

**Forced war heroes:  
Motivations of Dutch seafarers on Dutch merchant ships during World  
War II**

*About the paper*

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the motivations of Dutch merchant seafarers working on Dutch merchant ships during the Second World War. During the period from 6<sup>th</sup> June 1940 up to 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1946, Dutch employed by Dutch merchant companies were obliged under Dutch emergency measures to continue their work and to support the Allied war effort. According to extant Dutch historiography, the government-mandated duty and patriotic feelings have been identified as the primary motivators. However, as demonstrated in the Belgian and Norwegian historiographies, it was deemed implausible that the emergency measures and patriotic sentiments were the sole motivators.

Based on the combination of Dutch, Belgian, and Norwegian historiographies, three overarching categories of motivation have been identified: patriotism-based motivations, career- and financial-based motivations, and social-based motivations. The final distinction delineates between motivation derived from familial bonds and that derived from short-term activities such as socialising. Taking these three categories into consideration, this thesis has conducted a qualitative comparative analysis of three diaries, two memoirs, and a substantial amount of supplementary material. The objective of this analysis was to ascertain whether the five sailors under investigation experienced motivations that belonged to these three categories.

The findings of this analysis have indicated that the prevailing notion that patriotism was the predominant motivation, in addition to force, is incorrect. This thesis demonstrates that the primary motivation of Dutch merchant seamen was family-based. The data demonstrate that all seafarers experienced patriotic sentiments to a greater or lesser extent. However, even at their peak, patriotic sentiments were never comparable to those derived from the seafarers' family members. Finally, career- and financial-based motivations were evident among the seafarers, though the extent to which merchant sailors derived motivation from these factors differed; of the five studied seamen, one did so to a significant degree, while the others scarcely mentioned the topic at all.

Key concepts: merchant seafarers, merchant vessels, motivation, and patriotism.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis explores the motivations that Dutch seafarers had to remain in service aboard Dutch merchant vessels during the Second World War. Existing literature on the topic identifies two primary factors that motivated the Dutch seamen: feelings of patriotism and the emergency measures implemented by the Dutch government. Extant historiography suggests that, regardless of any other circumstances, more than half of the Dutch sailors saw freeing their homeland as their patriotic duty. The wartime measures were mostly aimed at those who did not have these feelings of patriotism. These laws compelled Dutch seamen to continue their service on merchant vessels. Violating them was punishable by penalties such as imprisonment and substantial fines.

The seamen's aggrieved reaction to the issued measures and the low number of desertions during the first years of the war (1940-1942) suggest that these two factors alone were insufficient in explaining the rationale of the sailors. The seafarers must have been motivated by other matters. To date, studies of the Dutch merchant fleet have only made broad statements on the seamen. The main focus of these studies has generally been on large naval events during the war, and when the ships sank, with some remarks on the circumstances of the seafarers on the sidelines. No dedicated study of the sailors' motivations has been conducted within Dutch historiography, resulting in a research gap. Despite the absence of a dedicated study in this area, broad categories can be identified based on the broad statements in Dutch historiography combined with extant literature on the Norwegian and Belgian merchant fleets, which were in a situation similar to the Dutch fleet. In addition to government control and patriotism, factors such as wages and career development, as well as the circumstances aboard the merchant ships and the seamen's families, also played a role in motivating the seamen.

This thesis will utilise primary source material from the collection of the Maritime Museum Rotterdam. These sources will contribute to the existing knowledge base regarding the motivations Dutch seafarers had to continue their work during WWII by adding new insights on the topic of motivations, as these sources have not been

analysed for this specific purpose before. These insights have the potential to either corroborate, refute or add to the current sum of research on motivations.

### **1.1 Research Questions**

The main research question of this thesis is as follows: '*What motivated Dutch seafarers to fulfil their duty on Dutch merchant ships during World War II, beyond the government-mandated duty to sail?*' In summary, the present thesis separates the reasons for the seafarers' continued presence aboard the ships and their will to work. The primary reason for the former is the government-mandated duty to stay, while the latter is caused by personal motivation. This thesis will primarily focus on the seamen's personal motivations, though it will also demonstrate that these motivations affected the seafarers' reasons to remain aboard the ships. This thesis focuses on the Dutch sailors working aboard Dutch ships. This was a group of about 12,000 sailors, though this group did not make up the entirety of the personnel aboard the ships; the largest group of non-Dutch seafarers was made up of Indonesians, who numbered around 6,500 across the entire Dutch fleet. The most important reason to focus on Dutch seamen is that the circumstances concerning motivations were vastly different between the Dutch and non-Dutch sailors. Therefore, a large demarcation in the background allows for more precise research within a singular group of people. These motivations, among others, apply to matters of patriotism and Dutch law, but also positions aboard the ships. Officers aboard Dutch ships, for example, were almost exclusively of Dutch nationality, while the servants working on the ships were often of Indonesian background. An example of patriotism as a motivation can be observed in a Norwegian case. The Norwegian government appealed to patriotic feelings when motivating the Norwegian seafarers. This did not happen in the case of Chinese seamen aboard Norwegian ships; they were recruited to do a job. Parallels can be drawn between this phenomenon and the Dutch case, as it highlights a difference in treatment between groups of different nationalities. Second, the emergency measures that were implemented only applied to the Dutch

seafarers. Third, diaries kept by non-Dutch sailors are much harder to access, as most Dutch collections do not have any of them.<sup>1</sup>

The specific period studied will extend from 6<sup>th</sup> June 1940, the day that the emergency measure forcing the Dutch seamen to continue their service aboard Dutch merchant vessels came into effect. The conclusion of the studied period is 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1946, as this date denotes the end of the government-mandated duty to sail. This thesis has not made a study of a specific region, but has opted to study the entire fleet across the entire world because there is currently no evidence suggesting that Dutch merchant seamen had different motivations based on the respective locations where they were located.<sup>2</sup>

The present thesis will have three sub-questions, the answers to which will investigate three broad categories identified within the literature. The first sub-question pertains to patriotism, as both merchant sailors who worked during the Second World War and Dutch and Norwegian literature have indicated that patriotism had a large effect on the seafarers' motivation. However, Rosendahl argued a contrasting perspective, stating that the effect of patriotism on motivation has been exaggerated in extant historiography. The first sub-question of this thesis will ascertain whether Rosendahl's argument concerning patriotism is also applicable to the Dutch case. This question is as follows: (1) How did the feeling of patriotism motivate seafarers to fulfil their duties? Second are career- and financial-based motivations. The Norwegian historian Rosendahl argued that money in the form of war bonuses was utilised as a means to motivate the Norwegian merchant seamen during the war. This situation might have been similar to that of Dutch sailors. The sub-question investigating this topic is: (2) By what means did career- and financial-based motivations affect the seafarers? Finally, historiographical works on the Belgian and Dutch merchant fleets have already demonstrated the presence of social-based motivations. While a multitude of social-based motivations have been identified, one in particular has been highlighted in this

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<sup>1</sup> Bjørn Tore Rosendahl, *Seafarers or war sailors? : The ambiguities of ensuring seafarers' services in times of war in the case of the Norwegian merchant fleet during the Second World War* (University of Agder, 2017), 39.

<sup>2</sup> Rosendahl, *Seafarers or war sailors*, 141; Saskia J. Klooster, "Verplicht varen. De inzet van de Nederlandse koopvaardij in vogelvlucht," in *De Nederlandse koopvaardij in oorlogstijd*, ed. Anita van Dissel, Martin Elands and Hylke Faber (Amsterdam, Boom, 2014), 11-52, there 51.

thesis, namely, motivation derived from familial relations. Although the presence of these motivations is indisputable, their relative significance in shaping seamen's motivations remains a subject of debate. The sub-question investigating this is: (3) By what means did the seafarers' families and experiences during the war affect their motivations?<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Concepts and Methodology

The main concept in this thesis is motivation. Motivation is defined as the reasons a person has for behaving in a certain manner. In the context of this thesis, these reasons relate to the seafarers' motivations for fulfilling their duties aboard the Dutch merchant vessels during WWII. The merchant vessels themselves constitute the second key concept. In this work, merchant vessels refer to vessels designed for non-military purposes. These ships were generally owned by mercantile, cruise or postal companies. The term merchant vessel is a broad one, encompassing ocean-going ships, coastal vessels, and inland shipping. For this thesis, the inland shipping sector has not been investigated. The reason for this is that the situation for the inland shipping sector and the coastal/oceanic shipping sector was in an entirely different situation that cannot be compared. The third key concept to be considered is that of Dutch nationality. Seamen of Dutch nationality were subject to the rights and obligations set out in the Dutch legislative framework. Additionally, citizens of the Netherlands shared a common history and culture. The fourth and final key concept is patriotism. This concept is defined as a combination of different feelings towards one's country of heritage, including attachment, love and devotion. Due to these feelings, patriotism can be conceptualised as a mechanism that facilitates the mobilisation of resources from the nation in times of crisis. As 'attachment' can be interpreted as attachment to family, a demarcation has been made to prevent this. For this thesis, 'attachment' as a part of patriotism does not

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<sup>3</sup> Anita van Dissel, "In buitenlandse havens. Desertie, opvang en welzijn," in *De Nederlandse koopvaardij in oorlogstijd*, ed. Anita van Dissel, Martin Elands and Hylke Faber (Amsterdam, Boom, 2014), 149-181, there 156-157 and 178; Bjørn Tore Rosendahl, "Patriotism, money and control: Mobilization of Norwegian merchant seamen during the Second World War," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 40, no. 2 (2015): 173 and 180-181, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2015.1011686>; Roger Machielsen, *De Belgische koopvaardij in oorlogstijd* (Antwerpen, Pattyn, 1991), 71, 73 and 77.

include any relation to family; this topic is covered in the fourth chapter on social-based motivations.<sup>4</sup>

This thesis will utilise ego-documents produced during and after World War II as its main primary source. An ego document is any form of autobiographical work. This means that it can take various forms, including diaries, travel accounts, memoirs, and a plethora of other forms. The ego documents used for this work have been authored by Dutch sailors who served on Dutch merchant vessels during the Second World War. The choice to primarily study ego documents, such as diaries and memoirs, for this thesis is because this type of source shows the largest documentation on the lives of seafarers during the war. Moreover, there were no other means available to the seamen to document their experiences during the war in a comprehensive manner. Other sources, such as letters, do give insight into the sailors' lives, but those are simultaneously less comprehensive in the information they give, as they generally do not give information about a longer period of time. Moreover, letters that were sent out to families by the seafarers were heavily censored to prevent possible information leaks. Lastly, diaries are relatively easily accessible as compared to other types of sources, such as the letters sent by seafarers, many of which have been lost or were never donated to archives. Making them hard to access in a short time.

Lastly, written source material is relatively easily accessible. The information obtained from the ego documents sources has been further enriched and corroborated by a number of sources of a smaller scale, including personnel cards compiled by the Netherlands Shipping and Trading Committee, seamen's books of seamen, birth and marriage certificates, and personal letters.

The main category, the autobiographies, consists of diaries and memoirs. Both sources have their own benefits and have primarily been sourced from the collection of the Maritime Museum Rotterdam. For this thesis, three diaries and two memoirs have been used. Besides these five documents, this thesis has also used all other written documents from the Maritime Museum Rotterdam's collection to enrich information

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<sup>4</sup> K.W.L. Bezemer, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse koopvaardij in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam, Elsevier, 1986), 249-250 and 257.

obtained from the diaries and memoirs. As such, this work is qualitative and has focused on five people working different jobs for different companies.

The benefit diaries will bring to this thesis is clear because it is written in the moment emotions are at their peak; it is also helpful as it is written from the perspective of the seafarer without much knowledge of the wider circumstances of the war. Purely for the sake of studying the less important motivations, nothing can beat written sources penned down during the time it happened. On the downside, diaries are less effective at showing the entire situation, especially during wartime when information was not shared as much. Moreover, authors of diaries have the tendency to repeat themselves and not describe the entire course of the war. The diaries used for this thesis were authored by Hendrik van der Mark, Jacobus Bernardus de Danschutter, and Roeland Jan Kroesen. All of these sources are, unfortunately, incomplete for various reasons. Hendrik van der Mark lost the first half of his diary during the war, Roeland Jan Kroesen only kept a diary during certain periods of the war, and Jacobus Bernardus de Danschutter started his diary in May 1940 but stopped during 1942, having increasingly large periods between accounts until he stopped entirely on 1<sup>st</sup> November. The clearest benefit of diaries is that they show the day-to-day experiences of their authors, for example. Van der Mark mentioned that he was thinking about the fate of his family back home in the Netherlands day and night, and due to the documentation of the day-to-day experiences, it is demonstrated how those feelings developed over the course of the war. Kroesen, in addition, wrote about his emotional state of mind and his girlfriend. In short, the diaries give information on the details that are of special importance for this research.<sup>5</sup>

The second type of written sources, memoirs, have their own specialities while still giving information about the seamen's motivations. Most importantly, because memoirs are written after the fact, the authors generally have more information about the

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<sup>5</sup> MMR, Collectie handschriften H152, Diary of Hendrik van der Mark about his experiences during World War II (14 November 1939 - 3 March 1946) 12; H1098, Diary of Roeland Jan Kroesen about his experiences during World War II (15 March 1942 – 5 March 1944) 35-36; H2195, Diary 1 of J.B. de Danschutter about his experiences during World War II (5 May 1940 – 17 June 1940); H2195, Diary 2 of J.B. de Danschutter about his experiences during World War II (23 June 1940 – 29 June 1941); H2195, Diary 3 of J.B. de Danschutter about his experiences during World War II (7 July 1941 – 1 November 1942).

