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

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CHAPTER 5

Lowestoft and Bergen: the first year of the War

Privateering and war

Defeating the Dutch fleet was the main method to achieve the taking over of the impressive Dutch share in world trade. Issuing Letters of Marque was also a very significant way to serve the same purpose. People believed that capturing the large Dutch commercial fleet would provide cheap shipping that would allow the English economy to flourish.¹

In the first months of 1665 the Navy Board was still preparing the fleet for the coming confrontations with the Dutch. Buying supplies, building and purchasing men of war and manning them were the highest priorities. The Navy Board employed just over one hundred men of war. The smaller and swifter vessels could be employed for hunting Dutch merchantmen until the naval battles would be fought. Naval squadrons patrolled the seas in order to gain prizes. By allowing privateers to operate government would have to invest less in expensive men of war to inflict commercial damage. Privateers would hunt down merchantmen on busy routes. The regime would still reap part of the profits, though, as a standard percentage of all captures would be the king's share. Issuing letters of marque was therefore a very cheap way of inflicting considerable harm on the enemy's maritime commerce.

Merchantmen captured by naval vessels could be used as the Navy Board thought fit. Often the cargo and the ship were sold off to private merchants who used them for transporting purposes. In other cases the prizes could serve different purposes. The *Jonge Prins* was exploited as a fireship against the Dutch fleet. The *Adam en Eva* was employed as a transport vessel carrying timber and naval supplies. The *Huis te Swieten* housed Dutch prisoners of war. The *Oranjeboom* was presented as a token of affection to Henrietta Maria, the king's mother. Clifford received the *Patriarch Isaac* as a reward for his services. The sale yielding him £370. To provide the fleet with affordable supplies, James ordered that all useful provi-

¹ Prizes taken during the First Anglo-Dutch War had provided cheap vessels for English maritime trade. It was expected that similar results would be achieved. Davis, *English merchant shipping*, 13-14.

sions from condemned prize ships had to be sold to the Navy Board at normal peacetime level prices.²

As we have seen, already in 1664 English authorities had already begun to give out licenses. Many Dutch merchantmen were captured and brought up by privateers and naval vessels. In the period before war had been declared, many Dutch owners felt that the taking of their vessel had been illegal. They wrote many complaints to the High Court of the Admiralty and to the Privy Council. The States General received written protests as well.³ The Privy Council was not the correct institution for cases like these however, and sent them to the High Court as well. The judges would then look into the matter and determine whether the capture had been legal. In May 1665 the Commission for Prizes warned the High Court that too many prizes were being released, that its judgement had been too lenient and that the law should be interpreted more strictly. This would, the commission argued, encourage privateering. To prevent practical misunderstandings and fraud a new list of contraband goods was issued. This was meant to make clear which vessels were legal prizes and which were not.⁴

According to prize law, ships and cargo would be condemned and confiscated if either the vessel or the goods belonged to Dutch owners, even if one or the other were neutral or English. Some new directions for appeal procedures were issued as well. But in cases of violent resistance there could be no protest and the prize would be condemned in all cases, even though war had not yet been declared. The same would happen when the defendants committed fraud.⁵ In addition, privateers were ordered to secure the cargo, the ship's papers and a number of prisoners. The reports of their interrogations were required to provide in court proof of the nationality of the owners of the vessel and the merchandise. The ship's papers would usually be the most important evidence in these cases and counted heavier than interrogations. To make sure that privateers would not violate these instructions the masters and owners had to be registered and had to pay sureties. Altogether £4,000 had to be paid to ensure that the king's ten percent share was paid and no fraud or piracy would be committed.⁶

According to Samuel Pepys, Charles only received of £20,000 from prizes in 1665.⁷ This rather disappointing figure suggests that the expenses of the High Court and

2 CSPD 402 11-6-1665; CSPD 452 July 1665; CSPD 520-521 Coventry to Arlington 27-8-1665; CSPD 20 Albemarle to Pepys 29-10-1665; CSPD 108 Pett to Pepys 29-12-1665; Pepys' White Book 359; PRO PC 6/1 f157 9-12-1665.

3 Scheurleer, *Brieven*, IV 436-438 Van Gogh to De Witt 30-1-1665; PRO PC 2/58 f214 23-7-1665.

4 CSPD 369 Commission for Prizes to the High Court of the Admiralty May 1665; BL Hargrave MS 431 f122 27-5-1665.

5 Roscoe, *History of the prize court*, 36-37; Marsden, 'Early prize jurisdiction', 44-45.

6 PRO PC 6/1 f105-106 'Commission to his royal highness the Duke of York Lord High Admiral of England touching the granting Letters of Marque and Reprizal'.

7 Roscoe, *History*, 35.

the Navy Board were much higher than had been anticipated before the war. Though the initial numbers of captures were impressive, William Coventry, who was knighted in July, was proved right when he argued that the prizes taken would not be sufficient at all to finance the war. Corruption and embezzlement in the out-ports contributed significantly to these low results. Local officials stole stored cargoes and vessels were sold to friends or family members at very low prices.⁸ After the surprise effect of the campaign against Dutch shipping had worn off, numbers of prizes dropped because merchants were now aware of the risk they ran and they prepared to avoid capture at all cost. Nevertheless Dutch maritime trade slumbered as a result of privateering. In 1665 the Baltic trade declined by 74 percent. The value of VOC stocks dropped to 322 after the Battle of Lowestoft. The total revenue of the convoy and licence duties were only 62 percent of the amount raised in 1664.⁹ Many vessels stayed in French harbours because there were no naval ships to protect their journey home. Yet despite the lurking danger many merchants set out merchantmen to continue their business. Benefiting from the coastal waters that were too shallow for the English navy they hoped to make a profit. Most colonial trades were undisturbed, despite attempts to intercept returning fleets. Consequently the Dutch Republic had much higher revenues than England.¹⁰ Disrupting Dutch commerce remained an important part of English strategy though. Hopes of capturing a precious homebound fleet, above all the returning VOC vessels, were still very much alive.

Like their English counterparts, the Dutch were very eager to invest in privateering. Initially the States General refused to give out commissions. They could not afford to cause a *casus belli* that would provide Louis with an opportunity to refuse his assistance in the war. Still government was quite supportive towards this economic warfare as long as there were enough mariners to man the fleet. Letters of marque were finally given out after sufficient sailors had been contracted for the navy. Often privateers were obliged to provide the same number of men to the admiralities that they employed on their own vessels. In the height of the campaigning season a complete ban on all private warfare could be imposed.¹¹ The Dutch strategy for the fleet did not involve hunting English commercial ships, but any encountered would be taken as officers and seamen could not be expected to ignore opportunities for prize money. One major success was achieved when in May nine English merchant ships which had sailed from Hamburg were taken. The damage to English owners, according to Pepys, amounted to some £200,000.¹²

8 BL Hargrave MS 431 f119 10-4-1665; BL ADD MS 4182 f21 6-7-1665.

9 Israel, *Nederland als centrum van de wereldhandel*, 219; Becht, *Statistische gegevens*.

10 CSPV 106-108 Letter from The Hague 16-4-1665; NA SG 6781 LF, Boreel to the States General 1-5-1665; CSPD 350 Coventry to Arlington 15-5-1665; Rommelse, 'English privateering', 23.

11 ZA States of Zeeland, Minutes of the States of Zeeland 2.2/81, 2-6-1665, 8-7-1665 and 9-7-1665.

12 PRO SP 84/176 f50 Downing to Arlington 5-6-1665; CSPD 389 Coventry to Pepys 7-6-1665; Warnsinck, *Van vlootvoogden en zeelagen*, 297.

Dozens of Dutch privateers, mainly from the provinces of Zeeland and Holland, operated round the British Isles and on the Atlantic. Waiting off the Irish West Coast they hoped to intercept rich cargoes of vessels returning from the West Indies and North America. Dozens of these Virginia ships were captured, inflicting considerable damage to English commerce. The English African trade suffered from the war as well. De Ruyter's mission had been carried out thoroughly. The private war effort endangered the setting out of naval vessels as many masts were imported from New England. Some of these vessels were caught on their way to England. Yet many of the captured prizes carried European goods too. Colliers from Newcastle and merchantmen carrying wine, brandy, salt and timber were brought up as well. Benefiting from French and Spanish harbours to sell their captures the Dutch could also use the Atlantic as hunting ground. Local Dutch consuls operated as prize officers. French and Spanish authorities sympathised with the Dutch and turned a blind eye on these practices.¹³

The results of Dutch privateering and the naval effort were to cause many complaints in England. Prices of fuel and food rose in the City of London causing unrest among the citizens. Even the mail boat between Dover and Calais was intercepted by an eager Dutch privateer. In the Republic, Downing admitted to Bennet, now Baron of Arlington, that 'the gazets of this country are every weeke stuf with news of prizes taken by their capers, and I am informed by severall English merchants of consideration that they have really of late done a greate deale of hurt, especially in the mouth of ye Channell and to such as come from ye plantations.'¹⁴ According to Bruijn some 400 English vessels were taken and condemned during the war. In 1665 alone one third of this number was captured.¹⁵

Engaging in large-scale naval battles was unmistakably the strategic aim from both the English and the Dutch point of view. England and the Dutch Republic had invested in enormous fleets and maritime dominance was at stake. Harming commerce was an important yet secondary purpose.

