

Netherlands



10 DOWNING STREET

bf 4/12

From the Private Secretary

28 November 1979

Possible Visit by The Netherland's Prime Minister

As I have already told you on the telephone, the Prime Minister has agreed in response to your letter to me of 23 November that an invitation should be issued to Mr. van Agt to come to London for an hour's talks in the late afternoon of Thursday 6 December. The Prime Minister would also be happy to offer him a working dinner that evening.

If the Dutch Prime Minister is able to accept the invitation, I should be grateful to receive briefs for the meeting by close of play on Tuesday 4 December and your suggestions for possible participants in the talks and in the dinner as soon as possible.

I am sending copies of this letter to Brian Norbury (Ministry of Defence) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

M. D. B. ALEXANDER

Paul Lever, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



? lunch on
7 Dec.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 November 1979

Dear Michael,

POSSIBLE VISIT BY THE NETHERLANDS PRIME MINISTER

Our Ambassador at The Hague was told on 22 November (The Hague telegram no 388, copy attached) that Mr van Agt would very much like to come to London to discuss TNF modernisation with the Prime Minister before the Netherlands' Government decides its position on about 10 December. We had earlier heard that Mr van Agt intended to raise this subject with the Prime Minister and other Heads of Government concerned during the Dublin Summit. The fact that he has proposed to pay a special visit to London indicates how important and sensitive this subject has become for his government.

Part of the purpose of such a visit would no doubt be to enable Mr van Agt to convince the Dutch Parliament that every effort has been made to persuade the Allies to accept the Dutch arguments in favour of a smaller TNF programme; this effort will be a necessary element in any Dutch decision to drop their reservations about the TNF package as it stands. But a visit would also enable the Prime Minister to make clear that, as far as HMG are concerned, the TNF programme should go ahead in its present form and that, if the Dutch want to continue to influence Alliance nuclear policies, they should go along with it.

Lord Carrington hopes that the Prime Minister will be able to accede to Mr van Agt's request; and would see advantage in her seeing Mr van Agt as early as possible. I understand that it might be feasible for the Prime Minister to receive him on the evening of 28 November or on 29 November, possibly at Northolt en route for Dublin.

I should be grateful if you would let me know whether this proposal is acceptable to the Prime Minister. We will then inform The Hague accordingly.

I am sending copies of this letter to Brian Norbury (MOD) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours etc
Paul
(P Lever)

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street



(1)

10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister.

Not before
Dublin - I must
concentrate
on the budget
on the
way
value
out

You will see from this
telegram that the British Prime
Minister is anxious to see you
before December 10. It looks as
tho' he is trying to be helpful.

Would you be prepared to see him
at Northolt (or Heathrow) for an
hour or so before take off on the
way to Dublin. I have no idea
whether this would be technically
feasible but if he is using his own
aircraft, it might be? Apce that
I should investigate?

Paul

Departmental

IMMEDIATE

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HAGFO 03/23

ADVANCE COPY

- OO FCO
- OO UKREP BRUSSELS
- OO UKDEL NATO
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- PS
- PS/UPS
- PS/MR HAD
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- PS/MR LEE
- PS/PS
- MR BLUMHARD
- MR. FERGUSON
- MR P.H. MOBERLY
- MR DAY
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- Dir Cabinet Office
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FM THE HAGUE 231010Z NOV 79.

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 388 OF 23 NOVEMBER.

INFO IMMEDIATE UKREP BRUSSELS, UKDEL NATO AND MOD (DS17)

INFO PRIORITY BRUSSELS, LUXEMBOURG, DUBLIN, COPENHAGEN, PARIS, ROME, BONN, OTTAWA, OSLO, WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK, LUSAKA, PRETORIA AND UKDEL VIENNA.

CALL ON NETHERLANDS PRIME MINISTER.

1. I SAW MR VAN AGT ON 22 NOVEMBER IN ORDER TO DISCUSS TNF MODERNISATION, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND RHODESIA TO ENSURE THAT THE POINTS WHICH YOU MADE IN YOUR MEETING WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON 6 NOVEMBER WERE ALSO UNDERSTOOD BY HIM AND THAT HE SHOULD UNDERSTAND FULLY THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO EACH OF THE ISSUES

ON 6 NOVEMBER WERE ALSO UNDERSTOOD BY HIM AND THAT HE SHOULD UNDERSTAND FULLY THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO EACH OF THE ISSUES. THE PRINCIPAL POINTS OF INTEREST FROM WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD TO SAY ARE AS FOLLOWS.

