16-5-1664, f 81 Richard Duke to Williamson 2-5-1664, f190 De Bacquoy to Williamson 29-5-1664.

73 NA SG 5905 LE, Van Gogh to the States General 15-8-1664.

74 NA SG 3270 RSG, 27-9-1664; CSP Clar 435 Downing to Clarendon 29-10-1664.

75 CSP Clar 422 Downing to Clarendon 26-9-1664; PRO SP 84/173 f128 De Bacquoy to Bennet 10-1-1665.

Open hostilities

In July it became clear that an English squadron commanded by Richard Nicholls had surprised and taken the WIC colony New Netherlands in times of peace. The settlement was aptly renamed New York after James of York. The newly appointed governor and magistrates guaranteed all property except for military forts and promised freedom of religion and trade.⁷⁶ Obviously they hoped to incorporate the area in the English commercial network. Leaving the colonists undisturbed would only increase prosperity and taxes. They would produce goods that could be exported and taxed under the Staple Act. Providing European commodities would yield more money. Yet most important to the English government was the fact that the only loophole in the North American monopoly had been closed.

The WIC tried to get the States General to deal with this new issue. The company had greatly suffered from 'this intolerable violence' as it was called and required assistance. The assembly did not take immediate steps but ordered the admiralties to equip another 18 men of war to protect maritime trade. Charles was officially requested to ensure that compensations be paid. Yet the monarch had different plans as was illustrated by one of his letter to Henrietta Anne. He remarked that 'you will have heard of our taking of New Amsterdam, which lies just by New England. 'Tis a place of great importance to trade, and a very good town.'⁷⁷ He was generally believed to have ordered the attack despite some attempts to conceal his involvement.⁷⁸

De Ruyter's action of October in Africa was, according to De Witt, a justified and necessary response to Holmes's actions and to the taking of New Netherlands. It did however make war inevitable, as Hollis commented that 'this Guinea voyage will be the greate crisis, their very going thither a certaine indication of the warre, and the succeſſe of that a great one of the whole issue of that warre, as a good or bad beginning makes a great impression.' He was now finally convinced that 'they [the Dutch] would have all that trade and will try a bleady nose before they quitt their pretentions.'⁷⁹

The success of De Ruyter's mission was impressive as almost all English forts in Africa had been taken and a number of merchantmen had been intercepted as well. The Royal Adventurers trading into Africa complained that he had confiscated some £50,000 worth of goods and another £120,000 was at risk. Pepys commented that this loss practically caused the company's bankruptcy. In reaction Charles ordered that more Dutch ships should be taken and brought into English harbours. Despite these attempts to compensate for the sustained damage, [the Dutch] 'are

76 Jacobs, *Een zegenrijk gewest*, 164-170; CSP Clar 413 17-7-1664; PRO SP 103/46 6-9-2664.

77 NA SG 5767 II LWIC, WIC to the States General 24-10-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 24-10-1664, 25-10-1664 and 31-10-1664; PRO SP 84/172 f134 Downing to Bennet 28-10-1664; Bryant, *Letters* 167-168, Charles to Henrietta Anne 3-11-1664.

78 CSPV 52-53 Extracts from letters from The Hague and London 21-11-1664.

79 PRO SP 78/119 f103 Hollis to Bennet 1-10-1664; BL ADD MS 22920 f51 Hollis to Downing 27-10-1664.

still here mighty high at their success in Guiny in comparison whereof they do not count what they have lost in the Channell worth the naming.⁸⁰ To save face Holmes was imprisoned in the Tower when he arrived in England. He was interrogated and stated that he had been attacked and had only responded to Dutch aggression.⁸¹ His function as scapegoat was not required very long and he was soon released.

In November a squadron commanded by Thomas Allin cruised the Western Mediterranean prowling for the returning Dutch Smyrna fleet. In December he met the 33-vessel convoy outside Cadiz and attacked it. The English government had decided that reprisals would be taken to compensate for De Ruyter's action. Allin managed to capture the *Abrahams Offer* and the *St Jan*. The *Koning Solomon* was sunk. The other merchantmen fled and sought refuge in Cadiz before continuing their way. Van Braekel, the Dutch commander, was killed defending his fleet.⁸² Allin's mission could be considered a failure despite the interception of two prizes. Taking the whole convoy would have meant major prizes and important damage to Dutch trade. The bulk escaped however and arrived safely in Dutch harbours.

