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

Rommelse, G.A.

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CHAPTER 6

Annus horibilis: plague, fire and naval battles

France and Denmark enter the war, Münster leaves

In January 1666 France declared war on England. Louis pragmatically decided to help the Dutch Republic and to observe the Franco-Dutch alliance of 1662. Denzil Hollis made a last diplomatic effort to keep France neutral. His speech in English, 'his master's language', was not successful though. He thanked the French king for the mediation he had offered by means of the 'célèbre ambassade', and then took his official leave.¹ He did not yet travel to England though. He remained in Paris 'incognito', because there were still hopes that the real outbreak of hostilities could be prevented. His unofficial presence in the French capital city might help to remedy matters. The capture of a number of French merchantmen in the Seine Estuary by English privateers did not improve matters though. More and more vessels were taken every day making a naval confrontation almost unavoidable.²

Yet Louis did not want to make the deterioration of Anglo-French relations irreversible. English merchants had three months to move all their belongings and their families back to England.³ This rather lenient measure suggests that the French king hoped to keep his options open in order to develop an effective strategy concerning the Spanish Netherlands. Postponing his military effort against Madrid he gained time to prepare and expand his army. Louis expected some degree of gratitude from the Dutch resulting in their neutrality when Louis's own ambitions were being aimed for.⁴ Charles understood Louis's problems and considerations. He wrote to Henrietta Anne telling her that 'if there were no other reason but this constraint which is upon our commerce of letters, I should use all my en-

1 NA SG 12587.173 SKF, Van Beuningen to the States General 1-1-1666; Bodl Carte MS 80 f541; Brown, *Letters*, 304-307 Hollis to Louis 20-1-1666.

2 NA SG 6782 LF, Boreel to the States General 29-1-1666; CSPV 246-248 Giustinian to the Doge 26-1-1666.

3 *The French kings declaration of a war against England* (27-1-1666)(BL); PRO SP 78/122/76 Hollis to Arlington 24-2-1666.

4 Brown, *Letters*, 317-320 Louis to D'Estrades 29-1-1666; Lossky, *Louis XIV*, 131.

deavours to have a good intelligence between me and France.’⁵ Using his sister as a means of communication he told Louis that any future Anglo-French co-operation would be possible and that the war would not permanently prevent this.

In February the Dutch Republic concluded an alliance with Denmark against England. The Sound would from then on be closed for all English vessels. In exchange for Dutch subsidies and letting Frederick off his debts the Danes excluded the Navy Board from the main source of timber and other naval supplies. France and the Republic would protect Denmark from any Swedish aggression as well. It caused Talbot to write to Clarendon that ‘it is not to be doubted but that your Lordship hath, before this time, too good assurance of the foule tergiversation of the Danes.’ In April James was ordered to issue letters of marque against Denmark in order to avenge, what the English considered, the Danish betrayal.⁶

Despite the alliance the African troubles were not solved. The WIC was involved in an intensive polemic with the Danish representatives Peter Canizius and Paul Klingenberg. France was asked to mediate but no solution was found. Yet the Danes provided protection to Dutch maritime trade in their waters. Their men of war often guarded Dutch merchantmen in their journey through the Sound.⁷

Sweden sympathised with England but did not enter the war. The Swedes often helped out protecting English vessels in their waters. In July France had paid some 200,000 livres for neutrality during the conflict and another 55,000 crowns were donated in December.⁸ This proved to Stockholm that Louis and the Dutch Republic were the powers with financial means while Charles had very little to spare.

The Dutch and French used similar tactics in the German Empire. More and more German princes chose to obstruct Münster in the war against the Dutch Republic. They had all received subsidies from France and the Seven Provinces. Louis had sent troops to force Münster to leave Dutch territory. French warnings not to aid Christoph Bernhard von Galen and the presence of their army, proved threatening enough to persuade other princes. Opposing the Dutch no longer seemed opportune and even dangerous as France was clearly demonstrating its military potential and its interest in the German Empire. For Sweden money was the main reason to refrain from participation. In April Von Galen had to agree with a humiliating peace treaty. All conquered territories, including the disputed area of Borculo, had to be returned and the Münsterite army had to be dissolved.⁹

5 Bryant, *Letters*, 189-190 Charles to Henrietta Anne 12-5-1666.

6 Brown, *Letters*, 349-357 Danish-Dutch treaty 11-2-1666; CSPV 254 Giustinian to the Doge 9-2-1666; Lister, *Life*, 428-430 Talbot to Clarendon 13-3-1666; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, II 230 De Witt to Van Beuningen 8-4-1666; CSPD 373; PRO PC 2/59 f8 19-5-1666; PRO ZJ 1/1 17-6-1666.

7 NA SG 12564.58 Lok.WIC; PRO SP 119/38 no.67 27-9-1667; CSPV 32 Giustinian to the Doge 13-7-1666; CSPD 15 Edward Botham to Williamson 16-8-1666.

8 PRO SP 119/37 no.52 29-6-1666; CSPV 35-36 Giustinian to the Doge 20-7-1666; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, II 530 Van Beuningen to De Witt 24-12-1666. This was approximately 600.000 guilders (Source: A. Scheffers).

9 CSP Clar 535 Henry Coventry to Clarendon 17-3-1666; Brown, *Letters*, 439-447 Peace treaty between the Dutch Republic and Münster 18-4-1666.

To England this was all bad news. Its only ally had withdrawn from the war and the number of opponents grew. All diplomatic efforts to counter this development failed as finances did not allow the subsidising of new friends. Parliament had voted additional revenue to continue the war, but taxation failed to produce sufficient funds. Yet renewed friendship with Madrid might provide new chances in this situation of isolation.

Sandwich was sent to Madrid carrying condolences on Philip's death, but also to negotiate a commercial treaty between both crowns and to convince the Spanish ministers that Anglo-French relations remained good. Fanshaw had already negotiated a commercial agreement with the Spanish that Charles had refused to ratify. Sandwich was now sent to remedy the situation and discuss an even more advantageous deal. Fanshaw officially remained on his position but was effectively put aside and disgraced. Sandwich was to assure the Spanish politicians that the Anglo-Dutch war would only be temporary and should not disrupt the friendship permanently. Tangiers and Jamaica were not returned to Spain but English privateering and naval hostilities in the West Indies ended. In exchange London hoped for trading privileges on the Spanish wool market and in Spain's extensive American possessions. England then promised to help negotiate a peace treaty between Spain and Portugal. This would prevent Louis from gaining any more influence on the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁰

Preparations for the campaigning season

In February 1666 an English naval squadron commanded by Sir Jeremy Smith sailed to the Mediterranean to put more pressure on France. The vessels were allowed by Spanish authorities to take on fresh water in Cadiz. The diplomatic efforts made by Sandwich and Fanshaw, who died in June, were clearly paying off. Anglo-Spanish relations improved and the harassment of Tangiers ceased. Spain had not recognised it as a Portuguese possession which its king, whom it regarded as a rebel, could give to England. The Anglo-Spanish negotiations led Louis to decide that his new fleet should remain in the Mediterranean. This sea was of more importance than the Atlantic and the North Sea where the English ruled the waves for the moment.¹¹ Preparations in France were intensified. Louis hoped that his new navy would catch up with the English and the Dutch in short time. A number of fireships had been purchased so that a real naval confrontation could be fought when the occasion seemed right.¹²

