



Source: Stikker, 8 July 1964, Press Conference at Schiphol Airport, Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Netherlands and Spaarnestad Photo SFA002019718, Photographer Harry Pot

STIKKER, Dirk Uipko

Dutch politician and third Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 1961-1964

By **Bob Reinalda** · Version 13 June 2014

Was born 5 February 1897 in Winschoten, Netherlands and died 24 December 1979 in Wassenaar. He was the son of Uipko Obbo Stikker, stockbroker, and Ida Meursing. On 2 May 1922 he married Catharina Paulina van der Scheer. After the early death of one daughter and one son, they had two sons.

Biography

Stikker grew up in the northern part of the Netherlands, where the family moved from the countryside to the dynamic city of Groningen when he was ten years old. He was ill quite often while attending grammar school and also spent time at a Swiss health resort. Given his poor health the army refused him for military obligations. While his father was pro-German during the First World War, Stikker supported the British. He studied law, just like his father had done, completing his studies at the

University of Groningen in 1922. He participated intensively in the activities of related student organizations, becoming president of both the local student association and the law students' union. Unlike most fellow students he had an early interest in politics. Before Stikker graduated, he was involved in assisting and advising his father, including undertaking a business trip to Vienna, where he also engaged with a private organization that was sending Austrian children to the Netherlands to convalesce. As a result of disagreements about business practices in 1922 his father had to leave the bank that had taken over his brokerage firm, which caused financial problems for the family. Shortly after Stikker married Paulina van der Scheer, to whom he had been engaged since meeting her during a holiday in 1918, and accepted a position at the Twentsche Bank, the one that had made his father step down. In 1923 he moved to the bank's headquarters in Amsterdam, where he had to start again from scratch, and managed to successfully focus on legal and economic aspects of banking. In 1927 he became director of a local bank in Lisse, which later was taken over by the Twentsche Bank, which appointed him director in Leyden in 1930 and then in Haarlem in 1933. While travelling in the United States (US) in 1932, Stikker was impressed by Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidential campaign and concluded that only the New Deal could end the Depression. Following the League of Nations' Economic World Conference in London in 1933, he rejected the Dutch continuation of the Gold Standard policy. Informed by a friend about a vacancy at Heineken's Breweries in Amsterdam, he was not initially interested but changed his mind when he saw the firm's balance sheet and, after being asked, became managing director of Heineken in 1935, a position he held until 1948. Due to his responsibility for international expansion he travelled extensively across the globe in order to increase the number of foreign branches and, given the political developments at the time, was introduced to the world of international economic and political relations.

During the German occupation of the Netherlands (1940-1945) Stikker occupied several functions related to brewery operations. The German effort of pushing employer and worker organizations to adopt a National-Socialist identity created unity among the employers, albeit an anti-German one, while the trade unions were dismantled. Stikker began using the breweries' financial resources to support those who had lost their jobs as a result of their political convictions. He arranged for money to be transferred to a former trade union leader, who used a fake name and received advances for a non-existing public house. Stikker enjoyed misleading the Germans, while simultaneously negotiating with them in his role as president of the national brewery association, and managed to avoid arrest. His underground work resulted in a network of employers' and workers' leaders who developed ideas about modernizing postwar labour relations. In early 1945 they secretly prepared the establishment of the Foundation of Labour, which, shortly after the country's liberation in early May, began to play an important role in improving Dutch labour relations and ensuring economic reconstruction while trying to avoid labour conflicts. Stikker became the chair of the Foundation, which comprised employers' organizations (he himself chaired the Central Social Association of Employers) and trade unions, and attended the 1946 International Labour Conference in Montreal as delegate. He was politically active as well and in November 1945 he became an independent member of the Upper Chamber. He succeeded in turning the prewar Liberal party into the new Party of Freedom (he left out the word Liberal in the name) and became its political leader. In 1948 it was reorganized into the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, which soon came to be dominated by Pieter Oud, an influential competitor in politics. In order to avoid discord, Stikker decided to become a full-time politician when his party was able to become part of a new governmental coalition. Since he had to give up all his existing economic and other positions for this, he demanded a powerful post and in August 1948 became Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was the first businessman and party man to serve in this post. As Minister of Foreign Affairs, Stikker turned out to be a pragmatic politician, essentially a proponent of Atlantic cooperation, who was also prepared to confront the US. The main foreign policy issues he faced were Indonesian independence, Atlantic relations and European integration.