The Battle of Lowestoft

In April 1665 James received his instructions as Lord High Admiral and commander of the English navy. He was ordered to 'assert our right and dominion in the narrow seas, and the rights of our subjects against the violences, usurpations

13 Binder, F., 'Die Zeeländische Kaperfahrt', 72-75; Bruijn, 'Kaaapvaart', 420-422; Bodl Carte MS 75 f256 Joseph Ash to Sir John Wolstenholme 25-9-1665; PRO SP 84/177 f57 Downing to Arlington 15-8-1665; Sainsbury, *Calendar*, 155 EIC to Captain Wyld 26-8-1665; CSPD 331 Richard Booth to the Navy Commissioners 5-5-1665. Ibidem 573 John Bence to Williamson 6-10-1665; BL ADD MS 4182 f7 and f11b 2-4-1665 and 2-5-1665.

14 PRO SP 84/177 f11 Downing to Arlington 21-7-1665; PRO SP 84/177 f151 Van Gogh to the States General 3-8-1665; NA SG 6781 LF, Boreel to the States General 10-7-1665; NA SG 12589.125 SKE, Van Gogh to the States General 1-5-1665.

15 Bruijn, 'Kaaapvaart', 422.



Cornelis Tromp (Netherlands Institute of Military History, The Hague).

and depredations of the Estates Grace.' Building up the fleet for the first big clash with the Dutch had the highest priority. It became a matter of personal responsibility and pride to Charles, James and the pro-war factions to set out the strongest and largest fleet possible so as to win an early and decisive victory. This could result in a short and therefore relatively inexpensive war, and eclipse the achievement of the Commonwealth Navy during the First Anglo-Dutch War. Charles and James increasingly identified themselves with the navy. They both visited and inspected the docks, wharves and ships and took great interest in all developments.

In these times of frantic preparation the City of London wanted to express its patriotism and loyalty to the king. The Lord Mayor and the aldermen agreed to finance the building of the *Loyal London*. The *London* had exploded and replacing it was the ideal opportunity to show the City's allegiance to the Restoration regime.¹⁶ The City government was very much dominated by the mercantilists who had supported the war. Parliament had already shown its support by voting generous revenue.

Like in the Dutch Republic, manning the fleet was problematic. Many men would rather seek employment on commercial ships or privateers. Wages were higher and personal risks were considerably lower. Using the press-gang authorities hoped to find sufficient numbers for the upcoming battle. Some men were taken directly off the merchantmen they were employed on. Others were drafted involuntarily as well and were completely unfit for service. They were over fifty years old or had never sailed before. Crews of fishing busses and coal carrying vessels were exempted from naval employment.¹⁷ This provided extra difficulties for the Navy Board that was preparing for the first large scale confrontation. Despite these problems the Board managed to equip over 100 men of war. The English fleet at the Battle of Lowestoft consisted of exactly 100 ships.¹⁸

In the Dutch Republic manning the unprecedentedly large fleet created potentially serious financial problems because the costs involved would be greatly increased by the decision of the States General in March to raise wages from 9 or 10 to 12 guilders a month, and then in April to between 16 and 18 guilders. Salaries varied per admiralty depending on demand and supply of labour. De Witt allowed for small pay rises to be paid but believed that the state should not be at the mercy of greedy sailors. Whereas in England the press-gang was used the Dutch relied on volunteers, but men had not come forward in sufficient numbers, despite the ban on outward mercantile sailings and suspension of letters of marque that left many seamen unemployed. Wounded sailors, widows and orphans were promised to receive rather generous compensations (a man losing both eyes for example, was worth some 800 guilders). The Dutch admiralities had always been known for their immediate payment of wages. This reliable image combined with the taken measures meant that many men signed up for service. De Witt disliked having to make concessions to seamen who, apart from being near the foot of the social scale, also included many foreigners. However he identified himself with the navy, realising that the survival of the Dutch Republic depended on it. He took on responsibility for co-ordinating the combined efforts of all five admiralities. Downing commented that 'never men tooke more pains than he hath done

16 PRO SP 84/175 f47 Instructions for James 1-4-1665; BL ADD MS f3 27-2-1665; CSPD 257 Van Gogh to the States General 27-3-1665; CLRO Rep 70 f109 20-5-1665.

17 NA SG 5905 LE, Van Gogh to the States General 28-10-1664; CSPD 240 Thomas Middleton to Pepys 16-3-1665; PRO PC 6/1 f142 8-5-1665; PRO PC 2/58 f160 10-6-1665.

18 Fox, *A distant storm*, 360.

about this fleete, as looking upon his all to be at stake therein, and he has infinitely animated all their seamen, telling them how the glory and honour of their nation (...) was at stake.¹⁹

The Dutch had learned from their defeat in the First Anglo-Dutch War and De Witt was determined to focus on large-scale naval confrontations. The main fleet should not be tied to providing escort protection for merchantmen and he gave low priority to naval attacks on English commerce.²⁰ The fleet had been strengthened significantly during the 1650s and 1660s and the construction programmes paid off. The admiralties managed to set out over one hundred men of war. Many of these ships were large and carried numerous heavy guns. They were meant to fight large-scale and setpiece battles. Dutch politicians and admiralty officials now understood that this was the only way to engage the English navy. The admiralties no longer hired converted merchantmen. Apart from the VOC vessels, the fleet had only purpose-built men of war. De Witt knew that a strong fleet was an essential tool in shaping and influencing Dutch foreign politics. He had persuaded many of his fellow regents that a large investment was necessary. Facilities, stores and warehouses had been built as well. In early 1665 the Dutch had gathered a huge fleet and were busy setting out even more ships. At the Battle of Lowestoft over 103 men of war were employed.²¹ De Witt was determined to engage the English in battle. Yet the army, now challenged by Münster's troops, had been largely neglected. The States General had been unable and unwilling to invest in both and so the army was in no state to confront any opponent. This problem continued to plague the Dutch Republic; it could not maintain both a powerful navy and army simultaneously. Despite this difficulty the provinces of Gelderland and Overijssel asked the States General for military reinforcements

Using propaganda and benefiting from patriotic pride, as De Witt did, was an important aspect of the Second Anglo-Dutch War and part of the war effort. It prepared a nation for the upcoming naval battles. In April 1665 all Dutch printers and publishers were prohibited from working for Downing, who was suspected of attempting to undermine the war effort. English authorities believed the Dutch had similar intentions in England by supporting and arming dissidents against the Restoration regime. In July Nicholas Oudart, Downing's secretary, was arrested on charges of espionage and thrown into prison. In retaliation Pieter Cuneaus, secretary to Van Gogh, was locked up in the Tower. Morrice proposed to exchange both gentlemen. For half a year after the declaration of war diplomatic contacts had been left intact, yet this incident was the straw that broke the camel's back. In

19 PRO SP 84/175 f12 and f98 Downing to Arlington 17-3-1665 and 24-4-1665; ZA States of Zeeland, Minutes of the States of Zeeland 2.2/81, 2-1-1665; Scheffer, *Roemruchte jaren*, 24-25; Oudendijk, *Johan de Witt*, 96-97; Bruijn, *Varend Verleden*, 163-165.

20 Bruijn, *Varend Verleden*, 112.

21 Scheffer, *Roemruchte jaren*, 18-19; Fox, *A distant storm*, 365-367; Prud'homme van Reine, *Schittering en schandaal*, 240.

September Downing returned to England and Van Gogh was told to leave as well.²²

Bennet and Williamson in Whitehall used printed tracts to affect the public opinion, as did Hollis at the Paris embassy to convince neutral states. Van Beuningen and Boreel had adopted the same methods. Dutch authorities used propaganda, printed in the Dutch Republic, to stir up anti-English sentiments among the own population. Stories about English cruelty in Africa were told to the people: 'it speaks of frying Dutchmen by the fire and cutting off the noses and eares of others, and strange stories of this kind.' These news items were published and 'shall not only be read on board every ship but posted up therein by the men, to embitter the seamen against the English.'²³ English authors used the Amboyna Massacre of 1623 for the same purposes. All ancient feelings of mutual distrust were exploited in preparation of the first naval battle. Yet despite Downing's anxiety about Dutch attempts to stir up English rebels, no significant numbers of tracts were sent across the North Sea.