In 1665 Sandwich had lost his position as commander of the fleet because of the scandal he was involved in. James had done very well during the Battle of Lowestoft but he was not continued because the risk of losing the heir to the throne was

10 Bodl Carte MS 274 f5-20 Instruction for Sandwich's mission to Madrid.

11 Brown, *Letters*, 342 Louis to D'Estrades 5-2-1666; CSPV 25 Zorzi to the Doge 30-6-1666.

12 NA SG 6782 LF, Boreel to the States General 19-2-1666.

13 PRO ADM 2/1 f4-5 Instructions to Rupert and Albemarle 4-3-1666.

too high.¹³ James may have temporarily lost the king's favour for failing to follow up his victory off Lowestoft, but the Dutch debacle in that battle had demonstrated the chaos that the death of a sole commander could bring. Charles certainly mourned Falmouth's death and might have wished to prevent his brother's. The competition for command of the fleet was won by Prince Rupert and Albemarle as joint commanders with the most important navy officers all hoping to gain royal favour and get the appointment for the season. Like at court and in politics, the king used this procedure to continue his grip on the entire corps and the fleet.

Setting out the fleet became even more difficult in 1666. Additional men of war had to be diverted to guard the Newcastle coal transports. Obviously this meant higher costs. Funds were almost exhausted. Charles was once again forced to borrow £50,000 off the EIC. The actual building and provisioning of ships did not run smoothly either. Much was stolen at the royal wharves. Thomas Middleton, a Navy Board official in Portsmouth, reported to Pepys that almost everything disappeared. Setting out guards did not help matters; in fact: 'the more watch the more thieves.' This development was not surprising since most of the employees had not received any wages for months. They often complained but there were simply no funds available to pay them. They still had to feed their families and saw no other options than to steal materials and tools.¹⁴

Buying sufficient provisions became more difficult as money ran out. Merchants charged a higher price to the Navy Board because all goods were bought on credit. The Dutch and French were well aware of this problem and hoped to use the financial situation as a weapon against England.¹⁵ Manning the fleet was not easy for the English either. Many sailors had been wounded at Lowestoft and were not eager to join the fleet again. Payment was very inconsistent and wages not very high. Joining a privateer was much more lucrative and at several occasions all letters of marque had to be revoked in order to provide for the navy.¹⁶ The plague complicated matters further as many of the London based sailors were struck by the disease.

The situation in the Dutch Republic seemed much improved since the defeat at Lowestoft. Important diplomatic successes had been achieved and France and Denmark had joined in in the war. During the winter twenty-four new men of war had been completed and were now ready to take their place in the fleet for the coming campaign. These new vessels were larger and their guns more numerous and heavier, more than compensating for the losses that had been sustained during the previous year. Moreover, the Dutch navy had decided not to employ converted merchantmen any more. As we have seen, the East India men had proved to be no match for the heavy English ships of the line and had become obsolete. The new men of

¹⁴ PRO SP 119/36 no.24 23-3-1666; CSPD 357 Charles to the EIC 29-4-1666; CSPD 317-318 Thomas Middleton to Pepys 4-4-1666; CSPD 474 9-7-1666; Greenhalgh Albion, *Forests and sea power*, 214.

¹⁵ Tanner (ed.), *Correspondence*, 132-136 The Navy Board to James 22-5-1666; CSPV 6-7 Giustinian to the Doge 8-6-1666.

¹⁶ PRO PC 6/1 f188 10-7-1666 and f189 16-7-1666.



Council of war on board De Ruyter's ship *Zeven Provinciën* before the Four Days Battle, painted by Willem van de Velde (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam).

war were property of the state and became the core of the new standing fleet. Obviously the States General were in a much better financial position than Charles. This advantage now paid off as the Dutch were able to repair and enlarge their fleet during the war. De Witt believed it to be much stronger and better prepared than the year before. In order to boost morale and to encourage men to sign up for service De Witt invited Prince William III to visit the fleet at the island of Texel.¹⁷

The defeat at Lowestoft had taught the Dutch an important lesson. Discipline had to be improved and De Ruyter decided that fighting in line would most effective. James had used a similar plan in the Battle of Lowestoft and it had paid off. His highly disciplined tactics meant that English men of war could take maximum advantage of their superior guns. His organisation had separated and dispersed the Dutch squadrons.¹⁸

The fleet would be divided into three large squadrons rather than seven small ones. Originally De Ruyter had plans to create a fourth squadron that should remain in reserve in order to assist another hard-pressed squadron. This was not realised however. Apparently De Ruyter had been convinced by his council of war to stick with the three-squadron concept. The officers had to sail in line and make sure the connection

17 Fox, *The Four Days Battle*, 154-155; Oudendijk, J.K., *Johan de Witt en de zeemacht*, 141-142, 151; Bruijn, *Dutch navy*, 84-88.

18 James, *Hertoge van Yorck en Albany. Generale instructie gevonden in 't schip de Charity of Liefde, genomen bij Capiteyn de Haen*; Weber, 'De linie van bataille', 334-341; Bruijn, *Dutch navy*, 87; Bruijn, *Varend verleden*, 113.

was not broken by the opponent. Obviously they had to react to signals and orders from higher commanding officers. Pounding the enemy with heavy gunfire and trying to break its line by manoeuvring one's ships between the enemy's vessels was the aim. By operating in line, all men of war could use their broadside guns and deliver round after round. Ships and parts of squadrons could then be isolated by gaining the weather side and then be dealt with separately. This was done by breaking the enemy line. Often squadrons were paired up against each other. Obviously this strategy required more co-ordination from central command and left less room for the individual and adventurous ways Tromp preferred. It demanded discipline, close communication and co-operation.¹⁹ The next engagement, the Four Days Battle, was fought with this revised approach. De Ruyter organised various councils of war in order to explain and consult his officers about the exact details of his plans.

The Four Days Battle

In April the French fleet was still in Toulon making preparations for its journey northwards. Louis had agreed that his ships would be joined by the Dutch Mediterranean squadron and would then proceed to meet with the bulk of the Dutch vessels. Co-operating in battle would be complicated though. Louis desired that De Beaufort would preside the council of war. De Dutch, however, felt that the French commander was too inexperienced to lead the combined fleet. He had never commanded in battle and his main qualification was his noble background. The issue remained entirely theoretical though. Louis decided that a more careful approach was preferable and ordered De Beaufort to seek temporary refuge in the port of Lisbon, while promising his allies that his ships would arrive as soon as possible.

The exact course of the French fleet concerned both the States General and the English government. The English feared that it could either be used to land an army in catholic Ireland or unite with the Dutch. The junction of both navies would be a very complex and dangerous affair though. The French could not afford entering the Channel and running into the English fleet. They would not stand a chance and so a rendezvous would have to take place south of the Channel. In order to do this the Dutch fleet would have to sail through the Channel leaving the Dutch coast undefended and vulnerable. The English would also be able to cut off its way home.