Charles ordered that all Dutch vessels should be stopped and brought up to English ports as reprisal. Naval squadrons would patrol busy shipping routes in order to intercept as many merchantmen as possible. James was required to issue letters of marque and reprisal to encourage private warfare. The Channel and the English South Coast were popular hunting grounds for naval vessels and privateers. Small, fast frigates were used to hunt down slower commercial ships carrying heavy cargoes. Similar orders to disturb Dutch commerce would be sent to all overseas colonies. Soon reports came in about numerous captures.⁸³ Altogether more than 200 ships were taken before the official declaration of war. This number caused many English to believe that the upcoming war would be as profitable as the First Anglo-Dutch War had been. William Coventry, secretary to James of York, doubted this though: 'I foresee two objections to this whole discourse (...): the great benefit which may be expected from prizes.' He predicted that Dutch captains would be on their guard and would not be surprised easily.⁸⁴

80 Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 150-151; Verhoog and Koelmans, *De reis van De Ruyter*, 71-85; Prud'homme van Reine, *Rechterhand*, 130-153; Scheurleer, *Brieven* IV, 411-412 Van Gogh to De Witt 5-12-1664; CSPC 266 Petition from the RAC 12-1-1665; Tanner, *Correspondence*, 33-34 Pepys to Sandwich 1-1-1665; Colenbrander, *Bescheiden*, 151-152 Downing to Bennet 13-1-1665.

81 PRO SP 84/174 f204 Van Gogh to the States General 19-1-1665; CSPD 170-171 24-1-1665.

82 Anderson, *The journals of Sir Thomas Allin*, Vol. I xii-xv, 189 and 193; PRO SP 84/173 f256 Mells 30-12-1664; PRO SP 84/173 f257 Jacob van Meeuwen 30-12-1664; Lister, *Life*, 360-362 Downing to Clarendon 14-2-1665.

83 NA SG 12589.124 SKE, Van Gogh to the States General 1-12-1664 and 5-12-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 4-12-1664; PRO SP 84/173 f207 Van Gogh to De Witt 5-12-1664; PRO SP 84/173 f247 and f248 22-11-1664 and 26-12-1664; PRO SP 84/173 f32-33 Cuneaus to the States General 9-1-1665; CSPD 90 5-12-1664, 95 10-12-1664 and 100 Coventry to Bennet 12-10-1664; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, IV 420-422 and 423-426 Van Gogh to De Witt 22-12-1664 and 27-12-1664; BL ADD MS 38846 24-12-1664.

84 BL ADD MS 32094 f28 Coventry to Clifford 26-12-1664.

Coventry was correct in his assumption. The States General immediately took steps in order to prevent confiscations. Letters were sent to all agents in foreign ports ordering them to issue warnings to departing vessels. Fishing busses should find shelter in French or Flemish ports.⁸⁵ Many captains had already thought of methods to escape capture and detention. They carried French or other foreign flags as a disguise. They avoided the dangerous route through the Channel that was swarming with enemy ships. Instead they returned home via the northern route. The English even thought about building a fort on the Shetlands to control this passage round Scotland.⁸⁶

In December the States General issued general orders to the admiralties to intercept English shipping. Fast frigates were to be sent out to disrupt English trade as much as possible. In Vlissingen and Middelburg shipowners hoped to benefit from this policy and petitioned for privateering licences. Yet the States General did not allow the admiralties to grant such permits. They would not provide the outside world with any evidence indicating that the Dutch were the aggressors. Naval actions were one thing but privateering was considered an even more direct proof of aggressive intentions. The refusal to give out licences infuriated shipowners who wanted to avenge their own losses and profit from tempting opportunities. The Province of Zeeland repeatedly urged the States General to finally allow the private war effort. The Zeeland representatives were ordered to convince their colleagues from other provinces, and especially the Holland delegates. Downing warned about the Zeeland privateering industry when he noted that 'those of Zeeland are mighty eager to be abroad a capering, there are great sums subscribed in Middleburg, Vlissingen towards the carrying on of the trade, and their deputies doe earnestly press in the Estates Generall the giving out of letters of reprisal.' Some thirty privateers would be set out from Zeeland harbours. Amsterdam merchants invested some 80,000 guilders in the business. The WIC applied for licences as well. The directors hoped to increase the company's income by waging war.⁸⁷