On the thirteenth of June 1665 the Battle of Lowestoft was fought. The Dutch suffered from considerable disadvantages, despite the confidence with which De Witt sent out the fleet. Jacob van Wassenaer Obdam, one of the few nobles who supported him, had been given the supreme command in 1653 for political rather than naval reasons, though he was by origin an army officer. He succeeded Maarten Tromp who had been killed in battle, and there was no suitable candidate available. None of the serving naval officers was acceptable as supreme commander. Wassenaer Obdam failed to unite the corps of officers who all served different admiralities and were jealous of each other. The chaotic organisation of the fleet, with seven squadrons each under its own commander, increased the difficulties. He failed crucially to convene a council of war to work out an agreed a coherent set of tactics. He did not set out a clear strategy. Consequently commanding officers tended to interpret the changing situations for themselves and there was little co-operation or co-ordination between different squadrons, particularly when the battle began to turn against the Dutch. Unlike their English opponents the Dutch had no standardised fighting approach. Wassenaer Obdam's orders provided the second main reason for his defeat; he was to seek battle at all costs which meant close-combat, the method which suited most Dutch captains who favoured one-to-one duels and boarding. The old squadrons, organised per admiralty, operated much

22 NA SG 5907 I LE, Downing to the States General 24-7-1665 and 20-8-1665, Morrice to Van Gogh 16-8-1665; NA SG 12589.125 SKE, Van Gogh to the States General 25-9-1665; PRO SP 84/178 f1 Downing to Arlington 12-9-1665; CSPD 484 1-8-1665; PRO SP 84/177 f22 Downing to Arlington 24-7-1665.

23 Colenbrander (ed.), *Bescheiden*, 181-183, 165-166 and 166-167 Downing to Arlington 26-5-1665, 24-4-1665 and 28-4-1665; Downing probably meant *Waerachtigh verhael vande growwelicke en barbarische moorderije, begaen door de Engelschen in Guinea aen onse Nederlandsche Natie, als tot Cabo Cors, Tacoqrari, Adia en Annemabo* (Middelburg 1665) Published on behalf of the States General, Knuttel, *Catalogus*, 9048; PRO SP 84/175 f109 Downing to Arlington 28-4-1665; PRO SP 78/120 f148 Hollis to Arlington 16-5-1665; CSPD 271 Christopher Sanderson to Arlington April 1665; CSPD 348 Charles to all Lord Lieutenants 14-5-1665.

like hunting packs seeking a one to one confrontation against an enemy vessel. The captains then gave their opponents a few rounds with their guns before attempting to board the ship. The crew had to finish the task in a bloody man-to-man situation. Conquering the other ship was the aim of this strategy. This resulted in large number of duels in which all co-ordination seemed to be lacking. This style of fighting had brought disaster in the First Anglo-Dutch War. In the Battle of Lowestoft Dutch firepower was still some twenty percent less than the English, and a small number of ships were converted merchantmen provided by the VOC. Thirdly the fact that the lack of a tactical plan, and differences in the sailing qualities of the ships set out by the different admiralties, meant that Wassenaer was unable to take advantage of a favourable wind at the very beginning of the action. He hesitated, then the wind turned giving James the initiative.

James had organised his fleet very well. He had the full support and loyalty of his officer corps and involved them in military councils. Unlike the Dutch, the English had a clear order of seniority among the officers. Despite all problems, the ships were all well manned and provisioned. Moreover, he knew about Wassenaer Obdam's orders to attack. He used this knowledge to the full, positioning the fleet at Sole Bay. The conditions were all present for an English victory.

The battle began early in the morning with gunnery duels. In the afternoon the Dutch flagship *Eendracht* exploded killing Wassenaer Obdam and his whole crew. Ironically the disaster was caused by a human error. F.L. Fox has argued persuasively that somebody must have accidentally lit the powder while carrying a new supply from below to the gun decks. The powder chambers were far below the waterline and could almost certainly not have been hit by enemy gunfire.

The explosion caused mayhem among the already dispersed Dutch fleet. No officer was able to take over effective or nominal command over the entire fleet. The various squadrons were separated from each other. Many of the captains fled, leaving Cornelis Tromp to organise the rearguard. He was one of the few officers who kept his squadron organised. The English chased the fleeing Dutch hoping to inflict yet more damage. The pursuit was given up during the night. Henry Brouncker, one of the volunteers, ordered the captain of James's flagship to stop the chase. He claimed that his orders came directly from James. It soon became clear that Brouncker had taken action on his own account. Some historians claim that James's wife had urged him to protect the Duke of York. His actions provided the crippled Dutch fleet with the opportunity to reach safety in domestic waters. Altogether seventeen ships were lost and between 5,000 and 6,000 men were killed or taken prisoner. James lost only one ship. Yet Charles mourned the death of his friend Charles Berkeley, who had been created Earl of Falmouth in March.²⁴

²⁴ Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 155-159; Fox, *A distant storm*, 94-126; Bruijn, 'Cornelis Tromp', 183; Rodger, *Command of the ocean*, 68-69; Milo, *Wassenaers en de zeemacht*, 33; Hyde, *Life*, 270; Bruijn, *Varend Verleden*, 106; Prud'homme van Reine, *Schittering en schandaal*, 239-244; CSPD 407-408 William Coventry's account of the Battle of Lowestoft 14-6-1665.

From a Dutch point of view the battle had been disastrous. The fleet had received all technical care required, but lack of discipline and strategy meant that it had not been prepared for its task. Its approach and organisation proved obsolete. Many ships had been lost and many sailors had been killed or taken prisoner. The supreme commander had been blown up and many officers had displayed cowardice and total lack of discipline. Drastic action on all fronts had to be taken to remedy matters. First of all, the States General issued publications denying the sustained losses to improve public morale and to prevent foreign governments reaching an early conclusion that the Dutch had irretrievably lost the war. Promising the people that the popular De Ruyter would take over command when he returned, expectations rose dramatically. De Witt understood that only a demonstration of his energetic leadership could enable the Republic to survive. He organised courts martial against a number of flag officers. He believed this was the way to restore discipline and trust in the fleet.²⁵

De Witt understood that drastic measures would have to be taken to reorganise the fleet. Appointing another army officer like Wassenaer Obdam would be out of the question. Fortunately a number of prominent naval officers were available. Cornelis Tromp was appointed temporary commander. De Ruyter, in whom De Witt placed great trust, would be the new commander though. Tromp publicly supported the interest of William III and was not a reliable and responsible character.

Using converted merchantmen had proved to be completely ineffective. Even the largest VOC vessels were inadequate, despite being heavily armed, against English ships of the line that had been state of the art since the 1640s. They were simply too small and not built to withstand continuous heavy enemy fire. No more merchantmen would therefore be hired and employed. Only purpose-built naval vessels would be up to the task. The VOC promised to pay 1.2 million guilders in contribution to the war effort instead. Fortunately for the Republic a number of newly constructed ships of the line became available to replace some of the sustained losses. As a result of De Witt's energetic approach to the serious situation, confidence rose again. The VOC stock had plunged to 322% after the results of the Battle of Lowestoft became public, but the setting out of new men of war, De Witt's zeal and De Ruyter's appointment caused people to put faith in the outcome of the conflict. Stocks rose again to 348%.²⁶

France and the outbreak of the war

As we have seen, during the months prior to the declaration of war many ships had been arrested and detained by the English. Most of these vessels were Dutch but many of other nationalities were also captured. Boreel, the Dutch ambassador in

25 PRO SP 84/176 f71 Downing to Arlington 23-6-1665; Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 159; Oudendijk, *De Witt en de vloot*, 107-108.

26 Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 768-769; ZA States of Zeeland, Minutes of the States of Zeeland 2.2/81, 4-7-1665 and 21-9-1665.

Paris, stated that the taking of so many merchantmen caused French trade to slumber and many of the vessels that were captured were French. French products were no longer transported but remained in warehouses in French ports. English traders were not able to suddenly fill this gap. This harmed interests of both merchants and the French government. The French had never counted on this as no warning had been given. Hollis stated that it made many French support or sympathise with the Dutch. Ambassador Count De Cominges in London demanded restitution of all French property that had been transported with confiscated Dutch ships. Most French merchants and ship owners hoped that Louis would be able to prevent or stop the coming war as it affected their interests.²⁷

Van Beuningen and Hollis still tried to persuade Louis and his ministers to support their opposing causes. Cases of captured ships complicated diplomacy. An English privateer had taken a Dutch merchantman just off the French coast near Boulogne. A Dutch private man of war had brought up an English vessel in French territorial waters as well. Paris tried to protect its neutrality by prohibiting privateering by foreigners in these coastal waters.²⁸ Hollis was worried about the Dutch lobby and warned Arlington that 'the French Court is much Dutchified, and it is not almost imaginable what a change hath bene generally within this fortnight.'²⁹ His impression was not correct since the French distanced themselves from the Dutch war effort in order to avoid direct involvement. They used the case of two French East India vessels to pressure the States General and to simulate official anger. The *St Jean Baptiste* and the *Alette Marie* had been built in the Republic and had been bought by the recently founded French East India Company. The States General decided to detain both vessels before they would be delivered in order to strengthen the Dutch fleet for the coming naval confrontation. They thought that paying full compensation would be enough to settle the dispute.

To Louis and Colbert this was completely unacceptable. They believed that the seizures were intended to hinder French competition in Asia. Yet from the Dutch point of view the new competitor on the Asian markets should be dealt with in its infancy. The VOC directors were obviously unwilling to accept competition at this stage. In April 1665 the king decided to take measures against the Dutch and arrested all Dutch ships in French ports. Obviously the issue also served Louis as an argument to refrain from aiding the Dutch against England. This meant that in the end the States General had to give in and return both vessels.³⁰

Commercial matters continued to complicate Franco-Dutch relations. French taxes on imports and exports, introduced in the previous year, remained high and

27 NA SG 6781 LF, Boreel to the States General 9-1-1665 and 16-1-1665; PRO PRO 30/24/38/22 f45-47 De Cominges to Charles 5-4-1665; PRO SP 78/120 f189 Hollis to Arlington 10-6-1665.

