

The States General and the Strategic Regulation of the Dutch River Trade, 1621-1636*

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Few aspects of the Dutch economic miracle of the seventeenth century were more fundamental to Dutch prosperity or more distinctive to the country than the Republic's flourishing river trade both internally and with the neighbouring Spanish Netherlands and north-west Germany. The Dutch Republic, Europe's leading entrepot for foodstuffs, notably Baltic grain, fish and herring, salt, wines, sugar, spices and dairy products, possessed a major market for these and other provisions in the densely populated, relatively highly urbanised and industrial belt of territory girdling the United Provinces to the south and south-east. So substantial indeed was this transfer of foodstuffs along the inland waterways of the Low Countries and Westphalia, that from an early stage in the Dutch revolt against Spain, the *binnenstromen* came to be seen as a formidable strategic instrument. During the years 1621-1636, the States General repeatedly closed the waterways for limited periods, in most cases, but not all, only to the passage of foodstuffs and certain materials beyond Dutch territory. The purpose of engaging in such action was in the main strategic, particularly that of inconveniencing as far as possible one or more Spanish or Imperial armies in the field. Due to the complex, decentralised character of the Dutch political system, however, it often proved difficult to implement these temporary blockades in a consistent manner. Especially revealing about Dutch political life at the time is the way conflicting economic interests within the Republic were able at different times to influence both the form and duration of these blockades. Undoubtedly, the major tension in this respect was between the interests of the inland towns on the one hand and those of the maritime towns of Holland and Zeeland on the other.

The history of Dutch regulation of the river traffic before 1609, admirably described by J. H. Kernkamp¹, shows that the practice then took several forms, that its effects varied greatly in different parts of the Republic and that on

* For his most helpful advice with this article, I should like to thank Professor K. W. Swart.
1. J. H. Kernkamp, *De handel op den vijand, 1572-1609* (2 vols.; Utrecht, 1931-1934).

occasion these consequences were drastic. As early as the summer of 1572, with most of Holland in rebel hands and the States of that province then gathered at Dordrecht, steps were taken to prevent water-borne traffic reaching Delft which was slower than the others in breaking with Spain, and Amsterdam which adhered resolutely to the Spanish cause until 1578². Following the collapse of Spanish power in most of the Netherlands during the later 1570s and the subsequent parting of ways between the rebellious majority and the Walloon provinces which reverted to Philip II, the States General in Brussels endeavoured intermittently to halt trade by river, canal and overland with the Walloon towns. The advance of Parma's troops into Flanders and Brabant in 1584, led the Dutch to ban all trade with enemy territory indefinitely and close the Rhine, Waal, Maas and IJssel beyond Arnhem, Nijmegen, Venlo and Deventer while the Eems was barred by States warships, patrolling its estuary. This measure, more comprehensive than its forerunners, spread consternation in Holland and quite soon, at the request of the 'burgomasters and merchants' of Dordrecht, the chief river entrepot in Holland, was amended to permit entry from enemy territory along the Maas and Rhine of Rhenish wines and timber, coal and iron from Liège and the Ruhr, and Walloon lime, essential imports³. While resented at Arnhem and Nijmegen, busy intermediary river towns between Holland and Germany, the ban was supported by the provinces of Utrecht and Zeeland which lost little trade by it and in the latter case was in imminent danger from Parma's advance.

While evasion of the ban was widespread, especially the nocturnal transfer of foodstuffs to the Spaniards overland by wagon, the patrolling of the waterways by naval craft and land routes by cavalry was effective enough to curb the traffic and cause considerable hardship to Parma's troops⁴. Also the retention of large stocks within Holland tended to depress food prices which was undoubtedly popular with the lower classes and was reflected in the attitude of towns such as Utrecht where influence of the guilds was marked. After the fall of Antwerp to the Spaniards in 1585, pressure for re-opening the river trade increased, especially in Holland. Nevertheless, the States General, guided by Queen Elizabeth's representative, the earl of Leicester, maintained its stringent policy. Indeed, by placard of 4 August 1586, the ban was again widened to cover all trade with enemy territory, including French ports east of the Seine estuary (so as to prevent sea-borne supplies reaching Flanders via Calais and Boulogne) and

2. *Ibidem*, I, 20-21.

3. N. Japikse, ed., *Resoluliën der Staten-Generaal, 1576-1609*, IV (RGP, XLIII; The Hague, 1915-) no. 750 (30-8-1584); Kernkamp, *Handel*, I, 162; on Dordrecht's river trade during this period, see J. L. van Dalen, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht* (2 vols.; Dordrecht, 1931) I, 314, 322 and P. W. Klein, *De Trippen in de 17e eeuw. Een studie over het ondernemersgedrag op de Hollandse stapelmarkt* (Assen, 1965) 66-89.

4. Kernkamp, *Handel*, I, 163, II, 15.

German ports from Bremen westwards. During 1587, the ban was gradually relaxed particularly regarding exports by sea to neutral ports and in November the States warships were withdrawn from the Eems. For some towns indeed, it was not unadvantageous to leave the main river blockade in force while the Eems and sea-routes were open, for this diverted the flow of foodstuffs through the ports of Holland and Zeeland via Calais, Boulogne, Emden and Bremen to the Spanish garrisons strung out along the eastern and southern borders of the Republic. Naturally, this approach was bitterly opposed by Holland's river towns, Dordrecht and Gorkum, by the inland provinces and those chiefly concerned with the strategic purpose of the blockade. The ban in force since the summer of 1584 was finally lifted, following Leicester's resignation, in the spring of 1588.

After the prolonged action of the mid 1580s, closing the rivers was mostly resorted to by the States General for short intervals only so as to inconvenience the Spanish forces during a particular campaign. Often, in an effort to reconcile the conflicting demands of strategy and trade, such measures applied only to a narrow sector of waterways. Thus during the 1590 Dutch offensive in Brabant, transporting provisions into Brabant between the Schelde and Maas was forbidden for some months, but Maurits could obtain closure of the Schelde and Maas themselves only briefly⁵. During the prince's advance upon Zutphen in 1591, only the IJssel beyond Deventer was closed. On the other hand, during 1599 a general prohibition on trading with the enemy was declared in reply to the ban on commerce with the 'rebels' issued in February 1599 by the Archduke Albert. In descending on Grave, in 1602, Maurits was again assisted by the States with a temporary ban as he was again in 1604 with the closing of the canals into Flanders during the siege of Sluis. With Spinola's major counter-offensive on the eastern borders of the Republic in 1606, the Maas, Waal, Rhine and Eems were closed to foodstuffs for several months.

Following the signing of the Twelve Years Truce in 1609, the Spanish army of Flanders was substantially reduced in size⁶ which itself reduced demand for Dutch provisions while at the same time, the Dutch naval blockade was withdrawn from the Flemish coast so that foodstuffs that previously could enter only by river, canal or overland could now be shipped by sea to Ostend and Dunkirk. The Brussels régime's policy of improving the Flemish canals during the truce years and particularly the digging of the new Gent-Brugge canal started in 1613 also encouraged diversion of traffic away from the Schelde and other *binnenstromen* to the Flemish coast as did Albert's astute refusal to lower the

5. *Ibidem*, I.

6. Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road* (2nd ed.; Cambridge, 1975) 271-272.

licenten (import-export duties pertaining to trade between the northern and southern Netherlands) on the South Netherlands side⁷. Yet, despite these negative factors, the river trade did benefit in some respects from the truce. The very cessation of hostilities permitted closer north-south links such as the regular *beurtvaart*⁸ (sailing barge) services established at this time connecting Vlissingen, Delft, Rotterdam and other Dutch towns with Antwerp. More important still, was the lowering of the *licenten* on the Dutch side from the comparatively high war-time level as fixed by the States General in 1603 to a much lower truce-time level⁹.

Although difficult to compare owing to the various stoppages before 1606, it appears from the lists of tolls paid at Venlo that on average slightly more shipping plied between the Northern and Southern Netherlands along the most important artery, the Maas, during the truce than in the previous few years¹⁰. Certainly, imports of Liège coal along the Maas into the Republic rose significantly due to the sizeable reduction in the Dutch import duty. Returns on the *riddertol*, a duty levied on barge traffic docking at Antwerp, likewise rose slightly during the period¹¹.

The situation on the *binnenstromen* was again transformed by the expiry of the truce in April 1621. The armies of both sides were considerably expanded, the army of Flanders soon reaching a war-time level of around 60,000 men up from a truce-time level of less than half of this figure¹². The army of Flanders, like its Dutch counterpart, was essentially a standing army, retained throughout the year, distributed in fortified garrisons located along the borders of the Republic. Among the largest Spanish garrisons were those on the German rivers to the east of Dutch territory, notably Lingen on the Eems and Wesel on the Rhine, each having a fixed garrison of around 2,500 men during the 1620s¹³, and Lipstadt on the Lippe. Other important strongholds to the east of the Republic were Oldenzaal and Grol until the capture of these by Frederik Hendrik in 1626 and

7. See P. Voeten, 'Antwerpse handel over Duinkerken tijdens het twaalfjarig bestand', *Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis inzonderheid van het oud hertogdom Brabant*, XXXIX (1956) 69, 70; *idem*, 'Antwerpse reacties op het twaalfjarig bestand', *ibidem*, XLI (1958) 214, 218.

8. On the *Beurtvaart* services, see Jan de Vries, 'Barges and Capitalism. Passenger Transportation in the Dutch Economy, 1632-1839', *AAG Bijdragen*, XX-XXI (1978) 47-48.

9. See tables I and II below.

10. J. A. van Houtte, 'Le tonlieu de Lithet le commerce sur la Meuse de 1551 a 1701', *Economische geschiedenis van België. Handelingen van het colloquium te Brussel, 17-19 november 1971* (Brussels, 1972) 304.

11. R. Baetens, *De nazomer van Antwerpens welvaart* (2 vols.; Brussels, 1976) I, 321.

12. Parker, *Army of Flanders*, 271-272.

13. See Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter AGS), Estado 2321. Gaspar Ruiz de Pereda to Philip IV, Brussels 20 October 1627 and other similar lists compiled by the paymasters-general of the army of Flanders.

1627, Rheinberg, Geldern, Hamm, Orsoy and Düsseldorf. Similarly, Spanish strongholds were dotted along the Maas, notably at Maastricht where over 1,000 men were stationed, Venlo and Roermond, in and around 's-Hertogenbosch, and on the Schelde in and around Antwerp. Finally, there was a veritable complex of fortresses linked by canals in Flanders at Hulst, Sas van Gent, Damme, Brugge, Gent, Ostend, Nieuwpoort and Ostend. Like the Dutch, the Spanish army in the Netherlands at this time almost never pilfered or scoured the countryside for its provisions. After 1621, mutinies were extremely rare and there was virtually no sacking of towns or villages by the Spanish soldiery. Spanish expenditure on the army of Flanders fluctuated at around four and a half million ducats (some thirteen million guilders) yearly during the 1620s, the bulk being expended on grain, fish, sak, dairy produce, wines, horses, fodder and timber imported along the *binnenstromen* from Dutch territory, Liège and Westphalia.