Louis understood this dilemma and ordered De Beaufort to remain in Lisbon in order to gain time. The English did not know this and were not sure which option to anticipate. Little reliable intelligence came in and the English assumed that the French were ready to enter the Channel. Charles, James and the other members of the Privy Council decided that twenty men of war would be sent out to intercept De Beaufort before he could join De Ruyter. Albemarle was consulted in this decision and Rupert was ordered to command the squadron. Albemarle led the remain-

19 Fox, *A distant storm*, 151-153; Prud'homme van Reine, *Rechterhand*, 275-281.

George Monck, duke of Albemarle, commander of the English fleet during the Four Days Battle, painted by Sir Peter Lely (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam).



ing seventy ships to the Thames Estuary in order to confront the Dutch. Yet in reality this main part of the fleet did not measure the official number of seventy vessels. A significant number was not ready as there had been severe shortages in supplies. There is some discussion among historians whether Albemarle was overconfident about the upcoming battle. Jones argues that Albemarle was indeed stubborn and that he could and should have retreated. Fox does not agree with his version. He claims that Coventry and Arlington were the main sources of English audacity.²⁰ Although neither had any naval experience they were responsible for the decision to seek battle, and that this decision was taken not at sea but in the Privy Council.

On the eleventh of June the Dutch and English fleets clashed near the Thames Estuary. Albemarle attacked despite his inferior numbers. Domestic expectations, the advantageous wind and his sense of chivalrous honour made him decide to seek the confrontation. It seemed that the Dutch were unprepared as well, giving the English the edge they needed against their larger enemy. Albemarle later claimed that avoiding battle had been impossible because he had been cut off by De Ruyter. For four days both sides, operating in line, fought a ferocious battle. On the first day the *Royal Charles* and the *Zeven Provinciën*, the two flagships met each other. Yet no decision

²⁰ Fox, *A distant storm*, 167-314; Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 169-171; Rodger, *Command of the ocean*, 72.

was achieved by either side. The Dutch lost the *Hof van Zeeland* and the *Duivenvoorde*. Sir William Berkeley, Falmouth's brother and Vice-Admiral of the White squadron, was killed when his vessel *Swiftsure* was captured. His body, the prize and the prisoners were taken to Zeeland. The *Seven Oaks* and the *Loyal George* were captured as well. Cornelis Evertsen the Elder, Lieutenant-Admiral of the Second Squadron, lost his life.

Next morning the fighting was resumed. Early in the battle Van der Hulst, Vice-Admiral of the Dutch Second squadron, was killed by musket fire. Frederik Stachouwer, Rear-Admiral of the Third Squadron did not survive either. The vessel *Liefde* was lost after a successful attack with a fireship. Another seven ships had sustained too much damage and were forced to return to the Republic. The English had to send an equal number back home after the first round of fights of the day. During an interval Sir Thomas Clifford arrived with new intelligence that said that Rupert had been called back. So far the English had gained the advantage during the second day. Rupert's reinforcements would provide Albemarle with a good opportunity to decide the battle. When the battle was continued after some time the *Black Eagle* quickly sank. The *St Paul* was lost as well when it was set on fire in order to escape capture. Albemarle was left with only thirty-four men of war. To make things worse twelve fresh Dutch ships arrived at the scene in the afternoon. The fight was then broken off and both fleets spent the rest of the day and the night nursing their wounds.

On the third day the Dutch pursued the English but were not able to do any harm. The English rearguard was too strong and the Dutch main fleet too slow to overtake its enemies. Then suddenly Rupert arrived to reinforce Albemarle's battered fleet. The combined forces were led by Albemarle and Rupert together. Yet when both commanders were about to join, the huge *Royal Prince* grounded. The ship's crew surrendered without a fight when the Dutch threatened to set it on fire. Sir George Ayscue, Admiral of the White squadron, was taken prisoner with most of his men. Unable to keep the prize the Dutch decided to burn the *Royal Prince*. Clifford commented that this 'touched every heart in the fleet, for she was the best ship ever built, and like a castle on the sea.'

On the final fourth day of the battle was continued once again. After both fleets had engaged and broken through each other's line several times, the *Landman* was burned by an English fireship. The *Dom van Utrecht* lost its mainmast and was forced to surrender. An English victory now seemed imminent as the Dutch fleet was divided. Yet when De Ruyter witnessed the *Royal James* losing her masts he hoisted the red flag, ordering all vessels to attack and seek out an opponent for close combat and boarding. The English rear was struck hard by this action. The *Clove-tree*, the *Essex*, and the *Convertine* were captured. The *Black Bull* sank after having been conquered twice. The *Dom van Utrecht* escaped when the crew hoisted the flag again. De Ruyter's attack decided the Four Days Battle as the English retreated.²¹

21 CSPD 431-432 Clifford to Arlington 15-6-1666; Fox, *A distant storm*, 167-314; Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 169-171; Van Foreest and Weber, a.o., *Vierdaagse Zeeslag*; Prud'homme van Reine, *Rechter-*



Fort Willoughby captured by Abraham Crijnsen (Netherlands Institute of Military History).

The outcome of the battle was not immediately clear and therefore disputed. Whitehall claimed the victory and ordered festivities to be organised. Yet this was merely wishful thinking and intended to boost morale. Charles and his courtiers were desperate for accurate intelligence and believed the first positive messages. It soon turned out that the losses were very large. Ten ships were lost out of a total of eighty, 1,000 men were killed, 1,450 wounded and another 1,800 imprisoned in the Dutch Republic. One admiral had been taken prisoner, one had been killed and Myngs died soon after. On the nineteenth Albemarle admitted to Arlington that he was not certain about the losses. The confusion of the battle meant that many reports contradicted each other, but the real extent of losses soon became clear. Obviously the defeat caused anger and strife at Court and within the ranks of naval officers. Albemarle was accused of having been overconfident. He then stated that Carteret, Coventry and Arlington had been responsible for the division of the fleet. He argued that he had warned against this and that he would not be able to confront the entire Dutch fleet.²² The Four Days Battle would later be one of the events that became subject of a Parliamentary evaluation of the war.

band, 167-176; Roos, *Varen en vechten*, 236-244.

²² BL ADD MS 32094 f196.

The Dutch had lost four ships and many other vessels had sustained heavy damage. Some 1,550 men were killed and 1,300 wounded. Three Dutch admirals had been killed in the battle. Yet six prizes could be shown to the public. There was still some uncertainty about the outcome of the confrontation, but this sentiment was soon forgotten. The first incoming reports were the cause of huge expectations and an overwhelming sense of happiness and relief. The usual official celebrations and bonfires were organised throughout the Republic. Services were held in church to give thanks for the obtained result. Dutch poets produced a number of poems praising the courage of the sailors and defending the Dutch cause. Commanders like De Ruyter, Van der Hulst, Stachouwer and Blok were honoured as well. The victory caused many Dutch merchants to try to take advantage of the absence of the English fleet. Many vessels left for or returned from France or other countries in order to make up for all losses and slumbering trade. This provided the Republic with funds that were necessary for the war effort.²³

Authorities minted commemorative coins and erected grave monuments for Cornelis Evertsen and Van der Hulst. Government clearly tried to mobilise all possible patriotic pride to continue the war. De Witt associated himself with the fleet and the war effort. Obviously the victory increased his prestige and for the moment silenced his opponents. The public knew of his hard work to prepare the ships. He tried to benefit from this temporary popularity to give the repairing and setting out of the men of war even more momentum.²⁴

The display abroad was another important aspect of the official celebrations. In Paris Boreel arranged for bonfires, trumpets, music, fireworks, and free wine for the public to be presented as well as a huge twenty-four course banquet. In Livorno the Dutch organised a huge feast and grateful 'roman catholic Dutch' had the *Te Deum* sung. Henrietta Anne tried to counter Boreel's ostentatious activities and continued spreading the news that England had won the battle. The States General believed a serious and decisive victory had been achieved against the enemy.²⁵

De Witt hoped that a quick new naval expedition would cause even more harm to the English. The Admiralties tried to repair their ships as quickly as possible in order to seek a new confrontation. Few weeks after the Four Days Battle a completely futile attempt was done to attack the English ships in repair that were supposed to be located near Chatham. De Ruyter was less optimistic and more realistic: according to a newspaper he had stated that it had not been a victory but 'the English were never more beaten'.²⁶

23 CSPV 37 Giustinian to the Doge 20-7-1666; PRO SP 119/36 no.58 20-7-1666 and no.59 23-7-1666; NA SG 6782 LF, Boreel to the States General 13-8-1666.