events surrounding their experiences, which means that they can connect cause and effect, giving a researcher new insights. An example of this is that diaries have shown that seafarers often did not know the destination they were sailing to, as mentioned by Van der Mark. Within a memoir, this information is already known and can even be connected to a reason why a ship was travelling to a specific destination at a specific moment in time. Finally, it is important to note that memoirs generally describe the entire war, in contrast to diaries, which tend to focus on a narrower time period. The most evident disadvantage of the memoirs, which is regrettably inevitable, is that they do not document the more mundane activities the memoirists experienced, which gives much less information on the less prevalent motivations. Diaries are known to provide a comprehensive record of daily activities, with minimal emphasis placed on significant events. In contrast, memoirs typically concentrate on notable moments, often overlooking the routine and less momentous occurrences that comprise the majority of a person's life. Furthermore, the curation of memoirs is a more deliberate process. It is notable that Jan Witting, one of the seafarers whose diary has been studied for this thesis, composed his memoir during the 1980s. As a long time has passed since the events described within the memoir, some of his viewpoints might have changed, making it plausible to hypothesise that the content of the memoir was influenced by the prevailing zeitgeist of the time he wrote his memoir. The memoirs used for this thesis were written by Jan Witting and Hendrik Klapwijk, and they fully embody the remarks that were just made concerning the content of memoirs. The content of both memoirs covers the entire duration of the war, shows only the interesting moments and mostly ignores the mundane moments in between. In the case of Klapwijk's memoir, this shows in his description of his visit to a tribal chief in Polynesia with a couple of friends. On the other hand, details were still mentioned, such as the types of meals that were eaten aboard; there is just no repetition of the important things, as memoirs are a lot more curated in their content, likely to remain interesting to a reader.<sup>6</sup>

As the diaries and memoirs used for this thesis have not been used to study the specific circumstances aboard the ships, but rather the mindset and worldview of the

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<sup>6</sup> H152, Diary of Hendrik van der Mark, 11; H693, Memoir of Hendrik Klapwijk about his experiences during World War II, 86.

diarists, the biases of diarists, which typically make studying diaries for facts complicated, are not an issue for this thesis. Rather, the method used for studying the diaries for this thesis was testing the content of the diaries against preset categories derived from a study of extant historiography, based on the methodology outlined in the work of Andy Alaszewski. The method by which this analysis was done was by investigating whether the categories were mentioned by the diarists, how often they did so, and whether the attention given to specific topics or motivations changed throughout the diary.<sup>7</sup>

The specific people that were studied for this thesis are all male of primarily Dutch descent, working for a variety of different companies during the war. Van der Mark was a 46-year-old carpenter working for the Rotterdam-Lloyd. The ships he worked on during the war were primarily used to transport goods over long distances. In addition, there was no set route his ship followed, meaning that the next destination was generally unknown. De Danschutter, a 21-year-old engineer working for Shell during the war, like van der Mark, mostly transported goods, which was also done all over the world. Of course, in the case of the Danschutter, the type of good that was transported was mostly oil. What needs to be mentioned about de Danschutter specifically is that oil tankers were among the most hazardous ships to be on during the war, as the chances of surviving a shipwreck on an oil tanker were exceedingly low. Kroesen primarily worked for the Holland America Line (H.A.L.) during the war as a 4<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> mate. He was 24 years old at the start of the war. The ships he worked on were repurposed cruise ships, which mostly transported troops throughout the war. Klapwijk was an *Engelandvaarder*, 19 years old and working as a 4<sup>th</sup> mate during the war aboard ships of the H.A.L. Unlike the first three people investigated during this thesis, Klapwijk worked on troop transport ships that almost exclusively followed similar routes from the western coast of the United States across the Pacific Ocean to support the war effort led by Douglas MacArthur. Lastly, Jan Witting was an engineer working for the *Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland* (S.M.N.) during the war. At the war's beginning, he was 23 years old. Jan Witting experienced a shipwreck twice during the war and survived both

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<sup>7</sup> Andy Alaszewski, *Using diaries for social research* (London, Sage Publications, 2006), 95-96.

times. The ships he served on mostly transported goods across irregular destinations varying from the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean.

The second category, which comprises additional sources employed to enhance the information, is predominantly composed of smaller-sized sources. The sources in question comprise personal and business letters, personnel cards created by the NSTC, and birth and marriage certificates. These sources are of assistance in enriching the information obtained from the diaries and memoirs. These additional sources are also of help when the background of the seafarers is researched, as this information is often not available within the diaries themselves. The personal archive of R.J. Kroesen contains a veritable treasure of information, including a diary, dozens of business letters, a personal letter to his sister, and his seaman's book. Primarily, sources such as these have allowed this thesis to investigate the seamen's backgrounds. While it is true that not all sailors have such comprehensive archives associated with them, personnel cards are held on almost all seamen. The Dutch Institute for Military History (NIMH) is the custodian of these personnel cards. These one-page documents were originally created during the war for information collection on all the sailors working within the Dutch merchant fleet under the Netherlands Shipping and Trading Committee. Within this documentation, information on seafarers' age, place of birth, current home address, religion, civic status and nationality was written down. Furthermore, the personnel cards were utilised for the purpose of documenting the ships on which the seafarers were employed, the commencement and cessation dates for each vessel, their designated function, their remuneration, and any supplementary bonuses. Given the content of the source material, it can assist in providing insight into the career and wage development of seamen during the war, which is relevant for understanding a part of their underlying motivations. The information provided by the personnel cards is of great value; however, it should be noted that the wages were recorded in Dutch guilders, a currency that was of limited use during the war, as any place the seafarers would want to use their money was not a place where they could pay with Dutch guilders. The values of the Dutch guilders can be estimated, though; during the war, there was a fixed exchange rate of 10.681 Dutch guilders to 1 pound sterling. As for the exchange rate between Dutch

guilders and US dollars, the H.A.L. applied an exchange rate of 1.90 Dutch guilders to 1 US dollar in 1940.<sup>8</sup>

This thesis will conclude with an analysis of the motivations that affected the Dutch seamen to the greatest extent. In addition, it will address the factors that led to their desire to work, as opposed to remaining and fulfilling their duties as they were compelled to do. Considering that all three main branches of motivations that are being studied are of importance, this thesis, which is based on a limited amount of personal documents, will primarily rank the importance of motivations according to how widespread the motivations seem to be. Secondly, the focus is on the extent to which motivations are documented in diaries and memoirs. It is evident that a single mention of motivation is likely to carry less significance in the context of a diary than multiple mentions. Clearly, five sailors, irrespective of their diversity, are not enough to make any accurate generalised conclusion on the motivations of all seamen. Making such a generalised conclusion, though, is not the purpose of this thesis. The analysis of these five seafarers has the purpose of checking whether the results obtained from Norwegian and Belgian historiography on the topic are also applicable to Dutch merchant shipping personnel, opening the door for future, more elaborate research if found to be so.<sup>9</sup>

### **1.3 Historiography**

The present historiographical section of this thesis will firstly introduce the Dutch merchant fleet and its position as compared to similar fleets. The subsequent segment of the paragraph will delineate the challenges and contextual factors confronting the seafarers. The third part will be structured according to the three categories of motivations investigated by means of the sub-questions of this thesis: patriotism, career-based motivations, and social-based motivations.

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<sup>8</sup> Dutch Government Repository, Kamerstuk 0000075330, Letter from the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs to the House of Representatives with an attached financial agreement between the Netherlands, Great Britain, Northern Ireland, and France, 4 September 1946, accessed April 11, 2025, <https://repository.overheid.nl/frbr/sgd/1946II/0000075330/1/pdf>; H1098, Signed request of Roeland Jan Kroesen to deposit his credit at New York and to appoint his father as beneficiary in the case of his death (23 August 1940).

<sup>9</sup> H804, Memories of Jan Witting of his experiences as an officer from 1936 to 1946 (1985 and 1999) 20.

Before the Second World War, the Netherlands had a large merchant fleet with some very large merchant shipping companies sailing under a Dutch flag. These companies included the Holland America Line (H.A.L.), which focused on the transportation of people and cruises. Other companies were the Rotterdam Lloyd and the *Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland* (S.M.N.), both of which focused on the transportation of people, goods, and mail. Shell, on their part, had some shipping companies, including the *Curaçaosche Scheepvaart Maatschappij* (C.S.M.), which transported oil. Of course, there were also other shipping companies sailing under a Dutch flag, but these were some of the most important. At the onset of World War II, the fleet of the Netherlands encompassed approximately 800–900 ships, including ocean-going and coastal vessels, with a gross tonnage (GT) of about 3 million tonnes in total. This made the combined total of Dutch merchant ships one of the world's largest fleets. After the war began, some ships were repurposed to carry different goods. Passenger ships were repurposed to transport army personnel or refugees, oil tankers still transported oil, and freight transportation ships had the largest variety in what they carried, as it could vary from food to bombs.

In comparison, the Belgian fleet comprised approximately 120 ships in total, with a significantly lower total tonnage of less than 500,000 GT. Conversely, the Norwegian fleet exhibited a superior magnitude, with an overall gross tonnage approximating 4.8 million.<sup>10</sup>

In the context of Dutch historiography, the majority of attention has been directed towards the events that transpired on the Atlantic side of the war. This phenomenon can be considered relatively normal given its historical context; the Dutch government and its merchant fleet were based in the Netherlands and later the United Kingdom, respectively. The majority of operations and skirmishes involving the Dutch merchant fleet occurred on the Atlantic side of the war. Of the events that did occur, 787 transpired on the Atlantic side of the conflict, in contrast to the combined total of 241 events that

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<sup>10</sup> Bezemer, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse koopvaardij*, v; Jordan Siemianowski, "Behind the scenes of Norway's role in the Second World War. The Norwegian-British tonnage agreement from 11<sup>th</sup> November 1939," *Folia Scandinavica Posnaniensia* 11, (2010): 45, <https://presso.amu.edu.pl/index.php/fsp/article/view/3613>; Machielsen, *Belgische koopvaardij*, 7; Willy van Cauwenberg, *Onze nationale koopvaardijvloot* (Antwerpen, Standaard-Boekhandel, 1945), 190.

took place in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. A sizable amount of research has been dedicated to the events surrounding the Allied merchant fleets at the international level. In particular, Norway, a nation that has encountered a comparable scenario to that of the Netherlands, has witnessed a significant amount of research on this subject. Norwegian researchers have also conducted extensive research on the activities of the Norwegian merchant fleet during the war as compared to the Netherlands. Specifically, they have undertaken research into topics such as the relationship between the state and seamen and the manner in which the state has motivated its seafarers. In contrast, the Belgian fleet, which was comparatively smaller, has received significantly less research attention on this topic.<sup>11</sup>

Following the moment of the Netherlands' entry into the war and the subsequent flight of its government to London, the British government pressured the governments of other nations to relocate the headquarters of their merchant fleets to Allied territories in the event that their nation was occupied by Axis forces. The method chosen by most Allied countries, such as the Netherlands, Norway and Belgium, was to establish a singular institution with its headquarters situated within Allied territory. This institution held custodianship over all merchant vessels within the nation's jurisdiction. The Dutch version of this institution was called the Netherlands Shipping and Trading Committee (NSTC). It was established on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1940, with the primary objective of serving as an advisory body to the Dutch government and liaising with the British government regarding the role of the Dutch merchant fleet during the war. The original committee overseeing this institution was made up of some owners of large Dutch shipping companies who happened to be present in London for business meetings when the Netherlands was invaded. Ten days after the establishment of the committee, it was designated as the custodian of all Dutch merchant vessels. The head office of the newly formed committee was placed in London. After the Dutch government also arrived in London, the committee came under direct Dutch governmental control. All decisions

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<sup>11</sup> "Databank koopvaardijpersoneel 1940-1945," Stichting Koopvaardijpersoneel 1940-1945, accessed January 27, 2025, <https://databank.koopvaardijpersoneel40-45.nl/>; Rosendahl, "Patriotism, money and control," 180-181.

made by the committee had to be approved by a representative of the Dutch Minister of Commerce, Industry and Shipping.<sup>12</sup>

Prior to the German invasion of the Netherlands, the Dutch government had already implemented emergency measures involving the Dutch merchant shipping industry, which included the requisitioning of ships during wartime. The measure that facilitated this was the *Zeeschepenvorderingswet 1939* (Sea-ship-requisitioning-law 1939). A second law was implemented with the objective of preventing existing ships from being demolished. This was achieved through the *Wet Behoud Scheepsruimte 1939* (Conservation of Tonnage Law 1939). The Sea-ship-requisitioning-law 1939 was the legislation used by the Dutch government to place all Dutch merchant vessels under the custodianship of the NSTC. Consequently, the new fleet operating under the common banner of the NSTC was hired out to the British government to bolster the Allied war effort. Throughout the war, Dutch merchant ships continued to fly the Dutch flag. With the *Zeeschepenbesluit 1942* (Sea-ship-decision 1942), the Dutch government took requisitioning a step further than other countries in a similar situation, as this measure allowed the Dutch government to take ownership of the merchant vessels, giving the NSTC more power over the fleet.<sup>13</sup>

The initial Sea-ship-requisitioning-law 1939 and its consequent Sea-ship-decision 1942 implemented laws concerning the ownership of the merchant fleet. However, the laws that specifically involved the seafarers themselves were *Koninklijk Besluit A5* (Royal Decree A5) and the *Vaarplicht 1942* (Seafaring Obligation 1942). These laws were implemented to compel seafaring Dutch citizens to dutifully continue performing their work aboard the merchant vessels for the duration of the war. The initial legislation was designed to prevent the Dutch seamen from simply quitting their jobs. The second law, implemented in 1942, was designed to address the widespread issue of desertion among Dutch sailors. While Royal Decree A5 was rather lax with its punishments, with jailtime only being a few months, the updated law from 1942 increased punishments for offenders to up to 15 years of incarceration. The first and second laws did have counterproductive effects; the vast majority of the seamen saw it as an insult and