The river trade also benefited in 1621 from the resumption by the Dutch of their naval blockade of the Flemish coast¹⁴. This deprived Rotterdam, the Zeeland ports and the Noorderkwartier towns of their truce-time carrying of supplies by sea to Flanders, diverting almost all such traffic via the inland waterways especially the Schelde, a shift which favoured the otherwise stagnant economy of Zeeland. However, the coastal blockade also made possible a return to the high level of *licenten* on the rivers prevailing under the war-list of 1603, the extra money being required to pay the burgeoning cost of the navy. It is extremely important to note in this connection that reversion to the 1603 war-list occurred not, as has sometimes been stated in the past¹⁵, in July 1625 when the States General republished the list, but, as the States General's instructions to the admiralty colleges make clear¹⁶, when war was resumed, in April 1621. In the case of essential imports such as iron from Liège and the Ruhr, re-imposition of the war-list involved no extra duty, but in most instances as is shown by tables I and II, the new list involved large increases on imports and exports both to and from enemy and neutral territory.

14. Dutch merchant vessels were being prevented from entering Flemish ports by the Dutch navy from the end of April 1621, see Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague (ARA), Staten Generaal (SG), 3180, fo. 187v, Res. 21 April 1621. The Dutch blockade of the Flemish coast was operative in most years from April to October.

15. This is stated in several nineteenth-century works and by Becht, see also J.C. Westerman, 'Statistische gegevens over den handel van Amsterdam in de zeventiende eeuw', *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis*, LXI (1948) 5, 6.

16. ARA, SG 3180, fos. 168v, 170v, 201, Res. 19, 21 April and 7 May.

Table I: 'Convoy and Licence' Money on key commodities under the 1609 Truce List¹⁷

a) Exports:	<i>Item</i>	<i>To Enemy Territory</i>
	Dutch butter (per vat)	4 guilders
	Dutch cheese (per 100 pond)	— 15 stuivers
	Wheat (per last)	10 guilders
	Herring (per last)	4 guilders
	Salt (refined, 't hondert)	15 guilders
		<i>From Neutral Lands From Enemy Lands</i>
b) Imports:	Liège coal (de hondert wagen)	0 gld - 15 st 0 gld - 15 st
	English coal (de hondert wagen)	0 gld - 10 st -
	Iron (de duysent ponden)	1 gld - 0 st -
	Lime (calcK, 't hoedt)	- 0 gld - 3 st
	Rhine wine (ses Amen)	3 gld - 0 st -

Table II: 'Convoy and Licence' Money on key commodities under the 1603 war-list re-introduced for the years 1621-48¹⁸

a) Exports:	<i>Item</i>	<i>To Enemy Lands</i>	<i>To Neutral Territory via the Maas</i>	<i>To Neutral Lands via Rhine or Waal</i>
	Dutch butter (vat)	16 gld	13 gld	10 gld
	Dutch cheese (100 lb)	3 gld - 5 st	2 gld - 15 st	2 gld - 5 st
	Wheat (last)	36 gld	34 gld	27 gld
	Herring(last)	12 gld	U gld	10 gld
	Salt ('t hondert)	100 gld	85 gld	75 gld
b) Imports:		<i>From Enemy Territory</i>	<i>From Neutral Territory</i>	
	Liège coal (hondert wagen)	1 gld - 5 st		
	English coal	-	1 gld - 0 st	
	Iron (1,000 pond)	1 gld - 0 st	1 gld - 0 st	
	Lime ('thoedt)	0 gld - 4 st	0 gld - 3 st	
	Rhine wine (ses Amen)	7 gld - 10 st	7 gld - 10 st	

This hefty rise in convoy and licence charges initially spread consternation among the Dordrecht skippers' guilds¹⁹. The increases tended to divert trade, most dramatically in the case of salt where the rise was steepest, away from the main *binnenstromen* such as Maas and Schelde to a number of minor, indirect routes, notably via Breda and then overland to small towns in Spanish Brabant

17. C. Cau, ed., *Groot plaacet-boeck* (9 vols.; The Hague, 1658-1796) I, columns 2388/2416.

18. *Ibidem*, 1, columns 2415/2486.

19. See the petition of Dordrecht's Maas skippers to the Dordrecht *vroedschap* (undated 1621) in ARA, SG 12, 562, no. 14.

whence the salt was distributed to its usual markets. Over the years, however, the net result of the resumption of war was marginally positive rather than negative so far as the river trade was concerned. The combined impact of the increase in military spending and the blockade of the Flemish coast evidently slightly outweighed that of the increases in convoy and licence money and the disruptions of war. In the years 1623-1624, despite months of dislocation of the river trade, slightly more traffic passed between the Northern and Southern Netherlands on the Maas than in 1618-1619, the best years of the truce²⁰. Similarly, returns on the *Brabantse watertol* collected on river craft docking at Antwerp were higher for 1623-1624 and for most of the 1630s than they had been during the truce²¹. Of this busy war-time traffic between one quarter and one third plied the Maas, a little less than one fifth sailed on the Rhine and one eighth on the Schelde²².

While the volume of river trade slightly increased in the early 1620s, its structure was more markedly altered by the transition to war. Unquestionably, despite the higher duties, demand for foodstuffs in the Southern Netherlands greatly increased. On the other hand, Liège coal entered the Republic in notably smaller quantities in the 1620s than previously, presumably as the higher duty increased the attractiveness to the Dutch consumer of domestic peat supplies²³. Imports of German wines into the Republic were likewise hit by the higher duties such that there was a marked trend during these years for the proportion of Dutch wine re-exports consisting of French wines to increase, a process particularly damaging to Dordrecht, the Dutch entrepot for German wines²⁴.

Spinola and Maurits took the field in August 1621, the Spaniards advancing north-eastwards from Maastricht with 1,800 supply wagons in their train. The subsequent siege of Jülich by the Spaniards continued for five months until the fall of the town in January 1622. During October, the States General several times debated whether to close the Rhine and Maas to provisions *en route* to the Spanish army. Though Holland proved somewhat reluctant to do so, on 23 October, Holland's deputies consented to the ban provided that herring, fish and salt were exempted and with this proviso the passage of foodstuffs was duly forbidden though along the Rhine only²⁵. Maurits himself considered this action unnecessary and even inconvenient to the Dutch forces in the Emmerich area and

20. Van Houtte, 'Le tonlieu de Lith', 304.

21. Baetens, *Nazomer*, 1, 396.

22. For further statistics on the river trade see my forthcoming book 'The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World, 1606-1661'.

23. Van Houtte, 'Le tonlieu de Lith', 304.

24. Klein, *De Trippen*, 11; M. Bizière, 'The Baltic Wine Trade, 1563-1657', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, XX (1972) 121-132.

25. ARA, SG 3180 f os. 501v, 512, 513v, Res. 19, 23 October 1621.

following consultation with the States General's deputies to the army was countermanded after only a few days²⁶.

In the next year, the armies took the field in July. While one Spanish army distracted the Dutch in the Cleves area, Spinola occupied Steenberg and descended upon Bergen-op-Zoom. Promptly, the Middelburg admiralty college in whose *repartitie* (customs jurisdiction) Bergen and the Schelde fell, provisionally banned the export by river, canal or overland of food, timber²⁷ and peat, asking the States General to confirm its action. The latter having already ordered the Rotterdam college to halt food exports into Brabant on the routes of its *repartitie*, promptly did so and instructed the governors of Breda, Geertruidenberg and Heusden to prevent passage of supplies from those towns to the surrounding villages except by certificate and upon payment of cautionary deposits so as to prevent seepage of victuals into Spanish hands overland²⁸. Soon after, the governors were further ordered to strip the village windmills of key parts and take these into custody within the garrison towns. In early August, the Rotterdam college complained that while it had halted the exit of all victuals from its *repartitie*, the States of Zeeland were allowing export of (French) wines, Middelburg's chief item of trade, as well as of salt, vital to the refining town of Zierikzee²⁹. At once, Zeeland was made to cease this practise. On 6 August, the States General's ban was widened to include hay and other horse feeds.

As the siege of Bergen-op-Zoom continued during August, anxiety in Zeeland, the province most immediately threatened, mounted. One consequence of the ban was a massive diversion of provisions by sea from Zeeland and Rotterdam to the ports of north-east France whence they could be transported, albeit at considerable inconvenience and cost, through Flanders to the besieging army in Brabant. To reduce this flow (the States of Zeeland did not wish to prevent it altogether), the States General was asked to extend the special war-time *licent* charged on exports to Calais, to Boulogne and the other French ports as far west as Dieppe, the surcharge to be re-imbursed upon presentation of testimonials from magistrates in those ports that cargoes had really been unloaded there and not at Calais³⁰. Soon after, alarmed by reports of further large consignments passing to the Spaniards via Calais, Zeeland requested a temporary raising of the charges for Calais as high as those pertaining on the Schelde³¹. The States

26. *Ibidem*, fos. 537v, 553.

27. Regarding timber, the aim was to prevent passage of Norwegian *sparren ende deelen* used in the construction of siege works, trenches and for mining under walls.

28. ARA, SG 3181 fos. 329v, 330, 334, Res. 25 and 27 July 1622.

29. *Ibidem*, fos. 350v-351, Res. 4 August 1622.

30. Zeeland to SG, 13 August 1622, *Notulen van de Staten van Zeeland*, 1622, 309; ARA, SG 3181, fo. 377, Res. 17 August 1622.

31. *Notulen Zeeland*, 1622, Res. 15 August 1622; ARA, SG 3181, fos. 391, 393, Res. 24, 25 August 1622.

General, after consulting the three Holland admiralty colleges, not only raised the charges for Calais to the Schelde level and those for French ports beyond Calais as far as the Somme estuary to the prior level for Calais, but banned all trade of any kind temporarily with Spanish Brabant and Flanders. A few days later, Zeeland began pressing for closure of the Maas in line with the waterways further west and for imposition of the Schelde list on all victuals shipped to French ports between Calais and the Seine³². The States General closed the Maas on 3 September and though Holland was reluctant to concede Zeeland's second point, the inland provinces insisted, and the Schelde list was duly extended to provisions for French ports up to though excluding the Seine estuary while for French ports from the Seine westwards deposits had to be paid refundable on presentation of testimonials from the relevant French authorities.