28 NA SG 6781 LF, Boreel to the States General 27-3-1665.

29 PRO SP 78/120 f41 Hollis to Arlington 18-2-1665.

30 NA SG 12587.170 SKF, Van Beuningen to the States General 3-4-1665; PRO SP 84/175 f68 Downing to Arlington 9-4-1665; PRO SP 84/176 f99 Van Beuningen to the States General 1-5-1665; Grever, 'Dutch assemblies', 113-134.

controversial, despite the States General trying to negotiate the reduction or abolition of the duties. Forty livres had to be paid per Leiden cloth. One hundred pounds of refined sugar was taxed with fifteen livres. The Dutch were not the only victims of Colbert's policies though. English merchants encountered more difficulties as well. It seemed to Hollis as if the French were trying to drive the English traders out of La Rochelle by continuously raising the tariffs. Boreel was convinced that the French attempted to fish in troubled waters by extending their trade during the Anglo-Dutch war. 'Harsh and unusual measures against strangers, and (...) great encouragement' would cause the French economy to grow at the expense of others.³¹

In April 1665 Louis sent a diplomatic delegation to London in order to mediate between England and the Dutch Republic. This gained him time as he was officially taking action to end the conflict and during this embassy he could not get actively involved in the war as this would violate the neutrality of the mission. The Duke de Verneuil, the king's uncle, Honoré Courtin and De Cominges were chosen to represent Louis. The Duke was an elderly and widely respected noble who gave weight to the delegation. The other two diplomats were both experienced and skilled negotiators who would do most of the work. Their mission was a difficult one: working towards a peace treaty between England and the Republic when most English politicians and citizens were screaming for war. In April they wrote to Louis that 'beaucoup de gens demandaient à Douvres, à Cantorbéry, à Rochester, aux personnes de notre suite pourquoi nous allions à Londres, et sur ce qu'on leur répondait que c'était pour y traiter la paix entre l'Angleterre et la Hollande, ils disaient assez naturellement, que si nous ne venions que pour cela, nous n'avions qu'à nous en retourner.'³²

This view was probably correct since Arlington, the Secretary of State, and other influential politicians opposed their mission. They did not desire to negotiate a treaty before the first naval battle had been won. This would enable the English to conclude a treaty on their own terms. The Dutch would be forced to give in to most of their demands. Arlington and his friends therefore decided to sabotage the 'célèbre ambassade'. The English victory at Lowestoft had been impressive and crushing. Louis officially congratulated Hollis and suggested that England would now be able to force a favourable peace treaty upon the Republic.³³ Obviously this would suit himself very much and so he invited the English to open negotiations with the States General.

31 PRO SP 84/175 f57 Downing to Arlington 4-4-1665; PRO SP 78/120 f163 Hollis to Arlington 30-5-1665; NA SG 12587.170 SKF, Boreel to the States General 5-6-1665; Israel, *Nederland als centrum van de wereldhandel*, 288-290.

32 Jusserand, *De Cominges*, 138 and 234 The delegation to Louis 20-4-1665.

33 CSPV 147-148 Sagredo to the Doge 3-7-1665; Barbour, *Bennet*, 83-85.



Charles II departing from Scheveningen Beach, painted by Johannes Lingelbach (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam).

The attack on the homebound VOC fleet at Bergen

In June, just before the Battle of Lowestoft had taken place, Downing reported to Arlington that a unique prize would soon be approaching. The Dutch expected the homebound VOC fleet and a number of richly laden Smyrna ships to return in a few weeks time. The English fleet would be able to intercept the whole convoy and capture a prize that would finance the whole war. It would inflict great commercial damage to the VOC, undermine public morale and the confidence of the States General. Downing stated that the Dutch, according to his informers, would take the northern route round Scotland. He suggested that naval vessels would patrol these waters in order to gain more detailed information. Intercepting De Ruyter on his homebound voyage would also be possible. After the obtained victory at Lowestoft this scenario convinced the English government to send the fleet commanded by the Earl of Sandwich. They knew the Dutch fleet would not yet be ready to confront them again and so they could easily take the risk.³⁴ The navy would patrol the North Sea waiting for the Dutch convoy attempting to cut off its way home.

For the realisation of this plan the co-operation of Denmark was required. The VOC convoy would almost certainly seek temporary refuge in a Norwegian port. Charles hoped to tempt Frederick III with a share of the prize. The Nordic monarch always faced financial difficulties and had borrowed huge sums off the Dutch. This construction could liberate him from these debts once and for all. Danish rivalry with the WIC in Africa only added to Frederick's dislike of the Dutch Republic.

³⁴ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden*, 210 and 221 Downing to Arlington 9-6-1665 and 28-6-1665 ; Boxer, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 29.

Charles promised to protect Denmark against any Dutch attempts to avenge the event. In exchange Frederick would close the Sound for all Dutch shipping, cutting the Dutch off from the naval supplies they required to set out their fleet.

In 1664 Charles had sent Henry Coventry to Stockholm to conclude an offensive alliance against the Republic with the Swedes as well. At the same time Sir Gilbert Talbot had been dispatched to Copenhagen with similar instructions. Coventry succeeded in concluding a defensive agreement and England officially guaranteed the Danish-Swedish peace of 1660. This disappointed Frederick because Denmark had lost three provinces to Sweden and obviously he hoped to take them back in the future. Pressure from De Witt and Louis prevented Denmark immediately agreeing to sign an English alliance. Instead Frederick chose to gain time and to wait for the outcome of the first naval confrontation. But the outcome of the Battle of Lowestoft convinced him that the attack on the homebound VOC fleet was well worth the risk.³⁵

To the English the ideal scenario would be to intercept De Ruyter and the VOC convoy before they would reach a Norwegian shelter. It was very difficult however, to predict the exact route the enemy would be taking. James wrote to Sir William Penn warning him that 'De Ruyter being upon his way from the Newfoundland, and therefore may be soe speedily expected home as that the neglect of a few houres may loose the opportunity of a very important service either upon De Ruyter or the Dutch East India fleet, which are also suddenly expected.'³⁶

The States General had decided to send scout vessels to warn returning merchantmen. On the fifth of August they met and the order was passed to sail on to the port of Bergen in Norway. Claus von Ahlefeldt, the governor of the city, welcomed the VOC fleet that was commanded by commander Pieter de Bitter. Another fifty Dutch vessels were already present in Bergen when Sandwich closed off the harbour. De Bitter immediately organised his defensive line. The largest merchantmen were armed with extra guns from other ships and created a crescent. Meanwhile Clifford, present as representative of Arlington, opened negotiations with Ahlefeldt and tried to convince him of that Anglo-Danish agreement had indeed been signed. The governor had received orders from Frederick to capture the Dutch ships but he had not been told to co-operate with the English fleet. De Bitter used the confusion to send his men into the surrounding Bergen forts. They took over the gun batteries and turned them towards the entrance of the bay. On the thirteenth of August Teddiman was sent in with a number of men of war. The English had little provisions and could not afford to delay the action any longer. They suffered heavy casualties however when the Dutch defenders and the Danish forts fired their guns, and were forced to retreat. Clifford opened negotiations once

35 Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 160-161; Schoolcraft, 'England and Denmark', 458-472; Lister, *Life*, 364-367 Clarendon to Henry Coventry 3-4-1665.

36 Colenbrander, *Bescheiden*, 250; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Portland*, 102-103 James to Sir William Penn 12-7-1665.

again and asked for Danish co-operation. Yet Frederick's orders to Ahlefeldt did not mention active participation. Clifford failed to persuade the governor and the whole operation was abandoned.³⁷

Meanwhile, on the sixth of August De Ruyter had arrived in Delfzijl with his squadron and his prizes. After recapturing Holmes's conquests he had crossed the Atlantic. He attacked Barbados and proceeded to Montserrat, then after attacking the Newfoundland fishery he finally returned. He had taken a number of rich prizes and received a hero's welcome. Downing commented that 'De Ruyter's arrivall hath huffed them up beyond the skies.'³⁸ He was immediately asked to command the fleet that sailed to Bergen to escort the merchantmen. On the eleventh he was appointed Lieutenant Admiral of the Rotterdam Admiralty and supreme commander of the Dutch fleet. This Admiralty was the oldest of all five and its Lieutenant Admiral was officially the highest officer in the fleet. The function of Admiral-General had been left vacant after Prince William II died in 1650. De Ruyter immediately left for the Norwegian Coast.

