

Dutch owners change name of vessel called after Nazi

A Dutch ship that sparked controversy because it was named after a Nazi will have its name changed, its owner said. The change was announced on Friday by Allseas, the shipping giant that built and named the **Pieter Schelte** for a prominent Nazi industrialist and Waffen-SS officer.



The **PIETER SCHELTE** ballasted down – Photo : Cees van der Kooij ©

“As a result of the widespread reactions which have emerged over the last few days, Edward Heerema, president of the Allseas Group, has announced that the name of the vessel ‘**Pieter Schelte**’ will be changed,” Allseas said in a statement. “It has never been the intention to offend anyone.

The new name will be announced within a few days.” Edward Heerema is the son of the late Pieter Schelte. The ship’s arrival in Rotterdam last month prompted a new wave of protests against Allseas, which has been resisting calls to change the ship’s name since before the vessel was built.

Also facing criticism was Royal Dutch Shell, which proceeded despite protests with plans to use the ship – the world’s largest crane vessels of its kind.

The Dutch government was also forced to explain why it offered Allseas over \$1 million in subsidies to build the ship. “In the end, I believe it was external pressure and particularly the threat of losing money that moved the company to this decision,” said Ton Biesemaat, an investigative journalist from

The Hague who exposed the affair and has been fighting Allseas for years. “Honestly, I already had given up hope of effecting change against what was a scandalous situation, but I am very happy to see this collective effort finally bear fruit.” Jewish groups in the Netherlands and Britain had voiced indignation over the docking in Rotterdam of the ship, the Guardian reported last month.

“Naming such a ship after an SS officer who was convicted of war crimes is an insult to the millions who suffered and died at the hands of the Nazis,” Jonathan Arkush, the vice-president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, was quoted as saying. “We urge the ship’s owners to reconsider and rename the ship after someone more appropriate.”

Esther Voet, who directs the Hague-based Center for Information and Documentation on Israel, bemoaned the timing of the ship's arrival in port, on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, saying it was "a coincidence, I'm sure, but a sign of the times.

We lost our battle to have the ship's name changed, and we are left eating dust."The ship, capable of lifting oil rigs five times heavier than the Eiffel Tower, arrived in Rotterdam on January 8 for finishing touches before entering service.

The nearly 400-meter-long **Pieter Schelte** arrived in Europe's largest port from South Korea where it was built, ahead of starting work lifting rigs and laying pipelines this summer.

"The length and breadth combined cover a surface equivalent to eight football pitches," said Jeroen Hagelstein of Allseas, which owns the boat that can lift oil rigs weighing up to 48,000 tonnes. "We've fought this for 10 years, tried to persuade everyone involved that this was offensive," Voet told the Guardian. "But no, we're left with this fact: The largest ship in the world is named after an officer in the SS, and not enough people are offended to get this changed."

Source : times of Israel: