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Netherlands
BRITISH EMBASSY
THE HAGUE

13 February 1981

The Right Honourable The Lord Carrington KCMG MC
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
London SW1

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Paul
My Lord,

VISIT TO THE NETHERLANDS BY THE PRIME MINISTER ON 6 FEBRUARY 1981

1. I have the honour to report that the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher MP, paid a short working visit to the Netherlands on 6 February. She was accompanied by her Private Secretary for Overseas Affairs, Mr M O'D B Alexander, her Press Secretary, Mr B Ingham, and by Mr J L Bullard (FCO) and Mr M D M Franklin (Cabinet Office).

2. During her visit Mrs Thatcher was received in audience by Queen Beatrix, and had talks with the Netherlands Prime Minister, Mr van Agt (who was supported by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr van der Klaauw, and the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr van der Mei). She also met over lunch the Minister of Finance, Mr van der Stee, and the President of the Netherlands Central Bank, Dr Zijlstra. I enclose the full programme of the visit.

3. Mrs Thatcher's visit to the Netherlands - her second following that made as Leader of the Opposition in December

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1976, but her first since becoming Prime Minister - came at a time when Mr van Agt was facing a number of difficult problems in an atmosphere increasingly affected by the approach of the general elections due on 26 May. Only three days before she arrived the Government had been defeated in the Second Chamber on a motion calling for the reversal of the decision to grant the Dutch heavy industry conglomerate RSV export licences to supply Taiwan with two submarines. Debate on at least two other controversial issues in Dutch politics, nuclear energy and TNF modernisation, is again running at a high pitch; and disagreements about them in both the Government and the CDA have left Mr van Agt in an uncomfortable position.

4. Yet Mr van Agt has long been at pains to present in public the image of a man unworried by domestic political turmoil. He (and his Ministers) went to particular pains to ensure that Mrs Thatcher's visit passed off without a hitch. The traditional Cabinet meeting held here on Fridays was postponed to permit Mr van Agt to play the fullest part in welcoming Mrs Thatcher. We for our part can conclude with confidence that the visit had the intended effect.

5. In planning the visit our main objectives were:

- (a) to reaffirm the Government's commitment to Europe; and to put across our views on the main Community issues of the day, bearing in mind the current Dutch Presidency, and the fact that the UK will succeed the Netherlands on 1 July;

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- (b) to demonstrate that Dutch attitudes and concerns are of importance to us;
- (c) to emphasise the importance of ensuring the continued cohesion and effectiveness of NATO and of maintaining solidarity over the role of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy.

6. The talks between the two sides were held in a markedly cordial atmosphere, both in private discussion between the two Prime Ministers (joined later by Dr van der Klaauw) and in plenary session. The strength of the Government's commitment to the Community was an aspect of which the Dutch had already taken note, but they were undoubtedly glad to have this underlined by Mrs Thatcher herself. Mr van Agt paid tribute to the constructive nature of recent UK policy on the outstanding fisheries problems, and took careful note of our concerns on agricultural prices and a number of other subjects. The Prime Minister for her part showed an evident sympathy for Dutch concerns which was much appreciated by her hosts.

7. The Dutch were also left in no doubt about the importance we attach to the maintenance of NATO solidarity, and to a positive decision by the Netherlands on TNF modernisation. The public statements made by the Prime Minister on this issue in the run-up to and during her visit came to many of her Dutch listeners, perplexed by the failure of their own Ministers to

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provide a lead, as a breath of fresh air. And while the problem of guiding public opinion naturally remains one primarily for Netherlands Ministers, Mrs Thatcher's remarks have had a valuable effect in causing her listeners to sit up and think rather more coolly about the dangers inherent in the policies now being advocated by some Dutch political parties. From the start the visit attracted widespread interest from the media. The Prime Minister gave an interview to the independent Netherlands Broadcasting Corporation, NOS, a few days before the visit took place and this secured a wide audience. The joint press conference given by Mrs Thatcher and Mr van Agt was well attended and brief, separate television interviews given on the day of the visit to the BBC, ITN and NOS were also much appreciated.

8. In sum, this was a most successful working visit which will help to set the seal on the cooperation and collaboration which had been so marked a feature of Anglo-Dutch relations in recent years. It came at a particularly opportune moment as regards the Community and indeed the NATO Alliance. All concerned are most grateful to the Prime Minister for undertaking it.

I have the honour to be
Your Lordship's obedient servant

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'R B R Hervey', with a horizontal line underneath.

R B R Hervey

SIT TO THE NETHERLANDS BY THE PRIME MINISTER ON 6 FEBRUARY 1981

ALL TIMES LOCAL

TRANSPORT PROGRAMME AT ANNEX

- 0945 Departure from London (RAF Northolt).
- 1015 HMA and meeting party leave Chancery/Residence for Ypenburg (RNLAf) airfield.
- 1045 Arrival at Ypenburg. Met by:
Netherlands Government
Mr van Agt, Netherlands Prime Minister
Royal Netherlands Air Force
Col J J François, Base Commander, Ypenburg
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Jonkheer Beelaerts van Blokland, Director of Protocol
Representatives of: The Ministry of General Affairs
The Netherlands Information Service
- British Embassy
HE Sir Jock Taylor KCMG, HM Ambassador
Mr R B R Hervey CMG, Counsellor
Wing Commander R F Mudge, Air Attaché
Mr C R Budd, Head of Chancery
- 1100 The Prime Minister and Mr van Agt leave for Lange Voorhout Palace, The Hague.
- 1100 Other members of the delegation leave for the Embassy.
- 1115 The Prime Minister is received in audience by HM Queen Beatrix.
- 1115 Mr Bullard calls on the Netherlands Political Director, Mr Reinink, at the MFA (accompanied by Sir Jock Taylor).
Mr Franklin calls on the Director-General for European Integration, Mr Posthumus Meyjes, at the MFA (accompanied by Mr Hervey) (on foot).
- 1145 Mr Alexander/leave ^{and Miss Sargent} Embassy for Catshuis.
- 1200 approx The Prime Minister, accompanied by Jhr Beelaerts van Blokland, leaves the Lange Voorhout Palace for the Catshuis.
- 1215 Talks at the Catshuis (the Prime Minister and Mr van Agt only).

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1230

The Netherlands Foreign Minister, Dr van der Klaauw, Mr Alexander and Mr Holtslag join the talks.

1235

Other members of the delegation and HM Ambassador leave the Embassy for the Catshuis.

1300

Lunch at the Catshuis (attended on the UK side by the Prime Minister, HM Ambassador and Messrs Bullard, Franklin, Ingham and Alexander; and on the Dutch side by Mr van Agt, Mr van der Stee, Dr van der Klaauw, Mr van der Mei (State Secretary, MFA), Dr Zijlstra, Dr Reinink, Mr Posthumus Meyjes, Mr Fack (Netherlands Ambassador in London), Mr van de Graaf (Mr van Agt's PPS), and Mr Holtslag (Mr van Agt's PS for Foreign Affairs)).

1530

Talks resume at the Catshuis, attended by full delegations and note takers.

1630 approx

Departure for Binnenhof.

1645

Joint Press Conference (Treveszaal), followed by brief separate TV interviews (NOS, BBC and ITN).

1730 approx

Departure for Rotterdam (Zestienhoven) airport.

Seen off by: Mr van Agt

Jonkheer Beelaerts van Blokland

Mr Holtslag

HM Ambassador

1815

Departure for London (Northolt).