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Editor of this issue: Professor Kevin Hewison, Director, UNE Asia Centre, The University of New England. His email address is: khewiso3@metz.une.edu.au

CONTENTS
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A Baptism of Fire: The Van Goens Mission to Ceylon and India, 1653-54[1]

Alfons van der Kraan
School of Economic Studies
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351
avanderk@metz.une.edu.au

Detail of 1656 Van Goens family portrait by B. van der Helst, after water colour copy by J. Ph. Koelman

Source: Ottow, W. M. (1954, *Rijckloff Volckertz van Goens: De Carrière van een Diplomaat, 1619-1655*, Utrecht: Press Trajectina.

Abstract

The 1653-4 voyage of Rijckloff van Goens from Batavia to Ceylon and India marked a vital stage in his long and eventful career with the Dutch East India Company (VOC). Before setting out on this mission, the 34-year old Van Goens had already proven his talents in a wide variety of areas. He had held posts as a merchant, a magistrate and an accountant and, in addition, he had succesfully led a number of diplomatic mission to various Asian courts, including those of Johore, Siam and Mataram (Java). But since the Company's activities in the Indies were as much military as commercial/political, it was necessary for Van Goens to prove himself as a military commander if he was to advance further in the Company hierarchy. His chance came in 1653 when the Company found itself at war with both England and Portugal.

In that year Van Goens left Batavia with a squadron of four ships with orders to stamp out corruption and private trading in the various Company establishments in Ceylon and India and, if the opportunity arose, to inflict as much damage upon the enemy as possible. His mission was a resounding success. Not only did he advance the Company's commercial interests but achieved spectacular victories over the English and Portuguese. At the mouth of the Indus river, Van Goens defeated an English squadron, whilst just south off Goa he inflicted a crushing defeat on the Portuguese.

These exploits so impressed the Company Directors in the Netherlands that from this time they looked upon Van Goens as one of their their indispensible 'servants' in the Indies. Consequently, his career reached new heights. In addition to achieving further military victories over the Portuguese (1658 and early 1660s), the French (1672) and English (1673), Van Goens subsequently became Governor of Ceylon (1658-72), Director-General of Commerce (1675-8), reaching the apex of power with his appointment as Governor-General of the Indies (1678).

[1] A shortened and revised version of this paper will appear in *The Great Circle* in 2000.

Introduction

In the Dutch Republic during the 17th Century class barriers to social advancement became increasingly difficult to surmount as the burgher-oligarchs, who ruled the towns, collectively entrenched their wealth, power and privilege. This, however, was not the case within the ranks of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). Although nepotism and connections certainly played their parts in determining advancement within the Company hierarchy, it is generally true nonetheless that in the Indies careers continued to be open to talent (Boxer, 1973: 57). In part, of course, this was due to the extremely high mortality of the European in Asia, all too many of whom went to early graves on account of the privations of the long and arduous voyage to the Indies, frequent warfare against European and Asian enemies, and, above all, the various poorly-understood tropical diseases to which the European, especially the newly-arrived, had little or no resistance. The relative openness of Dutch society in the Orient was due also in part to the multi-faceted nature of Company activities. While the Company was first and foremost a commercial enterprise, it was also a military, a political, and a productive organization. This meant that the Company required people with all kinds of skills: not only merchants, clerks and accountants, but also navigators, diplomats, sailors, soldiers, gunners and tradesmen like shipwrights, carpenters, surgeons, gun-smiths, architects, stone-masons and so on. For these reasons, it was certainly not inevitable for a Company servant forever to be stuck in one position; on the contrary, there was a high turn-over in various fields of endeavour so that there were frequent opportunities for the robust, the fortunate and the ambitious.

It was not at all uncommon, therefore, for men to enter the Company service in a lowly or, in some cases, even a menial capacity and rise to the highest ranks. For instance, Antonio van Diemen, an undischarged bankrupt, enlisted with the VOC as a soldier under an assumed name, and eventually became Governor-General at Batavia (1636-45), whilst the South Netherlander Francois Caron began his career with the Company as a cook's mate, eventually to rise to the Director-Generalship of Commerce (1647-50), the second highest post in the Company hierarchy. Many other examples can be given of men who rose to the top exclusively through their own merits and exertions. For instance, Jacob Mossel (1750-61) Reinier de Klerk (1777-80), two of the most distinguished Governors-General of 18th Century Batavia, both started their careers with the Company as common seamen (Boxer, 1973: 57-8). And although a non-Dutch ethnic background was a handicap, it was not an absolute barrier to advancement providing the foreigner learned to read and write Dutch and converted to the Dutch Reformed religion. This is shown by the large number of Germans who rose to the top in the service of the East India Company, men like Zacharias Wagner from Dresden, who enlisted as a soldier in 1642, to become Commander of the Cape after a 21-year career; or Jan Schreuder from Hamburg, who began his career in 1727 as a soldier and advanced to Governor of Ceylon and Councillor of the Indies, or, indeed, Johan Thedens from Friedrichstadt, who enlisted as a soldier in 1697 and, after a long career, became Governor-General at Batavia from 1741 to 1743 (Van Gelder, 1997: 184-6).

Another most remarkable career in the service of the Dutch East India Company was that of Rijckloff van Goens who rose from humble origins to the rank of Councillor of the Indies (1654), Governor of Ceylon (1658-72), Director-General of Commerce (1675-8) and, finally, to Governor-General of the Indies (1678-81). Unlike the examples cited above, however, Van Goens did not travel to the Indies of his own volition. Instead, in 1628, when he was just nine years of age, he was taken on the long voyage to Batavia by his Frisian parents, Volckert and Hillegond van Goens, because his father, whose full name was Volckert Boykes van Goens, had enlisted with the Company as a 'commander of the soldiers'. It is not known what motivated Volckert, who was already 56 years old at the time, to take his wife and only son on so dangerous and uncertain a voyage. It is likely, however, that he had felt frustrated as a low-ranking officer (a cornet) in the Republican cuirassiers (heavy cavalry) and that, without connections in an increasingly oligarchic Dutch society, he had seen little prospect of promotion. It is likely also that

Volckert was influenced by his younger brother, Boyke Boykes van Goens, who had sailed for the Indies in 1624 and had prospered in the Company's service (Ottow, 1954: 19-21). In his enthusiastic letters to Volckert, Boyke painted a rosy picture of life in the East, told him of his financial successes, and, according to Rijckloff van Goens' autobiographical statement, 'never ceased insisting that he join him in Batavia' (Memorie Rijckloff van Goens, 1656).

But whatever Volckert's motivation, on 3 October 1628 the Van Goens family set sail for the Indies aboard the Company ship *Bueren* which, after a 'fortunate voyage' through the South Atlantic, around the Cape of Good Hope and across the Indian Ocean, reached Batavia on 10 July 1629 (Memorie Rijckloff van Goens, 1656). The town in which the Van Goens family set foot was brand-new, having been founded on the ruins of Jacatra by Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Coen only ten years earlier. Centred on the castle, the nerve-centre of the Company's Asia-wide operations, Batavia was walled and laid out on the Dutch pattern with canals, a church and some gabled housing. Its population of approximately 8,000-10,000 people was already extremely cosmopolitan (Taylor, 1983: 10). Apart from the servants of the Company, only the higher ranks of whom were mostly Dutch, there were many men, especially among the soldiers, of other ethnicity, particularly Germans, French and Scandinavians. In addition, there were among the Batavian population numerous slaves from Bali, Celebes and elsewhere; there were substantial numbers of Eurasian children; there were some Japanese samurai, whom the Company employed as mercenaries, and last but not least, there were substantial numbers of Chinese because Governor-General Coen, who rightly saw that the Chinese, in contrast to most of the Europeans, were sober, highly skilled, and industrious, had encouraged their migration into Batavia and surrounding districts (Taylor, 1983: 3-32).

The Van Goens family arrived at a most inauspicious time because when they stepped ashore the Javanese armies of Sultan Agung were just approaching the town in an attempt to expel the European intruders from the island. Six days after the *Bueren* dropped anchor, however, tensions eased because news arrived that a Company squadron had destroyed the Javanese supply fleet off Tegal on Java's north coast. This victory, strategically decisive though it was, failed to halt the Javanese advance and, on 22 August, the first Javanese cavalry units reached Batavia, albeit too late to prevent the Dutch from bringing in from the surrounding districts all livestock, edibles and valuables and locking the gates of the walled town (Ottow, 1954: 22-5). Although Batavia was now under siege, Volckert van Goens was not destined to have an opportunity to display his martial skills; he had fallen seriously ill and passed away on 27 August, 'leaving a poor saddened widow and an orphan'. Perhaps to bolster the morale of the Batavia garrison, Governor-General Coen, who himself was to die of cholera only three weeks later, gave him a funeral with full military honours. Accordingly, Volckert's remains were taken to the place of burial by 'a company of soldiers in armour, carrying up-turned muskets and dragging their pikes and banners behind them', and as the coffin was interred 'the soldiers fired five salvos with their muskets, while from the castle walls three cannon salvos burst forth' (Memorie Rijckloff van Goens, 1656).

On 7 October, a few weeks after Volckert's death, the starving Javanese army began its retreat from Batavia leaving a trail of dead and dying fighters in its wake. Although the siege was now lifted so that all of Batavia could breathe more easily, Rijckloff's personal circumstances did not improve. His father had not left much in the way of money or property, and the Company did not at that time provide any kind of relief to the widows and orphans of its deceased servants. The Batavia poorhouse seemed to be the destination for Hillegond and Rijckloff, but for the intervention of uncle Boyke. Wishing perhaps to avoid the social stigma of having relatives in the poorhouse, or perhaps out of a sense of loyalty towards his deceased brother, Boyke van Goens took them into his Batavia home and provided for them (Ottow, 1954: 24-5). For Hillegond, however, this arrangement

was not destined long to endure. Like so many newly-arrived Europeans, she fell victim to one of the recurrent epidemics that swept Batavia and died on 25 July 1630, less than a year after her husband, leaving the eleven-year old Rijckloff not without self-pity later was to put it, 'a parentless orphan stranded in a strange country, without any particular inheritance other than the hope of God's mercy' (Memorie Rijckloff van Goens, 1656).

After the death of his mother, Rijckloff continued to live with his uncle. But whilst Boyke van Goens clearly did not wish his nephew to end up in the Batavia orphanage, a misfortune which greatly would have damaged his life's chances, he may at the same time have been reluctant to assume the responsibility and expense of raising the boy himself, especially because he already had two children of his own. Be this as it may, after some time Boyke began to look around for a suitable position for the boy. Eventually, his search met with success and, in April 1632, when Rijckloff was twelve years of age, Boyke introduced him to the high-ranking Company official Arent Gardenijs, the Councillor of the Indies who was related by marriage to the new Governor-General Jacques Specx. Arent Gardenijs agreed to take him on as an all-purpose messenger-boy, whose task it would be to run errands, to wait on him and serve him generally. Apparently, Gardenijs was so pleased with Rijckloff's services that when he was appointed Governor of the Coromandel coast he decided to take the boy with him and, accordingly, on 8 May 1632 Rijckloff accompanied his new master aboard the Company ship *Prins Willem* and set sail for the town of Pulicat on the Southeast Indian coast (Ottow, 1954: 26-7).

After a voyage of about five weeks the *Prins Willem* reached Pulicat, a small walled town with at its centre the Dutch fortress Geldria, a fortress which, with its permanent garrison of soldiers, its cannon and armoury, was meant to protect the various Company trading posts along the Coromandel coast. Inside the fortress was situated the Governor's residence, a two-storey building, 'magnificently and solidly' constructed (Valentijn, 1726: vol. VI, fol. 13). As the boy-servant of Gardenijs, this was to be Rijckloff's home. Apart from running errands for the Governor, he became familiar during this time with the Coromandel cotton trade and learned to recognize and appraise the various types of calicoes and chintzes which formed the mainstay of the regional commerce. Rijckloff's relationship with Gardenijs was clearly a good one. Gardenijs recognized the boy's potential and took sufficient interest in him to make available a 'good tutor', who instructed him in reading and writing as well as in such subjects as accountancy, theology and Greek mythology (Memorie Rijckloff van Goens, 1656). Apparently, Rijckloff appreciated the Governor's positive attitude. In his autobiographical statement, written many years later, in 1656, he refers to Gardenijs as 'my good master', acknowledges his endebtedness to him, and expresses regret at the ending of the relationship, which came late in 1632, when Gardenijs was recalled to Holland by the Company's Board of Directors (*Heeren XVII*) (Memorie Rijckloff van Goens, 1646).

Gardenijs had come under suspicion of private trading, a practice in which, notwithstanding repeated prohibitions by the *Heeren XVII*, virtually all Company servants, from the highest to the lowest, engaged to a greater or lesser extent. That Gardenijs should have been found out was probably not unrelated to the change in the Governor-Generalship which occurred in September 1632 when Jacques Specx, who had appointed him, was succeeded by Hendrik Brouwer (1632-6). Be this as it may, with his master's arrest and enforced departure from Pulicat in late December 1632, Rijckloff had lost his protector which probably meant that he had to move out of the Governor's residence to be assigned to more menial tasks. Although Rijckloff remained at the Geldria fortress for a while, during which time he served a number of different Company officials, including a certain Jacob de With, he no doubt was very unhappy for which reason he decided to return to his uncle's house in Batavia (Ottow, 1954: 29-31). When, however, the boy arrived at Batavia on 8 February 1634, he learned to his dismay that a few weeks earlier his uncle Boyke and family had left Batavia for the distant island of Ambon in the Moluccas. Again, Rijckloff found himself 'alone in the world' and without means of support. But in a display of the ambition and drive that were to characterise him throughout his

life, the 14 year old boy addressed an urgent letter to the Director-General Antonio van Diemen requesting an appointment with the Company. Always in need of literate and numerate employees, Van Diemen decided to put him on and resolved that he 'serve under the direction of the Senior Merchant Jacob de With to be employed in the warehouses in the capacity of Assistant' (Memorie Rijckloff van Goens, 1656).

Under these highly unusual circumstances, then, did Rijckloff van Goens enlist in the Dutch East India Company. After he had formally joined the Company and had taken the obligatory oath of loyalty and obedience, his intelligence, hard work and good judgement ensured a rapid, indeed, spectacular rise through the ranks. The first promotion came in 1639 when Rijckloff, at the age of 20, was appointed to the rank of Junior Merchant on a salary of 40 guilders per month. This was a very significant step up the ladder because the Merchants (that is, the Junior Merchants, the Merchants and the Senior Merchants) constituted the 'officer-corps' of the Company, from whose ranks all important functionaries were recruited. Partly for this reason, but partly also because the rank of Junior Merchant was on a 'career-track' in the sense that further promotions were possible, indeed likely, Van Goens was now a respectable member of the Dutch community in the East, a person who was entitled at official functions to walk under a large parasol carried by a slave (Ottow, 1954: 37-8). This position, and the income and prospects which it brought, enabled Van Goens to start a family and, on 13 September 1640, he married 'with the consent and approval of the Governor-General and the Councillors of the Indies', Jacobina Bartolomeusdochter Rosegaard, the 24 year old widow of a Company lieutenant who some months earlier had fallen victim to one of Batavia's murderous epidemics (Memorie Rijckloff van Goens, 1656).

Rijckloff's second promotion came in 1642, only three years after the first one, when for reason of 'proficiency shown in the keeping of the books of the Batavia trade office', he was elevated to the rank of Merchant on a salary of 60 guilders per month (Ottow, 1954: 39). This was followed by his promotion in 1645 the rank of Senior Merchant on 80 guilders per month in recognition of the skill with which he had carried out his first diplomatic mission, namely his mission from July-December 1644 to the Sultans of Palembang, Jambi and Johore. And six years later, in 1651, he reached the pinnacle of the formal order of rank when he was promoted to First Senior Merchant of the Batavia castle (Molhuysen VI, 1924: 588-9). During these years his wife, Jacobina, bore him five children, three of whom died in infancy. Of his two surviving children from this marriage, his sons Rijckloff and Volckert, he probably regarded his name-sake Rijckloff, born 11 July 1642, as the most promising and, possibly for that reason, he sent him, in December 1646, to Holland 'to be raised there in good discipline and morals'.

As Van Goens climbed in rank, the specific functions to which he was appointed grew in significance and scope. As mentioned above, in July 1644, and partly no doubt because of his knowledge of the Malay language, he was chosen to lead a diplomatic mission to the Sultans of Palembang, Jambi and Johore. A few years later, Van Goens was given command over a squadron of four well-armed ships and instructed to intercept and bring to Batavia two Genoese ships which had arrived in the archipelago and were challenging the Company's monopoly on the spice trade. Shortly after he had brought this mission to a successful conclusion, he was appointed as a Magistrate of the Batavian High Court (*Raedt van Justitie*). This was followed by his appointment, in 1650, as Commissioner to Siam where he was sent to investigate reports of corruption at the Company's Ayutthaya factory (Van der Kraan, 1998: 42-84). Between 1648-53 Van Goens led four diplomatic missions to the court of Amangkurat I, the Sunan of the Javanese state of Mataram, with whom to everyone's surprise, he managed to establish cordial personal relations. In 1652, and rather appropriately give his background, he was appointed President of Batavia's Orphan Court, and a few months later, in early 1653, news arrived at Batavia that the Company's Board of Directors had appointed him to the prestigeous post of Advisory (non-voting) Member of the Council of the Indies, the six-member Council

which, together with the Governor-General, comprised the so-called High Government (*Hoge Regering*), the Batavia-based body which took all important decisions affecting the Company's day-to-day operations in the East (Molhuysen et. al., 1924 VI,: 588-9).

But although Van Goens, by 1653, had certainly come a long way from his days as a penniless orphan, his position at the top of the Company hierarchy was not yet unassailable by any means. The problem was that with his appointment, early in that year, to Advisory Councillor of the Indies, he had risen too far in the Company hierarchy not to have aroused the envy of various powerful people at Batavia, whilst at the same time, his rise had been too meteoric for him to have had the time either to establish a support base amongst Company officials in the Indies, or to acquire a set of influential patrons in the Netherlands willing and able to protect him from his enemies. Added to his vulnerability was the problem that he had spent most of his life in the East, for which reason he had few personal contacts in the Republic. To cement his position at the apex of the Company hierarchy, and join the policy-making elite, he needed to do something spectacular, something that would so impress the Board of Directors in the Netherlands that they would come to look upon him as one of their indispensable servants in the Indies. And, as fortune would have it, later in 1653, when the Republic, and therefore also the Company, found itself embroiled in war against both England and Portugal, an opportunity to impress the Directors did indeed present itself.

A Dual Task

It was with a deep sense of foreboding that Batavia on 7 May 1653 greeted the news of the outbreak of war between the United Provinces and England and the early reverses suffered by the Dutch navy in the stormy North Sea (Ottow, 1954: 153). A few weeks later, on 10 June, the newly-appointed Governor-General, Joan Maetsuijcker, who was destined to hold this position for an incredible 25 years, convened a crisis meeting of his Council, to which some four months earlier the 33-year old Rijckloff van Goens had been elevated as an Advisory (non-voting) member. At this gathering, held as usual in Batavia castle's ornate Council chamber, Maetsuijcker and his six Councillors met to consider,

> the present troubled state of our dear fatherland on account of the war against the new Republic of England as well as other vexations, including the problems faced by the General Company in these lands, where indeed it seems that God the Lord is threatening us with multiple plagues and that the whole world has risen up against us and is seeking to destroy and exterminate us (Resolutie Gouverneur-Generaal en Raden, 10 June 1653).

