

FLEMISH INTERLOPERS BEYOND THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE, 1715—1723

Prof. M. Boucher
University of South Africa

“Monopoly”, as Gerald B. Hertz has said of British international commerce in the early eighteenth century, “however unsound economically, was a natural phase in the development of both ... colonial and East Indian policy.”¹ His view is equally valid in the context of the trading activities of the other nations with Far Eastern interests at the close of the War of the Spanish Succession, of which the Dutch were the most important. It was the age of the chartered company, exploiting recognized fields of commerce and expanding into new areas, jealous of its rights and resentful of inroads made by unauthorized competitors. Private ventures, however, opened up lucrative prospects for merchants and mariners in the decade following the Utrecht peace settlement. Independent trade was not confined to eastern waters, but despite official disapproval, many interlopers infringed the rights of the established companies from the Gulf of Aden to the Chinese coast.

Much of this commerce was in the hands of expatriates, particularly from the British Isles, and the East India Company of London, acting on its own initiative and in concert with its Dutch counterpart, sought to penalize Britons who participated and to protect its own monopoly.² A measure of the concern felt by the London company was the publication, apparently in 1721, of a list of the ships carrying English or Irish merchants or officers known to have been engaged in clandestine eastern trade since 1715.³ This survey, compiled from reports submitted to the company, does not pretend to be exhaustive nor, with regard to specific sailings, entirely accurate or complete. It does, however, provide a useful supplement to other sources of information on the voyages of particular vessels round the Cape of Good Hope, their captains and supercargoes, the nature of the trade and the ports of departure, destination and return.

It will be seen from this document that practically every voyage to the east made by independent vessels in these years concerned either directly or by implication the commercial activities of the Flemish port of Ostend. The former Spanish Netherlands, transferred in 1714 to the Austrian

“England and the Ostend Company”, *English Historical Review* (henceforth *EHR*), XXII, 86, Aug., 1907, p.279.

2. *Ibid.*, p.265; K. Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic trade 1620—1740*, Copenhagen and The Hague, 1958, p.223. The Commons resolved on March 23 (old style), 1720/1 that trade to the East Indies conducted by British subjects associated with foreign ventures was “of pernicious Consequence to the Commerce and Welfare of this Kingdom”, *Journals of the House of Commons*, XIX, London, 1803, p.492.
3. East India Company (henceforth EIC), *Account of ships, (according to the advices which the East-India Company have received) sent out to the East-Indies under foreign commissions; with English and Irish officers, supra-cargo's, and mariners.*

empire, entered a new era under serious disabilities. Flanders and Brabant shared the heavy expense of maintaining the garrisons in the barrier towns; taxation was burdensome; Britain and the United Provinces had deferred a promised reciprocity in import duties; Antwerp was barred from maritime traffic. The country, however, had an industrial potential and sought some relief for its economic ills in overseas trade. For this Ostend provided a suitable outlet, but Flanders was lamentably deficient in ships, the means to build them, the officers and crews to man them and the commercial acumen and financial resources to prosecute with success new ventures of this kind.

Seaworthy vessels had therefore to be obtained from England and the United Provinces, and recourse was had to foreigners — among them expatriate refugees — to finance commercial undertakings, to purchase and refit the ships needed, to serve as captains, officers and supercargoes aboard, and to supervise the mercantile arrangements before sailing and after return. That men in sufficient numbers came forward is an indication that there were many who saw in Flemish competition with the powerful English and Dutch monopolies a likely source of high profits.

Although permits to trade were issued from 1714, the new administration of the Austrian Netherlands was initially lukewarm in its support of Flemish commercial objectives. However, through the influence of the Irishman Patrick MacNeny, who from 1716 worked on the cupidity of Prince Eugene's permanent deputy, the Marquis de Prié, sanction was obtained for the further extension of eastern commerce. The series of private ventures thus inaugurated led in 1723 to the publication of an imperial charter constituting a national trading company similar to those of Britain, the United Provinces, France and Denmark.⁴