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<sup>12</sup> Bezemer, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse koopvaardij*, 198-200; Klooster, "Verplicht varen," 24-27; Machielsen, *Belgische koopvaardij*, 28; Rosendahl, *Seafarers or war sailors*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Klooster, "Verplicht varen," 27; Rosendahl, *Seafarers or war sailors*, 19-20.

perceived the emergency measures as a lack of trust given to them by their own government, causing a short-term spike in the amount of desertion. Jan Witting remarked on these measures that they went too far; on the topic, he wrote that he and his peers saw it as their duty to help during wartime. As is clear, the relationship between seafarers and the government during the war was characterised by tension. With every choice made by the government affecting over ten thousand sailors who might desert when driven to do so. As such, the tension between the government and seafaring personnel necessitated a delicate balance. Every action governments undertook and every emergency measure that was decided upon had to be carefully evaluated to retain and increase the motivation of the seamen who served on the merchant vessels.<sup>14</sup>

While the government used the aforementioned wartime laws to compel the Dutch seafarers into service, they concurrently implemented measures that would help the seamen deal with the circumstances. Examples of these are the increased time of leave that the sailors were getting during the war. Originally, there were seven days of paid time off per year; this was changed to seven days per quarter year. Secondly, seafarers who survived their ship being sunk would get 14 days of leave to process the events that they experienced after arriving back in England, but also to buy necessities like clothes, which they had likely lost when they shipwrecked. After this period passed, they were then sent to serve on another ship. While this leave worked in theory, it did not always work out perfectly in practice. Leave was not always possible, and in addition, there was the matter of where the sailors were supposed to go during their periods of leave.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the measures that were implemented by the Dutch government, other unofficial methods were also employed to prevent desertion. One of these punishments was a revocation of the Dutch citizenship of deserters. This specific punishment has been shown as a threat aimed at striking seafarers during the war.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Bezemer, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse koopvaardij*, 257, 267-268 and 1062-1064; H804, Memories of Jan Witting, 12; Van Dissel, "In buitenlandse havens," 156-157.

<sup>15</sup> Ageeth van der Veen, "Profiel Piet de Visser (1923)," in *De Nederlandse koopvaardij in oorlogstijd*, ed. Anita van Dissel, Martin Elands and Hylke Faber (Amsterdam, Boom, 2014), 92-97, there 96-97; Van Dissel, "In buitenlandse havens," 179.

<sup>16</sup> Van der Veen, "Piet de Visser," 93.

Patriotism as a motivator works twofold, firstly as a sentiment based on a shared national culture, cohesion, and ideology. Secondly, patriotism is an excellent tool to be used by governments. It is a sentiment that a government can appeal to, to motivate people into supporting an objective. A study of this phenomenon revealed that the Norwegian government utilised entire propaganda campaigns to appeal to its seafarers. The government tried to make sure that patriotism was seen as the most important motivation to serve by the sailors. Secondly, the role of the merchant fleet was portrayed as that of seamen working on behalf of the Norwegian king and not on behalf of a company. To achieve this, it needed to be clear that Nortraship, the Norwegian equivalent of the NSTC, functioned on behalf of the government and not on behalf of the wealthy shipowners. The reason for this is that patriotism as a motivator is not nearly as effective when the sailors perceive their situation as working to fill the pockets of rich merchants. On the Dutch side of things, the government tried to create a similar situation, and tried to prevent an image of working to fill the pockets of rich merchants from being created. To do this, the NSTC, which was made up of these large merchants, was put under governmental oversight. Like the Norwegian seamen, the Dutch seafarers had their country controlled by the Germans, and freeing the country from the tyrannical Nazi regime was the primary goal these feelings of patriotism were aimed at.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to conscripted soldiers during wartime, the sailors working aboard Dutch merchant vessels had employment that they had been educated for before the war, and they continued working these jobs throughout the war. In essence, the role of merchant seamen remained relatively unchanged; the war changed the goods being transported and the circumstances under which these goods were transported, dramatically increasing the risk of death due to their work. Consequently, seafarers often had no alternative but to continue their work. Desertion, therefore, did not just mean punishment by the government; it also meant losing the chance to practise the career for which they had received an education. Specifically, this shows the reason why most deserting seamen switched to another nation's fleet instead of seeking other job opportunities. As a consequence, during the later years of the war, such desertion was much less prevalent, as there were no 'safe' fleets to sail for, especially after the US

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<sup>17</sup> Rosendahl, "Patriotism, money and control," 141, 160-161 and 166.

entered the war. As is clear, the seafarers were, by and large, stuck in their chosen profession. Their situation was not all negative; during the war, sailors were still getting promoted in rank aboard the merchant vessels and within the companies, diplomas were still being awarded on some occasions, and experience gained during the war also counted towards subsequent promotions after the war was finished in the case that getting a promotion during the war was not possible. As such, career development also served as a motivator.<sup>18</sup>

While obvious, having a job means earning a salary. In addition to providing for their own needs, a portion of the wages earned by seamen has always been sent back to the seafarers' families back home in the Netherlands. This meant that the sailors were not just working for themselves; their families also relied on their income. This reliance likely also motivated them to continue working. In the case of such reliance, desertion meant abandoning one's family financially as well. Following the German conquest of the Netherlands, the portion of the salary that the seamen sent back home was blocked. This caused the families of the Dutch merchant seafarers to receive a significantly reduced amount of money. There were still means by which the families received money, but this was mostly done by means within the occupied territory of the Netherlands itself. The most important financial aid to the families of seamen was the *Zeemanspot* (Seaman's pot). Like the Netherlands, Norway also encountered this issue. In the Norwegian case, their government was dishonest about this situation towards its seafarers. They established a false image that portrayed the families as doing as well as any other during the war. This was done to prevent the emergence of any possible panic amongst the merchant seamen due to an increase in fear for the (financial) safety of their families. It is unclear whether the Dutch government chose a similar solution. Checking on the family's situation during the war became very hard as postal communication between the ship and the family became nearly impossible. The only

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<sup>18</sup> Ageeth van der Veen, "Profiel Hans Brugman (1919)," in *De Nederlandse koopvaardij in oorlogstijd*, ed. Anita van Dissel, Martin Elands and Hylke Faber (Amsterdam, Boom, 2014), 98-103, there 103; Ageeth van der Veen, "Profiel Willem Riepma (1921)," in *De Nederlandse koopvaardij in oorlogstijd*, ed. Anita van Dissel, Martin Elands and Hylke Faber (Amsterdam, Boom, 2014), 182-187, there 187; Ageeth van der Veen, "Profiel Tinus van den Akker (1920)," in *De Nederlandse koopvaardij in oorlogstijd*, ed. Anita van Dissel, Martin Elands and Hylke Faber (Amsterdam, Boom, 2014), 220-224, there 221; Van der Veen, "Piet de Visser," 97.

somewhat consistent means to exchange letters back and forth was with the help of the Red Cross; such letters were heavily curated by the seafarers, though, as letters that contained strategic information were blocked by the censure offices of both the Allied and the Axis powers. Moreover, it could take years for letters to arrive after having been sent, with no guarantee that they would arrive at all. Besides letters, every ship only had a single radio, as radios were considered a potential threat to the ship's safety. The reason for this was the idea that radios would generate a radio wave when receiving a message, which could be used to track the ship's precise location. As such, most of the seamen had no way to check on their families' situation during the war.<sup>19</sup>

On the matter of money, one of the primary issues during the war was inflation, which caused several issues throughout the war. The price of daily necessities increased to such an extent that seamen could not afford their day-to-day costs. The Dutch merchant seamen reacted to this development by striking, leaving their ships, and refusing to continue serving aboard other Dutch merchant vessels until the situation was remedied. The Dutch government reacted harshly to these strikes by threatening large punishments, but did acknowledge that the situation with the salaries needed to be changed. This was done by first increasing the salaries by a small amount and later lowering the amount of money sent to the sailors' families. An example from the biography of Machiel Krug's experiences during WWII describes the salaries, as obtained during March 1944, as a base salary of between 150 and 200 guilders per month, which had been increased to a salary of between 216 and 221 guilders. Added to this were all manner of additions in the form of a 'long voyage allowance' of 15 per cent, a daily premium of 2 guilders, a war premium of 2.50 guilders a day, and a drinking allowance of 0.30 dollars a day. Lastly, salaries and bonuses depended on the specific function one had, the company they worked for, and the ship they were employed on. Having a specific officer's function could make the difference between being or not being qualified for bonuses. In conclusion, the amount of attention allocated to financial concerns by both government and merchant seafarers indicates that career

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<sup>19</sup> A.J. Graffelman, *In konvooi : koopvaardijreizen gedurende de tweede wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam, De Boer, 1948), 76 and 79; Rosendahl, "Patriotism, money and control," 180-181.

development, the lack of choice to switch careers, and wages contributed significantly to the motivation of the seafarers.<sup>20</sup>

As opposed to the two preceding forms of motivation, the question of how social life changed aboard Dutch merchant vessels during the war has received comparatively little attention. What has been said comes down to a few basic points, all originating from the same source: fear, which is just a singular aspect of social-based motivations, or more accurately, it is a demotivator.

During the war, there was an ever-present level of fear aboard the merchant vessels. This fear, and specifically the factors that caused it, was the primary demotivator the seamen dealt with during the war. The results of the fear were also clearly described; emotions were more extreme, with the consequence that disagreements caused fights more often on one side, while the sailors themselves got closer to each other than ever, dear friends for six months, as described by one of them referring to the frequent transfer of personnel between ships.<sup>21</sup>

The first clear, direct cause of fear and conflict was the perceived presence of members of the fifth column, who were potentially present among the seafarers aboard the ships. During the war, the idea quickly spread that a specific group within every nation helped the Nazis with their conquest. This group was named the fifth column and was said to be of vital importance in the quick conquests of the Netherlands, Norway, Belgium, and Denmark. A second reason for fear was the unknown fate of the seamen's families. While the direct effect of this fear cannot be properly measured, a comparative study of desertion on merchant vessels between Allied nations shows that nations like the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway and Poland saw a larger amount of desertion on their fleets as compared to the British and Canadian fleets, which had the families of their seafarers in relative safety and financial security. A third documented case that caused fear was that the state of the war was largely unknown to the sailors; they did not get many updates on the war, making it unclear to them how much longer it was going to be.

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<sup>20</sup> Rob M. Krug, *Een zeeman in oorlogstijd: de reizen van Machiel Krug in de jaren 1939-1946* (Zoetermeer, Free Musketeers, 2015), 9; Klooster, "Verplicht varen," 31-32; Van der Veen, "Piet de Visser," 93.

<sup>21</sup> Ageeth van der Veen, "Profiel Berend van Bon (1917)," in *De Nederlandse koopvaardij in oorlogstijd*, ed. Anita van Dissel, Martin Elands and Hylke Faber (Amsterdam, Boom, 2014), 144-148, there 145;

Roeland Jan Kroesen, for example, wrote down that his girlfriend's assumption of the war taking at least two more years from November 1943 was exceedingly pessimistic. Living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is known that while the Netherlands was freed in November 1945, the government-mandated obligation to serve aboard merchant vessels was only lifted in March 1946. These statements do show that there was a general lack of information amongst the seamen during the war. The fourth and last main point that caused fear was connected to the ever-loomng German threat and came in the form of insufficient defences against German bombers, an argument that has been connected to desertion. As the merchant vessels were valued targets for bombing by the Axis powers during the war, the seafarers wanted the ability to protect themselves. As the merchant vessels were not designed with the placement of anti-aircraft guns in mind, they did not all instantly have one after the war started. During the initial years of the war, all Dutch vessels were gradually armed with increasingly stronger weaponry. By 1942, all Dutch merchant vessels were armed, with larger vessels being equipped with cannons for defence against enemy ships and machine guns against air targets. Smaller ships typically only had smaller machine guns. In addition, merchant vessels moved in convoys on dangerous routes to help protect them against enemy bombers and especially the German submarines, against which merchant vessels had no recourse.<sup>22</sup>

The consequences of fear have been heavily documented in the existing historiography. Conflicts were present from the start of the war onwards. The first conflict emerged between the Nazi sympathizers and NSB members who happened to be present aboard the ships on one side against the opposers of the Nazi regime on the other side, this first conflict though was not caused by fear, but by anger towards sympathisers of an enemy regime. The group of Nazi sympathizers and NSB members was, of course, removed from service rather quickly due to the chance that they could start working for the Germans as spies. After this initial conflict was resolved, gradual conflicts amongst the other seafarers arose, with fear being the main cause. One such conflict was described by Van Dissel, who referred to a diary that stated that sailors aboard the ship were crafting personal weapons to defend themselves from each other.

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<sup>22</sup> Bezemer, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse koopvaardij*, 227; Klooster, "Verplicht varen," 33-34; H1098, Diary of Roeland Jan Kroesen, 29-30; Van Dissel, "In buitenlandse havens," 156-158.