Understandably, the mood at the meeting was sombre. The Councillors complained that the Company was already at war with the Portuguese in Ceylon, in the Indian Ocean and elsewhere, that in its attempts to control the production of cloves, the Company was embroiled in a struggle in the South Moluccas against the local people and their Malay and Macassarese allies, that there was unrest in Taiwan and in various other parts of its far-flung trading emporium, and that, on top of all these problems, it was now at war also with the English. They considered the very real possibilities that the Portuguese might take advantage of the situation to begin an offensive in Ceylon, that the English East India Company might send a powerful fleet into the Indian Ocean which, especially if it linked up with the Portuguese, was likely severely to damage the Company's shipping and trade, and most worryingly, that in Europe the fortunes of war might turn against the Republic, in which case the English navy was certain to blockade the Dutch coast, ruin Dutch trade, and prevent the Company from sending to Batavia the urgently needed reinforcements in ships, soldiers and sailors.

Aware of the possibility they might be cut off from the Republic for an indefinite period of time, and convinced as pious Calvinists that 'all help, assistance, blessings and prosperity emanate from God Almighty', the Councillors decided to declare a general day of

fasting and prayer to be observed 'everywhere in the Indies where the Company's jurisdiction holds sway'. They stipulated that their proclamation to this effect be posted in various Asian languages in public places in all the Company's trading posts, fortresses, cities and territories from the Cape of Good Hope to Nagasaki, Japan, warning all and sundry that 'on pain of appropriate punishment, no one on the appointed day was to open any shop, consume any alcoholic drinks or perform any labour'. The Councillors further decided that the Dutch Reformed congregations should make a special effort. Their proclamation was to be announced from the pulpits of all the Dutch Reformed churches in the Indies enjoining the faithful to observe a day of fasting, a day during which they should concentrate their minds and

> fervently pray the Lord that He stay His punishing hand, avert the threatening plagues and resume His bountiful blessings which for so many years He so generously bestowed upon the General Company in these quarters to the greater glory of His name, the well-being of His church and congregation, and the salvation of the souls of so many people. Amen (Resolutie GG en Raden, 10 June 1653).

This atmosphere of crisis, however, did not stop Governor-General Maetsuijcker and his Councillors from trying to run the Company's multifarious affairs as best they could. For instance, a week earlier, on 3 June 1653, the Council had met to appoint one of their number to carry out an inspection of the Company's establishments at Ceylon, at Vengurla on India's Malabar coast, and at Surat in Gujarat province of the mighty Moghul empire. War or no war, these inspections could no longer be delayed. The Company's *Heeren XVII* in the United Provinces, always concerned about private trading and corruption amongst its servants in the East, had repeatedly written to Batavia insisting that its factories and trading posts in the Indies be audited at least once every two years and it had been quite some time since these establishments had been visited. Actually, the inspections of Surat, Vengurla and Ceylon were to have been carried out in the previous year by Joan Cuneaus, one of the Councillors of the Indies, on the return voyage from his 1651-2 embassy to the court of Shah Abbas II of Persia,[2] but due to lengthy delays at the Persian court, Cunaeus had not been able to complete this part of his mission. In view of his seniority on the Council and his experience travelling in West Asia, Maetsuijcker asked Cunaeus whether he would now be prepared to undertake the mission. The latter, however, pleaded ill health and indicated he wished to be excused, whereupon the Governor-General turned to Van Goens who at once agreed to undertake the mission, whereupon the Council unanimously appointed him Commissioner for Ceylon, Vengurla and Surat (Resolutie GG en Raden, 3 June 1653).

[2]The journal of the Company's 1651-2 embassy to the Persian court at Isphahan was kept by Cornelis Speelman, who as a 23-year old Junior Merchant served as Cunaeus' secretary on this voyage and who many years later, in 1681, was to succeed Rijckloff van Goens as Governor-General of the Indies. In this journal the young Speelman recorded on a daily basis the progress, the trails and tribulations of the embassy as well as the protracted commercial negotiations at the court of Shah Abbas II. But whilst the embassy was of course predominantly of a commercial/political character, it is testimony also to the awakening in Europe of a cultural/scientific interest in the mysterious Orient. For instance, one of the embassy's briefs was to bring back Persian manuscripts for study at Leiden University. Similarly, a Dutch painter, named Philip Angel, accompanied the embassy with instructions to make drawings of various landmarks and archeaological sites such as the ruins of Persopolis. And further, although the bulk of Speelman's lengthy journal deals with commercial/political matters, it also contains many fascinating details about mid-17th century Persian society, customs and religion. This remarkable manuscript was published in 1908 by A. Holz. See: Speelman, C. 1908. *Journaal der Reis van den Gezant der Oost-Indische Compagnie Joan Cunaeus naar Perzie in 1651-52.* Uitgegeven door A. Holtz. Werken Uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap, (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller).

Van Goens, of course, was fully aware of the importance of this assignment. Like every other high-ranking VOC official, he knew that Ceylon, Vengurla and, especially Surat, were central to the Company's operations in Asia. Although he had never been to Ceylon, Van Goens knew that the island produced cinnamon, one of the most profitable commodities in which the Company traded. He was aware also that the Company, in an uneasy alliance with Raja Sinha II of the Sinhalese kingdom of Kandy, was conducting a war against the Portuguese who still held the fortress towns of Colombo and Jaffnapatnam, a struggle the prize of which was control of the island's lowlands where the cinnamon trees grew. Van Goens also knew that Vengurla, situated just north of Goa on India's Malabar coast, was of great strategic importance to the Company. At Vengurla the Company could keep an eye on Goa, the seat of the Portuguese Viceroy, and at the same time, the Vengurla factory served as home base for the fleets the Company sent from time to time to blockade the capital of the Portuguese *Estado da India*, a base where minor repairs could be carried out and where the ships could take in fresh water, victuals and other necessities.

Van Goens further knew that the Surat factory and its subordinate trading posts at Ahmadabad, Baroda, Broach and at the Moghul capital of Agra, was one of the Company's most profitable commercial centres, yielding surpluses in the order of 150,000 to 200,000 guilders annually (Aalbers, 1916: 77). He was aware that the Surat factory occupied an absolutely pivotal role in the Company's Asia-wide trading network, not only because it was a substantial market for cloves, nutmeg and mace from the Eastern archipelago, for silver and copper from Japan and for tea, silk and porcelain from China, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, because in Surat the Company was able to exchange these goods for cotton piece-goods produced in the town's Gujarati hinterland. And these piece-goods, in turn, were the key to profitable trade in the archipelago and in East Asia because people everywhere in these vast regions were keen to exchange their own products for these colourful cotton cloths, products which the Company, without cotton cloths, would have had to pay for in silver or gold. In short, Van Goens realized that Surat piece-goods provided the essential lubricant to the Company's wheels of commerce, that they reduced the Company's need to export bullion from Europe to Asia and that, for all these reasons, the Company Directors in the Republic were certain greatly to value any improvement he could bring about in that factory's performance.

In view of the war, however, the Van Goens mission to Ceylon, Vengurla and Surat could not be an inspection trip pure and simply; it could not be a trip like the one he had undertaken three years earlier, in 1650, when he had sailed to Siam in a small yacht to audit the Company's factory at Ayutthaya (Van der Kraan, 1998: 42-84). The present mission had to be a military enterprise as well because it was possible, indeed it was likely, that Van Goens would encounter English and/or Portuguese ships in the Indian Ocean in which case he had to have the wherewithal not only to defend himself, but also, if the opportunity arose, to inflict as much damage upon the enemy as possible. So notwithstanding the various competing claims upon the Company's over stretched resources, the Council in early September 1653, made available to Van Goens four ships, namely, the yachts *Muijden*, *Avenhorn*, *Cabeljau* and *Hulst*, which, after they had been loaded with fresh water, provisions, and the usual cargo of spices for Surat and Persia, were fitted out for war. Like any prudent commander, Van Goens took a keen interest in seeing to it that nothing in this regard was overlooked. Accompanied by the ships' officers, he selected in the Company's arsenal the additional guns that were to be placed aboard the ships; he made sure that his squadron was adequately provided with gunpowder, cannon balls, shrapnel and such things as grappling irons for boarding, muskets, sables, axes and the like.

Since the great East Indiamen that plied the oceans between the Dutch Republic and Java had for many years carried guns, gun powder and the like as ballast on the outward voyages, Batavia had abundant stores of war materials so that it was not particularly difficult for Van Goens adequately to equip his ships. It proved far more troublesome, however, to find good quality crews. There was a severe shortage of experienced sailors and sol-

diers in Batavia caused in part by the war, which had prevented the arrival of substantial reinforcements from the Republic, and in part also by such factors as the extremely high mortality of Europeans in the tropics, and the competing demands for manpower from Company military operations in the Moluccas, Taiwan and elsewhere.

But whatever the reasons for this labour shortage, Van Goens had to dig very deep to man his squadron. Although for an effective handling of his four ships he needed a minimum of 360 men, 120 for the *Muijden* and 80 each for the *Avenhorn, Cabeljau* and *Hulst,* he was able to obtain only about 230 experienced European, mostly Dutch, sailors. To make up the shortfall Van Goens may have used his position as President of Batavia's Orphan's Court, to which he had been appointed a few months earlier (Molhuysen, 1924: 589), to take on board at least 73 boys, aged between 12 and 16, from the town's orphanage, an institution established in 1624, caring for fatherless children from Batavia's Indonesian Christian, Eurasian and Dutch communities (Taylor, 1983: 26). Still some hands short, he hired as casual day-labourers at least 43 'blacks' (probably local Sundanese) (Resolutie Ceylon Council, 1 November 1653). And finally, Van Goens was given 50 volunteers from Batavia's Mardijker community,[3] all of them 'healthy, strong young fellows', as well as 60 European soldiers from Batavia's already much-depleted garrison (Instructie Van Goens, 19 September 1653).

By 18 September 1653, when the ships had been fully loaded and were ready to sail, Governor-General Maetsuijcker and Council made the final preparations for the voyage. They appointed as advisors to Van Goens the Senior Merchants Anthonie van Voorst and Jacob Carsteman, whilst the Merchant Joan Grevenraet was to accompany him as Prosecutor (*Fiscael),* and the Junior Merchant Hendrick op de Kamp as Secretary. In addition, they provided him with the services of the chief surgeon Petrus Andreas who had spent some years at the court of the King of Bijapur, in the city of Bijapur in Vengurla's hinterland, spoke Persian, the court language, and was familiar with the Malabar coast and its people. In the evening, when all these formalities had been completed, the Governor-General held the customary and very lavish farewell dinner for Van Goens, his staff and all the officers of the *Muijden, Avenhorn, Hulst* and *Cabeljau,* a dinner attended also by the Councillors of the Indies, their wives and various other distinguished guests (Ottow, 1954: 159-60).

The next day, when everyone had recovered somewhat from the dinner, three of the Councillors, including Joan Cunaeus, came aboard Van Goens' flagship, the *Muijden*, formally to invest him as Commissioner for Ceylon, Vengurla and Surat. They handed him his commission, a parchment document, which was read out to the assembled officers and crew:

> Joan Maetsuijcker, Governor-General, and the Honourable Councillors of the Indies to all those who shall see this or will hear it read. Since the Honourable Lords Directors of the General East-India Company have repeatedly very strongly recommended and commanded that in order to combat all manner of abuse and corrupt practices, which in the course of time may have crept into and have

[3]The term 'Mardijker' is a Dutch corruption of the Portuguese version of *Maharddhika* (Sanskrit for 'great man' or 'high and mighty') which in the Malay archipelago acquired the meaning of a freed person, a person freed from slavery. The Mardijkers constituted a separate community in Batavia. They were the Portuguese-speaking descendants of freed slaves, mostly of Indian origin, who had arrived in Batavia in numbers especially after the 1641 Dutch conquest of Malacca. They mostly clung to their Catholic faith and continued to attend Batavia's Portuguese church although, at the same time, many of them were baptismal members of the Dutch Reformed Church. They kept themselves apart from Java's indigenous people, an endeavor in which the Company encouraged them by legislating for them as a separate group (Taylor, 1983: 47).

> been committed in the Company's factories and establishments in these lands, the said factories and establishments be audited and visited by good, trustworthy Commissioners at least every second year, and since Mr Joan Cunaeus, Councillor of the Indies, who in the previous year had been entrusted with an embassy to the King of Persia in order subsequently to visit the factories at Surat and Vengurla as well as the Government at Ceylon, on account of the passage of time has not been able properly to inspect the said three places, so is it that we have deemed it necessary to resume this Commission this year, and since at present there are only two senior Councillors at Batavia so that Mr Cuneaus cannot be missed from home,[4] so is it that we have looked around for another qualified, capable and sensible person to carry out this important commission, and to this end we have taken pleasure in the good qualities of the Honourable Rijckloff van Goens, presently Advisory Councillor of the Indies, and we have thought fit to nominate for this commission the aforementioned Rijckloff van Goens so that he, in accordance with the express orders of the Company, will visit and inspect the aforementioned government and factories, for which reason we order and command the Governor in the island of Ceylon, the Chief at Vengurla and the Director at Surat, as well as all other officers, high- and low-ranking, all soldiers and other subjects of the Company at these places, as well as all the officers, lesser officers, soldiers, sailors and Mardijkers aboard the yachts *Muijden, Hulst, Cabeljau* and *Avenhorn* with which his Honour is voyaging, modestly to accept as our commissioner the aforementioned Rijckloff van Goens, to recognize him as Commander and Chief, to receive, acknowledge, respect and obey him, and to render him all the help and assistance he requires for the execution of his commission, in accordance with the oath all of us have taken committing and obligating ourselves to the General Company, whose well-being and greater service we herewith seek to advance (Commissie Van Goens, 1653).

After the commission had been read out and Van Goens had been formally invested as commander of the expedition, the Councillors aboard the *Muijden* distributed separate instructions from the Governor-General to all the Company officials, skippers, pilots and other officers who were assembled there. If Van Goens' commission had emphasized the investigative aspect of the enterprise, Maetsuijcker's instructions to the fleet's officers left no doubt at all about the mission's military intent:

> Early tomorrow morning, when all you people are completely ready for the voyage you will muster the crews and, with the land wind, you will set sail in God's name, holding to the prescribed course, taking care at all times to be ready for battle in order to be prepared to meet any surprise attack by the Portuguese, the English, their adherents or other enemies like the Malabar pirates and such like, to which end a look-out has to be aloft at all times who should also report all treasure ships or other vessels and, if it can be done without great

[4]Clearly, Joan Cunaeus was not a man of the same calibre as Van Goens. The son of the famous Leiden professor Petrus Cunaeus (1596-1639), he owed his meteoric rise in the Company hierarchy more to patronage and connections than to innate ability. Here it needs only be noted that he gave different excuses for his reluctance to undertake the Surat, Vengurla, Ceylon mission. At the Council meeting of 3 June 1653 Cunaeus pleaded ill health, whilst in the commission of 19 September 1653, when presumably he had recovered from his illness, he is said to be indispensable at Batavia. All this points to just one conclusion, namely, that Cunaeus had no stomach for so difficult and hazardous a mission. For a character sketch of Cunaeus see: (Hotz in Speelman 1908: xxxi-xxxiv).

> risk or a long delay in the voyage, these ships should be attacked, and upon capture the prisoners should be secured, the cargo holds and goods should be sealed in order in this way to send these ships either to Ceylon or here to Batavia so that proper inventories can be made up and care can be taken that the Honourable Company will not be disadvantaged by unseemly plunder. This we most strongly urge and recommend upon you people who should bear in mind that this is a matter for which in due course you may be held responsible. The flag shall fly from the yacht *Muijden* and if on the voyage there is a matter that needs to be discussed, the Honourable Commissioner Rijckloff van Goens will convene a ships' council which he will chair. And in order to reduce the danger of fire or surprise attack by enemies, you people will stay together and under no circumstance allow yourselves to be separated from each other so that you may be spared the misfortune (God improves) that last year befell *'t Wapen van Batavia (The Batavian Arms)* which, taken by Malabar pirates in a surprise attack, sank with all hands.[5] Furthermore, maintain good order, be prudent in the management of provisions, administer justice over evil-doers according to law, and at all times be a modest pastor to those who are entrusted to your care. In conclusion, we recommend all you people together and each of you separately to the merciful protection of the Almighty God who will grant you a successful and safe journey (Instructie Opperhoofden, 19 September 1653).

And finally, on 20 September 1653, when all these formalities had been completed, Van Goens' fleet weighed anchor and set sail. The anonymous clerk whose task it was to keep a daily record of the comings and goings at Batavia castle noted matter-of-factly,

> Today the Honourable Rijcklof van Goens,… since a few months Advisory Councillor of the Indies, left the roads of Batavia with the yachts *Muijden, Avenhorn, Hulst* and *Cabeljau,* ... carrying 460 hands, including 60 soldiers and 50 Mardijker volunteers, suitably provided with foodstuffs sufficient for 12 months, all the ammunition and instruments of war that were requested, and loaded, in addition, with a cargo of merchandise valued at 289,147 guilders, 6 stuivers and 12 doits (Van der Chijs, 1888:126-7).

In War-torn Ceylon

In his cabin aboard the flagship *Muijden* Van Goens began reading the large bundle of manuscripts and the lengthy instructions Governor-General Maetsuijcker had handed him shortly before his departure from Batavia. He did not, however, have time to make much headway because on 23 September, just as the squadron had passed through the Sunda Strait into the Indian Ocean, the *Hulst* signaled that it was taking in water. Try as they might, the ship's carpenters were unable to find a leak so that they were forced to conclude that the water seeped in at the bow through a number of cracks between ill-fitting

[5]In February 1653 the yacht *Het Wapen van Batavia,* sailing alone along the West Indian coast, was taken by surprise by 8 Malabar pirate ships in the vicinity of Portuguese Goa. Rather than surrendering his ship, the skipper of the yacht, whose name does not appear in the records, set fire to the gun-powder blowing up his ship just at the moment the pirates were swarming all over it. According to a report by the then Governor of Ceylon, Jacob van Kittensteijn, this act of desperate bravery cost the lives of as many as one thousand people. Only five members of the Dutch crew survived the explosion, two of whom were sold as slaves to the Portuguese, whilst the remaining three were said to have joined the Malabar pirates (Van der Chijs, 1888: 104).

wooden beams. Two days later the situation had become critical because even though the three pumps aboard the *Hulst* were kept in constant operation, the water kept rising and had already completely filled the cargo hold. Realizing he was in danger of losing the ship, Van Goens, on 25 September, convened a crisis meeting of the fleet's council, which on account of the strong winds that prevented the crews of the *Avenhorn* and *Cabeljau* from launching their sloops, could be attended only by the officers of the *Muijden* and *Hulst.* At this meeting it was decided that the *Hulst* should not continue the voyage. Accordingly, and no doubt very much to his regret, Van Goens ordered one of his advisors, Anthonie van Voorst, to board the stricken vessel and make for the West Sumatran port of Pinangh (Padang) which, on account of the strong southeasterly winds was easier to reach than Batavia, carry out emergency repairs there and then sail to Ceylon at the earliest to rejoin the fleet[6] (Van der Chijs, 1888: 142).

After the *Hulst* had disappeared from view, Van Goens continued his voyage taking care that his three remaining ships stayed in close proximity to each other because, as he well knew, the chances of encountering English or Portuguese shipping increased as he approached the Indian subcontinent. Following the course outlined in the sailing instructions Batavia had given him, Van Goens sailed West along a South longitude of 9-10 degrees, a longitude that enabled him to take advantage of the Southeastern trade winds. According to his instructions, he was to hold to this course for a certain, indeterminate distance[7] until he estimated his position to be directly South of the Maldives, at which point he was to change course and sail North to the Southern Maldives where he was to turn Northeast to Cape Comorin, India's Southernmost point, from where he was to cross to Ceylon (Seijlaes Ordre, 18 September 1653).