The methods adopted to overcome some of the practical problems facing Flemish participation in the East India trade are well illustrated in a document, discussed by G. Hinchliffe, which has recently come to light in Yorkshire, England.⁵ It concerns the promotion of an Ostend trading enterprise by a consortium of English and Flemish venturers in the years 1718–20 and is probably typical of many similar undertakings of the period. Capital of £28 820 was raised by subscription, the investors including the Irish *armateur* and resident of Ostend, Thomas Ray, the Englishmen John Tyssen, Francis Acton and John Walker, and a fellow-countryman John Lister, a Yorkshire sheep farmer. A ship, the *John and Elizabeth*,⁶ was bought for £3 400 and extensively overhauled and refitted at Deptford at a cost exceeding the purchase price. Command was given to Nicholas Funnel, and two merchants, William Pennicote and Leonard Cock, were employed

4. N. Laude, *La Compagnie d'Ostende et son activité coloniale au Bengale (1725–1730)*, Institut royal colonial belge, Sect. des sciences morales et politiques, Mémoires, XII, 1, Brussels, 1944, pp.14 and n., 37; Hertz, "England and the Ostend Company", *EHR*, XXII, 86, Aug., 1907, pp.257–8.

5. "An Ostend East Indiaman, 1718–20", *The Mariner's Mirror* (henceforth *MM*), LIX, 3, Aug., 1973, pp.291–7.

6. The ship seems to have had an earlier name, the *Judith* (EIC, *Account* ..., p.1). Laude calls her the *Loyal Indith*, clearly a faulty rendering of *Loyal Judith*, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., app., no. 15, p.228.

as supercargoes. The bulk of the ship's company were engaged before the vessel sailed to Ostend, crimps being employed to decoy sailors into service.

On arrival at the Flemish port more crew members were signed on, some of them local men, and nominal command was entrusted to Philippe van Maestricht.⁷ This helped to change the identity of the ship, but further essential steps were taken. The supercargoes and English captain were admitted as citizens of Ostend, imperial colours were provided, the vessel was made over to Flemish owners, imperial and admiralty passes were issued and the name of the ship was changed to the *Wurtemberg*.⁸ All this cost money and the sum disbursed in Brussels for permission to sail bears out Prié's reputation for greed. Port charges, however, were not excessive, the greatest expense after pilotage being the money needed to secure the release of the carpenter's mate from prison — a charge he was required to make good from his wages.

The *Wurtemberg* sailed for Canton in 1719 with a cargo of lead, English and Austrian woollen goods, and bullion, mostly in the form of pieces of eight. She returned in the following year with more than a thousand chests of tea, 22 chests of silk, a quantity of ginger and 85 bags of radix-china, a popular cure for gout.⁹

Several points emerge from this account. In the first place, the venture was Flemish in name only, most of the capital was subscribed in England and the cargo for export was mainly of English origin. Secondly, a comparison of the goods carried on the outward voyage with those shipped aboard the two English East Indiamen of comparable size at Canton in 1719, the *Essex* and the *Sunderland*, suggests that private ventures were at a disadvantage. The value of the Flemish ship's exports in goods and bullion was less than two-thirds of that carried by either of her English competitors. Furthermore, the proportion of bullion to cargo was much smaller than was customary on English ships trading with China.¹⁰ This circumstance may be connected with a shortage of foreign coin at Ostend. Coin of the realm could not be exported and Ostenders often loaded with bullion at Cadiz.¹¹ As a result of this disparity in export cargo values the quantity of tea and silk imported by the *Wurtemberg* was considerably less than that brought home, for example, by the *Essex*.¹² However, the venture was doubtless profitable enough for the investors; moreover, the Flemish vessel had companions on the Chinese coast, although probably trading for different consortiums. These were the *Maison d'Autriche*, the *Bruxelles*

7. As given in Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., app., no. 15, p.228.
8. The name appears variously as *Wirtemberg* and *Wirtenburgh*. Modern French forms are used here invariably for Ostenders.
9. Hinchliffe, "An Ostend East Indiaman", *MM*, LIX, 3, Aug., 1973, pp.294, 296. Laude gives a brief account of the voyage in 1721—1722 to India of another Ostender, the *Saint-Pierre*, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., pp.23—4).
10. Hinchliffe, "An Ostend East Indiaman", *MM*, LIX, 3, Aug., 1973, p.294; H.B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company trading to China 1635—1834*, I, Oxford, 1926, p.159.
11. Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., pp.15 and n., 56.
12. Hinchliffe, "An Ostend East Indiaman", *MM*, LIX, 3, Aug., 1973, p.296; Morse, *Chronicles* ..., I, p.160.

galley and the *Saint-Joseph*, all former English ships and carrying British supercargoes.¹³