TNF MODERNISATION

2. MR VAN AGT CONTINUES TO BE EXTREMELY PREOCCUPIED BY THE INTERNAL POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS QUESTION. HE SAID THAT FOR HIS GOVERNMENT TO AGREE TO PRODUCTION AND DEPLOYMENT WOULD BE "SUICIDE". THE ALTERNATIVES THAT HE SAW WERE :

(A) FOR THE DUTCH TO AGREE TO PRODUCTION AND DEPLOYMENT EXCEPT FOR THE NETHERLANDS SHARE OF DEPLOYMENT. BUT HE WAS CLEARLY VERY UNHAPPY ABOUT SUCH A SOLUTION; OR

(B) AGREEMENT TO PRODUCTION AND DEPLOYMENT OF A SMALLER NUMBER OF MISSILES. THERE WAS IN HIS VIEW NOTHING HOLY ABOUT THE NUMBER 572 WHICH WAS RIGHT AT THE TOP END OF THE ORIGINAL BRACKET UNDER CONSIDERATION. HE BELIEVED THAT THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY EFFECT COULD BE ACHIEVED WITH A SMALLER NUMBER, "SOME HUNDREDS". HE RECOGNISED THAT HIS ALLIES HAD ACCEPTED THE NUMBER AND THAT THE PRESTIGE OF THE MAJOR ALLIES WAS TIED UP IN THE FIGURE AGREED IN BRUSSELS. NEVERTHELESS THE DUTCH WOULD CONTINUE TO TRY TO PERSUADE THEIR FRIENDS ON THIS ISSUE.

3. THE OTHER ALLEVIATIONS MR VAN AGT SAW FOR HIS POLITICAL POSITION WERE NATO AGREEMENT TO THE SHIFT STUDY, SOME REDUCTION IN DUTCH NUCLEAR TASKS AND SOME FORM OF REFERENCE TO A LINK WITH SALT II. THE LAST HE RECOGNISED WAS RIGHTLY A POINT OF GREAT DELICACY WITH CONGRESS. I PUT TO MR VAN AGT THE SCENARIO THAT THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT HAVING DEMONSTRABLY DONE ITS BEST TO PERSUADE ITS ALLIES SHOULD IN THE LAST RESORT, IN ORDER TO AVOID ISOLATION AND SECOND-CLASS STATUS, GO ALONG WITH THE NATO DECISION AND EXPLAIN THEIR ACTION TO PARLIAMENT WHO MIGHT THEN BE EXPECTED TO ACCEPT THE DECISION IN SORROW AS A NECESSARILY EVIL. MR VAN AGT THOUGHT THIS HIGHLY IMPROBABLE AS A SOLUTION; IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES THERE WAS A MUCH GREATER THAN 50 PERCENT CHANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT FALLING, WHICH WOULD THEN LEAD TO A GENERAL ELECTION FOUGHT ON THE NATO AND NUCLEAR ISSUE. HE RECOGNISED THAT IT DID NOT MATTER TO THE ALLIANCE WHETHER HIS GOVERNMENT FELL OR NOT, BUT IT WOULD BE BAD FOR THE ALLIANCE TO HAVE A CAMPAIGN FOUGHT ON THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE. THE GOVERNMENT COULD EXPECT THE SUPPORT OF SOME VERY SMALL RIGHT-WING GROUPS BUT IF MORE THAN SIX OR SEVEN OF HIS OWN PARTY OPPOSED HIM ON THE ISSUE THE OPPOSITION (INCLUDING THE D66 PARTY) WOULD BRING HIM DOWN.

THE D66 PARTY) WOULD BRING HIM DOWN.

4. I MADE THE OBVIOUS COMMENTS AND EXPLAINED THE POSITION OF
MGM AS DESCRIBED LAST WEEK BY MR PYM; MR VAN AGT WAS WELL AWARE
OF THIS BUT CLEARLY FELT HE HAD LITTLE POLITICAL ROOM FOR
MANOEUVRE. THIS WAS A DISAPPOINTING REACTION A WEEK AFTER THE
NPG MEETING AND BEARING IN MIND WHAT DR VAN DER KLAUW HAD TOLD
YOU ABOUT THE LIKELY EFFECT ON PARLIAMENTARY ATTITUDES OF RECOGNISING
THAT THE NETHERLANDS WOULD BE ISOLATED IF THEY HELD OUT. I THINK
THAT THERE MAY WELL BE AN ELEMENT IN MR VAN AGT'S STRATEGY OF
DEMONSTRATING FOR INTERNAL CONSUMPTION THE TOTAL EFFORT HE HAS
PUT INTO TRYING TO WIN ACCEPTANCE FOR CDA VIEWS IN ORDER TO
STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION IN THE PARTY.

5. MR VAN AGT TOLD ME INCIDENTALLY THAT TNF HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED
DURING THE BENELUX SUMMIT MEETING EARLIER THIS WEEK, BUT IT HAD
COME UP BRIEFLY WHEN M. WERNER AND M. THORN HAD MADE A SHORT
COURTESY VISIT TO THE HAGUE ON 21 NOVEMBER. HE THOUGHT THAT THE
BELGIAN POSITION WOULD BE IMPORTANT FOR THE DUTCH.

6. AT THE OUTSET OF THIS CONVERSATION THE PRIME MINISTER SAID
THAT HE WAS VERY ANXIOUS TO BE RECEIVED BY MRS THATCHER BEFORE
10 DECEMBER IN ORDER TO TALK ABOUT THE TNF PROBLEM. (WE HAVE
REPORTED THIS REQUEST SEPARATELY BY TELEPHONE.) I BELIEVE THAT
IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IN INTERNAL POLITICAL TERMS AND THEREFORE
IN GETTING THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT TO ACCEPT THE ALLIANCE DECISION
IF THE PRIME MINISTER WERE ABLE TO AGREE TO MR VAN AGT'S REQUEST.