As the ships made their way across the Indian Ocean, Van Goens at last had time to turn his attention to the bundle of documents the Governor-General had handed him. Although the records do not specify precisely which papers this bundle contained, it is likely to have included, amongst other things, copies of missives written by various Company officials who in recent years had played a role in Ceylon, people like Willem Coster and François Caron, who in 1640 and 1644 had led military campaigns in the island, and people like Joan Maetsuijcker, the current Governor-General, and Jacob van Kittensteijn, both of whom in recent years had served as Governor of the Dutch-held parts of the island. Reading these documents Van Goens learned that Ceylon was in the midst of a complex struggle for power in which there were three players, namely, Raja Sinha II of the Sinhalese kingdom of Kandy, as well as the Portuguese and the Dutch Company, each with their respective Sinhalese auxiliaries (lascarins). He further learned that Raja Sinha, who had come to the Kandyan throne in 1629, had decided for reasons of his own that the Company was the lesser of two evils[8] and that, in 1637, he had sought an alliance

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[6]The *Hulst* reached Padang on 3 October 1653. With the assistance of the carpenters from the *Leeuwinne,* a large East Indiaman which had just arrived from Holland and happened to be riding at anchor there, emergency repairs were carried out enabling the ship some time later to resume its voyage to Ceylon (Van der Chijs, 1888: 142). Although the *Hulst* made the crossing by itself, which was risky in view of the war against England and Portugal, the ship arrived safely at Galle, Ceylon, on 21 November, about a week after Van Goens had left for Vengurla and Surat. But even if the *Hulst* had reached Ceylon earlier, the ship would not have been able to rejoin Van Goens' fleet because when it arrived there it was still taking in water. At Galle the ship was thoroughly overhauled. In the process it was discovered that the leakage had been caused by inadequate repairs carried out in Japan some time earlier, on which occasion poor quality beams had been used which had been poorly fitted and, in addition, had become porous (Missive Van der Meijden, 4 December 1653).

[7]Only with the invention by John Harrison in 1761 of the marine chronometer did it become possible for navigators accurately to determine longitude at sea. Before this device came into use, navigators could only roughly estimate the longitudinal distance they had travelled before turning North or South. This meant that the navigators' experience counted for much, and that not infrequently errors were made, sometimes with disastrous results as was the case, for instance, with the shipwrecks in the 17th and early 18th centuries of several Dutch East Indiamen on the Western coast of Australia.

[8]Raja Sinha II, by all accounts an astute and able ruler, cannot have been so naive as to believe that the Dutch Company was entirely disinterested in its offers of military assistance against the Portuguese. Yet, whilst he almost certainly knew that the Company, too, would become a threat to the territorial integrity of his kingdom,

with the Company, an alliance which by 1653 had greatly reduced, but not completely eliminated, Portuguese power in the island.

More specifically, Van Goens became aware, while studying these missives, that some 15 years earlier, in 1638, when the Kandyan-Dutch alliance had come into effect, the Portuguese had controlled a substantial part, more than one-third, of the island's territory. In addition to controlling all these lands in the Northern-, the Western- and Southwestern lowlands, the Portuguese had been masters of virtually the whole coast of Ceylon which they had controlled from six great strongholds, namely, Colombo, Negombo and Galle on the Westcoast, Jaffnapatnam in the North and Batticaloa and Trincomalee on the Eastcoast. In 1638, however, a joint Kandyan-Company force had taken the Portuguese stronghold of Batticaloa, an exploit repeated in the following year in respect of Trincomalee. But even though the Company had refused to hand these fortresses to the Kandyan King, in consequence of which tensions had developed between Raja Sinha and the Company, the King had decided for the moment to swallow his pride and maintain his alliance with the Company. This had made it possible in the following year, in 1640, to resume the Kandyan-Dutch offensive which in March of that year had resulted in the capture by Company forces of the Portuguese stronghold of Galle, a success followed in 1644 by the Kandyan-Dutch capture of the Portuguese fortress of Negombo (Goonewardena, 1958: 23-57).

Van Goens also learned that nine years earlier, in 1644, when the truce between the Dutch Republic and Portugal belatedly had come into effect in Ceylon, the lowland regions of North and Southwestern Ceylon were still in the hands of these two European maritime nations. The Portuguese still held Jaffnapatnam in the North as well as Colombo on the West coast, whilst the Dutch Company was in possession of Negombo and Galle, the strongholds to the immediate North and South of Colombo respectively. Van Goens also became aware that with the capture in the early 1640's of Negombo and Galle, the Company had become a territorial power because, along with these two strongholds, it had acquired their respective cinnamon-producing hinterlands which, especially in the case of the Galle hinterland, comprised quite an extensive region occupying as it did the entire Southwestern corner of the island (see Map). And since cinnamon production in these regions needed to be organized, taxes needed to be collected, some public works needed to be undertaken and so on, it had been necessary for the Company to establish an administration in the island for which reason Batavia, in 1646, had appointed a Governor, Joan Maetsuijcker, who had established his headquarters at Government House in the fortified town of Galle (Goonewardena, 1958: 81-106).

And finally, Van Goens learned to his regret that since the resumption of hostilities against the Portuguese in September 1652, the war had not gone well for the Company. Although the uneasy alliance with Raja Sinha had been reaffirmed, the Company had failed so far to dislodge the Portuguese from Colombo, and this despite the fact that a squadron of four Dutch ships all these months had maintained a blockade of the fortress. But not only had the Portuguese held out in Colombo, they had achieved a number of military successes against both the Company and the Kandyans. For instance, in January 1653 the Portuguese, led by the brave and resourceful Gaspar de Figueira de Serpe, a

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time and again it became apparent that he favoured the Dutch over the Portuguese. Apparently, this attitude on the part of Raja Sinha was rooted in his deep hatred for the Portuguese. Since the Sinhalese King left no records explaining his position, one can only speculate on the reasons why he was prepared 'to make a pact with the devil' in order to drive the Portuguese from his island. The most plausible explanation is a simple one, namely, that he regarded the Portuguese as the more dangerous enemy. Like the Japanese Shogun, who expelled the Portuguese from his island empire in 1640, Raja Sinha may have regarded the missionary efforts of the Portuguese as a threat to social stability, perhaps because Sinhalese converts to Roman Catholicism, of whom there were many, saw God (and not Raja Sinha) as the supreme being so that he may have considered Portuguese-induced Catholicism as subversive to his status as God-king (Dewaraja).

half-Sinhalese native of Colombo, had put Raja Sinha's army to flight at Menikkadawara, whereupon he had attacked, without resting his army, the Company's stronghold at Anguruwatota, capturing the Company's entire garrison consisting of 100 Hollanders, 24 Javanese as well as about 140 Sinhalese auxiliaries (Winius, 1971: 129-30). A short time later Figueira had followed this up with two further crushing victories over the Kandyans in battles near the village of Alauwa, victories which had halted Raja Sinha's advance on Colombo. And as if all this was not bad enough, in May 1653, just when the Dutch ships blockading Colombo temporarily had sought refuge from a storm in the sheltered bay at Galle, a Portuguese fleet from Goa had slipped into Colombo bringing reinforcements in troops, war materials and foodstuffs (Goonewardena, 1958: 158-62).

After familiarizing himself with the situation in Ceylon, Van Goens turned his attention to the instructions from Governor-General Maetsuijcker and Council. He noted that the Councillors had given him several pieces of advice in respect of his inspection at Ceylon. They had told him that he need not concern himself with trying to uncover evidence of private trade because 'trade at Ceylon is of little consequence, the Company's principal objective being to seize the cinnamon which grows better in this island than at any place in the world yet known'. Instead, he should audit the various account books, check them for fraud and, in particular, he should investigate whether the Company did in fact enjoy the revenue from the villages under its jurisdiction.'It is an old custom in Ceylon', explained the Councillors,

> that upon the death of a landowner, the lands and the villages thereon revert back to the sovereign power which then disposes over them as it sees fit, a custom which our government has observed also because we too have given such lands to those who support us with soldiers or render us some other service.… Up to now, we have received no evidence that the Company has been well served in this matter, and since it is possible to abuse the power to allocate lands, since it is possible that lands that should have been given out have not been allocated, but, instead, have been held back to be used for private gain, we strongly recommend that Your Honour cast an eye upon this matter and ensure that the Company's interests are upheld (Instructie Van Goens, 19 September 1653).

As he read on, Van Goens must have noted with some irritation the timid tone of his instructions which repeatedly urged caution, especially with regard to the English. 'We recommend', the Councillors had written,

> that Your Honour quickly carry out the inspection at Ceylon ... and then sail on to Surat, unless it should become apparent [at Ceylon] that the English have a considerable force in the vicinity of that place or along the coast of India, a force Your Honour might not to be able to withstand, in which case Your Honour may deem it advisable to stay at Ceylon until further notice or until the arrival next January of the precious fleet from Taiwan in order then to continue the voyage together with these ships.... It may also be that the affairs of Ceylon will require Your Honour to stay there until the arrival of reinforcements.... We cannot prescribe more precise orders in these matters other than to recommend caution, assured as we are that Your Honour will not neglect to pursue the Company's best advantage, but we hope, if it pleases God, that the expected ships from the fatherland will not much longer be delayed so that we can send reinforcements to that island [Ceylon] and to the coast of India and keep dominance at sea, which God grant will so happen, so that we will be able without fear to look our enemies in the eye (Instructie Van Goens, 19 September 1653).

And given the shortage of experienced sailors aboard his ships, Van Goens further noted to his dismay that the instructions ordered him to leave his Mardijkers and soldiers in Ceylon,

> In order as much as possible to assist the dangerous affairs of that island [Ceylon], and in the hope that succour from the fatherland will soon arrive, we have made available 60 soldiers from Batavia's weak garrison and we have accepted as soldiers 50 men from the Mardijker volunteers, all strong, healthy young fellows, who we hope and expect, will serve us just as well as our own soldiers. Your Honour is to leave the aforementioned Mardijkers and soldiers in Ceylon to strengthen the garrison there unless Your Honour should receive information about the situation in Surat which will lead Your Honour to judge it advisable to keep some of the Mardijkers and soldiers aboard the ships which, regretfully, can only sparingly be manned with sailors (Instructie Van Goens, 19 September 1653).

The winds were strong and mostly favourable so that Van Goens' squadron made good progress. After reaching the Southern Maldives, the ships changed course heading for Cape Comorin, but before reaching the Cape they caught strong Westerlies which enabled them to head straight for Ceylon. On 17 October, however, while still in open sea, the look-out aboard the *Muijden* reported a sail on the horizon. In the belief that it might be a Portuguese or English enemy which they might take as a prize, Van Goens gave chase only to discover later in the day that it was a large Muslim ship belonging to the Moghul Emperor. With the guns of his squadron trained on the Muslim vessel, Van Goens went aboard with a party of officers and soldiers. There he learned that the ship came from Surat, that it was on its way to Aceh in North Sumatra and, no doubt to his deep disappointment, that the Nachoda (the Captain) had in his possession a pass issued by Gerardo Pelgrom, the Company's Director of the Surat factory. Having no choice now but to let the ship proceed unhindered, Van Goens nonetheless commented ruefully on the danger which this Muslim trade represented to the Company's commercial interests. 'This ship', he wrote in his report to Batavia,

> measured at least 180 to 200 lasts [360-400 tonnes] and was so chock-full with piece-goods and other merchandise that I am inclined to believe that the *Muijden*, if it had been empty, would not have been able to take in its entire cargo, all in all a most unfortunate state of affairs which, if it continues, will be very damaging to our textile trade in the archipelago and elsewhere (Missive Van Goens, 14 November 1653).

Two days later, on 19 October 1653, after a voyage from Batavia of just over four weeks, the ships reached Ceylon, precisely at Negombo, and Van Goens for the first time set eyes upon the emerald isle, an island where he was destined to spend a good part of his later years. The ships came to anchor in front of the Negombo fortress, captured nine years earlier, in 1644, by François Caron and described by Valentijn in glowing terms:

> The Negombo Fort ... is a beautiful and exceptionally strong fortress, chiefly constructed to cover the cinnamon lands. It has four points or bastions, two to the sea side named Hoorn and Enkhuyzen, and two to the land side named Delft and Rotterdam, a beautiful earthen wall, 22 feet wide, with 8 pieces of cannon on each bastion. It has a land- and a water-gate and ... within it is located another separate fort of two bastions named Middelburg and Amsterdam, constructed at its base of large square stones drawn up very high on top of which there is an earthen parapet; [the inner fortress] is in ad-

> dition surrounded by a moat in the middle of which, for greater strength, there is a firm and well laid out palisade (Valentijn, 1726 V: 26-27).

Upon arrival at Negombo, Captain Jan van der Laen, the Commander of the fortress, came aboard the *Muijden* to welcome Van Goens and give him a briefing on the current military situation in the island. The Captain, who in later years was to become one of his close associates, told Van Goens that, in addition to approximately 2,500 Sinhalese auxiliaries (lascarins), the Company had 1,084 European and 106 Javanese soldiers in Ceylon, of whom 297 were stationed at the Negombo fortress and the remainder at Galle, Kalutara and Matara. The Portuguese, according to Van der Laen, had at Colombo a similar number of lascarins and between 1,100 and 1,200 European and mestizo troops, some of whom were stationed in the Colombo fortress itself, whilst others, the majority, were in the field confronting Raja Sinha's army. The health situation amongst the Company troops, said the Captain, was not good because out of a total of 1,190 soldiers in the island no fewer than 83 were sick with fevers and dysentery. And morale, too, left much to be desired. The main problem in this respect was that the contracts of many of the European and Javanese soldiers had expired; they now wished to go home and they felt that the Company was doing them an injustice in keeping them in Ceylon. Moreover, the arrival of the three ships at Negombo had raised high hopes amongst these soldiers that now at last they would be relieved, and, naturally, they were sure to be sorely disappointed when they learned that these ships had not been sent to take them back to Batavia (Missive Van Goens, 14 November 1653).

All these factors, Van der Laen went on, had prevented the Company from pursuing the war with greater vigour. In fact, since the Dutch reverse at Anguruwatota of January 1653 and the Portuguese successes against the Kandyans shortly thereafter, there had not been a great deal of fighting at all. In Colombo's hinterland the Portuguese and Kandyans had faced each other for months without coming to any decisive battle. And on the part of the Company anti-Portuguese actions had been limited to occasional raids by parties of pro-Dutch lascarins, some 20 to 30 strong, who were sent into Colombo's hinterland from Negombo and Kalutara to summon the local population to come over to the Company and stop providing the Portuguese with victuals; those who refused were captured, taken back to Negombo or Kalutara to be sold as slaves with one third of the proceeds going to the lascarins who had effected the capture[9] (Goonewardena, 1958: 163).

Faced with this rather bleak situation, Van Goens decided to assist Van der Laen as best he could. The next day, on 20 October, he convened a meeting of the fleet's Council at which, after some discussion, it was resolved by unanimous vote that the most feasible course of action would be to give the Portuguese a scare by effecting a landing of soldiers and sailors at Negombo (Resolutie Van Goens, 20 October 1653). The following day the plan was carried out and Van Goens demonstratively went ashore with his Mardijkers, soldiers and sailors, some two hundred and 50 men in all, whom he led into the fortress. Although Van Goens had no intention of staging an attack on the Portuguese at Colombo, an enterprise for which his forces were clearly insufficient, the landing nonetheless served significantly to advance the Company's objectives in Ceylon because the Portuguese, already worried by the arrival at Negombo of the three ships, became even more alarmed when from a distance they saw these troops disembark. In the belief that a Dutch attack on

[9] Apparently, these raids by lascarins were not directed exclusively against the pro-Portuguese population of the Colombo hinterland, but sometimes also against the Portuguese themselves. Van Goens relates one such incident which must have occurred on or around 10 November 1653. He mentions that a party of pro-Dutch lascarins had staged a surprise-attack on a Portuguese guard-house at Mutwal, just a few kilometres north of Colombo. They had noiselessly killed the Portuguese guard, whereupon they had entered the house, killing another eight Portuguese soldiers and taking prisoner one Portuguese youth and two slaves. They had brought the nine Portuguese heads, and the three prisoners to the Negombo fortress, where of course they were suitably rewarded (Missive Van Goens, 14 November 1653).

Colombo was imminent, they hastily recalled their troops confronting the Kandyans some distance in Colombo's hinterland. Leaving the fortified positions they had held for many months, the Portuguese soldiers withdrew some 20 kilometres to Malvane, a village within a day's march from Colombo. And, of course, the abandoned district was immediately occupied by Raja Sinha who, according to Van Goens, at once proceeded 'to deport most of its people and install his own creatures' (Missive Van Goens, 14 November 1653).

Van Goens stayed at the Negombo fortress for a few days, during which time 'in order not to remain idle', he carried out an inspection of the books of Merchant Schilderhuijsen, the Company official who did the administration for the garrison and headed the small trading post that was located there. Coming totally unexpectedly, the audit seems completely to have overwhelmed the hapless Merchant. At any rate, it did not take Van Goens long to discover 'great slackness in his book-keeping', which left 8,000 guilders unaccounted for in his cash-books alone. Although Van Goens was able to trace 4,700 guilders, Schilderhuijsen was unable 'to give any explanation whatever for the remaining 3,300 guilder deficit', which meant that his career with the Company was in serious jeopardy and that he was likely in due course to be recalled to Batavia to face corruption charges[10] (Missive Van Goens, 14 November 1653).

A few days later, on 24 October, Van Goens re-embarked his soldiers and sailors, bade farewell to Captain van der Laen, and set sail for Galle. The voyage, however, proved to be a most difficult one. Adverse ocean currents and strong Southerlies made it necessary for the ships constantly to beat up against the wind so that they made but slow progress; in fact, it was not until 31 October, a full seven days after leaving Negombo, that the squadron finally sailed into the Bay of Galle (Missive Van Goens, 14 November 1653). There Van Goens for the first time set eyes upon this fortified town, captured in 1640 by Willem Coster and described by Valentijn:

> In circumference Galle embraces within the wall about half a mile [approximately four kilometres], with very wide and high walls on three sides on the land side, in front of which there is a very deep moat about 18 feet in width. It really has only three firm bastions, the Sun, the Moon and the Star, between which is situated the city gate, and a number of other strong points, namely Mariner Point, Utrecht, the Flag Rock, Venus, Mars and Aeolus. On the east side there is only one gate named the Sea or the Water gate, and for the rest the city is quite open on the sea-side. But it is so strongly provided by nature with many rocks, that it is impossible for ships to approach closely without a pilot, without running into the utmost danger. For that reason, it is customary as one approaches the city to fire a gun every half hour in order to obtain a pilot (Valentijn, 1978: 113).

After the ships had dropped anchor in the Bay of Galle, Van Goens was welcomed by several members of the Ceylon Council who came aboard the *Muijden* and took him and his staff to Government House where he met the newly-appointed Governor of Ceylon, Adriaen van der Meijden. Immediately upon arrival, Van Goens convened a meeting with

[10] As it turned out, Schilderhuijsen was never called to account because he died on 3 November 1653, less than two weeks after the audit. The records do not mention a cause of death so that the possibility cannot be ruled out that, depressed about his prospects, he decided to take his life. Be this as it may, the missing monies, as was customary in such cases, were at least partially recovered from the sale of his assets and the confiscation of his accumulated salary which under normal circumstances would have been paid to his next of kin in the Republic (Missive Van Goens, 14 November 1653).

the Governor and his Council to plan the future course of his mission. Van Goens, who certainly held the whip hand here, completely dominated the gathering. Van der Meijden and his Councillors were well aware that Van Goens had been sent to investigate them, they knew the powers Batavia had given him, and they also knew that if he should wish to find some instance of corruption or some kind of irregularity, as had already happened at Negombo, he was sure to find something. So unsurprisingly, fearful lest they should antagonize him, they gave in to his every demand.

Van Goens opened the meeting by reminding everyone that Governor-General Maetsuijcker had urged caution and had advised him to remain in Ceylon for some time if a powerful English fleet was known to be operating in the Indian ocean. He noted, however, that Muslim traders who had left Surat as recently as 10 September 1653 had brought no reports of any significant English presence in the Surat area; he pointed out that 'it would be unreasonable to live in fear of shadows', and told the meeting that there was not much point in him staying in Ceylon because in any case the forces he had brought from Batavia were too weak to make a real difference on the course of the war in the island. So for all these reasons, Van Goens went on, the Company would be best served, if he proceeded forthwith to Vengurla and Surat. Relieved no doubt to learn that Van Goens did not intend to stay long, neither the Governor nor any of the Councillors raised objections of any kind so that his proposal was quickly adopted by unanimous vote (Resolutie Ceylon Council, 1 November 1653).