So far as the permitted private trade of the officers and supercargoes of the *Wurtemberg* is concerned, insufficient data is given to make a valid comparison with the scale applicable on English East Indiamen.¹⁴ It is, however, known that at a later date supercargoes and captains on Ostend vessels were able to command a greater share of privilege tonnage than was usual elsewhere.¹⁵

By 1719 the Ostend trade had been firmly established by pioneer voyages to the main areas of Asiatic coastal commerce. In March, 1715 the 16-gun *Charles* galley, a small vessel with a crew of 30 commanded by Matthijs Guerrebrants, sailed from Ostend for the East African coast, Goa and Malabar. He called at the Cape on his return voyage, asking for refreshment and some assistance in view of the difficult weather conditions and the loss of one of his boats and the unserviceableness of another. His request was somewhat grudgingly granted and he sailed on with his cargo — mostly pepper — which was discharged at Cadiz and, surprisingly, Gibraltar.¹⁶

Another early voyage to open up new trade routes for the Flemings was undertaken by Xavier Sarsfield, an Irishman from Limerick who had been admitted to the nobility at Saint-Germain by James, the Old Pretender.¹⁷ Sarsfield's voyage to Surat evoked a strong protest to George I from the London East India Company.¹⁸ He brought back a valuable cargo of pepper, piece goods, sapan wood and myrrh for the Ostend consortium headed by Ray¹⁹ and his voyage was also significant in the light of the problems he encountered on the way. Sarsfield left Ostend on April 8, 1715 in the *Saint-Mathieu*, the former *Victoria*, sailing to Cadiz to load with bullion for his Indian commerce and rounding the Cape to call at Johanna in the Comoros. On arrival at Surat the Dutch tried by various means to discredit the venture in the eyes of the local authorities. Sarsfield, however, was able to complete his business and returned by way of the Cape, calling at St Helena in May, 1716. There he was met with great

13. EIC, *Account* ..., p.1.

14. On the EIC Private trade see E.H. Pritchard, "Private trade between England and China in the eighteenth century (1680—1833)K", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, I, 1958, pp.108—37, 221—56. The supercargoes of the *Wurtemberg* were to receive £800 each after sale of the cargo and were allocated six tons of cargo space for private trade, Hinchliffe, "An Ostend East Indiaman", *MM*, LIX, 3, Aug., 1973, p.293.

15. Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic trade* ..., p.236.

16. C 603, *Dag Register* (original), 1715—1716: June 2, 1716, pp.379—81, Cape Archives (henceforth CA); H.C.V. Leibbrandt, *Precis of the archives of the Cape of Good Hope. Journal, 1699—1732* (henceforth *Journal*), Cape Town, 1896, p.269; G.C. de Wet (ed.), *Suid-Afrikaanse argiefstukke: Resolusies van die Politieke Raad* (henceforth *Resol.*), V, 1716—1719, Cape Town, 1964: June 2 and 9, 1716, pp.84—5; EIC, *Account* ..., p.1; Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., app., no. 2, p.225.

17. Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., pp.14—5; Hertz, "England and the Ostend Company", *EHR*, XXII, 86, Aug., 1907, p.257.

18. Hertz, "England and the Ostend Company", *EHR*, XXII, 86, Aug., 1907, p.257.

19. EIC, *Account* ..., p.1; Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., pp.15—6.

hostility by the English. Water and lemons were denied his crew and guns were turned on the ship, causing a number of injuries. Sarsfield therefore sailed for Pernambuco in Brazil, where he was well received and enabled to continue his homeward voyage. The *Saint-Mathieu* anchored in the harbour of Ostend on August 30, 1716.²⁰

These two voyages provided a foretaste of things to come in the hostility of the Dutch and the English; they also illustrated clearly a major problem confronting the Ostenders: the lack of a friendly refreshment station between Europe and the east. The problem was to exercise the chartered company after 1723.²¹

A vessel with an imperial commission named the *Charles VI*, or the *Empereur* paved the way for Flemish activity on the China coast. This ship, commanded by Captains Opie and Solegard, did not, however, use Ostend as a home port. She sailed from Leghorn for Borneo and China, returning to the same port with a mixed cargo of pepper, tea and other merchandise.²² Opie brought her into Table Bay in March, 1718 under the Burgundian colours then in use, but attitudes to imperial interlopers had hardened by that date and he was ordered to continue his homeward voyage immediately.²³

