

Arbeits von A. L. (1980-85)

Andries van Aagt (79-80)

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to take this opportunity to discuss the Netherlands' position in the European Community with regard to the important question of the North-South dialogue.

When this subject comes up for discussion within the Community, at whatever level, we sometimes find that the views which the Netherlands holds on the urgent problems posed by the Third World and the solutions which it proposes to them differ from those favoured by the other members of the Community.

How can this be explained?

It is often said that the Dutch take such an interest in the Third World because of their colonial past, their trading mentality and their religion. I am not particularly convinced by this explanation. Our partners in the European Community also used to have colonies; the Dutch are not the only nation in the Community to have taken an interest in trade and to have displayed a talent for it; and the place which religion occupies in Dutch life is essentially no

different from that which it occupies elsewhere in the Community. Although the Netherlands has fewer historical ties with the Scandinavian countries than with its neighbours, it is a fact that our views on relations with the Third World often agree more closely with those held in Scandinavia than with the views of our immediate neighbours.

In the Netherlands, in contrast to other countries in the Community, there is wide support among the people for the country's development co-operation policy. This made it possible for the international aid target of 0.7% of the Gross National Product to be exceeded as early as 1975 through the encouragement which the Government and Parliament provided each other. It also meant that the Dutch Government knew that it had the support of the Dutch people in 1974 when it not only adopted the resolutions of the United Nations concerning the New International Economic Order but also immediately started working out proposals for putting the resolutions into effect. When these proposals were put to our Community partners the response was far from encouraging.

In recent years the Dutch Government has published

some important policy documents on development co-operation, including this year one on the effectiveness of Dutch bilateral aid and one on development co-operation and the world economy.

These documents illustrate the two-pronged nature of Dutch development co-operation policy. The first prong consists of direct bilateral technical and financial assistance, especially to the poorest sections of the population in the developing countries. In the Netherlands we seek to achieve as just a distribution of national income as we can, but there are far stronger reasons for trying to achieve a more just distribution of wealth throughout the world, and those who must be helped first are the poorest groups in the Third World. The second prong of this policy consists in promoting changes in international economic and monetary structures in order to ensure that a more rapid development of Third World agriculture, industry and trade is not impeded by those structures but if possible assisted by them.

The OECD secretariat recently published a study on the subject of future developments in the industrial west in conjunction with those in the developing countries. The title speaks for itself: "Facing the futures : mastering the probable and managing the unpredictable" or for short, "inter-futures". The-use-of the -word 'futures!' instead of ' future' is--sign ificant. The study analyses possible economic and cultural developments in the next twenty years.

Even now, changes are taking place which could have such an impact on everyday life that we hardly know how to deal with them, I should like to mention just a few of them.

There is the development of micro-electronics, which will greatly affect the employment situation. There are developments in biology, new forms of energy **and** the opening up of the ocean bed and of space. These are fascinating opportunities which could greatly benefit mankind but which at the same time could be used to his detriment in horrifying ways.

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Another development mentioned by the OECD study is as follows. It is estimated that the world population, now around 4 billion, will have grown to around 6 billion by the year 2000, and that it will stabilize out at some 11 to 12 billion a century from now. But qualitative demographic changes are occurring as well as quantitative ones. I refer here to migration, in which the refugee problem plays an important part. What we are seeing now is only the beginning of a dramatic process resulting from the destabilization of artificially maintained political and social equilibria from the colonial past. Not all refugee problems can be explained in this way, but many of them can.

The rapid growth of the world population will lead to the exhaustion of present natural resources. But besides this, as the world becomes more crowded our physical environment begins to suffer, and we shall increasingly have to make sacrifices in order to preserve it.

The Member States of the Community have serious economic

problems to contend with : an unacceptable level of unemployment, a rate of inflation which not only affects some sections of the population more severely than others but has grave economic consequences as well; a worrying balance-of-payments situation and a lack of new investment. All this leads to slower economic growth.

In their efforts to cope with the resulting problems. the governments of the Member States will have to work out a policy which takes full account of the development process in the Third World. In the last thirty-five years the number of independent states has increased threefold. As a result, international decision-making has become more laborious.

Every community, including the international community, needs rules if it is to function smoothly at the political, social, economic and monetary levels. In the world of today which is so heterogeneous, and so different culturally from the world as it was thirty years ago, the existing rules which were laid down

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after the Second World War are often no longer adequate. Thus there is a need for supplementary rules : rules which will genuinely help put an end to structural poverty in the Third World. If the process of economic development gets under way in these countries, for instance through the building up of their own production capacity, they must for one thing be sure that they will be able to sell their products on the world market. New rules of conduct are being prepared to ensure that the transfer of technology to the developing countries proceeds more flexibly. One channel through which technology is transferred is the multinationals. Rules are also needed to govern the conduct of these corporations, which play such an important part in international economic transactions; the United Nations has already made a start on this. The multinationals, in turn, can operate properly only if rules on investment in developing countries are agreed which safeguard the interests both of the country and of the corporation. Last of all, the rules of the international monetary system will have to be modified in order to counteract the structural balance-of-payments deficits of

developing countries and guarantee more stable rates of exchange.

The more the Third World countries develop, the more the consequences of this will be felt in our own economies. We are moving towards a new international division of labour which in the long term will be in the interests of both North and South.

