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## Dutch outcry over naming giant ship after Nazi

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In this undated image made available by NIOD, Wednesday Nov. 5, 2008, Pieter Schelte Heerema is seen wearing a SS uniform. Edwin Heerema, founder of Swiss-based Allseas Group SA, wants to name a \$1.7 billion vessel that he claims will be the world's largest, the Pieter Schelte after his late father, Pieter Schelte Heerema, who was renowned as a maritime engineer but was condemned for his service in the murderous Nazi Waffen SS. (AP Photo/NIOD, Netherlands Institute for War Documentation)

to communism rather than enthusiasm for national socialism. He said he then switched sides and joined the resistance in 1943 "as he could no longer associate himself with the ideas of the Nazis."

He noted that Heerema was tried and released shortly after the war, which shows he "cannot have been seriously delinquent."

The respected Netherlands Institute for War Documentation said that's technically accurate. Heerema was sentenced by a Dutch court to three years in prison but quickly released, the courts having recognized his unspecified but "very important" services to the resistance between August 1943 and

By Toby Sterling, Associated Press Writer  
 AMSTERDAM, Netherlands — It ought to be a proud milestone in the Dutch seafaring heritage -- the construction of a new ship its owner claims will be the world's largest. But there's one problem: its name.

Edwin Heerema, founder of the company that has commissioned the \$1.7 billion vessel, wants to name it the Pieter Schelte after his late father, Pieter Schelte Heerema, who was renowned as a maritime engineer but was condemned for his service in the murderous Nazi Waffen SS.

The choice of name has provoked outcry from politicians and Jewish groups, and revived painful questions about Dutch collaboration with the country's World War II occupiers.

"For people who know his pitch-black history, this ship should not be named for him. Not now, not ever," said Ronny Naftaniel, director of CIDI, which monitors anti-Semitism in the Netherlands. He said Edwin Heerema's desire to honor his father was understandable up to a point, but the choice of name was "tasteless and unethical."

Edwin Heerema's company, Swiss-based Allseas Group SA, rejected criticism.

"Pieter Schelte Heerema was widely appreciated in the industry during his life and the companies that came from his heritage have an excellent name in the offshore industry," spokesman Jeroen Hagelstein e-mailed in response to questions.

But it's an awkward matter for the government. It gave Allseas' Netherlands subsidiary a \$1 million tax break for its part in designing the ship, and now acknowledges it didn't notice the name until a Dutch journalist, Ton Biesemaat, raised the issue.

Hagelstein said Heerema joined the Nazis out of opposition to communism rather than enthusiasm for national socialism. He said he then switched sides and joined the resistance in 1943 "as he could no longer associate himself with the ideas of the Nazis."

March 1944.

"You have many different kinds of collaborators: some are passive and some are active. This man was prominent, a leader," said NIOD spokesman Fred Reurs.

Heerema's file at the NIOD contains a report of a speech he gave in 1941 in which he was quoted as saying "The German race is model. The Jewish race, by comparison, is parasitic ... therefore the Jewish question must be resolved in every Aryan country."

Some 70 percent of the Netherlands' 140,000 Jews perished in the Holocaust.

After winning promotions within the Waffen SS, Heerema became assistant director of an organization that rounded up unemployed Dutch workers and resettled them in Nazi-occupied areas of Eastern Europe, where hundreds died.

After a falling-out with his German superiors in August 1943, Heerema disappeared until his arrest in Switzerland in March 1944.

After his release in November, 1946, he headed to Venezuela where he began a new company and rapidly achieved success.

As a postwar industrialist he was credited with such important innovations as the semi-submersible crane vessel for work in rough seas.

He became a multimillionaire and member of the Dutch elite, but questions about his past resurfaced periodically until his death in 1981.

The new ship, to be used for laying oil pipes and decommissioning North Sea oil rigs, will be 1,253 feet long and 384 feet wide, making it the world's largest in area, Allseas says.

It said on Oct. 24 the financial crisis would not prevent the ship's completion in 2012. It said it has reached agreement on around \$250 million worth of contracts and is reviewing bids from shipyards in Southeast Asia to build the hull.

The tax break prompted Sharon Gesthuizen, a lawmaker of the opposition Socialist Party, to put formal questions to the Economic Affairs Ministry on Oct. 28.

"Do you see it as your responsibility to protest the naming of this ship, given the extreme sensitivity of the historical events that are connected to that name?" She asked.

The ministry has two weeks to respond.

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