The Flemish trade with Mokha in Arabia appears to have been initiated by the *Impératrice Elisabeth*, formerly known as the *Stringer* galley and commanded by Edward Pearson. This ship left Ostend in the autumn of 1718, returning with some 1 500 bales of coffee and a quantity of pepper, myrrh, aloes and cowries. Pearson had reached Mokha in May, 1719 and his ship was one of seven then at anchor there. It was a time of high prices — the English, indeed, were later to associate high prices with the arrival of Ostenders²⁴ — and perhaps because they were newcomers without contacts, the Ostend merchants turned for assistance to the English consul, Hill, in arranging their purchases.²⁵

The arrival at the Cape of a second vessel bearing the name *Charles VI* marked a further stage in Dutch hostility there to the interlopers. This ship, formerly the *Griffin*, was equipped by a group headed by Ray and the St Malo *armateur*, then living at Ostend, Gollet de la Merveille. The command was entrusted to La Merveille's son, Godefroid. The *Charles VI* carried a letter of marque as a privateer in view of war between Spain and Austria, but although the imperial government hoped that she might inconvenience Spanish shipping on her voyage, the La Merveilles were only interested in the founding of a factory on the Indian coast. Godefroid de la Merveille succeeded, despite Dutch and English opposition, in obtaining a site at Cabelon on the Coromandel coast, which was renamed Sadatpatnam. There the commander laid the foundations for a permanent

20. Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., pp.15–6, app., no. 3, 225.

21. *Ibid.*, pp.63–7.

22. EIC, *Account* ..., p.1.

23. C 604, Dag Register (duplicate), 1717–1722: March 25 and 26; April 1, 1718, pp. 232, 235 CA; Leibbrandt, *Journal*, p.275.

24. Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic trade* ..., p.202.

25. *Ibid.*, p.199; EIC, *Account* ..., p.1.

establishment, placing Lt Luis Diaz de la Pena at the head of a small military force, with Dominique Hugo as second in command. A Portuguese priest, Father Faria, attached to the archbishopric of Goa, was appointed chaplain.²⁶

It was on his return journey that La Merveille called at the Cape of Good Hope. Like Opie before him, he was ordered to leave at once, but he was not a man to give up easily. He sheltered for some weeks in Saldanha Bay under French colours and on Christmas Eve, 1718 slipped into Table Bay again, hoping to enlist the active support of one or other of the foreign vessels then at anchor there. In this he failed, but the incident showed the Cape authorities how vulnerable the settlement was to aggressive foreigners in the absence of visiting Dutch East Indiamen.²⁷ The arrival of the Ostenders seems to have made a lively impression on the local inhabitants. We read later that they were regarded by some at least as a possible means of escape for wives dissatisfied with married life.²⁸

A further extension of Flemish influence in India resulted from the arrival in 1721 of Arnold de Pret's ship, the *Ville de Vienne*, in Bengal. Her captain, John Harrison, and a leading supercargo, Alexander Hume, were Englishmen formerly in the service of the London company. They were able to obtain trading rights and the promise of a permanent factory for the Ostenders and on their return plans were discussed for the possible establishment of a colony there on the lines of that at the Cape of Good Hope. Finally, in January, 1723, on the last voyage made by independent interests before the formation of the chartered company, the *Charles VI*, formerly the *Elisabeth* — yet another vessel to bear the Austrian emperor's name — left for Bengal under Harrison's command. She carried Hume as chief commercial agent and Lt-General Jacques-André Cobbé of Antwerp as official representative of his imperial majesty.²⁹

Trade with China was put on a firmer basis by the Irishman James Tobin of the *Prince Eugène*, formerly known as the *Camberwell* galley. He was dispatched by the Dutch expatriate *armateur*, Jacobus Cloots, in January, 1718 and acquired a lodge at Canton for the Ostenders.³⁰ The profitable West African slave trade also attracted the attention of Flemish mercantile interests.³¹

The considerable opposition to the private Ostend trade, particularly in the United Provinces and in England, made it necessary to obtain ships in those countries by surreptitious means, through intermediaries.³² The

26. Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., pp.16–8.

27. C 604: Oct. 29, Nov. 5 and Dec. 24, 1718; Jan. 13–17, 1719, pp.326, 328–9, 355–6; C 512, *Uitgaande Brieven, 1718–1720: to Batavia, Nov. 11, 1718; to Amsterdam, April 29, 1719, pp.280–1, 324–8, CA; De Wet (ed.), Resol., V: Jan. 14, 1719, p.324; Laude, Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., p.17n.

