Jewish outrage as world's largest ship, named after SS war criminal, arrives in Europe

As Holocaust day nears, anger has erupted in the Netherlands and UK at arrival in Rotterdam of the Pieter Schelte. Ed Vulliamy reports

Leaders of Jewish communities and Holocaust memorial groups in Britain and the Netherlands have reacted with rage and despair at the arrival in Rotterdam of the world's biggest ship, the Pieter Schelte, named after a Dutch officer in the Waffen-SS.

The vice-president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Jonathan Arkush, said: "Naming such a ship after a man 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 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 in Auschwitz on the SS technology 'was set to revolutionise the offshore oil and gas industry'..."