The Zeeland representatives argued that Flemish privateers might be tempted to accept English letters of marque instead of Dutch ones when the Dutch authorities continued to outlaw privateering.⁸⁸ The delegates tried to use this argument to convince the States General that commissions should be handed out as soon as possible. In January, after the declaration of war had been issued, the States General gave in

85 NA SG 3270 RSG, 6-12-1664 and 11-12-1664; NA SG 6781 LF, Jacob Roch Horone to the States General 30-12-1664; NA SG 7059 LS, Van der Baten to the States General 12-1-1665.

86 SP 84/174 f50-51 Downing to Bennet(?) 27-1-1665; SP SP 84/174 f84 De Bacquoy to Bennet 14-2-1665; CSP Clar 464-465 Downing to Clarendon 6-2-1665; CSPV 74-75 Letter from The Hague 9-1-1665.

87 ZA States of Zeeland, Minutes of the States of Zeeland 2.2/80, 10-12-1664, 15-12-1664 and 20-12-1664; SP 84/173 f85 Downing to Bennet 23-12-1664 f100 Downing to Bennet 30-12-1664; NA SG 3270 RSG, 11-12-1664 and 22-12-1664; NA SG 5907 I LE, States General to the Admiralties 24-1-1665; NA SG 5767 II LWIC, The WIC to the States General 6-2-1665; BL ADD MS 4182 f1b 3-2-1665; Bruijn, 'Kaaopvaart', 415-419.

88 ZA States of Zeeland, Minutes of the States of Zeeland 2.2/81, 6-1-1665 and 10-1-1665; PRO SP 84/174 f9 De Bacquoy to Bennet 3-1-1665.

and decided to give out licences. Yet despite this enthusiasm the States General were reluctant to hand out too many. Only a few dozen privateers were permitted to intercept enemy vessels. Manning the fleet had the highest priority and would be difficult when all sailors were lured away by the high wages paid by privateers. The whaling industry was stopped as well for the same reason. In May all privateers were obliged to supply the navy with a number of sailors equal to its own crew.⁸⁹

New rules were published to ensure that no neutral vessels were captured. A licence would only be issued to the captain of a privateer so he would be responsible in person. This rule did not apply to naval officers. Witnesses and all documents were to be sent to one of the Dutch Admiralty Courts, even when a prize had been sold in a foreign harbour. This would prevent piracy and embezzlement.

Benefiting from foreign efforts to harm the enemy's commerce was very attractive; it was a very cost-effective way to inflict considerable damage. Operating from foreign ports was another appealing option. The Dutch hoped to get permission to use Cadiz to intercept English Mediterranean shipping. Very soon the first captures were reported when the *Anne and Elizabeth* was taken just outside Smyrna.⁹⁰

The English took similar steps to encourage privateering from bases overseas and sent orders to Tangiers that all Dutch vessels should be arrested. An inventory of the cargo, the captain's name, the homeport and destination had to be drawn up. Local magistrates had to function as prize court. Privateering was also stimulated in other ports. Bennet sent open licences to Cadiz that could be issued to individuals by the local English representative.⁹¹