After this matter had been settled, Van Goens raised a second issue. He reminded the meeting that on the voyage from Batavia to Ceylon he had lost the *Hulst* and proposed that this ship be replaced by the yacht *Sluijs,* the best ship of the four that were maintaining the blockade of Colombo. To bolster his argument, Van Goens submitted to the meeting a declaration signed by the skippers and all the pilots of his three ships, purporting to show that these ships were too heavily laden to be effective in a battle situation so that in order to improve battle readiness a fourth ship was necessary to carry the excess cargo:

> We the undersigned, the skippers and pilots of the yachts *Muijden, Avenhorn,* and *Cabaljau,* having been requested by the Honourable Commissioner Rijckloff van Goens to state what we require for our voyage along the Indian coast to Surat, declare upon our oath of loyalty to the Company that it is true that if we should encounter the enemy we will not be able to offer effective resistance and adequately defend the Company's precious cargo, our people and ships, unless our ships are made more manoeuvrable to which end it is urgently necessary for us to discharge about 80 to 90 lasts [160-180 tonnes], namely from the *Muijden* 30 to 40 lasts [60-80 tonnes], from the *Avenhorn* 20 to 30 lasts [40-60 tonnes], and from the *Cabeljau* 20 lasts [40 tonnes] (Resolutie Ceylon Council, 1 November 1653).

After also this proposal was adopted without any dissenting voice, Van Goens raised the third and perhaps, most contentious issue. He told the meeting that he was unable to leave in Ceylon the 50 Mardijkers and 60 soldiers Batavia had sent as reinforcements for the Company's garrison in the island. To strengthen this demand, Van Goens once more referred to the declaration by his Captains and pilots which further had stated: 'We declare in addition that in order for the ships to be adequately governed, they need to be manned with at least 360 hands, namely, 120 on the *Muijden* and 80 each for the *Avenhorn, Sluijs and Cabeljau'.* Van Goens went on to explain that aboard his three ships in the Bay of Galle there were a total of 372 hands, of whom 73 were mere boys and 43 'blacks' (probably Sundanese, hired at Batavia), whom he said, 'were so unwilling that little was to be expected from them in a battle situation'. He concluded by saying that he was only prepared to leave in Ceylon a few officers and some of the unwilling 'blacks', but he was not going to reduce the total complement of his four ships below 360 since

this was the minimum number of men required for an effective handling of his ships (Re solutie Ceylon Council, 1 November 1653).

The latter demand must have been very difficult for the Ceylon Councillors to accept. They were in dire need of these reinforcements, not only because they were at war with the Portuguese, not only because the heavy toll of tropical disease could be expected in the next few months further to reduce the number of soldiers at their disposal, but also, and perhaps most urgently, because many of the Company troops in the island were close to mutiny on account of the expiration of their contracts so that, from the point of view of morale, it would have been wise to relieve at least some of these discontented soldiers and send them back to Batavia. But if the Ceylon Councillors disapproved of this demand, they did not show it. In fact, no one raised any objections so that also this proposal was adopted by unanimous vote (Resolutie Ceylon Council, 1 November 1653).

During the two weeks Van Goens remained in Ceylon, he attended to various matters. He addressed the discontented Company soldiers of the Galle and Kalutara garrisons with 'sweet as well as earnest words' promising that those who had served the longest would be the first to be relieved and giving a personal undertaking to take eight to ten of the longest-serving Javanese soldiers back to Batavia on his return voyage. In addition to placating the soldiers in this way, Van Goens held discussions with Governor van der Meijden and other Company officials in an attempt to learn as much as possible about the current situation at Vengurla and Surat. But whilst Van Goens during these weeks was busy on several fronts, this activity did not extend to his investigation of the Ceylon Government. Having received everything he wanted from the Governor and Councillors, he did not probe too deeply into their account books, nor did he seriously investigate the Governor-General's concern about the possible private appropriation by Ceylon officials of the income from Sinhalese villages. In fact, he gave the Government a very favourable report-card. 'I have examined the Ceylon Government account books', Van Goens informed Batavia,

> and have found them to be completely correct. I have not had time thoroughly to examine the trade- and the pay-books, but I am confident that they do not contain mistakes to the disadvantage of the Honourable Company, because I have looked at these books closely enough to be able to say that (in my opinion) one would wish that the Honourable Company everywhere be served as well as it is served in this island (Missive Van Goens, 14 November 1653).

At Vengurla and Surat

On 15 November 1653, the day after he had issued this favourable verdict on the Ceylon Government, Van Goens weighed anchor and set sail with the *Muijden, Sluijs, Avenhorn* and *Cabeljau* steering a northwesterly course towards India's Malabar coast. Notwithstanding a brief calm, the winds when they returned were mostly favourable so that the squadron made good progress. The voyage was uneventful until, in the afternoon of 19 November, when the fleet had already advanced as far as Quilon, the look-out aboard the *Muijden* reported a sail on the horizon. In the belief that it was a Portuguese ship, Van Goens went in pursuit. But in the evening of the same day, when the squadron caught up with the vessel, it turned out to be the Company's yacht *Jasques,* formerly the English ship *Supply,* which a few months earlier had been captured by the Dutch in the Persian gulf, and was now being taken from Surat to Batavia by a skeleton crew (Missive Van Goens, 20 November 1653).

Keen to learn more about the situation at Surat, Van Goens invited the Captain of the *Jasques*, a certain Cornelis Stamper, to come aboard the *Muijden*. The Captain's tidings, however, were not good. Stamper told Van Goens that letters from the *Heeren XVII*, sent by the overland route via Aleppo and Basra, recently had arrived at Surat bringing word of Dutch reverses in the latest naval battle in the North Sea, a battle in which one of the Company's ships which had reinforced the Dutch navy, the *Vogelstruijs (Ostrich)*, had been sunk. The Captain further informed Van Goens that a few weeks earlier, in mid-October, a five-sail Company fleet, which had included the *Jasques*, sailing from Persia to Surat, had been caught in a most violent storm in consequence of which one ship, the *Robijn*, had been lost with all hands, whilst another ship, the *Morgenster*, had still been missing when he had left Surat. The sailors aboard the other three ships, the Captain added, had been forced helplessly to watch the *Robijn* go down without being able to do anything to save the doomed men.[11] And finally, Stamper told Van Goens that Company officials at Surat were extremely concerned about the reported presence in the area of a powerful English fleet, so concerned, in fact, that they no longer dared to send any ships to Persia and, for fear that he, Stamper, should encounter this enemy fleet, had given him instructions to sail to Batavia directly across open seas and without making landfall anywhere (Missive Van Goens, 20 November 1653).

After giving Van Goens all this information, Captain Stamper told him about his problems: his ship was severely undermanned, he needed fresh water, some provisions and various ship's accessories. Van Goens obliged in every respect. He gave Stamper six of his remaining unwilling 'black' sailors, who in any case wanted to return to Java, and provided him with water, foodstuffs and everything else he had requested. In addition, Van Goens changed Stamper's sailing instructions. Instead of letting him sail directly to Batavia across open seas, he ordered him to set course for Ceylon, and there to wait until other ships were due to sail for Java. And just before the delighted Captain went his way, Van Goens handed him a confident, self-assured letter for the Governor-General and Council: 'Your Honours can rest assured', Van Goens told them,

> that we are doing everything humanly possible to ensure (with God's help) that the enemy will not easily be able to surprise us. All of us are in good spirits and there is, as far as I am aware, not a single man aboard the four yachts who complains of illness, so that I firmly believe that all will be well and, in conclusion, I pray to God that in these wretched times He will mercifully bless Your Honour's government with His Godly wisdom. Amen (Missive Van Goens, 20 November 1653).

When the *Jasques* had disappeared from view and the squadron had resumed its course along India's Malabar coast, Van Goens returned to his cabin aboard the *Muijden* where he carefully reread Batavia's instructions concerning Vengurla. He noted that the Chief *(Opperhoofd)* of the Vengurla factory, the Merchant *(Koopman)* Jacob Bacherach, had incurred the wrath of Governor-General Maetsuijcker and Councillors and that they had ordered him to arrest the Chief and send him to Batavia, along with all his letters, account-books and papers. There were two reasons for Batavia's anger. First, Bacherach was strongly suspected of having engaged in private trade and, secondly, he had made a total mess of his relations with the local rulers, Nawab Fatel Khan of Vengurla, and his suzerein, the King of Bijapur, Mohammed Adil Shah, without whose goodwill it was impossible for the Company to trade in that part of India. What had happened? About a year earlier, in November or December 1652, the Company had sent an embassy to the court

[11]The Captain of one of the ships in this fleet, Johan Romeijn of the yacht *Saphier* (which itself was demasted), left an eye-witness account of the storm and the shipwreck of the *Robijn*. See: Extract Dagh-Register gehouden op 't jacht den *Saphier* tsedert 11 tot 22 October 1653, Overgekomen Brieven 1654, Derde Boek, Vervolg, fol. 743-749. VOC 1201.

of the King of Bijapur located in the city of Bijapur, some 250 kilometres northeast of Vengurla. Nawab Fatel Khan, who was at the court at the time, had advised the Dutch emissaries that, if they wished to be successful in their forthcoming audience with King Adil Shah, they would do well to increase the value of their gifts and, to this end, had lent them a ruby ring, valued at 300 pagodas (a gold coin worth four guilders), and another 500 pagodas in cash (Instructie Van Goens, 19 September 1653).

But when, a few weeks later, a messenger from Nawab Fatel Khan had arrived at the Vengurla factory requesting payment of 7,500 pagodas for the gifts to the King and some other debts, Bacherach had refused payment arguing that he had never authorized the royal gifts and that therefore the amount requested was far too high. Nawab Fatel Khan, enraged by this blunt refusal, had countered by doubling his demand to 15,000 pagodas. Bacherach, of course, had refused to pay this outrageous sum, whereupon relations between the Nawab and the Chief had deteriorated rapidly. Finally, in March 1653, Bacherach's position at Vengurla had become completely untenable for which reason he had decided to move his factory to Achera Salze, a small port some 45 kilometres North of Vengurla and located within the territory of a rival local ruler. And so, later that month, Bacherach had left Vengurla along with the 50-odd Company servants who had lived at the factory, leaving behind all the Company's immovable property as well as 82,168 guilders in outstanding credits owed by two Indian merchants, two brothers named Narva and Krisna Sinay, of which about 30,000 guilders, Bacherach carelessly had informed Batavia, had belonged to him personally (Instructie Van Goens, 19 September 1653).

As he read on, Van Goens noted that, in addition to arresting Bacherach, the Governor-General and Councillors wanted him to rectify the situation and, providing this could be done without undue humiliation to the Company, try to mend relations with Nawab Fatel Khan and the King of Bijapur with a view to reestablishing the factory at Vengurla. They wanted this not because Vengurla was a particularly profitable trading post, but because it was close to Portuguese Goa, and for that reason, very suitable as a base for Company ships which in future might again be sent to blockade the Portuguese capital in Asia. To help him attain this objective, Maetsuijcker and Council had made available Petrus Andreas, 'the former Chief Surgeon of Batavia castle, who has lived at Bijapur for many years, speaks the Persian language fluently, has many friends amongst the nobles at the court and who, in addition, is familiar with the dress, customs and manners of the country'. And to further assist Van Goens, they authorized him to select from amongst his ships' precious cargo some valuable gifts for Nawab Fatel Khan and King Mohammed Adil Shah, which, however, he was to give only if, in his estimation, there was at least a reasonable chance of a successful outcome (Instructie Van Goens, 19 September 1653).

Van Goens carried out his orders quickly and efficiently. Immediately upon arrival of his squadron in the roads of Achera Salze, in early December, he went ashore accompanied by Joan Grevenraet, the Prosecutor, and Jacob Carsteman, his Advisor, and Hendrick op de Camp, his Secretary. After Van Goens had informed Bacherach of the purpose of his mission, he had him locked into one of the rooms of the factory, whereupon he seized all his account books, papers and correspondence. A few days later, after studying the documents, Van Goens convened a court with Grevenraet, Carsteman and himself as magistrates. They had found overwhelming evidence that Bacherach had indeed engaged in private trade in tin, cotton piece-goods, gold and other merchandise to a value of 29,000 guilders, for which reason the former Vengurla Chief was there and then 'stripped of his office, rank and salary', whilst the 29,000 guilders worth of privately-

owned merchandise was confiscated, as was another 28,000 guilders which Bacherach some months earlier had lent out at interest to Indian merchants at Vengurla[12] (Generale Missive, 7 November 1654).

After settling this matter, Van Goens appointed in Bacherach's place the Company's Bijapur expert, Petrus Andreas, Chief of the factory at Achera Salze and instructed him to lead an embassy to the court of the King of Bijapur. He gave Andreas a conciliatory letter from Governor-General Maetsuijcker addressed to King Mohammed Adil Shah in which Maetsuijcker expressed regret for the difficulties that had arisen, blamed Bacherach for having caused them, announced that Bacherach had been arrested and would be taken to Batavia for punishment, requested that the whole dispute be forgotten, that the King would see to it that the two Indian merchants who owed the Company the sum of 82,162 guilders, repay their debts and, finally, that the Company be allowed to reopen its factory at Vengurla. And to increase the embassy's chances of success, Van Goens and Andreas selected from amongst the squadron's cargo suitably impressive sets of gifts for Nawab Fatel Khan and the King, sets of gifts which, in addition to various luxury products like spices, Chinese silk, sandelwood and the like, are likely to have included various items of European ingenuity such as clocks, firearms and eye-glasses (Generale Missive, 7 November 1654).

Van Goens decided not to wait for the embassy's return because, even if Peter Andreas should immediately be granted an audience with Mohammed Adil Shah, it would be at least two or three weeks before he could be expected to be back from the inland city of Bijapur. So, after wishing Andreas good luck, he ordered his ships to weigh anchor and resumed his voyage along the west coast of India. When the squadron was well out at sea, Van Goens turned his attention to the instructions Batavia had given him in respect of Surat. He noted that Maetsuijcker and his Councillors once again admonished him 'most sharply to inquire' into private trade which, they said, 'was extremely prevalent in Surat and in the subordinate trading posts as is all too apparent from the large private fortunes which our servants from time to time manage to accumulate there'. He was to expose the private traders 'without fear or favour, irrespective of who they might be', a task the Governor-General and Councillors were confident he would strenuously pursue because 'this is a matter of the greatest importance to the Honourable Company' (Instructie Van Goens, 19 September 1653).

Reading on, however, Van Goens could not help but notice that the vigilance with which Batavia urged him to carry out the inspection apparently was not to extend to Gerardo Pelgrom, the Director of the Surat factory. The Director, Maetsuijcker and Council informed him, had requested in the following year to be relieved of his post, but since his private letters to 'various people in Batavia' had clearly shown that this wish had been due to 'some misunderstanding', and had not been based on an overwhelming desire to return to 'the fatherland', and since, in addition, they were firmly of the view that Pelgrom 'was a smart, capable and faithful servant, who undoubtedly would be able in the future to render the Company many important services', they had decided to ask him to stay at his post for a few more years. Accordingly, they urged Van Goens to do his utmost to persuade Pelgrom to sign a new three-year contract as Director of the Surat factory, a contract which was to come into effect upon the expiration of his current term of employment and was to carry a salary of 180 guilders per month (Instructie Van Goens, 19 September 1653).

[12]Some time later, in Batavia, Bacherach appealed against this sentence arguing that he had not been given a chance to defend himself and complaining that the three magistrates who had sentenced him (Van Goens, Grevenraet and Carsteman) all harboured grudges against him (Resolutie GG en Raden, 25 September 1654). The appeal did not go well for the erstwhile Chief. The sentence was upheld and, in addition, he was fined another 30,000 guilders. Bacherach did not long outlive his disgrace. After running a sugar plantation near Batavia for some time, he died at Japara, Java, on 4 October 1657 (Aalbers, 1916: 88).

Van Goens further noted that Batavia wanted him to carry out two specific tasks. First, he was to put an end to the system of fixed-price contracts *(contracteren)* whereby the Company during the last few years had sold its merchandise because, so Maetsuijcker and Council informed him, 'many articles of commerce, and especially the spices, have been priced too low so that private merchants (which is a disgrace) have usually been able to resell the merchandise for much higher prices to their personal advantage and to the great disadvantage of the General Company'. They instructed Van Goens not to conclude any further fixed-price contracts. Instead, all merchandise was to be sold at auction and to the highest bidder, except the spices,

> the supply of which through the grace of God we control, so that we need not sell them below certain fixed prices, namely: cloves 50 stuivers per pound, mace 65 stuivers per pound and nutmeg 30 stuivers per pound, and if these prices cannot immediately be reached, the spices will stay in the warehouses until they come and ask for them (Instructie Van Goens, 19 September 1653).

And secondly, Van Goens was to settle some outstanding issues with the Moghul Emperor, Shah Jahan, either by going on an embassy to the court city of Agra, or preferably, by means of a 'courteous letter'. Essentially, he was to inform the Emperor that while the Company agreed to pay him the annual sum of 55,000 rupees (66,000 guilders) for exemption of tolls at Surat, it could not agree to his request for the unrestricted passage of Moghul ships in Asian waters. More specifically, Van Goens was to let Shah Jahan know that the Company would only be prepared to issue passes to his ships upon payment to the Company of the so-called 'Malaccan toll' of 10 per cent of the value of the cargo which, he was to point out, 'was a long-established custom dating back to the time of the Portuguese' and, in addition, Moghul ships would only be allowed to sail to Aceh in North Sumatra and under no circumstance would they be issued with passes for 'West Sumatra [Padang], for the tin producing regions of Malaya, for Perak, nor for any other place with which the Company is actively at war' (Instructie Van Goens, 19 September 1653).

The squadron continued its course up the west coast of India and, on 24 December 1653, it entered Suvali roadstead just North of the Tapti rivermouth, where the ships safely came to anchor behind a large sandbank. Later in the day Van Goens was met by Gerardo Pelgrom who, much relieved at the arrival of the four well-armed vessels, had at once come down from Surat some 20 kilometres up the Tapti river. Pelgrom confirmed the information Captain Stamper of the *Jasques* had given Van Goens a month or so earlier, namely, that an English squadron of at least three sail, fitted out by private merchants,[13] was cruising off Diu, the Portuguese stronghold just across the Gulf of Cambay, in the hope of intercepting the Company's yachts the *Gecroonde Leeuw (Crowned Lion)* and *Popkensburch,* which were expected any day to pass by Diu on their way from Basra, in the Persian Gulf, to Surat. With characteristic decisiveness, Van Goens took immediate action. He ordered the merchandise destined for Surat quickly to be unloaded, and two days later when this had been done, he sent three of his ships, namely the *Muijden, Sluijs* and *Cabeljau,* to waters off Diu where they were to locate and then engage the English squadron. He gave overall command of the operation to Merchant Pieter de Bie, the Chief of the Company's factory at Sindh, and ordered his right-hand man, Joan Grevenraet, who had visited Diu a few years earlier, to accompany the three ships in one of

[13]In the Dutch East India Company records frequent mention is made of the fact that the English East India Company chartered its ships from private shipowners. Of course, this is not surprising. For the servants of the VOC, a gigantic organisation which built its own ships and strictly prohibited private trade on the part of its servants, the more open organisation of the EIC and the greater freedom which that Company allowed its employees was a constant source of wonderment.

the Surat factory's fast-sailing sloops, the *Maagd van Dordt (Maiden of Dordt),* and gather information about Portuguese strength in the area (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655).

