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«The Rhine in Ruins»
The consequences of World War II for the Rhine shipping between the Netherlands and Germany, 1945 to 1957

ABSTRACT:
When the guns fell silent in Europe after the Third Reich’s unconditional surrender in May 1945, the Netherlands was confronted with the fact that Germany, its most important trading partner since the late 19th century, was in ruins. In the pre-war trade relations between the two countries, Rhine shipping and transit via Rotterdam had played an important role. After the Second World War, however, this was out of the question. Not only was Germany and especially its infrastructure in ruins, it was also occupied by the victorious Allies, whose strict autarkic policy was harmful to surrounding countries, especially to the Netherlands. Much has been written on the Allied occupation of Germany, but far less on the consequences of this policy for Germany’s neighbours. The British and Americans did everything in their power to prevent the costs of the occupation getting out of control. This meant, for example, that Dutch sea ports and Dutch Rhine shipping were discriminated against in favour of their German competitors. Dutch Rhine ships were not allowed to enter Germany, although this was a violation of the Convention of Mannheim of 1868. This article therefore focuses on the consequences of the Allied occupation policy on Dutch Rhine shipping and the continuation of this policy by the Federal Republic of Germany after 1949. It also explains why, after years of denying the Dutch Rhine fleet to enter German waterways freely, from May 1956 on Bonn suddenly changed its policy.

Introduction

The Rhine with all its tributaries is the pivot on which contemporary Europe hinges. Thus Karel Paul van der Mandele, President of the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce in the economic weekly «Economisch-Statistische Berichten» in 1953. His comment could not have been more to the point as far as the Dutch economy before World War II was concerned. Rotterdam and the Rhine played a central role in the transit of goods to and from the German hinterland, especially to the industrial area of the Ruhr. Via Rotterdam, this industrial centre was supplied with raw materials like ores, foodstuffs, wood etc. At the same time, this important waterway supplied the Netherlands and the rest of the world with coals, chemicals, iron and steel from the Ruhr area. The Netherlands had a dominant position in international Rhine traffic. Before the war, the Rhine traffic provided 48 per cent of the active balances of services of the Netherlands.

1 The author would like to thank Jan-Otmar Hesse and the anonymous referees for their comments on an earlier version of this article.
Rotterdam was and to a certain extent still is the natural outlet for Rhine traffic. Its geographic and strategic position at the estuary of the Rhine, Scheldt and Meuse, meant that Rotterdam and the Netherlands were vital for the German hinterland. The Dutch played a dominant role in the transit of bulk goods in Rhine traffic and inland shipping. Before World War II, 80 per cent of the transit trade — forming three-quarters of the total — that passed through Rotterdam was destined for or came from the German market. Rotterdam played an important role in the development of the Ruhr area, and it was the same the other way around. «The Rhine and its canals and tributaries became the natural hinterland of Rotterdam», as Renate Laspeyres wrote in her 1969-study on Rotterdam and the Ruhr area.

During and immediately after World War II, Dutch politicians and businessmen acknowledged the importance of Rhine shipping to the Netherlands. In a note dated 27 February 1947, the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce stated that the Dutch economy «is for an important part built on the transit of goods, predominantly via the Rhine, to and from Middle-Europe». As the geographer Frederick Morgan wrote in 1948: «The lower and middle Rhine and the Ruhr provided the bulk of the traffic of Rotterdam so that prosperity fluctuated closely in accordance with output of coal and consumption of ore in Germany». Rhine shipping therefore constituted a significant part of the Dutch-German economic relations. However, the monetary problems after 1931 and the Nazi autarkic policy as of 1933 partly destroyed this system. Rhine traffic from the Netherlands to Germany and vice versa halved between 1929 and 1936. World War II, the German occupation of the Netherlands and the Allied blockade only aggravated this development. After the annihilation of Nazi Germany, the Netherlands was keen to restore Rhine traffic and its connections with the German hinterland as soon as possible.

But from May 1945, The Hague was dependent on the policy of London and especially Washington and the American headquarters in Germany, and was unable to form an independent policy for Dutch interests in Rhine shipping. In this article, the prob-
lems in Dutch Rhine shipping and the extent of Dutch participation in Rhine traffic during the first twelve years after World War II are analysed.\(^{13}\) It also focuses on the consequences of Allied policy on Dutch Rhine shipping. Whereas much has been written on the occupation of Germany itself, little has been published on its consequences to Germany’s neighboring countries, especially on its small neighbours in the West, who dearly felt the results of the Allied occupation of Germany and had to deal with them one way or another.

At the same time, however, domestic events and interests also played an important part in the formulation of Dutch policy on the Rhine question. Dutch business and the government did not always agree on the course to be followed. A significant body of literature exists on how economic foreign policy is driven by business interests. According to liberal theory, «states act instrumentally in world politics to achieve particular goals on behalf of individuals».\(^{14}\) To that can be added: to defend the interests of business. James D. Fearon has stated that domestic politics is «typically a crucial part of the explanation for states’ foreign policies»,\(^{15}\) whereas Robert D. Putnam has claimed that domestic cleavage – as was the case in the Netherlands – may actually foster international cooperation.\(^{16}\) Was Dutch policy driven by business interests or did other factors play a significant role as well?\(^{17}\)

Dutch Rhine shipping before World War II

Prior to the outbreak of war in 1939, Dutch Rhine shipping had been an important asset on the current account.\(^{18}\) 80 per cent of all traffic carried by Dutch Rhine vessels was destined for Germany.\(^{19}\) The rapid industrialisation in the Ruhr in the 19th century had had a resounding effect on the growth of Rotterdam as a transit port for the Ger-

\(^{13}\) In this article, the role in transit of goods from the Dutch seaports to the German hinterland by the Dutch railways is left out, as only 20 per cent of the goods went via the railways. In Germany, it was more or less 50:50. B. J. Udink, De economisch-politieke verhouding tussen de Duitse en Nederlandse zeehavens, in: Internationale Spectator 12 (1957), 507-528, here 511; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, Maandstatistiek van verkeer en vervoer 1945-1955, Utrecht 1947-1956; A. Linden, Kohle und Rheinschifffahrt, in: Verein zur Wahrung der Rheinschiffahrtsinteressen e. V. (ed.), 75 Jahre Verein zur Wahrung der Rheinschiffahrtsinteressen e. V., Duisburg 1952, 34-36, here 34.


\(^{17}\) For more recent studies on the issue of economic foreign policy being driven by business interests see: Michael Cox/Doug Stokes, US Foreign Policy (Oxford 2012), Chapters 1, 7 and 17; Sean D. Ehrlich, Access to Protection: Domestic Institutions and Trade Policy in Democracies, in: International Organization 3 (Summer 2007) 571-605; Erik Gartzke, Preferences and the Democratic Peace, in: International Studies Quarterly 2 (June 2000), 191-212.