The States General hoped to limit the privateering that was carried out in Charles's name by foreign ships. The Flemish corsairs, particularly those from Dunkirk, were well known for accepting any licence that allowed them to capture merchantmen. Dunkirk was now officially part of France and the States General hoped that the French government would prevent the corsairs from accepting English letters of marque. This, Dutch authorities argued, would be in conflict with the Franco-Dutch treaty. The Dunkirkers Jan Jacobsen, Karel Verburg and Jan Jansen Gouverneur however carried English licences and operated against Dutch shipping. D'Estrades denied this but Dutch claims were true. Van Gogh had managed to get his hands on letters of marque that had been handed out to Dunkirk privateers. Boreel then requested De Lionne to outlaw these practices. The States General even threatened to condemn all foreigners using English licences to the death penalty.⁹²

89 ZA States of Zeeland, Minutes of the States of Zeeland 2.2/82, 15-1-1666; PRO SP 84/174 f22 De Bacquoy to Bennet 17-1-1665; PRO SP 84/174 f20 Downing to Bennet 27-1-1665; Bruijn, 'Kaaopvaart', 417-419.

90 CSP Clar 463 Downing to Clarendon 30-1-1665; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Finch*, 360 William Cave to the Earl of Winchelsea 28-2-1665.

91 Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Heathcote*, 181 Bennet to Westcombe 11-3-1665; PRO CO 279/4 15-3-1665.

92 Brown, *Letters*, 413-414 D'Estrades to the States General; 7-3-1665; NA SG 12589.125 SKE, Van Gogh to the States General 23-2-1665; NA SG 6781 LF, Boreel to the States General 20-3-1665; NA SG 5907 I LE, the States General to all provincial assemblies 11-3-1665.

In both states preparations for the war continued. The VOC promised to set out and finance twenty large, heavily armed merchantmen capable of joining the fleet in battle, with a minimum number of forty guns per vessel. In exchange the company's monopoly was extended to the year 1700. To equip more ships and to pay wages an extra tax was issued. All citizens were obliged to pay 0.5 % of their total property.⁹³

To man the fleet all sailors were needed. The admiralties did their utmost to contract sufficient numbers. Van Gogh still resided in London and tried to assist all Dutch seamen to return home. Having often lost all belongings after their ships had been brought up to English ports, the Dutch ambassador provided them with food, clothing and money. He arranged for neutral ships to transport them back to the Republic, the Spanish Netherlands or France.⁹⁴ This way most sailors avoided imprisonment or forced service on the English fleet. Contrary to official regulations, they were not held to serve as witnesses in prize cases.

In England preparations were made as well. In order to deal with all prize cases a new Commission for Prizes was set up. The aim of this body was to administer all captures, organise taxations and sales and to maximise the king's share in the spoils. The commission consisted of many important politicians and courtiers like Prince Rupert, Buckingham, Albemarle, Ormonde, St Albans, Sandwich, Anglesey, Lauderdale, Berkeley, Hollis, Carteret, Morrice and Nicholas. Bennet was appointed comptroller and Ashley Cooper treasurer. Both would receive a generous allowance for these tasks. The appointment was a royal reward for their services to Charles and his politics. A number of important MPs was given a function as sub-commissioner in the outports.⁹⁵ This was again a way of rewarding loyalty to the crown.

Naval and military preparations were problematic. As early as March 1665 the Navy Board, responsible for the setting out of the fleet, ran out of funds and could no longer meet its obligations. Government recognised the importance of the problem and tried to improve finances by raising taxes and cutting down spending drastically. Yet purchasing ships and preparing them for battle created an enormous strain on the expenditure. The yield of prizes could of course be applied for these purposes but this would not be sufficient. The cargo of Dutch merchantmen could also be used for the fleet. The salt from the *Koning Solomon* was delivered to the

93 PRO SP 84/174 f69 4-2-1665; NA SG 12581.31 SKVOC, 21-2-1665; *Ordonnantie ende instructie waer naer alomme binnen den lande van Hollandt ende West-Vrieslandt soo in de steden, op de slooten ende forten als ten platten lande het haerdtstede-gelt tot onderstant van den oorloge in desen jare 1665 ontfangen ende geheven sal worden volgende den consente van de Staten van den selve lande* (The Hague 1665); Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Heathcote*, 176 Downing to Fanshaw 12-2-1665; Staarman, 'De VOC en de Staten Generaal'.

