

HARRY POEZE AND HENK SCHULTE NORDHOLT

MERDEKA

THE STRUGGLE FOR INDONESIAN INDEPENDENCE
AND THE REPUBLIC'S PRECARIOUS RISE, 1945–1950



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*The Struggle for Indonesian Independence and the
Republic's Precarious Rise
1945–1950*

Harry Poeze and Henk Schulte Nordholt

Translated by Gioia Marini

Amsterdam University Press

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On 18 June 1970, Mohammad Hatta visited Sukarno on his deathbed. It had been years since they had last seen each other. In 1956, they had parted ways when Hatta resigned as vice president because he did not agree with President Sukarno's populist policies. In 1965, Sukarno lost power to General Suharto. He spent his last years in isolation, under house arrest.

Sukarno and Hatta were the great leaders of the Indonesian nationalist movement, and together they had led their country to independence in the war against the Netherlands. Now, after all those years, they were seeing each other again. Despite their disagreements, they remained deeply connected.

When Hatta sat beside Sukarno's bed, he whispered: 'How is it, No?' Sukarno opened his eyes and asked: 'Is that you, Hatta?' He was barely able to speak anymore.

They held each other's hands. They didn't need to say much to each other because they knew: 'We did it!'

(Based on a passage in Taufik Abdullah 2009: 331)

Foreword

How does one write a book about a revolution that everyone knows the outcome of, while at the time none of those directly involved had any idea how it would end? Even if Sukarno and Hatta had been firmly convinced that Indonesia would one day become a free country, when they declared independence on 17 August 1945 they had no idea when their Republic would be recognised. We cannot ask the readers of this book to erase their prior knowledge of this. What we do try to show in this book is the complexity of the struggle for independence and how full of unforeseen developments and unexpected outcomes it was.

This book provides a new overview of the Indonesian Revolution from 1945 to 1950, with a focus on the Republic's precarious rise. In August 1945, the Republic had neither an organised framework nor a well-thought-out plan for the future. Competing interest groups tried to determine the course of the Revolution, which led to much improvisation, conflict, strife and even civil war. As we will point out, the Revolution was regularly characterised by an individual's (or a group of individuals') desire to take action without the actors being able to foresee the consequences.

A guiding creed in these exhilarating times was the word '*Merdeka*' (freedom). It was a cry that was ubiquitous; open and light and vague enough to gain momentum; a programmatic slogan that promised a better future within reach; a greeting that brought people together in the midst of all the uncertainties and dangers.¹ Hence the title of this book.

In writing this book, we have made use of the extensive literature that already exists about the Indonesian Revolution. H.A.J. Klooster's 1997 *Bibliography of the Indonesian Revolution* includes no less than 7,000 titles, and many more have been added since then.² This book is also based on the thorough archival research and the 200 interviews that Harry Poeze has conducted over the course of many years, which is reflected in his comprehensive biography about Tan Malaka entitled *Verguisd en vergeten: Tan Malaka, de linkse beweging en de Indonesische Revolutie, 1945–1949* [Reviled and Forgotten: Tan Malaka, the Left-Wing Movement and the Indonesian Revolution, 1945–1949], from which this book has borrowed heavily.³

1 The description 'insubstantial and vague enough to gain momentum' is derived from Willem Anker's novel *Buys* (2017).

2 Klooster 1997.

3 Poeze 2007. A new edition of Poeze's 1976 manuscript about Tan Malaka's life until 1945, which includes much new unpublished material, is forthcoming.

This book differentiates itself from the older but still leading studies of the Revolution written by the Americans George Kahin and Benedict Anderson, who respectively focused on the formation of the new nation and the romanticised role of the revolutionary youth (*pemuda*) but paid little attention to the violence that occurred during the Revolution.⁴ We see the Indonesian struggle for independence as a violent process with countless civilian casualties.

The last English-language overview of the Revolution was published in 1974 by Anthony Reid.⁵ After that, Anglo-Saxon research became fragmented by the many sub-studies that sought mainly to reveal the regional dimensions of the battle.⁶

The Dutch and the Indonesian approaches to the colonial past diverge considerably. In the Netherlands, the interest has mainly been on the colonial past and the ‘decolonisation’ of Indonesia, and little attention has been paid to independent Indonesia. For most Indonesians, however, their national history only began in August 1945, and much attention is paid to the rise of nationalism but hardly any interest is shown in the colonial regime.

The period 1945–1950 is one in which both Indonesians and Dutch people are interested, but even here there appears to be little common ground. The traditional Dutch historiography describes the ‘decolonisation’ of the Dutch East Indies from a diplomatic perspective and, above all, in terms of the ‘defeat’ of the Dutch.⁷ While this book recognises that diplomacy played an important role between 1945 and 1950, it repudiates the prevailing Dutch perspective. Instead of emphasising the causes of the Dutch defeat (‘What went wrong?’), we believe the Indonesian victory is important and therefore focus on the rise of the Republic.⁸

In this book, we emphasise the conservative attitude of the Netherlands both in its political and military leadership. Even Lieutenant Governor General H.J. van Mook, who had a reputation as a progressive, clung to outdated ideas. The belief among the Dutch that they could control the decolonisation of Indonesia turned out to be an illusion. On top of that, the Netherlands proved itself to be a bad loser during the final negotiations in 1949.

4 Kahin 1952; Anderson 1972.

5 Reid 1974.

6 See Audrey Kahin 1985.

7 Smit 1952, 1962; Van den Doel 2000; De Jong 2015.

8 During a discussion on the 50th anniversary of Indonesian independence at the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam in 1995, the chairman of the panel asked the question ‘What went wrong?’ Henk Schulte Nordholt’s reply was: ‘Nothing went wrong, because Indonesia gained its independence.’

It took a long time for the Dutch to pay serious attention to the violent nature of the Indonesian struggle for independence and, in particular, to the part that Dutch soldiers played in it. We will not go into this in detail because it has already been addressed in the results of the study published in 2022 by the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, the Netherlands Institute for Military History and the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies.⁹

In Indonesian historiography, the struggle for independence constitutes the glorious bedrock on which the nation-state was established. This narrative still gives the army its legitimacy as the guardian of national unity. The years 1945 to 1950 are therefore all about the united struggle against the Dutch, the overcoming of internal problems, the fight for independence and the construction of new state institutions. Serious internal fault lines are only touched on peripherally, and relatively little attention is paid to the violence committed during this period. The many unnamed victims are not commemorated at the national level; this honour belongs only to the heroes who died in the battle against the Dutch.¹⁰ At the local level, however, there are many monuments that commemorate the civilian victims of the revolution.

In addition to the official history, more and more regional histories of the revolution are appearing, and critical contributions are being published on new platforms such as *historia.id*. We hope this book can also contribute to counter the monolithic view that still dominates the official Indonesian account.

In 2020, the book *Revolusi* by David van Reybrouck was published.¹¹ Why then, you might ask, should we come out with another book on the same topic? *Revolusi* focuses on the personal experiences and testimonies of those who lived through the Indonesian Revolution. Van Reybrouck was just in time, for many of those he interviewed are no longer alive. The great value of a book such as *Revolusi* is that Van Reybrouck has been able to reach a large audience through the captivating way in which he recounts all the stories, making the Indonesian Revolution almost tangible. Our book tells a different story by taking an in-depth look at the internal political ups and downs in Indonesia and the precarious path by which the Republic ultimately

9 Oostindie 2022. Koninklijk Instituut van Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV), Nederlandse Instituut voor Militaire Historie (NIMH) and NIOD Instituut voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust- en Genocidestudies (NIOD).

10 See Mestika Zed and Mukhlis PaEni 2012.

11 The English translation is published in 2024.

secured victory. Moreover, because Van Reybrouck chose to base his account primarily on the stories of contemporaries of the Indonesian Revolution who were still alive at the time he was conducting his research, certain important events are insufficiently conveyed when no surviving witnesses of those events were found. He devotes only a few words, for example, to the crises that threatened the survival of the Republic in 1946, which we examine in depth in Chapters 6 and 7. The leftist leader Tan Malaka, who played an important role at the beginning of the revolution, is not included in his book. His reading of the Madiun rebellion of September 1948 – which we would characterise as a civil war – is based on an outdated view that we refute in Chapter 10. The Republican military regime that emerged following the second Dutch attack in December 1948 also remains unmentioned in *Revolusi*, as is the role of the many Republican warlords. As a result, the military violence on the Republican side that was to cast a dark shadow over postcolonial Indonesia is overlooked. Another striking omission is the position of groups of Chinese who, similar to the Europeans and Indo-Europeans, fell victim to violence meted out by revolutionary youths, but who also played a crucial role in the vulnerable Republican economy and provided Republican military leaders with crucial supplies. Van Reybrouck largely confines his story to Java, while our perspective is broader. We also look at the dramatic developments in North Sumatra, where atrocities occurred in 1946 and 1947. He also barely mentions the federal Indonesia – of great significance to many Indonesians – that was being built at the time and that competed with the Republic. It was, moreover, federal nationalists – a group that has now been almost entirely forgotten – that came to the rescue of the Republic at a critical juncture.

Unlike most historians who write about the Revolution, we do not end our account in December 1949 when the formal transfer of sovereignty took place. The following year, 1950, marked the final stage of the Revolution when the Federal Republic became defunct and the unitary state was established. That, too, was fraught with much violence, and it is striking that former soldiers of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger, KNIL) played a leading role in that violence.

Revolutions come in all shapes and sizes. In most cases, they involve a change of power without any major impact on the social order. More sweeping revolutions involve a social upheaval in which ruling classes are overthrown. Charles Tilly characterises revolutions as a struggle between rival regimes,¹² which would apply to the period between 1945 and 1950 in

12 Tilly 1978.

Indonesia when British troops (albeit briefly), Dutch officials and Dutch troops, the federal states, and the Republic each tried to establish their authority. Within the Republic as well, there was a struggle for power between secular politicians, left-wing radical organisations, Muslims, soldiers and warlords. This book follows all these parties closely.

In this regard, it is important for us to take to heart a comment made by the historian Frederick Cooper. He argues that it is important to look at what tends to be hidden from view: the alternative routes that people had in mind but were not followed, or the attempts that failed as well as the dead ends.¹³ From the point of view of someone on the ground at the time, the conflict – which was fought on multiple fronts – had a precarious quality. This obliges us to look at ambitions that could have been realised such as a left-wing regime that wanted to make profound social changes or a federal system that would have kept old local elites in power throughout much of the archipelago. It is important to understand that these were serious options in the period 1945–1950. This is why we pay significant attention to the left-wing leader Tan Malaka, who posed a serious threat to the leadership of Sukarno and Hatta at the beginning of the Revolution. In September 1948, the communist rebellion, which developed into a civil war, nearly overthrew the Republican leadership. These incidents tend to be suppressed in the historiography because they failed, but we must remind ourselves that they were real alternatives at the time.

Finally, we should address the question of why two white Dutch researchers are writing a book about a Revolution that is not theirs. First and foremost, we are historians. We do not hide the fact that the fight for Indonesian independence has a special place in our hearts. Without turning a blind eye to the sharp edges of the Revolution, we also acknowledge that the Netherlands was unable to rise above its own colonial past.

Harry Poeze has devoted 50 years of his life to researching the Revolution, and in the course of that research, during our many discussions with Indonesian colleagues, we were explicitly asked to write this book to contribute to the discussion about the Revolution. We do this as involved outsiders, knowing that we are treading on 'sacred ground'. This will undoubtedly be criticised, but we are prepared to accept such criticism.

We are deeply indebted to our institute, the KITLV in Leiden, as well as the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijke Onderzoek, NWO), which funded a research project

13 Cooper 2005: 18.

that includes this book.¹⁴ We also thank our colleagues from the KITLV, the NIMH, the NIOD and the Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta who were involved in the major study of Dutch military violence during the Indonesian Revolution. Thanks should also go to Amsterdam University Press, the KITLV Members Association, and a private donor for funding the English translation and the Open Access edition. We are grateful to Aggie Langedijk, Gert Oostindie, Paul van Os and Marnix van der Sijs for critically reading a few chapters, and Taufiq Hanafi for providing the images. Many thanks to Gioia Marini for the translation and for her perceptive editorial advice, as well as the editors of Amsterdam University Press.

Finally, our deepest thanks go to our wives Henny and Margreet, without whom this book would never have been published.

14 This project was called *Indonesia in Transition: A History from Revolution to Nation-Building 1943–1958* and was led by Henk Schulte Nordholt and carried out by Abdul Wahid, Bart Luttikhuis and Peter Keppy from 2017 to mid-2021. In mid-2020, Luttikhuis left the project and was replaced by Roel Frakking. Various publications resulting from this project are currently being prepared.

1 The Colonial State: Violence and Modernity, Resistance and Repression

1900–1941

What was the Dutch East Indies like in 1900? And how did the colonial regime function? A policy of colonial expansion and economic exploitation held out the promise of development, but to what extent did this development benefit the people? Education and jobs in government or in business provided a small Indonesian middle class with access to a modern lifestyle. At the same time, there was resistance to colonial exploitation and racism, which was met with colonial repression. Slowly but surely, the idea of an independent Indonesia began to develop. How did these processes unfold and who were the leading figures? What was the situation in the colony in 1941? How strong was Dutch control over the colony at that point? And what had changed over the course of those first forty years of the twentieth century?

Colonial expansion

Around 1900, a new era was dawning on the Indonesian archipelago. The old nineteenth-century colony with its scattered possessions was being transformed into a powerful colonial state backed by an intimidating military capability. This colonial supremacy was secured by means of gunboats, artillery and repeating rifles. One-third of the colonial budget was set aside for military expeditions to bring the entire archipelago under Dutch control. Between 1870 and 1910, military expeditions were sent out to force principalities to submit to the new colonial regime, a practice known in colonial parlance as ‘pacification’.