The Spanish army finally withdrew in defeat from before Bergen on 4 October 1622. Although the confiscated *spillen* were then speedily restored to the Brabant village windmills under States' control, the *binnenstromen* remained closed at Maurits' recommendation for several more weeks. In the second week of October, the Zeeland authorities, without prior authorization from The Hague, allowed export of wines to Flanders and Antwerp alleging that excessive stocks of wine had accumulated at Middelburg since July. Annoyed, the States General nevertheless removed the ban on wine exports on 17 October and that on foodstuffs generally two days later³³. Thus the 1622 river blockade was in force for a little under three months altogether. Zeeland's role during that period may be accounted that of a province much alarmed by the Spanish threat and willing to place strategic necessity before commercial interest up to a point, but nevertheless remaining highly sensitive to the commercial needs of its merchants.

During 1623 there took place no Spanish offensive against the Dutch. Even so, the year was one of concern in the Republic, particularly in Overijssel and Gelderland, regarding the build-up of Spanish forces at Lingen, Geldern, Oldenzaal and Grol and the proximity for a time of the army of the German Catholic League under Tilly to the Republic's eastern border. It was widely feared that even without direct co-operation between the two Catholic armies, Spinola could invade from the south with Maurits being compelled to retain a large part of his forces far to the north³⁴. During February and March 1623, Overijssel took the lead as had Zeeland the previous year in pressing for action on the rivers, to impede the build-up of enemy forces lest the latter should

32. ARA, SG 3181, fos. 414, 426v, 429, Res. 3, 10 and 12 September 1622; *Notulen Zeeland*, 1622, 15 September 1622.

33. ARA, SG, 3181, fos. 466, 472v, 474v, 478, Res. 8, 15, 17 and 19 October 1622.

34. *Gedenkschriften van jonkheer Alexander van der Capellen* (2 vols.; Utrecht, 1777) I, 95.

attempt to besiege 'eenige vande Overijsselsche steden'³⁵. Encountering the reluctance of Holland, Overijssel despatched an extraordinary delegation to The Hague to back the demand. In early April Holland's consent was obtained for a provisional closure for two months of the Maas, Rhine, IJssel (beyond Deventer), Weser and Eems to foodstuffs, munitions and timber, wine to be included but not salt³⁶. Shortly after, the States General also closed the Schelde and canals leading into Flanders. Warships were despatched to patrol the Eems and Weser estuaries.

With the Rhine shut to foodstuffs and the troops at Zutphen intercepting supplies passing eastwards beyond Deventer, the States of Gelderland received complaints that no butter, cheese or herring was reaching Doetinchem, Borculo, Bredevoort, Winterswijk and other localities in the county of Zutphen. Gelderland and Overijssel which had a similar problem with regard to districts east of Deventer, then asked the States General to permit passage to rationed consignments on payment of caution money as had long been the practice with outlying villages under States' control in Brabant³⁷. In response, the States General, advised by the *Raad van State*, drew up fixed quotas of provisions for the localities concerned, allocating each to a specified distribution point, usually Zutphen, Arnhem or Deventer, from where the rations were to be released. On the expiry of the original ban, on 14 June, the measure was renewed indefinitely and maintained through June and most of July. Protests were registered by Dordrecht concerning the damage to river commerce generally and from the city of Bremen and the Danish crown on behalf of the latter over the blocking of the Weser by States warships³⁸.

On 19 July, a Holland delegation conferred with Maurits who agreed that there was now little reason to prolong the blockade which experience showed was damaging Dutch trade. The next day, led by the pensionary of Dordrecht, Holland's delegation to the States General, showing particular concern on behalf of the new herring catch, demanded withdrawal of the ban on the ground that it was ineffective, the enemy being well supplied, and because the admiralty colleges could no longer support the loss of the *licenten*³⁹. Initially, the States

35. ARA, SG 3182, fos. 76v, 89v, 90v, 99v, Res. 22 February 4, 6 and 13 March; the entry for 22 February reads: 'Die van Gelderlant ende Overijssel hebben vtoont de seer grote magazinen van vivres ende andere crychspvrosien, die den vyant in die quartieren in syne steden is maeckende, apparentelick omme eenige van deser landen frontieren ten bequaemen saisonne van 't jaar met belegeringe aen te tasten'.

36. *Resoluitien Staten van Holland*, 31 March 1623; ARA, SG 3182, fos. 132v, Res. 4 April 1623.

37. *Ibidem*, fo. 173, Res. 4 May 1623.

38. *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 22 July 1623; ARA, SG 3182, fos. 203v, 226, Res. 30 May and 16 June 1623.

39. *Ibidem*, fo. 276, Res. 20 July 1623; GA Deventer, Republiek 1, no. 19, Johan Lulop to Deventer, 26 July 1623.

General considered exempting herring from the ban and re-opening the canals into Flanders and Brabant while keeping the routes to the east closed. However, Friesland and Groningen reacted to Holland's pressure by insisting that if herring and fish were exempted then so should be butter and cheese likewise⁴⁰. The consequent deadlock was broken only several weeks later when, on the prince's advice, the inland provinces and Zeeland gave way to Holland, agreeing to re-open all the rivers from 12 August⁴¹. But on 6 August, Tilly's forces aided by some Spaniards vanquished the Protestant army of Christian of Brunswick at Stadtlohn, almost within sight of the Gelderland border which province and the Overijssel towns, especially Deventer, thereupon determined to prolong the ban on their waterways, appealing to the States General to suspend its order⁴². Six provinces consented at once to keep the Rhine, Maas, IJssel and Eems closed for the interim while Holland did so reluctantly. Subsequently, the Overijssel and Gelderland deputies in The Hague repeatedly reminded their colleagues that the evidence gleaned from Wesel and elsewhere established beyond doubt that all the Imperialist, Catholic League and Spanish forces in the area were suffering severely from shortage of supplies that both Córdoba's troops at Buerich and Anholt's force close by could be compelled to withdraw within a few weeks by keeping the rivers closed⁴³. Thus, the blockade was continued through September despite mounting impatience in Holland. On 26 September, representatives of the *grootte visscherij* (herring fishery) of South Holland appealed to the States General that herring sales had suffered severely, asking that this product might now be permitted through to Cologne and neighbouring markets⁴⁴. Finally, on 2 October, after a total of six months stoppage, the Rhine, Maas, IJssel and Eems were re-opened⁴⁵.

During 1624, the chief military development was the commencement of the siege of Breda by the Spaniards; but well before the actual invasion, the preparations were fully evident and the Dutch responded with regulation of the rivers. On 22 July, the Middelburg admiralty college submitted to the States General that owing to the large-scale movement of *sparren ende deelen* through Zeeland to Antwerp for use by the Spanish army, it had provisionally forbidden

40. ARA, SG 3182, fos. 276, 277v, 283v-284, Res. 20, 21, 26 and 28 July; Maurits proposed re-opening some *binnenstromen* but keeping the Rhine and Maas closed which Holland opposed deeming 'dat de Lycenten op d'eene plaets te openen, en op d'andere ghesloten te houden, causeren soude groote diversie van Neeringe', *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 3 August 1623.

41. ARA, SG 3182, fo. 297, Res. 4 August 1623; GA Deventer, Republiek 1, no. 19, Johan Lulop to Deventer, 4 August 1623.

42. *Ibidem*, Gelderland to Deventer, 12 August 1623; ARA, SG 3182, fo. 314, Res. 14 August 1623.

43. *Ibidem*, fo. 357v, Res. 6 September 1623; GA Deventer, Republiek I, no. 19, Johan Lulop to Deventer, 14 August and Gelderland to Deventer, 26 August 1623.

44. ARA, SG 3182, fo. 388v, Res. 26 September 1623.

45. *Ibidem*, fo. 389, Res. 27 September 1623.

export of such timbers⁴⁶. Shortly after, the States instructed the Rotterdam college to stop passage of foodstuffs, including wine, beer and horse fodder, along Maas or Waal or into Brabant 'op dat den vyant die extraordinaris dierte in sijn leger heeft, daarmede nyet en werdt versien⁴⁷. On 7 August, the States ordered the Middelburg college to shut the Schelde also and, as in previous years, pronounced forfeit all foodstuffs together with the barges and wagons in which they were conveyed intercepted by its ships and troops *en route* to Spinola's army⁴⁸. While the Rhine and IJssel remained open, the Amsterdam and Noorderkwartier colleges were instructed to assist with preventing passage of provisions from those routes southwards. Just before Spinola encircled Breda, on 23 August, Gelderland proposed a general prohibition on passage of foodstuffs by waterway or overland out of the Republic, but with Holland again pre-occupied with the issue of herring exports to Cologne and Westphalia, the Rhine still remained open even though it was well known in The Hague that much of the provisions being conveyed along the Rhine were being unloaded at the Spanish garrison towns of Wesel and Rheinberg and transported overland to Venlo and thence to Spinola's army⁴⁹. While supplies continued to flow eastwards, there was also a major diversion of provisions from Zeeland especially to Calais. Early in November 1624, the States General raised the *licent* on exports to Calais to the Schelde level and to other French ports as far as the Somme estuary to the prior level Calais⁵⁰.

By December 1624, after five months of closure of the Schelde, Maas and the waterways between, pressure had built up from Gelderland, Overijssel, Zeeland and also from the stadholder for closing the Rhine likewise. However, Holland refused to agree to this so long as the sea-route to Calais remained open, knowing that Zeeland would not consent to closure of the latter⁵¹. As the position of Breda steadily deteriorated, so demands for a tighter river blockade increased. In late January 1625, being advised by the Rotterdam college that so much food was being shipped up the Rhine that even grain was passing by that route, which was previously unheard of, Holland at last gave in and the river was closed⁵². As the months passed, the besieging army was doubtless sustained by the prospect of the eventual fall of Breda, but there is no doubt that the troops suffered severely from lack of supplies and towards the end of the siege the

46. *Ibidem*, SG 3183, fo. 390, Res. 25 July 1624.

47. *Ibidem*, fo. 399, Res. 29 July 1624.

48. *Ibidem*, fos. 420v, 421v, Res. 7 August 1624.

49. *Ibidem*, fos. 625v, 665, 745v.

50. *Ibidem*, fo. 645.

51. *Ibidem*, fos. 733v-734, 745v, 737v-738, Res. 20, 21 and 28 December 1624.

52. *Ibidem*, SG 3184, fos. 29, 31, Res. 20, 21 January 1625.

besiegers were in fact reduced to a far worse state of distress than the defenders⁵³. In part, this was due to lack of pay, but it does seem that the Dutch blockade contributed also. When Breda finally fell, the admiralty colleges desperately short of funds for the navy, at once pressed the States General to restore the *licenten*⁵⁴. Shortly after, on 12 June, a group of Amsterdam merchants who exported herring and fish to Westphalia, backed by the Amsterdam burgomasters, petitioned the States General for the re-opening of the rivers. Fish exports were promptly exempted from the ban. After consulting Frederik Hendrik, the new stadholder, the States finally opened all the *binnenstromen* to provisions and the other prohibited merchandise from 30 June 1625, except for the routes to Breda and 's-Hertogenbosch which remained blockaded⁵⁵. Export of horses was allowed a few days earlier to enable Dutch dealers to participate in the Besancon horse fair. The Maas and Schelde had been closed to foodstuffs and munitions for little short of a year.

