

The Dutch defense policy: much ado about nukes

Special to *Executive Intelligence Review*

The Dutch government will soon hold a "bilateral summit" meeting in Moscow, apart from its NATO partners, to discuss Holland's reluctance to deploy U.S. nuclear missiles in Western Europe. The Dutch Ministers of Agriculture and Transportation have already been in Moscow, discussing "prospects for cooperation" with, among others, Deputy Premier Gaidar Aliyev, one of those in Soviet ruling circles most responsible for Soviet destabilization and sabotage in the Middle East.

Holland is a trouble-spot in the shaky NATO alliance and has been for some time. Months ago, when Jesse Jackson was first putting together his presidential campaign, he and his anti-American nuclear-freeze rhetoric were warmly welcomed, not just by the terrorist government of Muammar Qaddafi, but by Holland's Queen Beatrix, who met with him during his tour of Europe. On that trip, Jackson also met with members of the West German Green Party and the violent squatters of West Berlin.

In May, the Dutch government made a unilateral decision not to station U.S. cruise missiles until 1988—the first time a NATO member nation has backed away from carrying out the Alliance's missile deployment as scheduled.

The author of the in-depth analysis below is a representative of the circles in Holland which are actively opposing the Soviet-steered Nuclear Freeze movement and Kissinger's effort to "decouple" Western Europe from the United States.

The author describes how factions of the Christian Democratic party are in collusion with the socialist parties in the wrecking operation against the Atlantic Alliance. This is relevant not only for Holland: The political process put under a microscope here resembles in important ways a similar process in larger European countries—not only Italy, where the Christian Democrats are moving toward sharing power with the Communist Party, but also Germany, where Christian Democratic Chancellor Kohl and his party colleague Defense Minister Wörner have made broad concessions to the "peace" movement.

—The Editors.

A Martian who was sent to Holland to make a report on the defense policy would soon discover that there is only one central issue on the mind of both politicians and public: the question of whether or not to station 48 American cruise missiles at Woensdrecht air force base in the south of the

country. This, however, would be the easiest part of the mission. According to a Dutch defense expert it would be far more difficult to ascertain what is really going on. Even a very clever Martian would need some time to make anything of the Dutch political scene.

In the House of Representatives, or Lower House, a bewildering number of parties, 13 in all, clamor for attention (see box). Some are denominational parties representing the large number of religious groups to be found in the country. The largest of these, the CDA or Christian Democrats, was founded in the late 1970s by merging the former Catholic party, the Christian Historical Union (CHU) and the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP). Contrary to its name, the ARP was certainly not the least progressive the three.

This merger lies at the root of much of the trouble. The ARP party members are in general opposed to nuclear weapons, which some of them call "an insult to God's creation." Consequently there is no clear party line on nuclear weapons. Quite a number of the 43 seat-strong Christian Democrats (5 to 11) are opposed to nuclear weapons. As they support the other points of the party program they call themselves "loyalists," while the others who hold an opposing view call them "dissidents," making Holland the only country where you can be "loyalist" and "dissident" at the same time. And then there are what might be called the "true dissidents": the Christian Democrats who left the party over the nuclear issue and formed their own small parties, such as the EVP and one called the Scholten-Dijkman Group.

Of the non-religious parties, the Labor Party (PvdA) is by far the most important. With 47 seats, it is the largest party in the country but is not part of the present Christian Democratic/Liberal coalition government. It is opposed to the deployment of cruise missiles, wants to reduce the commitment of the Dutch forces in NATO's theatre nuclear forces, and also favors a cut in defense spending. The third-largest party (36 seats) is the Liberal Party. The Liberals want to maintain a strong defense and support the agreed NATO stance on conventional and nuclear forces.

The other non-religious parties range from the far left (communists and socialist-pacifists) to the far right. At the latter end of the spectrum one finds, surprisingly, the Centrum or Central Party, which is often accused by other parties of neo-Nazi tendencies.

