

## THE INDEPENDENT ALLY

by Stanley R. Sloan

Late in the evening of November 1, 1985, J. M. Bik, a reporter for the newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, paced back and forth outside Nieuwspoort, the press information office at The Hague. Inside the red brick building, in an upstairs chamber, the 14 members of the Dutch cabinet debated whether or not to allow the United States, under the terms of a 1979 decision by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to deploy 48 Tomahawk cruise missiles on Dutch soil. For the Netherlands, this was, in the words of *New York Times* correspondent James M. Markham, "the most momentous and tormenting national security decision in postwar history."

For professional rather than political reasons, Mr. Bik probably hoped the missiles would be approved. The edition of the *NRC Handelsblad* tucked under his arm carried his front page story reporting that the cabinet had *already* decided in favor of deployment. Meanwhile, hoping to prove Bik wrong, hundreds of young antimissile protesters pressed against the building, shouting slogans and banging their fists against the doors and windows.

Finally, after 12 hours of cabinet debate, Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers came downstairs to the press gallery, now jammed with weary and impatient reporters, to announce the decision. To Bik's relief, Lubbers announced that his center-right coalition government had, indeed, agreed to let the United States begin deploying the weapons in the Netherlands in 1988. "Further deferment," wrote Lubbers to the Speaker of the Tweede Kamer (the lower house of parliament), "would undermine the credibility of the Netherlands' policy and call into question its reliability as a NATO partner." To mollify the country's vociferous antimissile movement, the cabinet also decided that it would discontinue two other "nuclear tasks" that the Netherlands undertook for NATO.\*

Back in Washington, State Department spokesman Joseph W. Reap hailed the Netherlands' "adherence to the fundamental principles underlying the [NATO] alliance." But in the Netherlands, Lubbers's pronouncement drew a flurry of protests. Some 100,000 high school students across the country skipped classes for a day. A group of protesters calling themselves, appropriately, Operation Emergency Brake halted commuter trains by pulling their emergency stop levers. To suggest impending nuclear doom, one radio station in

\*In 1988, the Netherlands will no longer assign U.S.-supplied nuclear weapons to its 32 F-16 fighter bombers, or nuclear depth charges to its six P-3C Orion II antisubmarine planes.



*Queen Wilhelmina escaped to London when the Nazis invaded Holland in 1940. Here she joins FDR and a Navy aide at Mount Vernon in August 1942 to lay a wreath at George Washington's tomb.*

the city of Hilversum broadcast nothing all day but the sound of an airraid siren. Most importantly, Joop den Uyl, leader of the opposition Labor Party, pledged to reverse the decision to deploy. To Laborites, den Uyl said, November 1 represented "a black day for all those striving for an end to the nuclear arms race."

Such protests did not surprise Lubbers or the Christian Democratic and (conservative) Liberal ministers in his cabinet. The missile question had generated recurrent indignation among Netherlanders ever since December 12, 1979. On that day, NATO foreign and defense ministers, meeting at the alliance's Brussels headquarters, formally approved a plan for closing a perceived gap in the alliance's deterrent strategy: They would station 464 cruise and 108 Pershing II missiles in five NATO countries (West Germany, Italy, Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands). The so-called double track decision also called on the United States to negotiate cuts in the number of missiles that would be deployed, in return for Soviet reductions in the number of their new SS-20 missiles aimed at Western Europe.

Dutch antimissile protesters, many of whom were organized by the country's powerful church-led Interdenominational Peace Committee, soon grew restless. U.S.-Soviet arms control talks in Geneva had stalled, while the initial deployment of missiles in West Germany

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and Britain grew imminent. Some 555,000 Dutch citizens took to the streets of The Hague, protesting against the NATO missiles, in November 1983. One farmer, Leendert Plaisier of Dronten, even offered the Soviets his 109-acre farm as a site for their SS-20s. "A nuclear equilibrium," Plaisier explained, defending his unorthodox view, "will make our country a safer place to live in."

At any point during the six-year Dutch missile debate, a casual foreign visitor might have wondered: Why all the fuss about these particular weapons? Indeed, the Netherlands had, for many years, served as a depot for U.S. nuclear artillery shells, depth charges, and other nuclear arms, which NATO would use against Soviet-led Warsaw Pact forces in the case of an attack.

