

THE EUROPEAN GATEKEEPER: THE NETHERLANDS, SPAIN AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, 1973-1977

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ABSTRACT: Forty-one years have passed since the start of the Spanish transition from dictatorship to democracy in 1975. This regime change did not unfold in isolation from external influences. Researchers have mainly investigated the role of major actors, while involvement of smaller players has had less emphasis placed on it. In this article, the foreign policy of the Netherlands regarding Spain and the European Community (EC) is examined during the last phase of the Franco-regime (1973-1975) and the first phase of the transition to democracy (1975-1977). This period corresponds with the office term of the most progressive cabinet in Dutch parliamentary history, led by social democrat Joop den Uyl (May 1973 - December 1977). Research in the Dutch archives reveals that the Den Uyl government tried to act as a gatekeeper in Europe, demanding democratization as a condition for Spanish accession to the EC.

KEY WORDS: Netherlands – Spain – European Community – transition – democratization

EL GUARDIÁN DE EUROPA: LOS PAÍSES BAJOS, ESPAÑA Y LA COMUNIDAD EUROPEA, 1973-1977

RESUMEN: Han transcurrido cuarenta y un años desde el comienzo de la transición española de una dictadura a democracia en 1975. Este cambio no tuvo lugar en aislamiento de influencias externas. Diversos investigadores han analizado exhaustivamente el papel de los actores con mayor relevancia. Sin embargo, la influencia de agentes en principio menores sigue pendiente de estudio. En este artículo, la política exterior de los Países Bajos respecto a España y a la Comunidad Europea (CE) durante la última fase del régimen franquista (1973-1975) y la primera etapa de la transición a la democracia (1975-1977) es examinada.

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Este periodo corresponde con el gobierno del gabinete más progresivo de la historia parlamentaria neerlandesa, liderado por el social-demócrata Joop den Uyl (mayo 1973 - diciembre 1977). La investigación en los archivos holandeses revela que el gobierno de Den Uyl asumió la tarea de guardián de Europa, exigiendo la democratización de España como condición de adhesión a la CE.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Países Bajos – España – Comunidad Europea – transición – democratización

INTRODUCTION¹

Forty-one years have passed since the start of the Spanish transition from dictatorship to democracy in 1975. This regime change did not unfold in isolation from external influences, as has been established by scholars studying the international context of the Spanish transition.² So far, researchers have mainly concentrated on the role of international organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Community (EC) and the Socialist International (SI).³ Other authors have studied the involvement of major players such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the

1 The following archives were consulted: Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (The Hague, Netherlands); Nationaal Archief (The Hague, Netherlands); International Institute for Social History (Amsterdam, Netherlands); Staten-Generaal Digitaal, www.statengeneraaldigitaal.nl; Delpher, www.delpher.nl; Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen, <http://dnpp.uu.nl/dnpp/>; Hemeroteca ABC, <http://hemeroteca.abc.es>; General R. Ford Presidential Library & Museum, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov>.

2 See for instance: Mario DEL PERO, Víctor GAVÍN, Fernando GUIRAO and Antonio VARSORI (eds.), *Democrazie: L'Europa meridionale e la fine delle dittature*, Milan: Le Monnier, 2010; Óscar José MARTÍN GARCÍA and Manuel ORTIZ HERAS (eds.), *Claves internacionales en la transición española*, Madrid: Catarata, 2010; Charles POWELL and Juan Carlos JÍMENEZ (eds.), *Del autoritarismo a la democracia: Estudios de política exterior española*, Madrid: Silex, 2007; Charles POWELL, "International aspects of democratization – the case of Spain" in Laurence Whitehead (ed.), *The International Dimensions of Democratization. Europe and the Americas*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 285-314.

3 See for instance: Cristina BLANCO SÍO-LÓPEZ and Susana MUÑOZ (eds.), *Converging Pathways: Spain and the European Integration Process / Itinerarios Cruzados: España y el proceso de construcción europea*, Cuadernos de Yuste, 7, Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2013; Thomas CAROTHERS, Spain, NATO and Democracy, *The World Today*, 37:7/8 (1981), p. 298-303; Juan DÍEZ-NICOLÁS, "Spaniards' Long March Towards Europe", *South European Society and Politics*, 8:1-2 (2003), p. 119-146; Antonio MORENO JUSTE, "The European Economic Community and the End of the Franco Regime: the September 1975 Crisis", *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 90 (2015), p. 25-45; Pilar ORTUÑO ANAYA, *Los socialistas europeos y la transición española*, Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2005; Pilar ORTUÑO ANAYA, "The EEC, the Franco regime, and the Socialist group in the European Parliament, 1962-77", *IJIS*, 14:1 (2001), p. 26-39; Charles POWELL, "Spanish Membership of the European Union Revisited", *South European Society and Politics*, 8:1-2 (2003), p. 147-168; Charles POWELL, "España en Europa: de 1945 a nuestros días", *Ayer*, 49 (2003), p. 81-119; Paul PRESTON and Denis SMYTH, *Spain, the EEC and NATO*, London: Routledge, 1984; Sebastián ROYO and Paul Christopher MANUEL, "Some lessons from the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Accession of Portugal and Spain to the European Union", *South European Society and Politics*, 8:1-2 (2003), p. 1-30.

Federal Republic of Germany.⁴ Less research has been conducted on the part played by relatively small actors such as the Netherlands.

Some authors have mentioned the critical position taken by the Dutch government towards the Spanish dictatorship. T. de Goede examined the theme of human rights in Dutch foreign policy towards Spain, Portugal and Greece in the years 1945-1975. However, de Goede limits the research on Dutch policy regarding Spain and the EC until 1970.⁵ Historian Charles Powell writes in his book on American-Spanish relations, *El Amigo Americano*, that Prime Minister Joop den Uyl disapproved of the United States' efforts to support the Franco regime, because it would have reduced the credibility of NATO.⁶ Kim van der Wijngaart makes a similar point in her historical study on American-Dutch relations, *Bondgenootschap onder spanning*. Van der Wijngaart observes that the Den Uyl government acted as a 'critical ally' in NATO and objected to the wish of the United States that Spain should become a member of that organization. In addition to this, Van der Wijngaart reveals that the Dutch preferred to support moderate socialists whilst the Americans cooperated with Franco.⁷ The critical stance of the Dutch government is further mentioned by historian Antonio Moreno Juste in his article, "The EEC and the End of the Franco Regime: The September 1975 crisis." The author points out that the Dutch government proposed joint diplomatic steps by the EC against the Franco dictatorship while, also immediately, recalling its ambassador from Spain after the execution of five militants in September 1975.⁸ The findings of the above-named authors suggest that the Dutch government took an active and critical stance towards the democratization process in Spain. Therefore, it is –first of

4 Víctor GAVÍN, "The Nixon and Ford Administrations and the Future of Post-Franco Spain (1970-6)", *The International History Review*, 38:5 (2016), p. 930-942; Encarnación LEMUS, *Estados Unidos y la Transición española: Entre la Revolución de los Claveles y la Marcha Verde*, Madrid: Silex, 2001; Antonio MUÑOZ SÁNCHEZ, *El amigo alemán: El SPD y el PSOE de la dictadura a la democracia*, Barcelona: RBA Libros, 2012; Pilar ORTUÑO ANAYA, "The Labour Party, the TUC and Spain, 1959-1977", *Labour History Review*, 64:3 (1999), p. 269-286; Charles POWELL, *El Amigo Americano. España y Estados Unidos: de la dictadura a la democracia*, Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2011; Esther M. SÁNCHEZ SÁNCHEZ, "French Military Action in Spain from Dictatorship to Democracy: Arms, Technology and Convergence", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 50:2 (2015), p. 376-399.

5 T. DE GOEDE, "De mensenrechten in het Nederlandse buitenlandse beleid ten aanzien van Spanje, Portugal en Griekenland, 1945-1975" in Maarten Kuitenbrouwer and Marij Leenders (eds.), *Geschiedenis van de mensenrechten: bouwstenen voor een interdisciplinaire benadering*, Hilversum: Verloren, 1996, p. 227-258.

6 Charles POWELL, *El Amigo Americano. España y Estados Unidos: de la dictadura a la democracia*, Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2011, p. 213, 220.

7 Kim VAN DER WIJNGAART, *Bondgenootschap onder spanning: Nederlands-Amerikaanse betrekkingen, 1969-1976*, Hilversum: Verloren, 2011, p. 188-189, 212.

8 Antonio MORENO JUSTE, "The European Economic Community and the End of the Franco Regime: the September 1975 Crisis", *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 90 (2015), p. 25-45.

all-relevant to discuss the composition of the Dutch cabinet in power during the mid-1970s.