94 NA SG 12589.125 SKE, Van Gogh to the States General 29-12-1664 and 16-1-1665; ZA States of Zeeland, Minutes of the States of Zeeland 2.2/81, 23-5-1665; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, IV 426-427 and 439-440 Van Gogh to the States General 29-12-1664 and 6-2-1665; PRO SP 84/174 f209 and f226 Van Gogh to the States General 26-1-1665 and 2-2-1665.

95 BL Harley MS 1509 f24 21-1-1665; CSPD 175 30-1-1665; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Heathcote*, 174-175 Williamson to Sir Andrew Riccard 26-1-1665; PRO SP 84/174 f249 Van Gogh to the States General 13-2-1665.

Navy Board. Yet bills and requests for money continued to pour in. The governor of Tangiers for example urgently required some £28,000 to improve the city's fortifications.⁹⁶ To finance the war, maritime trade would have to be continued as much as possible. The London merchants were given an advisory role in the Navy Board and the Admiralty. Their task was to examine methods of increasing commerce. Yet this would prove to be very difficult. Already in Spring 1665 trade was disrupted to a large extent and could only be continued with naval precautions.⁹⁷

Persuading France

The outbreak of open hostilities between England and the Dutch Republic caused extra tension in international politics. For both parties, gaining French support would be essential in the already inevitable conflict. In November 1664 Charles sent Charles Berkeley Lord Fitzharding, a favourite courtier, to Paris to convince Louis to support the English. Hollis stated that 'it was a very good resolution taken by his Majesty to send my Lord Fitzharding, which will I hope facilitate our proceedings here.'⁹⁸ The States General dispatched Coenraad van Beuningen, an important Amsterdam regent and experienced diplomat, to Paris with similar intentions, to prove that England was the aggressor in the Anglo-Dutch conflict. Both sides translated, printed and published their diplomatic letters and reports in French in order to persuade the French.⁹⁹

Berkeley did not succeed in his mission, although Louis gave him an expensive jewel as token of his favour. This convinced the naive Berkeley that an alliance was just around the corner. Yet no political deals were struck. The French king clearly played divide and conquer and demonstrated to the Dutch that they would have to please him in order to receive his support. In this way he gained time while waiting for Philip IV of Spain to die, when the issue of the Spanish Succession would become relevant. He hoped to keep options open in order to anticipate any possible change. He therefore refused to choose a side in the growing Anglo-Dutch conflict and told Charles that he preferred to solve the dispute with diplomatic means. This

96 Tanner, *Correspondence*, 38 Pepys to William Coventry 3-3-1665; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, IV 400-404 Van Gogh to De Witt 28-11-1664 and 29-11-1664; PRO PC 2/57 f275-276 21-11-1664; PRO PC 2/58 f8 14-1-1665; PRO CO 279/4 9-3-1665.

97 PRO PC 6/1 f115 12-1-1665; PRO PC 2/58 f1 12-1-1665; PRO SP 105/113 f90 Levant Company to Captain Hilland Captain Hudson 25-2-1665.

98 PRO SP 78/119 f160 Hollis to Bennet 22-11-1664.

99 Franken, *Coenraad van Beuningen*; PRO SP 84/173 f199 Secret Resolution of the States General 3-12-1664; Brown, *Letters*, 334-336 D'Estrades to Louis 4-12-1664; NA SG 12587.169 SKF, Van Beuningen to the States General 12-12-1664; *Memorie du Seigneur Conrad de Beuningen, Envoyé des Estats Genraux des Provinces Unies des Pais Bas au Roy Tres-Chrestien. Presente le 1. De fevrier 1665. Relation de ce que l'on a appris jusques à present, du combat naval donne le 12, 13 & 14 de juin 1665, entre les flottes d'Angleterre et des Provinces Unies des Pais-Bas La Lettre de Messieurs les Estats Genraux des Provinces Unies des Pais Bas, au Roy de la Grande Bretagne, sur le rappel de leur ambassadeur 11 decembre 1665. Avec la response de sa Majesté aus dits Estats 16 decembre 1665.*