After the precious merchandise had been safely stored in the large Company tent on Suvali beach,[14] from where, as was customary, the goods would be taken in ox-carts to the factory at Surat, Van Goens and Pelgrom boarded another sloop which took them up the shallow Tapti river. As Van Goens approached Surat he saw on his right a large Moghul fortress, built of stone, and equipped with a number of metal pieces. He also noticed that whilst on the land side the town was protected by an earthen wall which, as he no doubt observed, 'was not able to withstand European force', it was entirely open on the river side. As Van Goens came closer still he noticed that the town was about one German mile (about 7.5 kilometres) in circumference, that although the streets were not paved, it had a number of beautiful palaces, graceful mosques and Hindu temples. And as he came ashore at the market square, which adjoined the river, he also noticed that Surat was extremely cosmopolitan, and that apart from the local Gujaratis, the market was crowded with Persians, Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Tamils, Malays, Javanese, Portuguese and Jews, so that even a sight as remarkable as a Dutchman or an Englishman attracted but little attention (Valentijn, 1726 V: 144-147).

At the far end of the market square, Van Goens noticed the magnificent palace of the Surat Governor, and next to it the tollhouse through which all goods were required to pass, unless special dispensation was obtained from the Moghul Emperor. On the market itself were situated, on opposite sides, the English and Dutch factories, both of them large, imposing buildings containing the living quarters of the servants of the two Companies, as well as their kitchens, dining-halls and warehouses. Upon entering the Dutch factory, Van Goens discovered that it was home to about 50 Company servants, who were employed as Director Pelgrom's staff, his bodyguards, assistants, tradesmen, sailors and the like. In addition, the factory housed at least twice or three times that number of Indians who lived there as concubines of Company servants, as domestic servants of various kinds, as warehouse attendants and so on (Valentijn, 1726 V: 147).

Van Goens stayed at Surat about four months, until 20 April 1654, during which time he tried as best he could to carry out the difficult orders Batavia had given him. With regard to his most important brief, however, his investigation into corruption and private trade, Van Goens was only moderately successful. This was not for lack of trying. He undertook inspection tours of the subordinate trading posts at Ahmadabad, Baroda and Broach, he ordered the Chief of the distant, inland trading post at the court-city of Agra, Merchant Jan Tack, to appear before him at Surat, and he compared the account books of all the subordinate trading posts with those of Surat. Van Goens was able in this way to uncover various instances of petty and not so petty corruption; he was able also to conclude that the trading post at Brodera was running at a loss, for which reason he ordered its immediate closure, but he was unable to find any conclusive evidence of private trading (Generale Missive, 7 November 1654).

The problem was that Van Goens was unable also to examine the account books of the great Indian merchants of Surat, men like Mondas Naan, Sunderdas Narangie and a few others. This was politically impossible. Not only would it have been difficult to obtain permission for such an inspection from Surat's Governor, Nawab Hafiz, but also, and perhaps more importantly, it would have been entirely self-defeating from the point of view of the Company's commercial interests. The Surat merchants had a grip on the

[14]Having learned from bitter experience with the Portuguese how difficult it was to dislodge a European enemy from coastal strongholds, the Moghul Emperors had refused the Company permission to build a stone warehouse on Suvali beach and had only permitted the erection of tents. The same policy applied to the English. In fact, at the time of Van Goens' visit, the English Company also had a number of storage tents along Suvali beach. These tents were located 2 or 3 kilometres north of the Dutch ones (Valentijn 1726, Vol 5: 144).

commerce of this part of the Moghul empire so that, without their goodwill, it would have been impossible for the Company to sell its merchandise and buy the cotton piece-goods it required for its trade all over the Indies. And, moreover, except as a supplier of spices, the Surat merchants did not really need the Company because, if necessary, they could increase their purchases from their fellow Muslim merchants or, indeed, from the English who, needless to say, would have welcomed any such development. So for all these reasons, Van Goens left unexamined the account books of the Surat merchants which meant, as the Governor-General and Councillors themselves recognized, that 'it is virtually impossible to catch the private traders in the act, not only because their dealings are so subtle and so hidden, but also because they are greatly aided and abetted by the [Surat] merchants, who, by providing start-up money and on-going credit, are all too often the instigators of this cancerous evil' (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655).

This, however, did not mean that Van Goens failed to make any inroads at all into the Surat factory's network of private trade. For instance, in the course of his investigations he became very suspicious of the triangular Surat-Mocha-Basra trade link, a trade link which had developed not at the initiative of Batavia, but at that of Pelgrom's predecessors as Directors of the Surat factory. Each year two ships left Surat with cargoes of cotton piece-goods, spices and tin which were exchanged at the Arabian port of Mocha for silver and 'cauwa' or coffee; one ship brought the silver back to Surat, while the other took the coffee to the Persian port of Basra, where it was sold at a considerable profit. Suspecting that much of this trade was of a private nature, Van Goens decided to take it out of the hands of the Surat factory and recommended, instead, that Batavia take control of it and each year send a ship directly to Mocha and Basra. Similarly, Van Goens became suspicious also of possible collusion between the Dutch and English merchants at Surat. He warned Batavia that it would be very easy for Dutch servants of the Company, with capital borrowed from Surat merchants, to buy piece-goods on their own accounts and send these to Europe in English ships. For a share of the profits, Van Goens added, the English factors at Surat were sure to oblige[15] (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655).

Although unable significantly to reduce private trade, let alone eliminate it, Van Goens had more success in reforming the system of fixed-price contracts (*contracteren)* by which the Company during the last few years had sold its merchandise. Shortly after arrival at Surat, in January 1654, Van Goens organized an auction at the Company's factory, an auction at which all the merchandise he had brought from Batavia, except the spices, were sold to the highest bidders. The results were so encouraging that indeed it seemed that under the price contract system this merchandise (tin, copper, camphor, mercury and vermillion and so on) had been sold well below its real market value: whereas in 1653 merchandise to the value of 217,213 guilders had been sold for 365,210, Van Goens in 1654 sold 238,376 guilders worth of merchandise for 473,223 (Aalbers, 1916: 79).

The results for the spices were even more spectacular. Even though Batavia had set high price levels for the spices below which Van Goens was not to sell them, demand was so strong that he had no trouble finding buyers so that here, too, a substantial improvement was recorded: whereas in 1653 spices to the value of 85,289 guilders were sold for 328,059, Van Goens in 1654 sold 73,401 guilders worth of spices for 479,200, a mark-up of more than 650 percent. The higher returns for the spices combined with the improved prices obtained for the other merchandise meant that Van Goens realized a

[15] A few years later, in 1656, Van Goens himself had occasion to discover that these suspicions were by no means unfounded. On his way from the Republic to Batavia as Admiral of the outward-bound fleet, he encountered in the Indian Ocean the English ship *Society*, which was carrying letters from several VOC officials at Masulipatnam, on India's Coromandel coast, from which he learned that on a number of occasions the Chief of that factory had sent to England large quantities of cotton piece-goods as well as uncut diamonds (Generale Missive, 16 January 1658).

significant overall increase in the commercial viability of the Surat factory: whereas in 1653 goods to a total value of 303,502 guilders had been sold at Surat for 693,269, in 1654 goods worth 311,777 guilders yielded the very substantial sum of 952,423 (Aalbers, 1916: 114).

But whilst Van Goens very effectively reformed the method of sale at Surat, he was less successful in resolving the outstanding issues with the Moghul authorities. Partly because he had no confidence in a positive outcome of an embassy to the court of Emperor Shah Jahan, and partly also no doubt because he was reluctant to spend on gifts the very large sum of money, something in the order of 30,000 to 40,000 guilders, which such an embassy required, Van Goens decided against travelling to the court-city of Agra. Instead, he tried to settle matters with Nawab Hafiz, the Moghul Governor of Surat, who, he observed, 'can be made with small presents to do our bidding, whereas very large gifts to the Agra court all too often have resulted in only very minor advantages' (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655). Van Goens, therefore, had several meetings with Nawab Hafiz at his palace near the Surat market. At these meetings, he did obtain the Governor's approval of Batavia's proposal to buy off the Surat tolls for an annual fee of 55,000 rupees (66,000 guilders), but a number of other issues proved far more difficult to resolve.

For instance, Van Goens proposed to Nawab Haffes that the Moghuls and the Company should form an alliance in order at some time in the future jointly to capture the Portuguese stronghold of Diu. The Governor, however, was lukewarm, probably because he feared that once the Dutch were in possession of Diu, a small, strongly fortified island right off the southern end of the Kathiawar peninsula, they would never voluntarily surrender it. Similarly, Van Goens reacted less than enthusiastically to the Governor's request for five French cannon, three or four Dutch mortars and two heavy anchors which, so Nawab Hafiz claimed, he wanted to present to Emperor Shah Jahan. Reluctant to give the Moghuls the weapons upon which Dutch power in Asia largely depended, Van Goens stalled on this issue arguing that the Company was at war with the English and the Portuguese, that it had no guns to spare, and that all he could do was to relay his request to Batavia. But in order not completely to alienate the Surat Governor, Van Goens did send him the heavy anchors he had requested. And finally, realizing no doubt that the Surat Governor, nor any other Moghul official, could ever agree to Company restrictions on their right to sail Asian seas, Van Goens refrained from mentioning Batavia's refusal to grant Shah Jahan's demand for the unrestricted passage of Moghul ships and its plans to introduce passes, to require the 'Malaccan' toll of 10 percent of the value of the cargo, and to restrict all Moghul shipping to the port of Aceh. Instead of discussing these issues, Van Goens wisely decided to 'put them off for the time being' (Generale Missive, 7 November 1654).

And what about Gerardo Pelgrom? During Van Goens' stay at Surat, relations between the two men remained cordial, at least on the surface. Ostensibly, Pelgrom fully cooperated with the investigations, while Van Goens, realizing that Pelgrom was well-connected in Batavia, did not specifically target him, so that the two men continued jointly to sign their letters and reports to the Governor-General and Council. But try as he might, Van Goens could not persuade Pelgrom to sign another three-year contract as Director of the Surat factory. And of course it is not difficult to understand why. Under the leadership of Van Goens the profits of the Surat factory had soared dramatically: whereas in 1652 and 1653 net profits had been 161,025 and 197,732 guilders respectively, in 1654, when Van Goens sold the merchandise (except spices) by public auction, profits reached 396,816 guilders (Aalbers, 1916: 77). Pelgrom saw the writing on the wall. He knew that these figures would not go unnoticed by the *Heeren XVII* in the Republic; he knew also that if he stayed in his position, he was sure to come under further and much closer investigation. So for all these reasons, Pelgrom decided simply to serve out his time. And when, in February 1655, his contract had expired, he returned to Batavia and from there to the Republic where, according to the Company's Advocate Pieter van Dam, it was noticed that 'the means which Pelgrom has brought from Surat, and which he displayed on all sides, were quite substantial, even though he had spent only a few years at that factory so

that it is quite clear that he cannot have accumulated all that wealth from his salary alone' (Van Dam in Aalbers, 1916: 116).

A Fight at Sea

On 27 December 1653, when Van Goens first set eyes upon the town of Surat, the yachts *Muijden, Sluijs* and *Cabeljau,* accompanied by the sloop, *Maagd van Dordt,* headed across the Bay of Cambay towards Diu where they were to engage the three English ships that had been reported to be cruising there. But when the squadron, a few days later, arrived off Diu there was no trace of the English ships. The *Maagd van Dordt,* however, which Van Goens had sent along to gather information about Diu's defences, sailing close under Diu's massive walls, captured a small Portuguese supply vessel carrying 18 last (36 tonnes) of rice, and also apprehended an old Muslim fisherman. Upon questioning the fisherman, Joan Grevenraet, the Prosecutor, who was in charge of this spying expedition, learned that the English ships, the *Welcome, Dove* and *Falcon,* had left Diu eleven days earlier, that they had set course for the Persian Gulf where they wanted to link up with a fourth English ship, the *Endeavour,* whereupon the four ships intended to return to Diu jointly to resume their hunt for the richly-laden Company ships the *Gecroonde Leeuw* and *Popkensburch* which were expected to pass by Diu on their way from Gomroon (present day Bandar Abbas), at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, to Surat (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655).

Since Merchant Pieter de Bie, the most senior Company official aboard the Dutch squadron, had been ordered by Van Goens to sail to Diu only, Grevenraet decided to return to Surat in his fast-sailing sloop in order to seek further instructions. At Surat the captive Muslim fisherman was further interrogated. Notwithstanding close questioning, he steadfastly gave the same answers, convincing Van Goens that his information was reliable. This led him to change his plan. Concerned that the four English ships might overpower De Bie's squadron, Van Goens ordered the remaining two Company ships that lay anchored in Suvali's roadstead, the yachts *Avenhorn* and *Saphier,* to join the other ships off Diu; the five yachts were then jointly to search for and engage the English squadron, and after the battle three of the ships, the *Avenhorn, Sluijs, and Cabeljau,* were to proceed to Gomroon where they were to link up with the *Gecroonde Leeuw* and *Popkensburgh* before jointly returning to Surat. He ordered Grevenraet once more to accompany the *Avenhorn* and *Saphier* to Diu and relay his new orders to De Bie. In addition, he gave permission for a French traveller, a certain Jean Baptiste de Tavernier,[16] who was unable to travel to Persia by the overland route due to the war between Persia and the Moghul Empire, to board the yacht *Avenhorn* as a passenger, on condition that upon arrival in Europe he deliver a letter to the *Heeren XVII* at Amsterdam, a letter in which Van Goens gave a full account of the course of his mission so far (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655).

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[16]Jean Baptiste de Tavernier, the Baron of Aubonne (1605-89), was one of the most widely travelled men of the 17th Century who, over a 40-year period, undertook six overland voyages through the Ottoman Empire, Persia and the Indies. He was a diamond merchant and for that reason he was a popular guest at many Asian courts. Tavernier was also popular with many high-ranking officials of the Dutch East India Company who liked to buy diamonds from him. Unable to transfer to the Republic by means of ordinary bills of exchange the proceeds of corruption and private trade, these officials liked to invest in diamonds because these precious stones were small in bulk, could easily be hidden and could readily be sold in Amsterdam. Tavernier was close friend of Gerardo Pelgrom on whose recommendation Van Goens granted him passage to Persia. Tavernier left a three-volume account of his travels which was published in Paris in 1678. Notwithstanding the anti-Dutch bias in parts of this work, it was translated into Dutch and published in Amsterdam just four years later. See: Tavernier, J.B. 1682. *De Zes Reizen van de Heer Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Baron van Aubonne, die hij gedurende de tijt van veertig jaren, in Turkijen, Persien en in d'Indien, langs alle wegen die derwaerts strekken gedaen heeft. 3 Delen. Uit het Fransch door J.H. Glazenmaker. Amsterdam: Van Someren.*

In accordance with his instructions, Joan Grevenraet on 8 January 1654 boarded the *Maagd van Dordt*, and together with the *Avenhorn* and *Saphier* once more headed for Diu. After the two yachts a few days later had joined up with De Bie's squadron, and the five ships had disappeared over the horizon, Grevenraet briefly reconnoitred Diu's defences before heading back to Surat. But here misfortune overtook him. On 16 January, Grevenraet's sloop, which carried four small guns and a crew of 16 sailors and one ship's boy, appeared at Suvali's roads to find its path blocked by a fleet of 16 Portuguese war frigates, small vessels measuring between 60-100 tonnes, armed with 6-8 guns and with crews of about 20-30 sailors and soldiers, which the Portuguese used to protect their *cafilas* (lit. caravans) of small merchant vessels which they used to supply their numerous fortresses and settlements along the West Indian coast. In an attempt to reach the safety of the Tapti river, Grevenraet made a dash for it, but in vain, because five of the Portuguese frigates broke away from the rest of the fleet, and with the advantage of the wind they overtook the sloop and summoned it to surrender (Missive Pelgrom, 18 April 1654).

Grevenraet, however, ignored the summons whereupon the Portuguese opened fire from different directions. The Dutch sailors returned fire as best they could so that a fierce battle ensued in full view of Suvali beach where a crowd of Moghul officials, Company servants and merchants of various nations was quickly gathering. Without any ships at their disposal, the small group of Company servants who happened to be there at the beach were unable to come to the assistance of their comrades so that with mounting frustration they were forced passively to watch the unequal fight. For about two hours Grevenraet battled on. But in the end, when four of his sailors lay dead and when ten others, including Grevenraet himself, were seriously injured, he at last hoisted the white flag. The Portuguese, who had also sustained numerous casualties, apprehended the survivors, took the battered *Maagd van Dordt* in tow and headed south to the nearby Portuguese stronghold of Damão (Daman) (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655).

No doubt Van Goens felt responsible for the disaster that had befallen Grevenreat because he had sent him on his spying mission to Diu and, in addition, just days earlier he had denuded Surat of all Dutch naval forces when he had sent the *Avenhorn* and *Saphier* to Diu to join in the hunt for the English squadron. Be that as it may, Van Goens left no stone unturned to obtain the release of Grevenraet and the other captives. Even though as a convinced Calvinist he did not like negotiating with ‘papists’, he wrote several letters to Dom Bras de Castro, the Portuguese Viceroy at Goa, complaining that the Dutch sloop had been attacked in neutral waters, proposing to exchange three of the Portuguese prisoners held in Ceylon for every Dutch sailor released, and threatening that if the Viceroy remained deaf to his entreaties he would follow the Portuguese example and order his ships to attack and capture ‘all Portuguese vessels in each and every port of the Great Moghul where we may find them’. But unfortunately, the deep hatred which the Portuguese and the Dutch bore towards each other, a hatred born not only of commercial rivalry, but also of the unbridgeable Protestant-Catholic divide, allowed of no compromise. Dom Bras, at any rate, ignored all the letters from the ‘heretic’ Van Goens and, instead of responding, ordered the prisoners to be taken from Damão to Goa, where they were imprisoned as spies (Generale Missive, 26 January 1654).

While these events were unfolding near Surat, the five-ship squadron under Pieter de Bie headed northwest from Diu, towards Sindh and the Persian Gulf. But upon arrival on 20 January at Sindh (at the mouth of the Indus river), where at Sindi (present-day Tatta), some distance up-river, both the English- and the Dutch Company maintained small trading posts, De Bie learned from local informants that the English factors at Sindi had over two hundred bales of merchandise ready for shipment and that the English yachts were expected any day to arrive to take in this cargo. He decided, therefore, simply to wait for the English squadron to turn up (Tavernier, 1682, II: 166). Accordingly, the Dutch ships idly rode at anchor at the mouth of the Indus river for a number of days, until finally, at

daybreak of 2 February, the look-out aboard the flagship *Muijden* reported four small sails far out at sea. At about the same time, English sailors aboard the yachts *Welcome, Dove, Falcon* and *Endeavour,* which were under the overall command of Captain William Noke, sighted the Dutch ships off Sindh. Captain Noke, aboard the flagship *Welcome,* did not waste any time. Having the advantage of the wind, and probably counting on the element of surprise, he decided immediately to give battle and with billowing sails the English squadron headed straight for the Dutch ships (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655).

The French diamond merchant Tavernier, who saw the English ships approach from the deck of the *Avenhorn,* suggested that another reason for Captain Noke's boldness may have been that he underestimated the strength of the Dutch squadron. The Dutch yachts, according to Tavernier, were lying low in the water so that the English, looking at them from a distance, may have mistaken them for small frigates. But unbeknown to the English, the Dutch ships were riding low in the water for no other reason than that Van Goens had filled them to the brim with cannon, gunpowder and other war materials. The *Muijden,* for instance, carried no fewer than 48 guns, while the *Sluijs, Cabaljau, Avenhorn* and *Saphier* were armed with about 30 guns each (Tavernier, 1682 II: 166). This meant that the English were quite heavily out-gunned because the *Welcome,* the largest of the English ships, carried only 32 guns, whilst the *Dove, Falcon* and *Endeavour* were armed with about 26 guns each[17] (Blackman, Pearce and Gary, 1654).