At first Stikker regarded Sukarno, who had declared Indonesian independence in 1945, as a Japanese collaborator and agreed with the general business wish to restore Dutch authority over Indonesia. However, after another visit to Indonesia in mid-1948, and in line with a changing business attitude,

he began to distance himself from the Dutch government policy (and his own party's stand) to continue colonial administration. As a businessman used to observing the local situation directly, he travelled to Washington DC in September 1948 to meet Secretary of State George C. Marshall. In August 1947 the United Nations (UN) Security Council had called for a cease-fire in the armed conflict between the Dutch and the Indonesians and created a three-man Committee of Good Offices. Stikker was annoyed that its American member, Merle Cochran, had written a note which reflected the US policy that negotiations should be continued and that the US would support Indonesia. In Washington Marshall confirmed this position to Stikker. Soon after, on his way to Indonesia, Stikker found out in Paris that UN General Assembly President Herbert Evatt and the Security Council members Australia, Norway and the United Kingdom (UK) did not support the Dutch either and, in Indonesia, he discovered that both the Indonesian leaders and the other two members of the Committee of Good Offices concurred with the Cochran Note. Stikker tried to convince his cabinet colleagues of this reality, but did not succeed in changing the attitude of the Catholic People's Party that dominated the Dutch Indonesian strategy. Negotiations for a political settlement in Indonesia, in which Stikker was involved directly, failed and in December 1948 the Dutch resumed using force. They took Djokjakarta and imprisoned the Indonesian leaders, but the Dutch were met with such strong international discontent that they had to end the action in early January 1949. This was followed by the Security Council's transformation of the Committee of Good Offices into the more powerful UN Commission for Indonesia, which outlined a detailed recommendation for the settlement of the dispute on 28 January. When Cochran visited The Hague in February he concluded that Stikker was the only Dutch politician who understood the international situation (Bank 1999: 186). Under pressure from the US, negotiations with Indonesia were resumed in March and Stikker visited several capitals to discuss the issue. He met in Washington with the new Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, with whom he developed a better relationship than with Marshall and which later even became a friendship, and in Indonesia negotiated with Prime Minister Mohammed Hatta. This resulted in an armistice, followed by a Round Table Conference in August. In order to change the Constitution, given the number of votes required, Stikker had calculated that the government could obtain enough votes in Parliament if he succeeded in controlling his party. For this he called for support from the business lobby and eventually the government had one more vote than needed in the Lower Chamber and exactly enough in the Upper Chamber (Wilson 1970: 7; Bank 1999: 186). In December 1949 the Dutch transferred sovereignty to the Republic of Indonesia.

Having been involved in the negotiations for a North Atlantic Treaty since 1948, Stikker left his negotiator Eelco van Kleffens the necessary room for manoeuvre. However, his engagement with Indonesian independence made him intervene a few times. When Averell Harriman, the US Special Representative for the Marshall Aid in Europe, told Stikker in March 1949 that the US might suspend military aid if the Netherlands did not implement the UN resolution on Indonesia (a matter raised by Senator Owen Brewster given the Dutch stubbornness), Stikker proposed to the Dutch government to make a reservation to its North Atlantic Treaty commitment and, in order to gain a stronger position, he began to organize support for the principle of equality of treatment among the members of the Western Union, established in Brussels in 1948 by France, the UK and the Benelux countries. In his contacts with the Americans Stikker threatened to neither sign nor ratify the North Atlantic Treaty. Historians agree that this US pressure on the Dutch government impacted the outcome of the Indonesia issue, but debate whether Stikker was sincere in his intentions of withholding his signature (Megens 1994: 34-35). Some regard this as theatre, while others indicate that Stikker looked for French support in the Indonesian issue by supporting France on the question of whether or not cover the colonies in the North Atlantic Treaty. Stikker also supported Canada in its successful effort to widen the Treaty's Article 2, which deals with economic and social cooperation, while a Canadian-led Security Council compromise on Indonesia helped the Dutch to overcome a deadlock. Wiebes and Zeeman (1985: 236, 249) argue that Stikker was indeed prepared to employ North Atlantic Treaty negotiations in order to influence the US position on Indonesia. However, he also understood that he should avoid losing goodwill and, thus, had to accept US leadership in decolonization matters. Like his colleagues, he signed the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949. Yet, where it served Dutch