As Van Dissel mentioned that this was the only documented case of such a thing happening, it is unclear whether this was the norm or an exception, as it is very possible that others simply did not mention it. Secondly, besides the consequences of fear in the form of conflict, there was also an increased amount of documented drinking problems amongst the sailors. Lastly, as a result of fear, seamen aboard Dutch merchant vessels deserted. The exact number of deserting seafarers is unknown, though estimates by Bezemer put the total amount at around 6-8 per cent of the fleet's total. The factors that make the exact number of deserters hard to determine are, firstly, based on defining desertion. Seamen who suffered from long-term sickness, who could not find a harbour in time after being called on, those who went on strikes, those with psychological problems, and those who simply refused to sail were all given a mark of desertion. In addition, even among those who actually refused to sail, most simply continued aboard merchant vessels, but under the flag of another nation. Lastly, some of those who signed on with companies from other nations came back after some time and resigned with a Dutch company for the remainder of the war.<sup>23</sup>

Given the aforementioned drinking problems and the ever-present fear amongst the seamen, in addition to a 0.30 dollar bonus every seafarer earned daily as a means to subsidise the purchase of alcoholic substances, it is no wonder that seamen partied like no other when their ship was docked in a harbour. The sailors lived their lives and partied as if each day might be their last, and for a significant portion of them, it was. In addition to the heavy drinking during the partying, Van Dissel also described increased amounts of visits to prostitutes by the sailors when they were docked in a harbour. Moreover, British newspapers warned British ladies about the seafarers' charms and that they should be careful lest they fall in love with one. The question of whether the subsequent events transpired on Dutch ships remains ambiguous; however, on Belgian ships, the functional disparity in treatment between ranks started to slowly disappear. An example of this was the matter of food. Before the war, the officers ate a different and more luxurious meal as compared to the crew. However, with the onset of hostilities, this distinction was gradually rendered obsolete, and all seafarers, irrespective of their rank,

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<sup>23</sup> Bezemer, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse koopvaardij*, 227 and 267-268; Van Dissel, "In buitenlandse havens," 152, 156 and 178.

ate the same meal. Moreover, Belgian sailors began to adopt British traditions, including the practice of tea time in the mornings and afternoons. A notable difference was evident in the composition of the personnel on the Dutch ships as compared to the Belgian fleet, a factor that may have contributed to the observed disparities between the two fleets. The composition of the Belgian ships was predominantly Belgian, whereas the Dutch ships comprised seafarers of various nationalities, with seafarers of Dutch, Chinese, and Dutch-East-Indian nationalities being the most prominent. The officers aboard the ships were of Dutch descent, while the Chinese and Dutch-East-Indian seamen constituted the majority of the crew. On board the vessel, there was minimal interaction between individuals from different ethnic groups; they predominantly led separate lives with limited to no interaction.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Machielsen, *Belgische koopvaardij*, 73; Van der Veen, "Tinus van den Akker," 224; Van Dissel, "In buitenlandse havens," 178.

## Chapter 2: Patriotism as a motivation

Beyond government control, one of the strongest motivations among Dutch seafarers was patriotism, according to the existing literature on the topic. Moreover, almost every diary and memoir studied for this thesis mentions it to a greater or lesser extent. While all works analysed for this thesis mentioned it, for most of them, it did not seem to be the primary motivator. The reason for this statement is that feelings that can be ascribed to patriotism can also have a different root cause. Specifically, the wish to free the Netherlands can be caused by patriotic feelings, but it may also have been caused by the wish to reunite with family, friends and acquaintances back home. This reason was specifically mentioned by Queen Wilhelmina in her address to the personnel of the Dutch merchant fleet on Christmas Day of 1943.<sup>25</sup>

Hendrik van der Mark, the author of the first analysed diary, was very clear on where his motivations lay. In his diary, he specifically mentioned on multiple occasions that he was carrying out his duties aboard merchant vessels for his fatherland, for freedom and for protecting the Dutch rule of law; in short, he ascribed a part of his motivation to ideological feelings, showing Van der Mark's patriotic feelings. Furthermore, it was evident that Van der Mark's intention was to provide assistance in the ongoing military confrontation with the Germans. In the initial period of the diary, Van der Mark placed significant emphasis on his personal experiences pertaining to confrontations between German and Allied vessels, including his own involvement in such events. On multiple occasions, Van der Mark described the satisfaction derived from the successful destruction of enemy aircraft and submarines. He further described the collective expression of elation upon the observation of an oil stain, a tell-tale sign of a destroyed submarine, following a battle. It is, regrettably, not entirely clear whether these acts were indicative of patriotism or of other circumstances. The motivation behind his actions in freeing the Netherlands from German oppression may also have been influenced by a desire to reunite with his family. The reported cheering following the

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<sup>25</sup> H3749-81, Christmas message of Dutch Queen Wilhelmina (December 25, 1943).

destruction of enemy ships and aircraft could have been influenced by a variety of factors. The tendency for humans to derive a certain degree of pleasure from the suffering of their enemies is a well-documented phenomenon. This phenomenon can be attributed to the psychological impact of prolonged exposure to stress, particularly in situations where the stakes are high and the odds of survival are low. Furthermore, the suffering and death of the enemies can also serve to reinforce the individual's belief that their cause is just.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike Van der Mark, Jacobus Bernardus de Danschutter ascribes none of his motivations for serving to patriotism. The author never wrote about them at all beyond describing a persistent longing to go home. It seems that patriotism for De Danschutter was much less important of a motivator.<sup>27</sup>

Roeland Jan Kroesen was very clear about his patriotic sentiments, it being of special importance due to his desertion early in the war. Kroesen was a certified 3<sup>rd</sup> mate at the start of the war, having obtained his diploma during May of 1938. After having served aboard the ss *Pennland* during the initial years of the war, he deserted when his ship sank on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 1941. Following his desertion, Kroesen travelled to the United States, where he signed on with the US-based United Fruit Company, where he served until December of 1941. Kroesen clearly explained the choice for his desertion in a letter he wrote to his sister during December of 1941, which was career-based. Due to the Japanese invasion of Indonesia, though, he asserted that he would break his contract with the US-based company to once again sign on with a Dutch-based merchant company. As evidenced by his choices, Kroesen seemed to have been very motivated by patriotic feelings. These feelings of patriotism, though, appeared to be based on his Indonesian heritage, causing him to choose career over patriotism when the Netherlands was at stake, but choosing patriotism over career after Indonesia was threatened. Based on the content of Kroesen's letter, it seemed that he felt stronger patriotic feelings for Indonesia despite his ancestry and place of birth, which were predominantly Dutch. After having re-enlisted with a Dutch merchant company, Kroesen never mentioned his patriotic feelings again in his diary; he did, though, on multiple

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<sup>26</sup> H152, Diary of Hendrik van der Mark, 7-9.

<sup>27</sup> H2195, Diary 2 of J.B. de Danschutter, 2.

occasions, mention his desertion because there seemed to be a preconception that all deserters were cowards. In Kroesen's diary, he remained adamant that cowardice was not the reason for his act.<sup>28</sup>

In contrast to the information obtained from the prior three men who documented their experiences in diaries, the *Engelandvaarder* Hendrik Klapwijk authored a memoir, thereby giving his words a different weight. Initially, Hendrik Klapwijk pursued his studies at the Higher Seafaring School Groningen (Hogere Zeevaartschool Groningen) during the late 1930s. At the time of the German invasion of the Netherlands, Klapwijk had not yet entered into a contractual agreement with a mercantile company and was still residing in the Netherlands. In order to evade conscription on a German vessel and in order to liberate the Netherlands, Klapwijk fled to Sweden. Thereafter, he proceeded to travel to Basra in Iraq, where he formally enlisted on board the ss *Blommersdijk*. Klapwijk's writings on the subject of motivation among the seamen he served with are limited to a single remark: that no individual expressed discontent with the conditions aboard the ships, as all were united in their shared objective of liberating the Netherlands. However, his actions were indicative of his refusal to work for the German forces, which resulted in his escape from the Netherlands with the objective of seeking employment as a member of the Dutch merchant fleet during the war. While this appears to demonstrate Klapwijk's sense of patriotic duty, it needs to be remembered that Klapwijk wrote his memoir after the war, which might have influenced his writings by instilling a strong sense of patriotism into his work.<sup>29</sup>

Jan Witting, akin to Hendrik Klapwijk, likewise authored a memoir. Whilst he was not an *Engelandvaarder*, he did describe himself in a manner that was indicative of a patriot. Jan Witting had accumulated a period of experience in the mercantile sector prior to his engagement as an engineer in the intercontinental shipping industry on 8<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Haags Gemeentearchief, 0354-01 Bevolkingsregister gemeente Den Haag, Inv.nr 999. Resident register including Tiemen Cornelis Johannes Kroesen, accessed March 10, 2025, <https://hdl.handle.net/21.12124/7921F3DBB4484CDA9424AA5BD4F1967A>; Het Utrechts Archief, 463 Burgerlijke Stand van de gemeenten in de provincie Utrecht 1903-1942, Inv.nr. 158-01, Birth Roeland Jan Kroesen, 17-4-1916 (18 April 1916), accessed March 10, 2025, <https://hetutrechtsarchief.nl/collectie/9101A17FAF7488B3E0534701000A9DF1>; H1098, Letter written by Roeland Jan Kroesen to Wiesje and Max (25 December 1941) 1; H1098, Seaman's book of Roeland Jan Kroesen (8 December 1944) 8.

<sup>29</sup> H693, Memoir of Hendrik Klapwijk, 2, 50 and 107.

September 1939. He survived the sinking of his ship on two occasions and, as a result, was able to serve for the majority of the war aboard the ms *Johan van Oldenbarnevelt*. In his memoir, Witting explicitly stated that the enforced seafaring measures were not his preferred course of action; he regarded it as the natural thing to do to help their allies during the war. Furthermore, Witting stated that these were not merely his own personal convictions, but rather, they represented the prevailing ideology of the merchant shipping industry in its entirety. Furthermore, Witting expressed a desire to return to Great Britain after his second ship was destroyed, with the intention of rejoining the war. While Witting's words may ostensibly stem from patriotic sentiments, there are some reservations regarding the veracity of his account, particularly with regard to the logic underpinning his assertions. According to Witting, the primary motivator of the entire merchant fleet was helping their allies, which is not entirely a patriotic motivator by itself. Furthermore, Witting and his partner resided together in Great Britain, which could have influenced the 'natural thing to do' due to his personal circumstances. Furthermore, he expressed a desire to travel to the Netherlands, although the underlying motivations remain ambiguous. The potential factors, including patriotism, familial obligations, or a combination thereof, are not fully elucidated.<sup>30</sup>

As demonstrated by these five personal takes on patriotic duty, patriotism was a motivating factor to at least some of them. It is evident that patriotic sentiments may have influenced all parties to a certain extent; however, it is only evident in the works of Van der Mark, Klapwijk and Kroesen. De Danschutter did not refer to patriotism as a motivator. Finally, Witting's perspective merits consideration, as he conceptualised the act of providing assistance to one's allies during times of need as a form of 'common courtesy', sidelining patriotism as a motivation. However, it is important to note that his viewpoint may have been influenced by his personal familial circumstances. Furthermore, Witting finished his memoir in 1999, following a relationship ending in marriage with an English woman, which had already started prior to the war. In addition, Witting had at least one child with said British lady during the war. Consequently, it is implausible that his take on the situation, with providing assistance as being common

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<sup>30</sup> H804, Memories of Jan Witting, 6, 12 and 53.

courtesy, can be regarded as a precise reflection of the Dutch merchant sailors as a whole.

Although patriotism was not the prevailing sentiment expressed, it was the sentiment most frequently employed by the Allied governments. It is particularly noteworthy that shipping companies played a pivotal role in fostering these sentiments of patriotism. As stated in documents pertaining to the New York office of the H.A.L., the company was guided by two overarching directives. The primary objective was to provide support to the war effort in a manner that was both efficient and intensive. The second primary directive was to prioritise the interests of the company itself, where possible. It is reasonable to hypothesise that similar directives were issued by other shipping companies; this hypothesis is supported by the memoir of Jan Witting, who indirectly corroborated the directive by mentioning that the *Zeeschepenbesluit 1942* (Sea-ship-decision 1942) was implemented by the Dutch government to address issues caused by the companies. During the initial years of the war, the companies were only using their older, slower and smaller ships on the Atlantic Ocean, while the better and newer ships were kept far away to prevent them from sinking. Evidently, such actions would be conducive to the second primary directive of the companies, yet they would demand government intervention.<sup>31</sup>

The following two documented methods were employed by shipping companies such as the H.A.L. and the N.S.M. to stimulate patriotic feelings among seamen, in accordance with the first primary directive. The initial motivation was patriotism, which was encouraged through propaganda disseminated via posters. One such poster was documented in a newspaper aboard the ss *Nieuw Amsterdam*, a troop transport ship operated by the H.A.L. The newspaper in question depicted a poster on the ship, portraying the devastation inflicted by the Nazis in the heart of Rotterdam. The image was accompanied by a text that encouraged the readers never to forget this devastation. The object was exhibited aboard the ship in order to provide a constant reminder to the seafarers and passengers of the vessel of the conflict against which they were fighting and the destruction they were aiming to prevent. The second occurrence took the form of speeches. On 10<sup>th</sup> May 1941, Captain Verstelle of the ms *Ruys*, a vessel owned by

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<sup>31</sup> H3422, Report on the activities of the New York office of the H.A.L. during World War II (1940 – 1945).

the *Koninklijke Pakketvaart Maatschappij* (K.P.M.), was instructed to deliver an address to the crew of his ship. He was told to mention the savage nature of the Nazis and the unjustness of the attack on the Netherlands in his speech. Furthermore, he was informed that the objective of the speech was to encourage the people aboard the ships to collaborate and exert maximum effort to liberate the Netherlands. Although Verstelle was granted a certain degree of creative freedom in the composition of the speech, it was imperative that these points were articulated with absolute clarity to all parties.<sup>32</sup>

As is evident from the two methods employed to stimulate nationalistic sentiments, there is a simultaneous effort to shape a negative image of the adversary, thereby fostering a collectively held animosity towards the enemy among the Dutch merchant shipping personnel. It is evident that, in addition to the shipping companies themselves, the Allied governments were instrumental in fostering animosity towards the enemy. A substantial body of evidence can be found in the large number of propaganda movies created during the war. Both De Danschutter and Van der Mark cited their attendance at cinemas during the war as a means of escaping their circumstances. De Danschutter attended several screenings, but he only specified the film he watched on a single occasion. He did so on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1941, and he mentioned having seen the film *Underground*, an anti-Nazi propaganda movie that was produced by Warner Brothers in 1941. Evident from the collective hatred towards the Nazis, the movies successfully assisted in fostering negative feelings. While the present thesis will not quote some of the terms used in the diaries of De Danschutter and Van der Mark that could be perceived as derogatory, both of these individuals explicitly expressed their desire to see all Nazis dead, including the members of the NSB whom they perceived as traitors to the Netherlands.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, as evidenced by the information from the diaries and letters studied in this chapter. Patriotism, while being a significant motivator, is implausible to have been the primary motivator for the Dutch merchant sailors, in addition to force. Patriotism had its uses, but the common goal of wanting to free the Netherlands was not inherently a

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<sup>32</sup> H361, Newspaper aboard the *Nieuw Amsterdam* (August 1943) 13; H3749-66, Suggested speech sent to Captain Verstelle for the 10th May remembrance by NV KPM, (1941).