### Whales, Spices, Neutrality

For some American officials the missile protests raised fundamental questions about the Netherlands' loyalty to the Western alliance and, for that matter, about the character of the Dutch themselves. To some extent, the drama reflected the special political tensions that repeatedly have surfaced over nuclear weapons and NATO policies within most other Western European countries.

At the height of the missile controversy, American political commentator Walter Laqueur argued that the Netherlands had become "one of the weakest links in the Western alliance." The missile protests, he suggested, were symptomatic of a broader Dutch (and Northwestern European) phenomenon. The ranks of Dutch pacifism had been swelled by a variety of "confused but well-meaning 'troops.'" According to Laqueur, these included "idealists in search of a cause, ecologists fearful of irreversible changes on earth and in the atmosphere, churchmen in pursuit of a new faith, young people bored by the absence of genuine challenges and attracted by any movement promising action."

It is true, of course, that several Dutch politicians have ranked among the sharpest Western European critics of U.S. and NATO policies in recent years. But has the country really drifted away from its duty as a Western ally, as Laqueur and others suggest? Perhaps. But it may also be that the Dutch are simply reverting to their historic role as citizens of a small, highly independent country.

Throughout their history, the Dutch, for various reasons, have been wary of entanglements. Indeed, between 1648 (when the Neth-

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erlands won its independence by ousting Spain in the Eighty Years' War) and 1940 (when Nazi Germany occupied the country), the Dutch made a religion of neutrality. As Dutch scholar and parliamentarian Joris J. C. Voorhoeve wrote in *Peace, Profits and Principles* (1979), they sought "friendly relations and maritime and commercial treaties with all, but alignment with none."

Neutrality seemed a good choice for the Netherlands to protect its commercial and political interests. As Spain's overseas empire declined during the 16th century, the Dutch became Europe's great maritime power. During the 17th century, Holland's "Golden Age," as British historian G. V. Scammell observed in *The World Encompassed* (1981), "Dutch ships pursued whales in the Arctic, seals off South Africa, carried coal from England to Europe, grain from the Baltic to Iberia, slaves from West Africa to Brazil, silver from Europe to Asia, and spices from Asia to Europe."

Neutrality continued to serve the Dutch well as their maritime hegemony faded during the 18th and 19th centuries. A small nation hemmed in by military giants and traditional rivals—Germany, Britain, and France—the Dutch wanted to protect the flow of trade in and out of their ports, and to preserve access to their East Indian colonies. They did not want to upset the European balance of power. Nonalignment and nonparticipation became their creed.

### 'Island of Sanity'

Staying out of European conflicts, of course, was not always easy. Thanks to their geography—and their position as a major commercial crossroads—the Dutch would find themselves caught between Great Powers more than once. France's Napoleon III, for example, grew wary of German military power after Prussia crushed Austria in the Seven Weeks' War (1866). In an effort to extend French influence, he sought a bargain with Holland's King William III. The French emperor urged William to cede to France the adjacent Grand Duchy of Luxembourg—which then belonged to the Netherlands—in exchange for a monetary indemnity.

The Prussian prime minister, Otto von Bismarck, evinced no objection to the deal—until it was leaked to a soon-outraged German public. Then Bismarck had little choice but to threaten France with war. To stave off a European conflict, at least temporarily,\* the Dutch refused to cede Luxembourg to France. As prince lieutenant of Luxembourg, William's brother, Henry, granted the Grand Duchy's independence and neutrality at the Conference of London in 1867. "Dutch statecraft," as the 19th-century Dutch statesman, Johan Rudolf Thorbecke, rather confidently saw it, "itself free of the lust of power, is the fairest judge over the ambition of others."

\*The Franco-Prussian War erupted in 1870.

### DOING BUSINESS IN AMERICA

Practical, hard-working, and business-minded, the Dutch have loomed large in American life. Notable Americans of Dutch descent include three presidents (Martin Van Buren, Theodore and Franklin D. Roosevelt), empire builders (Cornelius Vanderbilt), writers (Herman Melville), actors (Humphrey Bogart, Audrey Hepburn), and journalists (Amy Vanderbilt, Walter Cronkite). But there are only six million Americans of Dutch ancestry today—compared with 40 million of Irish and 12 million of Italian descent.