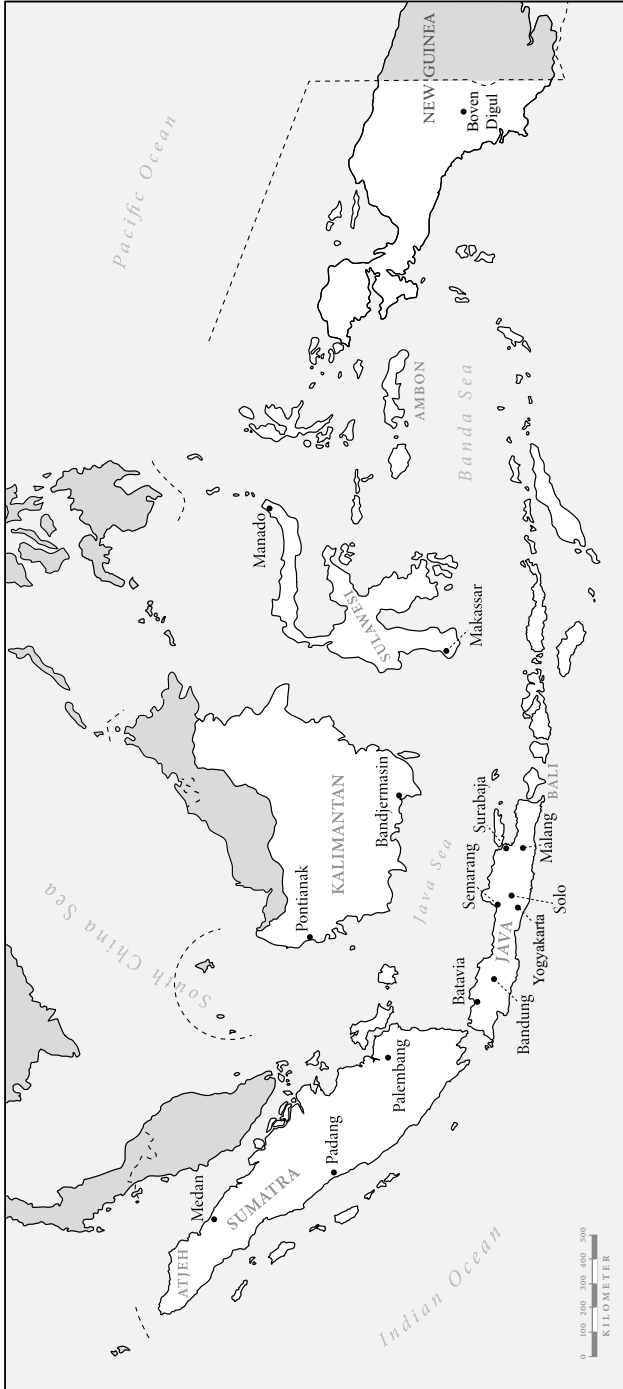
The largest such military conflict took place in Aceh. This prosperous area in northern Sumatra exported pepper to America, and there were rumours that the Sultan of Aceh wanted to establish diplomatic relations with America and France. The Netherlands was opposed to this and subsequently declared war on the sultan. The conflict went on for longer than expected. After the first military expedition in 1873, it took the Dutch another 30 years to break the resistance in Aceh. The colonial army had great difficulty with the guerrilla tactics of the opponent. It was only after the appointment of J.B. van Heutsz as military governor of Aceh in 1898 – who worked together with his special adviser, the Islam expert Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje – that

a fierce counter-guerrilla campaign was conducted in which small groups of well-trained KNIL soldiers hunted down their enemy. At the same time, a wedge was driven between the aristocratic and religious leaders of Aceh. The colonial government managed to get the aristocratic leaders on its side, leaving the resistance isolated. In 1903, the fugitive sultan surrendered. The war caused more than 100,000 casualties: 70,000 Acehnese and more than 30,000 KNIL soldiers and indigenous forced laborers. Among the victors were members of the Acehnese aristocracy who became part of the colonial administration following the conquest, thereby strengthening their grip on the cultivation and export of coffee and pepper.

Because the Aceh War was a costly affair that dragged on for many years, public opinion in the Netherlands became increasingly critical of the lack of colonial successes. The turning point in both the military conflict and in public opinion came in the year 1894. After the first colonial expedition against the Balinese princes on Lombok failed dramatically in August, the princes were defeated in December following a fierce battle. The conquest of Lombok triggered for the first time a wave of nationalist euphoria in the Netherlands and ensured that the colonial policy of expansion was fully supported by the Dutch public.

Under the rule of Governor General J.B. van Heutsz (1904–1909), the conquest of the archipelago was completed at a rapid pace. After an expedition to South Sulawesi in 1905, Bali was next in line. The prince of Badung, a kingdom in southern Bali, knew he did not stand a chance. After the colonial troops shelled the capital (present-day Denpasar) from the sea for days, they moved into the town on 20 September 1906. There they encountered a large group of men, women and children – dressed in white and fully prepared to die – who launched a final attack together with their monarch. They were mowed down by colonial bullets, and those who were not immediately killed took their own lives. Later that day, the same tragedy repeated itself at the residence of the second prince of Badung. In total, more than 1,000 Balinese died that day. Two years later, another *puputan* (meaning ‘the ending’ or ‘last fight’) took place in Klungkung, which sealed the Dutch conquest of Bali.

It is estimated that at least 125,000 people of the Indonesian archipelago were killed in all these colonial expeditions. This established a state of violence whose effects could be felt well into the 1930s. Everyone now knew what the Dutch were capable of. Behind a veneer of peace and order – something that would later be looked back upon with wistful nostalgia by mainly former colonials – a permanent fear lurked among the population.



Map 1. The Dutch East Indies

Not all the princes decided to resist the colonial regime. In Bali, the prince of Gianyar concluded a treaty with the Dutch, one that allowed him to strengthen his position. The treaty gave him colonial protection, and he no longer had to deal with competing aristocrats. Between 1870 and 1910, some 300 local princes throughout the archipelago signed what was known as the 'Short Declaration' pledging allegiance to the Dutch monarch, thereby subjecting themselves to colonial authority. These local aristocrats thus played key roles in the system of indirect government that was established throughout most of the colony. Only the interior of New Guinea remained out of the reach of the colonial state.

The colonial economy

Advances in transport (steamships, railways) and communication (telex, telephone) accelerated the circulation of people, goods and information on the archipelago. Multinational companies grew rich by cultivating crops for the world market such as sugar, tea and coffee and by exploiting new industrial raw materials such as oil, rubber and copra. One such multinational was the oil company Royal Dutch Shell, which maintained close ties with Dutch politicians and the colonial authorities and accounted for 85 percent of the oil extraction in the Dutch East Indies.

On the east coast of Sumatra, a profitable plantation area was developed by private entrepreneurs, with the support of the colonial administration, where tobacco and rubber were grown. Large numbers of workers from China, and later from Java, were recruited for this purpose, all of whom were bound to the companies through exploitative contracts. This contract slavery and violence against the Chinese represented raw capitalism. The city of Medan grew into a multi-ethnic centre where planters set up their offices and held wild parties after having collected their extravagant bonuses. Wealthy Chinese entrepreneurs also asserted their influence.

Java became one of the most important sugar producers in the world as a result of the technological innovations introduced by Dutch companies as well as Chinese entrepreneurs such as Oei Thiong Ham from Semarang. He ran a conglomerate that integrated the production, trade, transport and financing of sugar. In 1930, the colony's exports totalled more than 930 million guilders. While there was economic growth, this was largely absorbed by the steady growth in the population and the fact that the profits of the large companies flowed to their headquarters and did not benefit the people. Slowly but surely, Indonesians became drawn into the colonial economy in all kinds of ways. In order to pay taxes, one first had to earn

money, and that could only be done by engaging in wage labour or by selling cash crops. In Sumatra and other areas outside Java, an indigenous middle class of small producers of rubber, coffee and copra emerged, enabling the children of such entrepreneurs to receive an education.

The colonial state

In other ways as well, the colonial state began to penetrate further into society. The colony was centrally administered from Batavia and was being increasingly accurately mapped. The Royal Dutch Shipping Company (Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij, KPM) linked Batavia with the many islands through its regular connections. The railway lines built in Java and Sumatra encouraged mobility and labour migration. By around 1900, one million people were travelling by train every year from Semarang via Surakarta to Yogyakarta.

Throughout the archipelago, the state began introducing education, health care, forestry, agricultural extension services, public works, postal and telegraph traffic, and credit schemes. Malay became the official language of instruction, and sizes, weights, rules and procedures were standardised. The school curriculum was also standardised, and the archipelago was divided into fixed time zones. The introduction of the clock had a strong disciplining effect. In each provincial town, a large clock was placed at the central intersection so that everyone could see when they needed to be in the office or at school. Everywhere in the colony, the birthday of Queen Wilhelmina was celebrated on 31 August, even though the queen herself had never visited her subjects because of her concern that she would not hold up well in the tropical climate.

In 1930, the colonial bureaucracy consisted of more than 100,000 people, of whom only 15 percent were European. This raises the question of whether it is possible to make a simple distinction between 'colonial' and 'indigenous'. Where exactly does the division between these two concepts lie, and who was – directly or indirectly – a part of the colonial system? Just how difficult it is to answer this question becomes clear when we examine the social mobility in the colony.

The promise of modernity

The colonial regime faced a problem of legitimacy that could not be solved by resorting to violence alone. The state needed to offer more in order to tie the people to the regime, a realisation that was clearly expressed in 1899 by the

lawyer C.Th. van Deventer when he argued that the Netherlands had a 'debt of honour' towards the people of the East Indies because they had been exploited without receiving much in return. What the Dutch colonial regime offered was the promise of development and modernity. Two years later, Van Deventer's plea became government policy when Queen Wilhelmina announced the introduction of the Ethical Policy during her annual address to the nation, in which she stated that the Netherlands had an ethical vocation to 'elevate' the population. At the core of the Ethical Policy was the paternalistic idea that the people of the East Indies were incapable of developing on their own and thus needed to be guided. The precondition for this new policy was that the archipelago had to be 'pacified' first, which is why the 'elevation' of the people and colonial expansion went hand in hand. The key areas of the Ethical Policy were education, irrigation and transmigration. Not coincidentally, these key areas also served a wider colonial interest: education would provide a cheap workforce for the colonial state and Dutch companies; irrigation boosted not only the cultivation of rice but also the production of sugar; and transmigration would prevent an impoverished underclass on the overpopulated island of Java from rising up in protest. In addition, a colonial education system would counterbalance the growth of Islamic education. And finally, a distinctive feature of the Ethical Policy was that the people had to pay for the costs.

The Ethical Policy was supported by a small group of civil servants and politicians such as the government advisers Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and the Minister of Colonies and later Governor General A.W.F. Idenburg as well as Governor General Van Heutsz. They adhered to the so-called association idea, which envisaged the wholesale adoption of Western culture by the people of the East Indies. This could be achieved by having talented sons from elite families receive a Western education in order to take on a responsible role in the colonial system. Ideally, this would eventually break the racial barrier between indigenous and European administrators. A well-known example of this ethical project was Achmad and Husein Djajadiningrat, two brothers who came from a West Javanese noble family. Achmad eventually became a member of the Volksraad (the People's Council) and of the prestigious Raad van Indië (Council of the Indies), the highest advisory body in the colony. Husein obtained his PhD at Leiden University and became the first Indonesian professor at the Rechtschool in Batavia. Another example was Raden Adjeng Kartini, a passionate advocate for women's education who also became an icon of the ethical period through her letters, which were published in 1911.

The new course set by the Ethical Policy also meant that the traditional Javanese administrative gentry, with all its related privileges, was transformed

into a new bureaucratic elite. Nonetheless, not everything was Westernised. Thanks to strong pleas from Leiden University's Professor C. van Vollenhoven, the colonial administration did not introduce a uniform colonial legal system based on Western principles. Instead, Van Vollenhoven made a distinction between Western law, which applied to Europeans (and other population groups that were treated as equivalent), and *adat* law, the customary law of individual ethnic groups, thereby protecting the unique character of these groups against rules imposed from above that were incompatible with local customs.

The results of the Dutch-imposed education policy remained modest. Children from the elite were admitted to the European Primary Schools (Europese Lagere School, ELS), but it was not always a pleasant experience for them. Margono Djojohadikusumo, who later founded the Indonesian National Bank, recalled one instance in which a teacher sneered: 'You dirty filthy native, you don't belong here, you belong in the kampong with your peers.' His fellow pupils quickly adopted such language.¹ This incident illustrates that, despite the intention to 'elevate' the people, the racial distinction between Europeans and 'natives', which was firmly entrenched in colonial law, persisted.

On the initiative of Governor General Van Heutsz, efforts were also made to provide primary education for the general population. But in 1930, only 40 percent of Indonesian children attended these village schools because their parents often could not afford the school fees.

Access to secondary education was limited to a small minority: by 1940, only 7,000 juveniles had completed secondary school. An even smaller number was given the opportunity to study in the Netherlands. Because the colony was quite late in establishing higher education institutions, by 1942 only 300 Indonesians had completed higher education.²

These pupils and their families were part of a growing urban middle class consisting of civil servants, company employees, teachers and journalists. In 1930, the middle class in Java made up only 2 percent of the population. This small number did not detract from its significance as the vanguard of a new, modern way of life. The major cities where they lived, such as Batavia, Surabaya, Bandung and Medan, were not only hubs of governance, trade, transport and

1 Margono Djojohadikusumo 1970: 18. For a larger group of children whose parents were civil servants or employees of a company, the *Hollandsch-Inlandsche Schools* (HIS) were founded.