On May 11, 1973, the most progressive coalition government in Dutch parliamentary history took office. The socialist democratic party, Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA), won 27.3% of the vote in the elections of November 29, 1972. The PvdA became the largest party in Parliament, obtaining 43 of the 150 seats in the House of Representatives. The social democrats dominated the coalition government, formed with the progressive parties Politieke Partij Radikalen (PPR, 7 seats) and Democraten 66 (D66, 6 seats), as well as members of the Christian democratic parties Katholieke Volkspartij (KVP, 27 seats) and Anti-Revolutionaire Partij (ARP, 14 seats). Social democrat Joop Den Uyl became Prime Minister. It is important to note that this was the first time in parliamentary history that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was headed by a social democrat, Max van der Stoep. The Labour Party also took charge of the Ministry of Defense (Henk Vredeling) and the field of Development Cooperation (Jan Pronk). As such, the external relations of the Netherlands were dominated by the social democrats.⁹

For a progressive government it may have been expected that, compared to the previous conservative center-right cabinets, more attention in foreign policy would have been paid to political ideals such as human rights and democratic principles.¹⁰ The election program *Keerpunt 1972: Regeerakkoord van de progressieve drie* (“Turning point 1972: Coalition agreement of the progressive three”) had already foreshadowed such approach to foreign policy. With regard to NATO and Southern Europe, it was stated that the expansion of NATO with non-democratic states such as Spain would be rejected. In addition, NATO members Portugal, Greece and Turkey could count on strong economic and political pressure to accept democratization in those countries. The ‘Turning Point’ program further proposed a progressive European policy where attention was

⁹ Maarten KUITENBROUWER, “Een realistische idealist. Max van der Stoep (1973-1977 en 1981-1982)”, in Duco Hellema, Bert Zeeman and Bert van der Zwan (eds.), *De Nederlandse ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken in de twintigste eeuw*, Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 1999, p. 248-249.

¹⁰ For literature on human rights in Dutch foreign policy, see for instance: Peter BAEHR, Monique CASTERMANS-HOLLEMAN and Fred GRÜNFELD (eds.), *Human rights in the foreign policy of the Netherlands*, Antwerp: Intersentia, 2002; Peter BAEHR, Monique CASTERMANS-HOLLEMAN and Fred GRÜNFELD, “Human rights in the foreign policy of the Netherlands”, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 24:4 (2002), p. 992-1010; Maarten KUITENBROUWER and Marij LEENDERS (eds.), *Geschiedenis van de mensenrechten: bouwstenen voor een interdisciplinaire benadering*, Hilversum: Verloren, 1996, p. 227-258; Peter MALCONTENT, “Nederland en de mensenrechten” in Jacco Pekelder, Mathieu Segers and Remco Raben (eds.), *De wereld volgens Nederland: Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek in historisch perspectief*, Amsterdam: Boom, 2015, p. 128-151; Peter MALCONTENT, *Op kruistocht in de derde wereld: de reacties van de Nederlandse regering op ernstige en stelselmatige schendingen van fundamentele mensenrechten in ontwikkelingslanden, 1973-1981*, Hilversum: Verloren, 1998.

paid to the protection of human rights.¹¹ Yet, official policy statements on democracy promotion do not always correspond with what happens in reality, as one of the pioneers studying the international dimensions of democratization, Laurence Whitehead, already observed in one of his first publications on this theme.¹² Did the Den Uyl cabinet practice what they preached?

In this article, the policy of the Den Uyl government regarding Spain and the EC is examined during the last phase of the Franco-regime (1973-1975) and the first phase of the transition to democracy (1975-1977), and is based on extensive research in the Dutch archives. Since its foundation in 1957, the EC had made democracy a condition for countries which desire to join the organization. This type of policy, described as conditionality by another regime transitions pioneer, Philippe C. Schmitter, refers to policies by multilateral organizations demanding compliance with prerequisites to receive benefits such as association or membership.¹³ In this context of conditioning democratization, the potential influence of the Netherlands in the democratization of Spain should not be underestimated. As a founding member of the EC, the role of the Netherlands was relatively large during a time when the EC initially consisted of only six members, before growing to nine members in 1973, when the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark joined the organization. Like any EC country, the Dutch government could veto Spain's accession to the community. When the Spanish government applied for associate membership of the EC in 1962, the application was denied by the member states.¹⁴ In the Netherlands, the association was deemed unacceptable due to the existence of a dictatorial regime, although closer economic cooperation in the form of a preferential trade agreement, signed in 1970, was eventually considered acceptable.¹⁵ Given this position within the EC, the Den Uyl government could use the prospect of EC membership as a carrot to encourage democratization in Spain. This article examines to what extent the

11 Title translated by author. Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen, Groningen (Netherlands), D66, PvdA, PPR, *Keerpunt 1972. Regeerakkoord van de progressieve drie* [online] 1972, p. 41, <http://irs.ub.rug.nl/ppn/810579219> [30 October 2016].

12 Laurence WHITEHEAD, 'International Aspects of Democratization' in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Comparative Perspectives*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 7.

13 Philippe C. SCHMITTER, 'The influence of the International Context upon the Choice of National Institutions and Policies in Neo-Democracies' in Laurence Whitehead (ed.), *The International Dimensions of Democratization: Europe and the Americas*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 30.

14 See Delia CONTRERAS, "La relaciones de España y la CEE (1962-1979)" in Charles Powell and Juan Carlos Jiménez (eds.), *Del autoritarismo a la democracia. Estudios de política exterior española*, Madrid: Silex, 2007, p. 119-142.

15 T. DE GOEDE, "De mensenrechten in het Nederlandse buitenlands beleid ten aanzien van Spanje, Portugal en Griekenland, 1945-1975" in Maarten Kuitenbrouwer and Marij Leenders (eds.), *Geschiedenis van de mensenrechten: bouwstenen voor een interdisciplinaire benadering*, Hilversum: Verloren, 1996, p. 252-258.

Den Uyl government isolated Spain in Europe, insisting on democratization as a condition for EC membership. The insights shed further light on the role of the Netherlands in the democratization of Spain, making the history of the Spanish transition to democracy even more international.

NO DEMOCRATIZATION, NO ACCESSION

Shortly after the Den Uyl cabinet was installed in the Netherlands on May 11, 1973, a new government took office in Spain. On June 9, Franco's confidant, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, was appointed as prime minister. Reports from the Dutch embassy in Madrid informed The Hague on the ambitions of the Carrero Blanco government regarding the EC. The government declaration of June 14 included the objective to achieve closer relations between Spain and the EC.¹⁶ On June 20, Carrero Blanco declared in the *Cortes* that Spain should not be excluded from European integration. The Spanish government realized, however, that many obstacles needed to be removed, referring to the critical stance in Europe towards the regime.¹⁷

For the Spanish government one hindrance was the position of the Dutch government towards Spain, which was blocking Spanish accession to the EC. On June 29, the new Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Laureano López Rodó, had the opportunity to cultivate understanding from the Dutch government during a reception for diplomatic representatives stationed in Spain. During this gathering, López Rodó spoke with the Dutch ambassador, Evert Joost baron Lewe van Aduard who had been posted to Madrid since 1971. When López Rodó inquired about the Dutch position regarding Spain and the EC, the ambassador declared that the Dutch government first wanted to see signs of democratization. López Rodó answered that he hoped that the Dutch government would take into consideration the different meanings of democracy, including the Spanish interpretation of the concept of democracy. The ambassador could not reply because at that point the conversation was interrupted.¹⁸ Soon, however, the dialogue regarding the Dutch position on Spain and the EC would be continued at a different level.

¹⁶ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (Netherlands), Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Code-archief 1965-1974, nummer toegang 2.05.313, inventarisnummer 10650. Embassy Madrid to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 June 1973.

¹⁷ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (Netherlands), Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Code-archief 1965-1974, nummer toegang 2.05.313, inventarisnummer 10650. Embassy Madrid to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30 July 1973.

¹⁸ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (Netherlands), Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Code-archief 1965-1974, nummer toegang 2.05.313, inventarisnummer 1552, Embassy Madrid to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 June 1973.

In September, López Rodó met the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Van der Stoel, in New York. It is important to note that the two ministers convened in New York, while they attended the General Assembly of the United Nations. This would become policy by Van der Stoel, who was neither inclined to meet his counterpart in Spain, nor in the Netherlands. Although records do not explicitly reveal the reasons why Van der Stoel chose to meet his Spanish counterparts during a 'chance encounter', in the context of a multilateral meeting, it is plausible that he wanted to prevent the suggestion of maintaining normal, 'top level', diplomatic relations with a regime from which the Dutch government politically distanced itself. Moreover, such meetings in either country could have led to public outrage in the Netherlands. As such, López Rodó had no choice but to arrange an encounter with Van der Stoel in New York.

Given the political distance between the Netherlands and Spain, it is noteworthy that López Rodó solicited support from Van der Stoel to lift the objections of Italy and France concerning agricultural matters. This issue hampered the negotiations of a new preferential treaty between Spain and the EC. The original agreement dated from 1970, but it required revision due to the accession of the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland to the EC in 1973.¹⁹ López Rodó threatened Van der Stoel with economic repercussions if the Spanish government did not obtain the requested support. The Spanish minister stated that the Dutch benefited from trade with Spain, warning that if an acceptable treaty was not achieved, Spain would have to turn to other countries for economic trade. In this context, López Rodó specifically mentioned the development of the computer industry in Spain, for which EC countries as well as Japan had demonstrated an interest in. According to López Rodó, the decision of the Spanish government to go into business with the Europeans or Japanese would partly be determined by the outcome of the negotiations of the preferential trade agreement between the EC and Spain.