24 Scheffer, *Roemruchte jaren*, 103-108.

25 CSPD 432 17-6-1666, 434 Albemarle to Arlington 19-6-1666; Fox, *A distant storm*, 315-329.

26 PRO ZJ 1/1 28-6-1666; PRO SP 119/36 no.62 3-8-1666; NA SG 6782 LF, Boreel to the States General 2-7-1666; CSPV 27-28 Giustinian to the Doge 6-7-1666.

The St James Day Fight and Holmes' raid

In England the Navy Board managed to repair and set out the fleet in much shorter time than the States General had expected. Many men had been pressed for service and so the English were altogether well prepared. De Beaufort's French squadron was still in Lisbon and so the scenario of fighting two opponents was no longer confusing English strategists.²⁷ The English knew that they only had to deal with the Dutch this time and no second enemy had to be intercepted. Prince Rupert and Albemarle had again been appointed to command together.

The Dutch had been building and preparing frantically as well. To man the fleet many English and Scottish prisoners had been persuaded or threatened to serve. The aim was to seek the confrontation in battle as De Witt believed the English to be handicapped. The tactical approach would be identical to the one used during the Four Days Battle. On the fourth and the fifth of August the confrontation took place between two fleets that were almost equal in numbers. The English armament was much heavier and more numerous and this advantage was to decide the fight.

Almost immediately Jan Evertsen's squadron became separated from the bulk of the Dutch fleet. The Lieutenant Admiral of the Second squadron had succeeded his deceased brother but was now killed himself. Vice Admiral Rudolph Coenders of the same squadron met a similar fate. Tjerk Hiddes de Vries, Lieutenant Admiral of the Frisian Admiralty, was badly wounded. In a direct duel the *Zeven Provinciën*, commanded by De Ruyter, met with Albemarle's *Royal Charles*. The Dutch ship won as Albemarle had to pull out of the fight. The *Royal Sovereign* then damaged the Dutch flagship that had to retreat. Both the Dutch van and centre squadrons were battered by the English gun superiority and were forced to break off the engagement. Tromp was more successful with his rear squadron. The *Resolution* was successfully attacked with a fireship. The other two Dutch squadrons, however, fled for the Zeeland coast in order to prevent a heavier defeat. The *Sneek* and the *Tholen* were captured and then burned. The English pursuit was not carried out efficiently though. They lacked smaller vessels to overtake the Dutch in shallow waters.

The unsuccessful chase later caused heated disputes between the English naval officers. Sir Jeremy Smith failed to trap Tromp's squadron that tried to return home. The Dutch commanders became involved in even more serious quarrels. De Ruyter blamed Tromp for neglecting his duty and leaving the other two squadrons in the hour of need. The supreme commander lost his patience and reacted furiously when Tromp tried to explain his actions. He told him never to set foot on the *Zeven Provinciën* again. De Ruyter and Tromp both complained to the States General. De Witt tried to reconcile both admirals but his attempt failed. This strife and the defeat caused new political divisions in the Dutch Republic as Tromp was publicly associated with the House of Orange. He tried to solve the situation by offering his apologies and promising to serve loyally. His volatile character and insolent letter to the States General

²⁷ CSPV 36-37 Giustinian to the Doge 20-7-1666.

were taken into account however, and so he was dismissed. This measure was very unpopular with the public and the common sailors. Tromp's political contacts with Orangist regents in Rotterdam caused more unrest as they printed a pamphlet accusing De Ruyter of mismanagement during the St James' Day Fight.²⁸

Not worried about the internal problems in the enemy camp, the English naval officers hoped to follow up on their victory. On the nineteenth of August Sir Robert Holmes carried out a raid on the island of Terschelling and on a merchant fleet laying at anchor nearby. Albemarle had ordered him to do whatever damage he could to Dutch commerce and to exploit the victory by attacking the islands. Laurens Heemskerck, a Dutch traitor who had joined the English after Lowestoft, served as pilot helping to lead a squadron through the shoals. Holmes was surprised to find that the Vlie, the channel between Vlieland and Terschelling, was packed with numerous merchantmen. The captains had ignored warnings about a possible English raid. Holmes sent in five fireships that set them all on fire. Between 140 and 170 ships were destroyed, some of which were destined for the Baltic, Archangel, the West Indies and the Levant. Only twelve ships managed to escape from a similar fate. Altogether the damage to the Dutch economy was enormous: an estimated £1 million worth of goods and vessels had been lost. Riots broke out in Amsterdam. On the twentieth Holmes decided to carry out his initial plan to land troops on Terschelling. He set fire to the houses of the village of Westerschelling after his men had carried off what they could, leaving the villagers impoverished.²⁹

Holmes's bonfire, as it was called, boosted English morale and it inspired pamphleteers to stir up anti-Dutch sentiments once again. An anonymous writer published one of the many delighted poems:

*"Where are those boasting boors, what are their names?
That swore they blockt us up i'th River Thames
Brave, were it done; I must confess the Hogan
Was very willing, but wanted Mogan"
"Our streets were thick with bonfires large and tall,
But Holmes one bonfire made, was worth'em all.
Well done Sir Robert, bravely done I swear,
Whilst we made bonfires here, you made'em there."³⁰*

28 CSPD 524 and 578-580 Clifford to Arlington 21-7-1666 and 6-8-1666, 580 Allin to Williamson 6-8-1666; *Den oprechten Hollandsen bootsgesel. Vertoond in een t'zamenspraak tusschen drie personen*; Fox, *A distant storm*, 331-341; Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 170-172; Prud'homme van Reine, *Schittering en schandaal*, 262-270; Rodger, *Command of the ocean*, 76; Scheffer, *Roemruchte jaren*, 117-119.

29 The damage to the Dutch economy caused by Holmes, was very considerable, that much is certain. The amount of 1 million pounds worth of damage however, was based on English sources and is therefore probably unreliable. Historians have been copying this information from each other but it is also the only information available.; CSPD 21 Albemarle to Arlington 21-8-1666, 32 Rupert and Albemarle to Charles 21-8-1666; Bodl Rawlinson MS A195 f195 Coventry to Pepys 25-8-1666; Hallema, 'Engelse brandstichters', 725-732; Boxer, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 36; Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 172; Fox, *A distant storm*, 342.

30 *Sir Robert Holmes his bonfire, or the Dutch doomsday*. The words Hogan and Mogan refer to the title *Hoogmogende Heren* (High and mighty gentlemen) that the States General used for themselves.

