

CDA Press release on the situation in the Netherlands

Amsterdam, April 17, 2002

CDA has respect for decision Prime Minister Kok; but a Parliamentary Inquiry is not yet ruled out.

Yesterday the Dutch government resigned in reaction to last week's publication of the long-awaited report on the fall of the Muslim-enclave Srebrenica in 1995. In spite of the peacekeeping mission the Bosnian-Serb forces captured the enclave which led to the slaughter of 8000 Muslim-men. The role of the Dutch military presence, as peacekeepers, was investigated by de Dutch Institute for War Documentation (NIOD). The fall of the government comes just four weeks before the general elections.

On April 10, the report on Srebrenica concluded that Dutch soldiers serving as peacekeepers with the U.N. in Bosnia had been provided with an impossible mission. The report stated that Dutch political leaders sent forces to Bosnia without a proper analysis of the possible military and political consequences. It added that the U.N.-policy for the area was unclear. But the report clearly stated that the Dutch battalion at Srebrenica could not have prevented the massacre.

The CDA-fraction in the Parliament has great respect for Prime Minister Kok's decision regarding offering the resignation of the Dutch Cabinet over the Srebrenica massacre, but questions the 'who', 'when' and 'why'. The CDA still thinks the Cabinet has to justify itself towards the Parliament. A Parliamentary Inquiry is therefore not yet ruled out.

Jan Peter Balkenende, political leader of the CDA: "What happened in Srebrenica is very serious. It justifies the decision of the Dutch Cabinet. What was striking in the statement Prime Minister Kok made, was that he was the first one wanting to resign and that the other ministers followed his example. This makes you wonder about recent developments concerning Minister Jan Pronk." (Currently Environment Minister but closely involved with the events in Srebrenica as Development Co-operation Minister) and Defence Minister Frank de Grave. (Labour minister Pronk precipitated the planned parliamentary debate on the NIOD report planned for April 25 by making it clear that politicians should take responsibility for their "failure" in preventing the Srebrenica massacre. Despite a Cabinet agreement that any response to the report would be made collectively, Pronk said he had reached his own conclusions in terms of resigning. A similar stance was adopted by Defence Minister de Grave.)

"Did Prime Minister Kok take his decision beforehand or was he put on the spot by the pressure resulting from the statements of these two Ministers?"

"Besides all this, one can ask what results in the NIOD report are new and of so much value that all of a sudden the Cabinet felt the urge to resign? Even more politically relevant is the question on how the partyrelations within the Cabinet contributed to the resignation even before the discussion in the Parliament took place."