Van der Stoel was not intimidated. The Dutch minister acknowledged that the negotiations for the preferential trade agreement were complicated. He hoped that an agreement would be reached, an indication that Van der Stoel did not object to maintaining economic relations with Spain. Nevertheless, Van der Stoel did not appreciate the threat of repercussions and issued a warning. In turn, he threatened his Spanish colleague and reminded López Rodó that the Spanish government should not forget the income generated by Dutch tourism.²⁰ During

¹⁹ See for instance: Delia CONTRERAS, "La relaciones de España y la CEE (1962-1979)" in Charles Powell and Juan Carlos Jiménez (eds.), *Del autoritarismo a la democracia. Estudios de política exterior española*, Madrid: Silex, 2007, p. 119-142.

²⁰ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (Netherlands), Nederlandse Ambassade en Consulaten in Spanje, nummer toegang 2.05.249, inventarisnummer 333, Van der Stoel to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 September 1973.

the mid-seventies, Dutch tourism to Spain was indeed considerable, with more than 1 million Dutch tourists visiting Spain each year.²¹ So, economic cooperation was one thing; integration with the EC was another issue.

The political disapproval of the dictatorship in Spain blocked accession to the EC. Van der Stoel emphasized during his conversation with López Rodó that Spanish association or membership of the EC would only be possible if a democratic system was implemented in Spain. According to Van der Stoel, López Rodó argued fervently that Spain was already a democracy, referring to the definition of Aristoteles and the 1966 referendum in which the Spanish people supported the new constitution. The Spanish minister further expressed his astonishment about “liberal states not having liberal attitudes in showing understanding for a regime such as in Spain.” Van der Stoel did not budge on his position and replied that from the Dutch point of view, democracy implied the opportunity for opposition parties to assume power. The ministers clearly diverged on their understanding of the concept of democracy. Despite this disagreement, López Rodó wanted to maintain relations with his Dutch counterpart. At the end of the conversation, López Rodó invited Van der Stoel to visit Spain, but the Dutch minister apparently preferred to avoid such a visit. He mentioned his busy agenda and said that he would keep the invitation in mind.²² However, any further meetings between the foreign ministers would never take place. Some three months later, on December 20, the Prime Minister, Carrero Blanco, was assassinated by a car bomb planted by the armed Basque separatist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA). A new Prime Minister needed to be appointed. Would the installation of a new government in Spain change the position of the Den Uyl cabinet regarding Spain and the EC?

POLITICAL ISOLATION, TECHNICAL COOPERATION

On December 31, 1973, a new government took office in Spain. The Minister of Internal Affairs, Carlos Arias Navarro, was appointed as Prime Minister. Pedro Cortina replaced the Minister of Foreign Affairs López Rodó. The Den Uyl cabinet's position to politically isolate Spain in Europe did not change after the Arias Navarro government was installed. Developments in Spain contributed to this continuity in Dutch policy: during the first few months of the Arias Navarro government being in office, the harshness of the regime was already

21 Archief Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 10676. Jaarrapport 1974/1975, p. 94.

22 Translation by author. Original text: “liberale staten een niet zo liberale houding innamen bij het vertonen van begrip voor een regiem als dat in Spanje”. Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (Netherlands), Nederlandse Ambassade en Consulaten in Spanje, nummer toegang 2.05.249, inventarisnummer 333, Van der Stoel to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 September 1973.

attracting international attention. The notorious *Proceso 1.001* trial against ten leaders of the outlawed communist union, the so-called Ten of Carabanchel, continued to simmer on. On December 30, the union leaders were convicted with prison sentences of up to twenty years. In another case, on February 28, the liberal-minded bishop of Bilbao, Antonio Añoveros, was placed under house arrest for his criticism of the regime. At the beginning of March, though, both issues would be overshadowed by another case, which resulted in an explosion of international outrage. On March 2, a member of the ultra-left anarchist group *Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación*, Salvador Puig Antich, was executed by *garrote vil* after having been sentenced to death for murdering a policeman. Dutch newspapers reported regularly on these issues.²³ The events in Spain certainly did not soften the critical stance in the Netherlands regarding the Franco-regime.

The question of Spain and the EC was discussed several times in Dutch parliament. On January 28, parliamentarian Henk Waltmans of the progressive coalition party PPR asked Minister Van der Stoel to speak up against Spanish accession to the EC. Van der Stoel replied that only democratic countries would be allowed to join the EC.²⁴ After the execution of Puig Antich, members of parliament from the Christian Democratic coalition party ARP and the conservative protestant opposition party CHU asked Van der Stoel if the Dutch government would denounce the execution. The minister declared that the ambassador in Madrid had been instructed to inform the Spanish government of the “feelings of shock of the Dutch Government.”²⁵ These criticisms from Dutch politicians were however, not only limited to the Dutch parliament.

In the European Parliament, the Dutch socialists appeared to take the initiative in a resolution to condemn the Spanish regime. This was no easy feat because fellow socialists from other European countries were not prepared to go as far as their Dutch comrades. There was disagreement about the content of the resolution; Dutch socialists wanted to condemn the execution of Puig Antich and make it clear that EC membership would be out of the question as long as there was no democracy in Spain. The West German and French socia-

23 See for instance: “Vakbondsleiders in Madrid veroordeeld” [Delpher] *De Waarheid* (31 December 1973), p. 1, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010375433:mpeg21:a0005>, [1 March 2017]; “Huisarrest voor Spaanse bisschop” [Delpher] *De Tijd* (1 maart 1974), p. 1, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011236530:mpeg21:a0034>, [1 March 2017]; “Betogingen tegen wurging in Spanje” [Delpher] *Het Vrije Volk* (4 March 1974), p. 5, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010958401:mpeg21:a0157>, [1 March 2017].

24 Staten-Generaal Digitaal [online], Handelingen Tweede Kamer OCV/UCV 1973-1974, p. B7 en B10, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=sgd%3Ampeg21%3A19731974%3A0000787> [1 March 2017].

25 Translation by the author. Original text: “...gevoelens van geschoktheid van de Nederlandse Regering.” Staten-Generaal Digitaal [online], Aanhangsel Tweede Kamer 1973-1974 nummer 1033, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=sgd%3Ampeg21%3A19731974%3A0001837> [1 March 2017].

lists, however, did not want to go further than a condemnation and statement that the accession of Spain to the EC would be delayed because of this event. Eventually, a compromise was found.²⁶ While the Dutch socialists preferred a firmer resolution, it is relevant to note that the initiative for a joint formal statement came from the Dutch delegation. The Dutch socialists took the lead in Europe, taking a more radical position than their West German and French counterparts.

Although the events in Spain sharpened the divide between the Netherlands and the Franco-regime, there were also limits to the policy of political isolation. In some cases, practical cooperation between the EC and Spain was deemed acceptable. This corresponds to the double-track policy, which was set out in a memo by Van der Stoel. He regarded the traditional divide in foreign policy between economic interests and political ideals as artificial. Van der Stoel believed that both aspects should be part of foreign policy. This required finding a balance between promoting human rights and recognizing the potential risk of economic repercussions. According to Van der Stoel, “it was, fortunately, usually not a question of or-or, but of and-and.” There would be attention to human rights, but in practice specific policy decisions would depend on each case. Sometimes this would mean open criticism while at other times, silent diplomacy would be considered more suitable.²⁷ In short, Van der Stoel showed pragmatism. Other authors have already pointed out that selectivity in foreign policy is unavoidable.²⁸ As Whitehead once eloquently formulated: “...since the promotion of democracy is never more than one among a series of competing foreign policy objectives, the methods used to serve this end have to be evaluated with regard to their impact on other goals as well.”²⁹ This also applies to foreign policy of the Den Uyl cabinet. No matter how critical the socialist government was of the Franco regime, there were limits to political condemnation as other foreign policy objectives needed to be taken into consideration.

26 “Euro-parlement oneens over kritiek Spanje” [Delpher] *De Tijd* (14 March 1974), p.1, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011236541:mpeg21:a0008>, [4 March 2017]; “Europees parlement verdeeld over veroordeling Spanje” [Delpher] *De Tijd* (15 March 1974), p. 6, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011236542:mpeg21:a0097>, [4 March 2017]; “Terechtstelling Antich afgekeurd” [Delpher] *Nederlands Dagblad* (16 March 1974), p.1, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010633547:mpeg21:a0008>, [4 March 2017].

27 Translation by the author. Original text: “Het is, gelukkig, meestal geen kwestie van óf-óf, maar van én-én.” Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (Netherlands), Ministerraad, nummer toegang 2.02.05.02, inventarisnummer 1409. Notulen Ministerraad, 29 November 1974.