message was good enough for English politicians. Hollis stated that he was 'confident they [the French] will not openly engage for ye Dutch, and any other assistance a treaty will not prevent, no more then that with Spaine keeps them from assisting Portugall.'¹⁰⁰ Louis did not intend to confront Charles, because, he felt, this would drive the English into Spanish arms. Louis told D'Estrades that Charles had given him *carte blanche* in the Spanish Netherlands in exchange for neutrality. Obviously he could not simply accept this offer as it would cause the Dutch to side with the Spanish. An Anglo-Spanish agreement would be equally undesirable. Louis therefore decided to discuss the Anglo-Dutch conflict with Van Beuningen but not to agree on any matter. He was just trying to gain time. D'Estrades advised his king to take an even more drastic step by concluding a treaty with England. The French could then obtain the English territories in Acadia (Canada) in exchange for this agreement. In January 1665 Louis told D'Estrades that he would demand the strategic city of Maastricht as a reward for his aid to the Dutch.¹⁰¹

Both Hollis and Van Beuningen focussed their diplomatic efforts on convincing Louis and the French ministers that the other party had begun the conflict and had first undertaken aggressive steps. Charles tried to use Henrietta Anne telling her 'that Van Beuninghen does use all possible arts and tricks to make me appear the aggressor, but if you have read over the printed paper I sent you, you will clearly find the contrary and that 'tis the Dutch hath begun with us.'¹⁰² To strengthen his argument, Charles referred to the Dutch as 'those who used France so unworthily in the treaty at Münster.'¹⁰³

Van Beuningen told De Lionne that the States General would be happy to negotiate a peace agreement with England that would prevent the outbreak of war. His attempt to please Louis failed also. The French used the conflict the States General had with the Order of Knights of Malta as an excuse to refuse assistance. Louis even demanded that the States General would undertake not to conclude an alliance with Spain, warning that such an agreement would even provoke French hostilities. This clear threat made the Dutch feel betrayed by their allies and they worked even harder to prepare their fleet for the forthcoming battles with the English. The pos-

100 CSPV 61-64 Extract from letters from The Hague and London 4-12-1664; CSPV 64-65 Sagredo to the Doge 19-12-1664; NA SG 12587.169 SKF, Boreel to the States General 12-12-1664; PRO SP 78/119 f192 Hollis to Bennet 13-12-1664; Hartmann, *Charles Berkeley*, 126-147.

101 Brown, *Letters*, 344-346, 349-353 and 366, Louis to D'Estrades 19-12-1664 and 9-1-1665, D'Estrades to Louis 25-12-1664; NA SG 12587.170 SKF, Van Beuningen to the States General 23-1-1665; PRO SP 84/174 f28 Downing to Bennet 30-1-1665.

102 PRO SP 78/120 f1 Hollis to Bennet 14-1-1665; Bryant, *Letters*, 174-175 Charles to Henrietta Anne 15-1-1665; NA SG 12587.170 SKF, Van Beuningen to the States General 16-1-1665; *Vertoogh van den heer Coenraad van Beuningen, afgesante van de heren Staten der Geunieerde Provincien, aen Den Koningh van Vranckrijck gedaen den 1. Februari 1665*.

103 Bryant, *Letters*, 175-176 Charles to Henrietta Anne 22-1-1665. At the Conference of Münster of 1648 the States General had signed a separate peace treaty with Spain despite the Franco-Dutch alliance that stated that peace could only be concluded together. The French government often used this arguments to put pressure on the Dutch. Groenveld, 'Achtergronden en betekenis'.

sibility of France gaining possession of the Spanish Netherlands made the Dutch even more suspicious of French motives.¹⁰⁴

English politicians believed the French ambitions towards the Spanish Netherlands could be exploited. They put pressure on Madrid and demanded commercial advantages for English merchants. Sir Richard Fanshaw, the English ambassador in Spain, simulated anger and threatened to leave for England. Despite Fanshaw's theatrical approach Spanish ministers advised Philip IV to refuse giving in on the commercial issues.¹⁰⁵