On the thirteenth of September Sandwich managed to capture two VOC vessels, the *Vergulde Fenix* and the *Slot Honingen*. Misfortune struck the convoy when a storm dispersed the Dutch and these two ran into the English fleet. On the nineteenth eight merchantmen and four men of war, the *Zevenwolden*, the *Westvriesland*, the *Groningen* and the *Hoop* were taken as well. This spectacular success compensated for the failure of August. The two VOC vessels were very rich prizes. The English estimated their prize at some £500,000. This might have been an exaggerated figure: the VOC officials in Batavia had only invested some 680,000 guilders in the two vessels together. Sandwich was being given a hero's welcome when he returned to England.³⁹ The remaining ships, including those belonging to the VOC, returned safely in the Netherlands. They had been protected by the Dutch fleet and the storm had prevented any further confrontations with the English.

The VOC prizes caused optimism and greed in England. Coventry suggested that the cargo should be stored safely in order to prevent theft, embezzlement and decay, ensuring higher prices for the goods. Charles hoped the capture would liberate him of some of the most urgent financial needs. It appeared the English had finally struck gold. He immediately asked the EIC for payment of £50,000 in advance. Albemarle had negotiated a deal with the company.⁴⁰

But Sandwich became the centre of a scandal involving the prize goods. Many officers, even his lieutenant James Ward, had already helped themselves to parts of the car-

37 Lister, *Life*, 390-391 Talbot to Arlington 25-8-1665; Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 162-163; Fox, *A distant storm*, 130-138; Warnsinck, *De retourvloot van Pieter de Bitter*, 19-51.

38 PRO SP 84/177 f51 Downing to Arlington, 11-8-1665; Prud'homme van Reine, *Rechterhand*, 151-153.

39 Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 163-164; CSPD 555 Coventry to Arlington 18-9-1665; Fruin and Japikse, *Brieven aan Johan de Witt*, 251 Nicolaas Vivien to De Witt 17-9-1665; Scheffer, *Roemruchte jaren*, 62-63; Bruijn, Gastra and Schöffer, *Dutch-Asiatic shipping*, 78-79.

40 Sainsbury, *Calendar*, 164 Coventry to Arlington 26-9-1665, 172 13-11-1665; CSPD 57 24-11-1665.

goes. Not only had Sandwich neglected to guard them but he tried to win the favour of his officers by allowing them a share of the booty before the prizes had even been judged by the High Court of the Admiralty. Myngs, William Penn, Allin and Smith were all involved. Pepys too had bought some spices at bargain rate in order to make a profit later. Sandwich had broken the law in order to buy support for his bid to obtain the fleet command for the next year, as well as to secure money for himself. He did this in order to receive their support in his race for next year's command over the fleet. His action caused huge political outcry and permanent damage to his position at Court and in the navy. He had provided his rivals with a tool with which they could have him removed from his office. Albemarle was perhaps the most prominent figure of all who opposed him. Sandwich tried to save face by accusing some minor figures of theft but this did not help him. In December he was dispatched to Madrid on a mission to negotiate a commercial treaty with Spain and to conclude a Portuguese-Spanish peace agreement.⁴¹ This way he saved face but all politicians and courtiers understood that the diplomatic assignment came down to a practical exile from Court.

The struggle for the Mediterranean and Asia

Many politicians of the Restoration regime understood the strategic and economic importance of the Mediterranean. Controlling the access to the Straits of Gibraltar was essential if England wanted to expand its interests in the Iberian and Levant trades. Securing the Mediterranean commerce in times of war was certainly worth a naval squadron. Both the English and the Dutch maintained a number of ships in the Mediterranean to safeguard their interests. In the First Anglo-Dutch War the Dutch gained an important victory against the English in a battle off the Italian coast of Livorno. In first half of the 1660s both the States General and the Restoration regime used the danger of the North African corsairs as pretext for maintaining a squadron in the Mediterranean.

England tried to firm its grip on the entrance of the Mediterranean by acquiring the city of Tangiers on the Moroccan Coast. Charles received Tangiers as part of the Portuguese wedding agreement. By improving the fortifications, maintaining a strong garrison and building a mole the English hoped to establish a base for English men of war to guard the Straits. Large funds were invested in strengthening the city. Government believed that it could also serve as an important centre of trade. This way these investments would repay themselves in time. These expectations proved to be unrealistic however; constant Moorish hostilities required a large garrison and repairs to the mole turned out to be expensive.

⁴¹ CSPD 84-85 Sandwich to Arlington 12-12-1665; NA SG 7060 LS, Sasburch to the States General 30-12-1665; BL Harley MS 7071 f73-84 20-4-1668; Bodl Rawlinson MS A468 Lord Sandwich' narrative; Bodl Rawlinson MS A174 f298-302 Pepys' papers relating to his concernment with my Lord Sandwich in ye East India prizes; Colenbrander, *Bescheiden*, 266-267; *The diary of John Evelyn*, 7-12-1665.

Officially the government of Spain remained neutral in the Anglo-Dutch war. Madrid did not want to be dragged into a war it could only lose. In reality however, the Dutch Republic was supported. The Dutch squadron received its provisions from Cadiz and prizes could be disposed of in all Spanish harbours. Local authorities conveniently tolerated these practices and did not enforce official prohibitions issued by Madrid.

Spain hoped that England would lose the city of Tangiers to local princes or chieftains, for fear that Charles would sell it to France like Dunkirk in 1662. This posed an enormous potential strategic threat to Spain. The Spanish secretly funded Moorish princes to attack the city. In October the Duke of Medina Celi, governor of Cadiz, outlawed the sale of food and other supplies to the English by Spanish citizens.⁴² He considered the city of Tangiers besieged by the Dutch and according to the Law of Nations no trade was allowed with the English. This way the Dutch could continue putting pressure on English military, economic and maritime interests in the Mediterranean.

In the first months of 1665 the Dutch prepared a twelve-ship squadron under Jacob van Meeuwen, that would operate from Cadiz. Allin's naval ships had returned home after the attack on the Dutch Smyrna fleet. This meant that the Dutch squadron was practically unchallenged. It would serve to protect the returning Levant fleet and would disturb English trade. Every English merchantman was chased. Many of them were caught returning from Livorno and Alicante by Dutch men of war and privateers. This brought the English Mediterranean trade to a standstill. Arlington had to admit to the Earl of Winchelsea, ambassador to the Sultan in Istanbul, that the Navy Board simply lacked the funds to set out naval vessels to protect trade. The English vessels would have to sail in groups to prevent capture. In reality some captains did not dare to undertake the journey home and remained in local harbours like Smyrna. The privateers benefited from Spanish unofficial support and sold their prizes in Spanish harbours. The official prohibition was not enforced. By January 1666 the total of 23 prizes had been sold in Cadiz alone. According to consul Westcombe the sustained damage amounted some £332,500.⁴³ This sum might have been exaggerated but the harm inflicted was still considerable.

The Dutch squadron tried to blockade Tangiers into surrender. Supplying the city from the landside was out of the question because of Moorish hostility. Intercepting provisions from the seaside was rather effective. One English vessel was taken in September and four more in October. Soon the garrison complained about shortages. Attacking the city directly was impossible though. The new mole pro-

42 PRO CO 279/4 22-4-1665; CSPV 135 Zorzi to the Doge 17-6-1665; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Heathcote*, 207-208 Westcombe to Fanshaw 11-10-1665.

43 PRO CO 279/4 12-4-1665; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Heathcote*, 186-187, 208-209 and 220-222 Westcombe to Fanshaw 3-5-1665, 18-10-1665 and 10-1-1666, 369-370 Arlington to Winchelsea 30-4-1665; BL ADD MS 4182 f15 and f26b 11-5-1665 and 27-7-1665; NA SG 5907 I LE, Van Gogh to the States General 28-8-1665; CSPV 111 Zorzi to the Doge 6-5-1665.

vided opportunity to cover the harbour with gunfire. Sailing up to Tangiers had become too dangerous for enemy ships.⁴⁴

There were some minor successes for the garrison of Tangiers. In October Moorish corsairs chased a Dutch ship into the harbour where it was detained. It was confiscated by the governor Lord Bellasyse who judged it a legal prize. In September five Algiers vessels captured a Spanish merchantman and hoped to bring it up to their homeport. Near Tangiers they encountered the Dutch squadron and fled into the harbour. The Dutch were dispelled by gunfire from the mole. The prize was not returned to the Spanish owners and the Algerians requested their booty.⁴⁵

Asia was another area where the Dutch and English collided. Immediately after the news of the declaration of war was received the VOC benefited from its superior strength in Asia to hunt down English shipping. VOC men of war swarmed the waters round India trying to inflict as much damage as they could.

In April 1665 the island of Run was finally surrendered to English representatives. At last the Dutch authorities complied with the Anglo-Dutch agreement that had been negotiated back in Europe. Although the monopoly was voluntarily given up the chopping up of the nutmeg trees virtually destroyed its value. When the news about the outbreak of war became known in Batavia in August 1665, the governor-general decided to retake the island. In October an expedition was sent from Banda Neira to conquer it. Its mission was very easily accomplished as there were no English troops protecting Run. There were only 27 Englishmen against some 180 Dutch sailors and soldiers.⁴⁶ Thus the VOC profited from the war to continue the course that had already been plotted. The first victims of this policy had been the Portuguese who had lost possessions on Ceylon and in India during the war of the 1650s and early 1660s. The company now benefited from its strong fleet again to forcefully expand its commercial interests at the expense of the EIC.