28 See for instance: Peter BAEHR, Monique CASTERMANS-HOLLEMAN and Fred GRÜNFELD (eds.), *Human rights in the foreign policy of the Netherlands*, Antwerp: Intersentia, 2002, p. 219.

29 Laurence WHITEHEAD, “International Aspects of Democratization” in Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Comparative Perspectives*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 19.

More than once this double-track approach in the foreign policy of the Den Uyl cabinet caused the social democratic party in parliament to criticize its own minister on his position regarding Spain and the EC. The PvdA had objected to Spanish participation in Eurocontrol, a technical organization in charge of coordinating air traffic in Western Europe.³⁰ The party further disapproved of dictatorial Spain partaking in conferences of the European Ministers of Justice as well as any cooperation between the Council of Europe and the Spanish regime.³¹ The Council of Europe was established in 1949 to promote democracy and human rights in Europe, principles which were not respected by the Franco dictatorship. In addition to this, the PvdA disapproved of Spain's participation in the cultural activities of the Council of Europe.³²

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded to the objections of the PvdA, demonstrating the pragmatic stance of the Den Uyl cabinet. Regarding Eurocontrol, the Secretary of State for European Affairs, Laurens Jan Brinkhorst, gave assurances that this was a different organization than the EC.³³ In other words, participation in Eurocontrol would not imply a shortcut to EC membership. Concerning the presence of Spain at the conferences of the European Ministers of Justice, Brinkhorst declared that it was necessary to coordinate air traffic regulation in Western Europe. Nevertheless, the cabinet showed a willingness to cast aside their pragmatism, with Brinkhorst stating that the government would disapprove of future Spanish participation, if the human rights situation in Spain did not improve. Regarding the Council of Europe, the secretary recalled that only democratic states should be allowed to become members. Brinkhorst reminded the lower house that the Dutch government had protested against the execution of Puig Antich and that developments in Spain were being followed closely.³⁴ Due to Spain's representation at the Council of Europe's cultural activities, Minister Van der Stoel declared that Spain had been a member of the European Cultural Agreement since 1962.³⁵ He did not mention anything about barring Spain from these cultural activities in the near future. From the above it becomes clear that the social democratic party in

30 Staten-Generaal Digitaal [online], Aanhangsel Tweede Kamer 1973-1974 number 1642, 28 May 1974, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=sgd%3Ampg21%3A19731974%3A0002447> [1 March 2017].

31 Staten-Generaal Digitaal [online], Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1973-1974 13 June 1974, p. 4195, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=sgd%3Ampg21%3A19731974%3A0000769> [1 March 2017].

32 Staten-Generaal Digitaal [online], Aanhangsel Tweede Kamer 1973-1974 number 1892, 2 July 1974, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=sgd%3Ampg21%3A19731974%3A0002697> [1 March 2017].

33 Staten-Generaal Digitaal [online], Aanhangsel Tweede Kamer 1973-1974 number 1642, 28 May 1974, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=sgd%3Ampg21%3A19731974%3A0002447> [1 March 2017].

34 Staten-Generaal Digitaal [online], Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1973-1974 13 June 1974, p. 4195, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=sgd%3Ampg21%3A19731974%3A0000769> [1 March 2017].

35 Staten-Generaal Digitaal [online], Aanhangsel Tweede Kamer 1973-1974 number 1892, 2 July 1974, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=sgd%3Ampg21%3A19731974%3A0002697> [1 March 2017].

parliament took a more radical stance towards cooperation between Spain and European institutions than its own Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The progressive parties' critical stance in parliament continued into 1975. On February 24, parliamentarian Henk Waltmans asked Van der Stoel to clarify the government's position on the possible expansion of the EC with Greece, Portugal and Spain. Van der Stoel declared that the cabinet maintained its position that EC membership was open for democratic countries.³⁶ On May 28, members of the PvdA expressed their discontent with Spanish participation in the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education to be held in Stockholm in June. The PvdA found it unacceptable that a dictatorial regime could take part in this conference. Interestingly, the Minister of Education and Sciences, Jos van Kemenade, stated that the cabinet believed that educational and cultural relations with dictatorial regimes could eventually contribute to democratization.³⁷ Apparently, the Den Uyl cabinet was not only willing to cooperate with the Spanish regime in economic and technical matters, but also in educational and cultural ones. At this stage, the government saw educational and cultural ties as an opportunity to indirectly encourage democratization. However, before democratization could take off in Spain, the Dutch-Spanish relations soured.

COLLISION COURSE

In the spring of 1975, Dutch-Spanish diplomatic relations entered a downward spiral. Reports from the embassy in Madrid reached The Hague, noting a change in attitude by the Spanish regime towards the Dutch government. This was related to the negotiations of the preferential trade agreement. Although the Spanish government knew that the Den Uyl cabinet rejected EC membership on political grounds, the regime had so far not considered the Netherlands as an obstacle to the negotiations for the preferential trade agreement. After all, this treaty did not include EC membership and was solely limited to economic cooperation. However, the Arias Navarro government had come to believe that the Den Uyl cabinet took a negative stance towards Spain during the preferential trade agreement negotiations. The embassy further reported that the Netherlands was depicted with increasing negativity in the Spanish press. The position of the Dutch government was paired to the negative stance of the French and Italian governments, which raised problems with agricultural

³⁶ Staten-Generaal Digitaal [online], Handelingen Tweede Kamer OCV/UCV 1974-1975, 24 February 1975, p. 550, 555, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=sgd%3Ampg21%3A19741975%3A0000729> [1 March 2017].

³⁷ Staten-Generaal Digitaal [online], Aanhangsel Tweede Kamer 1974-1975 number 1285, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=sgd%3Ampg21%3A19741975%3A0002037> [1 March 2017].

issues during the negotiations. Spanish newspaper *Informaciones* published an article, suggesting that the Spanish government should obstruct the operations of multinationals from those countries in Spain. At the Dutch embassy in Madrid, this was interpreted as a clear warning of possible repercussions and it was suggested that Spanish correspondents in Brussels should be approached to inform them of the position of the Netherlands.³⁸

Minister Van der Stoel informed ambassador Insinger that the Spanish government was mistaken about the position of the Netherlands. Dutch concerns were not related to the Spanish regime, but with the way in which the European Commission had dealt with the negotiations, outside the mandate of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. In fact, the Dutch government supported the proposed agreement. Accordingly, Van der Stoel instructed Insinger to clarify the Dutch position at any suitable opportunity. The Spanish press in Brussels was also targeted. Van der Stoel informed the embassy that the Dutch permanent representative at the EC had been requested to see if Spanish correspondents in Brussels could be approached.³⁹

During this period in which diplomatic relations turned sour, the new ambassador, Jan Herman Odo Insinger, arrived in Madrid to replace Lewe van Aduard. The latter had been assigned to a position at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague. However, he would never get to occupy his new post as he suffered a fatal heart attack in front of the embassy in Madrid, just weeks before leaving Spain. Contrary to Lewe van Aduard, who was appointed by conservative Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Luns, Insinger was selected by the social democrat Van der Stoel. Upon arriving in Spain, Insinger became acquainted with several Spanish officials during the summer months.

On July 2, an initial meeting took place between Insinger and Cortina. During this conversation, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs pressed for closer relations between the Netherlands and the future Spanish head of state, Juan Carlos. He suggested that Queen Juliana and Prince Juan Carlos could meet, stating that the Spanish prince had already been welcomed in France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Finland and Denmark. Insinger reacted with astonishment, as he colorfully described in his telegram: "My eyes must have taken the shape of saucers, as in the fairy tales of Hans Andersen."⁴⁰ According to Insinger, Cortina then replied that during this first encounter he would not

38 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spanje, inventarisnummer 230. Embassy Madrid (63) to Van der Stoel, 18 juni 1975.

39 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spanje, inventarisnummer 230, Van der Stoel (28) to Embassy Madrid, 23 June 1975.

40 Translation by the author. Original text: "Mijn ogen moeten als in het sprookje van Hans Andersen de vorm van theeschoteltes hebben aangenomen." Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spanje, inventarisnummer 196, Insinger (67) to Van der Stoel, 2 July 1975.

threaten the ambassador “with a revolver.” Cortina declared that he did not expect an immediate response, but he did hope that the ambassador would shortly be able to provide an answer.⁴¹ Van der Stoel was adamant about his position. He dismissed a visit by Juan Carlos to the Netherlands. He wrote to Insinger that Franco’s dictatorship was reaching its end and he was not willing to deal with the regime’s representatives. Van der Stoel emphasized that the policy towards Spain was defined by “caution and restraint.”⁴² Obviously, Van der Stoel considered Juan Carlos to be part of the Franco-regime. Unlike other Western governments, the Den Uyl cabinet was not willing to cultivate relations with the future head of state.