\(^{19}\) Klemann, Nederland 1938-1948 (cf. n. 3), 356; Aide Memoire president Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce, 19 August 1949, in: NL-HaNA, KvK Rotterdam/Secretariaat, 3.17.17.04, inv. no. 2179.
man hinterland.\textsuperscript{20} For example, between 1904 and 1913 the supply of coal from Germany to Rotterdam increased by over 700 per cent.\textsuperscript{21} Before 1939, more than half of the trade between the Ruhr and foreign countries was conducted by river and canal, and of this some 90 per cent was with the Low Countries, i.e. mostly the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{22} It gave the Dutch Rhine fleet a dominant position in Rhine traffic, especially on German rivers and canals. Ships under Dutch flag were by far in the majority on the Lower Rhine, especially in Ruhr ports such as Duisburg-Ruhrort and Düsseldorf, while German ships were in the majority on the Middle and Upper Rhine.\textsuperscript{23} Ships under Dutch flag also dominated from the German border towards the seaports in the Rhine estuary, further reinforcing the earlier observations on the importance of the Ruhr to Germany, and the importance of the Netherlands to the Ruhr. The Dutch Rhine fleet was as big as the combined fleets of Switzerland, Belgium and France, although it should be noted that the French had not been active in Rhine shipping until after World War I. The Dutch Rhine fleet participated on a large scale in the Rhine traffic between German inland ports as well as on the German canals.\textsuperscript{24} In 1937, ships under Dutch flag made up approximately 33 per cent of the German inland shipping,\textsuperscript{25} and carried between 55 and 62 per cent of the total goods passing at Emmerich in the years 1936 to 1939.\textsuperscript{26}

Nevertheless, in the 30s the Dutch Rhine shipping had a number of weaknesses. Although its fleet was almost as large as all other Rhine bank states combined, and in some exceptional years even made up more than 50 per cent of the total European Rhine fleet, its size was disproportionate to national transport needs.\textsuperscript{27} As a result of this, the Dutch fleet was employed only in transit traffic, i.e. service to the German loaders and recipients. Added to this was the fact that Dutch Rhine shipping consisted mainly of private skippers, who usually owned only one ship, which they exploited personally. Dutch Rhine skippers were therefore only called upon when the shipping capacity of large shipping companies – often subsidiaries of large steel or coal concerns – was insufficient.\textsuperscript{28}


\textsuperscript{21} Paul van de Laar, Stad van formaat. Geschiedenis van Rotterdam in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw, Zwolle 2000, 105.

\textsuperscript{22} Norman J. G. Pounds, The Ruhr. A Study in Historical and Economic Geography, Blooming ton 1952, 207.

\textsuperscript{23} Jahres-Bericht der Zentral-Kommission für die Rheinschiffahrt 1922, 117.

\textsuperscript{24} Letter Ministry of Transport and Public Works to Minister Johan Ringers, about compensation for the damage done to the Dutch Rhine fleet, 18 July 1945, in: NA, Archief van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (BuZA), Londens Archief en daarmee samenhangende archieven, 1940-1945, access code 2.05.80, inv. no. 2795.

\textsuperscript{25} Henk van der Hoeven, De Rijnvaartakten en de cabotage, Utrecht 1956, 2.


\textsuperscript{27} Alfons Schmitt, Die Liberalisierung des innerdeutschen Wasserstraßenverkehrs insbesondere auf dem Rhein unter verkehrspolitischen Gesichtspunkten, Duisburg 1954, 29.

After 1936, however, the rearmament of Germany resulted in a strong upsurge of the economy and the Dutch Rhine fleet was able to retake its dominant pre-1929 position.\textsuperscript{29} The recovery was not quite complete before the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 put an end to it again.\textsuperscript{30} Rotterdam immediately felt the consequences of the hostilities. Great Britain and France blockaded the neutral Dutch ports and started checking ships for contraband, which they interpreted in the strictest manner, even confiscating cinnamon and nutmeg. The number of sea ships entering Rotterdam dropped alarmingly, while ships under German flag were absent after 1 September 1939.\textsuperscript{31} In 1940, the total tonnage of sea-going vessels entering the Netherlands decreased by 90 per cent when compared to the already low activity in 1939. This relapse was a little higher in Rotterdam than in the country as a whole. From 1940 on, the normally unimportant port of Delfzijl became the most important Dutch port as a result of supplies of wood and ores from Sweden.\textsuperscript{32} The invasion of the Netherlands in May 1940 and the subsequent German occupation brought further damage to the Dutch ports and Rhine shipping. Between 1940 and 1945, the Dutch seaports hardly functioned. In September 1944, moreover, the Germans inflicted extensive damage to the ports of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, in order to prevent them from falling undamaged into Allied hands, as the port of Antwerp had. Hitler personally ordered these measures on 18 September 1944.\textsuperscript{33}

After the liberation in May 1945, the future for the port of Rotterdam and Dutch Rhine shipping looked bleak. About half of the Dutch Rhine fleet had been destroyed or confiscated during the war,\textsuperscript{34} although around 40 per cent of the remaining fleet was in service again by November 1945.\textsuperscript{35} The port of Rotterdam had been almost totally destroyed during the war and lay in ruins. 45 per cent of the harbour hangars, 15 per cent of the cooling and warehouses and 40 per cent of the quay walls had been destroyed. Many (floating) cranes, loading bridges, and almost all docks and tank storage for mineral and edible oils had been lost. The entrances and shipping routes to both the ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam were blocked by sunken shipping docks\textsuperscript{36} and the waterways to and from the city were blocked by mines, shipwrecks and bridges.\textsuperscript{37} Moreover: «The whole Rhine, from Basel to Emmerich, is one big ruin of blown bridges, distorted steel constructions, wrecks and debris, on which all shipping has become impossible».\textsuperscript{38} When

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{29} Wemelsfelder, \textit{Het herstel van de Duits-Nederlandse economische betrekkingen} (cf. n. 18), 116.
\textsuperscript{30} Klemann, \textit{Tussen Reich en Empire} (cf. n. 5), 263.
\textsuperscript{31} Broksma, \textit{Havens, kranen, dokken en veren} (cf. n. 20), 189.
\textsuperscript{32} Klemann, \textit{Nederland 1938-1948} (cf. n. 3), 352.
\textsuperscript{34} Pfeiffer, \textit{Strukturwandlungen} (cf. n. 18), 25.
\textsuperscript{36} Klemann, \textit{Nederland 1938-1948} (cf. n. 3), 355.
\textsuperscript{37} Broksma, \textit{Havens, kranen, dokken en veren} (cf. n. 20), 214.
\end{flushleft}
the Third Reich surrendered unconditionally, only one bridge across the Rhine was left intact.39 953 bridges had been destroyed and 2,951 shipwrecks blocked the river and its ports.40 Extensive as the damage to the waterways was, it was relatively easy to repair. After access to the Dutch seaports had been cleared, ships became available to restore the connections to the hinterland. Access to the Ruhr had already been cleared by 6 September 1945. On that same day, the first Rhine barges left from Ruhrort for Rotterdam,41 but the German hinterland was in a disastrous state, and everyone assumed that it would take years for it to fully recover.42 Perhaps the biggest problem, however, was the Allied occupation policy.

The Allies discriminate against Dutch seaports

Allied trade policy and the destruction of German infrastructure by the Allied bombing campaign greatly worried and with regards to the former irritated Dutch politicians and businessmen. It soon became obvious that Allied policy would have serious repercussions on trade with Germany, which would hamper the recovery of the Netherlands and the repair of the damage in the Dutch seaports and Rhine shipping.

Dutch ships had no access to the internal German waterways, nor were they treated on the basis of complete equality with German ships. The economic recovery of the Netherlands, Rotterdam and Rhine shipping would be best served by the swift recovery of its important neighbour.43 The Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs had found «much to its dismay» that the economic disruption of the Netherlands, «started by the damage and wholesale looting inflicted by the Germans», was unconsciously being completed by Allied policy towards Germany and «the disruptive results of the war for the Netherlands are being intensified in no uncertain manner, and the Netherlands is in danger of becoming the sore spot of a reviving Europe».44 According to the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce, the position of Rotterdam had «never been as precarious as it is today».45

Much of this was caused by the fact that the recovery of Rotterdam as a transit port to the German hinterland was temporarily out of the question.46 The British and particularly the American occupation authorities persisted in using the German seaports instead of Rotterdam. This was probably for reasons of employment and foreign exchange reasons, but also because Allied policy on Germany was not yet clear and they disagreed on a number of questions relating to Germany’s future. They also discrimi-
nated against Dutch seaports. In the first post-war years, the Western Allies strove to manage their assets as economically as possible, i.e. at as little cost as possible. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs therefore even suggested paying part of the British and American occupation costs. It stated that it might be wise to send 3,000 men to join the occupation forces, as this would lighten the load of the American and British occupation authorities. Dutch claims, such as to direct goods traffic via Rotterdam, to be allowed to provide services on the upper Rhine and to import goods from Germany, would then stand a better chance with the Allies. The Hague fiercely opposed the discrimination of the Dutch North Sea ports, but there was little it could do to change Allied policy. The Western Allies resorted to a policy of autarky. This was extremely disadvantageous for Dutch shipping, which was, once again, pressed into a reserve role.

The Allies carried the (financial) burden for the occupation in Germany. Suggestions to provide port services as counter transactions, for coal for example, were not accepted. Coals – which had made up a large percentage of pre-war goods transferred in Rotterdam – could be sold everywhere, and Hamburg excellently served this purpose. The Allies choose to have goods supplied via Hamburg, Bremen and Emden, as this saved port and storage costs. Only 0.1 per cent of German exports via Hamburg was provided for by Dutch ships; American and British ships transported seventy per cent. The British and Americans supplied the same percentage of the goods unloaded in Hamburg, whereas the Dutch percentage stood at a mere 0.3 per cent.

The Americans in fact continued the 19th and 20th century German tradition of supporting German harbours with special subsidies for the railways, which made transport via Dutch ports all but impossible. Transport of certain products on the national German railways to and from German harbours received special railroad freight rates, the so-called Seefahenausnahmetarife, making it relatively cheap to transport an important number of products from the Ruhr to Hamburg and Bremen. These subsidies were aimed at diverting specific traffic along certain routes to the German seaports, thereby reducing Germany’s dependence on foreign seaports, but it also strengthened the competitiveness of the German ports. It aided their economic development. In 1945, the goal of these subsidies was to ship goods via Bremen and Hamburg and not via Dutch ports. Shipping via Rotterdam and Amsterdam would require Germany to use foreign steenkolenhandel van Rotterdam, Groningen 1946, 273 and 276; website Rotterdam-Antwerp 1880-2000. Database on cargo flows in the port of Rotterdam; http://oldwww.fhk.eur.nl/ws/eu/sheets.html, sheet 7: Throughput (all sea-borne cargo) 1919-1995 [last access 12 February 2009].

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs [hereafter BuZa], Map 583, code 912.231.
currency, which it did not have. This meant Great Britain and the United States would have to pay, which they had absolutely no intention of doing.

Another important factor that added to Rotterdam’s and as a consequence Dutch Rhine skippers’ woes, was the much-reduced activity in the Ruhr area. After the capitulation of the Third Reich, German mining had all but stopped and the Ruhr area, as yet, did not need ores. The part of the transport that had once gone via Rotterdam had come to a complete standstill. Had the Ruhr been active, it would have been impossible to ignore Rotterdam, as the German ports did not have the capacity to support the Ruhr. The Rhine was its natural transport route and, as such, remained the cheapest. Just before and after World War II, however, Germany lacked the necessary assets. Some Germans even accused the British to be short-sighted about using the port of Rotterdam, especially during the severe winter of 1946-1947. Heinrich Lübke, Minister of Food and Agriculture of the Land North Rhine-Westphalia, stated foodstuffs could have been supplied much quicker via Rotterdam and the Rhine than via rail from Emden and Hamburg.52

The breakthrough came in 1948 with the start of Marshall Aid and the German monetary reconstruction initiated in April that year. The Ruhr area simply could not do without the Dutch seaports, given the limited capacity of the German ports and Antwerp and the poor railway connections to the hinterland. For bulk goods like coal and ores, the Rhine and the Rhine ports were indispensable to the Ruhr. Rotterdam flourished from 1949 onwards, mainly because the German hinterland recovered faster than anyone had thought possible.54 In 1949, the port on the Maas overtook Antwerp for the first time since the Second World War, with 20.7 mn tons versus 19.8 mn tons.55 This was mainly the result of the recovery of industry in the Ruhr area on which Rotterdam had always been concentrated. In short, Rotterdam was retaking its position as the Ruhr’s and Germany’s most important port. As the Dutch economic weekly «Economisch-Statistische Berichten» noted in 1956: «The high level of industrial production, coupled with the increasing prosperity in the whole of Western Europe and certainly in Germany, is reflected in the higher import and export of manufactured and consumption goods. Moreover, it strongly increased the demand for raw materials.»56