2 In 1920 the *Technische Hoogeschool* (Technical Institute) in Bandung was founded. In Batavia, the *Rechtshoogeschool* (Law School) was founded in 1924 and the *Medische Hoogeschool* (Medical School) in 1927.

communication but also hotbeds of modernity. The world became immeasurably larger for these people when they read newspapers and saw moving images from other parts of the world in the cinema. In these cities, one could break with old constricting traditions and experience new dimensions of space and time.

The modern often manifested itself in wild mixtures of all kinds of styles that were freely experimented with. In the popular Stambul comedy, elements from Chinese opera and Malay *bangsawan* theatre blended effortlessly with themes from the Ali Baba tales, *The Merchant of Venice* or ancient Javanese Panji stories. *Keronchong* – a mix of Javanese and Portuguese music – was combined with jazz, tango and rumba, while the immensely popular singer Miss Ribut was all the rage from Penang to Manila. All these new sounds were spread throughout society by means of the gramophone. Highlights of modern life were the fairs on the Koningsplein, the main square in Batavia, which were held every year on the occasion of Queen Wilhelmina's birthday. Exhibitions, company stands, film screenings, sporting events, restaurants and cafes attracted 600,000 visitors there in the late 1920s, more than the population of Batavia, while outside the fenced area countless people who had no money for a ticket gathered in the evening to gaze at the thousands of lights that illuminated everything. The visitors identified with the modernity of the event, and even racial barriers became blurred in the hustle and bustle. Feuilletons in newspapers and cheap novels often articulated romantic desires in which lovers – for example, a Chinese boy and a Javanese girl – tried in vain to break through ethnic barriers. Such publications also described the dangers one faced when old habits were abandoned without knowing exactly what the new had to offer.

During this period of modernisation, time was stripped of its old cyclical character and opened up a view of the future, leading to the realisation that individuals, as agents of change, could transform the world. Examples of such a new world were taken not only from America but also from Japan, a modern Asian country that was determining its own future. In 1905, the images shown in cinemas in Java of Japan's military defeat of Russia were greeted with loud cheers. The embracing of modernity evoked fascination and wonder in addition to uncertainty.

Emancipation and resistance: the world in motion

New ideas opened up new vistas, cast doubt over the value of traditions, and raised questions about one's own identity, but they also offered possibilities for new forms of resistance. The realisation that one was living in an era and a world that was in motion also gave rise to new ideas about equality

and emancipation, and the possibility of breaking with old traditions. This realisation was reinforced by major events elsewhere in the world. In 1905, for the first time, a Western power – Russia – was defeated by an Asian country – Japan. In 1911, a revolution in China put an end to the emperor's unassailable position. And in 1917, the Russian Revolution proved that a grass-roots movement was capable of getting rid of the ruling upper class.

The cities of the Dutch East Indies slowly began to seethe. In Padang, the magazine *Insulinde* called on its readers to enter the world of progress (*dunia madju*). The doctor and journalist Abul Rivai wrote in his magazine *Bintang Hindia* that the young generation (*kaum muda*) had to bolster its self-esteem by acquiring Western knowledge. Tirto Adhi Surjo coined the term *kaum mardika*, freemen who demanded control over their own lives. He also founded *Poetri Hindia*, the first magazine for women. Many of the new periodicals did not last long because they quickly went bankrupt due to lack of money and opposition from the colonial administration. But together, these publications began to produce a new kind of Malay able to express the dynamics of movement, emancipation and the pursuit of equality.

The members of Budi Utomo (Noble Endeavour) – an emancipatory movement of the elite – also advocated the use of the Malay language, which, they argued, enabled the new *zeitgeist* to be expressed better than the hierarchical Javanese language. The association, founded in 1908 by Sutomo and others, is presented in the Indonesian historiography as the beginning of the nationalist movement, but this is incorrect. Budi Utomo consisted mainly of well-educated, well-to-do Javanese youth who tried to find common ground between Javanese cultural values and Western education.

The first nationalist organisation was the 'Indische Partij', which was founded in 1912 by the journalist E.F.E. Douwes Dekker (a second cousin of the writer Multatuli), the doctor Tjipto Mangunkusumo and the journalist Suwardi Surjaningrat. It was the first modern party to organise mass meetings that elicited a new sense of togetherness among those present. Douwes Dekker pleaded for independence; Tjipto attacked the corrupt traditional elite in Solo; and Suwardi wrote the article 'If I were a Dutchman' in 1913 on the occasion of the centenary of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which was also celebrated in the Dutch East Indies:

If I were a Dutchman, I would never want to celebrate such an anniversary in a country ruled by us. First give those enslaved people their freedom; only then can we commemorate our own freedom.³

3 *De Expres*, 20 July 1913.

Soon thereafter, the leaders of the Indische Partij were exiled to the Netherlands indefinitely, after which their party languished. Ironically, the exiles enjoyed more political freedom in the Netherlands than in the colony.

Islam and the left-wing movement

The first mass movement in the Dutch East Indies was founded in 1912 by traders in the Central Javanese city of Solo who felt threatened by the large Chinese entrepreneurs who dominated trade. The Sarekat Islam (SI, Islamic Association) quickly became popular under the leadership of Haji Umar Said Tjokroaminoto.

Small business owners and employees of government agencies, railways and large corporations joined the association and campaigned against Chinese competitors and corrupt Javanese officials as well as for better working conditions and more wages. Sarekat Islam was also the first mass movement in Asia. By 1913, the SI already had 200,000 members, and that number rose to half a million in 1919. Tjokroaminoto was a charismatic leader who managed to hold together the many currents and factions within his movement. In order not to jeopardise the growth of his movement, he avoided direct confrontations with the government.

By contrast, the journalist and restless activist Mas Marco Kartodikromo did confront the colonial authorities. He defied them by dressing like a dandy and making fun of common dress conventions. After working briefly for the railways, he became a journalist and joined Sarekat Islam. He also started his own magazine *Doenia Bergerak* (The World in Motion), in which he launched an attack on the colonial system and launched the popular slogan *sama rata sama rasa* – equality and solidarity. Mas Marco was repeatedly arrested and convicted. While in prison he wrote the novel *Student Hidjo*, Student Green, in which a Javanese student in the Netherlands throws himself into modern life, enjoys being served by white waiters, and becomes engaged to a Javanese girl but enters into relationships with Dutch women. The protagonist ultimately sees his flirtation with Western civilisation as a betrayal of his Javanese background. The novel ends in a Javanese provincial town where racial divisions have been overcome and European and Javanese officials work together harmoniously.

The rise of Sarekat Islam coincided with attacks on Chinese and Javanese government officials, and growing dissatisfaction over discrimination. One example of such dissatisfaction is the football match in Makassar in 1916 attended by 19,000 spectators that ended in a massive brawl between the supporters of the European club Quick and those of its opponent Bintang

Priyayi, who accused the Europeans of foul play. These riots took place against the background of the First World War, the Russian Revolution, US President Woodrow Wilson's call for the right to self-determination of all peoples, and the rise of Japan. The Europeans in the Dutch East Indies observed these developments with a sense of dread and a feeling that they were being left to fend for themselves. Sarekat Islam responded to this feeling by pledging its support for the defence of the colony, but only in exchange for the right to codetermination.

Sarekat Islam's proposal was rejected, but the ethically minded governor general J.P. van Limburg Stirum (1916–1921) decided to make some political concessions by creating a People's Council that would have an advisory role. He added, in vague terms, that the East Indies would be given more autonomy in the future, along with government reform and democratisation. The People's Council convened in November 1918. Of the 38 members on the Council, half were elected by local councils that represented a paltry 2,200 Europeans and senior civil servants of indigenous origin. The other half were appointed by the governor general, and among them were the most progressive members, including Tjokroaminoto.

The promise of democratisation was not fulfilled, and the demand that the government should be accountable to the People's Council was also not met. The Council remained a powerless body for a very long time. Moreover, it was not until 1931 that Indonesians made up the majority on the Council.

In 1913, the left-wing activist Henk Sneevliet arrived in the East Indies and founded the Indies Social Democratic Association (Indische Sociaal-Democratische Vereeniging, ISDV) in Surabaya the following year. In search of mass support, he linked up with Sarekat Islam in Semarang and came into contact with the young activist Semaun. When Sneevliet was expelled for sedition in 1918, Semaun took over his role. Under Semaun's leadership, major strikes took place in Java at sugar companies, among pawnbrokers and at railways between 1919 and 1923. In reaction, Europeans in the East Indies and politicians in the Netherlands increasingly began to call for repression.

The ISDV was renamed Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) in 1920.⁴ It was the first communist party in Asia. Dissatisfied with the growing influence of the PKI, the anti-communist wing within Sarekat Islam, led by Haji Agus Salim, pushed for SI to break with the PKI, leading to the transformation of

4 An important ally of the PKI was Insulinde, the successor of the Indische Party, which claimed to have 70,000 members. In 1923, the conservative wing seceded and formed the Indo-European Alliance (Indo-Europeesch Verbond, IEV), which followed a conservative-colonial line. This led the Indo-Europeans to distance themselves from the nationalist movement.

Sarekat Islam into the pan-Islamic Party Sarekat Islam (PSI) in 1923 and its withdrawal from all colonial consultative bodies. In turn, the PKI focused on the international class struggle. This meant that Islam and communism came to be diametrically opposed.

The PKI became increasingly isolated by the repressive policies of the conservative governor general D. Fock (1921–1926). PKI party leaders Semaun and Tan Malaka were exiled in 1922 for their role in major strikes, and the government began turning a blind eye to Islamist thugs who hunted down communists.⁵ The PKI therefore went underground and began making preparations in the utmost secrecy for an uprising.

In November 1926, to the great surprise of the colonial authorities in West Java, communist uprisings broke out, which spilled over into West Sumatra. Many Muslims participated in these uprisings. Unlike the leaders of the Partai Sarekat Islam, these Muslims saw communism not as a hostile ideology but as a source of knowledge to comprehend the injustice in society. The uprisings were ill-prepared and mercilessly crushed,⁶ with 4,500 communists being imprisoned, 1,300 of them in the new Boven Digul internment camp in New Guinea. One of them was Mas Marco, who died there in 1932 from the effects of malaria.

Secular nationalism

After the suppression of the communist uprisings, the PKI became powerless. Meanwhile, the Partai Sarekat Islam had become politically isolated for having moved down an exclusively pan-Islamic path. It was in this changed political landscape that two Islamic civil society organisations flourished. The first was the Muhammadiyah, which had been founded in Yogyakarta in 1912. The Muhammadiyah targeted the urban middle class and wanted to purge Islam of 'superstition'. By combining pure faith with Western knowledge and technology, the Muhammadiyah wanted to make its members resilient in the new era. The organisation established schools as well as clinics and orphanages. Gradually, the Muhammadiyah gained an increasing number of followers in Java and in West Sumatra. This growth was accompanied by an increase in the number of pilgrims to Mecca (68,000 in 1930). Students who went to study in Cairo encountered modernist ideas,

5 Tan Malaka travelled via the Netherlands to Moscow. Thereafter he led a nomadic existence as a representative of the Communist International (Comintern) in Southeast Asia.

6 Important communist leaders such as Musso and Alimin had already left the colony before the outbreak of the uprisings.

while pilgrims in Mecca came into contact with fellow believers from other parts of the colonised world with whom they could share their experiences. To counter the modernist character of the Muhammadiyah, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) was founded in East Java in 1926 by Kiai Hasjim Asjari. He represented the rural Islam that was taught in boarding schools where the teacher had an authoritative role and mysticism and the veneration of holy tombs played an important role.

Because the Muhammadiyah and the NU kept aloof from politics, there was room for a new, secular movement that emerged in the course of the 1920s. Two young leaders played a decisive role in this new political movement: their names were Mohammad Hatta and Sukarno.

Hatta came from a well-to-do family in West Sumatra. He attended the European Primary School and went to Dutch Higher Secondary School (the Hogere Burgerschool, HBS) in Batavia in 1918. He then went to study economics at the Rotterdam School of Economics in the 1920s with the help of a wealthy uncle and a scholarship from the Van Deventer Foundation. In Rotterdam, he became a member of the Indische Vereeniging, a club that was founded in 1908 by a group of students from the Dutch East Indies. With its members having the freedom in the Netherlands to become acquainted with new political ideas and currents, the Indische Vereeniging gradually became politicised, and when Hatta joined, its nationalist bent was gaining momentum. In 1924, the association changed its name to Perhimpunan Indonesia (Indonesian Association, PI) and the previous name of its magazine *Hindia Poetra* (Sons of India) was changed to the revealing title *Indonesia Merdeka* (Indonesia Free). In a manifesto published in 1925, Perhimpunan Indonesia demanded Indonesia's independence.⁷

Secular nationalism suddenly started to take off. This was also evident from the developments that took place in the East Indies in which Sukarno played a key role. Sukarno was born in Surabaya in 1901, the son of a Javanese teacher of low aristocratic descent and a Balinese mother. After finishing the European Primary School, he was admitted to the HBS in Surabaya, where he went to live with the Tjokroaminoto family. At a young age, therefore, Sukarno found himself at the centre of the political opposition, for Tjokroaminoto's boarding house was a meeting point for virtually everyone who mattered in the political opposition.