On July 30, Insinger had a first meeting with the Spanish Director General of Economic Cooperation, Raimundo Bassols. The discussion centered on the relations between Spain and the EC and, according to Bassols, it was important that the Spanish government would not be humiliated during negotiations with the EC. Bassols openly shared his vision of Spain’s future, declaring that the country was not yet ready to become a member of the EC. The adjusted preferential trade agreement would serve as a temporary solution until Spain could join the EC once democracy had been established. Regarding democratization, Bassols stated that most people in Spain wanted democracy, but this was not discussed in public. Bassols believed that democratization would start as soon as Juan Carlos became king. Bassols was resolute on one aspect though: it would not be realistic to demand a democracy “like the Dutch or Belgian model” in a couple of weeks. He emphasized the importance of an evolutionary transition to democracy to prevent disorder, stating that the Netherlands did not build its democracy in a short period of time either. Insinger reported to The Hague that the tone of his conversation with Bassols was pleasant, or normal at least, compared to his previous meeting with Cortina.⁴³

However, the new ambassador received heavy criticism of Dutch policy during courtesy calls made to get acquainted with Spanish officials. Insinger reported that the president of the *Cortes*, Alejandro Rodríguez de Valcárcel, almost immediately launched an attack on the position of the Netherlands and other European countries regarding Spain, stating that Western Europe needed Spain more than the other way around. During another meeting, Insinger was scolded by the Director General of Political Affairs of the Spanish Ministry

41 Translation by the author. Original text: “met een revolver”. Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spanje, inventarisnummer 196, Insinger (67) to Van der Stoel, 2 July 1975.

42 Translation by the author. Original text: “voorzichtigheid en terughoudendheid.” Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spanje, inventarisnummer 196, Van der Stoel (30) to Insinger, 5 July 1975.

43 Translation by the author. Original text: “naar Nederlands of Belgisch model.” Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spanje, inventarisnummer 230, Insinger (87) to Van der Stoel, 30 July 1975.

of Foreign Affairs, José Luis Los Arcos. Insinger reported that any hope for creating goodwill from Spanish politicians had been crushed by vicious remarks and accusations directed at the Netherlands. Los Arcos stated that the Netherlands harbored deep feelings of hatred against Spain, sentiments which, according to the Spanish official, went beyond the aversion to the Franco regime, and which were fed by the Dutch communists and their friends. In addition, he also stated that the Netherlands refused to see any positive aspects of Spain, accusing the Dutch government of acting against Spain within the EC by interfering with internal affairs by loudly demanding regime change as a condition for accession to the EC. Insinger reported that during both meetings he defended Dutch policy, pointing out the importance of political rights.⁴⁴ Clearly, some Spanish officials strongly disapproved of the position of the Den Uyl government. The difficult conversations Insinger had with some Spanish officials served as a prelude to the late summer of 1975 which would become hot in terms of diplomatic relations. In September, the Den Uyl cabinet would launch a fierce protest directed at the Franco regime.

LEADING THE PROTEST IN EUROPE

By the end of the summer, international condemnation of the Franco regime would reach a climax. On August 29, the military court in Burgos sentenced two ETA militants to death for the murder of a policeman. In the Netherlands, protests immediately erupted. Hundreds of people assembled in front of the Spanish consulate in Amsterdam while others occupied the office of Iberia in Amsterdam. The protests, varying from hunger strikes to sending telegrams and organizing demonstrations, spread throughout the country.⁴⁵ The developments in Spain would drive an even wider wedge between the Den Uyl government and the Franco regime.

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been following the ETA trials for some time.⁴⁶ Some bilateral diplomatic steps had already been taken. On the day of the sentencing, the temporary representative of the Spanish embassy was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where Secretary of State Pe-

⁴⁴ Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spanje, inventarisnummer 196, Insinger (84) to Van der Stoel, 23 July 1975; Insinger (90) to Van der Stoel, 4 August 1975.

⁴⁵ See for instance: “Massaal protest tegen Spaanse doodvonnissen” [Delpher] *Het Vrije Volk* (30 August 1975), p. 7, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010958858:mpeg21:a0205> [3 March 2017]; “Vele protesten tegen Franco-justitie” [Delpher] *De Waarheid* (3 September 1975), p. 1, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010375639:mpeg21:a0015> [3 March 2017]; “Den Haag vraagt Basken clementie” [Delpher] *Nederlands Dagblad* (2 September 1975), p. 5, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010572479:mpeg21:a0068> [3 March 2017].

⁴⁶ Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1965-1974, inventarisnummer 11910, Celer to Madrid, 28 May 1975.

ter Kooijmans pushed for clemency.⁴⁷ On September 1, during the Council of Ministers, Van der Stoel shared that the Spanish government had been pressed not to follow through with the executions. Prime Minister Den Uyl expressed his concerns about the developments in Spain, which he believed could lead to a “very explosive situation.”⁴⁸ Tensions in the bilateral relations mounted when additional death penalties were handed out in Spain.

On September 19, ambassador Insinger informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that five members of the revolutionary anti-fascist group *Frente Revolucionario Antifascista y Patriota* (FRAP) had received capital punishments for murdering policemen.⁴⁹ Among the convicted were two pregnant women.⁵⁰ Van der Stoel increased the pressure on the Spanish regime and summoned ambassador Ramón Sedó to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The minister clarified that the Dutch government, although disapproving of the violent acts by the FRAP, was shocked by the death penalties. In addition to this, Van der Stoel reminded Sedó that the Dutch government disapproved of the use of the death penalty during peace time. The minister pressed for clemency for all the convicted ETA and FRAP members. It is plausible that international pressure had some impact, for later that day, it was communicated that the pregnant women would not be executed.⁵¹ Dutch actions would not stop however, with the Den Uyl government stepping up its protest from the bilateral to the multilateral level.

It is important to note that the Den Uyl cabinet took the initiative for a joint protest at European level, as was also mentioned by the historian Moreno Juste.⁵² The first step by the Dutch government was to push for a common European demarche against the Franco regime, which was no easy task. Most EC governments had reacted in a reserved manner. Only the Belgian, British and Italian governments had directly contacted the Spanish regime about the issue. The French and Danish governments had expressed their indignation,

47 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1965-1974, inventarisnummer 11910. Van der Stoel to Madrid, 30 August 1975.

48 Translation by the author. Original text: “zeer explosieve situatie.” Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (Netherlands), Ministerraad, nummer toegang 2.02.05.02, inventarisnummer 1598. Notulen Ministerraad, 1 September 1975.

49 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1965-1974, inventarisnummer 11910. Insinger to Van der Stoel, 18 September 1975.

50 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1965-1974, inventarisnummer 11910. Insinger to Van der Stoel, 19 September 1975.

51 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1965-1974, inventarisnummer 11910, Van der Stoel to Madrid, 19 September 1975; Insinger to The Hague, 19 September 1975, codebericht 108 en 109. Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (Netherlands), Ministerraad, nummer toegang 2.02.05.02, inventarisnummer 1598, Notulen Ministerraad, 19 September 1975.

52 Antonio MORENO JUSTE, ‘The European Economic Community and the End of the Franco Regime: the September 1975 Crisis,’ *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 90 (2015), p. 25-45.

although this was not done through a demarche, while The Federal Republic of Germany, Luxemburg and Ireland had not taken any diplomatic steps at all. The Dutch Director General for Political Affairs was not optimistic about achieving a joint EC demarche. His colleagues from the United Kingdom, Denmark, Luxemburg and Belgium expected that their respective governments would support the Dutch initiative, but the West German, French and Italian representatives believed that their leaders would disapprove. The Italians feared that additional pressure on the regime would only reduce the chances of clemency.⁵³

Minister Van der Stoel was not prepared to give up easily. To push forward the Dutch initiative, Van der Stoel sent instructions to the Dutch ambassadors in the EC countries to communicate the Dutch proposal for the European demarche at the highest possible level. He wanted the ambassadors to emphasize the humanitarian grounds of the plea, thereby disconnecting the issue from a political condemnation of the regime. Van der Stoel wanted to increase the pressure as the Spanish government would decide whether the sentences would be confirmed within twelve hours.⁵⁴ This sense of urgency was, however, not felt everywhere in Western Europe. After the pressure of the Netherlands, the four largest EC countries –the Federal Republic of Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy– maintained their reservations about the Dutch initiative.⁵⁵ During the meeting of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) in Venice on 11 and 12 September, the Dutch used the opportunity to once again bring the idea for a joint demarche to the table.⁵⁶ Eventually the Dutch mission succeeded. On September 24, while present in New York for the General Assembly of the United Nations, the EC Ministers of Foreign Affairs decided that Italy, as president of the EC, would press for clemency on humanitarian grounds on behalf of all the EC member states.⁵⁷ However, this would not solve the issue of the death penalties.

53 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1965-1974, inventarisnummer 11910. DGPZ to Van der Stoel, 5 September 1975.

54 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1965-1974, inventarisnummer 11910. Van der Stoel circulaire, 5 September 1975.

55 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1964-1975, inventarisnummer 11910: Embassy Rome to The Hague, 5 September 1975; Embassy London to The Hague, 5 and 9 September 1975; Embassy Bonn to The Hague, 5 & 8 September 1975; Embassy Brussels to The Hague, 5 September 1975; Embassy Paris to The Hague, 5 & 11 September 1975; Embassy Luxemburg to The Hague, 5 September 1975; Embassy Dublin to The Hague, 5 September 1975; Embassy Copenhagen to The Hague, 5 & 8 September 1975; Memorandum Chef DEU to DGPZ, 8 September 1975.