The fact that the growth of Rotterdam was primarily a result of the increased production in the Ruhr area, and not of a noticeable change in Allied policy, was also noted by the Secretary of the Commissie Scheepvaartbelangen – Dutch Commission of Shipping Interests – H. Gaerlandt. In December 1949, he wrote: «The improvement of transit through Rotterdam was more a consequence of the increased coal exports from the Ruhr which forced the use of Western ports, rather than of a change of the original [Allied] point of view».57

53 Klemann, Tussen Reich en Empire (cf. n. 5), 277; Klemann, Nederland 1938-1948 (cf. n. 3), 356f.
54 After 1950, the transfer of goods would increase by 10 per cent annually. In 1963, Rotterdam reached the status of biggest port in the world. See Van de Laar, Stad van formaat (cf. n. 21), 512.
56 Nederlandse zeehaven, in: ESB, 18 April 1956, 357-358, here 357.
57 Note H. Gaerlandt, 7 December 1949, in: NA, 3.17.17.04, inv. no. 2179.
Dutch Rhine shipping barred from Germany

However, Dutch participation in the shipment of goods on the Rhine and on the internal German waterways did not do better. In the wake of Rotterdam’s decline in the first postwar years, it too had been cut off from normal Dutch-German economic relations.58 Table 1 below shows that a unique situation had developed in the Rhine traffic between the Netherlands and Germany in 1938 and 1939. There had been an almost total balance between upstream and downstream traffic. This was caused by the fact that the Ruhr area exported enormous quantities of coals and endlessly imported ores, mine wood and grain.

This balance was totally distorted after World War II and was never to return again. There is an obvious explanation for this in the first post-war years, as the German economy was in a state of ruin and subsequent Allied policy discriminated against Dutch Rhine shipping. Both upstream and downstream traffic across the Dutch-German border at Lobith (Emmerich) had almost completely come to a standstill in 1945. At the most, the total tonnage only reached half the 1938-level in 1950. Dutch Rhine shipping was indeed badly hurt after the war, both by German actions and by Allied policy. The American and British occupation authorities gave priority to the German fleet for the internal traffic on the waterways of the Rhine,59 which contravened the regulations for Rhine traffic that had been in force since 1815.60 Occasionally, when there was a shortage of German shipping space, were permits given to use foreign tonnage.61 As with port activity, the British and American occupation authorities advocated using the German fleet and excluding foreign shipping from internal German waterways for reasons of employment and foreign exchange.62 The United States was prepared to accept goods and services from the Netherlands, provided they accepted Reichsmarks. Washington only wanted to export to the Netherlands if the Dutch paid in dollars. Foreign ships were only to be called upon if German ships were unavailable. In practice, however, this was highly unlikely, as Europe as well as Germany faced an enormous overcapacity and there were more than enough German ships.63 As a result of this, it was almost impossible for Dutch skippers to transport goods via the (German) Rhine. Traffic crossing the borders was obstructed by Allied currency measures that made it extremely unfavourable for German suppliers to use foreign ships.64

The Dutch government and business felt that the principle of a Rhine freely accessible to all nations had to be maintained. Or, as the Nederlandse Rijnvaart Missie (Netherlands Rhine Shipping Mission) stated in July 1946, «every limiting measure by a foreign government always threatens Dutch Rhine shipping, as the Netherlands has

58 Klemann, Nederland 1938-1948 (cf. n. 3), 356.
60 Moquette, Van BEP tot BEB (cf. n. 47), 263.
61 Van der Hoeven, De Rijnvaartakten en de cabotage (cf. n. 25), 5.
64 Van Baalen, Spitzen kleurloze minister (cf. n. 28), 79.
Table 1: Tonnage passing the Dutch-German border at Lobith (Emmerich) in mn tons, 1938 to 1950 (1938 = 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Downstream</th>
<th>Upstream</th>
<th>Total tonnage</th>
<th>Balance: Downstream transport in per cent of upstream transport</th>
<th>Downstream (Index)</th>
<th>Upstream (Index)</th>
<th>Total (Index)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>101.4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>108.4</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>400.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>231.8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>136.1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>157.1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>157.3</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>154.5</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

relatively few of their own goods on the Rhine. Dutch navigation on the Rhine benefits most when business has free access to occupied Germany».65 This was completely in line with the Convention of Mannheim of 1868, which guaranteed free shipping on the Rhine. In a furious report, the Dutch (diplomatic) post in Wiesbaden wrote that the systematic exclusion of the Dutch fleet was «a flagrant contradiction of the right to free shipping on the Rhine».66

Dutch appeals come to nothing

As with almost all matters of concern to the Netherlands with regard to its political and economic relations with Germany, Dutch appeals fell on deaf ears with the Americans and British.67 The Allies rejected these demands, mostly as they needed to keep an eye on the German balance of payment. Before the war, Dutch barges had been active in Central and Eastern Europe. Dutch (and German) internal shipping was hard hit by the German partition, which made it increasingly difficult to trade with these parts of the continent. As a consequence of this, almost half the Dutch Rhine fleet lay idle in 1950 and unemployment was high in both the Dutch and German fleets.68 Internal competition between Dutch private skippers and shipping companies, the loss of a large part of its hinterland as a result of the German partition and the discriminatory policy of Western Allies, kept the development of Dutch Rhine shipping disappointingly low. Even the Marshall Aid, though promising a better future, did not provide a solution for the problems in Dutch services.69

It is not surprising therefore, that the Dutch were appalled by the Allied policy. The Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce reacted furiously. On 15 August 1949, when the Federal Republic of Germany was only a few months old, the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce sent a telegram to the Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine in Strasbourg in which it stated that Bonn’s policy was a «flagrant violation of the character and spirit of the Act of Mannheim».70 In a letter to the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, D. U. Stikker, the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce wrote that it could not get rid of the impression that, despite all negotiations and promises, «West Germany is systematically undermining the Dutch position in Rhine traffic».71 In a letter to the members of the Commissie Scheepvaartbelangen (Commission of Shipping Interests) of 3 October 1949, it wrote that «our country has always fared the best on the compass of

66 Overzicht van de werkzaamheden van den Post Wiesbaden gedurende het eerste levens-jaar van de Nederlandsche Rijnvaart Missie, 5 July 1946, in: NA, Rijnvaart Missie, 2.16.43, inv. no. 112.
69 Wemelsfelder, Het herstel van de Duits-Nederlandse economische betrekkingen (cf. n. 18), 122.
70 Letter Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce to Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Stikker, 18 August 1949, in: NL-HaNa, KvK Rotterdam/Secretariaat, 3.17.17.04, inv. no. 2179.
71 Ibid.
unlimited free shipping; it should never drop this principle». Gaerlandt, the Secretary of the Commission of Shipping Interests, understandably agreed: «It is clear, that this composition of rules is of obvious disadvantage to the Dutch Rhine fleet with regard to Germany. With these regulations the German authorities can make or break Dutch Rhine shipping as they please.» The Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce even requested that the Dutch borders be closed to German Rhine skippers.

The Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce constantly tried to influence the Dutch government to do more on behalf of the Dutch Rhine shipping sector. As such, it tried to set the agenda. Already in January 1947, the Secretary-General of the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce, Franz Lichtenauer, urged the Dutch government to do everything in its power to restore the Netherlands as the middle-man at the mouth of the Rhine. According to the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce, the Dutch government did not defend Dutch Rhine shipping interests well enough. For example, it stated that the government had stabbed the Dutch Rhine shipping in the back on numerous occasions. The earlier mentioned Van der Mandele urged the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs to protect the Dutch interests in Rhine shipping more powerfully. It was not that the Dutch government had no intention of doing this. However, it also had to take into account other interests, especially when it came to high politics. On that matter Bonn’s small Western neighbour was only a little partner. Bonn gave priority to its relations with the occupying powers, including France, and to the attempt to regain its independence. The Dutch government had a better eye for this than those with an interest in Rhine shipping, who thought that its interests should be better looked after. Dutch business thought its interests were the only important matter in the Dutch-German relations. But international politics in fact played an important role as well.

Freedom on internal German waterways?

The biggest stumbling block in the negotiations between the Netherlands and the young Federal German Republic was the Convention of Mannheim (1868), which guaranteed the freedom of Rhine shipping, that all ships and skippers were to be treated equally and to be exempted from taxes that had previously been levied on ship-

72 Letter Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce to members of the Commissie Scheepvaartbelangen, 3 October 1949, in: NL-HaNa, KvK Rotterdam/Secretariaat, 3.17.17.04, inv. no. 2179.
73 Note H. Gaerlandt, Secretary of the Commissie Scheepvaartbelangen, Rijnvaart, 7 December 1949, in: NL-HaNa, KvK Rotterdam/Secretariaat, 3.17.17.04, inv. no. 2179.
The Dutch and the Germans, however, interpreted this differently. According to the latter, this freedom only related to ships crossing the border, whereas national regulations were to be maintained for internal German traffic. Bonn only accepted the Convention of Mannheim for international traffic, which was a new and very unusual interpretation of an old international treaty. The Hague, on the other hand, demanded free participation, as this had been the interpretation previously.

Although the Dutch border had been opened to German vessels, full Dutch participation in German internal traffic had as yet been anything but realised. The Germans still felt that Dutch vessels should only be considered when no German crafts were available. As a result of this, the Dutch fleet remained almost entirely excluded from the German waterways. As the Dutch Rhine fleet could not find enough work within the Netherlands or in cross-border traffic, this issue became one of the most difficult problems in Dutch-German relations. To the Netherlands, the protectionist control of navigation on the Rhine and other German waterways entrusted to the German authorities by the Allies was unacceptable. The Dutch government advocated altering the regulations so that «once again the Netherlands fleet would have equal opportunity to participate in both German internal and international traffic [...] The result of this principle of freedom is a pre-condition for future co-operation in this field».

Generally speaking, there were two ways in which the Dutch government could try to break the stalemate: a legal one, in which The Hague would only be satisfied with total freedom of Rhine shipping, or a more pragmatic one in which a compromise was to be achieved through negotiations. In reality, no clear choice was made by the Dutch government. In Dutch business circles though, the opinions were clear: freedom of Rhine shipping had to be total. The Dutch cabinet’s point of view was not as pronounced. It switched between a legal and pragmatic stance. At the end of 1951, the Dutch and German Ministers of Transport met to discuss the Rhine problem. On 14 December, the Dutch Minister of Transport and Public Works, H. H. Wemmers, and his German colleague H.-Chr. Seebohm, signed the Bremer Protokoll, which stated that a joint commission would discuss the conditions and extent to which ships sailing under Dutch colours would be allowed to participate in the internal German transport. Little more than two months later, however, the negotiations were on the verge of collapse, as the Germans accused the Dutch of not sticking to the protocol. The Dutch Minis-
try of Foreign Affairs noted that 1951 had been a disappointing year for the Rhine problem and the application of the Convention of Mannheim had once again left much to be desired.87

When the German government did not change its opinion and still maintained that asset regulations were not contradictory to the Convention of Mannheim,88 the Dutch sent Bonn a sharp note in July 1953, in which it once again protested against Germany’s interpretation of the Convention of Mannheim.89 When the reaction from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs came on 27 October 1953, it was crystal clear: «Formal treaty regulations do not justify Dutch steps. A decision to alter the limits on the participation of non-German flags in the internal German traffic on the Rhine, however, is not based on currency considerations, but an unavoidable consideration of traffic policy – Verkehrspolitik. The Bundesrepublik has made this clear on numerous occasions».90 West Germany, however, wanted to avoid an international court battle on the question of the interpretation of freedom in the Convention of Mannheim.91 It would probably have lost such a legal battle. Both sides were in fact deadlocked.

The Dutch government was unable to achieve anything substantial in its negotiations with the German Republic, which simply continued the Allied policy. The Federal German government also appealed to the argument of its limited assets, though from the early 50s onwards, internal traffic arrangements became an increasingly important argument as well.92 The basis for the policy followed by Bonn had, to a great extent, been laid by the Allies before the formation of the Federal German Republic. Bonn simply continued using the monetary argument, even though this was no longer necessary.93 The Dutch were denied free access to the internal German traffic or innerdeutscher Verkehr. Initially, Bonn referred to its unfavourable economic and financial position, and stated that Germany could not afford to put any currency at its disposal for foreign ships using internal German transport. Using the currency argument was, according to the German Bundeskanzler and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Konrad Adenauer, the easiest way to prevent foreign countries from penetrating internal German shipping.94

88 Talks Algera and Seebohm, 21–22 January Baden-Baden, in: NL-HaNA, Kvk Rotterdam/Secretariaat, 3.17.17.04, inv. no. 1693; Seebohm also stated that traffic considerations were of much importance to the Federal government, too: the existing arrangement of traffic would be harmed if Dutch shipping were to be allowed freely on the German waterways.
89 Wielenga, West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak (cf.n. 81), 255.
93 Wielenga, West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak (cf.n. 81), 258.
Rhine traffic plummeted