The early Dutch ventured across the Atlantic mostly to explore and exploit—not to settle—the New World. “The nature of the Dutchman,” Sir Walter Raleigh said in 1593, “is to fly to no man but for his profit.”

The first Dutch foray to North America came in 1609, when the *Halve Maen* (Half Moon), commanded by an Englishman, Henry Hudson, sailed up the Hudson River in search of a Northwest Passage to the East Indies. Dutch explorers who followed, such as Adriaen Block, sought beaver skins from the Mohican Indians, who then inhabited the Hudson River Valley. In 1614 Dutchmen built Fort Nassau near present-day Albany, New York.

The Dutch also imported the first slaves to the New World. The Dutch ship that delivered 20 black Africans to Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619 was the first of many to bring bondsmen to labor-short English colonists.

Attracted by the lucrative fur trade, 13 Dutch merchants established the Dutch West India Company in 1621, and gained exclusive rights to develop the colony of Nieuw Nederland (which encompassed parts of Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York). A group of farmers founded Nieuw Amsterdam in 1625 at the mouth of the Hudson River. It was here, the following year, that Pieter Minuit, Nieuw Nederland’s director-general, concluded his famous pact with the Indians to purchase Manhattan Island for 60 guilders (\$24) worth of merchandise (including 80 pairs of hose, 30 kettles, and one frying pan.)

Dutch outposts such as Wiltwyck (today’s Kingston, New York) and Bergen (Jersey City, New Jersey) sprang up throughout the area. But only 10,000 Dutch inhabited Manhattan, Long Island, and the Hudson and Delaware River valleys in 1664, when a British force led by Colonel Richard Nicolls seized Nieuw Amsterdam and named it after the Duke of York.

Through no virtue of their own, the Dutch, unlike the neighboring Belgians, escaped the devastation of World War I. Germany’s famous Schlieffen Plan had originally called for Kaiser Wilhelm II’s troops to invade Belgium *and* the Netherlands on their way to France. But a neutral Holland, calculated General Helmuth von Moltke, would best serve the German war effort—by keeping the mouth of the Rhine River, at Rotterdam, open to German imports. A combination of “opportune Dutch timidity” and “considerable good fortune,” as Voorhoeve put it, “saved the Dutch.”

Through the 1920s and 1930s, the Dutch remained faithful to neutrality. Holland joined the League of Nations in 1920. But the League, as Foreign Minister H. A. van Karnebeek was quick to note,

Dutch immigration virtually ceased for 180 years. Then a fundamentalist revolt at home against the increasingly lax Dutch Reformed Church rekindled interest in the New World. Beginning in the mid-19th century, Dutch pastors led entire congregations of dogmatic Calvinist "Seceders" to America. Unlike their 17th-century predecessors, they came to establish their own isolated, God-fearing communities. In 1846, Dominie (Pastor) Henrick Pieter Scholte and his 900-person congregation from Amsterdam and Utrecht built the town of Pella on a prairie in central Iowa. The next year, Dominie Albertus C. van Raalte led his congregation from rural Drenthe and Overijssel to the forests of western Michigan. The new community, named Holland, he wrote, would be "a center for a united and spiritual life and labor for God's kingdom."

Today, Pella, Iowa (population: 8,300), and Holland, Michigan (10,400), are successful Dutch-American communities. Pella hosts two large companies—Rolscreen (windows) and Vermeer (farm equipment)—that maintain branches in the Netherlands. The town's 1985 median family income (\$30,945) lives up to the local motto: "A Nice Place to Live, and Make a Living."



*Teddy Roosevelt*

Pellans, says Robert van Hemert, head of the local chamber of commerce, are more frugal, and more apt to vote Republican, than most Americans. He attributes Dutch-Americans' success to their ability to seize new opportunities while preserving Dutch values. Perhaps this is what Theodore Roosevelt was referring to when he spoke before the Holland Society of New York in 1890.