56 Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (Netherlands), Ministerraad, nummer toegang 2.02.05.02, inventarisnummer 1598. Notulen Ministerraad, 12 September 1975.

57 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1965-1974, inventarisnummer 11910, New York PV (532) to Van der Stoel, 24 September 1975.

On September 26, it became known that the Franco cabinet had confirmed the five death sentences. The executions would take place within hours. Given the pressure of time, the Den Uyl cabinet conferred about the steps that should be taken. That same day, during the weekly Council of Ministers, the idea of a public protest was brought to the table by Den Uyl. The Prime Minister believed that the Dutch government should clearly demonstrate its indignation if the executions became a reality.⁵⁸ Remarkably, this decision was taken in absence of Minister Van der Stoel, who was at the time in New York, attending the General Assembly of the United Nations. Years later, Van der Stoel would explain that he had disagreed with the decision for a government-initiated public protest. He opposed the executions, but thought the reaction was a disproportionate reaction considering that there were so many human rights violations in the world.⁵⁹ In any case, once the executions had taken place on the morning of September 27, Van der Stoel returned on time from New York to participate in the demonstration later that day and to hear Prime Minister Den Uyl speak passionately against the Franco regime.⁶⁰ It is no coincidence that this demonstration took place at the *Domplein* in Utrecht, in front of the *Casa de España*. The steps by the Den Uyl cabinet were not only limited to this protest in the Netherlands. Once more, the Dutch government took the issue to the European level.

The fact that the EC ambassadors were recalled from Spain after the executions on September 27 is generally known. However, it needs to be emphasized that it was the Den Uyl cabinet again taking the lead in Western Europe. During the weekly cabinet meeting on September 26, it was decided to immediately recall ambassador Insinger from Spain. The Dutch ambassadors in the capitals of EC countries as well as the United States, Sweden and Norway were informed that Insinger had been summoned to return to the Netherlands. The ambassadors were instructed to immediately notify the ministry of the steps taken by other governments.⁶¹ Once more there was a reluctance to follow the Dutch example, even after the executions had taken place in the early morning of September 27. On that day, Van der Stoel noted that it was only Norway who had followed the Dutch initiative. At the time of writing his message it was still not known if the Swedish and Danish governments would follow suit.

58 Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (Netherlands), Ministerraad, nummer toegang 2.02.05.02, inventarisnummer 1598. Notulen Ministerraad, 26 September 1975.

59 Peter BOOTSMA and Willem BREEDVELD, *De verbeelding aan de macht*, Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2000, p. 39.

60 A video recording of the protest can be viewed on the website Open Beelden: http://www.openbeelden.nl/media/656167/Protest_tegen_executies_in_Spanje_grote_demonstraties_voor_Dom [1 March 2017].

61 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1965-1974, inventarisnummer 11910. Celer circulaire 1171, 26 September 1975.

It was also unclear as to what the governments of Belgium, France and the Federal Republic of Germany would decide, while the United Kingdom would probably not adopt the Dutch example.⁶² Eventually, most countries yielded. During the Dutch Council of Ministers on October 3, Van der Stoel announced that nearly all EC countries, as well as the Scandinavians, had emulated the Dutch initiative. Only the Irish government did not recall its ambassador. It is plausible that the West European countries, convinced by the Netherlands to summon their ambassadors, felt ambivalent about such a strong diplomatic statement as they soon contemplated the return of their ambassadors.

The West European countries did not want their ambassadors to abandon Madrid for a long period though. During the cabinet meeting on October 3, Van der Stoel reported that most countries were considering the return of their ambassadors to Spain –the Swedish government, for instance, had argued that high-level talks required the presence of the ambassador.⁶³ A week later, Van der Stoel informed the cabinet that the European Ministers of Foreign Affairs had discussed for how long the ambassadors should be absent from Spain with most EC countries wanting to send their diplomatic representatives back as soon as possible. It was argued that the presence of ambassadors in Spain did not necessarily imply approval of the Franco regime. Another reason put forward was that only the ambassadors could maintain high-level diplomatic relations with the Spanish government. Moreover, the ambassadors would be able to offer help to opposition movements. The Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries had already decided to send their ambassadors back to Spain. For France, this seemed not so much of an issue because the French ambassador had not been officially recalled, for at the time of the executions he was in France for unrelated reasons. The Italian government had not decided yet.⁶⁴ At this point it was obvious that the Dutch could end up in an isolated position if ambassador Insinger was not allowed to return.

After deliberation during the cabinet meeting, Van der Stoel concluded that the Dutch ambassador should also return to Spain. Insinger would get instructions to inform the Spanish government that the Netherlands disapproved of death penalties during times of peace. At the same time, the Dutch government appeared to want to appease the regime somewhat by communicating that it also condemned political murder by opponents of the regime. The ca-

62 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1965-1974, inventarisnummer 11910. Van der Stoel to PV (VN) New York, 27 September 1975.

63 Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (Netherlands), Ministerraad, nummer toegang 2.02.05.02, inventarisnummer 1599. Notulen Ministerraad, 3 October 1975.

64 Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (Netherlands), Ministerraad, nummer toegang 2.02.05.02, inventarisnummer 1599. Notulen Ministerraad, 10 October 1975.

binet agreed with Insinger's return to Madrid.⁶⁵ Around this time the health of 82-year-old Franco was deteriorating rapidly. A few weeks after the international outrage against the regime, Spain's political landscape changed dramatically when Franco died on November 20, 1975. Franco's rule came to an end, Juan Carlos' monarchy started and Prime Minister Arias Navarro remained in place to lead the first transitional government. Spain commenced its journey on the precarious road towards democracy. Did this historical moment present a juncture in the policy of the Den Uyl cabinet regarding Spain and the EC?

NO REASON FOR APPLAUSE

The first transitional government under the leadership of Arias Navarro indicated that it wanted to achieve full membership of the European Community. The Spanish government was no longer interested in renegotiating the preferential trade agreement from 1970 but now strived for full membership of the EC.⁶⁶ The Spanish Prime Minister counted on the empathy of West European countries.⁶⁷ The new Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, José María De Areilza, was optimistic about EC accession, although he realized that many problems needed to be solved before Spain could join the European Community. De Areilza wanted to cultivate understanding in Western Europe by means of bilateral conversations with EC governments. The minister expected that, after his visits to EC countries, Spain would be able to apply for full membership in the first half of 1976 and he further estimated that the negotiations would last for at least two years, viewing 1980 as a realistic date for Spanish accession. Ambassador Insinger reckoned this was too optimistic, as he reported to The Hague, considering the political changes that were needed in Spain before all EC members would support Spanish accession.⁶⁸ With hindsight, De Areilza was indeed too positive, as Spain's EC entry only became a reality in 1986. In any case, at the beginning of 1976, De Areilza was on a mission to tighten relations between Spain and the EC.

During a reception organized by King Juan Carlos in the first week of January 1976, De Areilza told Insinger that the Spanish government wanted the EC ban lifted. He hoped that he would be welcomed to the Netherlands

⁶⁵ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (Netherlands), Ministerraad, nummer toegang 2.02.05.02, inventarisnummer 1599. Notulen Ministerraad, 10 October 1975.

⁶⁶ Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 13409, Embassy Bonn (23) to Van der Stoep, 13 January 1976.

⁶⁷ Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 11124, "Spain's new timetable", *Newsweek*, 12 January 1976.

⁶⁸ Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 13407, Insinger to Van der Stoep, 20 January 1976.

for an unofficial work visit.⁶⁹ A few days later, ambassador Sedó submitted a formal request for De Areilza's visit to the Netherlands. Van der Stoel informed Insinger that he agreed with a work visit in February.⁷⁰ From the preparations for the meeting it can be deduced that the Den Uyl cabinet continued to show restraint towards Spain after Franco's death. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague, the Spanish ambassador stated that the Dutch government was free to view the presence of De Areilza as either unofficial or official. With this remark, Sedó implied that De Areilza preferred an official visit. Nevertheless, Van der Stoel only wanted a work visit. Sedó understood this position, yet, he took the opportunity to point out that De Areilza would be received by King Boudewijn in Belgium and Queen Margrethe in Denmark.⁷¹ Without explicitly stating so, the Spanish ambassador alluded to a reception by Queen Juliana. However, this was out of the question for Van der Stoel.⁷² The intention of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to solely listen to what De Areilza had to say.⁷³

The EC was an important topic of discussion during De Areilza's short stay in the Netherlands. Bassols, who accompanied De Areilza, stated that the Spanish government was no longer interested in the renegotiation of the existing preferential trade agreement, striving instead for EC membership. Bassols thought that the application for accession could be submitted in 1978. By that time, he believed that the democratization process would have advanced to such a level that a positive response from the EC countries could be expected. In turn, De Areilza stressed the importance of a positive attitude from the EC towards Spain, especially as the Spanish population supported EC membership and they would be very disappointed if the EC was to remain insensitive to the Spanish reform efforts. Van der Stoel's reply demonstrated that the Dutch government maintained reservations towards the transitional government. He stated that the Dutch people always cherished feelings of friendship with the Spanish people and expressed the hope that the democratization plans would indeed succeed. Regarding the reaction of the EC countries, Van der Stoel declared that no applause could be expected before concrete results were achieved.