The re-opening of the waterways, however, proved to be brief. July indeed was the only month in 1625 when river traffic was unimpeded as is reflected in the high return on the *Brabantse watertol* at Antwerp for that month⁵⁶. Then, on 29 July, the Brussels regime, finally complying with pressure emanating from Madrid for some time, forbade trade of any kind with the 'rebels', suspended indefinitely the *licenten* on the Spanish side on all water and land routes between Spanish and Dutch-occupied territory and closed the Rhine to the Dutch at Wesel and the Eems at Lingen⁵⁷. Fleets of Dutch barges were turned back by Spanish troops and officials on the Maas, Rhine, Schelde and other waterways. Unquestionably, the measure struck hard at both sides: Dutch river commerce was all but paralysed but in the Southern Netherlands prices of grain, herring, butter, cheese, salt and sugar rose steeply⁵⁸. Spanish cavalry operating on the fringes of Gelderland and Overijssel began to disrupt the flow of supplies overland to Zutphen, Doesburg, Emmerich and other Dutch garrison towns, a practice which they had previously scrupulously avoided for fear of retaliation in

53. Algemeen Rijksarchief (ARA) Brussels, SEG 193, fo. 23, Isabella lo Philip, Brussels, 1 May 1625.

54. ARA, SG 3184, fos. 224, 232, 243v, Res. 7, 12 June 1625.

55. *Ibidem*, fo. 248v, Res. 23 June 1625.

56. Baetens, *Nazomer*, I, 322.

57. AGS Estado 2039, consulta 28 September 1625; *Ordinantie ons Heeren des Coninx inhoudende verbodt vanden coophandel mette gherelleerde provintien* (Knuttel 3584; Brussels, 29 July 1625); J.I. Israel, 'A Conflict of Empires. Spain and the Netherlands, 1618-1648', *Past and Present*, LXXXVI (1977) 56.

58. *Ibidem*; Van der Capellen, *Gedenkschriften*, I, 454. On the collapse of sugar imports from Holland to Antwerp in 1625-1629 see H. Pohl, 'Die Zuckereinfuhr nach Antwerpen durch portugiesische Kaufleute wahrend des 80 jahrigen Krieges', *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, IV (1967) 356-357.

kind. The States General were slow to respond, first deliberating what to do in answer to the Spanish edict on 12 and then 19 August, but as yet were unable to agree on any action. There then ensued a period of intensive debate on this question among the Dutch provinces, city councils, admiralty colleges and other administrative bodies⁵⁹.

In all, formulating a response to the Infanta's *verbodt* took some two and a half months. The Dordrecht *vroedschap* pondered at length and consulted various local merchants before concluding, almost unanimously, that the most effective reply to the Spanish action would be to retaliate in kind banning all trade not only with enemy territory but with neighbouring neutral lands as well, with a view to forcing Isabella to retract her prohibition quickly⁶⁰. Likewise Amsterdam judged it best to proceed 'volgende 't exempel vande vijand'⁶¹. Zeeland once again was keen to proceed with stringent action on the rivers. Finally, on 16 October 1625, the States General issued a sweeping counter-prohibition, known as the *placaet van retorsie*, forbidding trade by inland waterway or overland with either enemy, neutral lands or villages and districts under contribution to the States but lying beyond the frontier garrison towns - Arnhem, Nijmegen, Zutphen, Grave, Heusden, Geertruidenberg and Bergen-op-Zoom⁶². As adjuncts to the edict, merchandise shipped westwards to French ports from Calais to the Somme were, for the duration, to pay the Schelde *licent* while exports to the Zevenbergen and Prinsenland districts lying between Spanish-occupied Breda and Tholen had to pay the still higher *Bosch licent*. Applications for exemption of consignments arranged before 16 October, including one from Louis de Geer who found himself unable to receive a delivery of pistol locks and bandeliers along the Maas from Sittard, were rejected. Meanwhile, fearing Dutch cavalry retaliation in Brabant and Flanders against the supplying of Spanish garrisons from local villages, the Spanish governors in the region made it known to their Dutch counterparts that the Brussels edict would not involve Spanish attempts to disrupt movements of provisions from border villages into Dutch garrisons, though for some months the dislocation continued on the eastern frontier⁶³.

The effects of the 1625 river blockade were undoubtedly drastic. The Dutch action increased further the diversion of trade from the *binnenstromen* which had commenced at the end of July with the Brussels edict. A massive flow of

59. ARA, SG 3184, fo. 320v, Res. 12 August 1625; *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 23 September, 2, 3 October 1625.

60. Gemeente Archief (GA) Dordrecht, section 3, vol. 46, fo. 23, vroedschapsresolutie, 27 September 1625.

61. GA Amsterdam, vroedschapsresoluties XIV, fo. 123, Res. 22 September 1625.

62. ARA, SG 3184, fo. 405v, 408v, Res. 16, 18 October 1625; for instance, trade relations between Grave and the Cuyk region were completely severed much to the distress of the Grave *vroedschap*, see ARA, SG 4947, II, Burgomaster of Grave to SG, 1 December 1625.

63. *Ibidem*, 3184, fos. 383, 396v, 494.

provisions, materials and manufactures which normally had passed along the rivers now passed via Amsterdam and the Noorderkwartier ports to Bremen and Hamburg whence they were shipped up the Weser and Elbe and then overland to the Eems and Rhine values⁶⁴. If Bremen had previously suffered from Dutch river regulation, on this occasion the city profited. Revealingly, while the Middelburg, Rotterdam and Noorderkwartier admiralty colleges advised the States General to impose the Schelde *licent* for exports to Bremen and Hamburg, Amsterdam argued against and the matter was shelved⁶⁵. Despite the raised tariffs on goods for the north-east French ports, there took place a simultaneous diversion of trade via Rotterdam and the Zeeland ports to Calais and Boulogne.

During the autumn of 1625, many requests reached the States General from villages under contribution but beyond the border *comptoirs*, asking for special arrangements for their supplies. At the States' bidding, the *Raad van State* drew up lists of approved provisions based on numbers of inhabitants and assigned each village to a depot - Dordrecht, Gorkum, Bergen-op-Zoom, Heusden, Grave, Arnhem, Nijmegen or Deventer - whence these were to be obtained. Oudenbosch, for example, a village of 344 inhabitants, located between Breda and Bergen, was allocated weekly at Dordrecht only, fixed rations of rye and oats, one hundred pounds of cheese, half a sack of salt, four barrels of beer, fifty pounds of soap and four stoops of wine 'for sick women' as well as measures of herring, other fish, cooking oil and timber for the upkeep of their houses⁶⁶. The same rations were assigned to other villages in proportion to population, the nearby twin villages of Oud and Nieuw Gastel, for instance, with 663 inhabitants, were allocated at Dordrecht two hundred pounds of cheese weekly, twice the provision of herring and fish and fifty percent more beer and wine than Oudenbosch⁶⁷. The lists testify to the wide variety of needs and particularly the large amount of herring consumed by the Brabant peasantry. Cheese was allocated on the basis of over a quarter of a Dutch pound per week for every adult and child in the villages. Inevitably, the system prompted rivalries between the depot towns for possession of these captive markets. Gorkum and Heusden quarreled, for example, over the provisioning of various villages in their vicinity while Rotterdam objected that the Prinsenland was assigned to Dordrecht, for previously much of the area's grain and fish had been procured from Rotterdam⁶⁸.

64. Despite heavy diplomatic pressure, Spain was unable to secure the closing of the Weser to the Dutch by the neighbouring German princes, see AGS Estado 2040, consulta, 3 December 1626.

65. ARA, SG 3185, fo. 52v, Res. 5 January, 12 February 1626.

66. *Ibidem*, fos. 59-60, Res. 27 February 1626.

67. *Ibidem*, fos. 51v, 60, 61v, Res. 12, 17, 18 February 1626.

68. *Ibidem*, fos. 64, 75v, Res. 21 February, 6 March 1626.

Among the repercussions of the blockades there was a sudden dislocation of commerce in neighbouring neutral lands. Liège for instance was entirely cut off from its Dutch market. While the Liège city council secured permission from Brussels for the passage through Spanish territory to the city of grain purchased from the Dutch, the States General refused to allow consignments for Liège through its *comptoirs*⁶⁹. Applications from Goch, Calcar, Cleves and other neutral localities on the Rhine to be allowed provisions from the Republic were held up for months in the States while the provinces considered what was to be done⁷⁰.

Pressure for some relaxation of the blockade was perceptibly mounting by the spring of 1626. In May, while rejecting petitions from the skippers of Nijmegen, Arnhem, Tiel and Culemborg for permission to convey fish and other perishable merchandise to neutral lands and from Dordrecht *vroedschap* to allow in a consignment of Liège iron and coal, the States General, prompted by Overijssel and Gelderland which were suffering most from the action, delegated a committee to deliberate the feasibility of restoring trade with neutrals on the basis of a higher than normal *licent*⁷¹. There were powerful groups however, including stadholder, *Raad van State*, and several city councils, who continued to insist that the *placcaet van retorsie* should not be altered but strictly maintained. Indeed, the States of Holland agreed on resisting the pressure from the inland provinces and persevering with the ban as it stood, disagreeing only over the issue of Calais, some towns, doubtless including Dordrecht and other inland centres, wishing to raise the *licent* or close the route altogether, while the maritime towns preferred to maintain the *status quo*⁷². Amsterdam persisted throughout 1626 in wanting the blockade to remain unaltered⁷³. The *Raad van State*, as always, was highly critical of this latter attitude, advising the States General that the

licenten alnoch behooren verhoogt te worden [to Calais and Boulogne], niet alleen voor desen tegenwoordigen tydt maer oock altijd duerende de oorlog, ende dat tselve streecken soude tot grooten dienst van tlandt ende ongerieff vande vyandt⁷⁴.

That strategic reasoning was actually less important than commercial calculation in formulating Dutch policy over the *placcaet van retorsie* is demonstrated by the

69. *Ibidem*, fo. 64, Res. 21 February 1626.

70. *Ibidem*, fo. 191, Res. 30 May 1626.

71. *Ibidem*, fo. 165v, Res. 15 May 1626.

72. *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 13, 19, 25 June 1626.

73. GA Amsterdam, vroedschapsresolulies XIV, fos. 159v, 182v, Res. 9 July and 17 November 1626, declaring in the latter 'in 't openen vande licenten op de neutrale Landen niet te consenteren voor ende alee den vyand van syne syde daer inne geconsenteerd sal hebben'.