The Dutch were devastated by the disaster. Churches, authorities and individuals began raising funds to help the people of Westerschelling. Many people were outraged with Holmes's methods and brutality. They felt that an undefended village should not have been plundered and burned. Obviously the Dutch had their own ways of harming their enemies and their opinion was biased.³¹

The campaigning season ended on October when the Dutch did once more attempt to gain the upper hand. In September the Dutch fleet sailed out to meet and join with De Beaufort's squadron. The English fleet, again commanded by Rupert and Albemarle, hoped to intercept either and patrolled the Strait of Dover. Another squadron was equipped to capture the homebound VOC fleet. The attempt was unsuccessful. In the Channel both fleets spotted each other but bad weather made an armed confrontation almost impossible. The *Charles Merchant*, however, was lost when the vessel lost her foremast and was captured. De Beaufort had by now entered the Channel hoping to meet De Ruyter. The Dutch commander decided to postpone the rendezvous because a battle with the English would have been fought under unfortunate circumstances. He warned De Beaufort to retreat to Brest and returned to the Republic. Seven of the French ships encountered the English and escaped to different directions. The *Rubis*, however, was captured after a hard fight with several English men of war.

In early October De Witt ordered one last attempt to seek battle with the English. He accompanied the fleet himself. Rupert sailed out once again to meet the challenge but bad weather prevented the confrontation. The long and bloody campaigning season had come to an end.³² Coastal patrolling continued though and the Dutch tried to protect their maritime commerce.

Disaster strikes: the plague and the Great Fire of London

The year 1666 was not very successful from the English point of view. In 1664 the Dutch Republic had been struck by bubonic plague, brought over from Turkey. English authorities were not unhappy with this situation as it would seriously weaken the opponent. Thousands of people died all over the Seven Provinces. In 1664 almost 25,000 perished in the city of Amsterdam alone.³³ The English were desperate to prevent the outbreak spreading to England but during the Spring of 1665 the disease had been carried to London nevertheless. Hundreds of people fell victim every week. In July panic broke out and many, including king and government, fled the City. Charles and his Court settled down in Oxford. The poor could not afford to leave and soon the number of casualties amounted to thousands per week. Their corpses were transported with carts and buried at night to prevent further spread-

³¹ Scheffer, *Roemruchte jaren*, 138-141.

³² CSPD 61 Sir William Penn to the Navy Board 2-9-1666, 143 Allin to Williamson 30-9-1666; CSPV 71-73 Giustinian to the Doge 21-9-1666; Jones, *Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 172-174; Fox, *A distant storm*, 343-344.

ing. Obviously the pressure on the English economy was considerable. Foreign trade was limited to the minimum and commerce in the City came to a standstill as many wealthier merchants and citizens had evacuated. The direct costs of the plague were high as well. Much money had to be spent on the caring for ill and burying of deceased. Only in the last months of the year did the intensity of the plague decrease as temperatures dropped. In February 1666 Charles and his courtiers finally returned to London.³³ The disease had left the City but the provinces and towns were struck in 1666.

Obviously the impression the plague made on contemporary English must have been considerable. Tens of thousands had died and contemporary science could not yet explain the exact nature and cause. Many people must have been convinced that the outbreak was a clear sign of Divine Retribution.

It was not only the plague that struck England; another disaster hit London and proved to be even more traumatising. On the twelfth of September 1666 a fire broke out in a bakery in Pudding Lane near London Bridge. The summer had been hot and dry and the ideal conditions for a major catastrophe were all present. Yet initially it seemed that the fire posed no immediate danger to the City. The Lord Mayor Bludworth greatly underestimated the potential of the fire and did little to remedy matters. A strong gale, however, caused other houses, many constructed from wood, to catch fire as well and so it spread rapidly. The area around Pudding Lane counted many houses that contained dry naval supplies like tar, hemp and flax. Obviously this contributed further to the spreading. It soon got out of hand and fire-fighters were unable to control the inferno. Still many people and the authorities were not reacting to the imminent danger.

Pulling down houses was now the only thing that could stop the fire. Yet, like in so many other old cities, the houses were built closely together which made it more difficult to completely clear a side of all flammable things. It would have required the co-operation of many people. Yet many citizens were too busy saving their own belongings to help create a fire-break. Many people were reluctant to pull down their own property. Chaos threatened to take over and then government took steps to limit the disaster.

James of York was ordered to organise and command the fire-fighting. He was the executive instrument of the king's authority in this case of imminent disaster that was clearly too large for local authorities like the Lord Mayor. He worked hard managing and encouraging crews of fire-fighters. He was even seen working side by side with them. He had to prevent the abuse or killing of foreigners as well. Many people believed there had been some sort of plot to set fire to the City. The Dutch and French were the most obvious suspects. Pamphleteers added to the panic by accusing foreigners, catholics and nonconformists. A number of foreigners was attacked by the mob. Even in Hull the governor organised extra guards and

³³ Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 624-625.

³⁴ Hutton, *Restoration*, 225-233.

locked up all prisoners to prevent arson. Rumours about a Dutch or French army invading England contributed to the sentiments of xenophobia and insecurity. Authorities later stressed that the disaster had not been caused by arson but by accident. They hoped to quiet these violent sentiments in order to bring an end to chaos. In September Parliament set up a committee that examined the causes of the great fire. In February 1667 it concluded that French catholics and Jesuits had been guilty. Government more or less ignored this report.³⁵

The fire still spread and reached the wealthier parts of the City. Many houses belonging to merchants and goldsmiths were destroyed. The EIC lost a large part of the Dutch VOC goods that Sandwich had captured the year before. The Royal Exchange, St Paul's Cathedral and many other important buildings fell victim to the flames as well. After four days the wind finally fell providing the fire-fighters with a chance to extinguish a number of separate fires.

The total damage was enormous. Many people had lost their house and fortune. For the moment commerce came to a standstill. Some 13,200 houses had been destroyed leaving at least 65,000 people homeless. Contemporary estimates of the total damage of houses amounted some £7 million. This caused the royal revenue to decrease as well. Altogether it seriously weakened the position of the English government.³⁶

Many people considered the great fire an act of Divine Retribution again like the plague had been. John Evelyn described the disaster in biblical terms stating that it was 'a resemblance of Sodome, or the last day; it call'd to mind that of 4 Heb. *non enim hic habemus stabilem civitatem*, the ruins resembling the picture Troy: London was, but it is no more.'³⁷ According to many, the people and government had sinned and had been punished accordingly. The year 1666 had obviously been awaited with great apprehension. The biblical number of the beast had inspired many people to believe that great and important changes and events were forthcoming. These people had now been confirmed in their beliefs. It seemed as if a bad curse had been put on England and its government. To soothe religious panic Charles ordered a day of national penance. In his diary John Evelyn commented that 'a generall fast through the nation, to humble us, upon the late dreadfull conflagration, added to the plague and warr (...) [was] highly deserved for our prodigious ingratitude, burning lusts, disolute court, profane and abominable lives (...)'.³⁸ Despite the naval successes that had been achieved, the year 1666 had truly become an *Annus Horibilis*, as some writers put it.

The financial problems the government faced now escalated due to these disasters, poor planning and failing taxation. The consequences for England were complicat-

35 Keeble, *Restoration*, 164.

36 Porter, *Great Fire of London*, 34-89; CSPD 99 Arlington to Clifford 14-9-1666, 103 16-9-1666, 107 18-9-1666 and 108 Luke Whittingdon to Williamson 18-9-1666.