RHODESIA

7. I WAS ANXIOUS TO ENSURE THAT MR VAN AGT UNDERSTOOD THE DIFFIC-
ULTIES THAT YOU FACED IN YOUR CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS INSTEAD OF GETTING
SECOND-HAND BRIEFING FROM THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.
I EXPLAINED WHERE THE NEGOTIATIONS HAD GOT TO AND THE DANGER OF
DELAY AND DIVERSION CREATED BY PRESIDENT NYERERE'S PROPOSED
MEETING IN DAR ES SALAAM ON 24 NOVEMBER. I SAID THAT YOU HOPED
THAT THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT WOULD USE THEIR INFLUENCE (WHICH IS
PROBABLY PARTICULARLY STRONG WITH NYERERE) TO PERSUADE ALL
CONCERNED OF THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY AGREEMENT AND THE DANGERS
OF DELAY. I ALSO TOOK HIM OVER THE SECURITY COUNCIL ISSUE (ON
WHICH I FEAR THAT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARE BEING
WET) AND MENTIONED THE PAPER WHICH WE HAD PRODUCED AND YOUR OFFER
TO ARRANGE FOR SIR IAN SINCLAIR TO DISCUSS THIS ISSUE WITH THEM.
MR VAN AGT TOOK ALL THESE POINTS AND MADE COPIOUS NOTES AND UNDER-
TOOK TO SEE WHAT HE COULD DO.

8. ON THIS ISSUE AGAIN I WANTED TO ENSURE THAT MR VAN AGT UNDERSTOOD THE POLITICAL AS WELL AS THE ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF THIS ISSUE IN THE UK AND TO DISPEL SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS OVER THE ORIGINS AND NATURE OF THE PROBLEM, WHICH WE HAD FORESEEN AS A POSSIBILITY DURING OUR ORIGINAL NEGOTIATIONS. SOME OF THESE POINTS WERE EVIDENTLY NEW TO HIM. HE SAID THAT THE BUDGET ISSUE HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT HIS MEETING IN BRUSSELS WITH THE PRIME MINISTERS OF LUXEMBOURG AND BELGIUM EARLIER THIS WEEK. THE BELGIAN PRIME MINISTER HAD EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD HIS GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITY TO AGREE TO THE REVISION OF THE FINANCIAL ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM TO PRODUCE TRANSFER OF 520 MEUA, BUT HAD NO AUTHORITY FOR ANYTHING ELSE. MR VAN AGT SAID THAT FORMALLY THIS WAS ALSO HIS POSITION. HE HAD AUTHORITY TO AGREE TO THAT. HE ALSO AGREED THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO DO SOMETHING TO CURB THE "IDIOTIC" CAP ARRANGEMENTS BUT RECOGNISED THAT THIS COULD ONLY BE A SLOW PROCESS. I POINTED OUT THAT 520 MEUA DEALT WITH ONE-THIRD OF THE PROBLEM ONLY AND WAS THEREFORE UNACCEPTABLE; SOMETHING ADDITIONAL WOULD HAVE TO BE DONE. HE SAID THAT SPEAKING PERSONALLY, AND HAVING ALREADY TOLD ME IN CONFIDENCE WHAT HIS FORMAL POSITION WAS, HE RECOGNISED THAT FOR THE SAKE OF ENABLING THE COMMUNITY TO WORK PROPERLY WITH BRITAIN AS A MEMBER IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE IN THE LAST RESORT TO DO SOMETHING ADDITIONAL NOW, BUT 1500 MEUA WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION. I REPEATED THE POSITION AS YOU EXPLAINED IT TO DR VAN DER KLAUW. MR VAN AGT COMMENTED THAT THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEM APART FROM THE FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY DIFFICULTIES FOR OTHER MEMBER STATES WAS THE POSITION OF M. GISCARD D'ESTAING AND WHAT THE FRENCH WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT.

9. I ALSO ASKED ABOUT MR VAN AGT'S REACTIONS TO THE REPORT OF THE WISE MEN. HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL TO TAKE THIS VERY FAR. HE SAID THAT THERE WAS MUCH OF VALUE IN THE REPORT BUT THERE WERE BITS THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED IN GREATER DETAIL, AND HE THOUGHT THAT DECISIONS WOULD HAVE TO AWAIT THE NEXT EUROPEAN COUNCIL.

CONCLUSIONS

10. THIS WAS A VERY FRIENDLY AND FRANK INTERVIEW; THE LACK OF ROBUSTNESS, IF DISAPPOINTING WAS NOT UNEXPECTED. IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE PRIME MINISTER IS SERIOUSLY WORRIED ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR THE COALITION IN PARLIAMENT. HIS APPARENT WILLINGNESS TO BE HELPFUL ON THE RHODESIAN QUESTION IS MILDLY ENCOURAGING, BUT WE SHALL CHECK WITH THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING. ON THE EEC ISSUES I HOPE AT LEAST THAT I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SOFTEN THE GROUND A LITTLE BIT.