With Tjokroaminoto's help, Sukarno was able to enrol at the Technische Hoogeschool (technical institute) in Bandung in 1921. He immediately took

7 In that same year, a brochure was published – written by Tan Malaka while in exile – in which the term 'Republic of Indonesia' was used for the first time.

part in the political debates in Bandung. At a meeting of a nationalist youth organisation called Jong Java (Young Java), he objected to the hierarchical differences in the Javanese language by deliberately addressing his audience in Low Javanese. This caused such consternation that he was prevented from speaking. In Bandung he became more and more influenced by the ideas of Douwes Dekker and Tjipto Mangunkusumo, the former leaders of the Indische Partij, who had returned from exile. Sukarno realised that nationalism and unity were more important than Islam or communism. He was also inspired by the ideas of Suwardi Surjaningrat, who had started the Indonesian education movement known as Taman Siswa in 1922. The movement's pedagogy had its roots in Fröbel, Montessori and Tagore and was embedded in Javanese culture.⁸ Taman Siswa refused to comply with the rules of the colonial administration. This non-cooperative – or 'non-co' attitude – which promoted a new autonomous self-awareness, was inspired by Ireland's Sinn Fein and Gandhi's *swadeshi* movement and very much appealed to Sukarno. In 1925, together with Tjipto, he founded the General Study Club (Algemeene Studieclub) in Bandung, a debating club open to members from diverse political backgrounds. One of the issues they discussed was the *Indonesia Merdeka* manifesto of the Perhimpunan Indonesia, where Hatta was now chairman.

Representatives of the Perhimpunan Indonesia were part of an international anti-imperialist network that had branches in Moscow, Berlin, Paris and London, where contacts were established with nationalist and communist leaders from China, India, Vietnam and Africa. Hatta was a member of the League Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression, which was a front organisation of the Comintern, as was soon to become clear. In 1927, Hatta travelled together with the former leader of Young Java, Subardjo, to Brussels to attend the first conference of the League, where he met the Indian nationalist leader Jawaharlal Nehru, among others.⁹

Subardjo played a prominent role in the Perhimpunan Indonesia and was among the PI members with communist sympathies who would come to dominate this organisation. He was active in front organisations of the Comintern and even attended the tenth anniversary of the Soviet Union in Moscow.

Hatta was arrested in June 1927 on suspicion of communist sympathies. His trial was held in March 1928. In his plea, he argued:

8 To mark an important turn in his life, Suwardi had changed his name to Ki Hadjar Dewantoro.

9 It was in Brussels that he also met Semaun, who lived in Moscow. In 1922, Hatta and Subardjo had also met Tan Malaka when he was in transit to Moscow following his exile.

The Indonesian people have been awakened forever, due to their misery and due to the tyranny of the government. The 'gentlest people on earth' have become rebellious; no longer can one continue to defy it. [...] I have no doubt that Dutch rule in Indonesia will come to an end. It is only a matter of time, a matter of sooner or later and not yes or no. The Dutch people have to accept this iron law of history, whether they like it or not.¹⁰

To many people's surprise, Hatta was acquitted. Only the Communist Party of Holland and the left wing of the Social Democratic Workers Party (Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij, SDAP) had supported him. The leadership of the SDAP was more cautious in its support of Hatta because it was eager to join a government coalition and therefore afraid of offending its future coalition partners.

The Perhimpunan Indonesia never had more than 50 members but its influence in the Dutch East Indies increased as more of its members returned from the Netherlands and played prominent roles in the new nationalist movement. In this movement, Sukarno was to play a leading role. In 1926, he obtained his degree in engineering from Bandung with a design of a bridge as his final project. His future, however, was to lie in building political bridges rather than physical ones. This was apparent from the attention garnered by his plea, made in the same year, to bridge the contradictions between nationalism, Islam and Marxism with the idea of national unity supported by a common Indonesian language.

A temporary lull in colonial repression allowed Sukarno to present himself in public as a leader. Governor General De Graeff (1926–1931) wanted to make a distinction between moderate nationalists who were willing to operate within the colonial system and revolutionaries who opposed it. De Graeff insisted that there was no room for the latter, but he did want to offer the moderates a wider platform in the People's Council. This policy was doomed to fail because Sukarno and Hatta had opted for a non-cooperative line while a growing group of conservative Europeans demanded that the government pursue an uncompromising policy of repression.

On 4 July 1927 – not coincidentally on American Independence Day – Sukarno founded the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI) together with Tjipto

10 Hatta 1952: 303. The term 'the gentlest people on earth' comes from the poem 'Vloekzang, de laatste dag van de Hollanders op Java' by Sicco Roorda van Eysinga, a phrase that Multatuli subsequently included in the fourth edition of his novel *Max Havelaar (Biografisch woordenboek van het socialisme en de arbeidersbeweging in Nederland, 2000, VIII: 225)*.

Mangunkusumo in Bandung.¹¹ Sukarno presented the party as a secular mass party that sought unity above all else in order to achieve Indonesia's independence. He made a sharp distinction between the people who were on his side (*sini*, here) and those who were on the colonial side (*sana*, there). For him, there was nothing in between.

The PNI did not become a mass party, as its membership remained limited to 1700 supporters who came from the urban middle class. But when Sukarno gave a speech somewhere, he easily mobilised a crowd of more than a thousand people. The attendees were enthused by the way in which he managed to embed modern nationalist ideals in a familiar Javanese mindset.

At least in its early days, the PNI gained most of its following among the educated urban youth who joined the party's youth organisation, which was led by the young student Sutan Sjahrir who hailed from West Sumatra, just like Hatta. Another young supporter of the nationalist movement was Amir Sjarifuddin, who came from a mixed Christian-Muslim family from Tapanuli in North Sumatra. Amir had attended secondary school in the Netherlands, after which he went to Batavia to study at the *Rechtshoogeschool*, an institute for professional training of jurists at the university level. He joined a debating club where he had heated discussions about the French Revolution. In 1926 he was involved in the establishment of the Union of Indonesian Students (*Perhimpunan Peladjar-Peladjar Indonesia*, PPPI) in which various regional youth organisations – such as Jong Java, Jong Sumatranenbond, Jong Batak and Jong Sulawesi – joined forces.¹² The fact that the Young Islamic League was not part of this secular coalition was indicative of how isolated the Islamic movement had become.

At the end of October 1928, Amir Sjarifuddin was involved in the organisation of the second Youth Congress, which was held in Batavia. On the last day, the violinist and composer Wage Rudolf Supratman performed the song 'Indonesia Raya' to the loud cheers of the attendees. The colonial observer at the congress, Ch.O. van der Plas, did not realise at the time that this was the Indonesian national anthem. The song was adopted by the PNI, which opened and closed all its meetings with it.

11 By this time, Tjipto Mangunkusumo was no longer involved in the PNI activities because he had been exiled to Banda at the end of 1927, where he was forced to stay for 11 years. In the same year, Tan Malaka founded the PARI (*Partai Republik Indonesia*) in Bangkok. The PARI had very few followers but, like the PNI, embodied the idea that the party should lead the struggle for independence.

12 The use of the word 'young' in the names of the organisations was inspired by the Italian nationalism of Giuseppe Mazzini; Harper 2020: 81.

At the congress, the 'oath of the youth' was taken, which was drafted by Muhammad Yamin. It summed up the essence of Indonesia as 'one country, one people, one language'. In this utterly secular view of the nation, ethnic and religious differences were made subordinate to an overarching union with a common language. In practice, this unity proved difficult to achieve, as exemplified by the failure of Sukarno's attempt in 1927 to bundle different organisations and parties into a national federation as a result of insurmountable differences.

The Partai Sarekat Islam grudgingly adapted to the new *zeitgeist* in 1929 by changing its name to Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia (PSII). But it did so on the understanding that the nation had to be in the service of Islam and not the other way around. This name change did not help the party much, as the PSII never returned to the forefront of the political movement.¹³

Repression and discord

Despite the good intentions of Governor General De Graeff, colonial repression increased. In 1919, the General Intelligence Service (Algemeene Recherche Dienst, ARD) was established, which was well acquainted with developments within the nationalist movement through its extensive network of informants.¹⁴ And under the so-called 'hate mongering' articles of the Dutch East Indies penal code, anyone guilty of anticolonial propaganda could be sentenced to six years in prison. The ARD became obsessed with the danger of communism, which it claimed was also present within Sukarno's PNI. ARD agents increasingly cracked down on PNI meetings, preventing the speakers from speaking and even closing meetings if the speakers' remarks were too critical. This also regularly happened to Sukarno when, in his speeches in 1929, he made an emotional appeal to his audience to prepare for the war between Japan, England and the United States, which he believed was inevitable: 'We will use this to take our destiny into our own hands.'¹⁵

In late 1929, Sukarno was arrested on suspicion of sedition and communist sympathies. After almost a year of pre-trial detention, his case was heard

13 The party was moreover divided into 'co's and 'non-co's'. The latter group was led by the young party secretary Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosuwirjo, a nephew of Mas Marco, who had dropped out of his training as a doctor to become a political activist.

14 The ARD was usually referred to by the name of its predecessor, the Political Intelligence Service (Politieke Inlichtingendienst, PID, 1916–1919).

15 Hering 2002: 170.

by the Landraad¹⁶ in Bandung at the end of 1930. It became a political trial, with the prosecutor stating that the PNI was the successor of the PKI and the judge not even trying to maintain an appearance of impartiality. Sukarno delivered an impressive speech in his defence, titled 'Indonesia accuses', that lasted two days, in which he identified imperialism and capitalism as the major culprits that 'make us a nation of paupers and our nation a pauper in the midst of nations.' Like Hatta, he argued that independence was inevitable: 'The sun does not rise because the rooster crows, but the rooster crows because the sun rises.'¹⁷ Sukarno was sentenced to four years in prison, but after a year he was pardoned by Governor General De Graeff, just before the latter's departure for the Netherlands, as a final sign of his goodwill. For Sukarno, his year in prison was a traumatic experience.

In 1930, Hatta was still chairman of the Perhimpunan Indonesia in the Netherlands, while Sutan Sjahrir was secretary. Both leaders soon came into conflict with a communist group within the PI that was bent on taking power. When this group succeeded in taking over in 1931, Hatta and Sjahrir were expelled from the organisation. Under the leadership of Rustam Effendi, the PI became a front organisation for the Communist Party of Holland (Communistische Partij Holland, CPH). In 1933 Effendi became the first Indonesian to be elected to the Dutch parliament, as part of the CPH.

In the 1930s, the nationalist movement was far from unified. After Sukarno's conviction in 1930, his loyalists had dissolved the PNI out of desperation, and in May 1931 the Partindo was founded, which established itself as a successor of the PNI. In September of that year, Hatta and Sjahrir formed the Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia from the Netherlands. The PNI Baru (the new PNI), as it was called, focused on the formation of cadres and on education. At the end of 1931, Sjahrir returned to the Dutch East Indies to lead the project. Not long thereafter, his Dutch girlfriend Maria Duchâteau followed, and they got married in Medan. When the couple began walking the streets arm in arm, this caused a huge stir among the local European community. When it turned out that Maria was still officially married to the Dutch socialist Sal Tas, her marriage to Sjahrir was annulled and Maria was immediately put on a boat and sent back to the Netherlands.

Because Hatta first had to complete his exams in Rotterdam, he did not return to the Dutch East Indies until August 1932. In the same month, Sukarno decided to join the Partindo, and he invited Hatta to do the same.

16 The Landraad was a court chaired by a European administrator and included members of the Javanese, Chinese and Arab administrative elite.

17 Hering 2002: 194.

Hatta declined this offer because he had principled objections to Sukarno's dominant role as leader of the party as well as his one-sided emphasis on mass mobilisation. Sukarno, in turn, accused Hatta's PNI Baru of being an elitist club that was engaged in intellectual hair-splitting and was unable to mobilise the masses.¹⁸ The Partindo was by far the largest party in 1933 with 20,000 members. The Partindo and PNI Baru were to remain far apart in their approaches to resistance.

Crisis and conservatism

The new governor general, Esquire B.C. de Jonge (1932–1937), was a reactionary hardliner and a *protégé* of Hendrik Colijn, the former Shell manager who was prime minister of the Netherlands and minister of colonial affairs from 1933 to 1937. In his book *Koloniale vraagstukken van heden en morgen* (*Colonial Issues of Today and Tomorrow*, 1928), which at the time was considered an authoritative publication, Colijn had stated that he did not take nationalism in the East Indies at all seriously because it was the doings of a small educated upper class which did not represent the population in any way. Colijn also took the view that the People's Council should be abolished because democracy was not part of the culture in the East Indies.

Under De Jonge's tenure, colonial rule began to take on the characteristics of a police state. The police were given a broader mandate, and the governor general made generous use of his 'exorbitant rights' to ban meetings, apply censorship, and pre-emptively apprehend suspects and banish them to Boven Digul. Even using the term 'Republic of Indonesia' became a punishable offence. Monitoring politics became a legally permissible police task, which involved organised violence being applied to colonial subjects. The police employed 54,000 men, 96 percent of whom were Indonesian. In her novel *Buiten het gareel* (meaning 'out of line'), Suwarsih Djojopuspito paints a harsh picture of such police agents who hunted down alleged nationalists with great zeal. She and her husband taught at a nationalist school that was not subsidised by the government. Her book gives a penetrating picture of the pressures felt by the teaching staff who moved outside colonial circles. It also describes the conflicts between the teachers as well as the subordinate position of women within the nationalist movement.¹⁹

18 This latter accusation was not entirely justified, for Sjahrir was aware of the power of a united trade union and was active in organising the May 1933 Kaum Buruh Congres (Workers' Congress), although this federation soon became bogged down in impotence and repression.