However, the transition to this new division of labour will not be accomplished without problems. The developments now taking place elsewhere, outside our countries, do not leave our own economies unscathed. All the Member States of the European Community are now caught up in the process of closing down unprofitable industries and companies, and of introducing innovations and new, more advanced technology. So far this transition has mainly been caused by the steep rise in energy prices and by outside competition, for example from Eastern Europe. This competition is making itself felt in shipping for example. The growth in industrial activity in the Third World is also having its effect on some sectors. The answer



to this is a national economic restructuring policy, But we all know that this can do little to help - and is even doomed to failure - .if we as Member States of the European Community do not collaborate intensively on it. Jointly and under the direction of the European Commission, we must form an idea of where our economic strength will lie in the future and how we must coordinate the measures we take in order to achieve the desired result. In doing so, we must allow for the fact here that the speed of industrialization will increase in the Third World over the next two decades. However, two points are of importance : that the measures which we take to put our own affairs in order do not adversely affect the rate of development in the Third World and that we should take steps in good time in order to deal with the effects upon our economies

Then there is the question of energy supplies.

At present we are principally trying to save energy and to increase production of the familiar energy carriers including nuclear power, although the latter

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involves a great deal of public debate. In this way we are seeking to ease the situation in the short term. However, the energy problem acquires a much broader dimension when one realizes that energy is an essential component of all economic development. The vast majority of countries in the world are only at the beginning of their economic development. In the years to come their demand for energy will increase exponentially. For this reason it is of great importance to do intensive research into new sources of energy, preferably ones which will not exhaust the earth.

These new problems- can only be tackled effectively if we cooperate with one another, and for this purpose we need more effective forms of regional and international consultation, On the whole, international consultation is still entered into without obligations. But the need for supranational management is going to become ever greater. We should consider ourselves lucky that by establishing the EEC we have created an organisation with supranational powers - albeit still too few of them in my view. And yet it is not uncommon

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for the use of the supranational machinery to be frustrated by national sentiments or by a short-sighted concern for national interests. If regional co-operation already presents such difficulties, how is international co-operation to be achieved? Nonetheless, the need for international management will likewise increase.

~~I have given you a broad outline of the views of the Netherlands on North-South relations~~ - views which we put forward in European Community negotiations and elsewhere, in fact wherever the North-South dialogue is at issue, and which emanate from the involvement which we feel with the fate of the Third World. In our own countries, we do not tolerate such large differences in income as those which exist between North and South, nor do we tolerate a situation in which people have to live below the minimum subsistence level. It goes without saying, therefore, that we cannot accept such a situation ~~outside our own borders.~~

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These are...not mere empty words. Appeals to the Netherlands for aid in emergencies are not made in vain. This was illustrated recently when a hastily organized campaign by voluntary organizations brought in 30 million guilders in the space of a few weeks in order to help the boat people from South-East Asia. Injustice at home and injustice abroad go hand in hand. Just as we are prepared to make financial sacrifices to alleviate need, so we are ready to act against violations of fundamental human rights.' In both cases it is the individual who suffers, whether physically or mentally. Sometimes when we criticize violations of human rights we are arrogantly accused by those whom we criticize or by third parties of playing the schoolmaster yet again. But what is generally left unmentioned is that the Netherlands is one of the few countries to have reached the international aid target of 0.7% of GNP and that the Dutch people have repeatedly shown their readiness to give spontaneous aid in cases of acute need. It is difficult for me to predict how the Dutch people will respond to the consequences of the demographic changes--I have referred to, but I have reason--to hope

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that— in everyday..-life-.they will display the **same** tolerance towards immigrants of no matter what origin **as** they generally expect of others. Here we touch upon a central point in Dutch thinking. Naturally we are primarily concerned with the problems which exist in our own country. But there is also scope for consideration of developments outside **it**, not only because in the long term these developments may have a decisive impact upon our own existence and our own material and spiritual development, but also because the Dutch have a highly developed sense of justice and solidarity. All this brings us to the conclusion that the world cannot go on without close international co-operation, and that we should encourage every step—in this direction.

For **small** countries like the Netherlands, the striving for intensive international co-operation is a matter of conviction and of survival. The structural problems which I have mentioned call for international and in many cases worldwide solutions in which national policies must be incorporated and coordinated with one another. For large, economically powerful countries this will mean greater changes than for smaller

countries which have always been largely dependent upon co-operation with other countries. It is no coincidence that the economically most powerful countries reacted to the 1974 energy crisis by trying to settle matters at summit conferences among themselves, whereas even at an early stage a country like the Netherlands was emphasizing the necessity of much broader debate between all parties concerned, especially those in the Third World.

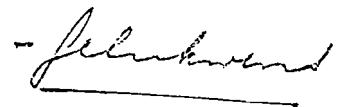
Unless indications are deceptive, we are now on the threshold of renewed international negotiations on problems of energy, raw materials, finance and aid to the Third World. First the non-aligned states at Havana and then the developing countries as a whole, at New York, proposed this. There is talk of a second Paris round of North-South negotiations, this time in the framework of the United Nations.

The responses of the countries of the European Community to this proposal have been characteristic, ranging between the extremes of "absolutely negative" and "positive".

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Although many questions still remain to be answered in connection with this proposal and it is not yet clear whether the conditions for constructive negotiation are given, I believe that the European Community cannot afford to say "no" to the proposal. In doing so we would be missing yet another opportunity to take a fresh step in the direction of structural changes which, viewed in the long term, are in our own interest as well. The world is becoming increasingly interdependent. Today economic relations are still unbalanced due to the dominant position of the West. We shall have to make short-term sacrifices in this area in order to reap a long-term harvest which will benefit us all. Peace and security, justice and equality are values which will retain their validity in the future, not only for ourselves but for the whole world.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. de Groot", with a horizontal line underneath it.