<sup>33</sup> H152, Diary of Hendrik van der Mark, 7-8; H2195, Diary 1 of J.B. de Danschutter, 1; H2195, Diary 3 of J.B. de Danschutter, 6.

patriotic motivation. Evidence from both the diaries and memoirs of seafarers and the speeches and documentation of companies clearly indicates that feelings of patriotism were predominantly provoked by the escalating negative sentiments held towards the opposing forces. This dynamic then influenced the experienced battles and the subsequent contentment that ensued when the Allied forces prevailed by destroying enemy aircraft and submarines. In conclusion, this chapter of the thesis posits that patriotism as a motivator was used as a tool by governments, but no evidence of sufficient quantity supports the assertion that patriotism had a significant role in motivating all studied seamen.

## Chapter 3: Career-based motivations

The organisational structure of Dutch merchant vessels, excluding the inland shipping sector, has historically exhibited a rigid hierarchical structure, distinguishing between large commercial shipping and coastal shipping. The present thesis is concerned exclusively with seafarers who were active within the field of large commercial shipping; as such, hierarchical explanations within the field of coastal shipping will be disregarded. Within the domain of large-scale commercial shipping, a hierarchical structure can be identified, encompassing approximately five distinct divisions. The highest rank is that of the captain, with the officers occupying the spot directly below. These officers include the 5<sup>th</sup> through 1<sup>st</sup> engineers and the 5<sup>th</sup> through 1<sup>st</sup> mates. It is also worth noting that apprentices of these functions are also considered officers. The officers are positioned at the pinnacle of the hierarchy, with the petty officers occupying a subordinate rank. Examples of such roles include the quartermaster, the carpenter, and the boatswain. The lowest rank on the ship is that of ordinary seaman. In addition to the aforementioned four rankings within the hierarchical structure, there are those who occupy positions within the civil service aboard the ships, for example, a cook. The possession of the necessary qualifications for the roles of officer in the deck department, as evidenced by Kroesen, and in the engineering department, as demonstrated by De Danschutter, necessitated the attainment of diplomas that could only be obtained through the completion of a formal academic programme. These studies are vocational educations that exclusively focus on these jobs. This factor rendered the process of career transition exceedingly arduous, as evidenced by De Danschutter's admission that he possessed no formal qualifications beyond his current occupation. In the Dutch system, career development was subject to a rigid framework. A newly qualified sailor typically starts their chosen career path as an apprentice, provided they have pursued the relevant studies to become an officer. Upon attaining a sufficient degree of experience in the field, typically spanning a period of one year, individuals would be promoted from the apprentice rank to the fourth or fifth mate or engineer rank. Subsequent promotions

would necessitate a combination of experience in the preceding rank and the attainment of a diploma for the succeeding rank.<sup>34</sup>

As stated in the introductory chapter, Hendrik van der Mark was a 46-year-old carpenter during the war, working for the Rotterdam-Lloyd. Aboard ships, the role of carpenter is that of a petty officer, a position that does not allow for promotion within the function. The only higher functions aboard the ship are either engineers, 5<sup>th</sup> through 1<sup>st</sup> mate or the captain. The final condition stipulates that the individual must have held a high-ranking position on board merchant vessels. As a consequence of his advanced stage of career, Van der Mark did not receive a promotion during the war. His basic wage, which was 139 Dutch guilders per month at the start of the war, remained unchanged until 1<sup>st</sup> January 1943, when it was increased to 161.50 Dutch guilders.<sup>35</sup>

Much less is known about the endeavours of De Danschutter during the war. At the commencement of hostilities, De Danschutter was engaged as an apprentice engineer, assuming the role of 5<sup>th</sup> engineer. During the war, he was officially awarded his diploma for the position of 5<sup>th</sup> engineer. With regard to the matter of career advancement, he adopted a more reticent stance, stating that he could only aspire to become a 4<sup>th</sup> engineer after the war had concluded, as studying during the war was very complicated. Furthermore, he insinuated a desire to seek employment on the mainland, but noted the difficulty of doing so due to his lack of relevant qualifications. The precise amount of remuneration received by De Danschutter remains uncertain, as no documentation has been found that specifically mentions the amount, either in his diary or in the personnel records of the NSTC.<sup>36</sup>

On the matter of career advancement, none of the investigated seamen was as driven as Roeland Jan Kroesen. Kroesen was a Dutch seafarer working aboard the ms *Sommelsdijk* and the ss *Pennland* during the first years of the war with the function of 4<sup>th</sup> mate. When the ss *Pennland* was sunk on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1941, Kroesen deserted. In a letter he addressed to his sister during December 1941, he explained that he had had it with

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<sup>34</sup> H2195, Diary 3 of J.B. de Danschutter, 26.

<sup>35</sup> NIMH, 159 LOCK, Inv.nr. 2590, Personnel Card of Hendrik v.d. Mark, accessed April 18, 2025, <https://proxy.archieven.nl/2231/C9034DC7A994480BB925C61EB602D105>.

<sup>36</sup> H2195, Diary 3 of J.B. de Danschutter, 26; Inv.nr. 2516, Personnel Card of Jacobus Bernardus de Danschutter, accessed April 18, 2025, <https://proxy.archieven.nl/2231/A8B46F76611548E3AE718B27E5D863E1>.

the H.A.L. who employed him. He explained that he wanted the job of 3<sup>rd</sup> mate, the function for which he had received his diploma in 1938. Money was not the primary motivator for Kroesen, he explained. The primary problem, according to Kroesen, was the lack of respect he was given. According to Kroesen, he felt like he was being treated as if he were an apprentice, something he was most definitely not. As Kroesen could not stand this treatment, he took the chance he was given after the ss *Pennland* sank. He travelled to the United States and signed on with the US-based United Fruit Company as the 3<sup>rd</sup> mate aboard the ss *Maya*. Interestingly enough, Kroesen's personnel card describes the ships he served on after deserting as being the Duchess of Fithol, the Empress of Australia, followed by the Orontas, and lastly the Evangeline, spanning the period of 13<sup>th</sup> May 1941 to 18<sup>th</sup> February 1942. No mention is made about his work for United Fruit or his desertion anywhere on his personnel card. During the beginning of February 1942, he boarded the ss *Edam*, as their 3<sup>rd</sup> mate, something which again does not conform with the information obtained from letters exchanged between the H.A.L., the owner of the ship, and Kroesen. He did get promoted to 3<sup>rd</sup> mate at a later date and was eventually promoted to 2<sup>nd</sup> mate after studying for a promotion during the war. During the war, Kroesen's wage increased from 107.50 Dutch Guilders when he was 4<sup>th</sup> mate to 217 Dutch guilders in his function as 2<sup>nd</sup> mate. While the increase in wages most definitely should not be disregarded, Kroesen did mention to his sister that his patriotic feelings towards the Dutch East Indies outshone his wish for money and position. After all, the Japanese invasion of Indonesia on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1941, was enough of a motivator for Kroesen to resign from his job as 3<sup>rd</sup> mate at the United Fruit Company, after which he again signed on as 4<sup>th</sup> mate at the H.A.L., though this time with the promise of being considered for promotion as soon as there was an opening. That opening was presented within only a couple of months, followed by the official promotion of Kroesen.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> H1098, Letter written by Holland-America Line to Roeland Jan Kroesen (9 January 1942); H1098, Letter to Wiesje and Max, 1; MMR, H1098, Seaman's book of Roeland Jan Kroesen, 8 and 16; Inv.nr. 2642, Personnel card of Roeland Jan Kroesen, accessed April 18, 2025, <https://proxy.archieven.nl/2231/17459FD7C6CA4ADDB87002BBE8ABF80B>; Scheepsramp Pennland, Oorlogsbronnen, accessed 12 March, 2025, <https://www.oorlogsbronnen.nl/thema/Scheepsramp%20Pennland>.

Hendrik Klapwijk was an *Engelandvaarder* during the war, initially working as an apprentice in the deck department while being promoted to 4<sup>th</sup> mate at a later point. Klapwijk only actively entered service starting from 19<sup>th</sup> July 1941, following his escape from the Netherlands. As an apprentice, his monthly wage was 37 Dutch guilders; this amount increased to 107.50 Dutch guilders following his promotion to 4<sup>th</sup> mate. The wage level did increase throughout the war, ending at 136 Dutch guilders, registered on his personnel card on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1945. Within the memoir, Klapwijk did not mention much about his spending patterns during the war; what is clear is that there was no necessity for him to financially support his girlfriend. His girlfriend, Maureen, was still living with her parents, who took responsibility for Maureen's financial well-being during the war. Klapwijk's motivation to serve aboard the merchant vessels during the war did not seem to have anything to do with career development. Additionally, Klapwijk left the seafaring sector after the war and moved to South Africa.<sup>38</sup>

Like De Danschutter and Klapwijk, Jan Witting did not seem to be very motivated by financial matters. Neither did Witting seem to be motivated by the prospect of advancing his career. Unlike the other seamen like De Danschutter, Witting had other options. Witting had received a vocational education for bank employees and additionally had a lot of experience working in factories before he ever started working in the merchant shipping sector. Due to the financial crisis in the 1930s, Witting became jobless and eventually started working in the merchant shipping sector, first as an engineer within the coastal shipping sector and later as an engineer aboard the ships in the large commercial shipping sector. According to Witting's personnel card, he worked as a 5<sup>th</sup> engineer for the entire duration of the war; whether this was truly the case, though, is not entirely clear, as Witting's diary mentioned that Witting attended a Dutch seafaring academy in 1944, which was located in Sutton, near London, where he successfully obtained his degree for 4<sup>th</sup> engineer on 2<sup>nd</sup> March of that year. Of course, it is entirely possible that Witting never had the chance to get a higher position aboard the ships he served on; earlier noted mistakes on the personnel cards, like those noted in Kroesen's personnel card, shed some doubt on the matter. What is clear is that Kroesen

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<sup>38</sup> H693, Memoir of Hendrik Klapwijk 69-71; Inv.nr. 2527, Personnel card of Hendrik Klapwijk, accessed April 23, 2025, <https://proxy.archieven.nl/2231/A606B1F0D8074AA4AE1CB50101ABEA3B>.

promptly quit his job in the merchant shipping sector as soon as the war was over to move to Eindhoven in the Netherlands, where he started working in a Phillips factory. Whether the idea to quit his job was already present during the war is unknown, but given the moment he acted, it seems likely. The idea of switching careers immediately after the war is very likely to have affected Witting's motivations for career development.<sup>39</sup>

Regarding the sources, there is an interesting contradiction between a remark made by De Danschutter about the possibilities of career development during the war and the situations of both Kroesen and Witting. Specifically, De Danschutter remarked that he could only be promoted to 4<sup>th</sup> engineer after the war was over, as it was really hard to get promoted during the war. In contrast, on the ss *Edam*, the ship Kroesen served on after rejoining the war effort, Kroesen was promoted twice, once from 4<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> mate and once from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> mate. The basic monthly salary, which was 116.50 Dutch guilders when he was 4<sup>th</sup> mate, had increased to 217 Dutch guilders as 2<sup>nd</sup> mate. Considering the effort it took, especially during the war, Kroesen's argument for desertion was not necessarily a weird one; not that desertion was acceptable, but his reasoning had some merit. The primary issue during the war regarding being promoted had to do with getting the necessary diplomas, and there being an open position. Getting the experience was easy, but attending a seafaring school was difficult. Going to the seafaring schools in the Netherlands was impossible due to obvious reasons. Moreover, there were very few options to take time off to study. A leave of absence had to be requested and granted. This process could be complicated depending on relations with superior officers and the availability of a replacement officer, as seen from Witting's situation when he wanted leave on his arrival in the UK. As seen from both Kroesen's and Witting's cases, being promoted in both officer departments was possible. In a list of short biographies on graduates of the *Amsterdam Kweekschool voor de Zeevaart* who served aboard merchant vessels during the war, 14 out of 29 sailors mentioned attending a temporary seafaring school during the war to study and to be promoted. These people, while working for a variety of different companies, were all educated to

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<sup>39</sup> H804, Memories of Jan Witting, 7, 82, 98; H2195, Diary 3 of J.B. de Danschutter, 26; Inv.nr. 2550, Personnel card of Jan Witting, accessed April 23, 2025, <https://proxy.archieven.nl/2231/3B530B0AC30040679414EE27D11A30E0>.