"Hollanders," said the future U.S. president, could never have won "re-nown had they remained Hollanders instead of becoming Americans." Had Cornelius Vanderbilt remained "alien in speech and habit of thought," TR went on, he "would have remained an unknown boatman instead of becoming one of the most potent architects of the marvelous American industrial fabric," and Martin Van Buren "would have been a country tavern-keeper, instead of the president of the mightiest republic the world has ever seen."

did not represent a one-sided political agreement or a military partnership. Moreover, within the League, the Netherlands and other small European nations refused to align themselves with Britain and France. On July 1, 1936, three years after Hitler took power, the Netherlands and six others (Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and Norway) declared themselves exempt from any future League decisions imposing economic sanctions against an aggressor. The likelier another war seemed during the 1930s, the more the Dutch clung to their faith.

To many Dutch politicians, neutrality seemed not only prudent, but also *morally* superior to military conflict. The Dutch, proclaimed P. J. S. Serrarens, a member of the parliament, after Germany in-

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vaded Poland, "have the duty in these days to guard the higher ethical values for mankind and in particular for Europe." Holland would remain, in the words of his colleague Rutgers van Rozenburg, an "island of sanity" amidst "the folly of peoples."

Even after the Germans invaded neutral Denmark and Norway in April 1940, the Dutch thought they could avoid the worst. Hitler had other plans. "The violation of Belgium's and Holland's neutrality is without importance," the Führer had told his leading military commanders at a November 23, 1939, meeting in Berlin. "Nobody will question that after we have conquered."

### Into the Attics

The Nazi attack began in the early morning hours of May 10, 1940. The Dutch spotted German planes penetrating Dutch air space at 1:30 A.M. But the aircraft did not attack; instead they proceeded out over the North Sea, on their way, it seemed, to England. At 4:00 A.M., the planes circled back toward the Netherlands, this time dropping bombs, then paratroopers, on Dutch airfields. Meanwhile, the Wehrmacht poured across the border. "The city is surrounded by strong German troops," warned Nazi leaflets dropped from the air on The Hague. "Any resistance is senseless."

As it happened, resistance *was* senseless. The Luftwaffe wiped out the Netherlands' meager air force within two days. The Germans delivered the final blow at 1:30 P.M. on May 14, when their aircraft began carpet bombing the city of Rotterdam. Gusts of wind whipped flames into a fury, as people poured into the streets. The city was devastated; there were some 1,000 dead. Within only a few hours of the attack, General Henri Gerard Winkelman, the commander-in-chief of the Dutch forces, called on his 300,000 poorly armed troops to lay down their weapons. To the Dutch people, Winkelman broadcast this stark explanation of the quick capitulation: "Our air force was too weak against the German air force and our anti-aircraft batteries also were not up to the might of the German power from the air . . . We were left to ourselves."

Neutrality, however noble in principle, had proved no guarantee of national survival. The Dutch forces had resisted only long enough to permit Queen Wilhelmina and the Dutch cabinet to flee to London aboard a British destroyer. Thousands of Dutch refugees soon followed. Their vessels, under frequent attack by Luftwaffe planes, steered zigzag courses as they steamed toward England.

The Dutch who stayed in Holland would live under Nazi occupation for the next five years. Berlin put Reichskommissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart, a Viennese Nazi, in charge of the Netherlands. On May 30, 1940, Seyss-Inquart delivered his "inaugural address" in the historic Ridderzaal at The Hague, where the queen had given her

traditional Speech from the Throne.\*

The Nazis would soon abolish the parliament, political parties, and the free press, set up German courts, and hand over much administrative authority to the Dutch National Socialists. They rationed the distribution of food, shoes, textiles, and soap, and confiscated foodstuffs and other valuables. Zinc tokens replaced Holland's copper, nickel, and silver coins. The Germans conducted *razzia*, or man-hunts—first for Jews, and later for other able-bodied men—to provide workers for war industries in Germany. Some 300,000 *onderduikers* (underdivers) resisted the *razzia* by hiding themselves in the attics or basements of sympathetic countrymen.

1944 began auspiciously for the Dutch. The Allies landed in Normandy on June 6, and went on to liberate Paris on August 24, Brussels on September 3, and parts of the Netherlands' southernmost province of Limburg by September 9. But Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery's northward push into the Netherlands failed at the Battle of Arnhem (September 17–27).