After World War II, there was a large surplus of shipping capacity in Western Europe. Total tonnage had dropped as there was less cargo on offer, especially from Germany where the Ruhr area was in ruins.95 When the industry in Germany’s and in fact Europe’s industrial heartland slowly started to recuperate as of 1948, it still exported very little coal compared to the pre-war situation. Before the onset of hostilities in 1939, most German coal had been exported via the Rhine, mainly through Rotterdam. Coal from the Ruhr was vital for Europe. By early 1945, the United States, Great Britain, Russia and France recognised that Europe was, to a large extent, dependent on German coal.96 But as the Ruhr area had practically ceased to function, export of Ruhr coal had dried up. This left its mark on Rhine shipping. The section between Duisburg-Rotterdam decreased sharply after World War II when measured in tonnes kilometres (t-km). 13.3 bn of the 25 bn t-km on the Rhine in 1937 were shipped between Duisburg and Rotterdam, 53 per cent of the total. By 1948, this had dropped to 40 per cent (10.15 bn t-km), or only 26 per cent of the 1937-figure. In that year, 7.4 bn t-km were shipped downstream between Duisburg and Rotterdam and 5.9 bn upstream. This amount had dropped to 2.07 bn and 1.42 t-km respectively by 1948.97

From 1939 on, the export of coal overseas came to an almost complete stop. Whereas between 1936 and 1938 the export of Ruhr coals via Emmerich amounted to between 17 and 24 mn tons, by 1948 this had dropped to only 6.5 mn tons.98 Ruhr coal had been exported in large quantities to Brazil and Argentina in the interwar period, but was completely crowded out by US-coal later on. The decline had a lot to do with supply and production problems in Germany. The Germans failed to bring their coal on the market. After the war, moreover, coal never became as important as it had been before 1940.99 At the end of the 40s, the importance of ores and coal had decreased significantly.100 Oil was the future energy source. It was abundant, and, above all, cheaper than coal. As Daniel Yergin puts it: «King Coal held on to his throne through the first half of the twentieth century. Yet he could not resist, he could not stand unmoved, in the face of the great tidal wave of petroleum that surged out of Venezuela and the Middle East and flowed around the planet after World War II».101

In the first years after the war, mine workers in Germany were so underfed that production suffered. Modernisation was limited after overuse in the Third Reich and there were not enough houses for mine workers.102 They went absent on a regular basis; even

97 Nordrhein-Westfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf [hereafter HStAD], NW-22, Staatskanzlei, NW 22-966; Zeitschrift für Binnenschifffahrt, May 1949.
98 Ibid.
100 Klemann, Nederland 1938-1948 (cf. n. 3), 359.
when they were given higher rations, they went looking for extra food and other basic necessities in the countryside.\textsuperscript{103} In 1946, total European coal production stood at only 340 mn tons (60 per cent of which was produced in Great Britain\textsuperscript{104}) compared to the 1938-figure of 646 mn tons, or 52.6 per cent.\textsuperscript{105} In 1946 and 1947, the Ruhr produced 50 and 60 mn tons of coal, compared to 127 mn tons in 1938. This amount would never be reached again after World War II.\textsuperscript{106} By 1951, the export of Ruhr coal had dropped by 27.5 per cent compared to 1936; the share of export to the Netherlands had dropped from 20.6 per cent in 1936 to 11.9 per cent of the total quantity of coal exported by the German Federal Republic in 1951.\textsuperscript{107}

The fall of West Germany as a large coal exporting country had serious consequences for Dutch Rhine shipping. The success of Rotterdam as a transit port had rested on the balance between the transport of ores upstream and the transport of coal and related products like cokes downstream. That balance was distorted and many ore transporters returned to Rotterdam empty.\textsuperscript{108} Lack of cargo was a big problem, as the Dutch Rhine fleet was as large as those of the other Rhine nations combined; as a consequence, many Dutch Rhine skippers were out of work.\textsuperscript{109} In the first half of 1950, the situation was so serious, that there was no employment for almost half of the Dutch Rhine fleet.\textsuperscript{110} In 1956, 54 per cent of the ships going from West Germany to the Netherlands were unloaded.

Therefore, the refusal to allow the Dutch Rhine fleet to participate in the internal German transport became one of the biggest obstacles to normalising Dutch-German Rhine navigation relations.\textsuperscript{111} As Table 2 shows, the total tonnage of Dutch ships passing Emmerich dropped significantly, as did those of the other Rhine shore states. Although Dutch barges still accounted for more than half of the total tonnage that passed at Emmerich, it lagged far behind the 1938-figure.\textsuperscript{112} Although the five mn tons in 1947 still amounted to almost 63 per cent of the total, Dutch tonnage would never again reach this pre-war level after World War II. This was also because the Ruhr produced less coal and oil became more important in the European economy. The German share

\textsuperscript{103} Martijn Lak, Stunde Null. Zonder Duitsland geen Nederlands herstel, in: De Academische Boekengids (November 2007), 13-15, here 14; Werner Abelshauser, Der Ruhrkohlenbergbau seit 1945, Munich 1984, 30.

\textsuperscript{104} Peter R. Odell, Oil and World Power: A Geographical Interpretation, Hammondsworth 1970, 95.

\textsuperscript{105} This is the total of the coal production of the main coal producers in Europe: Great Britain, Germany, Soviet Russia, France, Poland and Belgium. Erik Buyt/Piotr Franaszek, Sectoral developments, 1914-1945, in: Stephen Broadberry/Kevin O’Rourke (eds.), The Cambridge Economic History of Europe. Volume 2, Cambridge 2010, 208-231, here 225, Table 9.6; own calculations.


\textsuperscript{107} Linden, Kohle und Rheinschiffahrt (cf. n. 13), 35.

\textsuperscript{108} Van de Laar, Stad van formaat (cf. n. 21), 514.

\textsuperscript{109} Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), Statistiek van de internationale binnenvaart 1956, Zeist 1958, 86.

\textsuperscript{110} Verseput, Kamer van Koophandel en Fabriken voor Rotterdam 1928-1953 (cf. n. 68).

\textsuperscript{111} Jaarboek van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken 1950/1951, The Hague 1951, 86.