28. CJ 1034, *Civiele Proces Stukken, 1720: July 17, 1720, p.275, CA.*

29. Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., pp.31–5, app., nos 27 and 37, 231 and 233. *Ibid.*, pp.22, app., no. 9, 226; EIC, *Account* ..., p.1.

30. Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., app., nos 11, 20 and 31, pp.227, 229 232; EIC, *Account* ..., p.2.

31. Discussed by Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., pp.49, 54–5, with reference to the later

former ownership of most of these vessels is obscure, but the names of some of them suggest that they were, on occasion, purchased or hired from the London East India interest. There was certainly a *Heathcote*, for example, sailing for the English company during and after the period under discussion and it is perhaps significant to see in the list published by the East India Company of ships under foreign commissions a vessel of this name which lay off Ostend harbour in May, 1720 after sailing from a port in the United Provinces. The document states that the majority of her officers and a large number of her crew were English and that "it was the general Report of all, when she was first brought here (to Ostend), that she was designed for the East-Indies".³³ Commissions other than imperial ones may also disguise Ostend participation. A vessel described in the East India Company's list as the *St Francisco Xavier* sailed from England to the United Provinces and on to Lisbon, where she was given a Portuguese commission. She then left in September, 1715 for the Coromandel coast and Bengal, carrying an English supercargo named Johnson, and returned to Lisbon by way of Brazil.³⁴ This ship may perhaps be identified with the Dutch vessel the *Emerantia*, later purchased by a consortium which included the Ghent *armateur*, Jacques Maelcamp, and restored to her earlier name as the *Saint-Francois-Xavier*. She sailed for Canton early in 1720 under the captaincy of Philippe de Moor of Ostend, with Johnson again one of her supercargoes, and returned in June, 1721.³⁵

Nor were difficulties with the English and the Dutch confined to the purchase and fitting out of ships. Mention has been made of the hostility displayed at refreshment stations, but opposition sometimes took a more violent form. One vessel, the *Flandria*, was confiscated by the Dutch as she left Ostend harbour in June, 1720; another *Flandria*, a Bruges ship equipped by Jacques Maelcamp, was taken by the English at their Benkulen factory on Sumatra in August, 1721. Bound for Canton, she was captained by an Englishman, John Williamson.³⁶ It was he, perhaps, who commanded the *Marquis de Prié*, captured by a Dutch ship off the West African coast in October, 1718 on what may well have been a slaving voyage.³⁷ Another *Marquis de Prié* was taken by the Dutch on the same coast in April of the following year, but her captain, Jacobus de Winter, managed to seize the Dutch vessel which was bringing him back to Europe.³⁸

There was, however, less interference with Flemish trade than might have been expected. Ostend ships were not molested in Asiatic ports; local potentates did not differentiate between traders from the various European nations and any attempts at infighting would have had adverse effects upon all mercantile transactions.³⁹ Although after 1721 officers of the East India

33. EIC, *Account* ..., p.2.

34. *Ibid.*, p.1.

35. *Ibid.*, p.2; Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., app., no.24, p.230. Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., pp.23, app., nos 28 and 32, 231, 232; EIC, *Account* ..., p.2.

37. Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., app., no. 11, p.227, where the captain is given as J. Willemsen.

38. *Ibid.*, app., no. 20, p.229.

39. Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic trade* ..., pp.200-1.

Company were empowered by parliamentary legislation to take British subjects found engaging in foreign ventures into custody, the main concern of the English traders was to make it as difficult as possible for their independent rivals to capture the market, so that the interlopers would become "sick of the voyages".⁴⁰

More to be feared by the Flemings and one of the many hazards facing all ocean going ships in the early eighteenth century was piracy. All merchantmen went armed and vigilance could not be relaxed in home waters. Among the last of the private traders of Ostend was the *Impératrice Elisabeth*, which had formerly sailed as the *Ville de Vienne*. She left for Mokha in November, 1722 and was captured by Algerian corsairs at the entrance to the English Channel on her return voyage. The crew, with the exception of Captain J. de Gheselle and a supercargo, were taken into captivity.⁴¹