As the English ships drew nearer and their hostile intent became plain to see, the Dutch sailors, lacking time properly to hoist the anchors, quickly cut the anchor cables and brought their guns in readiness. As they came within firing range, the four English yachts, sailing next to each other, jointly attacked the *Muijden.* Several of the Dutch ships, however, came to the assistance of the *Muijden* so that only one of the English yachts, the *Welcome,* managed to press home the attack, an endeavour in which it succeeded so well that it collided with the Dutch flagship, causing its rigging to become entangled in an anchor that was hanging from the starboard side of the *Muijden.* But instead of seizing this unexpected opportunity and ordering his men to board the *Welcome,* a venture which might well have succeeded because the *Muijden,* with about 120 soldiers and sailors, was larger and more heavily manned than the *Welcome,* Pieter de Bie gave orders for his ship to be cut free (Tavernier, 1682 II: 166-167). This seems to have been the last time anyone listened to him because with cannon thundering, with metal and pieces of wood flying about everywhere and with men screaming in pain, De Bie lost his head completely so that no one, and least of all the skippers of the other Dutch yachts, paid him any further heed.

Apart from revealing the ineptitude of De Bie, this close encounter between the *Welcome* and *Muijden* led the English Commander, Captain William Noke, to change his plans. He had seen at close quarters that the Dutch ships were heavily gunned and well manned; he realized that under these circumstances it would be well-nigh impossible for him to win the battle, and almost certainly he worried about the precious cargo of Persian silk, worth between 30,000 and 40,000 pounds, aboard the *Welcome* and *Dove,* and for all these reasons he decided that caution was the better part of valour. Taking advantage of a favourable wind, Captain Noke left the scene of the battle with his ships *Welcome* and

[17]Apart from being outgunned, Captain Noke may have been at a disadvantage also in respect of the motivation of at least part of his crew, some of whom may have enlisted for the long voyage to the Indies because they were reluctant to fight the Dutch in the North Sea. In any case, Blackman, President of the English factory at Surat, quoted the men from the *Dove* as 'saying they came not forth to fight, for, if they had bein mynded soe to doe, they might have had fighteing worke enough at home' (Blackman, Pearce and Gary, 1654).

Dove, which, however, were hotly pursued by the fast-sailing Dutch yacht *Sluijs*. But although Captain Noke, by retreating in this way, had taken his precious cargo out of harm's way, he had abandoned the two remaining English yachts, the *Falcon* and *Endeavour*, which now faced truly overwhelming odds (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655).

While the *Welcome* and *Dove* were trying to make good their escape, the yacht *Falcon* was engaged in a one-to-one duel with the *Avenhorn*, a duel witnessed by Tavernier who was standing on the *Avenhorn's* quarterdeck. In his memoirs the Frenchman related how a broadside from the *Falcon* 'took away two Hollanders who were standing close to me, while a third had his head smashed by a piece of wood which also tore off a piece of my cloak: they were killed instantly right at my side, so that I was completely splattered with their blood' (Tavernier, 1682 II: 169). But even though the *Falcon's* gunfire had already killed about ten of the Dutch sailors, the skipper of the *Avenhorn*, Jan van Roosendael,[18] told his men to hold their fire until the English yacht had come within close range. And when finally the *Avenhorn's* guns burst forth they did so with devastating effect: the *Falcon's* foremast came crashing down onto the deck, while a cannonball, smashing right through the Captain's cabin, ignited some gunpowder causing a fire to take hold (Tavernier, 1682 II: 167).

At this moment, Dutch sailors aboard the *Avenhorn* threw out their grappling-irons, wherupon Van Roosendael, at the head of his men, jumped across onto the *Falcon's* deck wielding boarding-axes and sables with which they quickly cut the English yacht's riggings. With his ship on fire, unable to set sail on account of the cut riggings, and facing a numerically superior enemy, the *Falcon's* Captain had little alternative but to surrender. Van Roosendael, who had received a serious injury in the hand-to-hand fighting, ordered the English sailors to be disarmed, whereupon they were taken across into the *Avenhorn* in groups of ten. Some of the English sailors, however, volunteered to fight the fire. The Dutch skipper, who was to die a few days later of his injuries, allowed them to stay aboard the *Falcon*, and together with a party of his own men, the erstwhile enemies, who had been trying to kill each other only minutes earlier, battled together to douse the fire, an effort which was crowned with success towards the late afternoon (Tavernier, 1682 II: 167).

While the *Falcon* was fighting this losing battle with the *Avenhorn*, the second English yacht that had been left behind, the *Endeavour*, also found itself in serious strife. It was attacked by the Dutch yacht *Saphier* , commanded by skipper Johan Romeijn, an attack in which it was joined later in the day by the *Avenhorn*. Both Dutch yachts managed on several occasions to approach the *Endeavour* closely enough to fire broadsides into its hull, in consequence of which a number of holes were made below the waterline. With the *Endeavour* taking in water, discipline aboard the vessel seems to have broken down. While the ship's carpenters for some time valiantly tried to plug the holes through which the water was gushing in, other members of the crew showed greater interest in the cargo of victuals the *Endeavour* was carrying, a cargo destined for the English factory at Surat, which for the most part seems to have consisted of Persian (Shiraz) wine (Tavernier, 1682 II: 168).

[18]Van Goens knew Jan van Roosendael well. In 1650 Van Roosendael had commanded the small yacht *der Gapinge* with which Van Goens had travelled to Siam to inspect the Company's factory at Ayutthaya. Impressed by Van Roosendael's skills as a seaman, Van Goens had recommended him for promotion in consequence whereof he had been given command of the *Avenhorn* (see Van der Kraan, 1998: 81).

With his ship sinking, most of his crew out of control and drinking Shiraz wine below deck, the Captain of the *Endeavour* had few options other than to raise the white flag. This, however, was noticed by the look-out aboard the yacht *Sluijs,* which was in pursuit of the fleeing *Welcome* and *Dove,* and had already come within firing range of the latter English yacht. The skipper of the *Sluijs,* a certain Christiaen Sluijker, mindful no doubt of the maxim that a bird in hand is better than ten in the bush, broke off the chase and headed for the stricken *Endeavour* intending to claim the yacht as a prize. Understandably, this was not appreciated by the crew of the *Saphier* who had done most of the fighting and to whom, moreover, the English sailors of the *Endeavour* had called out requesting quarter. But as chance would have it, the *Sluijs* was first to reach the *Endeavour,* whereupon nearly the whole crew, some 70 men, went across onto the English yacht and by menacing the men from the *Saphier* with their muskets and pistols forcibly prevented them from climbing aboard (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655).

But although the men from the *Sluijs* successfully intimidated the crew of the *Saphier,* their capture of the *Endeavour* proved to be something of a poisoned chalice. Their hopes of seizing a rich prize were largely disappointed because, apart from the Shiraz wine, there was little of value on board and, moreover, the ship was no longer seaworthy and was taking in a lot of water. In any case, when the men from the *Sluijs* first climbed aboard they did not see any English sailors on deck, but when some of them jumped below deck, they came upon an extraordinary scene because the entire English crew, some 60 to 70 men, was gathered there guzzling wine. And this, needless to say, was an activity which appealed equally to the Dutch sailors who, according to Tavernier, 'proved themselves no wiser [than the English], and not realizing that the ship was close to sinking, joined them in their drinking party' (Tavernier, 1682 II: 168). And while the erstwhile enemies spent the afternoon together in increasing merriment, the *Endeavour* kept taking in water until, towards nightfall, the ship suddenly rolled over, whereupon it sank quickly, taking down to a common seaman's grave 12 English and ten Dutch sailors (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655).

During the night following the tragic sinking of the *Endeavour,* Captain William Noke with the yachts *Welcome* and *Dove* shook off the pursuing *Muijden* and *Cabeljau* and made good his escape. So when on 3 February 1654 the sun rose over the seas off Sindh and the English ships were nowhere to be seen, the Dutch at last had time to draw up the balance sheet. It transpired that during the battle of the previous day they had suffered 50 casualties of whom ten had gone down with the *Endeavour,* while another 18 had been killed in the fighting. The material damage, too, had been considerable. Apart from the *Cabaljau,* which was carrying most of the merchandise for Persia and for that reason had stayed clear of the fighting, all the Dutch yachts had suffered damage, although none was in danger of sinking. On the positive side, the Dutch had captured the *Falcon,* which they immediately renamed the *Conijn (Rabbit),* as well as approximately 100 prisoners who, for reasons of security, were divided up amongst the various ships: about 20 were held aboard the yacht *Sluijs,*[19] while the remaining 80-odd were taken aboard the *Muijden, Saphier* and *Conijn* (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655).

[19]These 20 prisoners were taken back to Gomroon, Persia, where they arrived on 24 February/6 March 1654. While the *Sluijs* was lying at anchor in the roads of Gomroon, four of the prisoners escaped to be taken in by the English factory there. The fate of the other prisoners is unknown, but it can safely be assumed that, like the prisoners who were taken to Surat, most of them eventually signed contracts with the Dutch Company (Young, Park and Otgher, 1654).

After carrying out some emergency repairs, the yachts *Avenhorn*, *Sluijs* and *Cabaljau*, proceeded on to Gomroon, Persia, while the *Muijden*, *Saphier* and *Conijn*, returned to Surat where they arrived on 17 February 1654, only to find that the *Welcome* and *Dove* had reached Surat two days earlier and were lying safely anchored in neutral waters some distance up the Tapti river (Blackman and Pearce, 1654). At the Surat factory, Van Goens was briefed on the battle and, the partial Dutch victory notwithstanding, he was far from amused! 'It is a sad and insufferable business', he wrote in his letter to the *Heeren XVII* of 18 April 1654,

> that our ships' officers have behaved themselves so badly in this battle, not through lack of courage as far as can be ascertained, but through lack of forethought and deliberation. They met the attacking enemy in such a disorderly manner that the two yachts that have escaped at all times retained the advantage of the wind, while our two best and fastest-sailing yachts, the *Sluijs* and *Saphier*, attacked the weakest of the enemy ships (an old yacht, named *Endeavour)*, and out of greediness for booty so shamelessly forgot themselves that they not only wasted a lot of valuable time, but also (it is lamentable) began to drink Persian wine so that along with the prize that had been taken 10 of our sailors and 12 Englishmen sank to the bottom of the sea (Missive Van Goens, 18 April 1654).[20]

But the worst of it, Van Goens went on, was that the battle had yielded but little profit for the Company:

> Although the *Muijden* and *Cabaljau* pursued the two fleeing ships (in which the best booty had been loaded) deep into the dark of night, to my great regret they escaped capture so that the Honourable Company has gained nothing other than the idle fame of victory and the *Falcon* (now named the *Conijn)*, which, despite the damage it has suffered, is still a strong, well-built yacht, eight years old, large enough to take in at least 240 tonnes, and armed with 25 iron and two metal pieces, but without any cargo because, as I said before, the cargo of Persian silk was carried in the *Welcome* and *Dove.* It was estimated to have been worth between 300,000 and 400,000 guilders, so that a great prize has slipped through our fingers for no other reason than the shocking mismanagement of the ship's officers (Missive Van Goens, 18 April 1654).

'I venture to say', Van Goens concluded,

> that the only thing lacking here has been a good Chief to keep the skippers in awe, because [in this battle] everyone has just followed his own temper and passions, for which reason, if this war should continue (which God mercifully forbids), I advise that squadrons of 3 or 4 ships, let alone larger fleets, should never sail the seas without an undisputed Commander, a man of authority who through his dominance over all others and his wise council will be able to make everyone do their duty. Here this has not happened. The extremely

[20]Tavernier, an eye-witness to the battle, largely confirms this assessment. Although he was full of praise for the skipper of the *Avenhorn* who, he said, 'had gained great honour in this fight' (Tavernier 1682: 167), he had a poor opinion of the way both the English and Dutch had conducted themselves. Upon arrival at Gomroon, Tavernier is quoted to have told the English factors in this Persian port: 'there never was a fight worss mannaged on boath sides. The Dutch were most of them drunke and knew not what they did; the English, I thinke, were little better, if not worss. They would never elce have lost such an opportunity' (Blackman, Pearce and Gary, 1654).

> fast-sailing yacht *Sluijs* simply ignored the signals that were sent from the *Muijden*, which flew the flag, calling it off the *Endeavour* and ordering it to pursue the fleeing English ships, so that it is clear that those of the *Sluijs* are the most guilty, for which reason, I shall as soon as possible, and after gaining further information, administer such punishment as I and the Surat Council will consider justice to demand (Missive Van Goens, 18 April 1654).[21]

But although Van Goens clearly had wanted a more resounding victory over the English, he was, as indeed were many of his Protestant contemporaries in both England and Holland, very much opposed to this war which he saw as an instance of fratricidal strife which only diverted the Company from its real goals, namely, the destruction of Portuguese and Muslim power in the Indies. Van Goens gave vent to these feeling in his report to the *Heeren XVII*. 'I pray to the Almighty', he told the Company Directors, 'that He will find a way soon to forge peace out of this bloody war lest two brave nations tear each other asunder to become easy prey for others' (Report Van Goens, 18 April 1654). In addition, his treatment of the English prisoners clearly shows that Van Goens harboured no hatred towards this enemy. In striking contrast to the Portuguese treatment of Grevenraet and his men, upon arrival in Suvali's bight on 17 February 1654 of the *Muijden*, *Saphier* and the captured *Conijn*, Van Goens released into the care of President Blackman, the head of the English factory at Surat, about ten of the prisoners who had been badly injured, as well as one, a certain Hargrave, who was ill, a compassionate gesture which, interestingly, he failed to mention in his reports to Batavia (Blackman, Pearce and Gary, 1654).

The remaining prisoners, some 70 men, one of whom was Joseph Blackman, the brother of President Blackman, Van Goens detained aboard the three ships riding at anchor off Suvali. But six days later, on 23 February 1654, after having met President Blackman, he agreed to release the President's brother and five other officers, two of whom were named Newland and Allen, on condition they swear an oath not to take up arms against the Dutch Republic for a period of twelve months (Report Van Goens, 18 April 1654). Interestingly, in his report to the Company directors in London, President Blackman gave the news that the six officers had been released on parole, but made no mention of the substance of the oath they had been required to take (Blackman and Pearce, 1654). And in a further conciliatory gesture, Van Goens granted a pass to Captain William Noke to sail from Surat to Basra, Persia, from where he intended to travel overland to England, in part, as Van Goens confided to the *Heeren XVII*, 'because in any case we cannot prevent him undertaking this voyage if he decides to sail in a Muslim ship' (Missive Van Goens, 18 April 1654).

But while Van Goens treated the prisoners leniently, certainly by the standards of the time, it is clear also that in releasing the English officers he was not motivated by altruism alone, but also by considerations of a practical nature. He faced a severe shortage of sailors, especially of experienced sailors, a shortage which had worsened on acount of the 50-odd casualties the Dutch had suffered in the battle off Sindh. Put simply, Van Goens wanted the captured English sailors, who he said, 'are as brave as we are', to enlist with the Dutch Company and he was disappointed when five or six days after their arrival at Surat, only a handful of the prisoners had signed contracts, even though the signing of a

[21]Van Goens was never to carry out this threat. The *Sluijs* returned to Surat from Persia on 9 April 1654 by which time Van Goens was anxious to leave for Ceylon which was under pressure from the Portuguese. And in the battle against the Portuguese early in May 1654 (see the section To Ceylon's Rescue), Christiaen Sluijker and the other officers of the *Sluijs* so distinguished themselves that back in Batavia Van Goens interceded on their behalf and had the trial called off (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655).

contract brought an immediate improvement in conditions for the sailor in question because he was then allowed out of the hot, dark and humid cargo hold where he had been kept, he received a wage, better food, the right to bear arms and so on (Report Van Goens, 18 April 1654). Recognizing that the command structure amongst the prisoners was an obstacle to the realization of his goal, Van Goens decided simply to release the officers who, he said, 'had been inciting their men against us' (Generale Missive, 26 January 1655).

But even without their officers, the English sailors did not exactly rush to sign up with the Dutch Company. After about two weeks of imprisonment in the ships' cargo holds, only 15 or 16 of the prisoners had taken the oath of loyalty with the Dutch Company, whilst the rest remained opposed to the idea so that, according to Van Goens, 'there is such great discord amongst the English prisoners that at night one party armed with drawn sabres has to stand on guard to prevent the other party from escaping' (Missive Van Goens, 18 April 1654). But despite being closely guarded, five of the prisoners did manage to jump overboard and swim to shore eventually to make their way to the English Surat factory, although the great majority, between 50 and 60 men, unwilling or unable to escape, eventually succumbed to the pressure and signed contracts with the Dutch Company. Here, too, Van Goens saw the hand of God. 'I am of the opinion', he informed the Directors in the Republic, 'that God the Lord has greatly assisted us in sending us the English prisoners because they help us bring our ships across the seas' (Missive Van Goens, 18 April 1654).

To Ceylon's Rescue

On 4 April 1654 the long-awaited yachts *Griffioen* and *Trouw,* escorted by the *Weesp* and *Hulst,* came to anchor in the roads of Suvali bringing merchandise from Japan, China and Taiwan. But apart from the precious cargo of Japanese copper and Chinese silk, the squadron also brought letters for Van Goens from Governor Adriaen van der Meijden in Ceylon and Petrus Andreas at Vengurla. The news was both good and bad. The good news was that Andreas had been entirely succussful in mending fences with King Adil Mohammed Shah of Bijapur. Andreas reported that he had carried out his embassy to the court at Bijapur, that he had been well-received there, that the King had ordered the Indian merchants, Narva and Krisna Sinay, to repay their debt to the Company, and that he had issued a new *firman* allowing the Company to reopen its factory at Vengurla. In addition, Nawab Fatel Khan, at his own expense, had carried out repairs and extensions to the Company's buildings at Vengurla so that the accommodation of the Company servants at that factory was now grander and more comfortable than before. 'One would wish', Van Goens wistfully commented on reading Andreas' letter, 'that all the Company's affairs would take such a favourable turn' (Missive Van Goens, 18 April 1654).

The bad news, however, concerned Ceylon. Governor van der Meijden reported that in late January 1654 an 18-sail Portuguese fleet, consisting of 5 war frigates and 13 supply ships, had slipped through the Dutch blockade of Colombo, that the blockading Dutch yachts had destroyed only one of the frigates, that substantial reinforcements in men, victuals and war materials had been landed, and that the Portuguese, emboldened by this relief, had begun an offensive and had succeeded in reclaiming a great deal of territory. At the same time, Van der Meijden went on, the morale amongst the Company troops was worse than ever, especially amongst the Javanese soldiers who, in order to avert the danger of mutiny, he had had to split up into small units which he had distributed amongst the various garrisons. The health situation was also extremely poor. Of the entire 400-strong Galle garrison, the Governor complained, a mere 25 men were healthy enough to bear arms (Missive van der Meijden, 26 May 1654).

What made all these tidings even more disturbing was the intelligence Petrus Andreas had received from Goa. Andreas had been told by informants in Goa that on 24 February 1654 a Portuguese fleet consisting of five pinnaces (*pataxos)* and a 'good number' of frigates had left the Portuguese capital for Ceylon with the intention of breaking the Dutch blockade of Colombo and bringing further succour to the Portuguese forces in the island. This, Van Goens knew, was a most dangerous development because the Dutch blockading fleet, which consisted of only three yachts and one armed sloop, would be extremely hard-pressed to withstand this Portuguese fleet. 'God grant', Van Goens warned the *Heeren XVII,* 'that our ships will be able to repel the enemy and keep them out because otherwise the affairs of Ceylon might well take a turn for the worse' (Missive Van Goens, 18 April 1654).