\textsuperscript{112} In 1938, the last pre-war year, it stood at 62 per cent; from 1950 to 1957 it stood at respectively 55.7, 52.7, 53.0, 56.8, 53.4, 50.5, 50.3 and 50.7 per cent. Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft, Deutsche Binnenschiffahrt 1937. Heft 2: Diagramme und Tabelle (Bonn 1958); De kansen voor de Nederlandse Rijnvaart, in: ESB, 18 April 1956, 362-368, here 362.
dropped even more drastically. In 1947, there was almost no German shipping at Emmerich, its share having decreased from 19.2 in 1938 to only 0.3 per cent in 1947.\footnote{\textsuperscript{113}}

Pragmatic policy gains the upper hand

Although Bonn rejected the Dutch claims of free participation on the Rhine, it proposed new negotiations to try to reach an agreement on the share of Dutch shipping on the internal German waterways. The only way for the Netherlands to get a formal, binding decision was to take Germany to court, but The Hague hesitated as, according to the Dutch historian Friso Wielenga, the government was not sure what they would be able to do.\footnote{\textsuperscript{113}}

\begin{table}[h]
\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Dutch & German & Others & Total tonnage & Dutch share in total \\
\hline
1938 & 34 & 10 & 10 & 54 & 62 \\
1939 & 26 & 7 & 9 & 42 & 61 \\
1947 & 5 & 0.3 & 3 & 8 & 63 \\
1948 & 11 & 2 & 5 & 18 & 61 \\
1949 & 13 & 11 & 6 & 30 & 43 \\
1950 & 16 & 6 & 7 & 29 & 55 \\
1951 & 19 & 8 & 9 & 36 & 53 \\
1952 & 19 & 8 & 8 & 35 & 54 \\
1953 & 21 & 8 & 8 & 37 & 57 \\
1954 & 22 & 9 & 10 & 41 & 54 \\
1955 & 25 & 14 & 11 & 50 & 50 \\
1956 & 29 & 17 & 12 & 58 & 50 \\
1957 & 31 & 18 & 13 & 62 & 50 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}
\caption{Inland shipping at Emmerich in million tons per country, and Dutch share in total, 1938, 1939 and 1948 to 1957}
\end{table}

to achieve by this.114 The Netherlands did want arbitration and would probably have won. The question, though, was: What would the country gain from beating its most powerful neighbour and main economic partner in a legal battle that would harm the Dutch-German relations? The Dutch did not have the political power to tell their big neighbour that they just wanted justice to be done. The fact that the Netherlands would not have gained anything from a legal victory was missed by those with economic interests in Rhine shipping. The Hague, however, also had other interests at heart. The German Federal government, too, wanted to avoid a legal battle in front of an international tribunal about the interpretation «freedom» in the Convention of Mannheim.115 A legal battle would have been damaging to Germany, as it wanted to regain its independence and sovereignty. World War II had only just ended and the German Federal government would have had a problem explaining why it was flauting rules of law.

The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs and later Secretary-General of NATO, Joseph Marie Antoine Luns, whose Ministry had never had much confidence in a legal solution, seized the opportunity to take a more pragmatic position on the Rhine problems.116 He and Adenauer had an exchange of views, after which the Germans made the commitment to take steps to reach a satisfying agreement.117 They reached an acceptable compromise in 1954, when they agreed that representatives of Dutch and German business would negotiate about quotas on the Dutch participation in the internal German traffic on the Rhine, as well as on other German rivers and canals. All this would be done in the presence of government observers. Again though, no official agreement was reached. In April 1955, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that it regarded the talks as failed.118 This was against the will of Dutch business representatives, who wanted to continue the negotiations. However, Luns informed the German ambassador in The Hague, Hans Mühlenfeld, that the Dutch cabinet was by now convinced of the uselessness of bilateral negotiations and was no longer interested in continuing.119

Bonn, however, declared that as of 1 May 1956, a considerable relaxation of the rules governing the Dutch participation would come into effect and from that date on, ships sailing under foreign colours would be allowed to participate in internal German shipping under the same conditions as German ships, just as in 1936 when the Nazi regime had asked Dutch Rhine shipping to be more active. The decision was greeted with satisfaction in The Hague.120 The reason for this sudden change of West German policy is unclear. It seems likely that it had to do with the fact that at that time the Ruhr area was finally starting up in full earnest. The German index of industrial production shows, that production increased from 113.0 in 1950 (1936 = 100), via 155.0 in 1955 to 203.0

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114 Wielenga, West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak (cf. n. 81), 255f.; Wolters, De Zilveren Mijlpaal (cf. n. 38), 51.
115 Letter to Auswärtiges Amt about a visit of Dutch Foreign Minister Beyen to West Germany, 12 November 1953, in: PA AA, B 11 Bd. 1150, Microfiche 1150-1.
116 Wielenga, West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak (cf. n. 81), 255.
117 Jaarboek van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken 1953/1954, 72.
118 Wielenga, West-Duitsland: partner uit noodzaak (cf. n. 81), 257.
in 1957.\textsuperscript{121} Goods entering Germany along the Rhine near Emmerich increased strongly as well, from 11,332 tons in 1950 to 42,493 tons in 1957, with a clear peak in the years from 1954 to 1956.\textsuperscript{122} Iron ores transported from the Ruhr to the Netherlands increased by more than half from 1955 to 1957.\textsuperscript{123} The same development is visible upstream. Both upstream and downstream, the total number of tons of coal increased dramatically during the same years as well. The total tons of iron ore and coal transported upstream at Lobith (Emmerich) rose from 21 mn in 1954 to 41 mn in 1958.\textsuperscript{124} The steel production in the Ruhr area increased from 12.3 to 19.5 mn tons between 1953 and 1957; at the same time, coal production grew from 115.5 to 123.2 mn tons.\textsuperscript{125} The German Rhine fleet simply could not cope with the growth of transport. In other words, the Dutch Rhine fleet was desperately needed by the German industry. This probably explains the sudden and dramatic change of West German policy.

Another explanation would be the fact that the liberalisation of the Rhine shipping was, on the German side, predominantly blocked by the Bundesverkehrsministerium, not by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Both the latter and its Dutch counterpart had little interest in continuing the battle on government level, as this would harm the integration process. Therefore, «wurde das Problem auf Initiative der beiden Außenministerien von der intergouvernementalen Ebene wieder auf die der Verbände delegiert, die sich, so die Überlegung der Außenministerien, unter sich einigen sollten».\textsuperscript{126} The background to this was that both sides wanted to prevent a further deepening of the Dutch-German conflict. This resulted in the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für die Rheinschifffahrt, in which the standardisation of transport quota and costs were agreed upon, especially between Dutch and German shipping companies: «Entstanden war damit ein Preis- und Quotenkartell.»\textsuperscript{127} It should be noted, however, that only after the Ruhr started to produce in full swing, the Dutch Rhine fleet was allowed full access to the internal German waterways.

