



ORGANISATION DU TRAITE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD
NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

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OTAN - NATO
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NATO CONFIDENTIAL
PO/60/167

To: Permanent Representatives

From: Secretary General

Preparation of the Summit Meeting

Enquiry in the NATO countries on East/West contacts
and exchanges

Text of the Reply by the Netherlands

I am forwarding herewith the text of the reply by the Netherlands Government to the questions set out in document PO/60/30 on East/West contacts and exchanges.

(Signed) P.-H. SPAAK

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REPLY BY THE NETHERLANDS GOVERNMENT TO
DOCUMENT PO/60/30

The Netherlands Government has studied the Secretary General's most useful questionnaire on East-West contacts (document PO/60/30) and would answer the specific questions listed therein as follows:

(1) Non-interference in domestic affairs

The communist countries distribute quite a great amount of propaganda material among the population of the Netherlands. The Soviet Embassy in The Hague, e.g. issues several times a week an information bulletin with a circulation of about 10,000. In addition, publications such as "Soviet Union" are sent to private addresses. This publication and others like "New Times" and Soviet newspapers, are also available at a number of newspaperstands and bookshops. There are also regular broadcasts from the Soviet Union in the Dutch language. All these publications and radio broadcasts give a distorted picture of the situation in the Netherlands and are of a subversive character.

The Western countries are handicapped by the fact that they have to counter this propaganda individually, whereas the communists co-ordinate and direct their propaganda towards one very definite purpose: the spreading of communism.

In the case of a small country like the Netherlands the task of countering these Soviet activities is not an easy one, as the Soviet Union has no difficulty in taking retaliatory measures such as the decrease of the importation of Netherlands products. Threats to this effect have already been received in the past.

Though it seems doubtful whether any results can be expected, we are nevertheless of the opinion that the Russians should be urged at the summit conference to cease such activities.

(2) Official contacts

Official contacts between Netherlands and Soviet bloc Government officials or parliamentarians are of little or no advantage to a country like the Netherlands. We also have the impression that trained communist officials who visit the West are on the whole hardly influenced by such contacts. The situation is different with delegations of a more technical or scientific character. On balance, it would seem useful to enable nationals of communist countries to get acquainted with the Western way of life.

(3) Freedom of movement for persons

The West should continue to urge the Soviets to abandon the restrictions they impose on personal freedom of movement. This is one of the weak spots of the Soviet bloc, as the communist rulers know only too well that individual freedom is incompatible with the maintenance of a communist regime. A decree of the Supreme Soviet of the 16th September, 1949, has even made it illegal for Soviet citizens to establish contacts with foreign diplomatic missions without the consent of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Only recently a young student who had visited a Western Embassy in Moscow for a purely innocent purpose was subsequently maltreated and arrested.

(4) Freedom of information

Any possibility of enhancing the freedom of information, in all its aspects, should be fully exploited by the Western countries. Like the freedom of movement, this is a particularly vulnerable point with the communists. Since the distribution and sale of newspapers, periodicals and books is in the hands of State organizations, it would be of importance to have some means of ascertaining that Western publications, once admitted in the Soviet bloc, are indeed freely available. In view of what Mr. Khrushchev a.o. has recently said on this subject in his Novosibirsk speech, there is little hope of achieving any genuine freedom of information.

(5) Cultural and artistic exchanges

As the communist countries have far greater funds available for cultural and artistic manifestations than countries like the Netherlands, these exchanges will benefit the communists more than us, unless they take place on a basis of strict reciprocity. This is not always possible, especially for the smaller countries, either for lack of funds or of comparable artistic groups. In order not to let the scales be tipped too much in favour of the Soviet bloc, some form of Western co-ordination and co-operation might be useful.

As the language often presents a difficulty, stress should perhaps be laid on the exchange of exhibitions of the plastic and pictorial arts, where the West has a marked superiority. In the field of music, a careful selection should be made in order to make sure that we are sending the very best artists, as the Soviet bloc countries have themselves excellent musicians and some good orchestras

(6) Exchanges in the fields of tourism and sports

The Netherlands have received several groups of tourists from the Soviet Union and of students, especially from Poland. Recently a group of Ukrainian trade-union leaders has visited the Netherlands under the auspices of UNESCO, and this visit has been an 'eye-opener' for a number of people in the group. They have been struck by the fact that the relationship between workers and employers in the Netherlands is totally different from what they had always been told. They were, to some extent, also impressed by the living conditions of the workers. In the near future similar groups from Rumania and Bulgaria will visit the Netherlands, all of them under the auspices of UNESCO.

The general conclusion can be drawn that such visits may be of advantage to the West if the visitors are taken care of by a good organization instead of being left in the hands of communists or their sympathisers in the receiving country.

(7) Economic relations

(a) The Netherlands are generally in favour of extensive trade with the Soviet bloc. However, the State trade system of these countries offers insufficient guarantees for a free import into these countries, and our liberal import policy is therefore not reciprocated. Moreover, the Netherlands must have the means to protect themselves vis-à-vis these countries against cheap and large-scale imports which might disturb the markets.

Since there exist already organizations like the ECE which deal with trade relations, there seems to be no need to discuss these questions at the summit conference, unless for political reasons. The Soviet Union has made proposals in the ECE for the establishment of an "all-European regional trade organization" and for the holding of a conference of Ministers of Trade. These proposals will be discussed during the next meeting of the ECE. Moreover, in the last meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations some East-European countries have proposed the establishment of a world and of regional trade organizations. These proposals were not adopted as the existing organizations were considered to be adequate.

(b) Should the Soviet Union propose to discuss general questions of trade at the summit meeting, it might be desirable for political reasons to enter into discussion.

(c) In such a case the proposals set out in paragraphs (5) and (6) of document C-M(58)93 can still be regarded as valid.

(d) These suggestions, especially the one concerning the sale of surplus products are of too detailed and too delicate a nature to be discussed at the summit meeting. Items of secondary importance should not be included in its agenda.

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(8) Financial problems

It does not seem appropriate to discuss these questions at the summit meeting;

(a) A financial problem raised by East-West trade concerns the desire of the Soviet bloc to receive longer term credits than are normally granted by the West.

(b) and (c) The Netherlands have had no such difficulties.

(d) There seem to be no reasons at the present time for revising document C-M(59)75.

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