74. Advys of Raad van State to SG, 24 July 1626, ARA, SG 5494, I.

fact that the *Raad van State* changed its stance at the end of September 1626 and switched to favouring re-opening the *licenten* for neutral territory, as the ban was being extensively evaded due to disobedience and corruption among the naval crews and troops patrolling the rivers and routes who frequently extorted money for condoning prohibited traffic and on account of the now desperate shortage of naval funds⁷⁵; yet despite this, the *placcaet* remained unmodified. While Utrecht, Friesland and Groningen were willing to alter the ban, Gelderland and Overijssel, denuded of their German trade, called more and more stridently for relaxation, first intimating that they would be unable to meet their annual quotas towards the States General's budget if this were not done and, by January 1627, actually threatening to re-open the *licenten* on their rivers unilaterally.

Holland, in the face of this pressure, while still preferring complete closure, was willing by January 1627 to consider modification. However, the solution acceptable to the majority of the province, restoring the *licenten* for neutral territory only on the basis of the Bosch *licent*, was entirely unacceptable to the inland provinces⁷⁶. The latter were only willing to raise the *licenten* for neutrals on Maas and Rhine if those for the sea-routes to the Eems, Weser and Elbe estuaries, as the *Raad van State* advised, were increased *pari passu*; otherwise they insisted on restoration of trade with neutrals on the regular war-time basis. For a time, Holland inclined towards a compromise whereby river commerce with neutrals would pay the regular war-time *licent* on trade with enemy territory, but this too proved unacceptable to Overijssel and Gelderland⁷⁷. It is not entirely clear whether the opposition of Dordrecht to the Holland majority over this proposed compromise was chiefly due to Dordrecht's dislike of seeing the gap in *licenten* charged on river as distinct from maritime traffic widened further, or to a belief that such modification of the *placcaet* would remove pressure from the enemy to lift his blockade by enabling the Spaniards to procure their provisions indirectly via neutrals. Proposals to placate the inland provinces and Dordrecht by increasing the *licent* on the sea-routes at least to the Eems and Weser estuaries to the level normally applying on the Rhine and Maas to trade with neutrals, though supported by most Holland towns was firmly blocked by Amsterdam and for a time by Rotterdam⁷⁸. Significantly the softening in Holland's approach early in 1627, caused dismay in Zeeland because re-opening

75. ARA, SG 3185, fos. 398v, 401, Res. 3 and 6 October 1626; *ibidem*, SG 5494, II, Advys Raad van State to SG, 29 September 1629; ARA, Raad van State, 44, Res. 29 September and 24 December 1626.

76. *Ibidem*, SG 3186, fo. 20v, Res. 15 January 1627; *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, II, 14 and 18 January 1627.

77. *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 18, 19 January 1627.

78. *Ibidem*.

to neutrals but not to the enemy meant in effect the resumption of some activity on the Rhine and Maas while the Schelde and Ghent canal remained completely closed such that Brabant and Flanders would be supplied indirectly from neutral localities on the Rhine and Maas⁷⁹, while Zeeland's trade with Calais contracted.

One notable difference between the 1625-1627 blockade and the less prolonged interruptions of river trade during the 1620s was that while the latter involved only provisions and certain materials, the 1625-1627 action applied to all merchandise, shutting out foreign manufactures in the process. For this reason, the 1625-1627 ban proved to be of greater concern than the others to the Holland industrial as well as commercial towns. While the work-force of Leiden, Haarlem, Delft and Gouda undeniably benefitted in all the blockades from the cheaper foodstuffs and therefore lower cost of living that resulted⁸⁰, exclusion of South Netherlands, Westphalian and Liège manufactures especially appealed to *vroedschappen* which, prompted by the textile guilds, were in highly protectionist mood during the 1620s⁸¹. Thus coupled with the resistance of Amsterdam and other maritime towns to the demands of the eastern provinces and Holland river towns was that of Leiden and the manufacturing interest. After considering the representations of the inland provinces in June 1626, the Leiden *vroedschap* had instructed its deputies in the Hague to

serieuselick helpen arbeijden dat de licenten op de neutrale landen gesloten blyven ende dat de sluyten naer den viant, met goede wachten beset ende bewaert mogen werden⁸².

Middelburg, which consistently strove through 1627 to stiffen the resistance in Holland to re-opening the rivers discerningly made a point of stressing that by shutting out Flemish manufactures the river blockade was significantly damaging industrial life across the border.

Undeniably though, the staunchest support for the blockade stemmed from those towns which profited from the diversion of river commerce to the sea-routes. Frequently, this expanded trade with north-east France and north-west Germany was indirect. Herring and salt-fish, for instance, was shipped in abundance from Rotterdam and Zeeland first to Dover and then to Calais so as to avoid the higher *licenten* payable on the direct route to Calais⁸³. The

79. *Notulen Zeeland*, 1627, Gecommitteerde Raden to Zeeland towns, Middelburg, 22 January 1627.

80. Van der Capellen, *Gedenkschriften*, I, 454; Israël, 'A Conflict', 56-57.

81. J. I. Israël, 'The Holland Towns and the Dutch-Spanish conflict', *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, XCIV (1979) 65-68.

82. GA Leiden, Secretariearchief 447, fo. 303, Res. 23 June 1626, see also *ibidem*, fo. 332, Res. 18 November 1626.

83. *Notulen Zeeland*, Res. 18 March 1626.

fundamental motivation for Zeeland's persistent opposition to restoring the *licenten* on the rivers is revealed by its reaction to the demands from Overijssel, Gelderland and the *Raad van State* that the charges for Calais should be increased in order to reduce the diversion by that route. The inland provinces were naturally bitter that others should profit from the cessation of their own trade while the *Raad* judged that the great scale of the diversion was in effect nullifying the intended strategic impact of the *placcaet*. In November 1626, Zeeland instructed its deputies in The Hague that they

zullen devoir doen dat dese openinge van licenten op Neutralen geen voortganch en gewinne, maer de zaecken laten verblyven by den teneur van het placcaet van retorsie... ende sonderlinge niet mede de meerder verswaringe van het Port en de Haven van Calis, op dat den cours van den Handel niet en werde gediverteert⁸⁴.

The Middelburg *vroedschap* was the most anxious of any in the United Provinces to retain the blockades as it stood and in its drive to hold the line in Zeeland and Holland, elaborately set out its arguments⁸⁵. Replying to claims that the *placcaet* was not in fact denying provisions to the enemy but merely denuding the admiralty colleges of sorely needed funds, Middelburg judged that in reality great damage was being dealt to the Southern Netherlands through the blockade. If supplies were entering via Calais and other French ports, these were costly due to the high *licenten*, a factor which also compensated the admiralty colleges in part, because the French taxes had to be paid before such victuals entered Spanish territory, and owing to the heavy cost of transportation by canal and overland to the Spanish forces. In consequence, the Spanish Netherlands had suffered a punishing rise in food prices. Salt was then selling at Liège, according to the Middelburg *vroedschap*, at five times its price in Holland and Zeeland. Rye, a cheap grain, was then selling at Ghent for over twenty five per cent more per last than was wheat at Middelburg. Restoring river trade with neutrals, it was argued, would not only harm the commerce of Holland and Zeeland but provide both the Spanish army and the Emperor with all the supplies they needed thereby undermining the strategic interests not only of the Republic but also of its protestant allies in Germany and of the Danish king⁸⁶. At the same time, Middelburg maintained that the *licenten* for Calais should not be raised lest sea-borne commerce should suffer.

84. *Ibidem*, Res. 24 November 1626.

85. See Rijksarchief in Zeeland, Middelburg, archive of the States of Zeeland, vol. 933: 'Consideratien van d'Heeren borgemrs schepenen ende Raet deser stad Middelburg over het openen vande licenten oft uytganck vande goederen op ende vande neutralen Landen steden ende dorpen op contributie zittende', 5 February 1627.

86. *Ibidem*, 9-13.

During February and March 1627, while the States of Zeeland, specially summoned on account of this issue, unanimously re-affirmed support for the existing placcaet, and while Holland remained divided, Overijssel and Gelderland intensified their pressure 'met affirmatie dat zonder dese openinge niet een stuyver tot subsidie van de Admiraliteyten is te verwaghten'⁸⁷. To back its claims, Overijssel put to the States General a missive from the Deventer *vroedschap* maintaining that owing to continued closure of the rivers, Deventer's former German trade (chiefly with the towns of north-central Germany via Munster and Osnabrück) had been wholly diverted via Holland, Bremen and the Weser route⁸⁸. Confronted by such pressure and that of groups within Holland who claimed that imports such as lime, iron and *molensteenen* were urgently needed for agriculture and the windmills⁸⁹, the States of Holland equivocated during February and the States General provisionally resolved by majority vote to restore river trade with neutrals as from 13 February 1627⁹⁰. Shortly after, even Rotterdam, one of the Holland towns that gained most from the blockade, consented to restoring river commerce with neutrals provided that this was on the basis of the war-time *licent* on trade with enemy territory, hoping in this way to retain a substantial gap between the cost of river-borne as distinct from sea-borne commerce⁹¹. Yet the dispute was far from over and the scheduled re-opening failed to take place. Several Holland towns continued to insist on the 'enemy' *licent* on trade with neutrals while the *Raad van State* still pressed for the Bosch *licent* both on exports by river and by sea to Calais and Bremen and Zeeland flatly refused to accept the majority vote in favour of re-opening⁹².

During March, the inland provinces continued to insist that they would only accept further closure of the rivers if the diversionary sea-routes were closed likewise, and warships employed to block the entrances of Emden, Bremen, Calais, Boulogne and the Somme estuary as in 1599⁹³. When Holland objected that this would be costly and would annoy the foreign states affected, asking whether simply raising the *licenten* on the sea-routes would not suffice, the inland provinces replied that it would not but that they would accept restoring the river trade to neutrals on the basis of the same increased *licent* as would be applied to the sea-routes. This prompted a *grootte dispariteyt* among the Holland towns⁹⁴. A majority of the province comprising manufacturing, river and other

87. *Notulen Zeeland*, 1627, 122.

88. ARA, SG 3186, fo. 46, Res. 30 January 1627.

89. *Notulen Zeeland*, 1627, 108.

90. ARA, SG 3186, fo. 53v. Res. 4 February 1627.

91. GA Rotterdam, Oud Archief XX, vroedschapsresoluties, 24 February 1627.

92. ARA, SG 3186, fo. 65, Res. 13 February 1627.

93. *Ibidem*, fo. 104, Res. 13 March 1627.