The lack of a political consensus on defense matters, and especially nuclear weapons, is of course a clear reflection of the present lack of social cohesion within Dutch society. This is a fairly recent phenomenon. Although Holland had a tradition of neutralism, World War II changed that abruptly. Holland became a staunch supporter of NATO and not so very long ago Dutch society was a byword for a somewhat stodgy conservatism. There are probably several reasons for this change. By the end of the 1960s the ravages of World War II had been repaired and the Dutch economy was flourishing as never before. In this period of economic well-being—partly attributable to the Marshall Plan—everything seemed possible in the widest conceivable sense. A new generation, prosperous and with no clear recollection of the war, took over and pledged the construction of a new society.

Gradually the old institutions gave way to the new. The noisy student revolt against what they saw as an obsolete hierarchical structure overcame the protests of their more experienced tutors and marked the beginning of a period of change and educational experiment within the universities. As the older politicians yielded up their positions, experiments got under way in other sectors of Dutch society as well. Laws were modified, as were the sanctions for criminal and other offenses. Social security provisions proliferated because the economy could afford it, and because moreover the traditional work ethic had lost much of its force with the decline in the authorities of the churches.

In those days of flower power, protest became almost a way of life. Taking part in demonstrations, whether against the war in Vietnam, anti-abortion laws, nuclear weapons and

The political hydra

The Dutch political system is a curious amalgam of three larger parties and a multitude of smaller ones. In the most important political body, the House of Representatives or Lower House, the 150 delegates represent a total of 13 parties. These parties are:

Parties	Seats
Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA, Labor)	47
Christen Democratisch Appel (CDA, Christian Democrats—center)	43
Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democraties (VVD, Liberals)	36
Democraten '66 (D'66, Democratic party)	6
Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij (PSP, Pacifists—left-wing socialists)	3
Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (SGP, Religious right-wing)	3
Communistische Partij van Nederland (CPN, Communist Party)	3
Politieke Partij Radicalen (PPR, Religious left-wing)	2
Reformatische Politieke Federatie (RPF, Religious right-wing)	2
Groep Scholten-Dijkman (Religious anti-nuclear splinter group)	2
Centrumpartij (extreme right)	1
Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond (GPV, Religious right-wing party)	1
Evangelische Volkspartij (EVP, Religious anti-nuclear splinter group)	1

As no single party enjoys a clear majority most governments are a coalition of the three—and sometimes four—largest political parties. General elections are held at four-year intervals, or sooner if the coalition collapses over an important political issue. After each general election, a senior politician is appointed by the Queen to try to form a new government (“formateur” in Dutch), or, if the election results show no clear preference of the voters for one of the possible combinations, to take stock of the differences of opinion on the divisive political issues (an “informateur”). In the latter case the forming of a new government tends to be a lengthy affair stretching over months rather than weeks. Although the deliberations of the “formateur,” the “informateur,” and the representatives of the different political parties are supposed to be secret, all the main actors show a tendency to leak selective information to the press. Meanwhile meetings of party cadre or party leaders give their views on stumbling blocks in the negotiation process. Though presented with conviction, these pronouncements are generally of a somewhat ambiguous nature. On the one hand, the speaker must be sure that he conveys a clear signal of the seriousness of the party line on a particular issue. On the other hand, however, he must keep his options open in order to maintain a strong bargaining position. When finally, after much plotting and counterplotting and secret and not-so-secret meetings of party officials, agreement is reached between two or three parties, there is still one final hurdle to be cleared: the formation of a government policy accord spelling out in some detail the plans and policies of the new government. When the accord is signed the new government can be sworn in and its plans implemented in the next four-year period. That is, of course, if the coalition holds together and does not come to grief on differences in the interpretation of a particular issue of the accord.

nuclear energy, industrial pollution or the expansion of airfields, was tantamount to marching in the vanguard of progress and those who stayed at home risked being labeled conservative. Politicians who were not publicly in sympathy with these movements were regarded as backward, right-wing and opposed to the "real progress" demanded by "the people," and consequently lost popular support. Others, even those who knew that a world without hunger and war could not emerge from a simple formula, jumped on the bandwagon and with feigned enthusiasm placed themselves at the head of the marches in the hope of picking up a few votes. What they did in reality, however, was to give political sanction to mass protests and thus to undermine the normal parliamentary process.