interests Stikker distanced himself from the US, such as his recognition of the People's Republic of China in March 1950 and his rejection of US proposals to confront China directly during the Korean War. In 1949 he headed the Dutch delegation to the UN and also reorganized the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to improve the fit with modern international relations by separating political affairs from assistance work and allowing more access to non-diplomatic actors. In December 1950 Stikker clashed with his competitor in the Liberal party, Oud, who initiated a vote of non-confidence over the status of West New Guinea, which, according to the 1949 UN agreement, should have been resolved in 1950. When all Liberals voted in favour Stikker submitted his resignation, provoking a ministerial crisis. Stikker returned in the new government, but would no longer engage actively with the New Guinea issue.

For economic reasons, such as the development of the Rotterdam harbour and the trade in agricultural products, Stikker favoured normal relations with Germany after the war and succeeded in taming existing wishes for border corrections. With regards to European integration as espoused by the Council of Europe, which had been founded in 1949, he believed that the federalist ideas discussed in that context had little relation to the real problems. Given his focus on trade liberalization, which was difficult during reconstruction, he regarded trade promotion and payment regulation as practical forms of integration. Given the more rigorous US policy of using Marshall Aid to further economic integration and the, according to the US, inadequate functioning of the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), the US decided to promote the appointment of a political conciliator at the OEEC, without clearly defining the conciliator's duties. When the UK rejected Paul-Henri Spaak of Belgium, Stikker was chosen for this post in February 1950. After he was elected Council chairman in April, the position of conciliator lost its prominence. Stikker's aim as chair was to further liberalization within the OEEC and, in June, he proposed liberalizing various branches of trade in succession, in what he referred to as the 'sector' approach. He advocated full liberalization coupled with compensating measures for certain economic activities, for which a European fund would have to be established. Although the Plan of Action named after him received a limited response from the OEEC, the organization began to promote mutual trade under US pressure through a Code of Liberalization of Trade. Since unanimous agreement on implementation was required, Stikker tried to eliminate as many problems as possible and for the remaining few asked the representatives to come to what they called the 'torture room', because of the extremely long sessions required to reach agreement (Wilson 1970: 12-13). The main limitation on the possibilities offered by Stikker's Plan of Action was not related to the OEEC, in which he cooperated with Secretary-General Robert Marjolin, but rather to the launching of the plan by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman in May 1950 which would lead to the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and its High Authority in April 1951. Although the ECSC had traces of his sectoral approach, Stikker, who signed the ECSC Treaty for the Netherlands, had reservations about both its supranational character and its restricted membership in comparison to the wider OEEC. Stikker opposed the decision that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), created as a permanent organization in February 1952, should study the economic situation of its member states because of overlap with the better-equipped OEEC. In the late 1950s he suggested that the US and Canada should associate themselves with the OEEC in order to better understand European decision making in this organization and to be aware of the divergence with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade that was taking place.

In September 1952 Stikker did not return as Dutch minister after the elections and ended his OEEC chairmanship. He became Dutch ambassador to the UK (until 1958) and from 1954 also represented his country in Iceland and in the Permanent Council of the Western European Union in London. Since his expenses proved larger than his income, he speculated to enlarge his capital. Following instructions was not easy for an individual used to leading. He chaired the Dutch delegation to the UN Economic and Social Council in 1955 and 1956 and in 1958 became the Dutch Permanent Representative to NATO's North Atlantic Council and to the OEEC, a combined position in Paris that he held until 21 April 1961, when he became the third Secretary General of NATO, succeeding Spaak.