One Ostender made good her escape when James Macrae, the Scottish commander of the London East Indiaman *Cassandra*, fought an unavailing action against the pirates George Taylor and Edward England off Johanna in August, 1720.⁴² Another, the *Ville d'Ostende*, formerly the *Greyhound* galley, commanded by André Flanderin, was taken in April, 1721 off Bourbon (Réunion) at the time of the capture of the richly laden *Nossa Senhora do Cabo*, which was bringing the retiring Portuguese viceroy home from Goa. The *Ville d'Ostende* was sent to Madagascar with a prize crew, but in July, 1721, through the efforts of her English second mate John Freeman, she managed to escape to Mozambique and from there sailed to Goa, where she was sold with her cargo.⁴³ The Ostend vessel the *Marquis de Campo*, once known as the *Hanover* galley, with Guerrebrants as second in command to Hendrixen Pulinck, was captured by pirates in November, 1719, after trading on the Malabar coast.⁴⁴

An Ostender listed in the London East India Company's report is the *Prince Eugène*, formerly the Charles galley, which "was at Surat in September, 1719, thence went to the Mallabar (*sic*) Coast". The report continues: "It is said the Pyrates (*sic*) took her off the Cape of Good Hope, returning from Europe."⁴⁵ The *Prince Eugène* was commanded by J. de Clerk of Ostend and was equipped by Charles and Jacques Maelcamp. From Belgian sources it would appear that De Clerk got the better of the pirates and succeeded in rescuing an English ship from their clutches. He brought his ship safely to Ostend in mid-1720.⁴⁶ In the first half of

40. Morse, *Chronicles ...*, I, p.165, Instructions to supercargoes in China, 1721 season.

41. Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende ...*, pp.67-8, app., no. 38, 233. The capture took place on May 29, 1724 and was followed by an abortive attempt to come to terms with the Algerian authorities. This vessel, like most Ostenders, carried a bilingual chaplain, Father Van der Plancke.

42. Macrae, Bombay, Nov. 16, 1720, in C. Johnson, *A General history of the robberies and murders of the most notorious pirates* (ed. A.L. Hayward), London, 1926, pp.89-91.

43. C. Grey, *Pirates of the eastern seas (1618-1723): a lurid page of history* (ed. G. MacMunn), London, 1933, p.325; Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende ...*, app., no. 25, p.230.

44. EIC, *Account ...*, p.2; Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende ...*, app., no.22, p.229.

45. EIC, *Account ...*, p.2.

46. Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende ...*, app., no. 16, p.228.

that year there was considerable anxiety at the Cape about piracy in local waters⁴⁷ and it is interesting to note that the pirates claimed to have captured and released an Ostender there at about this time, having aboard a London merchant named Nash (Naish).⁴⁸ The reference may be to the *Prince Eugène*, but another Ostend vessel, the *Maison d'Autriche*, formerly the *London*, was homeward-bound from China at this period and carried a Naish as chief supercargo.⁴⁹ It is possible that both Ostenders were involved with the pirates, or that Naish had at some point transferred to the *Prince Eugène*.

*There was certainly a well known London merchant called Naish with an interest in the China trade. This was James Naish, who made a considerable fortune as a chief supercargo for the English East India Company and was eventually accused of defrauding his employers. A settlement was reached after a protracted lawsuit and in 1739 he played a part in the preliminary discussions which led to Anson's famous voyage round the world.*⁵⁰

*James Naish was chief supercargo for the London company at Canton in 1716⁵¹ and sailed again in the same capacity with the English East India Company's China fleet which called at the Cape of Good Hope on its outward voyage in April, 1722.⁵² He was certainly in Ostend shortly before the second of these trading expeditions and it seems not unlikely that he also travelled to Canton for a consortium from that port in the interval between the two voyages for the London company. If this is the case, his attitude at the Cape in 1722 has an unpleasantly sanctimonious ring. On that occasion he gave information to the authorities that a visiting French ship, the *Comte de Toulouse* of Dunkirk, had taken on goods at neighbouring Ostend and that Edmund Burke, her Irish captain, and her British chief mate had previously worked for the Flemish independent traders.*⁵³

What, in practical terms, was the effect of the Ostend competition which so irritated the Dutch and English companies? It has been pointed out that the Flemish trade was in the hands of several private groups, in a sense competing against each other; this lack of co-ordination minimized the threat to the large national monopolies. There was talk of high prices in eastern ports resulting from Ostend competition and in 1720 Chinese

G.C. de Wet (ed.), *Resol.*, VI, 1720—1723, Johannesburg, 1968: Feb. 23, April 2 and June 8, 1720, pp.21—2, 35, 55.