69 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 13407, Insinger (3) to Van der Stoel, 12 January 1976.

Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 12801, Van der Stoel (3) to Insinger, 19 January 1976.

71 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 12801, Memorandum nr. 57, 4 February 1976.

72 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 12801, Visite aux Pays-Bas de Son Excellence Monsieur José María de Areilza, Comte de Motrico, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères d'Espagne, 20-21 février 1976.

73 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 12801, DEU/WE to M via S/C DEU, DGPZ and S, 12 February 1976.

ved. Still, Van der Stoel claimed that he was under the impression that the Spanish government was, at least, making serious efforts with reforms. However, from the Dutch point of view, it was not quite the right moment for Spanish membership of the EC, although the minister stated that this position might change in the future.

Despite Dutch reservations, the visit was seen as positive and valuable by both sides. Van der Stoel declared that the friendly ambiance was in part caused by the open attitude of De Areilza and the way in which he shared information and dealt with questions.⁷⁴ De Areilza was also content, thanking Van der Stoel for his hospitality and opportunity to explain the reform plans of the Spanish government.⁷⁵ In his memoirs, De Areilza claimed that even ambassador Sedó was surprised about what had been accomplished in the Netherlands.⁷⁶ Upon his return to Madrid, Insinger reported on the reactions of the Spanish press. The newspaper *ABC* wrote that the Netherlands, above all expectations, had shown sympathy while the newspaper *Ya* called the attitude of the ever-critical Dutch government very positive.⁷⁷ The vivid description of *ABC* is telling for the Spanish evaluation of the visit of De Areilza: “No ha sido una bola de queso holandés duro” – “It has not been a hard ball of Dutch cheese.”⁷⁸

The Spanish optimism regarding the attitude of the Dutch government regarding Spain and the EC was not shared by the United States. In June 1976, King Juan Carlos paid an official visit to the United States, accompanied by De Areilza. They spoke with President Ford, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Brent Scowcroft. During the conversation, Juan Carlos brought up the subject of the EC. Juan Carlos and De Areilza were optimistic about starting negotiations with the EC. The reaction of Kissinger though, is remarkable: “The Dutch will give you problems.”⁷⁹ Obviously, the policy of political condemnation towards Spain by the Den Uyl government did not go unnoticed in the White House.

74 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 12801, Celer (12) to Madrid, 23 February 1976.

75 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 12801, De Areilza to Van der Stoel, 28 February 1976.

76 José María DE AREILZA, *Diario de un ministro de la monarquía*, Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1977, p. 93.

77 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 12801, Insinger to Van der Stoel, 24 February 1976.

78 Translation by the author. José JAVALOYES, “Sorprendente y positiva acogida a la visita de Areilza en Holanda” [online] *ABC* (Madrid), (22 February 1976), p. 17, <http://hemeroteca.abc.es/nav/Navigate.exe/hemeroteca/madrid/abc/1976/02/22/017.html> [1 March 2017].

79 General R. Ford Presidential Library & Museum, Memorandum of Conversation President Ford, Juan Carlos I, Henry Kissinger, José María de Areilza, Brent Snowcroft [online], 2 June 1976. <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0314/1553461.pdf> [1 March 2017].

Historian Encarnación Lemus refers to this meeting in her study on the relations between the United States and Spain during the transition. She interprets the conversation as a warning from Kissinger to Juan Carlos for the objections by the Netherlands and Sweden.⁸⁰ However, it is relevant to emphasize that Kissinger specifically mentioned the Netherlands as an obstacle for closer relations between Spain and the EC, not Sweden. After all, as Kissinger asserted, the Netherlands was a member of the EC, giving the Dutch government the power to veto the accession of Spain. Although Juan Carlos and De Areilza seemed rather optimistic about the progress being made to achieve closer ties with the EC, Kissinger clearly considered the Dutch as troublemakers, especially Prime Minister Den Uyl. The Netherlands may be a relatively minor power in international politics, but the Den Uyl government was certainly capable of blocking Spain's accession to the EC. As has been demonstrated, the position of the Den Uyl cabinet towards Spain was at times considered a nuisance, not only in Spain but also in the United States, as the passage above demonstrates. Would the Den Uyl cabinet maintain this critical stance towards Spain once the second transition government was installed?

MAINTAINING DISTANCE

Soon after the visit of Juan Carlos to the United States, the king decided to replace Arias Navarro due to the insufficient progress of implementing democracy in Spain. On July 3, Adolfo Suárez was appointed as Prime Minister and Marcelino Oreja became the new Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Den Uyl cabinet received the non-democratic governmental change in Spain with skepticism, lacking confidence in the progress of transition. As a result, Van der Stoel maintained a policy of distance. On July 27, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs received a letter from his new Spanish counterpart, Marcelino Oreja. In this letter, Van der Stoel was addressed as the President of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EC, as the Netherlands in this period held the presidency of the EC at this time. The subject of the letter concerned the negotiation between Spain and the EC regarding the preferential trade agreement. The Suárez government did not agree with all of the proposals. There was a willingness to negotiate, but the new Spanish government argued that changes to the existing preferential trade agreement should be minimal. Oreja indicated that his predecessor had already put forward these points of view during his visit to the Netherlands in February. As such, the Suárez government was under the impression that an agreement had been reached on the issue.

⁸⁰ Encarnación LEMUS, *Estados Unidos y la Transición española: Entre la Revolución de los Claveles y la Marcha Verde*, Madrid: Silex, 2011, p. 177.

Oreja suggested that a high officer of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs visit the Netherlands at the beginning of September to explain the Spanish government's point of view. The Spanish minister sent a similar letter to all of the other EC Ministers of Foreign Affairs.⁸¹ Van der Stoel was not pleased with this request for bilateral consultations.

The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs wanted to prevent bilateral talks between Spain and EC member states. He sent instructions to the Dutch ambassadors in EC countries, stating that bilateral consultations should be avoided, as these should only take place at EC level. Van der Stoel believed that bilateral discussions could lead to different interpretations of Spain's wishes, which would only delay the negotiation process. He declared that the Spanish government should direct itself to the European Commission. The Dutch ambassadors were instructed to pass along these motivations and obtain support for this approach in EC capitals.⁸² However, it soon became clear that Van der Stoel stood alone in this matter. His EC colleagues were willing to receive Spanish representatives at a bilateral level. Van der Stoel, realizing that he had not been able to reach his objective, sent new instructions to the Dutch ambassadors. His message unveils that the other EC countries acted in a contradictory manner. Van der Stoel wrote that other member states acknowledged that the Spanish government should indeed directly approach the European Commission, but they were nevertheless prepared to receive Spanish representatives at a bilateral level. According to Van der Stoel, the member states had at least agreed to limit themselves to listening to the Spanish delegation. Considering the situation, Van der Stoel agreed to receive Spanish officials in the Netherlands, emphasizing that the Dutch government would not host Spanish representatives in its function as president of the EC.⁸³ Van der Stoel apparently wanted to avoid the Spanish government interpreting the visit as a step closer towards EC membership.

It is interesting to note that Van der Stoel refused to meet Oreja in the Netherlands. Insinger had informed Van der Stoel of Oreja's European travel plans.⁸⁴ Van der Stoel responded, stating that the visit to the Netherlands should be limited to a delegation at appropriate policy level –in other words, Oreja would not be received in the Netherlands. Van der Stoel further reinstated that a passive attitude would be adopted, emphasizing that the Netherlands would not take

81 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spanje, inventarisnummer 230, Oreja to Van der Stoel, 27 July 1976.

82 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spanje, inventarisnummer 230, Van der Stoel (circulaire 193), 13 August 1976.

83 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spanje, inventarisnummer 230, Van der Stoel (circulaire 197), 20 August 1976.

84 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 13409, Insinger (276.743) to Van der Stoel, 20 August 1976.

on the role of president of the EC.⁸⁵ Another message confirms that the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs maintained a certain distance regarding his Spanish counterpart. Van der Stoel was unwilling to take the initiative for a meeting with Oreja. He would be prepared to meet Oreja in New York during the United Nations General Assembly, but only on the condition that Oreja proposed such meeting.⁸⁶ At this stage, Van der Stoel obviously had no faith in the Suárez government and the progress towards democracy. Moreover, it is telling that Oreja was not welcome to visit the Netherlands in September, while Felipe González, leader of the Spanish socialist party, Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), was received in the same month with a warm welcome by its Dutch sister-party PvdA. During this visit, González also had a meeting with Prime Minister Den Uyl.⁸⁷ As has been demonstrated earlier, Van der Stoel maintained his policy of only meeting his Spanish counterparts during international meetings. By adopting this strategy, the minister avoided not having any contact at all, while at the same time averting public scrutiny in the Netherlands.