19 See Suwarsih Djojopuspito 1940.

De Jonge persevered in his repressive policies. In 1933, Sukarno published a series of articles entitled *Mentjapai Indonesia merdeka* in which he compared freedom to a 'golden bridge' to justice and prosperity. The phrase *mentjapai merdeka* means 'achieving or obtaining freedom', but the Dutch authorities interpreted this as 'a grab for freedom' and read it as a call for violence. In February, a mutiny took place among the indigenous crew of the Dutch navy ship *De Zeven Provinciën*, in protest against a substantial reduction in their salaries. This was interpreted – once again – as a communist act of resistance that threatened the colonial order. Hatta's visit to Japan in April, where he was received as the Gandhi of Java, was also seen as a subversive act. On 1 August, Sukarno was arrested, and not long after, nationalist parties were banned from holding rallies.

With another imprisonment looking likely, something broke in Sukarno. He begged the colonial authorities to release him, and in exchange he promised to leave politics and seek work as an engineer. In November, he announced his withdrawal from the nationalist movement, stunning his supporters and drawing fierce criticism from Hatta. Sukarno was not released but instead exiled to the town of Endeh on the island of Flores. From there, he was transferred to Bengkulu in South Sumatra in 1938.

Hatta and Sjahrir were arrested in early 1934 and exiled to Boven Digul. After criticism of the bad living conditions in Boven Digul appeared persistently in the Dutch press, the two leaders were transferred to Banda Neira. Other nationalists were also arrested, including Amir Sjarifuddin, who in 1933 went to prison for a year and a half for a so-called 'press crime'.²⁰ Governor General De Jonge saw the situation in quite simple terms: all resistance – from the mutineers on *De Zeven Provinciën* to the moderate nationalist Sutomo – was the work of communists, for which he had no tolerance. In 1936, he even boasted that when talking to nationalists, he always started with the sentence: 'We have ruled here for 300 years with the whip and the club, and we shall still be doing it for another 300 years; at that point we can talk.'²¹

The police state also infiltrated the business world. The Java Sugar Employers Union, with which all major sugar companies were affiliated, had built up an archive from 1923 of 170,000 fingerprints of all trained personnel to efficiently identify communists, strikers and runaways. Such a system did not exist even in Europe.

20 He received this relatively light sentence presumably on the recommendation of J. Schepper, his old teacher at the *Rechtshoogeschool*, and also because he had been baptised in 1931 (a Christian, after all, could not possibly be a communist).

21 Elson 2008: 62.

The colonial repression occurred at the same time as an international economic crisis that began with the 1929 stock market crash on Wall Street. The crisis paralysed the colonial economy, showing how intertwined it was with the world market. The prices of important export products such as sugar and rubber plummeted by 75 percent, and of the 179 sugar factories that existed in Java, only 45 survived. Tens of thousands of workers lost their jobs. The colonial government was also forced to cut back on its spending. In 1920 the budget had been 1.2 billion guilders, but by 1935 this had shrunk to 500 million. The result was that spending on education, health, infrastructure, agricultural development and credit lending fell sharply. Tellingly, spending on the General Intelligence Service was not reduced.

The only advantage of the economic crisis was that food prices also plummeted, but this hardly outweighed the disadvantage of the difficulty of paying taxes when it became a challenge to earn money.

The economic crisis and the intensified repression undermined the legitimacy of the colonial state because it was clearly not fulfilling the promise it made in 1900 of development and modernity.

The hardening of colonial conservatism coincided with a demographic change within the European elite in the colony, which consisted of about 135,000 people. Because more and more Dutch women had come to the East Indies, the number of mixed marriages decreased. As a result, the European elite became increasingly homogenous and began to close themselves off even further from the rest of society, creating the illusion that they were living in a kind of 'tropical Netherlands'.

The repressive colonial policy was also reflected in a hardening of the colonial press. While colonial newspapers already had a reputation for fierce polemics in which *ad hominem* attacks were used, the newspapers now unanimously turned against nationalists and so-called 'ethicists' among the Dutch who were more understanding of the nationalist movement. The anger and fears of many Europeans in the East Indies, who saw their existence being threatened by rising nationalism and the economic crisis, were expressed by H.C. Zentgraaff, editor of the *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*. In 1929 he founded the Vaderlandsche Club, which propagated a reactionary, colonial nationalism.

The only current opposing the Vaderlandsche Club among the Europeans was a small group of ethically minded Europeans – mainly civil servants and teachers of the Rechtshoogeschool – who had united around the progressive magazine *De Stuw*. One of them was H.J. van Mook, who worked for the Volkskredietwezen (People's Credit Organisation) and was a member of the People's Council. He held many debates with representatives of the Vaderlandsche Club and criticised the authoritarian policy of Governor General De Jonge. At the

same time, Van Mook disdained the non-cooperative Indonesian nationalists. He was in favour of the formation of an autonomous East Indies that would be led by a cabinet of indigenous professional administrators accountable to the People's Council and that would also accommodate those Europeans who wanted to stay as well as Indo-Europeans and Chinese.²² His proposal found little support among the nationalists as well as the European power holders, and when Governor General De Jonge banned any criticism of his policy in 1933, the group that had formed around *De Stuw* was forced to disband.

Thus, not only were the last vestiges of the Ethical Policy removed, but the so-called association idea also met its end largely unnoticed. The racial divide was widening, and the idea that democracy was incompatible with the nature of the Eastern world began gaining ground within conservative colonial circles. As a result, emphasis was placed on 'restoring' traditional relationships of authority and on mapping out the ethnic and religious diversity in the archipelago. This strengthened the system of indirect rule in which the local aristocracy, under European supervision, represented colonial authority and were responsible for keeping nationalist influences at bay.

Science came to play an important role in consolidating the late colonial state. In 1924 a conservative training programme for administrative officials was established in Utrecht, with the support of the business community, to provide a counterbalance to the liberal education in Leiden. Ethnographic research focused on establishing the ethnic diversity in the archipelago, which would demonstrate the impossibility of national unity. Archaeological research revealed the Hindu-Buddhist history of the island of Java, which the Dutch had an obligation to preserve. This effort was also meant to show that Islam was only a 'recent' phenomenon that did not have deep roots in society. As proof, Hindu Bali was exhibited to the world as a living museum at the 1931 International Colonial Exposition in Paris. The first tourists also set foot on the island around this time to see with their own eyes the 'timeless Bali' – a paragon of colonial conservation – in all its beauty.

Cooperation and rejection

By 1934, the non-cooperative nationalist movement had been crushed and its main leaders imprisoned. Two new parties were formed that decided

22 Only a small portion of the Chinese living in the Dutch East Indies sided with the nationalists. In 1932, the Partai Tionghoa Indonesia was founded, which was headed by Liem Koen Hian. It remained a small party whose members were recent immigrants (*totok*) and who, unlike the assimilated *peranakan* Chinese, had no ties to the colonial system.

to operate within the colonial system. The largest was the Parindra (an acronym for Partai Indonesia Raya, the Greater Indonesia Party), which was led by Sutomo.²³

The Parindra, which aimed to establish self-government by democratic means, had a large following among lower-level indigenous government officials. By establishing farmers' cooperatives and promoting the supply of credit, the party emphasised the importance of economic self-reliance. Mohammad Husni Thamrin from Batavia became the main spokesman of the party in the People's Council.

Sutomo and Thamrin became the new leaders of the nationalist movement. Together, they represented a sizeable moderate urban middle class that strove for gradual reforms of the colonial system.

Given the increased political repression, the People's Council was the only place where Indonesians could still freely express their criticism of the colonial government. Thamrin took full advantage of this opportunity, which is why he is considered the first professional Indonesian politician.²⁴ Just how rigid the reaction of the colonial authorities was to the moderate voices of the People's Council became apparent in 1936. The moderate councillor Sutardjo – inspired by the administrative autonomy bestowed upon the Philippines by the United States that year, with a promise to grant independence in 1946 – submitted a motion asking the Dutch government to convene an imperial conference where the Netherlands and the East Indies could discuss, on an equal footing, how the East Indies could obtain administrative independence within the kingdom within ten years. The motion could not have been more moderate. Although it was passed in a watered-down form – the ten-year term was scrapped – it was sent to the Dutch government in The Hague with a negative recommendation attached by the governor general. After much vacillation, the Dutch government rejected the motion in the autumn of 1938, which led to a deep sense of disillusionment among the Indonesian members of the People's Council. Sutardjo concluded that his country would have been better off under any other Western power than the Netherlands, and Thamrin decided to speak only Indonesian in the People's Council.

23 Sutomo had co-founded Budi Utomo in 1908 and was by this time a veteran of the nationalist movement. In 1924 he had been one of the founders of the Indonesian Study Club in Surabaya, which had acted as a political catalyst. With the help of the Study Club, a number of interest groups were set up in and around Surabaya, including for drivers, streetcar staff, tailors and domestic staff, later followed by farmers' cooperatives. In 1930, this movement was reorganised as the Persatuan Bangsa Indonesia (Unity of the Indonesian People).

24 Taufiq Abdullah 2009: 49.

Outside the People's Council, the Parindra tried to increase its following by setting up a youth section, which took on a conspicuously fascist slant. Together with other nationalists, including Ki Hadjar Dewantoro of the Taman Siswa movement, Sutomo shared an admiration for the power that European fascism radiated. He also looked up to Japan with awe, a country that seemed to successfully blend the samurai tradition with technological development. Fascism's promising synthesis of modernity and tradition and its emphasis on leadership, discipline and a devotion to duty inspired Sutomo in his formulation of cultural nationalism. He propagated a cultural rearmament to make Indonesia great again, harking back to the heyday of the Javanese empire Majapahit. Thus, the Parindra leader deliberately did not speak of Indonesia Merdeka (a free Indonesia) but of Indonesia Raya (a great Indonesia). This new cultural impetus was to be propagated by the youth movement Surya Wirawan, which was modelled after European fascist organisations, complete with uniforms, flags and a Hitler salute. Despite these efforts, the Parindra gained only a modest following. The party had only 3500 members in 1937, while 14,000 people were part of cooperatives affiliated with Parindra. Clearly, colonial repression was making Indonesian officials and other members of the urban middle class wary of taking political risks.²⁵

Like Sutomo, Subardjo, a fellow student of Hatta and later a Soviet sympathizer, had also developed a great admiration for Japan. In 1935 he had the opportunity to go to Japan as a journalist and stayed there for a year. He was impressed by the country's economic development, and during his time there he embraced a pan-Asian ideology and made many contacts with influential people. After his return, Subardjo started his own law firm.

To the left of Parindra on the political spectrum was the Gerindo (acronym for Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia, the Indonesian People's Movement), which was founded in 1937. This party was a loose alliance of former members of the Partindo and left-wing activists. Many leaders of this movement were from Sumatra, such as A.K. Gani, Muhammad Yamin and Amir Sjarifuddin. The Gerindo opted for a strategy of 'loyal opposition' within the colonial system. The lesson Amir Sjarifuddin had learned from the Spanish Civil War was that the main struggle in the world was not between East and West but between fascism and democracy. He was also influenced by the policies of

25 Not all political organisations were active at the national level. By far the largest political party was the regional Pakempalan Kawulo Ngajogjakarta (Union of Nationals of Yogyakarta), which in 1935 had more than 200,000 members. The party opposed the high taxes and the dominant role of sugar factories in the region.

the Comintern, which had called for a popular front to be formed together with other parties against the rise in fascism. It was on these grounds that the Gerindo, unlike the Parindra, warned the population about Japan's imminent rise. The Gerindo did not have a large following: the number of members in the party only gradually increased to a maximum of 5000.

Former members of the illegal PARI and PKI found refuge in the Gerindo. The founder of the PARI, Tan Malaka, had disappeared and little was known about him by the end of the 1930s. It was not clear whether he was still in the service of the Comintern, given the Trotskyist sympathies that had been – wrongly, as it turns out – attributed to him. He had been arrested in Hong Kong in 1932 and deported. Many doubted whether he was still alive. He grew into a mysterious figure to whom supernatural powers were attributed. This was due to the popular dime novels that appeared at the time in which Tan Malaka was portrayed as Scarlet Pimpernel (*Pacar Merah*) who experienced exciting and romantic adventures during his anticolonial meanderings.

The communist PKI had been briefly brought back to life by Musso in 1935, when he returned to the East Indies in the greatest secrecy and was active in Surabaya for a year. After the General Intelligence Service disbanded the small illegal PKI again in 1937, Amir Sjarifuddin maintained contact with communists who remained in hiding.

Under the shadow of colonial repression, the Muhammadiyah had become the largest civil society organisation in the archipelago and thus embodied the emancipation of the Muslim middle class. In 1937, Islamic organisations banded together in the Supreme Council of Muslims in Indonesia (Madjelisul Islamil a'la Indonesia, MIAI).

In May 1938, Sutomo, the leader of the Parindra, died at the age of 49. His funeral was attended by some 50,000 supporters. After Sutomo's death, the leadership of the nationalist movement rested on Thamrin's shoulders. In May 1939, Thamrin finally managed to establish a degree of unity by forming the Gabungan Politik Indonesia (GAPI, the Indonesian Political Association), which included the main political parties (such as Parindra, Gerindo and PSII), the union of government employees, and the Union of Indonesian Students (PPPI). GAPI's key demand was for the formation of a full parliament to which the East Indies government would be accountable. Like his predecessor De Jonge, Governor General A.W.L. Tjarda van Starkenborgh Stachouwer (1937–1942) – popularly known as 'Si Pepsodent' (after the toothpaste brand) because of the way he displayed his immaculate teeth in a wide smile – was not willing to make a single concession. The colonial regime thereby condemned itself to a fatal path of increasing isolation.

Freedom and identity

In elementary schools in the Dutch East Indies, children were taught a common language – Malay – and the map on the wall of their classrooms displayed not just their own region but the entire colony. The subliminal message conveyed was that this was their country. If they continued their education in a provincial town or in one of the big cities, they ended up in a modern urban environment where they met contemporaries with whom they shared the same experiences. They had left their villages behind and had become inhabitants of the colony. This feeling of being part of something much greater was reinforced when they became civil servants or teachers and their careers took them to different places in the archipelago – all Malay-speaking – where they met like-minded people. This enabled them to visualize for the first time the large country in which they lived, and leaders such as Sukarno, Sutomo and Thamrin made them aware of the fact that this country was their future nation.