Given this lack of social and political cohesion it came as no surprise that on Dec. 12, 1979, when NATO took its "dual track" decision on cruise and Pershing missiles, the Dutch Christian Democrats/Liberal coalition did not commit itself to the deployment of 48 cruise missiles on Dutch territory. In an official statement, the first of the many "footnotes" which were to dent the Alliance's sense of unity, the Dutch came out in support of the military and political reasons on which the decision was based, but stated that they would take a decision on deployment "in December 1981 on the basis of the criterion of whether or not arms control negotiations have by then achieved results."

That date came and went. A new Labor/Christian Democratic/Democrats '66 coalition was unable to reach agreement on nuclear weapons. The only point the coalition partners could agree upon was that they would take no decisions on cruise deployment at all, much to the chagrin, incidentally, of the rank and file of the Labor Party who had expected a "no deployment" decision. When this coalition fell apart in 1982 through differences of opinion on economic policies—cuts in government spending in order to curb inflation—the leader of the new Christian Democratic/Liberal coalition, Ruud Lubbers (Christian Democrats), promised that a decision would be taken in June 1984. This was the final date allowing for the necessary construction operations at Woensdrecht air base in the preparation for the scheduled deployment in the spring of 1986.

Meanwhile the protests of the peace movement, an uneasy consortium of radical left wingers, muddle-headed anti-Americanists and people with a genuine concern for peace and environment, reached a new pitch. On Nov. 23, 1983, for instance, about half a million people marched in the Hague in protest against the cruise missiles. The peaceful character of this demonstration was not emulated in later actions by so-called peace activists, who tried to block the traffic to and from the air base. Against the background of these protests—and with polls indicating that a majority of the population was against deployment—tensions mounted as June 1984 approached. In the coalition there were conflicting views. Defense Minister Job de Ruiter (CDA) appeared to be against deployment, while Foreign Minister Hans van

den Broek of the same party wanted to implement the NATO decision, as did the Ministers of the Liberal Party.

Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers seemed to hover in between. He tried to break the deadlock by proposing various alternative basing schemes ranging from the outright danger-

The Dutch military

The active duty manpower level of the Dutch armed forces is about 110,000, of which 50% are conscripts. In a conflict, the wartime strength will be more than double that number since over 150,000 reservists can be recalled for active duty.

Most of the naval forces are assigned to NATO. The Royal Netherlands Navy has over 40 surface combatants and submarines plus some 25 helicopters. In addition, the naval air arm has nine maritime patrol aircraft, some of which are dual capable. Mine countermeasures are enhanced by the introduction of new "minehunters." Units of the Marine Corps are part of the AMF and conduct exercises in Norway on a regular basis.

The Royal Netherlands Army has earmarked one Army Corps of nine brigades (three armored and six mechanized) for the defense of its sector in the North German Plain. The units are in the process of being fitted out with modern Leopard 2 tanks and new armored personnel carriers. Nuclear capabilities include a Lance battalion, a howitzer battalion, and an atomic demolition ammunition mission team. Territorial Army units will guard land lines of communication and critical installations. Army units (with reinforcement of marines and air force personnel) serve in Lebanon and Sinai.

The Royal Netherlands Air Force supports NATO with 18 dual capable F-16 strike aircraft, 90 F-16 and NF-5 ground attack aircraft, and 18 RF-16 reconnaissance aircraft. The air force also operates 2 Nike and 11 Hawk air defense missile squadrons. Nike is to be replaced by the Patriot missile.

A new 10-year budget plan was published in 1984. The budget estimates are based on a real annual growth of 2% from 1984 through 1987 and of 3% thereafter. The diminished growth of the budget—3% was the target—means serious trouble for the services. Procurement plans have had to be altered and operating expenditures curtailed. The changes have not so much affected the procurement of major weapon systems as the items that are needed to attain a balanced force structure, such as electronic warfare equipment, ammunition, spare parts and so on.

ous to one or two bordering on the ridiculous. As most of these alternatives were unacceptable to the Liberal Party, the chance that the cabinet would fall increased; not a very agreeable prospect for the coalition partners. New elections with nuclear weapons as the main issue would probably benefit the Labor Party, making the chance of a return to government for the Liberals very slim indeed. It would also entail a reversal of the economic policies of the present coalition. The rewards of the austerity measures, such as wage cuts in the civil service, which are slowly becoming discernible in the form of increased economic activity, would then be lost too.