The Den Uyl cabinet maintained its position to keep the European gates closed to Spain. During a briefing by Van der Stoel to a Dutch parliamentary delegation planning to visit a conference of the International Parliamentary Union in Madrid, the standpoint of the Den Uyl cabinet towards Spain and the EC was discussed. Van der Stoel informed the delegates that only a democratic Spain could become a member of the EC. According to Van der Stoel, there was agreement on this condition amongst the EC Ministers of Foreign Affairs. At that time, Van der Stoel did not even consider the issue as urgent, because the application for membership was not expected until after democratic elections.⁸⁸ Later that year the position of the Den Uyl cabinet was once again made clear during the parliamentary debates on foreign policy. Spain would not be allowed to become a member of the EC if no democratic system was installed.⁸⁹ The Den Uyl cabinet kept adhering to the conditionality prin-

85 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spainje, inventarisnummer 230, Van der Stoel (53) to Madrid, 21 August 1976.

86 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 13408, Van der Stoel (54) to Madrid, 25 August 1976.

87 Archief PvdA, inventory number 2407, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, Brief aan leden Partijbestuur, 14 September 1976; "Socialistenleider naar Nederland" [Delpher] *Het Vrije Volk*, (2 September 1976), p. 5, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010959324:mpeg21:a0191> [31 October 2016]; Eppo Jansen, "Madrid weigert de socialisten toestemming voor congres" [Delpher] *NRC Handelsblad* (2 September 2 1976), p. 5, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBNRC01:000025411:mpeg21:a0061> [31 October 2016].

88 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 13902, Van der Stoel (63) to Insinger, 23 September 1976.

89 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 12360, Nota naar aanleiding van verslag inzake hoofdstuk V der rijksbegroting, dienstjaar 1977, Buitenlandse Zaken, 27 October 1976.

ciple after Suárez had been appointed as prime minister. It would not take long however, for the initial skepticism to make way for increased confidence in the capabilities of Suárez and his team.

A WARM WELCOME

The beginning of 1977 showed the first signs of a change in the attitude of Dutch foreign policy towards Spain. In February, Van der Stoel informed the ambassador in Madrid that he wanted Dutch-Spanish bilateral talks at policy level to be resumed. He requested Insinger to find out if there was interest in restarting consultations at the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Van der Stoel stated that the Director General of Political Affairs would be more than willing to travel to Madrid for a meeting. As the last bilateral consultations had taken place in Madrid in January 1973, Van der Stoel suggested that the meeting should take place in The Hague.⁹⁰ This was a first sign of rapprochement. In the summer of 1977, the Dutch-Spanish relations would develop further.

The decisive event which led to the recovery of warm diplomatic relations was the holding of the first democratic election in Spain since 1936. The coalition party *Unión de Centro Democrático* (UCD) won the elections of June 15, 1977, with Adolfo Suárez becoming the Prime Minister of the new, democratic Spain. After the elections, Van der Stoel instructed Insinger to inform Suárez that there was much appreciation in the Netherlands for the way in which he had guided Spain to democracy. Van der Stoel further declared that, as far as the Netherlands was concerned, there were no longer any political objections to the negotiation of accession to the EC. He pointed out that it would be a complex process, especially regarding economic and agricultural issues, but he instructed Insinger to make clear that the Netherlands would not cause any problems regarding agriculture. Lastly, Van der Stoel mentioned that he was looking forward to meeting Suárez in New York during the United Nations General Assembly. For the first time, Van der Stoel was even considering a visit to Spain, expressing hope that he or his successor could visit the country.⁹¹ This clearly demonstrates a turnaround in the Dutch approach towards Spain. The tone of Van der Stoel was remarkably different from previous years, when he was reluctant to meet Spanish ministers. The tide had turned. Van der Stoel was now praising the Spanish Prime Minister and actually looking forward to meeting him.

⁹⁰ Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spaanje, inventarisnummer 190, Celer (6) to Madrid, 28 February 1977.

⁹¹ Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spaanje, inventarisnummer 190, Van der Stoel (41) to Insinger, 19 July 1977.

Once the democratic elections had taken place, the Den Uyl cabinet was positive about Spanish accession to the EC. Van der Stoel stated in a message to Insinger that the Dutch government welcomed the Spanish application for EC membership, emphasizing that Spain had complied with the political conditions.⁹² On August 2, ambassador Sedó handed Van der Stoel the application for EC membership.⁹³ During the meeting, Suárez's European tour was also discussed. The objective of this journey was to explain the Spanish plans to individual EC governments before the EC Council of Ministers discussed the application. The Spanish officials wanted to start their European tour in the Netherlands and this time the door was open. Van der Stoel told Sedó that Prime Minister Den Uyl and he were looking forward to receiving Suárez and Oreja in the Netherlands.⁹⁴

Shortly before the visit took place, reports from Madrid were sent to The Hague with information on the democratization process in Spain. The impression received was very positive. At the embassy, the journey of Suárez through Europe was seen as symbolic due to the progress that had been made with democratization in Spain and there was optimism about Spain's future. The role of Suárez in the transition was praised. Besides the positive evaluation, it was also recognized that there were still many challenges ahead. At the embassy, the personal and political positions of Suárez were considered strong, but the future of his cabinet was viewed as uncertain. The newly-elected government still had to face difficult issues such as a poorly performing economy, changing the tax system and reforming social and labor laws. It was further reported that the most important topic for the visit would be the relationship between Spain and the EC.⁹⁵

The historic visit by Suárez, the first time that a Spanish Prime Minister had been received in the Netherlands, took place on August 29. For the Dutch side, a large delegation participated in the meetings. Suárez told Den Uyl that, with the application for EC membership, Spain wanted to demonstrate that it wished to be part of Europe. He shared that the Spanish government was thankful that Europeans had shown empathy for the difficulties that Spain faced during the transition. The trust in a positive outcome was much appreciated. Suárez further stated that the entire Spanish population supported the application to the EC, emphasizing that the Spanish people would be bitterly

92 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spanje, inventarisnummer 230, Celer (circ. 1460) to Madrid, 29 juli 1977.

93 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 13408, Van der Stoel (44) to Insinger, 2 Augustus 1977.

94 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), Buitenlandse Zaken 1975-1984, inventarisnummer 13408, Van der Stoel (44) to Insinger, 2 Augustus 1977.

95 Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spanje, inventarisnummer 230, Embassy Madrid (98) to Van der Stoel, 28 August 1977.

disappointed with a rejection.⁹⁶ At this point however, the Spanish government and people no longer had to fear the Den Uyl cabinet as European gatekeeper. The political objections had disappeared after the historic democratic elections and Suárez and Oreja's visit to the Netherlands marked the beginning of a new era in Dutch-Spanish relations.

CONCLUSION

The Spanish regime change from dictatorship to democracy did not unfold in isolation from external influences. Scholars have established that major actors influenced the democratization of Spain. This article has examined the part played by the Netherlands, a relatively small actor on the world stage. The suggestion by some authors that the Dutch government took an active and critical stance towards Spain has been confirmed by extensive research in the Dutch archives. Indeed, the primary sources reveal that the Den Uyl cabinet tried to act as a gatekeeper, blocking Spanish membership of the EC as long as democracy remained unestablished. Minister Van der Stoel maintained a political distance from the regime, resolutely insisting on the democratic condition for accession to the EC. At the very end of the Spanish dictatorship, the Den Uyl cabinet not only publicly denounced the Franco regime but also took the lead in European protests, convincing EC partners to undertake a joint demarche as well as withdrawing their ambassadors from Spain. When the transition started, the Netherlands continued to act as a gatekeeper, still maintaining political distance from the transitional governments. The year 1977 represented a turning point, when the Den Uyl cabinet started to believe in the democratization efforts of the Suárez government. Once Suárez became the first democratically elected Prime Minister of the new democratic Spain, he was received with open arms in the Netherlands. The European gatekeeper had opened the gate to Europe.

This paper has established that it is worthwhile to investigate the part played by relatively small actors such as the Netherlands. Smaller powers can make a difference in international relations, including the promotion of democracy in another country. Dutch archival sources reveal that an actor such as the Netherlands can become a force to be reckoned with. As a founding member of the EC, the Dutch government possessed the power to frustrate the objective of the Franco regime to seek closer relations with the EC. In a similar way, the Den Uyl cabinet could block the rapprochement between the Spanish transitional governments and the EC when progress on democratization sta-

⁹⁶ Archief Buitenlandse Zaken, Den Haag (Netherlands), MAD/Spanje, inventarisnummer 230, Van der Stoel (53) to Insinger, 31 August 1977.

lled. The Den Uyl cabinet used this power in an attempt to influence political developments in Spain. These efforts were not futile. The archival sources show that the Den Uyl cabinet played a noteworthy role in encouraging the democratization of Spain, contributing to some extent to a successful Spanish democratic transition.

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