Madrid believed the Anglo-Dutch war would be advantageous to Spain. The Spanish were still engaged in their war with Portugal. England would not be able to assist Portugal and the West Indian colonies would be safe from English attacks. Philip and his ministers hoped a treaty with the States General could be concluded as the French would probably not assist the Dutch Republic. The war would produce a potential ally that shared the interest to save the Spanish Netherlands. Rumours that Charles might sell Tangiers to France only caused these hopes to increase. For the moment Spain thought it wise to gain time. After Allin's attack on the Dutch Smyrna convoy of December 1664 the Spanish announced that they would remain strictly neutral in the Anglo-Dutch conflict.¹⁰⁶

The Nordic states were also players in the political game to be taken into account in case of an Anglo-Dutch war. Sir Gilbert Talbot had been sent to Denmark in the summer of 1664 to persuade the Danish to join England in its conflict with the Dutch Republic. Talbot proposed that if Copenhagen closed the Sound for Dutch shipping and ordered all subjects to return home, the English navy would protect Denmark from both the Dutch and the Swedes.¹⁰⁷ King Frederick III did not commit himself but, like many others, hoped to fish in troubled waters.

The Swedes seemed inclined to assist the English. In December 1664 they offered to rent thirty ships to the Navy Board. The Dutch acted to prevent an Anglo-Swedish pact; in March 1665 the WIC was ordered by the States General to pay Sweden 140,000 *rijksdaalders* as compensation for the disputed Dutch capture of the fort of Cabo Corso and the vessel *Christina*. All complaints regarding the African trade had been solved.¹⁰⁸ This measure effectively bought off the Swedes and made them remain neutral in the Anglo-Dutch war.

104 NA SG 6781 LF, Van Beuningen to the States General 16-1-1665; PRO SP 84/174 f92 Van Beuningen to the States General 6-2-1665; CSPV 79 and 82-83, Marin Zorzi, Venetian ambassador in Paris, to the Doge 11-2-1665 and Sagredo to the Doge 6-3-1665; Brown, *Letters*, 400-402 D'Estrades to Louis and De Lionne (two letters) 26-2-1665.

105 CSPV 53-55 and 60, Zorzi to the Doge 26-11-1664 and 10-12-1664.

106 NA SG 7059 LS, Hendrik van Reede van Renswoude to the States General 19-1-1665, Sasburch to the States General 22-2-1665; CSPV 77-78, Zorzi to the Doge 28-1-1665.

107 CSP Clar 440-441, Sir Gilbert Talbot to Clarendon 15-11-1664; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, IV 421, Van Gogh to De Witt 22-12-1664.

108 NA SG 3270 RSG, 31-12-1664; NA SG 12564.56 Lok.WIC.

The declaration of war

In November 1664 Morrice wrote to Winchelsea that 'a fire was likely to be kindled between us, it smoked then, hath been fuelled since, and is now ready to breake out and flame.' According to Clarendon 'they [the Dutch] have too insolently provoked the King to such an expense, that fighting is thought the better husbandry.'¹⁰⁹ This suggests that the English government, headed by Charles, took a rational and united decision to fight a war against the Dutch Republic. Each group within the English political nation which supported the decision to go to war had its own particular objectives in mind. Charles certainly had his own aims to increase his political power and ultimately his financial resources. And like him several (but not all) ministers, ambitious courtiers, naval officers and merchants expected war to advance their interests. Bennet told Winchelsea that 'in the last session of Parliament complaints were made to his Majesty of many of their [the Dutch] depredations and violences committed against his subjects both in and out Europe with a promise on the Parliaments side to stand by his Majesty with their lives and fortunes in the prosecution of justice.'¹¹⁰

The large majority of Parliament expressed its enthusiasm about war. The enormous amount of £2,5 million was granted to the king for this purpose. Sir Robert Paston, a Norfolk gentleman, was asked by Bennet and Clifford, the king's managers in Parliament, to speak in the Commons, promising him that the king would later reward him with the title of a baron. Paston had to wait until 1673 before he received his reward. Paston's appeal to the House had the effect that was desired. Charles pledged to use these funds for the war only and that he would not suddenly strike a deal with the States General.¹¹¹ His speech served to sooth any opposition that did not trust his motives.