### Van Kleffens's Vision

The Dutch would suffer two more major wartime disasters after the loss at Arnhem. To open up the seaward approaches to newly captured Antwerp, a key Allied supply port, the British routed the German garrison on the Dutch coastal island of Walcheren—a victory achieved only after the Royal Air Force bombed the sea dikes there. The resulting inundation, combined with heavy fighting, wreaked havoc on the island, drowning some residents, and sending others scurrying for higher ground. The last eight months of occupation also saw the Germans halting food shipments to western districts of the Netherlands. City dwellers in Amsterdam and The Hague survived Holland's "Hunger Winter" of 1944–45 by trading clothes, furniture, and jewelry for food. In rural areas, their starving countrymen ate the pulp of sugar beets and roasted tulip bulbs like chestnuts.

By the time Germany's General Johannes Blaskowitz surrendered on May 5, 1945, at the Hotel Wereld in Wageningen, 200,000 Dutch had lost their lives. Roughly half of these were Jews, who had been deported to Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Sobibor, Bergen-Belsen, and other Nazi concentration camps.†

\*The Dutch East Indies, meanwhile, fared no better. Following their December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese captured, in rapid succession, the islands of Borneo, Celebes, Timor, and Bali. After eight days of fighting Allied forces, the Japanese took the archipelago's chief island of Java on March 9, 1942. Japan's often-brutal occupation of the Dutch colonies lasted over three years.

†Among them was Anne Frank, who hid for two years with her family in the "Secret Annexe"—a hidden attic in her father's spice business—in Amsterdam. Acting on a tip from Dutch informers, the Gestapo discovered the Franks on August 4, 1944. Anne died, at age 15, of typhus at Bergen-Belsen in March 1945. Her father, Otto Frank, survived Auschwitz. He recovered Anne's now-famous wartime journal, which was published in 1947 as *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*.



The trauma of World War II forced the Dutch to reconsider the wisdom of neutrality. In London, officials of the Dutch government in exile reflected on the role in European politics that the Netherlands might play after the war. In 1943, Eelco N. van Kleffens, the Dutch minister of foreign affairs, had sketched the outlines of a future "Atlantic alliance" in a radio address to the still-occupied Netherlands. Van Kleffens envisioned that

there would emerge in the West a strong formation in which America with Canada and the other British dominions would function as an arsenal, Great Britain as a base (particularly for the air force) and the Western parts of the European continent—I refer to Holland, Belgium, and France—as a bridgehead. In this manner we would be dependent, it is true, on the Western powers; but these powers would, conversely, have a need of us. It is difficult to think of a stronger position for our country.

The Allied liberation of Holland, therefore, also set the stage for the end of Dutch neutrality.

World War II had demonstrated that an independent, neutral



*NATO commander Alexander M. Haig, Jr., chats with a Dutch conscript in West Germany (1976). The Hague allots 13 percent of the national budget to defense—less than Washington (27 percent), Paris (19), or Bonn (19).*

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Holland might be *more*, not less, vulnerable to a hostile Soviet Union or a resurgent Germany. The conflict, moreover, had left behind a Europe divided between Eastern totalitarianism and Western democracy. The Communist coup in Czechoslovakia (February 1948), the USSR's "mutual defense pacts" with Romania and Hungary (February 1948), and the ominous Soviet blockade of West Berlin (June 1948 to May 1949) solidified Western, and Dutch, resolve to stand up to the Russians. One 1948 Nederlands Instituut voor de Publieke Opinie poll showed that 71 percent of the Dutch expected another world war within their lifetimes. Another survey revealed that 76 percent had a "friendly" attitude toward the United States, versus only 27 percent with similar sentiments toward the Soviet Union.

### NATO's 'Conscience'

The Netherlands thus became an enthusiastic member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which was formed in Washington, D.C., on April 4, 1949. Dutch diplomat and former NATO official S. I. P. van Campen has reflected that "the security factor dominated all other considerations." But the Dutch chose to join the alliance not only for practical but for ideological reasons as well. They believed that, through the alliance, they could gain what they had once enjoyed by remaining neutral: peace, independence, and free trade among nations whose actions would be governed by international law.