work in the deck department of the ships. The biographies listed a few reasons for getting time off to study. The reason that was most often mentioned was that the shipping companies the seafarers worked for sent their personnel there to prevent the NSTC from filling up gaps. Companies like the H.A.L. and the S.M.N. preferred to have their own officers taking up positions on their ships instead of being assigned *Engelandvaarders*, as the companies had less control over those. A second reason was the need for people with the necessary diplomas. In contrast, ordinary seamen were more easily replaceable than the officers, especially the officers in the higher ranks. With the high death count of sailors during the war, possible shortages of officers needed to be prevented. The solution chosen by the NSTC was the creation of at least three seafaring academies, the previously mentioned academy in Sutton near London for engineering officers. For the deck department, there was originally a seafaring school in Surabaya in Indonesia; this one was quickly forced to close its doors due to the Japanese invasion, though. Afterwards, a new academy was created in Bronxville, near New York. The academies were all temporary. The education in Surabaya took place aboard the ms *Oranje*, and the examination happened in the Navy Department in Batavia, current Jakarta. How the lessons and examinations were organised in Sutton and Bronxville is unknown. The date that the Surabaya and Bronxville academies opened for students is traceable. The Surabaya academy's first batch of students went during the summer of 1940, showing how early these measures had already been taken. Due to this academy having to close its doors, the seafaring academy in Bronxville was opened, which received its first batch of students in January of 1943. Due to the lack of information on temporary seafaring academies present during the war, it is unknown if there were more academies present beyond the three named in this thesis.<sup>40</sup>

The hypothesis that the opportunity to pursue a promotion was exclusive to seafarers under the employ of a company was disproven. As the NSTC itself established these academies, *Engelandvaarders* were also granted the opportunity to attend an

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<sup>40</sup> Co Nelisse, Dik Roggeveen and Jan Tonkens, eds. *Belevissen van oud-kweekelingen van de Kweekschool voor de Zeevaart varende in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Vereeniging van Oud-Kweekelingen van de Kweekschool voor de Zeevaart te Amsterdam, 2000), 88 and 90; H804, Memories of Jan Witting, 77; H1098, Notice addressed to Roeland Jan Kroesen about a temporary promotion to 2nd officer by the H.A.L. (14 June 1943); H1098, Seaman's book of Roeland Jan Kroesen, 8; H1098, Tax form Roeland Jan Kroesen (24 June 1942); H2195, Diary 3 of J.B. de Danschutter, 26.

academy. In instances where individuals were unable to take leave, the option to pursue education during leisure time was nevertheless possible as long as the sailor in question could obtain the necessary study materials. Of the two described *Engelandvaarders* who had not signed on with any company, one of them was also shown to have attended the same academy in Bronxville. An example of such a case is that of the *Engelandvaarder* Anske Albert Duif, who obtained the diplomas for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> mate during the war and concurrently fulfilled the roles of apprentice, 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> mate. When Duif applied for his promotion, he was informed that he could receive his diploma for the 3<sup>rd</sup> level due to his overdue experience and was strongly encouraged to immediately pursue his diploma for the 2<sup>nd</sup> mate level. In addition to the augmentation of the monthly salary, a direct financial incentive of 100 US dollars was offered to those who obtained the diploma within a two-month period. During the period under consideration, his base salary increased from 90 Dutch guilders to 144 Dutch guilders. As stated in the aforementioned publication, other seamen from the deck department shared similar experiences. Individuals such as Bastiaan Boll, Jacob Versteeg, Adriaan Nanne Simon Gerus, Willem Albert Hage and Jan Marinus Sanders all attended a seafaring academy and subsequently advanced their respective careers. During the war, Boll was promoted from apprentice to 3<sup>rd</sup> mate. This transition was accompanied by a significant increase in remuneration, from a salary of 30 Dutch guilders to 161 Dutch guilders. Versteeg was not promoted during the war aboard his ship, even though his personnel card does make note of his rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> mate. Gerus went from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> mate, though his personnel card only indicates an official rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> mate, making it seem like he did not study for 1<sup>st</sup> mate during the war. Hage went from apprentice to 3<sup>rd</sup> mate, and lastly, Sanders went from 4<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> mate during the war. All of the subjects experienced a considerable increase in their monthly wage during the war period, consequent to their respective promotions. Irrespective of Gerus' supposed rank of 1<sup>st</sup> mate, there is no evidence that he obtained a diploma for the rank. Furthermore, no evidence or reference has been found that would indicate the possibility of a 2<sup>nd</sup> mate studying for promotion to the rank of 1<sup>st</sup> mate.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Inv.nr. 2513, Personnel card of Bastiaan Boll, accessed April 23, 2025, <https://proxy.archieven.nl/2231/10C66F0AE1474DEFA38F502614F8FAFB>; Inv.nr. 2520, Personnel card of Adriaan Nanne Simon Gerus, accessed April 23, 2025,

As already referred to in the historiography, Klooster mentioned that there was a lot of inflation during the war. As a result, small extra allowances were given to the seafarers, and the money that was sent home to the families was reduced. This was not the only measure taken. The personnel cards of Dutch sailors also show wage increases during the war, while the seamen kept the same jobs. Wages earned by seamen were decided upon by the companies the seafarers were working for, according to Witting, but the structural increase in wages seen at all studied companies indicates that either the Dutch government or the NSTC may have played a role in this matter. Most obvious in the wage increases is Van der Mark, whose wage increased by 22.50 Dutch guilders on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1943. Others like Klapwijk also had their wage raised on the same day; for him, the increase was 13.50 Dutch guilders. Later that same year, Witting also had his wage increased by 54 Dutch guilders. Unfortunately, there is no definitive proof that the Dutch government or the NSTC had a role in the increase in wages, as the sailors studied in this thesis are not of sufficient volume to create a study on this, but the similarities in timing of the wage increases do seem to indicate it. Regarding the wages, it is furthermore important to note that the personnel cards registered all wages in Dutch guilders, but seafarers might not have always been paid out in Dutch guilders. On this topic, Klapwijk remarked that his monthly wage was 14.50 US dollars, which likely meant that Dutch guilders were not the chosen currency for wages. The decision to do this was logical, though considering the fact that the Dutch guilder was of little use during the war.<sup>42</sup>

In regard to the bonuses received by seamen, it has been documented that these included a 'long voyage allowance' of 15 per cent, a seaday premium of 2 guilders, a war premium of 2.50 guilders per day, and a drinking allowance of 0.30 dollars per day,

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<https://proxy.archieven.nl/2231/F72EB250DCD04E9FB6FBF8C750B0332A>; Inv.nr. 2540, Personnel card of Jan Marinus Sanders, accessed April 23,

<https://proxy.archieven.nl/2231/A69950DB092542ACB50F9C7C4CE75F43>; Inv.nr. 2547, Personnel card of Jacob Versteeg, accessed April 23, 2025,

<https://proxy.archieven.nl/2231/D1386D2A7B134851A26437E417C96BBA>; Inv.nr. 2629, Personnel card of Anske Albert Duij, accessed April 23, 2025,

<https://proxy.archieven.nl/2231/C22BEC8E8BBB4D8BB8EFFEBFDFE0F9F4>; Inv.nr. 2634, Personnel card of Willem Aalbert Hage, accessed April 23, 2025,

<https://proxy.archieven.nl/2231/3B3AFF8544304AECA99275E17C919A86>; Nelisse, Roggeveen and Tonkens, *Belevenissen van oud-kwekelingen*, 124.

<sup>42</sup> Inv.nr. 2527, Hendrik Klapwijk; Inv.nr. 2550, Jan Witting; Inv.nr. 2590, Hendrik v.d. Mark;

as stated by Krug. It is important to note that these numbers were not representative of the entire fleet. A thorough examination of the personnel cards has revealed that the 'long voyage allowance' was, in fact, only 15 per cent for officers; petty officers such as Van der Mark received 10 per cent. The seaday premium amount was not fixed and depended on rank. Kroesen received a seaday premium of 1.20 Dutch guilders while working on the ss *Pennland* as a 4<sup>th</sup> mate. However, when working as a 2<sup>nd</sup> mate aboard the ss *Edam*, he received a seaday premium that was 2.70 Dutch guilders. In addition, officers in higher-ranking positions received a greater number of bonus types. Following Kroesen's promotion to the rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> mate, he began to receive a daily provision premium of 0.50 Dutch guilders. As with the main wage, the question of whether the bonuses were paid out in Dutch guilders or other currencies remains unanswered. Witting's reference to the war bonus being paid out in British pound sterling complicates this further. The rationale behind the ongoing ambiguity surrounding this thesis is that the probability of single salaries being disbursed across multiple currencies appears improbable. Consequently, it may have been up to the respective shipping companies to determine the preferred currency.<sup>43</sup>

Besides earning money and developing one's career, being a motivation in itself, the motivation was also directly related to other motivations, mostly on the family aspect. While the part of the wage sent to the families of sailors might have been stopped by the Germans, the *Zeemanspot* (Seaman's pot) was still present. It is unlikely that such a fund would give money to families of deserters, meaning that this financial dependency remained active during the war. In the case of the five people studied for this thesis, the financial dependency of the families did not seem to be present, except for the case of Van der Mark. The other four were not married or even living together. As a result, they had no spouse depending on them. Furthermore, the respective girlfriends of De Danschutter and Kroesen had jobs; they earned their own money during the war, making them far less dependent on their fiancés. In addition, since Kroesen's girlfriend

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<sup>43</sup> H804, Memories of Jan Witting, 10; H1098, Monthly salary of Roeland Jan Kroesen aboard the ss *Pennland*, (1 January 1941 – 30 June 1941); H1098, Notice addressed to Roeland Jan Kroesen; Krug, *Een zeeman in oorlogstijd*, 9.

lived in Alexandria, no Dutch fund supported her either way, which might have been a part of Kroesen's decision to desert.<sup>44</sup>

Beyond the part of the wage which seafarers earned that was given to their families at the start of the war, sailors found means to financially support their families in other ways. Van der Mark specifically mentioned the position of the Red Cross organisation on this matter. According to him, the Red Cross could send food parcels to his family, something Van der Mark mentioned doing on multiple occasions. Secondly, during the war, there were far fewer means to get goods from different places, as transportation was primarily used for the war. Moreover, all sorts of countries had bans on goods that should not be exported to prevent shortages. Both Van der Mark and Kroesen mentioned buying or even smuggling goods in harbours they docked at for their families back home, be it clothing from the US or white silk from India.<sup>45</sup>

To finally summarise this chapter, financial matters and career development helped motivate seamen. As opposed to patriotism, earning money is only likely to have indirectly motivated the sailors during the war. Seafarers needed it, and if necessary or simply wanted, they used it to help their families. Consequently, the statement of indirect motivation means that earning money was not a motivation in itself, but it worked to support other means of motivation. The proverbial 'carrot' mentioned by Rosendahl in the form of monetary compensation did not seem to directly apply in the Dutch case to boost motivation. The war bonus, which was the primary financial means to boost salaries during the war, remained largely unchanged, which prevented the dissatisfaction reported by Rosendahl about the Norwegian fleet, which decreased the war bonus due to British pressure. Regardless of the increasing salaries and unchanged relative bonuses during the war, the seafarers studied for this thesis seemed to remain indifferent to the amounts based on the information derived from the written sources.<sup>46</sup>

The matter of career development was different; the five main people studied within this thesis had very different perspectives on this point due to their different personal situations. There was no option for career development in the case of Van der Mark, and both Klapwijk and Witting left the seafaring sector immediately after the war.

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<sup>44</sup> H1098, Diary of Roeland Jan Kroesen, 24; H2195, Diary 2 of J.B. de Danschutter, 1.

<sup>45</sup> H152, Diary of Hendrik van der Mark, 41 and 71-74; H1098, Diary of Roeland Jan Kroesen, 25-26.

<sup>46</sup> Rosendahl, "Patriotism, money and control," 173.

As for De Danschutter, he mentioned wanting to leave the merchant shipping sector but expounded on the fact that it was very complicated, as he had no qualifications for other work. Only Kroesen seemed to be motivated by career development during the war to a large degree, and he immediately took it to the extreme by deserting for those convictions. Consequently, it is very hard to find a pattern from these results that can be stated to be even remotely representative of the entire sector.

## Chapter 4: Social-based motivations

To investigate social-based motivations, this chapter has divided the topic into three categories. These three categories are (1) family, (2) circumstances aboard the ship, and (3) circumstances in harbours and on land. Finally, this chapter will analyse how social-based motivations are interrelated among themselves.