Although itching immediately to rush to the aid of the Dutch in Ceylon, Van Goens was as yet unable to do so. The problem was that even though there were now six Dutch yachts riding at anchor in Suvali's roads, Van Goens had insufficient forces to relieve Ceylon, partly because the *Griffioen* and *Trouw* were loaded with merchandise for Persia and were scheduled to proceed to Gomroon, and partly, because he had to leave at least two yachts behind to keep the *Welcome* and *Dove* bottled up in the Tapti river. 'It hurts me to my very soul', Van Goens explained in his letter to the Directors,

> that I am unable at present to come to the assistance of Ceylon. Until I receive reinforcements, I cannot allow the two English ships to sail away because this nation is now so embittered against us on account of the damage they have suffered, that I do not doubt for a moment that upon gaining their freedom they immediately will go over to the Portuguese in order jointly to undertake some kind of desperate enterprise to avenge themselves (Missive Van Goens, 18 April 1654).

No doubt much to his relief, just five days later, on 9 April 1654, the Persian fleet at long last arrived at Suvali, a fleet consisting of six yachts, namely the *Avenhorn, Sluijs, Cabeljau, Gecroonde Leeuw, Popkensburgh* and *Zijdeworm (Silkworm),* the latter a small yacht which some months earlier had been captured from the English in the Persian Gulf. After stipulating that the two Persia-bound ships, the *Griffioen* and *Trouw,* should stay behind to continue the blockade of the Tapti river until the expected change in season in May would make it impossible for the English ships to sail for home, Van Goens began making preparations for the Ceylon relief expedition. There was much to be done. In order as much as possible to increase the manpower aboard his fleet, Van Goens took a number of Dutch sailors off the *Griffioen* and *Trouw* whom, under much protest by President Blackman to the Surat Governor, he replaced with 20 hired Gujarati seamen. In addition, Van Goens saw to it that all repairs that could be made to the ships' hulls, rudders, rigging and so on were in fact carried out (Missive Van Goens, 18 April 1654).

Finally, on 20 April 1654, when everything possible had been done, Van Goens left Suvali roadstead with a large, 11-sail fleet consisting of the *Muijden, Saphier, Weesp, Hulst, Conijn, Avenhorn, Sluijs, Cabeljau, Gecroonde Leeuw, Popkensburgh* and *Zijdeworm,* a fleet, which, although well-armed, was rather weakly manned with between 600-650 sailors and soldiers of various nationalities. The voyage down the West Indian coast was uneventful until the early morning of 26 April 1654, when three of the yachts, the *Hulst, Popkensburgh* and *Zijdeworm,* sailing close to shore near Achera Salze, some 45 kilometres North of Vengurla, sighted a large Portuguese *cafila* of approximately 65 ships, about 55 of which were small unarmed vessels carrying foodstuffs like rice, coconuts, figs and so on, while the remaining ten or so were war frigates whose task it was to protect the convoy (Brief Van Goens, 29 April 1654).

Acting on orders from Van Goens to avenge the Portuguese seizure of the *Maagd van Dordt*, and to destroy all Portuguese shipping wherever it may be found, be this on the high seas or in neutral ports, the three Dutch yachts immediately bore down on the *caffila* . The Commander of the frigates, however, coincidentally the same officer who about three months earlier had captured the *Maagd van Dordt,* took the view that the approaching yachts were too large and too heavily gunned for him to be able successfully to confront and, instead of trying to defend his convoy, headed for the safety of Goa with all his war frigates. This left the *caffila* at the mercy of the Dutch yachts. About 35 of the merchant vessels were quickly chased onto the shore where about 20 of them were smashed to pieces by the surf, whilst the remaining 15 or 16, which had been washed onto the beach, were set alight and burnt by a party of Dutch sailors. About 20 merchant vessels, sailing very close to shore, managed to escape, while another four were captured and taken in tow. By midday the entire *caffila* had been destroyed and dispersed (Brief Van Goens, 29 April 1654).

On 27 April 1654, when all the Dutch ships had assembled in the roads at Vengurla, Van Goens learned to his satisfaction of the destruction of the Portuguese *caffila*. He decided to use this opportunity once more to press for the release of Grevenraet and his men. Accordingly, he drafted two letters to Dom Bras de Castro, the Portuguese Viceroy at Goa, in which he told him that the Dutch attack on the Portuguese fleet was in retaliation for the Portuguese seizure of the *Maagd van Dordt* and that, if he wished such attacks to cease, he should immediately release Grevenraet and the other prisoners.[22] At the same time, Van Goens wrote to Gerardo Pelgrom advising him to inform Governor Haffes of Surat that the destruction of the Portuguese *caffila* had been a deliberate act on the part of the Company to avenge itself for the outrage the Portuguese had committed in violating the neutrality of the Emperor Shah Jahan's Suvali roadstead, and that the Company would persist in such attacks until such time as the Portuguese agreed to release the prisoners (Brief Van Goens, 29 April 1654).

After briefly inspecting the Vengurla factory, where he found everything to be in good order, Van Goens boarded the flagship *Muijden* and in the late afternoon of 29 April 1654 once again set sail for Ceylon. It was not to be a quiet voyage. When the fleet, in the early morning of 1 May 1654, had just passed Goa, two sails appeared on the horizon which, later in the day, proved to be those of the Portuguese galleons *Santiago e São Felipe* and *São José*, two well-armed ships carrying 34 and 36 heavy guns respectively and manned by crews of between 120-150 each. Catching sight of the superior Dutch force, the smallest of the galleons, the *Santiago e São Felipe,* tried to escape by running close to shore but, unfortunately, struck some rocks and ran aground. With one of the galleons out of action without having had to fire a single shot, Van Goens with several of his yachts attacked the *São José,* which bravely battled on for about eight hours until late in the evening when it, too, was driven ashore near the place where the *Santiago e São Felipe* had stranded (Winius, 1971: 142-3).

[22]After a long silence, Dom Bras on 12 June 1654 at last responded to Van Goens' letters by making the release of the prisoners conditional upon the restitution of the four merchant vessels captured during the attack on the caffila, a demand unacceptable to the Company (Missive Dom Bras, 12 June 1654). But even if the Viceroy's response had been more forthcoming, it would have been too late for Joan Grevenraet. During his brief stay at Vengurla, Van Goens learned that Grevenraet had died on 23 April 1654 in a Goan dungeon 'of natural causes', probably as a result of infection of the wound he had sustained in the battle off Suvali beach (See the section A Fight at Sea). Upon hearing of Grevenraet's death, Van Goens thanked 'the Almighty for delivering him out of the hands of that atrocious nation because otherwise he would in all probability have shared the fate of the other prisoners and have spend the rest of his life in misery' (Generale Missive, 26 January 1654). It is not known what became of the other 13 prisoners of the *Maagd van Dordt.*

The crews of the two stranded galleons escaped into the dark of night, taking their dead and wounded with them. When, a short time later, the Dutch sailors landed onto the beach, they quickly concluded that the two ships were irretrievably lost, whereupon, on orders from Van Goens, they slid the guns out into deep water, whence they could not easily be recovered, and set fire to the vessels. But whilst it was disappointing that not much could be salvaged from the two ships, good fortune did not desert Van Goens. His men took prisoner four Portuguese stragglers, one of whom, to their surprise, turned out to be a Dutch sergeant whom the Portuguese, in January 1653, had captured at Anguruwatota in Ceylon (see the section, In War-torn Ceylon, above) and who had used this opportunity to escape from Portuguese captivity (Brief Van Goens, 7 May 1654).

The sergeant was brought before Van Goens and, happy to be back amongst his own people, readily gave him all the information he required. He told Van Goens that the two galleons that had just been destroyed formed part of the five-ship squadron which on 24 February 1654 had left Goa for Ceylon. The galleons had reached Colombo towards the end of March 1654 and, as Van Goens had feared, after a splintering engagement outside the Colombo harbour entrance, an engagement in which one of the Dutch yachts, the *Drommedaris,* had ran aground, they had broken through. Amidst scenes of great jubilation in the beleaguered town, the galleons had landed a quantity of victuals and some reinforcements in men and war materials whereupon, early in April 1654, they had started the return voyage to Goa, only to become separated along the way (Winius, 1971: 142-143).

Realizing that three more Portuguese galleons were on the way, Van Goens called a meeting of all the skippers at which he told them of the likelihood of further battle and, in order to motivate them, held out the prospect, in case of victory, of two months extra wages for all sailors and soldiers of the fleet and substantial bonuses for all the officers. Immediately thereafter Van Goens resumed his course down the West Indian coast. And indeed, after just one day, in the afternoon of 3 May 1654, two sails appeared on the horizon which, some time later, proved to be those of the *São João Pérola* and *Santo António,* the two largest of the five galleons carrying 42 and 38 heavy guns repectively and manned by crews of between 150-200 soldiers and sailors each (Brief Van Goens, 7 May 1654). Around the same time, the Portuguese sighted the Dutch yachts but, in the belief that it was an English squadron escorting a number of Portuguese ships to Colombo, they made no attempt to escape but, instead, headed straight towards them (Van Tongeren, 1654).

When the Captains of the Portuguese galleons realized their mistake, it was too late to disengage. Both of them, however, resolved to fight it out, whereupon they and their men knelt down in prayer, took the last sacrament from the hands of the *padres,* and swore an oath never to surrender their ships. Meanwhile, Van Goens had divided his fleet into three squadrons, one of which he held in reserve, while the other two engaged the galleons. Van Goens himself attacked the largest galleon, the *São João Pérola,* with the *Muijden, Weesp* and *Popkensburgh,* while the *Santo António* was set upon by the *Sluijs, Gecroonde Leeuw, Hulst* and *Cabbeljau.* The unequal fight went on all night, from about 4.30 in the late afternoon until dawn of the next day. By that time the two Dutch squadrons had fired broadside upon broadside into the galleons which, while causing many casualties and extensive damage to their woodwork, riggings and sails, had failed seriously to cripple either one of the two Portuguese warships, let alone sink them. Instead, the galleons had retreated in an orderly fashion to take up defensive positions close to shore, making it almost impossible for the Dutch yachts to approach them without running aground (Brief Van Goens, 7 May 1654).

At sunrise of 4 May 1654 Van Goens carefully considered the situation. The galleons still had a lot of fight left in them so that, obviously, it was impossible to take them by boarding without suffering heavy casualties and serious damage to his ships, several of which were carrying precious cargos. So for all these reasons, Van Goens decided to sacrifice the oldest and least seaworthy yacht in his fleet, the *Zijdeworm,* and turn it into a fire-ship. Accordingly, the ship was emptied of its supplies and cargo, stripped of its guns and filled with tar, wood and other incendiary materials. And in order to induce the skipper of the *Zijdeworm* to undertake this dangerous assignment, Van Goens offered him the substantial sum of 2,500 guilders of which he was to keep half, whilst the other half was to be divided amongst the sailors he required to carry out the enterprise. The skipper agreed to these terms and quickly recruited a pilot and eleven volunteer sailors (Brief Van Goens, 7 May 1654).

In the evening, when everything was ready, the fire-ship was set alight whereupon it bore down upon the *São João Pérola.* The *Zijdeworm* closely approached its stationary target when, to the delight of the Portuguese, a sudden change in the direction of the wind blew the fire-ship away from the galleon. But if the Portuguese saw in this a manifestation of divine intervention, they were soon to be disappointed because, undaunted by the failed initial attempt, the skipper of the *Zijdeworm,* decided without delay to make a second run (Resolutie GG en Raden, 19 June 1654). This time the fire-ship headed straight for the bow of the *São João Pérola.* With the blazing *Zijdeworm* bearing down on them, with the crew of the fire-ship already jumping overboard, a fatal collision seemed inevitable. In a desperate attempt to take their ship out of harm's way, the Portuguese sailors cut the anchor cables and tried to escape by running close to shore. But to no avail. Unable to free itself from the violent surf, the *São João Pérola* was soon cast up against the rocks; the crew, seeing that all was lost, abandoned ship, and within a few hours the mighty galleon had broken up into several pieces (Brief Van Goens, 7 May 1654).

Notwithstanding the disaster that had befallen the *São João Pérola,* its sister-ship, the *Santo António,* refused to surrender so that Van Goens, at sunrise of 5 May 1654, resumed the attack. Again, broadside after broadside were fired into the galleon by the *Muijden, Sluijs, Weesp* and several of the other yachts. After a few hours of taking this punishment, the Captain of the *Santo António* at last gave orders for his crew to abandon ship, but unwilling to leave anything of value to the hated Hollanders, he set his ship ablaze. Having wanted to capture the ship, the Dutch saw to their dismay that the fire was quickly spreading. This, however, did not stop the men from the *Sluijs,* the same crew which a few months earlier had boarded the sinking *Endeavour,* from taking to their boats and, at considerable risk to life and limb, climbing aboard the stricken galleon. There, amidst a scene of utter devastation, they counted the mangled bodies of 41 Portuguese soldiers and sailors lying scattered about the deck (Brief Van Goens, 7 May 1654). But with fire now engulfing the galleon, the men from the *Sluijs,* dare-devils though they undoubtedly were, had little time for plunder and were soon forced to abandon ship. Minutes later, the fire reached the gun-powder storage room whereupon the *Santo António* exploded into a ball of fire (Brief de Lairesse, 10 May 1654).

In the expectation that there was one more galleon to come, Van Goens in the afternoon of 5 May 1654, once more assembled his fleet and resumed his course down the West Indian coast. And indeed, just a few hours later, the fifth galleon, the *Nossa Senhora de Nasaré (Our Lady of Nasareth),* with a small Muslim vessel in tow, came into view, a galleon with only 24 guns and a crew of between 100-120, the smallest ship in the ill-fated Portuguese squadron. Van Goens did not take immediate action but waited until sunrise of 6 May 1654 when, however, it became apparent that the Captain of the *Nossa Senhora de Nasaré,* a certain Urbano Fialho, had decided to fight it out. During the night he had brought his guns in readiness and, for greater manoeuvrability, he had released the Muslim ship he had had in tow. The Anachoda was brought before Van Goens who immediately recognized him because a few months earlier, at Surat, he had given him a pass

allowing him to sail to Bengal. After thanking Van Goens for his deliverance, the Anachoda explained that he was on his return voyage to Surat but that the galleon, a few days earlier, had captured him and was taking him to Goa as a prize (Vertoogh Van Goens 1655).

In the meantime, the *Nossa Senhora de Nasaré* made a dash for it, trying to escape to the nearby Portuguese fortress of Onor. Several of the Dutch yachts, including the fast-sailing *Muijden* and *Sluijs*, went in pursuit but could not prevent the galleon, later in the day, from reaching Onor first. But as if there was no end to Portuguese misfortune, Captain Fialho discovered that Onor was ringed by the besieging forces of the local Indian ruler, Sinapa Naik, and that it was impossible to enter the harbour. With his back to the wall, he defended himself with great bravery, but could not prevent the Dutch yachts from firing broadside after broadside into his galleon's hull and rigging. The unequal fight continued until the following morning, by which time the galleon had sustained heavy damage. With Captain Fialho still refusing to give up, the Portuguese crew, or what remained of it, mutinied, placed him under arrest and began negotiating terms of surrender (Winius, 1971: 142-3).

After Van Goens had agreed to grant them their lives and liberty and put them ashore at nearby Cannanore, the crew of the *Nossa Senhora* ran up the white flag whereupon they were taken prisoner. To everyone's surprise, there were 23 Hollanders among their number who, like the Dutch sergeant who had escaped from the *São José* a few days earlier, had been taken prisoner in January 1653 at Anguruwatota in Ceylon (see the section In War-torn Ceylon). Although most of these Hollanders turned out to be prisoners of the Portuguese, seven of them, presumably after converting to Catholicism, had entered Portuguese service. Although Van Goens could have had these seven hanged in punishment of their crime, he decided to pardon them because he understood that they had gone over to the Portuguese not out of affection for the enemy, but out of 'sheer despondency on account of the great poverty and misery they have had to endure'. In any case, the 23 Hollanders provided most welcome additional manpower for the fleet because during the fighting of the past few days Van Goens had lost 25 of his sailors, while another 48 had been injured, many of them seriously (Generale Missive, 7 November 1654).

In addition to providing some additional hands for the fleet, the *Nossa Senhora* also made good some of the material losses Van Goens had suffered because the galleon proved to be well supplied with guns and war materials. Unable to transfer onto his ships the galleon's heavy guns on account of their great weight, Van Goens nonetheless took six of the lighter guns, described as 'excellent metal pieces', which he placed aboard the *Muijden* and *Weesp*. In addition, he loaded onto his ships 5,000 pounds of gunpowder, 2,000-3,000 cannon balls, quantities of sails and ropes, several masts, and various other items of navigational equipment (Brief de Lairesse, 10 May 1654). At the same time, however, Van Goens decided he could not save the ship. It had been badly damaged, it was taking in water and, therefore, it would require quite a substantial crew to keep it afloat, a crew Van Goens felt he was unable to make available from his already weakly-manned fleet. So for all these reasons, and no doubt much to his regret, he ordered the galleon to be put to the torch (Missive van der Meijden, 26 May 1654).

When the *Nossa Senhora* had disappeared beneath the waves, the fleet headed to Cannanore where it arrived three days later, on 10 May 1654. In accordance with the terms of surrender, Van Goens put ashore Captain Fialho and his remaining crew. In addition, he released the Moghul ship he had freed from Portuguese captivity and gave its Anachoda, who was sailing for Surat, two letters addressed to Gerardo Pelgrom, the first of which, dated 7 May 1654, he had written in the roads of the besieged Portuguese fortress of Onor, while the second, dated 10 May 1654, he had dictated to his Advisor, Huijbert de Lairesse, in the roadstead of Cannanore (Brief de Lairesse, 10 May 1654). In these

spontaneously written letters, composed very hastily, at a time when the impressions of battle were still fresh in his mind, Van Goens not only gave a factual account of the sequence of events, but, in addition, made several observations of a general nature.

In the first place, he paid tribute to his Portuguese enemy, especially the crews of the *São João Pérola* and *Santo António* who, he stated in his letter of 7 May 1654, 'have given us the greatest trouble', and who fought

> not with much prudence or forethought, but with the greatest desperation, having promised their Captains, after taking the sacrament, that sooner than surrendering their ships to us, they would set them alight and in that way ascend to heaven, a promise which led them to persevere in the fight to such a degree that on one of the ships [*Santo António*] we counted no fewer than 41 dead, while an equal number of bodies was later washed up on the beach (Brief Van Goens, 7 May 1654).

Secondly, Van Goens freely acknowledged that in winning this series of victories, he had been incredibly fortunate. 'As far as I knew', he wrote on 7 May 1654,

> the fleet that had left Goa for Colombo consisted of a few pinnaces (*pataxos)* and some smaller vessels, so we were very surprised to encounter these ships. No one would have believed that the Portuguese had such powerful naval forces in the Indies [because each one of these ships] was a strong, mighty galleon, armed with 24, 34, 36, 38 and 42 heavy guns and manned with as many as 800-1,000 mostly white hands. If we had encountered the five galleons in combination, they would have inflicted great damage upon us and, in all likelihood, we would not have been able to sink even one of them.[23] But it seems that the great and Almighty God has willed that they would encounter us separately so that we could take just revenge for the innocent blood they shed when they took the *Maagd van Dordt* in the Surat river (Brief Van Goens, 7 May 1654).

And thirdly, Van Goens further acknowledged that his good fortune did not desert him when battle was joined, especially during the hard fight against the *São João Pérola* and *Santo António*,

> In the evening [of 4 May 1654] we destroyed the *Saint John* and the following morning the *Sluijs* first took the *Saint Anthony* [before it exploded], so that these fellows had kept us busy for over 40 hours during which time they did much damage to the woodwork and sails of several of our ships. It is God alone who deserves the glory because three times in succession all our ships were so much on a lee-shore that the *Cabeljau* touched the rocks several times, while the *Muijden* on several occasions had less than nine feet of water under its keel so that a sudden gust of wind *(travade)* would have been sufficient to destroy us (Brief de Lairesse, 10 May 1654).