94. *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 10 March 1627.

inland towns now brought heavy pressure to bear on Amsterdam, Rotterdam and the Noorderkwartier ports to concede a *generale sluytinge* which would include the disputed sea-routes. On 20 March, a majority of the States of Holland voted for a general closure

sonder dat die van Amsterdam te bewegen waren tot het sluyten van de Havenen van Calis, Boulogne ende de Somme met de Eems ende Weser, ofte de convoyen van dien te verhoogen, omme niet alle de neringen uyt den Lande te diverteren⁹⁵.

Nevertheless, on 26 March, Holland consented in the States General to deliberate a *generale sluytinge*, agreeing to closure of the Eems and Weser by Dutch warships and that Louis XIII should be asked to forebear the closing of Calais to Dutch merchant vessels⁹⁶. Soon after, Rotterdam gave way to the clamour for a general closure⁹⁷. However, when it emerged subsequently that at Amsterdam's insistence Holland would concede shutting the Eems and Weser to foodstuffs and munitions only and not to other merchandise, the five non-maritime provinces retorted that if Holland refused to proceed with a general closure such as had been envisaged, that they would then insist on implementing the resolution of 4 February and re-open the rivers to trade with neutrals⁹⁸. To this Holland and Zeeland replied that they would not accept a majority vote by the five inland provinces on an issue concerning convoy and licence money.

The deadlock continued unchanged for a further two months. During June, however, discussion resumed on the basis of a fresh approach whereby exports by river and overland to neutrals would be allowed except for foodstuffs and munitions, the Eems and Weser would be closed but likewise to foodstuffs and munitions only and all imports from neutral territory admitted by river 'uytgesondert manufacturen in vyanden steden ende landen gemaect'⁹⁹. Deftily though this formula accommodated most of the conflicting interests involved, it failed to clinch the matter. Zeeland proved willing to concede admission of timber, iron, lime, *molensteenen* and other key imports for which there was mounting demand in Holland, though Vlissingen at first resisted the addition of iron to the list alleging that sufficient iron was arriving by sea. In other respects though,

95. *Ibidem*, 20 March 1627.

96. ARA, SG 3186, fos. 118, 156, Res. 24 March, 17 April 1627; *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 2 April 1627; *Notulen Zeeland*, 1627, 107-108, reports from The Hague dated 3, 14 and 20 April; in the first of these it is stated that 'die van Hollant niet wel langer kunnen derven kalck, yser en Molensteenen, die sy nodigh hebben tot hare Lantwercken, molens en sluysen'.

97. GA Rotterdam, Oud Archief XX, 18, Res. 29 March 1627.

98. ARA, SG 3186, fo. 156, Res. 17 April 1627; *Notulen Zeeland*, 1627, 109.

99. ARA, SG 3186, fos 243v-244, Res. 12 June 1627; *Notulen Zeeland*, 11 June 1627; *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 30 June 1627.

Zeeland was less placatory insisting that traffic carrying goods from neutral lands to the Republic should return empty. In Holland also the proposal was eventually rejected because Frederik Hendrik and the army were then about to take the field and it was thought best to keep the blockade as it stood. Even so, on 17 July, hard pressed to admit imports of materials, the States General finally agreed to allow in goods from neutral territory on the regular war-time basis, excepting only manufactures from enemy territory¹⁰⁰. Immediately, permission was granted to a merchant of Hasselt to convey down the Maas 10,000 lb of iron and large consignments of Liège coal and lime.

After the campaigning season, the inland provinces resumed their drive to secure either a full resumption of river trade with neutrals or else a total lifting of the river blockade. The financial predicament of the admiralty colleges was now such that an immediate subsidy of 800,000 guilders from the States General was considered essential. The five provinces used this as a lever to force Holland into compliance, refusing to vote the subsidy until the river ban was further relaxed¹⁰¹. By majority vote, the States General, on 9 October, provisionally agreed to re-open the rivers shortly on the basis applying before October 1625¹⁰². In Holland, a majority including Amsterdam and Rotterdam were now willing to terminate the blockade completely but Haarlem, Schiedam and Hoorn still preferred the relaxation to be on the basis of trade with neutrals only while Enkhuizen and Schoonhoven steadfastly opposed any change¹⁰³. Dordrecht consented to the re-opening on 11 October. Zeeland, however, remained reluctant, proposing that if Spain did not promptly respond by lifting its own ban, the States General should then re-impose its blockade with both enemy and neutral territory and that in any case exports should be on the basis of the *Bosch licent*¹⁰⁴. Despite the reservations of some Zeeland and Holland towns, the *licenten* on river, canal and overland commerce were at last restored two years and four days after the original declaration of the blockade on 20 October 1627.

The rivers remained fully open on the Dutch side (the Spanish ban remained in effect) for a mere three months before the Dutch again sought to regulate them for strategic purposes. In January 1628, following the recent arrival of Catholic League troops under Tilly and Imperialist detachments in East-Friesland, some of these forces encamping within view of the Dutch garrison at Leerort on the Eems, the States General decided to try to compel these units to withdraw by

100. ARA, SG 3186, fo. 312v, Res. 17 July 1627.

101. *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 9 October 1627.

102. ARA, SG 3186, fo. 426, Res. 9 October 1627.

103. *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 9 October 1627; GA Dordrecht, section 3, vol. 46, fo. 109, Res. 11 October 1627.

104. ARA, SG 3186, fo. 437v, Res. 18 October 1627.

halting exports of food up the Eems and overland from the Dutch border. A frigid neutrality persisted between Dutch and Imperialists, 'hoewel', as Aitzema put it, 'het Hart ende gemoedt wedersijts hostijl genoech was'¹⁰⁵. As the pretext for its action, the States General gave out that owing to the wars in Poland and East Prussia supplies were very short in the Republic. It was decided in The Hague to refrain from preventing passage of foodstuffs from the bishopric of Munster and overland from Hamburg to East-Friesland 'de wijl 't selve al te seer soude smaken na rupture vande Neutraliteyt', but the admiralty colleges of Dokkum and Amsterdam were ordered to despatch warships to the Eems and East Frisian coast and allow no sea-borne provisions to enter Griet or Norden or beyond Emden while the Dutch governors of Leerort, Bellingwolde and Bourtange were to allow no supplies through from the province of Groningen. When Tilly protested at such conduct, the States General again alleged shortages on account of the occurrences in Poland. The ban seems to have had only a very limited effect, however, due to the Elbe and Rhine remaining open and following a petition from the city of Emden pointing out that the Imperialists were receiving most of what they needed from Munster, Cologne and Hamburg, the ban was lifted after eight months duration during August¹⁰⁶.

The next occasion when the States General suspended the river trade was during the major Dutch offensive that began in May 1629. The long Spanish prohibition on trade with the 'rebels', operative since July 1625, was finally called off in April 1629 after urgent pleas from Brussels had secured the consent of Philip and his ministers in Madrid¹⁰⁷. At this point, the condition of the Spanish troops, starved of supplies and in some cases having received no pay for as long as four months, was, as Frederik Hendrik was well aware, more wretched than at any stage since 1621. The Dutch descent upon 's-Hertogenbosch being intended as a surprise, the States General waited until the army was well entrenched around the great fortress town when the Brussels regime was endeavouring with much difficulty to muster an army of relief before imposing the new blockade. The moment was undeniably well chosen as the shortage of all foodstuffs and military supplies in the Southern Netherlands was then acute. In the second week of May, the *Raad van State* proposed an immediate ban on exports of provisions and munitions along the rivers and canals. Holland, except for Dordrecht which briefly resisted¹⁰⁸, acquiesced and, on 17 May, the States General introduced the

105. Liewe van Aitzema, *Historie of verhael van saken van staet en oorlogh in ende omtrent de Vereenigde Nederlanden* (14 vols.; The Hague, 1667-1671) II, 431; see also Bernard Hagedorn, *Ostfrieslands Handel und Schiffahrt des 16. Juhrhunderts bis zum Westfälischen Frieden (1580-1648)* (Berlin, 1912) 506-507.

106. Aitzema, *Historie*, II, 438-441.

107. Israël, 'A Conflict', 57.

108. GA Dordrecht, section 3, vol. 46, Res. 13 May 1629.

ban exempting only wine at Zeeland's request. The stoppage applied to the Schelde, Maas and waterways into Flanders and Brabant only, leaving the Rhine, Eems and Weser open¹⁰⁹. As before, special arrangements were made for various localities in Dutch Brabant to receive rationed supplies.

At the end of May, the States General debated whether to extend the ban also to the Rhine, IJssel and Eems for which there was good strategic reason but put off its decision owing to the reluctance of Holland, or at least of Amsterdam and other commercial towns¹¹⁰. Through June and early July, discussion among the provinces focussed on the Rhine, Eems and sea-lanes to Calais, Boulogne, Emden and Bremen. Predictably, Zeeland wished to keep the sea-routes open but to close the Rhine 'alzo anders de Neringe derwaerts wert gediverteert, tot groote prejuditie van de inwoonderen van Zeelant'¹¹¹. While most Holland towns desired closure of both the sea-lanes and the Rhine, Amsterdam insisted that both should remain open¹¹². Amsterdam thus clashed with Middelburg on the question of the Rhine as well as on that of wine which Amsterdam wished to be included in the ban. At length, Amsterdam gave in on the former and Middelburg on the latter point, the States General closing the Rhine and encompassing wines within the blockade on 7 July¹¹³, thereby evoking considerable displeasure in Zeeland where merchants evidently had large stocks of wine in hand awaiting shipment to Antwerp and Ghent¹¹⁴. Zierikzee was much aroused that the prohibition applied also to salt.

During July, as it became clear that the Republic faced a full-scale strategic emergency, the inland provinces and some Holland towns repeatedly demanded that the river blockade be extended further. Attempting to save 's-Hertogenbosch by means of diversion, the Spanish forces advanced north-eastwards, crossing the Rhine at Wesel and, on 22 July, seizing a vital crossing on the IJssel at Westervoort. Also, it seemed increasingly probable that Imperial troops, then triumphant in North Germany, would, as indeed they soon did, move to assist the Spaniards. In response, the States General firstly closed the Eems above Leerort

109. ARA, SG 3188, fos. 286v, 287v, Res. 13, 14 May 1629; ARA, Admiraliteiten 2456, Res. Coll. Middelburg, 13, 16 May 1629.

110. ARA, SG 3188, fo. 324, Res. 30 May 1629; GA Amsterdam, vroedschapsresoluties XV, fo. 93v, Res. 6 July 1629; the Amsterdam *vroedschap* noted that previously such action had not seriously hindered the enemy 'door dien hij niettegenstaende 't sluyten, evenwel toevoer van alles ghekreghen heeft door de ingesetenen van eenighe particuliere steden, als Deventer ende andere plaetsen opde frontieren ghelegen, oock Dordrecht, sonder dat het Land zyn gerechtigheyt daer van gekregen heeft. Te meer alsoo door't selve sluyten den vyand tegenwoordigh nieuwe oorsaecke gegheven souden worden, om tot groot nadeel van dese Landen, van syne syde de licenten generalick mede te sluyten'.