Similar enthusiasm was displayed in numerous published tracts and pamphlets. Many authors used the same elements to stir up anti-Dutch sentiments in the public opinion. They pointed out how in 1623 the VOC had been treacherous at Amboyna and killed a number of English traders. In some publications illustrations about the execution and torture were used. John Crouch wrote 'while man has memory, may that hellish plott of cursed Amboyna never be forgott.' Another common theme was the military aid that was given to the young Dutch Republic in the days of the Revolt against Spain. The Dutch now proved to be very ungrateful to the English and the Prince of Orange. One author wrote that 'thus were the seven provinces delivered from the miserable cruelty of the Spanish, by the grace of God, and the three successive heroes of Nassau.'¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Finch*, 336-339 Morrice to Winchelsea 10-11-1664; Lister, *Life*, 346-348 Clarendon to Downing 8-11-1664.

¹¹⁰ PRO SP 84/173 f3 Bennet to Winchelsea 12-11-1664.

¹¹¹ Bryant, *Letters*, 170-172 Charles' speech in Parliament 4-12-1664; CSPD 89 and 197 4-12-1664 and 19-2-1665; BL ADD MS 36988 f88 Speech of Sir Robert Pastons, earl of Yarmouth, made in Parliament; Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 148-149; Barbour, *Henry Bennet*, 78-80; Hyde, *Life*, 231-233.

¹¹² *Bellum Belgicum Secundum, or a poem attempting someting on his Majesties proceedings against the*

The Dutch did not really try to influence English public opinion as William was to do, with effect, in 1672 and 1673. There were some accusations that they hoped to arm dissenters against Charles's government as well. Downing wrote that 'they have some att worke about penning bookes in English, which they intend to scatter through England, Scotland and Ireland, whereby to decrye his Majesties proceedings and his making warre against them who are of the same religion, without any manner or ground or pretence (...) and with these paper bullets they intend to kill ye all.'¹¹³ Yet his remarks were merely based on wild rumours.

The Dutch did not believe the English were only after compensation for sustained losses. Van Gogh commented that the English only tried to increase their trade and shipping.¹¹⁴ He correctly noted how mercantilism had created a clear link between politics and commerce. This was the main motive for English aggression

Public opinion in the Dutch Republic did not display the same eagerness to go to war. Many people feared that France would benefit from the conflict to invade the Spanish Netherlands. People in the eastern provinces felt that the Anglo-Dutch conflict was not of their concern. Yet when Münster began threatening the eastern territories these provinces sought support from the States General. The new fleet was source of much confidence. Many large and heavily armed men of war had been built. The Dutch Republic, many observers felt, should no longer accept English aggressive actions but should depend on the new navy.¹¹⁵

In January the States General issued the official declaration of war following Allin's attack on the Smyrna fleet. In March 1665 the declaration of war was finally published. Bennet used the heralds to spread the news throughout the City of London. Dutch authorities published the message as well.¹¹⁶ The campaigning season was approaching and the real war was ready to break out.

Dutch; Cliffe, An abreviate of Hollands deliverance by, and ingratitude to the crown of England and the House of Nassau; Crouch, Belgica Characteristica or the Dutch character, being news from Holland (London 1665); Darell, A true and compendious narration of sundry notorious or remarkable injuries, insolencies and acts of hostility which the Hollanders have exercised from time to time against the English nation in the East Indies; W.W., The English and Dutch affairs displayed to the life: both in matters of war, state and merchandize.

113 CSPD 426 1-1-1664; PRO SP 84/173 f33 Downing to Bennet 28-11-1664.

114 Scheurleer, Brieven, IV 374-377 and 387-388 Van Gogh to De Witt 24-10-1664 and 7-11-1664.

115 PRO SP 84/172 f155 Downing to Bennet 7-11-1664; PRO SP 84/174 f121 Downing to Bennet 27-2-1665.

116 NA SG 5907 I LE, 4-3-1665 and 16-3-1665; CSPD 236 Bennet to the Lord Major 13-3-1665.