The Hague became one of Washington's most reliable partners. The Dutch actively supported plans for a European Defense Community during the early 1950s. In spite of their wartime ordeal, they endorsed U.S. efforts to rearm West Germany and bring Bonn into the alliance. The Dutch generally supported NATO's defense goals, and accepted the deployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in 1957. The Hague thus welcomed America's presence in Europe as a deterrent to the Soviet threat and as insurance against a hostile Germany. The Dutch preferred, as Voorhoeve put it, "the gentle hegemony of a remote Atlantic superpower" to potential subordination to Britain or France.

The Dutch, almost automatically, assumed the role of NATO's "conscience." They were always prepared to remind other allies, including the United States, of the North Atlantic Treaty's principles, such as the promise to "live in peace with all peoples and all governments." The Netherlands supported NATO's adoption of a 1968 report, drafted by Belgian foreign minister Pierre Harmel, that urged the alliance to provide a strong deterrent *and* seek better relations with the Soviet bloc. "Military security and a policy of detente," the Harmel Report said, "are not contradictory, but complementary." The Dutch thus sought to mediate and mitigate East-West tensions, much as they had done during the 19th century, when they avoided,

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at all costs, upsetting the balance of power.

The Netherlands also became NATO's self-appointed interlocutor with the Third World. Under pressure from the United States and Britain, the Dutch reluctantly ended their colonial rule over the East Indies in December 1949 [see box p. 64]. They lost a fortune when the Indonesians expropriated their assets. But with the fervor of a converted colonialist power, the Netherlands became a generous source of aid to the Third World.\*

All in all, the Netherlands found it easy, during the early days of the alliance, to be a "loyal" ally. But a series of world events, beginning in the 1960s, changed the Dutch view of the United States, just as the Soviet threat appeared to be receding.

### **Bashing the *Neutronenbom***

Following the U.S. lead, the Dutch became increasingly convinced of the Harmel Report's wisdom. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968), the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin (1971), the SALT I Treaty (1972), and the Helsinki Final Act (1975) appeared to demonstrate that East and West could differ profoundly and still not go to war. Moreover, the Dutch, along with many other West Europeans, saw little chance of a Warsaw Pact attack—as long as the NATO alliance maintained a strong military deterrent, and kept up good relations with the East.

At the same time, the Dutch became distressed by what Washington was doing around the world. Perhaps more than anything, U.S. involvement in Vietnam tarnished Washington's reputation in the Netherlands and across Western Europe. President Lyndon B. Johnson sought European support for America's costly effort against communism in Southeast Asia. "Send us some men and send us some folks to deal with these guerrillas," the president asked Britain's Prime Minister Harold Wilson in 1965. But the British, Dutch, and other Europeans balked, on several grounds. First, some were unhappy that Washington had to withdraw U.S. troops from Europe to fight a war in faraway Asia. Second, many opposed the conflict on moral grounds; and third, most believed that, against Hanoi's tenacity, the United States could not succeed. Many Dutch, like many Americans, winced at news photos of American GIs laying waste to seemingly innocent villages in Southeast Asia. In Holland, such sights may have stirred up bad memories of Dutch oppression in their own East Indian colonies.

The fall of Saigon in 1975 did not mean the end of Dutch, or

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\*According to the World Bank, in 1985 only Norway gave more aid to underdeveloped countries—measured as a percentage of gross national product (GNP)—than did the Netherlands. The Norwegians donated one percent (\$555 million) of their GNP to Third World countries; the Dutch gave 0.9 percent, or \$1.123 billion. The U.S. contribution: \$9.5 billion, or 0.24 percent of its GNP.



*Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers (front center) meets with peace activists (October 1985). Some 3.7 million citizens signed petitions demanding a ban on NATO deployment of 48 cruise missiles on Dutch soil.*

Western European, distress over U.S. policies. Peace activists seized on another cause for outrage when Jimmy Carter contemplated (only later to “defer”) the production and deployment of the neutron bomb in 1978. In contrast to existing nuclear weapons, the “enhanced radiation” nuclear artillery shell, its proponents argued, would enable NATO to counter a Soviet armored thrust into Western Europe while causing relatively little blast damage to nearby towns and villages. European and American journalists dashed off stories about the bomb that would “kill people, but not buildings.” Egon Bahr, secretary general of West Germany’s Social Democratic Party, called it “a perversion in human thinking.”