48. Johnson, *General history* ..., p.439. Naish was often written Nash.

49. EIC, *Account* ..., p.1. He is named as captain in Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., app., no. 17, p.228.

50. G. Williams (ed.), *Documents relating to Anson's voyage round the world 1740—1744*, Publications of the Navy Records Society, CLX, London, 1967, pp.4—5, 9—13, 27, 28n., 30—3; L.S. Sutherland, *The East India Company in eighteenth-century politics*, Oxford, 1952, p.48.

51. Morse, *Chronicles* ..., I, p.155.

52. C 604: April 10—16, 1722, pp.933—53, CA; Morse, *Chronicles* ..., I, pp.171—2. The ships were the *Eyles*, the *Lyell* and the *Princess Emilia*.

53. De Wet (ed.), *Resol.*, VI: April 16, 1722, pp.181—2. The name appears here as Nesch.

merchants complained that Ostenders sought to engross the tea market, using unscrupulous methods.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, at that stage of international commerce, there was probably room for considerable expansion of trade and supplies enough for all. So far as the China trade was concerned, it was the Dutch who worried most. Their commerce was undertaken by middlemen, plying between Chinese ports and Batavia and the tea which they brought was often ill packed in bamboo containers and therefore more subject to damage than that exported by the English and Ostenders, who used chests lined with lead. Direct trade between the United Provinces and China was mooted in 1718, but was not introduced until 1729.⁵⁵ On the other hand, the chartered companies enjoyed greater resources, long experience and valuable contacts. They were thus able to secure a large share of the market in eastern ports. At Mokha, for example, half the export trade in 1723 was in English hands.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, there was a steady flow of goods into Europe brought by Ostend vessels. These were disposed of at public sales and most of the merchants attending them came from England, the United Provinces and France.⁵⁷ Many of the products carried in Ostend bottoms were smuggled into neighbouring countries, thus causing a glut and a consequent fall in prices. This was by no means to the liking of the established monopolies. When Tobin brought back the earlier *Prince Eugène* to Ostend in July, 1719 with a valuable cargo of tea from China, it was rumoured that the London company would suspend its customary minimum prices in order that free sales might help to drive the Flemings out of the market.⁵⁸ Although this was not done, the fact that such action was contemplated indicates the seriousness with which Ostend competition was regarded. In another sense, too, the rise of Flemish maritime commerce was damaging to Dutch and English interests. Each new venture represented a flow of capital into the Austrian Netherlands and there was a constant drain of merchants and skilled mariners to the coast of Flanders.

The activities of the independent traders of Ostend were, however, only a pin-prick to the directors of the existing chartered companies abroad. It was the consolidation in 1723 of Flemish enterprise in a well organized rival company which was to present a very real challenge to the older monopolies. In this several of those mentioned in these pages — among them Thomas Ray, Jacques Maelcamp and especially Alexander Hume — were to play a part at home or abroad. Charles VI's new venture was, however, to arouse such violent opposition in Britain, the United Provinces and, to some extent,

54. Morse, *Chronicles* ..., I, p.163; Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic trade* ..., p.232.

54. Morse, *Chronicles* ..., I, p.163; Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic trade* ..., p.232.

55. Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic trade* ..., pp.217, 221, 234. In 1723 the Dutch sought to select Chinese fabrics favoured by the Ostend merchants, *Ibid.*, pp.148—9.

56. *Ibid.*, p.206.

57. Laude, *Compagnie d'Ostende* ..., pp.70—5, discusses the sales with reference to the later company.

58. Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic trade* ..., p.223.

France,⁵⁹ that he was compelled to sacrifice it within a decade in the interests of European peace.⁶⁰ Its decline does not concern us here, but those who helped to bring it into being deserve to be remembered in the long history of the Cape sea route.

59. On the friendly feelings abroad between the French and the Ostenders, based in part on a common Catholic heritage, see F. Prims, "Les Rapports entre coloniaux français et belges au temps de la Compagnie d'Ostende ... (1724–1730)", *Revue de l'Histoire des Colonies françaises*, VI, 1932, pp.515–26.
60. The East India trade of the Ostend company was ended in 1731, although the company continued in existence until 1793, Hertz, "England and the Ostend Company", *EHR*, XXII, 86, Aug., 1907, pp.275–6.