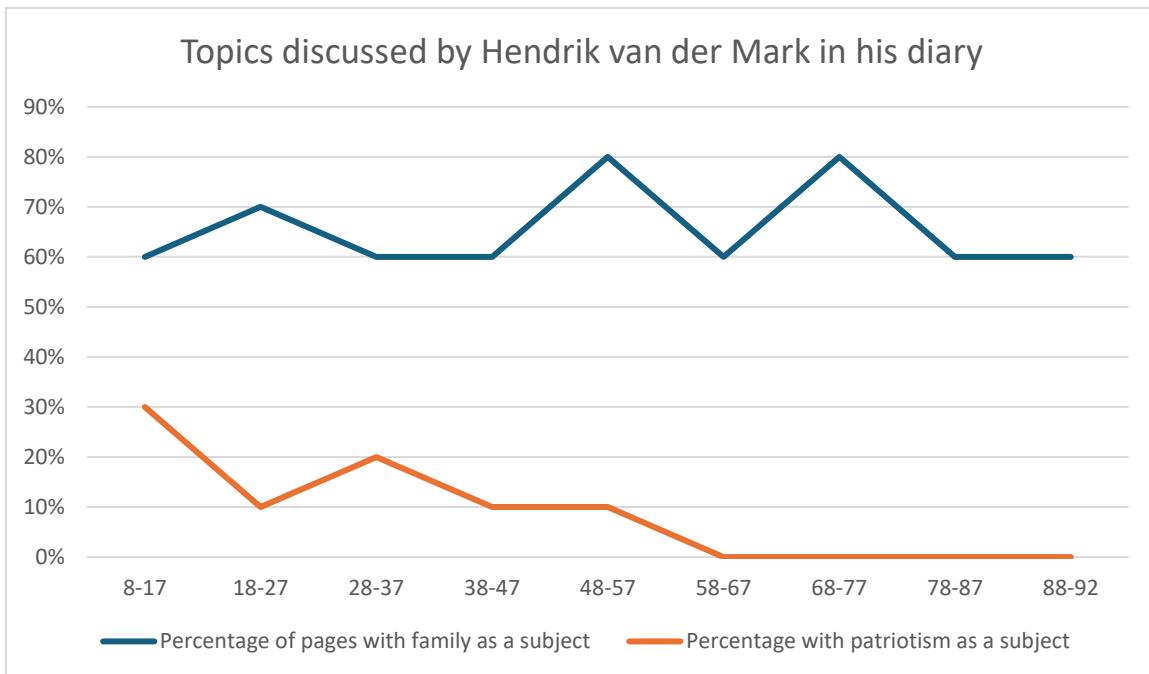
The motivation stemming from family generally took the form of a wish to see them again. The means to do that was freeing the Netherlands, and the best method available to help make this happen was continuing to work within the service of the Dutch merchant fleet. The way these three factors interrelate is the subject of this category. Family is, of course, a broad term which can indicate anything from a wife/girlfriend to parents, children, siblings, grandparents, in-laws, and further extended family. On the topic of motivation, naturally, not all family members were equal; some family members evoked more motivation than others. An analysis of the diaries has shown that any family member who is not directly related to the seafarer in question, such as in-laws and further extended family members, was either never mentioned at all or was only mentioned in passing in the diaries; only De Danschutter mentioned the parents of his partner, though he only expressed curiosity on their circumstances. Based on the lack of dedicated attention on this group, as a whole, it seemed to have had no or at most minor effects on the seamen's motivation. Within the directly related family, there is a clear demarcation between wife or girlfriend and children on one side and siblings, parents, and grandparents on the other side. The second category was almost entirely disregarded, only getting minor attention within the diaries and memoirs. Siblings and parents have been mentioned, both as a topic within the diaries and as recipients for letters. Van der Mark is the only one who had the chance to visit his brother during the war, often deciding to spend his leave on his brother's farm in Minnesota, a brother he had not seen in 33 years; Kroesen specifically sent at least one letter to his sister during the war, and De Danschutter sent a letter home as well. The letter that De Danschutter sent to 'home' is likely to have primarily addressed his parents; the group of family that seems to be roughly equal in importance to siblings are the parents. The

relation with parents was more complicated to investigate than the relation between the sailors and their siblings, as the parents of both Van der Mark and Klapwijk were dead before the war broke out, Kroesen never contacted his parents during the war, and Witting did not mention anything about his relationship with his parents beyond having them informed about his survival after the ss *Soemba* shipwrecked, which was announced on the radio at that phase of the war. Both siblings and parents, though, seemed to have only had a minor effect on the seafarers' motivation. By far the most important family members for the sailors' motivation were their partners and children.<sup>47</sup>

As Hendrik van der Mark was already 46 years old at the start of the war, he was in a different phase of his life than the other four seamen studied in this thesis. Van der Mark was married and had a certain number of children; at the start of the war, his oldest was 21 and his youngest was 12. The level of attention Van der Mark devoted to depicting the circumstances of his children in the diary was considerable. He documented birthdays and other significant events in their lives and expressed profound concern for their well-being, particularly their survival. In addition, he wondered about important milestones in his children's lives, one of which was the question of whether they had married yet. Van der Mark also mentioned his wife in his diary, but it seemed that his children were more important to him, as he gave them more attention. Be they wife or kids, Van der Mark explicitly stated on multiple occasions that his motivation during the war consisted of a combination of patriotism and family. Later on in his diary, he refined this motivation to a statement that reuniting with his family was the most important motivation he had to continue his work.

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<sup>47</sup> H152, Diary of Hendrik van der Mark, 32; H804, Memories of Jan Witting, 48; H1098, Letter to Wiesje and Max; H2195, Diary 1 of J.B. de Danschutter, 15; H2195, Diary 2 of J.B. de Danschutter, 58.



The diary of Van der Mark consists of 85 pages of actual text; a count of these pages shows that he was very stable in the amount of attention he gave them throughout the war; 60 per cent of the pages within his diary had statements about either his children or his wife. The period from pages 48 to 77 showed the most attention. That these pages showed the most attention had a clear reason; these pages describe the period from 16<sup>th</sup> April 1944 to 1<sup>st</sup> August 1945. As is clear, a very long period. This first peak is caused by a shift in the topics written about by Van der Mark; Van der Mark's diary slowly shifts away from describing his experiences to him being increasingly vocal about missing his family. Even when Van der Mark did obtain letters from home, they were very old, which left much to wonder about, which caused him to be in a state of perpetual fear about his family's fate. Pages 58-67 start from 6<sup>th</sup> January 1945 and end after the Germans had signed their unconditional surrender. Van der Mark was far less worried in this period, mostly focusing on the war itself and it being finished, and wrote less about his family. During this period, he was even able to go back home for a short time. Afterwards, there was another peak in his attention to his family, though this time it was mostly focused on how he could help them. Having gone home, Van der Mark found his entire family had survived the war. This knowledge caused Van der Mark to switch his line of thinking, after which he started smuggling food and clothing from the US to his family in the Netherlands. Interesting on the side of patriotism is that Van der

Mark was influenced by patriotic feelings in the first years of the war far more as compared to the latter years, while the attention given to family increased the longer the war continued.<sup>48</sup>

De Danschutter was only 21 years old at the start of the war, unmarried, but engaged to Adriana Leonie van de Casteel. His motivation, strictly speaking, is not mentioned explicitly within his diary, but his opinion on the matter is exceedingly clear. To De Danschutter, his girlfriend is one of, if not the most important part of his life. His diary, to start with, takes the form of fictional letters addressed to his girlfriend. He writes one of these letters every Sunday starting from 5<sup>th</sup> May 1940. De Danschutter documents his experiences during the war in his diary, which he alternated with questions about the current experiences of his fiancée, caused by his lack of information about circumstances in the Netherlands and his girlfriend in the initial years of the war. In addition, De Danschutter attempted to exchange letters with his fiancée during the war. Especially at the beginning, this was a complicated endeavour, but starting from January of '41, some of them actually ended up at their intended destination. Due to these letters, a lot of the perpetual fear, described by Van der Mark and De Danschutter himself in the first part of his diary, is much less dominant in the later portions of De Danschutter's diary, as he knew how his fiancée was doing by then. In the later portions, the content of the diary focused more on the daily experiences of the Danschutter, in addition to reactions to the letters he had received from his fiancée. A topic that comes up more often as the length of the war raged ever onwards is the wish to reunite with his fiancée. Regarding De Danschutter, it is clear that his motivation almost exclusively stemmed from his fiancée and his wish to see her again.<sup>49</sup>

Like De Danschutter, Kroesen had a fiancée during the war; her name was Chryssanti Georges Mina, simply called Chris by Kroesen in his diary. Chris lived in Alexandria in Egypt, during the war. While war also took place in North Africa, including Egypt, the Allied powers had won against the Axis powers on this field of battle during March 1943. Alexandria, though, remained unoccupied during the war, being an important supply port for the Allied Forces. As a result, Kroesen had the chance to visit

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<sup>48</sup> H152, Diary of Hendrik van der Mark, 12, 23, 25, 27, 31, 37, 44, 56 and 71-74.

<sup>49</sup> H2195, Diary 1 of J.B. de Danschutter, 1; H2195, Diary 2 of J.B. de Danschutter, 2, 27-29 and 44.

his fiancée relatively often at the start and during the later years of the war. In addition, he did not have to worry overly much about his fiancée's status, as she was not in a place occupied by Axis forces. Consequently, there are some similarities in the way Kroesen writes about his fiancée within his diary as compared to De Danschutter does about his fiancée during the later years of the war. They write about more innocent topics, showing much less worry. Due to the fact that Kroesen's fiancée lived in Alexandria and his frequent visits there, Kroesen had some problems unique to his situation. He was often homesick shortly after leaving Alexandria, as shown by his comments about himself being lonely, miserable and despondent after returning to the sea. Moreover, he had similar feelings every time he was nearing Alexandria. As a result, he had to reacclimatise to working on a ship every time he returned from visiting his girlfriend. Consequently, family as a motivation to free the Netherlands and Indonesia is not likely to have been a motivation for Kroesen nearly as much as it was for De Danschutter and Van der Mark. There was no stake in it for him; Kroesen deserted when Alexandria was under threat and signed on with a Dutch company shortly before it was saved, allegedly for patriotic reasons. Having signed on again, he visited his fiancée whenever he had the chance, but he remained in service until the end of the war. He married his fiancée on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1944, showing that he cared very much about her. His motivation, though, was not dominated by these feelings.<sup>50</sup>

Of the five seafarers, Klapwijk devoted the least attention to his girlfriend in his memoir. He did have a girlfriend, a woman named Maureen who resided in Cornwall with her parents. Klapwijk spent the majority of his leave there, and the couple even got engaged. However, due to the nature of the source material and Klapwijk's apparent disinterest in addressing the subject of Maureen, the motivation derived from his relationship with her remains ambiguous. Moreover, given the nature of the source material as a memoir, the transitions in primary themes observed in the diaries of Van der Mark and De Danschutter are not reflected in this account. It is evident that his motivation to serve as an *Engelandvaarder* and contribute to the liberation of the Netherlands did not stem from a personal desire to reunite with his girlfriend.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> H1098, Diary of Roeland Jan Kroesen, 24-26 and 36-37; H1098, Seaman's book of Roeland Jan Kroesen, 3.

<sup>51</sup> H693, Memoir of Hendrik Klapwijk, 69-71 and 76.

In terms of romantic relationships, Witting's relationship status underwent significant fluctuations during the war. Initially, he had a British girlfriend named Polly, but by the end of the war, he had become engaged, married on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1942, and finally had a daughter in the latter years of the war. During the war, Polly lived in Edinburgh with her parents; Witting visited whenever he had the chance, and if he could not travel to Edinburgh when in the UK, his partner tried to come to him. As the most important people to him lived in the UK, his motivation seemed to revolve around their safety in the later years of the war. Something they were distinctly not, as Edinburgh was a target for German bomber attacks during the war. Consequently, Witting's motivations, rooted in familial obligations, underwent discernible transformations throughout the war. The ramifications of these shifts, however, remain challenging to ascertain due to the nature of the source material, akin to the limitations encountered in Klapwijk's memoir.<sup>52</sup>

As is clear from these personal stories, the study of motivation derived from family members has its differences and similarities with the previous chapters. Specifically, children and spouses were most important, but the level of influence this relationship had on the seafarers' motivation wildly fluctuated. This could be affected by (1) changes in information, (2) changes in the relationship, and (3) developments in the war. First, the changes in information, as seen from Van der Mark, De Danschutter, and Kroesen, influenced their feelings as measured in the tone they wrote in their diaries and the direct content they penned down. Second, changes in the relationship could shift motivations, as was most clearly seen in Witting's diary; the fast-paced development of his relationship with Polly and the birth of their daughter influenced how he was motivated. Third, as seen from the diary of Van der Mark and Kroesen, developments of the war led to their families being safer, causing them to witness the results they helped make possible.

Familial relations, based on the amount of attention given to them in diaries as compared to other influences like patriotism, seem to have had the greatest influence on the studied seamen's motivation. That this was possibly also the case for the other Dutch sailors was not just attested to by the diaries themselves, but also by

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<sup>52</sup> H804, Memories of Jan Witting, 6, 12, 65, 77, 82, 86 and 98.

other sources, such as Queen Wilhelmina's Christmas message of 1943, which centred on family, mentioning that "the seafarers' thoughts were naturally with their families, friends, and acquaintances, left behind in enemy territory and that their families were undoubtedly strengthened by the seamen's brave and undaunted perseverance."<sup>53</sup> As stated by this message, even the Dutch government, which was intrinsically linked to the Dutch royal family during the war, recognised the importance of family on the sailors' motivation. Finally, family impacted the seafarers' motivation, but the level of the impact differed between the different seamen. Furthermore, partners are the family members who are mentioned most often within the diaries studied for this thesis research. Based, though, on the single diary of Van der Mark, it is questionable whether children or partners had the greatest impact on the seafarers' motivation. What is clear is that there were likely to be more sailors with a partner than seamen with children, making the spouses most likely to have had the largest role within the motivation sailors derived from familial relations.

As opposed to the motivations derived from patriotism, career development and wages, and familial relations, which were all under a lot of scrutiny by the NSTC and the Dutch government. A number of other factors might also have played a role in keeping up the motivation of the seafarers. While these factors analysed in isolation had a negligible effect on the sailors' overall motivation, collectively, they were found to be of considerable significance. In essence, these factors can be categorised into (1) factors aboard the ship and (2) factors in harbours and on the mainland.