37 Evelyn, *Diary*, 13-9-1666; Heb. xiii. 4, *Non enim hic habemus stabilem civitatem*. (For here we have no lasting city.) The Vulgate version is slightly different: *Non enim habemus hic manentem civitatem*.

38 CSPD 119 Thomas Holden to Williamson 22-9-1666, 122 23-9-1666; Evelyn, *Diary*, 20-10-1666.

ed. In September Charles was forced to request another additional supply of £1,6 million to continue the war. The majority of the MP's understood the urgent need and agreed. Yet, king and Parliament disagreed on how to raise this. Charles proposed a general excise that would continue to be levied for the rest of the reign. This would permanently improve the financial position of the Crown and expand the official bureaucracy, reducing royal dependence on votes of money by the Commons. The majority of the House of Commons did not accept this and offered to buy off the Hearth Tax once and for all. This was unacceptable to the king as the result of this would be the opposite. He would only get his money in February next year when he was allowed some £1,26 million.³⁹ In October 1666 James was ordered to lay up most of the fleet. All major men of war were pulled back to naval ports and only a small squadron of fast vessels would continue disrupting Dutch trade and protect the coast. The laying up allowed the Navy Board to discharge most of them. Sailors were already being paid with tickets rather than money.⁴⁰

Altogether the war became more and more unpopular. Successes like the outcome of the St James' Day Fight and Holmes's Bonfire were still celebrated publicly. Pamphleteers still expressed their optimism after these victories but the people felt that other issues deserved priority. The public felt that peace was required in order to rebuild the City and to recover from the plague and the commercial standstill. Public dislike of the Dutch diminished as well. Many believed the Plague and the London Fire had been caused by French Catholics. As well as religious hostility, and popular xenophobia increasingly directed against France rather than the Dutch Republic there were substantial reasons for dislike; Colbert's protectionist duties were slashing English exports to France, increasing an imbalance of trade, and the navy which he was building faced England with a new rival at sea.

Taxes rose as result of the war and government still lacked funding to pay its bills. Most merchants by now understood that an armed confrontation was not the best way to take over Dutch maritime supremacy. They experienced how the ongoing conflict increasingly crippled their business and shipping. Yet the king and his leading ministers felt it could not simply pull out: too much was at stake and could be lost. Borrowing another £50,000 from the East India Company seemed the only option.⁴¹

In late 1666 only political and personal motives of Charles and his ministers caused the English to continue the war. Many mercantilists now regretted their support or had held pessimist views from the beginning. The Dutch were not likely to make major concessions. The fleet was still potentially dominant at sea but it had become clear that the financial burden was growing too heavy to bear; it turned out that royal revenues would be insufficient to put out a full-strength fleet in 1667. The use of tickets to pay seamen complicated this even further. Royal creditworthi-

39 Jones, *Charles II*, 71-72.

40 Bodl Rawlinson MS A191 f245-248 Materials towards an account of ye reason of discharge of men by ticket.

41 CSPD 357 Charles to the EIC 29-4-1666.

ness had virtually extinguished; this meant that naval contractors, who were on the brink of bankruptcy could not buy timber and other naval stores. Politicians like Clifford and Albemarle were still supporting the continuation. Only a honourable and profitable peace treaty would be acceptable as all other scenarios would damage Charles's position at home and abroad. Their own political and social fortunes were connected to the king's and so they still hoped to make the best out of the situation. The large warlike faction that had existed in 1664 had fallen apart though. More and more opposition, especially from a new group of country MP's, against certain policies could be heard in the House of Commons. There was not yet a coherent faction or party that opposed the king's plans as would happen in later years. Often Charles's managers proved incapable of manipulating and steering Parliament. Many people distrusted their individual intentions as well. Ambitious courtiers and politicians were not trusted as generally as before. Factions and individuals tried to get an act passed that would totally prohibit the import of Irish cattle. This was a clear sign that the ministers were losing control in Parliament when such a major proposal was introduced by an unofficial leadership. When Charles expressed his dislike, a number of country MP's reacted by threatening to block any future funding.⁴² Relations between Court and Parliament were certainly not as well and co-operative as they had been in 1664 and 1665. Two important developments indicated the deteriorating relations between king and Parliament. The revival of the old procedure of impeachment against Viscount Mordaunt, a minor courtier, created a potential threat to the ministers. The Commons proposed appointing commissioners of accounts to examine the public accounts and report back, which Charles resisted as a major invasion of his prerogative rights.

Manoeuvring in the international powerplay

In 1666 the effects of the war were felt in both the Dutch Republic and in England. Common people's lives were affected in many ways. Trade was hampered and so prices rose. Sailors served on the fleet, were imprisoned or risked a hostile confrontation in commercial employment. This concerned their families as well. The pressure on both governments increased as many citizens petitioned for many different reasons. The drain on financial reserves and the amount of casualties contributed to this.

Both sides were now prepared to enter informal discussion. They still had to show their self-confidence in public to justify the financial demands made on their people. This was necessary to finance the next naval campaign in 1667. However, to make the first move to suggest opening negotiations would be taken as an admission of weakness. Using secret channels to examine possibilities could be extremely dangerous, as the Buat affair showed in the Dutch Republic. In September Hen-

42 Jones, *Charles II*, 71-72.

ry de Fleury de Coulan de Buat, a French army officer in States' service and convinced supporter of William III, became involved in a secret plot to overthrow De Witt's regent regime. He openly corresponded with Arlington about peace negotiations and even informed De Witt about this. He was fed with material to include in his letters by De Witt, who instructed him on what to write on the possible terms that a treaty might include. De Witt eagerly exploited the possibility that was offered by his political opponents. The correspondence was perhaps not ideal but it provided a honourable way to open negotiations. De Witt, however, had no idea that Arlington was inciting Buat to organise a coup, calculating that a change of regime would greatly improve England's negotiation position. Pressure on De Witt was increasing early in 1666. William courted support in visits to Amsterdam and Rotterdam. In March Zeeland regents could no longer withstand popular pressure and wanted to appoint William, still officially a minor, general of the cavalry and Member to the Council of State. However the next month De Witt contained the moves to promote William by getting Amalia van Solms, William's grandmother and regent, to agree that the Prince's political education should be undertaken by a commission named by the States of Holland. He was to be consoled by the title 'child of the state', which implied that in time he might advance to major offices, but the agreement meant that any immediate advance was now not possible by legal means. At the moment the position of De Witt's regime was too strong for the Orangists to win major concessions.

In August De Buat made a huge mistake however, when he showed De Witt the wrong letters that were intended for the conspirators. Their plot had been completely futile and obsolete ever since Amalia van Solms's agreement with De Witt of April. The meaningless correspondence had been continued nevertheless and De Buat still believed he was advancing the Prince's interests. De Witt finally had him arrested after De Buat ignored a chance to flee. He was accused of treason and beheaded. De Buat had not really tried to help the English defeat the Republic, but merely hoped to advance the Prince's interests and bring an end to the war.

De Witt used De Buat's naiveté to strike hard against the opposition and even managed to strengthen his position. De Buat had had connections with Tromp and his brother-in-law Johan Kievit, a Rotterdam regent. For the moment all plans to change the political situation had become impossible.⁴³ This increased the government's political power considerably. Less opposition was to be expected at home and Arlington could no longer play his Orangist card.

