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

Esther Voet, director of the Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel (Cidi), based in The Hague, said that the timing of the ship's arrival, shortly before Jews were targeted and killed in Paris and the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, was "a coincidence, I'm sure, but a sign of the times. We lost our battle to have the ship's name changed, and we are left eating dust."

Survivors of the Holocaust in Britain also spoke out. Ruth Barnett, a tireless campaigner who arrived from Nazi Germany as part of the Kindertransport, said: "I am outraged by the intensity and

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The definition of "world's largest ship" is disputed but the vessel is certainly the largest crane ship. It was built by the Swiss-based group Allseas, a pipelayer for the oil and gas industry. The ship weighs 403,342 gross tonnes, is more than 120 metres wide (the length of a football pitch) and 382 metres long.

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Allseas is owned by a Dutchman, Edward Heerema, who is the son of Pieter Schelte Heerema. The ship bearing his father's name arrived in Rotterdam from the Korean Daewoo shipyards two days before the killing of four Jews at a kosher supermarket in Paris and three weeks before the Auschwitz anniversary.

Voet says: "We've fought this for 10 years, tried to persuade everyone involved that this was offensive. But no, we're left with this fact: the largest ship in the world is named after an officer in the SS, and not enough people are offended to get this changed."

She continued: "The only thing we can try to do now is persuade the authorities in Rotterdam not to accept it. But then it becomes an issue of jobs, and difficult. I only hope we keep the moral high ground."

On the coincidence of the ship's arrival with the killing in Paris and the Auschwitz anniversary, she added: "If they are insensitive enough to name a ship after a Nazi, they're not going to be sensitive enough to care about the anniversary of Auschwitz!"

Cidi cited a petition organised by a British-based website monitoring the affairs of Royal Dutch Shell, the energy group, which trumpeted the ship's arrival in Rotterdam and which Allseas confirms in a press release to be among its early clients. The site, Royaldutchshellplc.com, is run by John Donovan, a former Shell contractor who is completing a book on the history of the company's relations with the Third Reich. His petition reads: "Please change the ship's name so that it no longer sails under the name of a former Waffen-SS officer jailed for war crimes."

Donovan told the *Observer*: "This public homage by Edward Heerema as the wealthy son of a Nazi war criminal is an affront to the relatives of tens of millions of souls who perished at the hands of Nazi Germany."

Lloyd's Register, which has been closely involved in bringing the Pieter Schelte to launch and featured the ship in glowing terms on the cover of its magazine, stuck by its position. "It's not our role to take a view on the name of a single ship," said a spokesman, Mark Stokes.

Allseas refrained from comment, but its communications office sent "general information", including an interview with Edward Heerema in the *Telegraaf* newspaper, and a summary of his father's career. This stated that he "became a member of a national social-

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■ Schelte returned to Venezuela where, says Barnouw, "any suggestions that he helped Nazis to escape to South America were dismissed. But he was (Waffen-SS) member."



Pieter Schelte Heerema in his SS uniform. The ship bearing his name, above right, was built by Allseas, a Swiss-based oil and gas support group owned by his son. AFP/Getty



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It continues: "Heerema lost his sympathy for the Nazi regime, and defected in June 1943. At the end of the war he was arrested. His trial in 1946 led to conviction for the period of his detention awaiting trial."

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■ Among Schelte's remarks was his



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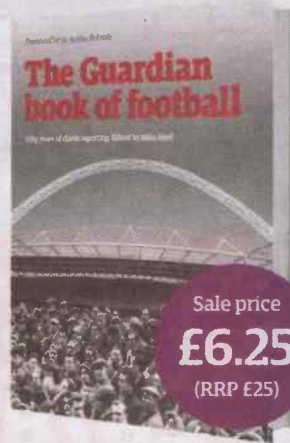
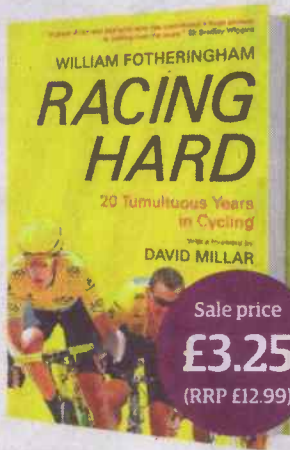
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