The factors that played a role in the motivation of the seafarers aboard the ships were not influenced by the NSTC and the Dutch government. Consequently, these factors slightly differed in form between the separate ships and companies. Most of these points focused on creating a good working environment on the ships, as that boosted morale, productivity and collaboration. Additionally, having good living circumstances aboard the ship made people happier, which made them have an easier time processing the circumstances they were forced to deal with during the war. As already mentioned by Van Dissel in her work, De Danschutter remarked that there were quite a few arguments aboard the ship he served on; people were creating personal

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<sup>53</sup> H3749-81, Christmas Wilhelmina.

weapons, and they were pessimistic, restless, and nagging about everything they could. Van Dissel portrayed this situation as a commonly seen occurrence, something it was distinctly not. Even De Danschutter, whose diary is the basis for Van Dissel's statement, portrayed the people instigating these conflicts as criminals. Moreover, other seamen also focused on the relations between the different members of the personnel; their stories have shown that De Danschutters' situation truly was an exception to the standard. Witting, for example, wrote about the same topic, mentioning that the good relationship between the officers made for a good atmosphere on the ship. Other seafarers like Klapwijk and Kroesen mentioned more strained relations between seafarers, but no consequences of those relations came anywhere close to the situation described by De Danschutter. Lastly, Van der Mark never talked about the interpersonal relations aboard the ships he served on at all, making it unknown whether such a situation presented itself on the ship he served on.<sup>54</sup>

A second matter, but one that was incessantly complained about when it was badly organised or prepared, was the food aboard the ships. This specifically was a matter that De Danschutter mentioned when he was talking about the conflicts aboard his ship. Food was one of the matters that was complained about the most. Both Van der Mark and Klapwijk remarked on the food present aboard their ships, as well as mentioning the large amount of food for the consumption of the crew and its good quality.<sup>55</sup>

As shown, the majority of these factors were found to be similar, but a marked difference was observed between troop transport ships and all other types of ships. The basis of this statement comes from Klapwijk's memoir. During the war, Klapwijk primarily worked aboard the ss *Edam* and the ms *Noordam*. These ships, owned by the H.A.L., were troop transport ships. The troop transport ships were both of a larger size and had a considerable number of passengers aboard, many of whom had never previously experienced a prolonged period at sea. Consequently, these vessels boasted a wider array of entertainment options, catering to the recreational needs of both military

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<sup>54</sup> H804, Memories of Jan Witting, 63; H2195, Diary 3 of J.B. de Danschutter, 13-14; Van Dissel, "In buitenlandse havens," 178.

<sup>55</sup> H152, Diary of Hendrik van der Mark, 18; H693, Memoir of Hendrik Klapwijk, 106; H2195, Diary 3 of J.B. de Danschutter, 13-14.

personnel and seamen. Klapwijk stated that his vessel, the *Noordam*, had an army reverend aboard as an officer within the standard crew. It is probable that this phenomenon was confined to the large troop transport ships. The absence of mercantile reverends aboard the ships in a permanent capacity during and prior to the war is indicative of this. The role of the priest, of any denomination, aboard ships as it existed during the Dutch 'Golden Age' had long since been obsolete. A recent initiative to establish a comparable congregation of religious leaders had been initiated in 1936 but had not yet achieved significant popularity. Consequently, it is probable that only ships engaged in the transportation of troops were equipped with a reverend, as these vessels were associated with the military and not the companies of the troop transport ships. In addition to the religious duties of the reverend, the reverend aboard the *ms Noordam* fulfilled a variety of other roles, predominantly focusing on providing assistance to soldiers and seafarers through entertainment or by helping them to cope with their circumstances. Entertainment organised by the reverend aboard the ship came in many ways; he distributed games and books for crew members and army personnel to read, he organised boxing tournaments, put orchestras together and led singing evenings. Additionally, the reverend was, of course, always available for religious tasks as well.<sup>56</sup>

While the company exerted a significant degree of influence on the events that transpired on board the vessel, the individual characteristics of the sailors became even more discernible when the ship was at dock. As previously mentioned by De Danschutter and Witting, there was a general division within the crew, although this did not typically result in consequences that posed a threat to physical safety. This 'split' most often manifested as a dichotomy between two groups of seamen. On the one hand, there were the more 'serious' seafarers, who focused on their job, the war, and their family. Examples of this group include Van der Mark and De Danschutter. On the other hand, there were the more 'playful' sailors, who partied hard and consumed a lot of alcohol. This latter group is described by Klapwijk, who personally experienced this phenomenon in the harbour of San Francisco. Furthermore, individuals with a pronounced inclination towards this perspective placed significant emphasis on the

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<sup>56</sup> Het ontstaan van het gereformeerd koopvaardijpastoraat, GereformeerdeKerken.info, last modified January 4, 2018, <https://gereformeerdekerken.info/2018/01/04/het-ontstaan-van-het-gereformeerde-koopvaardijpastoraat/>; H693, Memoir of Hendrik Klapwijk, 97.

tourist attractions they visited, including prominent American cities such as New York and San Francisco, as well as destinations such as Buenos Aires, Malta, Basra, Polynesia, Massawa and Sofaga. It is evident that not all seamen embarked on voyages to these locations for the purpose of recreation. However, certain individuals, such as Witting, who undertook an expedition to the Pyramids of Giza, and Klapwijk, most definitely did. Klapwijk's experience in Polynesia was meticulously documented as well, including his unwarranted fear of the native inhabitants, whom he described in a manner that implied a degree of cannibalistic tendencies. Finally, it should be noted that the 'playful' element of the group was renowned for their amorous exploits in harbours. These exploits included brief romantic encounters and visits to prostitutes in the majority of harbours in which they stopped. De Danschutter found it impossible to refrain from writing about this matter, asserting that a significant proportion of the crew on his vessel engaged in extramarital relations at every opportunity, irrespective of their marital status. Although De Danschutter did not explicitly state that at least some of the girls with whom his crew were engaging in sexual relations were prostitutes, he did insinuate as much by remarking that some of his fellow crew members were expending their entire monthly wages on "those rotten girls". Although ostensibly an extreme division, these were the extremes, and the majority of individuals occupied positions somewhere in between. However, both parties found themselves in a complex situation and sought to alleviate the stress caused by the perpetual state of fear experienced while aboard the ships. Those seafarers who exhibited a greater adherence to the 'serious' aspect of maritime life sought alternative means of alleviating stress, such as partaking in a beer with fellow seamen on a terrace. Sailors such as Van der Mark and De Danschutter did not engage in revelry; on their part, they attended a cinema in Buenos Aires, consumed a beer, and engaged in a game of billiards, which they stated was sufficient for them.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, these factors, both aboard the ships and in the harbours, were of significant importance to the daily lives of the seafarers. While they were not directly motivational, they kept life bearable; it is simply easier to work in one's job when one can do so in decent or even good circumstances. As a result, these seemingly little things

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<sup>57</sup> H152, Diary of Hendrik van der Mark, 18 and 29; H693, Memoir of Hendrik Klapwijk, 50, 86 and 113-114; H2195, Diary 2 of J.B. de Danschutter, 7; H2195, Diary 3 of J.B. de Danschutter, 26 and 42.

were one of the most important things in keeping the seamen in line. Secondly, while some were necessities, many things were also done by the sailors, simply to keep themselves busy. Whether they did this by boxing with their fellow crew members, playing in an orchestra, writing a diary, sunbathing or by sending copious amounts of letters home did not matter all that much. Especially because of that, a person such as the reverend on the ms *Noordam* was of vital importance as he played a role in keeping the crew busy with fun matters, keeping them from focusing on the ever-present fear. While some things were freely available, many things were not. In this part, there is a very clear interrelation between social factors and economic factors. No matter if one processed or coped by writing in a diary, whether they partied, visited a cinema, or planned excursions. There was a necessity for money, be it to buy the diaries and writing utensils, to get the alcohol, or to buy entrance tickets to a cinema or tourist attraction. The same is true regarding the money necessary to buy clothes and food for family members in the cases of Kroesen and Van der Mark.<sup>58</sup>

As has been made clear by the enormous amount of attention given to family and other smaller, social-based factors such as partying, social factors played a huge role in strengthening the motivation of the Dutch merchant seamen. Irrespective of the seafarer's exact familial circumstances, all of them centred around it, be it by merely thinking about them often, sending letters, or even buying products for them. Family, as acknowledged by the Dutch government and merchant shipping companies, was quite likely the most influential motivation for the vast majority of the seamen. Besides family, the smaller factors like having enough food of good quality, relaxing, and processing the events they were forced to deal with during the war were also of vital importance to the mental health of the seafarers. While this last topic was never a topic the sailors wrote page upon page about, there is no questioning its importance. Lastly, as specifically shown in the case of the graph on the presence of family and patriotism as topics in the diary of Hendrik van der Mark, how much motivation is derived from family or patriotic feelings can change throughout the war. As evidenced by the graph, some periods saw more attention to family than others, which may have indicated that family had a greater role in the seamen's motivation in some periods and less of a role in other periods. Why

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<sup>58</sup> H2195, Diary 1 of J.B. de Danschutter, 9; H2195, Diary 3 of J.B. de Danschutter, 38.

exactly Van der Mark increased his attention to his family in the later parts of his diary is unclear, but what is clear is that other topics, such as the events he was experiencing during the war, were mentioned far less often. A possible explanation for this specifically might be found in a letter written by Leendert Ernst van Vessem to his wife and children in 1944. While he mostly wrote about missing his family, which makes sense in a letter addressed to them, he also mentioned that the war was becoming increasingly monotonous. A feeling Van der Mark might have shared, which could have caused him to write less about his day-to-day experiences in the later parts of his diary.<sup>59</sup>

Regardless of the spikes in attention given to family, or lack of attention to other things, all five seafarers studied for this thesis were more or less influenced by their familial ties, which is indicative of the other Dutch merchant sailors who are likely to have also been motivated by this specific motivation to a higher or lesser extent.

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<sup>59</sup> H2100, Letter written by Leendert Ernst van Vessem addressed to his wife and children (1944) 1.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

The topic of the present thesis was the motivation of merchant sailors during World War II, separating the reasons for the seamen's continued presence and their will to work. This was done per the research question: '*What motivated Dutch seafarers to fulfil their duty on Dutch merchant ships during World War II, beyond the government-mandated duty to sail?*' To perform this research, various diaries, memoirs, other personal documents, and NSTC personnel cards have been analysed to reconstruct merchant sailors' motivations.

The extant historiography has contributed comparatively little, having primarily focused on the merchant fleet as a whole up until the present. At the time of writing, only limited steps have been taken towards generating an understanding of the way of life of the civilian merchant seafarers during the war. The prevailing historiography posits that patriotism serves as the predominant motivator for merchant seamen. This thesis has challenged that conclusion.

Within the present thesis, five case studies on merchant seafarers have been conducted. This has been done by sequentially examining the impact of three primary motivation categories: patriotism, career-based motivations, and social-based motivations.

As already referred to within the concepts, patriotism has been defined as a combination of different feelings towards one's country of heritage, including attachment, love and devotion. If patriotism is analysed as a motivation that ignores familial attachment, as was the applied definition in this thesis, patriotism is not, by any means, the most significant motivator. Of the five studies, three of them, including Van der Mark, Klapwijk and Kroesen, supported a patriotic notion, though Kroesen's motivations on career development outweighed his sense of patriotism, causing a short-term desertion in the middle of the war. Van der Mark alluded to the concept of patriotism on several occasions, and Klapwijk referenced it on a single occasion, although this amount is of negligible significance in itself, given the inherent limitations of the source material. The

remaining two sailors exhibited either an absence or a questionable degree of patriotism, devoid of any substantial significance.

Comparatively, the matter of career- and financial-based motivations was much more straightforward, though there was a relation between career- and financial-based motivations and the social-based motivations. The career- and financial-based motivations of Van der Mark were influenced by his familial relations. The other four seamen had no family members who were financially dependent on them. Consequently, their familial ties did not influence their financial motivations, showing the importance of their individual backgrounds in the study of their motivations. Furthermore, the topic of career advancement only really applied to the younger people in officer functions who had a lot of room for career development in a relatively short period of time. This specifically was reflected in the cases of Kroesen and the short biographies of the seafarers who had graduated from the *Amsterdam Kweekschool voor de Zeevaart*. As this thesis simply studied too few people with such a large variety of backgrounds and results, no conclusive result can be given that indicates a more wide-ranging sentiment with any certainty.

As evidenced by the chapter on social-based motivations, familial ties are likely to have been the most important motivator for the Dutch merchant seamen. The exact circumstances the direct family was in were of comparatively smaller significance, though there was a marked difference between the sailors who could visit their partner and children during the war and those who could not visit their spouse and children. Especially those who could not visit their family experienced more fear during the war, but both sides were largely equally motivated, as the direct family was often still in danger, even if the place they lived in was not occupied by Axis-aligned forces. Secondly, the chapter on social-based motivations also delved into comparatively smaller factors that all played a role in either alleviating stress or simply making the living circumstances aboard the merchant vessels more bearable for the seafarers, which might not have directly motivated the sailors but made it possible for many to go on.

Evidenced by this thesis, a lot of information regarding the true motivations of seafarers has been disregarded in extant historiography, leading to wrong or inaccurate

conclusions. Patriotism, the motivation that was deemed to be most important in extant historiography, was not the most important motivator in the Dutch case, just as in Norway, as argued by Rosendahl. Monetary compensation, mentioned as a motivation by Rosendahl, did not seem to affect any of the investigated seamen, though whether these five were the exception or the rule is unclear, as there is evidence of striking sailors who were active on Dutch merchant ships due to dissatisfaction with the wages. Career advancement, a motivation which was entirely disregarded in historiography, affected the motivation of people who had the option to advance their careers. Lastly, the social-based motivations, which have been minimised in their role on the sailors' motivation, have turned out to have played the largest role. Additional research on this topic would be of benefit, especially for states and shipping companies, to learn how they should motivate seamen in the case that a situation similar to the Second World War happens again.

As a conclusion to this thesis, regarding the primary question of what motivated the seafarers, the primary answer would be family. Patriotism is secondary, and financial and career-based motivations only seemed to have affected the motivation of a comparatively smaller group, but played a large overall supporting role to the family-based motivations. Based on this research, there seems to be a clear link between the seamen's backgrounds and their individual motivations. Further study on this topic could bring to light how exactly background influenced sailors of all levels aboard the ships, though this would need a study of far more seafarers than the five people studied for this thesis.

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