In March 1952 the Americans had asked him to accept this position, but he refused at the time because he did not want to build up the organization and also preferred to play roles behind the scenes and on a personal basis (Wilson 1970: 21). When Spaak decided to return to Belgian politics in early 1961, Stikker proposed a British Secretary General, but both the US and the UK asked Stikker to be a candidate. He agreed under the condition that the North Atlantic Council be unanimous in asking him. This happened, although the French originally opposed his nomination because of the strained relations within NATO after President Charles de Gaulle's proposal for a US-British-French directorate within the alliance, which the US had refused. These tensions dominated Stikker's time in office, which was also affected by the Cold War events of the early 1960s such as the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. During a blockade of the roads to Berlin Stikker was annoyed that the major countries did not inform NATO headquarters. Instead, he had to use his good informal relations with General Lauris Norstad, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, to work together to handle the situation and give instructions to the officers in command on the roads about how to act. As Secretary General, Stikker had close contacts with British politicians, US President John F. Kennedy, who favoured a moderate defence strategy, and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (the latter two had holiday homes close to each other on the Italian Lake Como). Although Stikker understood de Gaulle's feelings about France being sidelined in US strategies, he had little direct contact with him and noticed France's minimal efforts to contribute to and cooperate within the alliance, while still depending on NATO. Relations became more strained when US Secretary of Defence, Robert McNamara, gave a secret speech to the North Atlantic Council in May 1962 in which he advocated a strengthening of European conventional forces and a stronger US control of nuclear strategy, including a limited use of nuclear weapons, and he criticized France's nuclear plans. Adenauer was hurt because he had not been consulted and feared a lack of defence and de Gaulle felt insulted. Relations became more complex after the so-called Nassau Conference in December, where the US and the UK agreed to make their nuclear forces available to NATO, and de Gaulle's press conference of January 1963, where he refused the American offer of a Polaris missile arrangement and NATO's flexible response strategy and also vetoed the British application to join the European Economic Community. Stikker and his staff analysed the various statements in order to provide answers that might help reduce the concerns and uneasiness that undermined the alliance's coherence. Stikker travelled to the capitals in order to emphasize NATO solidarity and tolerance, aware that not all politicians shared his confidence in Atlantic unity. He also talked to Kennedy, McNamara and Secretary of State Dean Rusk in order to prepare Council meetings. Stikker saw his activities severely restricted when a malignant tumour was discovered. He was operated in Walter Reed Hospital in Washington in October 1962. He needed a long time to recover and was unable to actively participate when the Cuban Missile Crisis began a few days after his operation. He had a special telephone next to his bed, but Deputy Secretary General Guido Colonna di Paliano replaced him, also trying to be moderate. Stikker returned to activity in 1963, but needed another operation in May. During the summer and autumn he noticed that his physical condition was not improving and therefore he announced in December that he would step down in the following year. During the Cyprus crisis of 1964 he was concerned about the tensions between NATO members Greece and Turkey, but also noticed that the NATO Secretary General had no political or diplomatic representatives capable of informing him of the status of the situation. To solve this hurdle he engaged the NATO military authorities and used their information and connections to convey his interest and actively offer his good offices. On 1 August 1964 he resigned and was succeeded by Manlio Brosio.

Stikker then took leave to be a private citizen in Menaggio, Italy, where he wrote his memoirs, *Men of Responsibility*, published in 1966. The book showed little modesty for his role and thus created debate. In 1964 Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island awarded Stikker an honorary doctorate. In 1966 Stikker participated in the founding of the Asian Development Bank, for which he also studied the economic situation in various Southeast Asian countries. In that year he also became an advisor to the UN Conference on Trade and Development, for which he published a report on the role of private enterprise in investment and the promotion of exports in developing countries in 1968. In

1972 he returned to the Netherlands, where he slowly lost his sight and eventually passed away in 1979. Although there is an understanding that Stikker played a conciliatory role in NATO, Robert Jordan (1979) and Ryan Hendrickson (2006) regard Stikker's leadership role as wanting, due to the difficult political circumstances, his health condition, the strong influence of military like Norstad and French animosity. Jaap Hoogenboezem (2009), however, refers to Stikker's experience in Dutch pillarized politics as one where leadership was the ability to solve day-to-day problems through careful negotiation between various segments, all the while respecting existing differences and fostering core values such as cooperation and compromise. Stikker handled de Gaulle, who felt no need to communicate personally, by disregarding his improper diplomatic behaviour and by bringing large problems back to manageable proportions, and he did not resolve the deadlock of US hegemony in the organization, but rather controlled it by silent diplomacy. While Jordan (1979: 126-127) regards Stikker as reticent because he did not attend the informal Tuesday lunches of the permanent representatives, Hoogenboezem explains that Stikker had his own American contacts and therefore preferred formal relations with the American representative. Stikker thus recognized NATO's deadlock at the time for what it was and made the alliance live with it (Hoogenboezem 2009: 417). NATO did not break up and continued to perform its functions.

Archives

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www.gahetna.nl/collectie/archief/ead/index/zoekterm/Stikker/eadid/2.21.156

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