Prisoners of war

During the last months of 1664 somewhere between 150 and 200 Dutch merchantmen had been brought up to English ports by both privateers and naval ships.⁴⁷ This continued after the declaration of war. The capture of ships did not only yield booty but prisoners of war as well. The Battle of Lowestoft added another 5,000 to

44 PRO CO 279/4 22-5-1665, 19-8-1665 and 22-10-1665; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Heathcote*, 192 Lord Bellasyse (governor of Tangiers) to Fanshaw 22-5-1665, 211 Westcombe to William Coventry 23-10-1665; NA SG 7059 LS, Van Reede van Renswoude to the States General 17-6-1665 and 23-9-1665.

45 PRO CO 279/4 19-8-1665 and 6-10-1665; BL Althorpe MS C13 Hollis to William Coventry 12-9-1665; NA SG 12589.125 SKE, Van Gogh to the States General 16-10-1665.

46 BL Oriental and India Office E/3/29 f3 and f17 15-4-1665 and 20-8-1665; NA SG 12563.45 Lok.VOC; NA SG 5739I LVOC, The VOC to the States General 22-12-1666 and 26-10-1667.

47 Rommelse, 'English privateering', 17-29.

6,000 to these. Dutch privateers took English vessels as well and so both governments had to deal with this prisoner problem.

In January 1665 the Privy Council decided that the issue would be the responsibility of the Commission of Prizes. The sailors were to remain on their ships and were only allowed to come ashore once a location for them had been found. Their treatment was harsh. They were locked up in London or Winchester and received little food. Officially five pence per day was reserved for every common sailor. Officers would get twelve pence worth of food and clothes. The expenses should be paid out of the prize yield. After the Battle of Lowestoft the prisons of Canterbury, Rochester and Maidstone were allocated to Dutch prisoners of war.⁴⁸

Van Gogh worried about the employment of Dutch on English merchantmen and on the fleet. The coal vessels from Newcastle needed extra help, and the English hoped to solve their shortages by manning some of their naval ships with prisoners of war. In exchange these sailors would receive much better treatment than they would in prison. Van Gogh understood that many of his fellow Dutch would be inclined to serve because of the poor conditions of their imprisonment. To prevent this Van Gogh required funds to help the sailors. He concluded a contract with a London merchant who would dress and feed the prisoners in Chelsea. John Evelyn, one of the members of the Commission for the Sick and Wounded, warned Van Gogh that he should provide help because 'unless your Excellency take some speedy course for their better supplie of provisions, most of your poor men will perish, there being neither firing, straw nor victualls convenient allowed to them. So as the mortality is already very great amongst them, the weather being sharp and this reduction of their foode putting them to the utmost extreimity. I beseech your Excellency to take some speedy course to relieve the poore men before it be too late.'⁴⁹

To finance the aid Van Gogh turned to the Dutch Church at Austin Friars in the City of London. Reluctantly the church and also the Dutch community of Yarmouth collected money to feed and dress the prisoners. It was, however, increasingly difficult to raise the required funds as trade and commerce slumbered during the war. The Church nevertheless continued giving its help.⁵⁰

On several occasions Van Gogh complained to Charles about the treatment Dutch prisoners received. In July Charles promised that this would be improved. The king ordered that all Dutch officers should sign a petition declaring that they were treated well. According to the document they were free to walk the streets of

48 PRO PC 6/2 f123 and f147 28-1-1665 and 20-5-1665; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, IV 441-442 Van Gogh to De Witt 9-2-1665; Bodl Rawlinson MS A289 f89 Arlington to the Sherif of Kent 18-6-1665.

49 NA SG 12589.125 and 12589.126 SKE, Van Gogh to the States General 1-6-1665, 8-12-1665 and 10-12-1665; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, IV 473-474 Van Gogh to De Witt 24-7-1665; PRO SP 84/177 f122 Van Gogh to the States General 23-7-1665; *The diary of John Evelyn*, 7-11-1664.

50 Lindeboom, *Austin Friars*, 75; Hessels, *Epistulae et tractates*, 2521 Dutch community of Yarmouth to the Dutch Church at Austin Friars 19-10-1665, 2521-2522 and 2523-2524 Van Gogh to the Dutch Church at Austin Friars 20-10-1665 and 14-11-1665.

Ipswich, Colchester and Woodbridge and the food they got was fine.⁵¹ Obviously Charles hoped that this statement would make the Dutch authorities treat English prisoners with consideration.

In the Dutch Republic, Downing did not have to deal with the same problems, the number of English prisoners being much lower. He helped a number of escaped prisoners to make their way to Flanders. He provided them with money and passports. He received the amount of £5,000 to assist English in the Republic.⁵² Yet the issue of prisoners did not take up much of the ambassador's time.

Many requests came in for the exchange of prisoners. Sometimes individuals proposed to be exchanged for another specific individual. Zacheus Ewell, a pilot, asked to be traded for his Dutch colleague Jan Hendrick Boon. Captain Wijke Beijma and Lieutenant Johannes Grieviers had the States of Friesland petition to the States General for their exchange without naming an English prisoner. Other Dutch sailors contacted the Dutch Church at Austin Friars.⁵³

Often the two ambassadors received requests for the release of individuals. In December 1665 the city of Bristol petitioned to Van Gogh for the release of all their citizens from Zeeland prisons. In exchange all Zeeland sailors in Bristol goals would be set free. Downing was often asked to mediate in the release of certain individuals. The petitioners would cause an English person to be set free. Some Dutch even offered to pay ransom. Gerrit Jansen and Claes Simonszoon were willing to pay their way out at £10 for a naval captain, £5 for a captain of a merchantman and 40 shillings for a common sailor.⁵⁴

The admiralties and provincial states were flooded by requests from wives of prisoners. The institutions desired the States General to organise an exchange. This would provide them with men for the fleet and would prevent more yelling, angry women outside the admiralty buildings.⁵⁵

Van Gogh was very eager to exchange all prisoners and submitted official proposals at several occasions. But Charles refused to accept the terms Van Gogh proposed. He did not want to trade 300 English for all 2,300 Dutch. Yet the king was content that both governments had released all boys under fourteen years of age. This made Charles rethink the issue of a general exchange. It was open for discussion again. This was probably motivated by the expenses he had to make to feed and dress all 2,300 men. In the Privy Council the newly established Commission for

⁵¹ Scheurleer, *Brieven*, IV 471-472 and 485-488 Van Gogh to De Witt 17-7-1665 and 17-12-1665; CSPD 472 Charles to Sir William Doyley 21-7-1665; NA SG 5907I LE, Van Gogh to the States General 6-8-1665.

⁵² PRO SP 84/177 f26 Downing to Arlington 28-7-1665; CSPD 54 23-11-1665.

⁵³ CSPD 77 9-12-1665; NA SG 5907I LE, States of Friesland to the States General 22-7-1665; Hessels, *Epistulae et tractatus*, 2519-2520 Pieter Overnei to the Dutch Church at Austin Friars 30-9-1665.

⁵⁴ NA SG 12589.126 SKE, Van Gogh to the States General 13-12-1665; NA SG 5907I LE, Van Gogh to the States General 19-4-1665; Colenbrander, *Bescheiden*, 226-230 Downing to Arlington 25-5-1665.

⁵⁵ NA SG 5907I LE, Admiralty of West-Friesland to the States General 4-8-1665, Admiralty of Amsterdam to the States General 5-8-1665, Admiralty of Friesland to the States General 12-10-1665; ZA States of Zeeland, Minutes of the States of Zeeland 2.2/81, 3-7-1665.

Sick and Wounded mentioned that 'the great charge, contracts by the sick and wounded, and Dutch prisoners [...] hitherto exceeds the profit of the prizes taken.' The Navy Board was responsible for all the costs and experienced the drain of its funds.⁵⁶ This complicated the Board's task of setting out the fleet.

France, Münster and the Nordic kingdoms

In July 1665 the intentions of the Münsterite bishop Christoph Bernhard von Galen to declare war on the Dutch Republic injected a new development in the Anglo-Dutch conflict. Louis immediately wrote to the Duke of Neuburg asking him to persuade Münster to refrain from the plan. Louis threatened that military intervention from his side would be inevitable and unavoidable. The Dutch army was too weak to resist a relatively minor German prince and so Louis would be forced to act because of the Franco-Dutch treaty of 1662. He did not want the bellicose bishop to spoil his ambitions concerning the Spanish Netherlands. Philip IV died on the seventeenth of September and the French king was preparing to carry out his plans. Münster's war on the Dutch would involve many German princes and this could thwart his planned campaign. Louis therefore sent diplomats to various German states to convince them they should refrain from attacking the Dutch.⁵⁷

Louis still attempted to keep all options open. Charles might keep his promises concerning the Spanish Netherlands. This would mean that Louis could invade and conquer almost without international opposition.⁵⁸ The Dutch were occupied with the war against the English and could not possibly oppose this *fait accompli*. Yet supporting the States General and especially De Witt's regime was another option that might be preferable. The Dutch had endured many losses and Louis could not tolerate their total defeat at the hands of the English. This would give Charles too much power and influence on the continent, especially as the Stuart-Orange connection could result in an alliance. De Witt's regime would be overthrown and the stadholder would assume power. Young William of Orange was only 14 years old and Charles being his guardian would gain much more influence in the Low Countries. Aiding the Dutch was not a very attractive option but it might be necessary. The Spanish matter would then have to wait. But for the moment Louis, a cunning strategist in foreign politics, tried to gain time in order to have more strings to his bow.