In the 1930s, the indigenous urban middle class in the Dutch East Indies numbered more than five million people. Secular nationalism had taken root in this group, but it was only within a small minority that the awareness of a shared national destiny existed. Colonial repression had made overt political action dangerous, but a kind of ‘cultural citizenship’ did emerge that was supported by the awareness of being a part of the modern world. Through advertisements, films and theatre performances, they were invited to participate in the urban colonial society and to adopt a modern lifestyle. That lifestyle was reflected in clothing and other forms of consumption, such as the use of new consumer goods including soap, toothpaste, margarine, cigarettes, watches and bicycles. In this context, the term *merdeka* stood not so much for political freedom but instead mainly reflected the desire to break free from oppressive traditions and to decide one’s own future. For many, the colonial state served as the necessary context in which one could participate in *kemadjuan* (progress). In this sense, the members of the new urban middle class were, to a large extent, the progeny of the colonial state.

Modern urban life also encouraged the formation of the nuclear family as the primary social unit, with the husband as the breadwinner and his wife expected to do the housework. She also had to protect her domain from the temptations of overconsumption and the negative consequences of Western individualism. Muhammadiyah circles emphasised the importance of education for women in order for them to play their new role in the modern family, and a debate also emerged about whether or not polygamy was an outdated practice. The novel *Belenggu* (*Chains*, 1940) by Armijn Pane illustrates this tension between the new modern life and the penchant for

past traditions. The main character is a doctor trained in modern methods who is married to an emancipated woman but falls hopelessly in love with a singer who unleashes uncontrollable feelings in him. In the end, he loses both women and winds up in existential loneliness.

The mixture of progress and colonial conservatism – along with the tension between rationality and emotion, the opportunity to become cultural citizens of the East Indies, and the maintenance of strict racial boundaries – made life in the late colonial period a confusing experience for many.

The discussion regarding identity was also taking place in nationalist circles. At a national education congress in 1935, the prevailing opinion was that education should be based on Eastern values such as spirituality and collectivism in order to empower the people against Western materialism and individualism. Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, the editor of the cultural magazine *Poedjangga Baru*, reacted extremely critically to this view. It struck him as completely outdated to fall back on traditional values. Only by learning from the West and by rationally building a new modern culture as individuals could the old world hope to come to an equal footing with the West. Alisjahbana was in turn criticised by nationalists, who cited their own spiritual superiority rooted in the rich history of the great Hindu-Buddhist civilisations.

Elements of this debate resurfaced in a discussion among politicians about the nature of the new nation. Sjahrir represented a Western-oriented, liberal-social democratic system. Sukarno distrusted liberal democracy because it supported capitalism and abandoned the lower classes. Semaun, who also distrusted democracy because it was in the hands of a bourgeois middle class, advocated the establishment of councils based on ethnic groups. Here he unexpectedly found support from the conservative Sutomo and Dewantoro, who emphasised cultural values and hierarchical leadership. Haji Agus Salim, on the other hand, called for an Islamic-based democracy in which leadership also had an important role to play.

Women played a marginal role in the nationalist movement. Although Tan Malaka had advocated equal rights for men and women, the consensus among the leaders was that women should serve as guardians of cultural identity and traditions. Only the small women's organisation Istri Sedar openly opposed this male chauvinism and championed equality and emancipation.

Almost all the nationalist leaders believed that ethnic boundaries had to be broken to ensure national unity. The Indo-Europeans and the Chinese, however, were a separate case – they were distrusted because they had tied their fate to the colonial system.

The most important consensus among nationalist leaders was the pursuit of unity to achieve freedom and independence. Although the people served as the legitimate basis of national sovereignty, they still had to be taken by the hand. It was here that the large gap between the urban leaders and the rural population became apparent. When Sukarno visualised the common people, he thought of Marhaen, a simple little farmer he had met during his time in Bandung and whose needs he wanted to fight for. Hatta envisioned a more abstract image of a decentralised system in which the village served as the basis of democracy and the economy was organised on a cooperative basis. No one held detailed ideas about individual civil rights. Instead, what prevailed was a mixture of ideas about elevating the people – echoing the Ethical Policy – and a conservative-romantic ideal of grassroots communities forming the cultural basis of the nation.

War and boycott 1939–1941

The global economic crisis of 1929 forced Japan to seek new markets, while the country's nationalist and military ambitions reinforced its expansionism. In 1931 Japan annexed Manchuria, and in 1937 it attacked China. At the same time, Japan increased its diplomatic pressure on the Dutch East Indies and other Western colonies in Southeast Asia to supply cheap raw materials and further open their markets to Japanese products. The region was mainly seen as a supplier of oil, tin, rice and rubber. As its war in China threatened to stall and Japan began to suffer from a Western trade boycott, it began to prepare for a military expansion into Southeast Asia.

With the outbreak of World War II, the position of the colonial powers in Southeast Asia weakened. Indonesian nationalists took advantage of this situation. Thamrin was now the undisputed nationalist leader. Whenever he spoke, a large crowd gathered and began to boo the police that were present. In December 1939, Thamrin organised a large conference in which the GAPI and the MIAI as well as dozens of other organisations participated. The conference once again demanded that a full parliament be established, confirming what Ch.O. van der Plas, now governor of East Java, had concluded earlier that year: that almost all Indonesian intellectuals wanted independence. At the time, only a very small group of Dutch people – those associated with the political-literary magazine *Kritiek en Opbouw*, including Beb Vuyk, Jacques de Kadt, E. du Perron and D.M.G. Koch – were still in regular contact with Indonesian nationalists.

When the Netherlands was occupied by Germany in May 1940, the East Indies became a colony without a fatherland. The colonial authorities were

now isolated in two ways: the colony was entirely dependent on itself, and the gap between the Dutch rulers and the moderate nationalists became unbridgeable. An offer by Thamrin and Sutardjo to help form indigenous militias to defend the colony in exchange for the establishment of a parliament was rejected. A motion put forth by Sutardjo calling for equal citizenship for all nationals was also rejected in late 1939. A motion that Thamrin submitted in August 1940 calling for the term 'native' to be replaced by 'Indonesian' was granted, but the term the 'Dutch East Indies' was not replaced by 'Indonesia'. The latter remained a forbidden word. Governor General Tjarda van Starckenborgh Stachouwer rejected almost all demands and motions submitted by Indonesian members – both nationalist and moderate – of the People's Council. His view was that such things could only be discussed after the war was over. He did, however, ask a committee of top civil servants to submit their advice on how the colony should be structured politically in the future. While the report – published in 1941 – noted the complaints among the population about racism, it advised against granting citizenship to the people, thereby underlining the committee's lack of recognition of the seriousness of the Indonesians' pursuit of independence.

When a motion put forth by the moderate Councillor Wiwoho Purbohadidjojo advocating autonomy within the kingdom was also rejected in the autumn of 1940, he concluded that the Indonesian people had no choice but to go their own way. And this is precisely what happened.

But before this outcome could be realised, the nationalist movement lost its leader. Thamrin was placed under house arrest on 6 January 1941 on suspicion of having covert contacts with Japan. Five days later, he died of a combination of kidney failure, malaria and exhaustion. The next day, some 20,000 to 30,000 people gathered at his funeral in Batavia. By this point, all known nationalist leaders were either dead, in exile or interned, but the nationalist movement nonetheless revived.²⁶ Parindra's membership skyrocketed to 20,000, while the farmers' cooperative Rukun Tani had 30,000 members.

The promise that Queen Wilhelmina made on 10 May 1941 to convene a national conference on new political relations between the Netherlands and the colonies after the war was duly noted by Indonesian politicians. In July 1941, the National Faction in the People's Council again proposed

²⁶ In June 1940, Amir Sjarifuddin was once again arrested, this time on suspicion of illegal communist activities. Faced with the choice between exile to Boven Digul or joining the Department of Economic Affairs, which meant that he could no longer be politically active, he opted for the latter.

forming indigenous militias in defence of the Dutch East Indies in exchange for the establishment of a full-fledged parliament. The governor general once again did not bow to pressure, convinced as he was that the colony could count on military support from England and the United States. In response, the National Faction in the People's Council broke its ties with the colonial system by unequivocally striving for independence. In protest, Sukardjo left the People's Council to set up his own parliament. On 14 September, a broad coalition of 27 organisations – including the GAPI, the MIAI, and numerous trade unions such as the large federation of government employees – formed the Majelis Rakyat Indonesia (MRI, Indonesian People's Council) in Yogyakarta.²⁷

The creation of their own parliament, which was led by Sukardjo (of Parindra), Sartono (of Gerindo) and Atik Suardi (of the trade unions), was nothing less than a broad-based declaration of independence, making it clear that an alternative power had emerged which denied the legitimacy of colonial rule. On the eve of the Japanese invasion, the Dutch authorities found themselves in a powerless position of isolation.

27 This allowed the MIAI – which included the Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, PSII, and 26 other Islamic organisations – to establish itself on the political front. However, the alliance between secular parties and the MIAI immediately caused tensions because the MIAI wanted to put a clear Islamic stamp on the future form of government. The MIAI was also kept out of the leadership of the MRI by the other parties.

2 The Japanese Occupation: Hope, Exploitation and Mobilisation

1942–1945

The founders of the alternative People's Council of Indonesia – the *Madjelis Rakyat Indonesia* (MRI) – were busy establishing regulations and procedures for their own parliament when they were overtaken by the war. The Japanese occupation of the archipelago put an end to Dutch colonial rule, but it also marked the beginning of a period of fundamental change. While the economic exploitation and the mobilisation of millions of people under Japanese rule left deep social wounds, it also gave rise to a new generation of young people who were willing to fight against the West with renewed enthusiasm. Did the Japanese conquest of the archipelago liberate Indonesia? How did the moderate nationalists react to Japanese rule? And were Sukarno and Hatta able to reassert their influence after their long imprisonment?

The conquest

In the course of 1939–1940, the Japanese conquest of China had stalled and Japan began to suffer the effects of the trade boycott imposed on it by the West. Because the Japanese economy was dependent on oil imports, mainly from the United States, the threat of shortages loomed. Negotiations with the Dutch East Indies in May 1940 to export more oil to Japan came to nothing.

When Japanese troops invaded southern Vietnam in July 1941, the United States, Britain and the Dutch East Indies declared a trade boycott against Japan. This measure forced Japan to speed up its conquest of Southeast Asia, a battle that was mainly about securing raw materials such as oil, rubber and rice. Japan's main target was the Dutch East Indies.

In September 1940, Germany, Italy and Japan concluded a tripartite treaty, which was followed by a non-aggression pact between Japan and the Soviet Union in July 1941. Japan had also made an agreement with the Vichy regime in France. With Britain busy dealing with the war against Germany, and the United States remaining militarily uninvolved, Japan went on the offensive.

In the early morning of Sunday, 7 December 1941, a Japanese surprise attack disabled the American fleet at Pearl Harbor. This action gave the Japanese invasion force free rein in the Pacific and in Southeast Asia. The

British and Dutch authorities did not have a high opinion of Japanese soldiers, whom they saw as peculiar, near-sighted goons who were unable to fight. The opposite turned out to be true: the colonial armies were no match for the well-trained and excellently armed Japanese invasion force. With its superior air force and precision torpedoes, Japan was able to destroy the colonial armies and fleets in no time. On 10 December, the British fleet was disabled off the coast of Malacca. In the same month, the Americans were forced to hand over the Philippines, and a Japanese attack was launched on Hong Kong and British Borneo. On 11 January 1942, Kuala Lumpur was taken, and on 15 February, the Japanese army captured Singapore, considered by the British to be their impregnable fortress in the region. After a fierce battle, 100,000 British troops were defeated by 30,000 Japanese soldiers.

The Dutch East Indies was aligned with a military coalition that also included the United States, Britain and Australia, but this was of no help to the Dutch colonial authorities. At the last minute, the United States decided to focus on protecting Australia and to concede the Dutch East Indies. After Governor General Tjarda van Starkenborgh Stachouwer declared war on Japan on 8 December 1941, the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (Koninklijk Nederlands-Indische Leger, KNIL) – supplemented by European citizens who had been called to arms – awaited the arrival of the Japanese troops.

Remarkably, the leaders of the *Madjelis Rakyat Indonesia* expressed their support for the Dutch East Indies government, but this immediately resulted in a split within its own ranks. Abikusno Tjokrosujoso and his party left the MRI in protest, once again severing the fragile relationship between the secular nationalists and the Islamic nationalists. At the same time, more than 600 Indonesians suspected of pro-Japanese sympathies were arrested by the colonial police and interned in Garut in West Java.¹ Many of them were part of the political elite. The internment served as the final blow to any possibility of a collaboration between the colonial regime and the nationalist movement.

Japanese troops landed in Manado on 11 January 1942. By the end of February, almost the entire archipelago had been conquered – excluding Java – including the oil fields at Tarakan and Banjarmasin on Kalimantan, and those at Palembang in South Sumatra. On 27 February, the battle on the Java Sea began, where a combined fleet of Dutch and Allied ships – without air support and hampered by poor communication – went down without a chance, with 2,200 crew members perishing.

1 They were liberated by the Japanese on 11 March 1942. Some 200 Japanese were also arrested; earlier, 2,800 Germans and 500 members of the Nationalist Socialist Movement (NSB) had been arrested.