[23]Van Goens was probably right in this judgement because even though he commanded an 11-sail fleet, the five Portuguese galleons, acting in combination, may have been more than a match for him. Although highly manoeuvrable, the Dutch yachts were quite a bit smaller than the galleons which, in addition to their greater size and stronger hulls, also carried heavier guns and larger crews. Whereas Van Goens' yachts were actually merchant vessels fitted out for war, the Portuguese galleons were more specifically warships.

But even though Van Goens piously attributed his good fortune to the Lord, it cannot be denied that earthly matters also played their part. There was, for instance, the vanity and pride of the Captains of the Portuguese galleons who had broken rank because each one of them had wanted to be the first to reach Goa and announce the news of their successes in Ceylon (Van Tongeren, 1654). There was also Van Goens himself who had made his own luck to a large extent. Throughout his mission he had done everything in his power to ensure that his ships were well-armed and as strongly manned as possible, whilst during his running battles with the Portuguese he had been able through the force of his personality to make his unruly skippers obey him and coordinate their attacks. In addition, he had been able to motivate his crews to exert themselves by promising them extra wages and probably also by turning a blind eye to the plunder of the three galleons that fell into their hands.[24]

When the Muslim ship, bearing these letters for Gerardo Pelgrom, had set sail for Surat, Van Goens weighed anchor and left the roads of Cannanore for Galle which, after a swift and uneventful passage, he reached on 15 May 1654. Understandably, the arrival of the fleet and the news of the destruction of the five Portuguese galleons brought great rejoicing to the small Dutch community there. And, indeed, these jubilations were not misplaced because the naval victory, which fortune had handed Van Goens, marked a vital turning-point in the Dutch-Portuguese struggle for Ceylon. Unable quickly to make good the loss of five capital ships, it was now much more difficult for the Portuguese to muster the naval forces necessary to break the Dutch blockade of Colombo and bring victuals and reinforcements to their beleaguered stronghold. And, of course, the inability of the Portuguese adequately to relieve Colombo was the critical factor. It meant that the Portuguese at Colombo had to call off the offensive they had begun in the wake of the galleons' successful breakthrough in March 1654; that the Dutch, notwithstanding their military weakness, were likely soon to regain the territory they had lost in recent weeks, and, more generally, that the Company's position in the island was now much more secure.

Anxious to reach Batavia and announce the news of his victory, Van Goens did not stay long at Galle. After consulting with Governor van der Meijden and satisfying himself that the Company had sufficient naval forces in Ceylon waters to maintain the blockade of Colombo, he left for Batavia on 18 May 1654 where, after a swift passage across the Indian Ocean, he arrived on 15 June 1654. Governor-General Maetsuijcker and his Councillors welcomed Van Goens with the customary fanfare and in subsequent days they expressed their 'complete satisfaction' with the way he had carried out his assignment, awarding him a gratuity of 3,000 guilders. But whilst the Councillors publicly expressed their admiration for Van Goens, especially for the 'glorious victory' he had won over the Portuguese, there were some on the Council, perhaps Maetsuijcker himself, perhaps Joan Cuneus, who felt he had been just a bit too successful. At any rate, a few days after his return to Batavia, on 19 June 1654, when Council met to consider the promise of two months extra wages which, during the battle against the Portuguese galleons, Van Goens had made to the sailors of his fleet, some of the Councillors quibbled over the costs of this promise in consequence of which the bonus was reduced to only one month extra wages. At the same time, the Council also reduced the reward Van Goens had promised the volunteer skipper of the fire-ship from 1,250 to 1,000 guilders (Resolutie GG en Raden, 19 June 1654).

[24]In Van Goens' reports to Batavia there is of course no mention of any private plunder of the *Santiago, São José* and *Nossa Senhora*. Yet, that this did take place would seem a reasonable inference to make because it is very implausable indeed if there were no valuables at all aboard these three ships.

These reductions, irritating though they must have been for Van Goens, were just little pinpricks compared to what was to follow. In early October 1654, shortly after the arrival at Batavia of letters from the *Heeren XVII* promoting Van Goens from Advisory (non-voting) to Permanent (voting) Member of the Council of the Indies, his political opponents on the Council dropped their masks completely to make a concerted bid to rid themselves of this overly ambitious young upstart. Acting on information supplied to them by Gerardo Pelgrom, the Council formally accused Van Goens of private trading and corruption, offenses he was supposed to have committed at Surat where, it was alleged, he had sold quantities of copper and tin below market value and had misappropriated a substantial amount of money. But even though the Batavian High Court (*Raedt van Justitie)*, on 30 October 1654, for lack of evidence acquitted Van Goens of these charges, the damage, of course, had been done and, as a consequence, the atmosphere at Batavia had become quite poisonous (Aalbers, 1916: 113-7). Realizing no doubt that some people on the Council wanted to destroy him, Van Goens, on 7 November 1654, drafted a letter to the *Heeren XVII* which he entrusted to his friend Huijbert de Lairesse, who had been by his side during the battle against the Portuguese, and who was about to sail for the Republic as Admiral of a four-sail homeward-bound fleet (Generale Missive, 7 November 1654).

In this letter Van Goens thanked the Directors for his recent promotion, congratulated them with 'the splendid victory' which God the Lord had allowed him to win over the English and Portuguese, and announced that, in addition to De Lairesse, several of the skippers and other officers who had participated in these battles were returning home with the fleet that was about to sail. Van Goens further told the Directors that 'as there are at present a number of good servants at Batavia, so that my absence will not be prejudicial to the Company', he had decided temporarily to leave the Company's service and return to the Republic with the next fleet. Even though he had not seen 'the dear fatherland' for 26 years so that he was understandably interested in revisiting the country, his primary intention in returning home was to have a chance 'to show myself to Your Honours ... and again to offer my services to the Honourable Company, if it pleases Your Honours to accept them' (Brief Van Goens, 7 November 1654). Van Goens was going home to state his case directly to the Company Directors and, hopefully, gain their support.

Conclusion

In Holland Van Goens was warmly received by the Company Directors who were deeply impressed with the way he had carried out his mission to Ceylon and India. And, indeed, they had every reason to be satisfied. Van Goens had made inroads into the network of private trade and corruption at Surat, he had vastly improved the profitability of the Company's operations at Surat, he had checked the power in the region of the English East India Company and, to top it all of, he had won a spectacular victory over the Portuguese, a victory which had stabilized the Company's position in Ceylon. Before he had set out on his mission, Van Goens had already proven himself as a thorough investigator and a skillful diplomat, but now he had added to these qualities that of a capable and resolute military commander – precisely the combination of skills that were central to the Company's operations in the Indies.

As a token of their appreciation of the important services he had rendered, the Company Directors presented him with a heavy gold chain, while Van Goens, for his part, gave them the report he had written on the home voyage, entitled: *Vertoogh wegens den Presenten Staet van der Generale Nederlantse Oost-Indische Compagnie (Treatise concerning the Present State of the General Netherlands East India Company)* . In this report, Van Goens gave an overview of the trade in the most important Company establishments in the Indies, and outlined a grand strategic vision by which he felt the Company could succeed in dominating the external trade of India and Ceylon, a vision in which the military and the commercial spheres were inextricably intertwined. The Company, Van Goens argued, had committed far too many of its resources to the Malay

archipelago and needed to pay more attention to Ceylon and India because the long-term potential for commercial gain in this part of Asia was much greater than in the archipelago. In order to capture the external trade of Ceylon and India, and begin to reap this commercial gain, the Company had to do two things. Firstly, the Company needed to expel the Portuguese from Ceylon and from the coasts of India, and secondly, it had to drive the Muslim traders from the Indian Ocean, whereupon it should make Ceylon, because of its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, the centre of its Asia-wide maritime empire (Van Goens, 1855: 141-80).

Impressed with this forcefully argued report, a copy of which they submitted to the Estate-General at The Hague, the Directors asked Van Goens to commit to paper some of his impressions about Java, an island he knew better than just about any of his contemporaries on account of the embassies he had led to Sunan Amangkurat's Mataram court. The result was Van Goens' *Javaense Reijse, gedaen van Batavia over Samarangh na de Koninckklijcke Hoofd-plaets Mataram (Javanese Voyage, from Batavia over Samarang to the Royal Capital of Mataram),* the first account of Java and the Javanese to appear in a Western language, an account which eleven years later, in 1667, was published in Dordrecht by Vincent Caimax (Wever, 1995: 1-135). After some months in Holland, the Directors began to urge Van Goens to re-enter the Company's service, to which eventually, in October 1656, he agreed on condition he be confirmed in his position as Permanent Councillor of the Indies. And so, on 22 November 1656, Van Goens, accompanied by his wife and his son Rijckloff, sailed for Batavia for the second time, not now as an unknown nine-year old boy, but as the 37 year old Admiral of the outward-bound fleet and a fully-fledged Councillor of the Indies (Molhuysen et. al., VI 1924: 588-9).

Supported by several of the most powerful Directors in the Republic, Van Goens spent the remainder of his career with the Company trying to implement the grand strategic vision he had conceived during his 1653-54 mission to Ceylon and India. And to the growing resentment of the Council at Batavia, which had a vested interest in the continuation of the Company's archipelago-centric policy, Van Goens pursued his vision with extraordinary single-mindedness and determination. Although his repeated attempts to capture Goa were not crowned with success, he was victorious in Ceylon and along India's Malabar coast, expelling the Portuguese from Tutecorin, Manaar and Jaffnapatnam in 1658, and from Coulang, Cranganore, Cochin and Porca in the early 1660's. In addition, Van Goens successfully defended the Company's position in Ceylon and India against challenges from other European powers, defeating a French fleet off Ceylon in 1672 and an English fleet off Coromandel in 1673 (Molhuysen et. al., VI: 588-9).

Apart from dealing all these blows to the fading Portuguese empire in the East, Van Goens made his mark as Governor of Ceylon, a position he held with one brief interruption from 1658-72. During these years he did his utmost to realize his ambition of making Ceylon the centre of the Company's maritime empire, an ambition the fulfillment of which, in his view, required, first, that the entire island be brought under the effective control of the Company, and, secondly, that a vigorous community of Dutch settlers be established in Ceylon as merchants and plantation-owners. In pursuit of these goals, Van Goens conducted numerous military campaigns in Ceylon's mountainous interior against Raja Sinha, in consequence of which he extended the area under Company control from about one-tenth of the island in 1658 to about one-third in 1672. In order to make Ceylon attractive to Dutch settlers, Van Goens advocated a relaxation of the Company's monopolistic trade policies, arguing, as others had done before him, that whilst the Company should keep its monopoly on the trade between Europe and the Indies, it should allow the Ceylon settlers freely to participate in the trade within the Indies (Van Goens, 1827).

But unfortunately for Van Goens, his aggressive policies in Ceylon and India gradually eroded the support he enjoyed amongst the Company Directors. Not only was his advocacy of a relaxation of VOC trade policy unpopular with many of them, there was also mounting irritation on the Board with his constant demands for military reinforcements for the war against Raja Sinha. Unable to understand why the Sinhalese people did not seem to appreciate the beneficence of Company rule, Van Goens continued to clamour for more ships, sailors and soldiers, assuring the Directors that if only they gave him everything he asked for, he would stage one final campaign and bring the war to a quick and victorious conclusion. But the war dragged on and on, and the Ceylon deficits continued to mount. Although some of the Directors, especially the powerful Amsterdam burgomaster, Gilles Valckenier, were steadfast in their support for Van Goens, in 1673, when the Company was in the midst of a severe financial crisis brought about by the war against England and France, the Board reluctantly made the decision to remove Van Goens from his Ceylon Governorship.

By this time, however, the prestige of Van Goens was so great that it was not possible simply to accuse him of private trading, remove him from his office and recall him to the Republic as was done in many other cases. Instead, the Directors decided to 'kick him upstairs' and appointed him Director-General of Commerce at Batavia, after the Governor-Generalship, the highest rank in the VOC hierarchy. But Van Goens, who reluctantly accepted his promotion, was not so easily thwarted. Before he took up his new position, he used his influence to have his son and namesake, Rijckloff van Goens Junior, succeed him as Governor of Ceylon. This meant that there was no immediate change in the Company's Ceylon policy because, like a dutiful son, the young Van Goens continued his father's policies and persisted with the war against Raja Sinha, until 1679, when he, too, was removed from the Ceylon Governorship (Arasaratnam, 1958: 77-100).

When Van Goens, in 1675, moved to Batavia to take up his Director-Generalship, he began the last phase of his long and illustrious career with the Company. And even though, upon the death of Joan Maetsuijcker in 1678, he achieved the pinnacle of success when the Board of Directors in the Republic appointed him Governor-General of the Indies, his last years in the Company's service were marked by disappointment and personal tragedy. Due to his attempts over many years to shift the Company's focus from the archipelago to Ceylon and India, Van Goens was not popular in Batavia and, faced with a hostile Council, he was out-voted time and again so that as Governor-General he was largely ineffectual. In 1679, for instance, and notwithstanding his elevation to the Governor-Generalship, he was unable to prevent his son's dismissal as Governor of Ceylon. Similarly, although he refused to sign the 1681 peace treaty with Raja Sinha, he was powerless to stop the treaty from coming into effect which meant, amongst other things, that he had to accept that many of the Ceylon territories he had brought under Company control at such great cost in lives and in gold, were handed back to the Sinhalese King (Arasaratnam, 1958: 77-100).

In addition to seeing his life's work come undone, Van Goens, in 1679, noticed the onset of one of the most feared tropical diseases, an incurable bacterial infection, known at the time as the 'disease of Lazarus', or leprosy (Kalff, 1925-6: 269-70). Realizing that his days were numbered and that, if the disease was to run its course, he was going to be afflicted by hideous deformities, Van Goens wrote to the Directors in Holland requesting to be relieved from his post as Governor-General. After some to-ing and fro-ing, the Directors granted his request which meant that, on 25 November 1681, he formally stepped down as Governor-General to be succeeded by the talented Cornelis Speelman, a man who for many years had been one of his fiercest critics (Molhuysen et. al., VI: 588-9). Accompanied by his personal Chinese physician, who, unsurprisingly, was better able to relieve the symptoms of his disease than any of the European ship's surgeons, Van Goens left Batavia a few days later as Admiral of the homeward-bound fleet (Anon., 1840: 30-4).

This, however, was to be his last assignment. After carrying out a month-long inspection of the Company's settlement at the Cape, Van Goens guided his fleet safely to the Republic where he arrived on 29 August 1682. His condition, however, had worsened on the long voyage and, after settling his worldly affairs, he died at Amsterdam on 14 November 1682, quite possibly by his own hand. He left enormous fortunes to the two sons who survived him, Rijckloff Junior and Volckert, fortunes consisting of various pieces of real estate in Ceylon and Batavia, letters of credit amounting to hundreds of thousands of guilders, chests full of gold and silver ornaments, jewels and diamonds, expensive furniture, porcelein, as well as all kinds of Oriental works of art, many of which he had received as gifts from Asian Kings (Lubberhuizen-van Gelder, 1945: 289-310). But whilst Van Goens was certainly acquisitive during his long career in the Indies, it was not for this that he came to be remembered because in this respect he was hardly unique. No, his legacy was that of a far-sighted empire-builder, a forerunner of such 18th Century figures as Joseph Dupleix and Robert Clive, a legacy graphically expressed by Pieter van Dam, the Company's advocate from 1652-1706, who commented disapprovingly: 'He was like a great and ambitious King, and not at all like a merchant who has an eye only for his profit' (Van Dam, 1932: Vol 2. Part 2: xiv).

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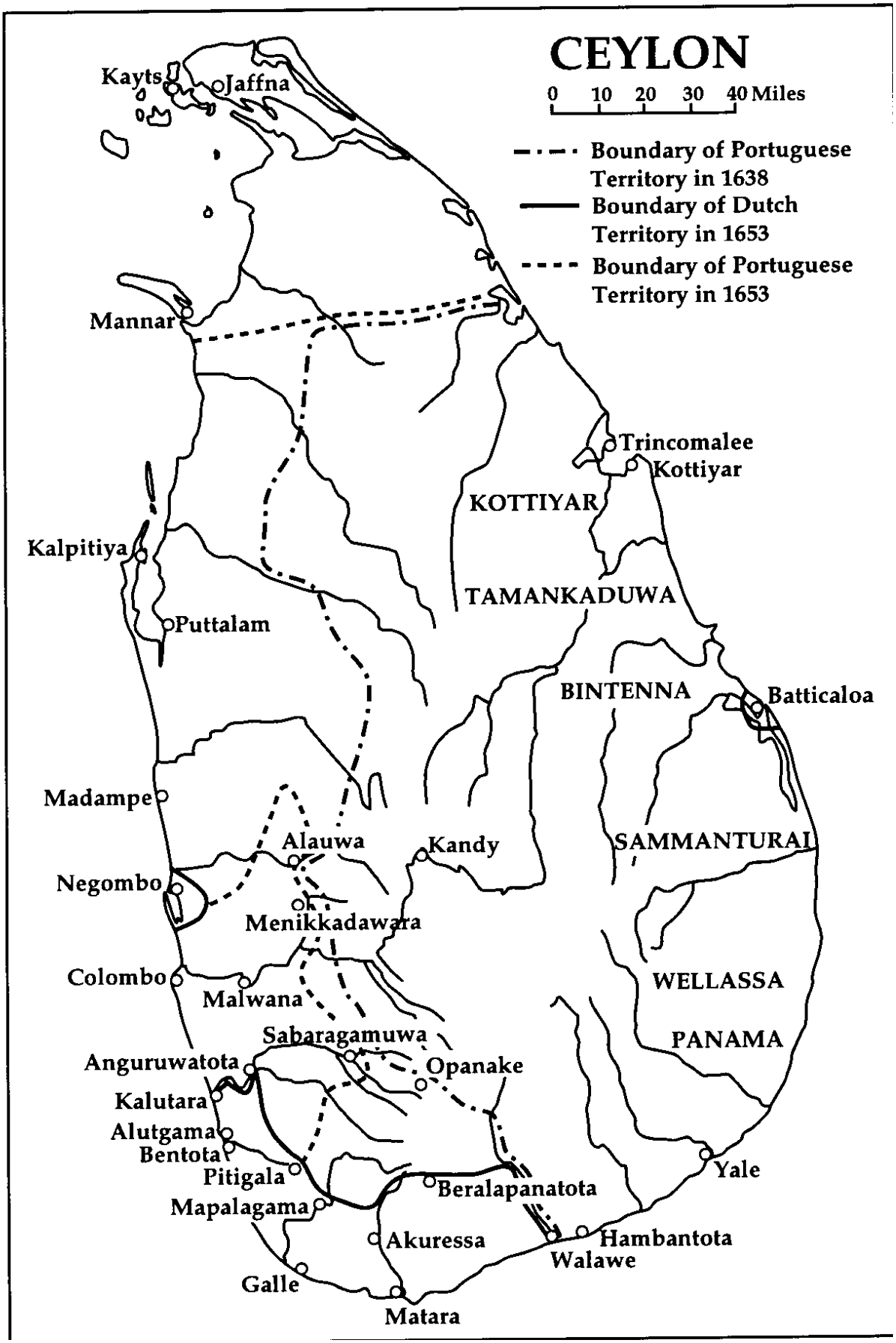
CEYLON
0 10 20 30 40 Miles
Boundary of Portuguese Territory in 1638
Boundary of Dutch Territory in 1653
Boundary of Portuguese Territory in 1653
Kayts
Jaffna
Mannar
Trincomalee
Kottiyar
KOTTIYAR
Kalpitiya
TAMANKADUWA
Puttalam
BINTENNA
Batticaloa
Madampe
Alauwa
Kandy
SAMMANTURAI
Negombo
Menikkadawara
Colombo
Malwana
WELLASSA
Sabaragamuwa
PANAMA
Anguruwatota
Opanake
Kalutara
Alutgama
Bentota
Pitigala
Yale
Beralapanatota
Mapalagama
Akuressa
Hambantota
Walawe
Galle
Matara