Moreover, the legal battle on the interpretation of the Convention of Mannheim was far from over and would drag on for some years without the Dutch government getting anything substantial for its efforts,\textsuperscript{128} although in the Treaty of Rome of March 1957 the principles of the Act of Mannheim were confirmed.\textsuperscript{129} This did not, however, end or
shape the Dutch-German conflict. After hearing all opinions, the Dutch government should have taken a clear stance in the discussions on the Convention of Mannheim. It failed to do so, shifting between legal steps and negotiations.\(^{130}\) As late as February 1957, the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce insisted strongly that the Netherlands should adhere to the traditional interpretation of the Convention of Mannheim.\(^{131}\) In early 1958, however, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted, that it had succeeded in pushing the Dutch demand for the freedom of Rhine shipping into the background. The Hague had dropped the idea of taking it to international arbitration. It appeared to be satisfied with the German guarantee that the situation would not be altered.\(^ {132}\) The door to free participation on the internal German waterways was now on a chink for Dutch Rhine shipping, although it was by no means wide open.

**Conclusions**

Before the Second World War, Rotterdam had played a central role in the transit of goods to the German hinterland, especially to the industrial area of the Ruhr. At the same time, the Ruhr area supplied the Netherlands with coals, chemicals, iron and steel. The Dutch also held a dominating position in the international Rhine traffic. Before the war, it provided 48 per cent of the active balance of services on the Dutch current account. The Dutch position was also strong on the internal German waterways, especially on the Lower Rhine where the most important Ruhr ports were located. This is a clear indication of the strong ties between the Ruhr and the Dutch seaports and Rhine shipping. The autarkic policy of the Nazis in the 30s and World War II totally disrupted this system. For military reasons, the German occupiers destroyed the ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam at the end of the war. The slow recovery of the port of Rotterdam and Dutch Rhine shipping was primarily caused by the fact that its natural hinterland lay in ruins. The extensive Allied bombing in the last year of the war, although not particularly damaging to German industry, had destroyed and paralysed large parts of the German infrastructure.

Financial and political reasons forced the Western Allies to resort to a policy of autarky within their respective zones of occupation. This made trade with and between their zones practically impossible. All this had grave consequences for the Netherlands, especially for Rotterdam and Dutch Rhine shipping. The Allies decided to direct all their imports via Hamburg, Emden and Bremen, and only called on the Dutch Rhine fleet when German barges were unable to deal with the traffic. Allied trade policy and the destruction of the German infrastructure greatly worried and irritated Dutch politicians and businessmen. This was understandable given the fact that it was inevitable that this would have repercussions on trade with Germany. Not only would it hamper the recovery of the Netherlands, the Allied policy would also damage Dutch seaports and

\(^{130}\) Udink, *De ontwikkeling* (cf. n. 79), 368f.
\(^{131}\) Letter Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce to Minister of Foreign Affairs Luns, 27 February 1957, in: NL-HaNA, Kvk Rotterdam/Secretariaat, 3.17.17.04, inv. no. 1273.
Rhine shipping. Although The Hague filed numerous complaints and requests, these mostly fell on deaf ears. Rotterdam was only able to retake its position as largest and most important port for German goods from 1949 onwards, when the German hinterland had made a remarkable recovery. Once the Ruhr area was in full operation, it could not do without its natural port of Rotterdam.

As with German ports, the American and British occupation authorities favoured German shipping on the Rhine for financial reasons. The German fleet was given priority in internal German traffic. Only occasionally, when there was a shortage of German ships, were permits granted to foreign ships. The reason behind this Allied policy was plain and simple: it saved valuable currency and the British and American taxpayers at home would bear a smaller burden for the occupation of Germany. The Allies discriminated against Dutch Rhine shipping, and denied it access to internal German traffic, in which the Netherlands had played a leading role before the onset of hostilities in September 1939. Moreover, the partition of Germany robbed Dutch Rhine shipping of an important part of its hinterland.

When the Federal German Republic was founded in May 1949, it more or less continued Allied policy and Dutch tonnage passing at Emmerich dropped significantly below the pre-war level. Although it still formed a majority of the ships, Dutch tonnage had not regained its 1938-level by 1957. The Dutch were also denied free access to the internal German waterways. Initially, Bonn stated this was due to its unfavourable economic and financial position, and stated that Germany could not afford to spend hard currency on having foreign ships take care of the internal German transport. From the early 50s onward, arguments on internal German traffic arrangements were the main reason for refusing Dutch Rhine shipping free access to the internal German traffic. The biggest stumbling block in the negotiations between the Netherlands and the Federal German Republic was the Convention of Mannheim (1868), which guaranteed the freedom of Rhine shipping.

This was the strongest card of the Dutch, but they did not use it wisely. Bonn and The Hague held very different interpretations of the Convention. According to the Germans, freedom was only related to ships crossing the border and national regulations governed the rights of the innerdeutscher Verkehr. Bonn only accepted the Convention of Mannheim for international traffic. That was a completely new and unique interpretation. The Netherlands on the other hand, demanded free participation. It could easily have taken Germany to a court of arbitration on its interpretation of the Convention. It would probably have won, but would not have gained much, as this would have created a conflict with its most important trading partner. Bonn did not want to risk a legal battle either. It wanted to be on good terms with other European countries and it could not afford to be accused of breaking international law so shortly after the war.

Added to this was the fact that the Dutch government and Dutch business did not always agree on what policy to pursue. To the latter complete and free access to the internal German waterways was central and of prime importance, and it tried to press The Hague to do more. However, the Dutch government also had to take into account other interests such as political relations and international cooperation. When we compare this to the existing theory, we can conclude that Dutch foreign policy was partly driven by business interests and domestic affairs, but that other factors, especially international developments, were equally important.
Despite several agreements and numerous talks, for years no real solution was reached for the problems regarding the Rhine shipping between the Netherlands and Germany, apart from the establishment of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für die Rheinschifffahrt*. Under the pressure of the German and Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs, it was left to the shipping companies to reach an agreement, in which they indeed succeeded. This did as yet not, however, mean that the Dutch Rhine fleet had full and free access to the internal German waterways. Only as of 1 May 1956 did the German Federal government declare that the rules would be considerably relaxed; from that date ships sailing under foreign flags would be allowed to participate in internal German traffic under the same conditions as German shipping. The reasons for this sudden change of policy are unclear, but it seems to have been caused by the fact that as of roughly 1955, the Ruhr industry finally began full production. This resulted in a spectacular growth of coal and iron ore to be transported along the river, and the German Rhine fleet simply could not cope with it. From that moment on, West Germany could no longer afford to ignore the Dutch Rhine fleet and allowed it full and free participation in internal German traffic.

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