The next opportunity to open serious Anglo-Dutch discussions was provided by Berkeley's body. The dead admiral's corpse had been embalmed and preserved by Dutch authorities. The States General sent an official message to London informing Charles about the procedure that had been followed. This method meant that no side

43 Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 775-776; Geyl, *Orange and Stuart*, 220-260; Rowen, *John de Witt*, 617-622; Fruin, 'Het proces van Buat'; Brown, *Letters*, 578-580 and 587-590 D'Estrades to Louis 19-8-1666 and 26-8-1666.

lost face and the discussions could begin. The king replied with a letter stating that the Dutch had been the aggressors, especially in the colonial trades, and that he would have dealt with Holmes if it had not been for their impatience. England would like to reach a peace agreement nevertheless and so the invitation to start a more formal correspondence was made.⁴⁴ Berkeley's corpse was transported to England.

In the meantime, Franco-Dutch relations were still very complicated. Officially both countries were united as active allies. In reality however, co-operation between them was far from ideal. The commercial disputes only increased as Louis and Colbert continued to enforce their tariff-policy. Mercantilism was becoming more and more important in French foreign politics. Dutch merchants frequently complained to Boreel about harsh taxes and bad treatment by local authorities.⁴⁵

The military aspect of the alliance caused friction as well. France had defeated Münster and had deterred other potential enemies like Sweden and some German princes. Louis believed the Dutch Republic should be grateful for his assistance. Declaring war on England, he argued, had not been obligatory under the Franco-Dutch treaty because he regarded the Dutch Republic partly responsible for the outbreak of the conflict. The king therefore thought that the Republic should be thankful for what French diplomats and the army had done. His Mediterranean interests could be damaged if he risked his new and expensive fleet in a confrontation with the English. However his 'gloire' would not permit him to refuse naval aid explicitly, so he had tried to win time by delaying De Beaufort's journey to the north. In the neutral vision of Giustinian, the Venetian representative in Paris, the Dutch would be kept satisfied with flattery and diplomatic aid against Münster and other potential opponents. France would only wait for an ideal opportunity to serve its own interests and would limit its involvement in the war to the minimum. In his view the French were not entirely unhappy about the English victory at St James' Day. This would keep the Republic and England in balance and would prevent the Dutch from claiming sovereignty of the seas.⁴⁶ Like all other governments, Louis would help his allies when their targets corresponded with his. He believed that aiming for the realisation of his own ambitions should be preferred. In all reason, he thought, the Dutch could not ask for more than that. In this sense the Second Anglo-Dutch War was very much connected to the issue of the Spanish Netherlands. For Louis it was even subordinate as he could time his move and both England and the Republic were not in a position to react while their hands were tied because of the war.

One, rather unreliable, source confirms how French foreign politics were shaped by pure *raison d'état*. Sometime in 1665 De Lionne wrote to Louis explaining his view on current developments: 'the present conjuncture of affaires abroad

44 Brown, *Letters*, 616-621 The States General to Charles 17-9-1666; BL ADD MS 32094 f162-168 Charles to the States General 14-10-1666; CSPV 100-102 Giustinian to the Doge 12-11-1666.

45 NA SG 12587.173 SKF, Boreel to the States General 25-6-1666.

46 CSPV 49-51 and 87-88 Giustinian to the Doge 10-8-1666 and 12-10-1666.

requires nothing more from your Majesties prudence, than to respite for a little time the warr against Spaine. That which is allready begun betwixt England and the United Provinces is the most fortunate occasion that can possibly be wished, and which the Divine Providence seemes to present your Majesty not only to constitute you arbiter of the differences between those two nations, but by which you may exhaust them at little charge, as being the only powers which can and are indeed to engage for the defence and protection of the Lowe Countries.' De Lionne believed that France should strive to continue the conflict in order to weaken both competitors. A well-timed attack on the Spanish Netherlands could then not be prevented.⁴⁷

In July France took diplomatic steps in order to create the ideal political setting. Paris offered Spain a defensive alliance declaring that England had proved to be weak after the defeat of the Four Days Battle. The purpose of this manoeuvre was to prevent Sandwich from concluding a close friendship with Madrid. Of course the Spanish government replied with plausible and insignificant excuse that prevented the loss of face by either side.⁴⁸

In December Giustinian told the Doge that Don Francisco de Moura de Castel Rodrigo, the governor-general of the Spanish Netherlands, attempted to drive a wedge between France and the Dutch Republic by means of rather obscure intrigues.⁴⁹ This way the Dutch would have the free hand to check Louis when he threatened to invade the Spanish Netherlands. Thus, throughout the war most major participants of the international powerplay were somehow tied to the issue of the Spanish Netherlands. The Dutch and English were occupied by their conflict and France only benefited from this when neither would connect with Spain. Madrid hoped to ally itself with either state in order to protect its territories. The Dutch were very much concerned about Louis's desires but the English were not united on the attitude to be taken towards French ambitions. There were ministers who were concerned, but were they ready and in a position to take any action? The English government had the alternative option, which the Dutch did not have, of acquiescing in, or even collaborating with, French policies. The Anglo-Dutch war was therefore only part of this complicated game of international politics.

47 PRO PRO 30/24/4 f153 De Lionne to Louis (undated). This letter, found in the Shaftesbury Papers, was written in English and was therefore either a forgery or an intercepted and translated letter. If it were a forgery, it would be reasonable to assume that it was intended to serve propaganda matters. I have not come across any pamphlets on this issue. The English were known to intercept and translate foreign diplomatic and political letters. Van Gogh complained about this phenomenon at numerous occasions. The content of the letter does confirm the image that arises from other sources. I therefore believe that the letter can be used for this argument.

48 CSPV 41-43 Zorzi to the Doge 28-7-1666.

49 CSPV 116-117 Giustinian to the Doge 28-12-1666.

The war in the Mediterranean, in the American colonies and against trade

In 1666 the Dutch naval pressure on the city of Tangiers ceased as the Dutch squadron was ordered to accompany De Beaufort to the north. Yet the French hoped to gain the fort and to improve their position in the Mediterranean. They attempted a landing but this failed. From this year onwards the war in the region was fought mainly between England and France.

Lord Belasyse contracted a local prince to protect the settlement from the land side. The Moroccan noble supplied the regiment with fresh meat as well. In exchange the English would deliver fifty tons of gunpowder per three months. This, and Sandwich's negotiations in Madrid, led to the pressure on Tangiers decreasing significantly. Spain was more concerned about the French capturing the city and therefore stopped harming English interests.

The absence of the Dutch fleet was a considerable advantage to the English, especially since a number of their own vessels, commanded by Sir Jeremy Smith, were present to protect supply lines from England. More enemy merchantmen were therefore brought up to Tangiers than during the previous year as well. In January two French ships were captured by Algerian corsairs and taken to Tangiers. Lord Belasyse confiscated both as they had been intercepted by infidels claiming that he valued christians over muslims; he used the religious difference as an excuse to claim the ships for the king. Smith hunted down more commercial vessels and escorted them to Tangiers.⁵⁰ Altogether the war in the Mediterranean went much better for England from 1666 onwards. Yet the situation on the North Sea and at home meant that trade could still not be resumed to the normal extent.