111. *Notulen Zeeland*, Res. 11 July 1629.

112. *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 7 July 1629.

113. ARA, SG 3188, fo. 393, Res. 7 July 1629.

114. *Notulen Zeeland*, Res. 11, 12, 19 July 1629.

on 19 July¹¹⁵. The five provinces and most Holland towns also pressed Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Middelburg to consent to closure of the sea-lanes to north-east France and north-west Germany but without success. In early August, combined Spanish and Imperial forces thrust into the heart of the Republic, the town of Amersfoort capitulating to the Imperialist general Montecuculi on 13 August. Soon after, the States General shut the rivers Weser and Jade to prevent passage of supplies to the enemy via Bremen and Munster¹¹⁶. Two warships were assigned to block the Weser estuary and two that of the Jade.

Through September 1629, with the Spanish occupation of the Veluwe continuing, the Dutch maintained their river blockade. Undoubtedly, the dangerous military situation did much to unify Dutch opinion over the closure of the rivers except that there was some friction between Zeeland and the other provinces over the inclusion of wine and salt in the ban¹¹⁷. The consensus dissolved, however, as soon as the emergency passed with the withdrawal of enemy troops from the Veluwe and IJssel in mid October. After some discussion, the blockade was finally lifted, after five and a half months in operation, on 1 November, except in the case of grain which was then in short supply in the Republic and export of which was forbidden indefinitely¹¹⁸.

After the dramatic campaigns of 1629, for two years (1630-1631) there was no major advance by either side in the Low Countries and there was no significant interruption of river traffic other than the continuing Spanish ban on the passage of timber down the Rhine and Maas to Dutch territory and the Dutch ban on grain exports which was renewed in May 1630 and maintained until August 1631¹¹⁹. The massing of Spanish forces around Antwerp in August 1631 preceding Jan van Nassau's ill-fated venture into Zeeland elicited merely a temporary Dutch ban on exports of certain timbers (*sparren, deelen ende andere noordsche waeren*) to the Spanish Netherlands¹²⁰. Nor during Frederik Hendrik's great break-through along the Maas valley in 1632, did the States General seek to regulate river traffic as part of its strategy. Soon after the siege of Maastricht began, in June 1632, the States of Zeeland, in view of the shortage evident at

115. ARA, SG 3188, fos. 414, Res. 19 July 1629; GA Amsterdam, vroedschapsresoluties XV, fo. 99v, Res. 19 July 1629.

116. ARA, SG 3188, fos. 486v, 503, Res. 25 August, 1 September 1629; ARA, Admiraliteiten 2457, Res. Coll. Middelburg, 1 September 1629.

117. ARA, SG 3188, fos. 533v, 548v, Res. 22 September, 8 October 1629; *Notulen Zeeland*, Res. 7 September 1629.

118. ARA, SG 3188, fo. 570, Res. 24 October 1629.

119. Israël, 'A Conflict', 57; on the importance to the Dutch of timber imports down the Rhine from the Black Forest, Odenwald, Saarland and elsewhere, see H. C. Difereë, *De geschiedenis van den Nederlandschen handel tot den val der Republiek* (Amsterdam, 1908) 218-219; for the ban on grain exports, see ARA, Admiraliteiten, verzameling Bisdom, vol. 58, fos. 136, 226.

120. *Ibidem*, fo. 243v.

Zandvliet and other Spanish forts around Antwerp, provisionally banned the export of foodstuffs along the waterways of its *repartitie* into Flanders and Brabant, but both the States General and the *Raad van State* reacted negatively, deeming that such action should not have been taken without proper authorization, and the ban was soon lifted¹²¹. This and the subsequent lack of debate over the matter seems to suggest that the decision not to regulate the rivers during the Maas offensive arose from strategic considerations. Presumably, the fact that the Dutch army operated over a long stretch of the Maas valley beyond the *comptoiren* meant that there was little sense in closing the Maas to Dutch traffic and with the Spanish and Imperialist armies of relief drawn into the same area, neither was there any sense in closing the other rivers. During 1633-1634, there was again no action on the rivers except that in 1634 whilst the marqués de Aytona sought to cut off the Dutch garrison at Maastricht by establishing fortifications blocking the Maas in and around Stevensweert, the States General forbade transportation by water or overland of supplies to the Stevensweert area and imposed a general ban on the passage of Scandinavian timbers to the enemy.

The last occasion when the States General imposed a full-scale river blockade for strategic purposes took place in 1635-1636 following the Spanish and Imperialist offensive on the eastern frontier of the Republic during the autumn of 1635. After the failure of the combined Franco-Dutch invasion of the Southern Netherlands in June 1635, the Spaniards succeeded in surprising the strategic Dutch fortress of Schenkenschans on the Rhine between Nijmegen and Emmerich just beyond the Dutch border, a fortress which commanded an easy entrance into Gelderland north of the great rivers. The Cardinal-Infante had swiftly followed up this break-through, building a linking fortress, Fort Ferdinandus, between Schenkenschans and Cleves and connecting this new enclave with the main Spanish territory by seizing and fortifying Gennep. This advance represented the most dangerous threat to the Republic since 1629, especially as Imperialist troops moved to assist the Spaniards in holding the Cleves enclave. In early August, the States General imposed and strictly enforced a ban on the passage of foodstuffs along the Rhine and Maas beyond Dutch territory¹²². When, however, some days later, the *Raad van State* proposed that the blockade should be extended to encompass the Schelde and other routes into Brabant and Flanders as well as the Eems and Weser, while the inland provinces,

121. ARA, SG 3191, fo. 295v, Res. 22 June 1632.

122. ARA, SG 5515, I, SG (minute) to Coll. Rotterdam, 6 August 1635; *ibidem*, SG 3194, fo. 410v, Res. 18 August 1635; *ibidem*, SG 5494, II, Coll. Rotterdam to SG, 17 and 22 August 1635; in November 1635, the Rotterdam college reported that it had twenty five armed vessels with average crew size of thirty on the rivers of its *repartitie*, ARA, SG 5515, II, Coll. Rotterdam to SG, 22 November 1635.

being those most immediately threatened, agreed, Holland and especially Amsterdam and Dordrecht, and Zeeland, the latter now having discarded its earlier zeal for such action, refused¹²³.

On 30 August, the States General peremptorily instructed the Middelburg admiralty college to stop exports of provisions from its *repartitie* indefinitely, without the States of Zeeland having consented to this¹²⁴. The order was not implemented and the college and States of Zeeland endeavoured to persuade the other provinces and the stadholder that in the interests of the Republic as a whole, the Schelde should not in fact be closed. While Zeeland was unable to sway the prince who in fact had clear evidence that the enemy troops on the eastern frontier were suffering from severe shortage of supplies which could readily be made more acute by widening the blockade¹²⁵, Zeeland's arguments proved more effective in Holland and especially with the Amsterdam *vroedschap*¹²⁶. Consequently, all further moves towards widening the ban were blocked for the time being. Indeed Holland, at the prompting of Dordrecht, advised Frederik Hendrik on 6 December that it now favoured re-opening the Maas and Rhine and pressed him for his reasons why this should not be done¹²⁷. The prince insisted that the countryside around Cleves was derelict and uncultivated, that the enemy was hampered by lack of victuals and that therefore for strategic reasons the rivers should remain closed.

During January 1636, delegates from Holland and Zeeland as well as from the States General conferred several times with the stadholder over the question of the blockade. The prince and inland provinces continued to demand closure of the Schelde, Eems and Weser and a suspension of *licenten* on provisions for neutral as well as enemy territory. Holland and Zeeland objected that were this to be done, the Spaniards would receive Dutch foodstuffs by sea indirectly via the ports of south-east England and that once this commerce was diverted to Dover and elsewhere it would be difficult to retrieve it. The stadholder answered that the blockade would be for a short period only and that if supplies reached Flanders from England, it would be laborious and costly for the enemy to transfer such victuals to its forces in the Rhine valley¹²⁸. The issue of whether to halt passage of supplies overland from Grave, 's-Hertogenbosch, Geertruiden-

123. ARA, SG 3194, fo. 425, Res. 25 August 1635.

124. *Ibidem*, fo. 432v, Res. 30 August 1635; *Notulen Zeeland*, Res. 15 September 1635.

125. *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 11 September and 12 October 1635; for confirmation of the prince's information, see ARA Brussels, SEG 213, fo. 89, Cardinal-infante to Philip IV, 20 August 1635.

126. GA Amsterdam, vroedschapsresoluties XVI, fos. 97, 97v, Res. 15 and 23 October 1635.

127. *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 6, 11 December 1635.

128. ARA, SG 3195, fos. 57v-58, 66v-67, Res. 19, 21, 23 January 1636; *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, Res. 24 January 1636.

berg and Bergen-op-Zoom to neutral territory and villages under contribution was held up in the States-General, against the advice of stadholder and *Raad van State*, for several weeks. Finally, in late January 1636, the Amsterdam *vroedschap* reluctantly changed its stance, consenting to a general blockade¹²⁹, and the opposition in Holland to the demands of stadholder, inland provinces and *Raad van State* collapsed. On 1 February 1636, the States General suspended the *Heenten* on all exports of foodstuffs via *binnenstromen* or overland, closing the Rhine, Maas, Waal, Schelde, Zwijn, Eems and Weser¹³⁰. The question as to whether to close the Elbe also was kept back for further consideration by Holland and firmly blocked by Amsterdam.

Zeeland accepted the ban only with great reluctance¹³¹. A request for exemption of fish and salt put to the States General on behalf of Zierikzee was rejected. As in the past, troops as well as considerable naval forces were used to enforce the blockade and confiscate goods and barges, horses and wagons employed to circumvent it. Requests from Dordrecht merchants for permission to despatch provisions *onder cautie* through the Spanish-controlled sections of the Maas to Venlo, Roermond and Maastricht were rejected¹³². On seeking clarification regarding marginal commodities, the admiralty colleges were instructed to include in the ban besides *sparren ende deelen*, sugar, spices, soap, olives, caviar and tobacco¹³³. In March, protests were submitted in The Hague by the city of Bremen, indignant at the closing of the Weser and the Count of East Friesland and city of Emden, aroused by the closing of the Eems. These were disregarded except that the States General permitted resumption of export of spices and drugs to Bremen¹³⁴. Bremen also appealed directly to the Amsterdam *vroedschap*, claiming that the States General's measure would surely fail in its strategic purpose while having the adverse strategic effect of depriving the Swedish army and other Protestant forces in North Germany of their supplies (much of which came from Holland via Bremen) to the advantage of the Emperor.