On 1 March, Japanese soldiers went ashore on Java, and once again, the colonial army faced a superior military force. The KNIL had been trained to contain internal disturbances, not to defend the colony against a modern, armed external enemy. Its small, outdated air force was soon disabled, and there was virtually no coordination between the various army units. Moreover, the colonial military quickly became demoralised, and instances of desertion among the KNIL soldiers were not unheard of. After Japanese troops had captured Kalidjati airfield near Bandung, the resistance by the Dutch was broken.² On 5 March, the last broadcast of Radio Bandung ended with the greeting 'Farewell, 'till better times' – but for the colony, these better times were not in the offing. On 9 March, the Dutch East Indies capitulated. In a matter of three months, the Japanese had eliminated colonial rule in Southeast Asia.³

Hope

Prior to the invasion, the Japanese army had sent out radio broadcasts in Indonesia announcing that it would come as a liberator. By ending each broadcast with the national anthem 'Indonesia Raya', the impression was created that Indonesian independence was on the horizon. When the Japanese troops marched into Java after the capitulation, they were welcomed impromptu – or so it seemed – in many cities by enthusiastic crowds waving Japanese and red-and-white flags. In Makassar, the Japanese troops were welcomed by a committee headed by the local Parindra leader. These events turned out to be well organised and not at all impromptu. Prior to the Japanese invasion, the colonial administration had set up committees that would provide assistance to any possible civilian victims of the war. Many of these committees emerged after the capitulation as Freedom Committees, headed by Parindra members.

Achmad Subardjo played a leading role in the Central Committee that organised these actions, having already been in contact with the Japanese for some time. In the late 1930s he had met Shigetada Nishijima, who had settled in Java in 1937 as a tradesman to carry out espionage work for the

2 Groen et al. 2021: 273–94.

3 In these three months, 42,000 Dutch and 17,500 Allied soldiers were imprisoned; the Indonesian members of the KNIL were allowed to go home. It was only in the western part of Timor that the fighting continued until December 1942, by Australian soldiers who were helped by the local population. Much of New Guinea remained unoccupied. In the rest of Southeast Asia, Indochina was the only place where a Vichy-like French administration remained in place under strict Japanese control.

Japanese navy.⁴ Through this contact person, Subardjo became the leader of a secret organisation in 1941 that supported the Japanese invasion by collecting military data and sabotaging actions of the Dutch army.

The swift Japanese victory had raised hopes among many nationalists that independence was imminent, and in various places in Java the welcoming committees tried to take over the local government. Subardjo reportedly had a draft constitution ready, and on 8 March, PSII leader Abikusno Tjokrosujoso, along with Mohammad Yamin, offered Japanese army staff a plan for an Indonesian cabinet. The plan envisaged Subardjo in charge of foreign affairs, Muhammad Yamin responsible for home affairs, Ki Hadjar Dewantoro for education, Abikusno Tjokrosujoso for transport, and Hatta for economic affairs. Sukarno was placed somewhere at the bottom of the list as minister of press and propaganda. In response, the Parindra, which had been deliberately kept out of the cabinet by Abikusno Tjokrosujoso, presented its own cabinet, including Hatta at Finance and – again at the bottom – Sukarno as a minister without portfolio. Abikusno Tjokrosujoso then made another list, this time with Sukarno as deputy prime minister. All this gave off a chaotic impression.

Immediately after the capitulation, Chinese homes and shops were looted and government buildings and Europeans were attacked in a number of cities in Java. In Gorontalo in the north of Sulawesi and in Aceh, revolts against the colonial administration had already broken out before the arrival of the Japanese. In Gorontalo, nationalists proclaimed the Republic of Gorontalo on 23 January and took over the administration. In Aceh, the resistance was led by Said Abu Bakar, a leader of the Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh (PUSA, the Association of Acehnese Ulamas). Despite harsh reprisals carried out by the KNIL in which several hundred people were killed, the resistance spread so quickly that the Dutch decided to flee. When the Japanese went ashore in northern Aceh on 12 March, they were received by a cheering crowd and discovered that the colonial administration had already been driven out. In various places, the old conflict between religious leaders and the aristocracy also flared up again. The PUSA hoped to break the power of the nobility with Japanese help.

Similarly, but in a less violent manner, Muslim clerics in Minangkabau on the west coast of Sumatra rebelled against the colonial administration, and the nationalists in Padang formed a People's Committee. And on

4 Another contact person was Sujono who had lived in Tokyo in the 1930s and had invited Subardjo to visit Japan. During the invasion, Sujono accompanied the Japanese troops as an advisor. Touwen-Bouwsma 1996.

the east coast of Sumatra, in the region where the Karo Batak people lived, nationalist groups occupied large agricultural enterprises and plantations.

Deception

The Japanese were shocked by all this violence and had no intention of accommodating the nationalists. On 20 March 1942, the Japanese high command banned all political actions as well as the red-and-white flag and the term Indonesia, just as in Dutch times. On 15 July, all political parties were banned and the colonial status quo provisionally maintained. Much to the disappointment of Muslim and nationalist leaders, the Japanese decided to support the old governing gentry. Hopes of a rapid path to independence and social change quickly evaporated.

What the Japanese did dismantle was the administrative unity of the archipelago. The Japanese 16th Army, under the command of General Hitoshi Imamura, was in charge of Java. Sumatra was annexed to Malaya and administered from Singapore by the Japanese 25th Army. In mid-1943, the Japanese split the administration of Malaya and Sumatra, with the 25th Army controlling only Sumatra, while its headquarters were moved to Bukittinggi.⁵

Eastern Indonesia fell under the authority of the Japanese Navy, with Makassar as its headquarters. The fleet wanted its own sphere of influence in the archipelago as well as direct access to the oil reserves on Kalimantan. This subdivision of the archipelago, combined with the tensions between the army and the navy, meant that there was very little communication between the regions. The administrative division of the archipelago and Tokyo's aim to annex Sumatra and eastern Indonesia into the Japanese Empire gave the nationalists little hope for the future. The status of Java remained unclear. But the fact that the dreaded Japanese military police, the Kenpeitai, were employing agents of the equally dreaded Algemeene Recherche Dienst (General Intelligence Service) did not bode well. When all political parties were banned in July 1942, it was these ARD agents who were involved in the arrest of members of the Parindra.⁶

5 The 16th and 25th Armies fell under the command of Field Marshal Terauchi, who established his headquarters in Dalat in southern Vietnam.

6 The Kenpeitai, including the former Indonesian ARD agents, comprised more than a thousand men. The Tokkeitai, which was affiliated with the navy, was active in eastern Indonesia.

The removal of the Europeans and the continuity of local governance

After the Japanese occupation forces had taken more than 85,000 Dutch and Allied prisoners of war, the remaining Europeans were interned in phases: first the men were put behind barbed wire, and then the women and children, who were housed in separate camps. By September 1943, some 100,000 Europeans who had been working in government and business were removed from society along with their families. Only a small group – those working at strategically important posts – were not interned.

Thousands of Western prisoners of war and civilian internees were employed in the construction of railways in Thailand and Sumatra, where respectively 15,000 and 2,500 men met their death. Women were taken out of the camps to work in Japanese brothels. Over time, an increasing number of civilian prisoners died of hunger and disease. Some 13 percent of the prisoners in the civilian camps did not survive the camps, and the death rate among the prisoners of war was 20 percent.

Indo-Europeans had to be able to prove their 'Indonesian bloodline' in order to stay out of the camps. This was a fundamental change for a group that would have preferred to identify itself as European. Because many Indo-Europeans refused to cooperate with the Japanese, over time an increasing number of Indo-European men were interned, while their wives and children remained in society. A group of around 150,000 Indo-Europeans remained outside the camps and came to be known as *buitenkampers* ('those outside the camps'). They became the target of intimidation by Japanese soldiers and hostile behaviour by the Indonesian people.

A small group of senior officials of the colonial administration had fled to Australia just before the capitulation.⁷ Among them was Huib van Mook, who had been appointed lieutenant governor general in January 1942. He travelled to London in May, where he also became minister of the colonies as part of the Dutch government in exile. While there, he assessed the future of the former colony. The Allies had assigned the liberation of the archipelago to the US General Douglas MacArthur, who had assured Van Mook during a meeting shortly after the capitulation in March that the United States would not abandon the Dutch East Indies again but would help it restore its colonial rule. But it was not at all clear whether his position would find agreement among American politicians, who were known to consider colonialism *passé*. Van Mook therefore formulated a text that emphasised reformism and innovation, which was read by Queen Wilhelmina in a radio speech on

7 The political prisoners who were being held in Boven Digul had also been transferred to Australia to prevent them from becoming politically active under Japanese rule.

7 December 1942. In it, she sketched the contours of a post-war empire made up of autonomous components. Indonesia – the term was now used officially for the first time – would have its own parliament, and racial divisions would be officially eliminated. The Dutch government hoped that this would persuade the Americans to hand over the former colony to the Netherlands after the defeat of Japan. At the same time, the speech expressed Van Mook's conviction that it was incumbent upon the Netherlands to complete its ethical project, begun in 1901, before independence could take place. Raden Sujono, who was a former member of the People's Council and the Council of the Indies, and minister without portfolio of the Dutch government-in-exile in London, was the only one who pleaded – in vain – for the full independence of Indonesia.

Meanwhile, Leo Jansen, who worked for the Allied radio stations' wiretapping service, noted on 2 January 1943:

The Indonesians have seen another Asian people who are rulers. They have seen Dutch women become servants of Asians. They have seen Europeans being hauled half-naked through the streets. They no longer respect us, and this respect is, after all, what colonial rule is largely based on.⁸

With the removal of the Europeans, the Dutch language also disappeared from the streetscape. Batavia officially became Jakarta, and Indonesians were forced to adopt the Japanese calendar and time: 1942 became 2602, and the clock moved forward an hour and a half. In March 1943, the statue of Jan Pietersz. Coen, the notorious colonial seventeenth-century governor general of the Dutch East Indies, was removed from his pedestal.

Soon after their conquest of the archipelago, the Japanese reduced their troop strength from 55,000 to 15,000 and brought in 20,000 of their own civil servants, office workers, businessmen and technicians. In June 1942, a military administration called the Gunseibu was put in place. Various departments of the former colonial administration were placed under Japanese leadership, who were assisted by Indonesian advisors. The judiciary was separated from the government administration, and the system of having separate courts for different ethnic groups was abolished.

The political organisation of the regions also underwent a radical change. In Java, the provinces were abolished, and in large cities and in the residences, Japanese administrators replaced the Dutch mayors and residents. In Jakarta an Indonesian mayor was appointed, the political veteran Sutardjo. The Central Javanese principalities were left as they were. The young sultan

8 Jansen 1988: 124–25.

Hamengkubuwono IX was appointed governor of Yogyakarta by the Japanese. In the rest of Java, the dual structure in which the Dutch Interior Administration operated alongside the Javanese administration ceased to exist at the district level. This meant that the traditional administrative aristocracy, the *pangreh pradja*, was given more power – but also more tasks. Village chiefs were no longer appointed for life but for four-year terms, and higher demands were also placed on them: they had to be under 50 years of age and able to read and write. If they functioned poorly in the eyes of their superiors, they were dismissed. Although the Javanese administrators quickly adapted to the new regime, they had clearly become more vulnerable, for they had lost much of their old prestige and could be more easily dismissed if they did not perform up to standard.

In Sumatra, the residencies also came under Japanese administration and indigenous administrators retained their positions. Because Japan was planning to annex East Indonesia to the Japanese Empire, this region was given a strong Japanese civilian administration which fell under the supervision of the naval leadership in Makassar. As in Java and Sumatra, the princes and noble rulers who had been part of the system of indirect rule in colonial times remained in their posts. But the Japanese administration did not tolerate any wayward behaviour from these local administrators, as became clear when the Balinese ruler of Gianyar was exiled in 1943 and replaced by his son Anak Agung Gde Agung.

Old and new Chinese entrepreneurs

The Japanese distrusted the Chinese in the archipelago because of the close relations they had with the Dutch and because many Chinese had financially supported the resistance against the Japanese invasion of China. But since Chinese merchants fulfilled a crucial role and the market did not function without them, the Japanese authorities immediately made overtures to large Chinese entrepreneurs. These Chinese, in turn, had little choice but to cooperate because they needed protection.

The established Chinese merchant families (the *peranakan*) – who had lived in Java for a long time and had maintained close ties with the colonial regime – had difficulties when the old colonial export economy collapsed and they were forced to pay large sums of money in order to keep healthy ties with the Japanese military. Nonetheless, united in the Chinese Overseas Association (Kakyo Sokai), they continued to play an important role. Oei Thiong Ham's company, for example, suffered heavy losses but was able to offset them by becoming a supplier to the Japanese army.

The Japanese occupation offered new opportunities for the so-called *totok* Chinese, the more recent immigrants who mainly operated in rural areas. They knew the rural economy well and had good contacts with the local population. Because they were willing to take more risks, they were able to adapt more quickly to the new circumstances. Operating in the grey area between trade and smuggling, these merchants managed to make large profits.

The New Asia and the nationalists

Before the Japanese invasion, Hatta and Sjahrir had been transferred to West Java from their place of exile on Banda Neira to prevent them from being used by the Japanese to make anti-Dutch propaganda. Hatta was 40 years old but was already considered an 'elder statesman' by the Japanese. At the end of March, the Japanese army leadership offered him the position of advisor, which he accepted after being assured that the military had no intention of colonising Indonesia. He became an advisor to the Japanese military administration in Jakarta and was given a house on Oranje Boulevard and an official DeSoto car. Achmad Subardjo, whom he knew from his student days, came to work in his office.