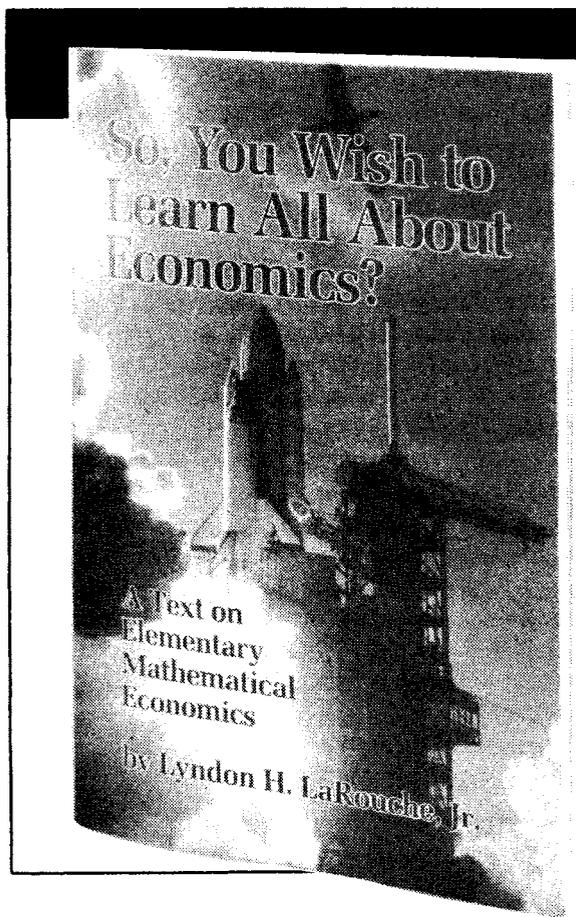
This explains why the compromise reached on June 1 in Mr. Ruud Lubber's coalition government may very well be the best that could be achieved. An unqualified decision to go ahead might have brought down the government, as might also a disguised "no" against deployment. The text of the decision—which is open to different interpretations however—boils down to this: The Dutch government will take a decision on deployment on Nov. 1, 1985. If by that time an arms control agreement has been reached with the Soviet Union, a fair share of the total number of missiles that are allowed under the terms of the treaty will be deployed in the Netherlands. In the absence of such an agreement the Netherlands will deploy the scheduled 48 weapon systems if the Soviet Union increases the number of SS-20 missiles beyond the limits reached on June 1, 1984. With this decision Dutch officials have for the first time formally agreed to accept the

missiles under NATO's 1979 plan, but it is also the first time a NATO nation has backed away from carrying out the deployment as scheduled. Under the original schedule the first missiles would have arrived in 1986. Now they can only be deployed some two years later.

If the process of reaching agreement within the cabinet was difficult, the government still had to clear the even more formidable hurdle of parliamentary approval. But in the two-day debate the prime minister successfully defended the government position. Some 20 amendments were defeated, although one amendment of the opposition was supported by seven delegates of the Lubbers/CD party.

Mesmerized by the nuclear debate, politicians had little time or inclination to discuss the matters of conventional forces. Holland has a professional navy and air force and a sizable army. The cadre/militia system of the army permits rapid expansion in wartime. Most of the forces are assigned to NATO (see box p. 35).

The territorial army will secure the land lines of communication of the allied forces and guard important military installations, using mobilizable infantry brigades, infantry and ranger battalions and National Reserve units. The latter are volunteer forces who train in their spare time. The number of people volunteering for these units is remarkably high, as is also the number of volunteers for units serving in Lebanon and Sinai. This together with the fact that the number of conscientious objectors has gone down could well be a sign that the mood is changing in Holland.



\$9.95

JUST RELEASED!

So, You Wish to Learn All About Economics?

by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

Order from your bookstore or from:

The New Benjamin Franklin House Publishing Company, Inc.

304 West 58th Street, 5th floor, New York, N.Y. 10019

(Shipping: add \$1.50 for first book, \$.50 for each additional book)

Bulk Orders:

● 10-99 books, 25% discount

● 100 or more books, 40% discount

(Bulk orders: pay UPS charges. 1-9 books, add \$1.50 for first book, .50 for each additional book)

Mastercard/Visa holders call: **(212) 247-7484**