As always, the blockade caused huge temporary diversions in the trade in foodstuffs and before long attention in the Republic was centering on the question of extending the ban further. Although the Amsterdam admiralty

129. GA Amsterdam, vroedschapsresoluties XVI, fo. 114, Res. 28 January 1636.

130. ARA, SG 3195, fo. 87v, Res. 1 February 1636; *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 1 February 1636.

131. *Notulen Zeeland*, 11 February 1636; ARA, SG 3195, fo. U5v, Res. 15 February 1636.

132. *Ibidem*, fos. 120v-121, 125, 133v.

133. *Ibidem*, fo. 100, Res. 7 February 1636; in late April 1636, Amsterdam pressed for exemption of sugar and spices from the ban 'als niet anders zynde als delicatessen waer door den vyandt niet en kan werden gespijst', *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 22 April 1636.

134. Aitzema, *Historie*, IV, i, 337; Ludwig Beutin, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Bremischen Handelsgeschichte*, II, *Bremen und die Niederlande* (Weimar, 1939) 9-10, 36-37.

college confirmed in mid February, that supplies were being shipped in large quantities to the enemy from Holland via Hamburg and the Elbe and through Dover and Dunkirk, Holland opposed broadening the blockade to encompass the Elbe and Dover at the insistence of Amsterdam¹³⁵. Even so, there was growing fear in Holland of the consequences of leaving the Dover route open and nowhere more so than at Rotterdam. Rotterdam complained in the States of Holland on 29 February that Englishmen were buying up salt fish in quantity, intending to ship it to Flanders via England¹³⁶. The *gecommitteerde raden* of Zeeland wrote to The Hague shortly after complaining that provisions were being shipped daily from Zeeland to England for trans-shipment to Dunkirk and transfer to the Rhine, urging the States General to bring forward its Schedule for blockading the Flemish coast¹³⁷. While in most years, the States General's fleet blocked the Flemish coast from April onwards, the programme was so delayed in 1636 that no naval action was taken to check the flow of supplies either in April or May, causing consternation not only in Middelburg and Vlissingen but in Rotterdam which wanted either a wider ban, to encompass England, or else a total lifting of the blockade¹³⁸.

Schenkenschans feil to the Dutch on the last day of April, but despite this the ban was kept in force for some months longer at the insistence of stadholder, *Raad van State* and inland provinces in order to weaken the remaining Spanish and Imperialist forces in the Cleves and Gennep areas. During May, pressure in Zeeland for re-opening the rivers steadily mounted until, on 28 May, the States agreed that the blockade could simply not be suffered by the inhabitants of Zeeland any longer such that if the States General would not immediately lift it, as would be preferred, then Zeeland would break with accepted procedure and re-open its waterways unilaterally from the end of May¹³⁹. The States, *lichtmeesters* and military governors in Zeeland were warned not to act without States General authorization, but Zeeland went ahead nevertheless and officials on the Schelde followed their province rather than the orders from The Hague¹⁴⁰. The States General, States of Holland and stadholder reacted with great indignation, summoning several officials of the Middelburg admiralty college to be disciplined in The Hague and sending in Holland warships to patrol Zeeland's waterways. In this way Zeeland was quickly forced to retract and re-impose the blockade on the Schelde for the final few weeks of the action¹⁴¹. Finally, on 25

135. *Resolutien Staten van Holland*, 20 February 1636.

136. *Ibidem*, 29 February 1636.

137. *Ibidem*, 26 April 1636.

138. GA Rotterdam, Oud Archief, no. 21, 101, vroedschapsresoluties, 19 May 1636; ARA, SG 3195, fos. 200v, 216v, 232v-233, 29 March, 7, 14 April 1636.

139. *Notulen Zeeland*, 28 May 1636.

140. ARA, SG 3195, fos. 349, 366v-377, Res. 30 May, 5, 6 June 1636.

141. *Notulen Zeeland*, 8, 13 and 20 June 1636.

June, the States General did restore the *licenten*, this being the very last occasion that this occurred. As Aitzema expressed it

't gheheele werck tegen Zeelandt wiert ghelaten in ruste; ende den vijf en twintichsten Iunii wierden de licenten generalijck geopent; tot sluytinge vande welcke men noyt daer na heeft willen verstaen¹⁴².

Compared with the earlier river blockades, the last, that of 1635-1636, shows some significant points of divergence. Perhaps most striking is the totally different role played by Zeeland in 1636-1636 than previously, though the explanation is clear enough. The outbreak of war between France and Spain in May 1635 entirely transformed Zeeland's position vis-à-vis strategic regulation of the Dutch waterways. In the past, closing Schelde and Zwiijn had simply meant swelling Zeeland's commerce with Calais, Boulogne and Dieppe. After May 1635, however, with the border between France and the Spanish Netherlands shut, suspending Dutch river traffic merely meant transferring lucrative business to the English such that, as Aitzema observed of the 1635-1636 blockade, Zeeland suffered more than any other province. The enormous growth of the entrepot trade at Dover, briefly, during the mid 1630s, was entirely due to two factors — the outbreak of the Franco-Spanish war and the last Dutch river blockade and there can be no doubt that the latter was of great importance in shaping this short phase in Dover's history. Whereas no French wines were re-exported from the Dover entrepot in 1634 or until December 1635, from the latter month until November 1636, no less than 3,666 tuns were re-exported, almost all to Dunkirk¹⁴³. The rise of Dover was also looked upon with evident anxiety at Amsterdam and still more at Rotterdam. Before, 1635, with the Calais-Dunkirk connection viable, Zeeland had generally been the most eager of the provinces to engage in river regulation. While the clearest evidence relates to the years 1625-1629 when England was also at war with Spain, that is to years when re-exports from Dover to Dunkirk were forbidden by the English crown¹⁴⁴, and to 1622 when Zeeland was directly threatened by Spinola's operations, during the 1623-1624 blockades Zeeland had also readily participated. Despite England then being at peace with Spain, the Dutch naval blockade of the Flemish coast had curtailed English exports to Flanders and Zeeland's trade by sea with north-east France had much expanded.

After 1636, there was only one major Spanish offensive by land against the

142. Aitzema, *Historie*, IV, i, 301.

143. See J. S. Kepler, *The Exchange of Christendom. The International Entrepot at Dover, 1622-1641* (Leicester, 1976) 55.

144. *Ibidem*, 34-35.

Dutch, in 1637, and after the recapture of Breda by the Dutch in the same year, there occurred only several fairly minor advances by the Dutch, the most important being the campaigns culminating in the capture of Sas van Gent and Hulst (1644, 1645) in Flanders. Thus it might be said that from a strategic point of view, the Dutch had little real reason to resort again to river regulation after 1636. Yet the 1637 campaign was a major one and during the sieges of Gennepe (1641), Sas van Gent and Hulst there was in fact reason to impose river blockades at least in certain specific sectors. The fact that this was not attempted does suggest that the new-found fear of the consequences of shutting the rivers evident at Middelburg, Rotterdam and Amsterdam in 1635-1636 owing to the burgeoning of the Dover entrepot acted at least to some extent as a deterrent.

In conclusion, it may be said that while those who opposed regulation of the waterways habitually claimed that such action was ineffective in denying provisions to the enemy and while evidence of contraband trade and collusion with contrabandists by the very officials and troops assigned to prevent it abounds, it does seem that considerable inconvenience was in fact caused both to the Spanish and Imperialist forces. Spanish documentation confirms that during at least four major campaigns, those of 1622, 1624-1625, 1629 and 1635-1636, the army of Flanders was severely impeded by lack of provisions. The fact that supplies were brought in great quantities from Holland to Spanish forces at Bergen-op-Zoom, Breda and in the Rhine valley via Calais and Dunkirk or through Bremen and Emden surely proves conclusively that the Spaniards were forced to procure victuals with great difficulty and at great cost. Furthermore, the tendency of the Dutch provinces to be sharply at variance as to when and how to blockade the rivers demonstrates that the effects of such action were both widespread and profound. Over this issue, the interests of the inland towns diverged sharply from those of the maritime towns and the blockades were seen to cause major if temporary shifts in patterns of trade. The economic repercussions were therefore very diverse, some localities reaping handsome profits from the misfortunes of others, and could, as several references in the Dordrecht city council records indicate, influence for prolonged periods the entire tone of life of major towns¹⁴⁵.

145. See, for instance, GA Dordrecht, scclion 3, vol. 46, fos. 31v-32, 128, Res. 29 November 1625, 22 August 1628.

Nederlands-Sovjetrussische diplomatieke betrekkingen. De moeizame geschiedenis van het akkoord van 10 juli 1942

H. H. JONGBLOED

VOORGESCHIEDENIS TOT 1941

Op 10 juli 1942 ondertekenden de Nederlandse ambassadeur bij het Britse Hof, tevens waarnemend minister van buitenlandse zaken, E. F. M. J. Michiels van Verduynen, en de Sovjetambassadeur in Groot-Brittannië, I. M. Majskij, de overeenkomst, waarbij diplomatieke betrekkingen tussen hun beide landen een feit werden.

Dat had heel wat voeten in de aarde gehad. Na de bolsjewistische revolutie van 1917 had Nederland, als zoveel andere landen, eerst een afwachtende, later een afwijzende houding aangenomen tegenover het aangaan van officiële betrekkingen met het nieuwe bewind in Rusland. Toen dit bewind zich eenmaal had geconsolideerd en het zijn diplomatieke isolement begon te doorbreken met de lokroep van economisch gewin, lieten tal van landen hun bezwaren tegen het aanknopen van betrekkingen met de USSR varen. Ook de Nederlandse houding, kwam, op initiatief van het bedrijfsleven, weer in discussie. Schoorvoetend besloot de toenmalige minister van buitenlandse zaken, H. A. van Karnebeek, te gaan onderhandelen met de Sovjetregering over een handelsakkoord. Een Nederlandse delegatie reisde in maart 1924 naar Berlijn, maar moest vaststellen, dat de Russen eerst en vooral geïnteresseerd waren in 'normalisering' van de verhouding tussen beide landen. Toen daarover in tweede ronde in april 1924 werd onderhandeld, bleek dat de opvattingen over een aantal aspecten, vooral economische, van die 'normalisering' sterk uiteenliepen, waarop de besprekingen werden opgeschort.

Even heeft het er toen op geleden, dat een derde ronde zou volgen. Ondershandse Nederlandse sonderingen en wederzijdse concessies zouden daarop enig uit-

1. Over de Nederlands-Sovjetrussische verhouding in het tijdvak 1917-1924 schreef drs. H. P. M. Knapen zijn doctoraalscriptie, onder de titel 'Nederland en het andere Rusland. Een onderzoek naar een aspect van de buitenlandse politiek van Nederland' (Nijmegen, 1975). Met welwillende instemming van de heer Knapen heb ik voor mijn doctoraalscriptie én voor dit artikel van zijn bevindingen gebruik kunnen maken.