The French king hoped that his embassy in London could successfully mediate between the English and the Dutch. The English terms were ambitious: the regulating of the East Indian trade, compensation for the vessels *Bonna Esperanza* and

⁵⁶ BL ADD MS 4182 f28; NA SG 12589.125 SKE, Van Gogh to the States General 17-7-1665; NA SG 59071 LE, Downing to the States General 11-7-1665; PRO PC 6/1 f160 9-12-1665; Tanner, *Correspondence*, 53-54 Pepys to Coventry 13-10-1665.

⁵⁷ Brown, *Letters*, 522-524 Louis to D'Estrades 17-7-1665; CSPV 168-171 Sagredo to the Doge 31-7-1665.

⁵⁸ Brown, *Letters*, 26-27 De Lionne to D'Estrades 14-8-1665.



Christoph Bernard von Galen, bishop of Münster (Stadtmuseum Münster, foto Tomasz Samek).

Henry Bonadventure that had been confiscated in 1645, New Amsterdam would remain in English hands, Run would be returned to the EIC, compensation should be paid for the English war effort and some of the African forts should be transferred. The English hoped that they could now gain all that had been refused before the outbreak of the war. Louis believed the Dutch were better off with these conditions than with the continuation of the war. He ordered D'Estrades to argue for peace, but the States General refused.⁵⁹ They would never have agreed to these terms as this would have meant endangering the sheer existence of the Republic.

⁵⁹ Brown, *Letters*, 53-67 and 86-88 Louis to D'Estrades 29-8-1665 and D'Estrades to Louis 10-9-1665.

The Dutch state, De Witt and many fellow regents believed, was too much connected to maritime trade. Fighting was therefore considered the better option.

In October there were rumours about Sweden joining Münster against the Republic. This would have been disastrous from the Dutch point of view. For the French it would have created a major complication, disturbing their diplomatic preparations to exploit Philip IV's death; De Lionne did not understand why the States General should not simply give in to demands advanced by Sweden.⁶⁰

In the second half of 1665 the Anglo-French relations deteriorated rapidly. The capture of many French merchantmen contributed to this. Many were caught carrying Dutch goods and were judged lawful prizes. The naval salute was another matter that increasingly plagued international politics. The English demanded that all foreign vessels saluted the English flag when carried by a man of war on the British seas. Louis was not the person to accept inferiority in matters of honour and demanded that all English vessels saluted his flag on the Mediterranean. In October two of his vessels clashed with two English over this dispute. The hanging of a French privateer in English service did not improve sentiments. De Lionne was still against French participation in the war. He admired the States General for their tenacity but believed this should not necessarily drag France into the conflict.⁶¹

The English attitude towards France had grown more hostile and for much broader and more important reasons. In November the three French delegates reported to Louis that 'La Haine des Anglais en général est à présente si grande contre la France, que le Parlement approuverait tous les traités qu'il croirait être utiles pour ruiner vos desseins.' The increasing rift between England and France in the last months of 1665 was essentially the result of the development of Louis's preparations to advance into the Spanish Netherlands. Charles's neutrality in the case of Spain was not so valuable anymore, even though Spain sought to improve relations with the English. In fact an Anglo-Spanish agreement became even more unlikely now despite Arlington's hopes. By siding with England, Spain could provide Louis with a convenient *casus belli*. The outbreak of an Anglo-French war seemed imminent and neutrality was essential to Madrid. From the French point of view declaring war on the English would keep Spain isolated. Maritime pressure rose as French merchantmen were now warned not to sail without protection. Since war seemed imminent, Hollis expected that the official declaration would come as soon as the three delegates had returned to Paris.⁶²

60 Brown, *Letters*, 130-132 and 159-162 De Lionne to D'Estrades 8-10-1665 and D'Estrades to De Lionne 26-10-1665.

61 BL ADD MS 4182 f27 14-7-1665; BL Althorpe MS C13, Hollis to Coventry 23-9-1665 and 21-10-1665; NA SG 6781 LF, Boreel to the States General 30-10-1665; Brown, *Letters*, 112-115 De Lionne to D'Estrades 23-9-1665.

62 Jusserand, *De Cominges*, 250 French Delegation to Louis 1-11-1665; NA SG 6781 LF, Boreel to the States General 13-11-1665; PRO SP 78/121 f174 Hollis to Arlington 5-12-1665; CSPV 220-221 Zorzi to the Doge 4-11-1665, 261-262 Marco Giustinian to the Doge 23-2-1666; Barbour, *Bennet*, 86.

In November Louis promised the States General to support them against the English. He first needed the official assurance that no separate peace treaty would be concluded as had happened in 1648. His honour forced the king to demand this: it had been an argument in the Franco-Dutch negotiations and he could not suddenly forget about it without losing face. More importantly, he wanted a free hand concerning the Spanish Netherlands once the war was over. This condition apparently secured the ambitions that he now had to postpone.⁶³

Expanding interests and naval power in the Mediterranean were an important strategic purpose to the French. Louis was already busy building a strong fleet and he too hoped to play a major role at sea, but according to a French memoir dominating the North Sea would be impossible because of English naval capacities. Yet by having the Moorish princes attack Tangiers, the Mediterranean could become a French domain.⁶⁴

France had already launched a diplomatic offensive to reach its aims. Brandenburg was asked to support the Dutch Republic against Münster in exchange for Dutch funds and French political friendship.⁶⁵ Von Galen and other German princes would now hesitate to hinder Louis in future plans. Brandenburg was a strong ally and large supplier of mercenary soldiers.

Securing Swedish support or neutrality was the next step. Stockholm demanded £100,000 per year from England for its friendship as the Swedish government would miss out on enormous French subsidies. For the English regime it would be almost impossible to collect and pay this sum. In December 1666 Van Beuningen informed the States General that France would open negotiations with the Swedes and that the French would attempt to buy Swedish loyalty.⁶⁶ These intentions would complicate English foreign policy-making as Charles's treasure was already under severe pressure for the war effort.

In December the imminent Anglo-French war became public knowledge. The French court was told that the mediation had failed and escalation of the conflict was now unavoidable. Obviously this caused happiness in the Dutch Republic and also extra pressure on English commerce. Warnings came in that the Levant trade was immediately threatened by the French fleet. This prediction seemed even more accurate when the Duke de Beaufort, commander of the French navy, captured two English vessels and brought them up to Toulon.⁶⁷

63 Brown, *Letters*, 198-201 Louis to D'Estrades 13-11-1665 and 210-211 De Lionne to D'Estrades 20-11-1665.

64 Brown, *Letters*, 38-41; NA SG 12587.170 SKF, Van Beuningen to the States General 20-11-1665; Villiers, *Corsairs*, 154-155.

65 Brown, *Letters*, 241-247 Louis to D'Estrades 18-12-1665.

66 CSP Clar 512-513 Henry Coventry to Clarendon 11-11-1665; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, II 149 Van Beuningen to De Witt 25-12-1665.

67 NA SG 6781 LF, Boreel to the States General 25-12-1665; PRO SP 105/113 f118 The Levant Company to Coventry 23-12-1665; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Heathcote*, 217 William Blunden to Fanshaw 28-12-1665.

England had gained the Bishop of Münster as an ally but had to finance his war effort against the Dutch Republic. Gold and silver were shipped to neutral Antwerp, where minting for payment to Von Galen took place. Some 2,5 million guilders was being processed. Much of the money was provided and transferred by Edward Backwell, alderman of the City and prominent goldsmith-banker. The Navy Board had to contribute as well. In reality the financing of the German ally caused difficulties. Von Galen continuously complained about this to Sir William Temple, the English representative in Germany. He claimed that he required some 18,000 English soldiers as well.⁶⁸ Despite the problems within the alliance, the German bishop attacked the Dutch Republic in September 1665 with some 20,000 soldiers. The Dutch army failed to protect the provinces of Overijssel and Gelderland against the invaders. Large areas were overrun. Von Galen then moved northwards into Drenthe and threatened the city of Groningen. The poor state of the troops caused much political unrest as people criticised De Witt's regime.⁶⁹

But in September the Dutch acquired military assistance from the Dukes of Brunswick and Neuburg. They would attack Münster in order to relieve pressure from the Dutch army. Brandenburg then offered mediation. In August France had decided to give direct military assistance against the bishop. Paris had already dispatched a courier to Madrid to ask for permission for the troops to cross the Spanish Netherlands. In Brussels people were worried that the French would use the opportunity to concentrate the army for a coming campaign against the Spanish Netherlands. This did not happen though. The French soldiers had strict orders to avoid conflicts with locals. Louis would not want to encourage the Spanish to side with England. In October Louis decided to really take action. In November his French troops arrived to help out and Von Galen quickly had to withdraw his army from the Dutch territories.⁷⁰ The English had lost their only ally but Von Galen had demonstrated the weakness of the Dutch military at land.