In this very year the English immediately took the initiative in the West Indies. In January Arlington received a report stating that Tobago had been taken from the Dutch and that plans were made to capture the islands of Saba and St Eustatius as well. The WIC felt threatened and asked the States General for military support. The directors hoped to send 150 more troops to Curaçao. The soldiers did not arrive in time though and St Eustatius was conquered the same month. Saba was lost as well.

The French had very ambitious plans concerning the West Indies. In April they took the English half of St Christopher. The French colonists completely surprised their English neighbours and defeated them. An attempt to undo this failed. Lord Willoughby, governor at Jamaica, wrote to Charles that the English were losing in the West. The island of Nevis had been acquired by the French and he feared that Barbados would be lost to them as well. Louis had sent some 800 soldiers to the West Indies and this seemed to make the difference. Things became even worse in

⁵⁰ PRO CO 279/6 f9 20-1-1666, f43-46 12-4-1666, f65 16-5-1666, f101 24-8-1666; PRO CO 279/8 26-9-1666, 24-10-1666 and 13-11-1666; Historical Manuscripts Commission (ed.), *Heathcote*, 245-246 Belasyse to Westcombe 5-4-1666; BL Sloane MS 3509 f186-190 f186-190 13-9-1667.

December when an English squadron under Willoughby was struck by a terrible tropical storm. The vessels had been on their way to St Christopher to recapture the colony but the 500 survivors were all taken prisoner. Lord Willoughby drowned and so the English had lost their main leader as well. And to make things worse, Antigua was lost in that same month.⁵¹ Altogether it became clear that some action should be taken to save the English colonies in the West Indies. The French were very determined to exploit the war and the English financial weakness to improve their own position in the West.

The Franco-Dutch alliance meant that privateering against England increased in 1666. French corsairs eagerly accepted Louis's letters of marque. Dutch privateers were allowed to use French ports with hardly any restrictions. They could sell their prizes there and dispose of their prisoners. In March Hollis reported to Coventry that ten English merchantmen had been brought up to La Rochelle and St Martin by the Dutch in ten days time. Many private men of war still patrolled the waters around the Iberian Peninsula as well. The damage to trade was significant, the fishing industry was ruined and the colliers from Newcastle could not set out for London. In November four enemy privateers surprised some fifty vessels carrying coal and dispersed them. The escort by one man of war was unable to prevent this. Prices of fuel in London rose accordingly.⁵²

French corsairs and naval officers profited from the war as well and took a number of prizes. Several English Levant vessels were intercepted and brought up to Toulon. French privateers operated in the Atlantic as well but usually avoided the North Sea, which their Dutch colleagues considered an attractive hunting ground and had many ships there. The total amount of French captures was relatively low though as Dutch competitors intercepted many merchantmen and English maritime activities slumbered.⁵³

Meanwhile English and Scottish privateering continued as well. The Scots had equipped some 120 privateers in early 1667. They roamed the northern half of the North Sea and threatened Dutch, Danish and French merchantmen on their way to the Baltic. According to one Dutch diplomat the Danish waters were absolutely

51 CSPC 355 John Reid to Arlington January 1666, 375 April 1666, 382-383 and 431-432 Willoughby to Charles 22-5-1666 and 18-12-1666; CSP Clar 546 Willoughby to Clarendon 5-6-1666; CSPD 292-293 D. Grosse to Williamson 7-12-1666; CSPV 13, 28-29 and 64-65 Giustinian to the Doge 22-6-1666, 6-7-1666 and 7-9-1666; NA SG 57681 LWIC, Extract of a resolution of the States General 12-1-1666, the WIC to the States General 12-1-1666; BL Egerton MS 2395 f443 21-4-1666.

52 BL Althorpe MS C13 Hollis to Coventry 10-3-1666; NA SG 6782 LF, Boreel to the States General 26-3-1666 and 9-4-1666; CSPD 187 Captain Thomas Trafford to the Navy Board 12-1-1666, 113 Richard Bower to Williamson 20-9-1666, 262-263 H. Muddiman to George Powell 25-11-1666, 266 Luke Whittingdon to Williamson 26-11-1666, 107 Robert Gray to Sir Philip Frowde 28-5-1667; CSPC 465-466 William Willoughby to Williamson 17-5-1667.

53 Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Finch*, 413 Lannoy to Winchelsea 2-3-1666; NA SG 6782 LF, Boreel to the States General 10-12-1666; Villiers, *Corsairs*, 159-166.

swarming with Scottish private men of war. Considerable successes were achieved: Dutch ships carrying wine and grain were brought up to Edinburgh. According to the EIC Scottish privateers had even managed to capture a VOC vessel and escort it into Leith.⁵⁴ It is clear that increasingly the Scottish privateering business became an appealing alternative to trade in time of war.

The English colleagues did their best to capture their share of the prizes, operating against the Dutch, French and Danish. This was an attractive prospect as well, but many entrepreneurs had difficulties setting out their vessels because of the naval press-gang. The navy continued taking merchantmen as well. As in 1665, these captures served many different purposes. The *Vergulde Leeuw* was given to the Royal Adventurers trading into Africa, who had lost this very same ship to the Dutch some years before. Other prize goods and vessels were used to reward naval officers. Teddiman and Holmes distributed the cargo of the vessel *Tulp* among their officers. Holmes received the ship, Teddiman got the *St Gertrude*. Many other prizes and goods were sold off to the public in order to strengthen royal finances. A French prize was given to Sir William St Ravy to repay a £700 debt. Other ships could well be employed for naval services after the judgement had been passed. The *Melkmeid* was used to transport masts and the *Zwarte Postpaard* carried stones. Some others were old, could not be sold and were then turned into fire ships.⁵⁵

In March 1667 some £145,806 of the prize money had been paid to the Navy Board. The sum of £20,000 had been spent on Tangiers. The Commission of Sick and Wounded had received £3,000 and £18,525 was paid to the farmers of customs and excises. Salaries of High Court officers and prize officers had been funded with prize money as well.⁵⁶ Still this was all disappointing as some people had hoped that the war would pay itself. Yet no profit was made. And according to Pepys the common sailors had still not received their share of prize money by 1669.⁵⁷

54 CSPD 571 Robert Mein to Williamson 29-3-1667; Scheurleer, *Brieven*, VI 605 Van Reede van Renswoude to De Witt 2-7-1667; PRO SP 119/38 no.22 18-3-1667, no.26 1-4-1667 and no.35 3-5-1667; Sainsbury, *Calendar*, 310 Mark Scott to Williamson 17-4-1667.

55 CSPD 195 Andrew Crawly to Pepys 19-1-1666, 256 Captain Fracis Saunders to the Navy Board 1-3-1666, 312 1-4-1666, 325 Charles to James 9-4-1666, 215 2-11-1666, 219 5-11-1666, 119 Allin to Williamson 3-6-1667, 449 22-1-1667, 525 4-3-1667, 528-529 Coventry to Arlington 5-3-1667, 596 Coventry to the Navy Board 9-4-1667; PRO PRO 30/24/4 f143 22-2-1666 Account of sales of prize goods in Plymouth; Tanner, *Correspondence*, 180-181 Pepys to James 17-10-1667.

56 PRO PRO 30/24/40/41.

57 Pepys, *Diary*, 14-5-1669.

