
Netherlands

Cabinet crisis hits on NATO flank

by Dean Andromidas

The deployment of U.S. cruise missiles in Europe is threatening to bring down the center-right government of Netherlands Prime Minister R. Lubbers and to inflame the entire "Euromissile" issue throughout the North Atlantic Alliance. The current Dutch cabinet crisis is being manipulated by circles working toward decoupling Europe from the United States and crushing support for President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative for the development of an effective anti-ballistic-missile system for the United States and Europe.

The Dutch crisis follows Denmark's refusal, despite previous NATO agreements, to deploy any nuclear weapons on its territory. It follows official recent statements by the foreign ministers of West Germany and Italy attacking U.S. beam-weapons defense and calling for a greater European role in NATO, at the expense of the United States. A move to de-nuclearize the Netherlands would leave NATO's northern flank dangerously weakened at a time when the Soviets have been escalating their provocations aimed at northern Germany, Norway, Denmark, and neutral Sweden.

Cabinet battle

The current crisis was triggered following French President François Mitterrand's speech in February before the Dutch Parliament calling for a Europe-wide effort, in cooperation with the United States, to acquire a European space station and space-based ABM system. Eager to interest Holland's advanced electronics industries in the ABM effort, Mitterrand is said to have avoided the cruise missile question in an effort to persuade the Dutch to focus on the ABM project. But almost before Mitterrand's speech could be translated into Dutch, the appeasers forced an anti-"space wars" resolution through parliament, authored by Maarten Engwirda, faction leader of the leftist Democrat 66 Party.

Soon after the resolution was passed the cabinet crisis broke out, the pretext being opposition to the NATO Euromissile deployment. Defense Minister De Ruyter of the Christian Democratic Appeal Party headed up the opposition within the cabinet, and other cabinet members from his party

were also said to oppose deployment. Public debate on Mitterrand's proposal and the U.S. beam-weapons program has been dropped as a result, as potential supporters of these ideas are being silenced with the threat that the government could not weather new elections, and a Socialist-backed government, which would de-nuclearize Holland, would come into power.

The government has managed to postpone the parliamentary vote until the latter half of June. Meanwhile it is floundering, and airing various equally unworkable proposals, including the Danish proposal for a ban on the deployment of nuclear weapons in peacetime. A diplomatic source was quoted by the *Washington Post* May 11 that the parliament will almost certainly not accept the full quota of 48 missiles without a compromise.

Jan van Houwelingen, second-ranking official in the Dutch defense ministry, stated in Washington May 11 that the Netherlands will not accept all 48 cruise missiles. Houwelingen, according to the *Washington Post*, said that the United States had to be more understanding of the need to compromise if any missiles are to be deployed. "It is impossible to say that the only possibility is saying yes to 48 missiles," said von Houwelingen. He was in Washington to promote European arms sales.

The government's paralysis is very much to the liking of those participants in the East-West disarmament forums and One World planning sessions of the Pugwash Conferences. Prof. Hylke Tromp, the leader of the Dutch delegation to Pugwash, gloated that "a collapse of the missile deployment in Holland would lead to questions being raised in Belgium; look at the situation in Greece and Italy." Uncertainty about whether President Reagan will win the elections, he said, "reinforces a tendency among the middle-of-the-road politicians not to be 'more Reagan than Reagan.'" Calling the Strategic Defense Initiative "star-wars madness" and a "divisive issue," he claimed that opposition to the Euromissile deployment was rampant in the cabinet and that he himself had spoken with Prime Minister Lubbers last November on the missile issue.

Professor Tromp, who is also head of the War Studies Institute at Groningen University, is close friends with members of the nuclear freeze movement in the United States—including Admiral Eugene LaRoque of the Center for Defense Information and Bill Arkin of the Institute for Policy Studies—and is a top controller of the powerful Dutch peace movement. Nonetheless, his alternative to NATO's nuclear strategy is a conventional buildup, putting him in the same camp as Henry Kissinger and his business partner Lord Carington, the NATO secretary general.

EIR will intervene in the Dutch debate directly through a seminar on beam weapons to be held in The Hague May 23. European and American experts will present an evaluation of the scientific prospects for beam defense, the strategic importance of the program, and the political debate around it in the United States.