During the second half of 1665 the English continued their diplomatic efforts to gain new allies against the Dutch Republic. Temple was ordered to win more German princes for the English cause. Sir Walter Vane was sent to Brandenburg. In September Sir Thomas Clifford was chosen for an embassy to Sweden and Denmark. Gaining Nordic support would be vital as it would close off the Sound for Dutch shipping. This would complicate the setting out of the fleet. Yet Sweden chose neutrality and French subsidies. England had no money left to buy yet another ally. Den-

68 NA SG 7059 LS, Sasburch to the States General 9-8-1665 and 20-9-1665; Bebington, *Arlington's letters*, 9-13; Arlington to Temple, 35-38; Von Galen to Temple 15-10-1665; PRO PRO 30/24/38/30; BL ADD MS 38849 f38 7-1-1666; Clark, D.K., 'Edward Backwell', 48-50.

69 NA SG 12579.83 Slok.L, Maurice de Nassau to the States General 14-10-1665; Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 770; Rowen, *John de Witt*, 598-610.

70 PRO SP 103/46 21-9-1665; PRO SP 78/121 f37 Hollis to Arlington 19-8-1665; CSPV 206 Sagredo to the Doge 2-10-1665; NA SG 6781 LF, Van Beuningen to the States General 2-10-1665; NA SG 7059 LS, Sasburch to the States General 21-10-1665 and 8-11-1665; Bebington, *Letters*, 44-46; Von Galen to Charles.

mark could not be persuaded either. Frederick III preferred to gain time and wait for the most advantageous offer. He would not simply side with England after the Bergen failure. He had only agreed to assist the English during their attack against the homebound VOC fleet. He had not yet tied himself to any further commitment and his support could still be obtained. Aiding the Republic and France could be more lucrative.⁷¹ Thus, England's diplomatic offensive had failed completely.

By the end of 1665 France had decided to declare war. Münster had been defeated and pulled out of the conflict. All other potential allies had refused to accept English offers or had been persuaded, bought or threatened by French or Dutch diplomats to reject them.

Domestic affairs in England and the Dutch Republic

During the last months of the year 1664 the bellicose factions at Whitehall finally had succeeded. War was then regarded unavoidable and both sides were preparing frantically for the coming campaigning season. Charles had understood that fighting the Dutch would be the most advantageous and opportunistic course to plot. A large number of courtiers like James of York, Arlington, Berkeley and Clifford, naval officers like Holmes, merchants like Sir Richard Ford and companies like the East India Company and the Levant Company had supported the war. This coalition had easily managed to outrival the opposing supporters of peace. The collection of factions had influenced English politics on every level. Parliament had been persuaded by Charles's favourite politicians Arlington and Clifford and quickly voted £2.5 million to undertake the war. It had seemed that no one opposed the coming conflict. Only few people had still been against the outbreak. Yet their voices could hardly be heard among such a majority. Popular sentiments had been supportive towards the war as well.

The outcome of the Battle of Lowestoft only increased the popularity of the war. It seemed that major victories could be obtained against the Dutch Republic as had happened during the First Anglo-Dutch War, although Dutch efforts against trade were disturbingly effective. Charles had ordered the Navy Board to consult with London merchants about how to continue maritime commerce, but protection of shipping proved to be almost impossible. De Ruyter's action against the Royal Adventurers trading into Africa had completely ruined the young company. Obviously this cooled mercantilist sentiments of those courtiers who had invested large sums in the Africa trade. The Levant, Asian and many other trades were disturbed as well causing merchants to begin to regret their involvement.⁷² Slowly but surely the mercantilist support for the war began to decrease. More and more traders un-

71 BL ADD MS 4182 f37 8-9-1665; BL Stowe MS 191 f6 October 1665 Instructions to Sir Walter Vane; CSPD 546-547 Coventry to Arlington 12-9-1665; Lister, *Life*, 405-409 Talbot to Arlington 16-10-1665; CSP Clar 510-511 Clarendon to Henry Coventry 14-10-1665.

72 PRO PC 2/58 f1 12-1-1665; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, IV 374-377 Van Gogh to De Witt 24-10-1665; CSPC

derstood that violence would not bring the commercial dominance they had hoped for. It only cost them ships, taxes and a standstill in trade. Gradually the large *ad hoc* faction was disintegrating as many companies and most merchants came to understand the downside of war. Political support from mercantile groups diminished and the coalition between ambitious politicians and mercantilists that had carefully been forged after the Restoration began to break apart. This made government increasingly vulnerable against opposition.

Still most people believed the conflict could and should be brought to a good and favourable end. In their opinion the political and commercial fruits of Lowestoft could soon be harvested. Many naval officers and courtiers believed they would profit from the conflict. In October 1665 a session of Parliament was held in Oxford because of the plague. It was thinly attended but because the Court had left Whitehall an effective percentage of courtiers was present. Charles asked for extra funds to carry on the war: 'the truth is, as I entered upon this war by your advice and encouragement, so I desire that you may, as frequently as is possible, receive information of the conduct and effects of it; and that I may have the continuance of your cheerful supply for the carrying it on. I will not deny that it hath proved more chargeable I could imagine it would have been.' The situation was difficult as the £2,5 million had already been spent. Not all the money had actually been received as taxation failed and expenses had proved to be higher than expected. In October another £1,25 million was allocated towards the war. It was, however, not in the least certain that this amount would actually be raised as trade slumbered because of Dutch privateering and the outbreak of plague.

The Navy Board already dealt with great shortages that caused that many merchants now refused to supply goods to the navy as they would simply not receive their money. Rope-makers were on strike because they had not been paid for a long time. There were no funds to remedy the situation. The plague that had broken out in London in April made things even more complicated. Purchasing second hand clothing for the sailors was impossible because of the contagious disease. To give the good example Charles and the courtiers promised only to wear clothes made out of English textiles.⁷³ It was a futile gesture though. Financial problems were already complicating the war effort and would continue to do so. England had won the naval confrontations of the year 1665 except for the attack at Bergen, but prospects for the next year were not so good. The diplomatic attempts had failed altogether and the Treasury was exhausted. It seemed that by the end of the year the wheel of fortune had turned in favour of the Dutch Republic. Yet most Englishmen seemed to support the continuation of the war with confidence.

266 Petition of the RAC 12-1-1665; Tanner, *Correspondence*, 33-34 Pepys to Sandwich 1-1-1665; PRO SP 105/113 f90 The Levant Company to Captains Hill and Hudson 25-2-1665.

73 Bryant, *Letters*, 187-188 Charles' speech in Parliament 19-10-1665; PRO ADM 2/1 f1-3 18-12-1665; CSPD 464 Sir John Mennes to the Commissioners of the Navy 15-7-1665; CSPD 22 Coventry to Albemarle 29-10-1665, 31 Arlington to the Lord Mayor of London 5-11-1665.

The Dutch were equally determined to bring the conflict to a good end. The Republic had suffered the severe defeat at Lowestoft but De Ruyter's return had provided new hope. Johan de Witt continued working for the common good and had managed to keep the organisation intact. There were some minor riots when people blamed the States General for the defeat. Yet the fleet was rebuilt as new ships were constructed. Funds were raised and a new tactical plan was adopted. Finally the diplomatic efforts began to pay off. Louis's support was eagerly expected and the Danish partnership looked promising.

Domestic opposition from the Prince's supporters and political pressure on De Witt's regime had been severe and still continued. Geyl stated that "the public at large was pro-[William III of] Orange, though not necessarily pro-English." Supporters of the Prince tried to undermine De Witt's position continuously and claimed that Charles was certainly not the bitter enemy the States General believed him to be. Downing's public display of hostility and intimacy with certain well-known supporters of the Prince contributed to De Witt's feelings of unease. Sermons and pamphlets from hostile ministers and authors added to this. More and more the public believed that Charles opposed the States General on behalf of his nephew. After Lowestoft the English began to actively exploit this sentiment. They hoped to use Dutch opposition in order to organise a plot that would unbalance De Witt's regime and the Dutch war effort. Arlington believed the time was right to undermine the Dutch political leader. The States General arrested several of Downing's spies and secretaries and so in August Downing left.

In that same month the fleet was ready to set out again. This time De Witt himself accompanied the expedition on behalf of the States General. He took personal responsibility and intended to take matters into his own hands. Many people, especially naval officers, criticised him for this. They believed he displayed his arrogance and would not be capable of carrying the command. Other people admired his leadership though. The appointment of De Ruyter as supreme commander helped strengthen De Witt's government.⁷⁴

Altogether the domestic situation in the Dutch Republic was unstable and difficult. Government had to operate in the highly complicated and dangerous arena of international politics while preventing its opponents from planning its downfall. Foreign enemies understood this complication and hoped to profit from it. It restricted De Witt's means to shape Dutch policies and to react to developments in the European powerplay. The difficult situation at home would continue in 1666.

74 Geyl, *Orange and Stuart*, 194-209; Prud'homme van Reine, *Rechterhand*, 154-155