Many in Holland agreed. A Dutch political action group, Stop de Neutronenbom, circulated anti-neutron bomb petitions and sponsored large street demonstrations in Amsterdam. There, during the spring of 1978, roughly one in 10 homes sported a yellow “Stop the Neutron Bomb” poster, which hung on the front door or in a window. When his fellow cabinet ministers refused to denounce the weapon, Defense Minister Roelof Kruisinga resigned in protest. The *New Statesman*, a leftish British magazine, observed that “although [the Netherlands] is a loyal member of the Western alliance, it has not lost

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the habit of thinking for itself.”

Thus, the alliance-shaking cruise missile controversy of 1979–85 was only one signal of Dutch anxiety. The Reagan administration’s fiery early anti-Soviet rhetoric, its support for the *contra* rebels in Nicaragua, and the U.S. invasion of tiny Grenada added to the Dutch impression that Washington was losing the moral judgment and political acumen to lead the alliance properly. Moreover, some Dutch politicians began to doubt whether the United States, as President Reagan insisted, considered NATO “our first line of defense.” Would Washington actually defend Rotterdam, as American politicians had long promised, at the risk of endangering New York? European politicians were stunned when the president himself rashly remarked in 1981 that he “could see where you could have the exchange of tactical weapons against troops in the field without it bringing either one of the major powers to pushing The Button.”

### Such Good Friends

Yet, despite all the trans-Atlantic bickering, Prime Minister Lubbers’s government values the alliance and, along with other Western European governments, cherishes Washington’s nuclear guarantee. The possibility that President Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail S. Gorbachev would actually eliminate all strategic ballistic missiles—as proposed by President Reagan in Reykjavik last October—gave Dutch leaders the jitters. They rely, after all, on America’s “nuclear umbrella” to compensate for the Warsaw Pact’s superiority in conventional forces, especially tanks and artillery.

“Drastic changes in the nuclear [weapons] field,” said Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek, understating the Dutch government’s worries, “could, beyond a certain point, have the effect of emphasizing the significance of the present conventional disparities.”

Dutch politicians are like most political leaders within the alliance: They want it all. On the one hand, as Dutch journalist Maarten Huygen has written, “the Netherlands wants American influence as a balance against Britain, France, and West Germany as the ultimate guarantor of peace on the European continent.” But the Dutch also feel that Washington exercises too much power over Dutch and European security interests. Says Dutch socialist Klaas de Vries, “We [Europeans] want to control our own destiny.”

Polls have shown that the Dutch, like other Western European citizens, seem to suffer from an apparent mild case of schizophrenia: Sizable majorities have opposed certain NATO initiatives, such as the deployment of the cruise missiles, yet remain firmly committed to membership in the alliance.

The Netherlands, it should be remembered, shoulders modest but important nonnuclear tasks within NATO. While the Dutch, un-

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like the West Germans, do not play host to many U.S. personnel, they have taken on responsibilities beyond their own borders. The Dutch are assigned to defend a crucial sector of the North German plain, and their navy joins in NATO antisubmarine and sea-control efforts in the North Sea and in the North Atlantic. Dutch ground units perform well in NATO field competitions, despite the fact that their unionized conscripts are allowed to wear beards and long hair. Senior Dutch military men claim that they could, in time of war, mobilize some two million reservists within 24 hours.

But the Netherlands' record is far from perfect. Although NATO would like to see two Dutch combat-ready brigades stationed in West Germany during peacetime, only one is deployed there. And the Netherlands, along with most allies, has fallen short of the NATO-wide goal of increasing defense expenditures by three percent, in real terms, each year.

The Dutch know that they have, in recent years, gained a reputation abroad as one of the sharpest critics of U.S. policies. But, as they see it, their criticism expresses what is needed within the alliance: more European self-assertion to uphold the principles on which NATO was founded. They reject the notion that complaints and disagreement equal disloyalty.

In 1982, Leopold Quarles van Ufford, the former Dutch consul-general in New York, was invited to the University of Pennsylvania to address the topic: "Are the Dutch Good Friends?" Van Ufford was apologetic. The Dutch, he explained, possess "an undeniable degree of self-sufficiency, which motivates us to correct others and at times makes us rather unliked." But "this urge to point a finger at others," he added, "does not make us less good friends, just less jolly."

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