Hatta became a kind of ombudsman who frequently passed on complaints from the people to the Japanese authorities about the rough behaviour of Japanese soldiers or about the fact that everyone was forced to pay their respects to the Japanese emperor with a deep bow (*keirei*) towards Tokyo. Muslims found this contrary to the precept to pray in the direction of Mecca. This criticism that Hatta passed on was not well received. The office was closed and Subardjo arrested; and Nishijima, who was also involved with the office, was temporarily side-lined.

Sukarno was still in Sumatra at this point. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, in a moment of despair, he had offered the Dutch governor general his services in exchange for being evacuated to Australia, but the offer was ignored.⁹ He was taken by the Dutch from his place of exile in Bengkulu to Padang, where he had to wait another four months before he could return to Java. Sukarno was well aware of the dilemma he was facing. He told a friend: 'I know the Japanese are fascists. But I also know that this is the end of Dutch imperialism. We will suffer under the Japanese, but thereafter we will be free.'¹⁰

9 Hering 2002: 275.

10 Adams 1965: 156.

General Imamura decided to bring Sukarno to Java. On 9 July, after having been absent for nine years, he returned to Jakarta where he was welcomed by a large crowd. That same evening, he met with Hatta and Sjahrir. Sukarno wanted to cooperate with the Japanese because it gave him the opportunity to reach the masses. Hatta was already an advisor to them, but Sjahrir did not want to associate himself with the Japanese. He decided to withdraw to his sister's home in Tjipanas in West Java, where he maintained contact with a network of nationalists he knew from the time he headed the PNI Baru and listened clandestinely to Western radio stations to follow the course of the war. He was also in contact with Amir Sjarifuddin, who was building an underground network of left-wing activists.

On 10 July, Sukarno had a meeting with General Imamura in which the two immediately hit it off. It helped that Sukarno was captivated by Japanese pan-Asianism and the Japanese rhetoric of liberation and struggle. Imamura indicated that Tokyo did not yet know what status Java would receive, and he left it to Sukarno to decide whether he wanted to cooperate with the Japanese. After a few days of reflection, Sukarno indicated that he was willing to cooperate but reserved the right to determine his own course after the war ended. Alongside Hatta, Sukarno became an advisor to the military administration in Java. He was given a house on the Pegangsaan Timur no. 56, a car, and a salary of 750 guilders per month. For the rest of the month, he made a tour of the major cities in Java, all the while increasing his visibility among the people.

Imamura recognised the importance of Hatta and Sukarno. He sympathised with the nationalists and gave them scope to play a role in Japanese propaganda. Along with the 16th Army came a separate propaganda unit, the Sendenhan, whose task it was to win the hearts and minds of the people for the Japanese cause. A new elite was to be formed in Java, one that was imbued with the idea of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere and of the leading role of Japan, which would bestow the New Asia with an alternative kind of modernity. Western technology was embraced but Western individualism was repudiated, for Asian modernity was rooted in ancient cultural values. The family model was central to this: Japan was like a father leading the other peoples in Asia in the harmonious Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. Indonesian nationalists were very much attracted to this idea. It gave their country a place in this new order, and it gave them a sense of direction and hope for independence.

What was special about the propaganda unit was that it included a large group of writers, filmmakers, painters, draughtsmen and composers who supported Indonesian nationalism. Together with Indonesian artists and

journalists, they created propaganda posters, radio programmes, theatre performances and films.¹¹ United in their task, they propagated the image of Japan as the liberator of Asia and the bearer of new prosperity. Young nationalists such as Chaerul Saleh, Aidit, Armijn Pane, Sanusi Pane and Muhammad Yamin joined the Sendenhan, while Sukarni and Adam Malik went to work for the Domei news agency. The new newspaper *Asia Raya* had a circulation of 23,000 and was headed by Sukardjo Wirjopranoto, who had gathered a staff of Parindra editors around him. Travelling theatre companies performed propagandistic plays using new forms of theatre. News reports and informational films were also shown outside the major cities by means of mobile cinemas, and in the cities, radio broadcasts were transmitted via a system of 1,500 loudspeakers attached to trees and poles. This was how thousands of people were introduced to Sukarno for the first time. An important role in the Sendenhan was played by the liaison officer Hitoshi Shimizu. He had gained experience in China, had learned a little Malay, and became Sukarno's interpreter.

The 3A movement

Even before Hatta arrived in Jakarta, a campaign known as the 3A movement was initiated on 16 March under the supervision of Hitoshi Shimizu and the Sendenhan and chaired by the Parindra leader Raden Samsudin. The aim of the movement was to generate support through posters and parades for Japan as Leader of Asia, Light of Asia and Protector of Asia – hence the three A's. Former members of the Parindra's youth movement, the Surya Wirawan, formed the core of the 3A's youth faction.¹²

No sooner had it started than the 3A movement folded. The Kenpeitai and the army leadership distrusted the nationalists who were leading the movement. Hatta also gave very little credit to the 3A because of the dominant role that former Parindra leaders played in it. In October, the 3A was disbanded, the movement having lost its momentum, and with that the Parindra leaders lost their platform.

Along with prominent figures such as Husein Djajadiningrat and Ki Hadjar Dewantoro, Sukarno and Hatta became part of the Commission for the Study

11 Mark 2003. American films were nonetheless still shown in Jakarta until mid-1943, as Kaoru Kochi demonstrated on 16 July 2019 during a presentation at the ICAS (International Convention of Asia Scholars) in Leiden.

12 The 3A was not allowed in Sumatra and East Indonesia, which were governed by the 25th Army and the Japanese navy.

of Traditions and Forms of Government (Kyokan Seido Chosakai), which advised the military government on administrative and cultural matters between November 1942 and October 1943. For Husein Djajadiningrat, this was an important moment. As a child of the Ethical Policy, he had always had the feeling that the Dutch held him in low regard. With the Japanese now coming to ask him for advice, he felt he was finally being taken seriously.¹³

One important recommendation made by the Commission was the need to set up a Language Commission. Because the Dutch language was banned in November but no one knew Japanese, Indonesian had to be quickly prepared as a new language. The Language Commission, established in October 1942 and led by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, set to work to standardise the grammar and spelling of the colloquial Malay language and to create 7,000 new words for technical and administrative terms. The introduction of this common language gave a powerful impetus to the unity of the archipelago; Teeuw even sees it as the turning point in its decolonisation.¹⁴

The new language was also propagated in new literature. The ideas made popular by the writers of the 1930s, who were oriented towards the West and focused on the role of the individual, no longer resonated. Action and decisiveness were what was required. Young writers such as Usmar Ismail, Abu Hanifah, Rosihan Anwar and Chairil Anwar wrote short stories, plays and passionate poems. Beneath the overblown propaganda for the Japanese cause that they were obliged to include, their works reverberated with new ideals and the desire for freedom.

Around the same time that the Language Commission was established, the Centre for the Arts (Pusat Kesenian) was opened with the aim of giving more space to the new visual arts of Indonesia that had emerged in the 1930s. It was through the Pusat Kesenian that painters such as Sudjojono, Affandi, Henk Ngantung and Basuki Resobowo were able to explore their society's distinctive character.

The PUTERA movement and frustrated nationalists

Towards the end of 1942, it became clear that the possibility of a civil administration taking shape in Java was fading as the island was moving increasingly towards hard-core military rule. While it appeared that Indonesian intellectuals were being given space to manifest themselves on the cultural level, at the same time a tipping point could be felt in the war

13 Jansen 1988: 38.

14 Teeuw 1979 I: 105.

in the Pacific, and Japan was put on the defensive by the steadily advancing American troops. In June 1942, the Japanese military progress in the Pacific was halted at the Battle of Midway. In August the battle for the Solomon Islands began, and in early 1943 the first Allied bombs fell on Kupang, Makassar and Ambon. From the middle of 1943, the Japanese began to suffer heavier defeats.

The Japanese army leadership realised that more effort would be needed to mobilise people and resources in Java in their support of the war. To this end, a four-man force was appointed on 4 November 1942 under the leadership of Sukarno and including Hatta, Ki Hadjar Dewantoro and the chairman of the Muhammadiyah, K.H. Mas Mansur. Sukarno was convinced that Japan would win the war, but Hatta thought otherwise. Hatta was also critical of the Japanese presence in his country. In 1942, observing the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, he said that Indonesia had been liberated from Dutch imperialism but that 'the youth would rather sink to the bottom of the sea than be recolonised.'¹⁵

The four-man team had only just been appointed when Imamura was transferred to the Pacific in November 1942 to take part in the fight against the United States. He was succeeded by General Kumakishi Harada, a military man who had little affinity with the 'Greater Asia' idea and even less sympathy for Indonesian nationalism. He was focused exclusively on the war and how Java could contribute to it as much as possible. As a result, the propaganda unit soon lost its autonomy and became part of the army intelligence service.

On 8 December, Sukarno announced the establishment of a new national mass movement that would allow him to express his nationalist ideas more clearly. At the same time, he submitted to the military administration a plan for a constitution and a national government covering the entire archipelago that would work together with the Japanese. He also reiterated his request for the Indonesian flag and national anthem to be allowed. As in the late colonial period, all of his proposals were refused.

Despite these rejections, a new popular movement was established under military supervision. It was called the Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (Centre for People's Power), abbreviated as PUTERA, meaning 'son', indirectly referring to the sons of the nation. Chinese and Arabs were not allowed to join PUTERA. Although the leadership was formally in the hands of the four-man team, the organisation was, in actual fact, an extension of the Japanese propaganda apparatus. PUTERA disseminated information on hygiene (washing hands

15 Hatta 1981: 212–3.

before eating) and on stimulating agricultural production (planting *padi* in tight rows),¹⁶ and spread a great deal of anti-Western propaganda. As with the 3A, the PUTERA ultimately did not succeed in carrying out its aims. Thwarted in its efforts by the conservative Javanese administrative corps and distrusted by the Kenpeitai, the organisation remained confined to just a few branches in the major cities.

The frustrating thing for the nationalists was that they were expected to be winning the hearts and minds of the people for the Japanese cause but the military administration did not want to honour any of their wishes. Outside of the major cities, the nationalists had still not gained a foothold. The PUTERA had provided Sukarno with an urban platform. In Bandung, Surabaya and Jakarta, he gave speeches to crowds of 100,000 to 200,000 people. The price he had to pay for being able to do this was that he had to go all out in propagandizing for the Japanese cause.

Nationalist leaders were not involved in administering the archipelago, and intellectuals noticed that the Japanese looked down upon them. The Japanese administration began to bombard Indonesian society with directives and rules, which emanated a mixture of interventionism, arrogance and ignorance on the part of the Japanese. A good example of this was the complicated rates that were specified for rides in a *becak* (pedicab) in order to prevent the practice of haggling, which changed nothing whatsoever.¹⁷

The extent to which the nationalists in Java were being ignored became apparent in the course of 1943 when Tokyo promised both Burma and the Philippines independence within the Japanese Empire. The Japanese hoped that by doing so, they could secure the support of the people in their fight against the Allies. At the same time, it was decided in Tokyo that the Indonesian archipelago would be administratively annexed to the Japanese Empire. The only concession made to the nationalists in Java was the establishment of a series of advisory councils. When Prime Minister Hideki Tojo visited Jakarta on 7 July, he was unwilling to make any further pledges. The Japanese distrust of the nationalist leaders continued unabated. There was even a plan to murder Hatta because he was suspected of being anti-Japanese, and it was only due to the timely intervention of the interpreter of the 16th Army that this assassination attempt was prevented. Hatta did have to pledge to study the Japanese mentality (*seishin*) in more depth.

16 This was something that had already been started by the Dutch Agricultural Extension Service, but it was only under the Japanese military administration that it was forcefully implemented.

17 Mark 2003: 483; 492–3.

A new disappointment for the nationalist leaders was the fact that they were not invited to attend the Greater East Asia Conference held in Tokyo in early November 1943. In order not to antagonise them any further, the Japanese invited Sukarno and Hatta for a separate visit to Tokyo later that month. The Japanese politely shelved a renewed request for administrative autonomy of the entire archipelago, including their own flag and national anthem. Another visit to the Japanese Emperor followed, with Sukarno and Hatta receiving high honours, but again they effectively went home empty-handed.

In October 1943, the Central Advisory Council (Chuo Sangi'in) was established in Java, and each residency was given its own advisory board. Prominent nationalists and Indonesian officials were appointed as advisers in various departments. The Central Advisory Council became the first forum in which members could express their opinions, but it had even fewer powers than the colonial-era People's Council. In most cases, the Council only had to answer questions from the Japanese regime, with Japanese advisers often already formulating the draft of the answers. Petitions submitted by the Council regarding the flag, the anthem and the administrative unity of Indonesia were again ignored. Similar advisory councils were set up in Sumatra and Sulawesi.¹⁸

Mobilisation: Islam, education and 'semangat'

The Japanese authorities were aware of the importance of Islam as an anti-Western weapon but had very little knowledge of Islam and how it was practiced in Java. Initially, people assumed that Abikusno Tjokrosujoso was the most important Islamic leader, but this turned out to be incorrect because his PSII had a limited urban following.¹⁹ The Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), on the other hand, had a large following in the countryside, but in April 1942 the Japanese made the mistake of arresting NU leader Hashem Asjari for refusing to bow (*keirei*) to Tokyo. An outright blunder on the part of the Japanese was their ban on the use of Arabic.

Nonetheless, the military administration was determined to reach the masses in Java through Islamic institutions – a reversal of colonial policy,

18 In Sulawesi, Sam Ratulangi and Tadjuddin Noor were appointed as advisers to the Japanese administration, while Nadjamuddin Daeng Malewa was appointed mayor of Makassar in May 1945.

19 In 1943, the Department of Religious Affairs (Shumubu) was established, a continuation of the Office of the Domestic Affairs Adviser. It was led by Husein Djajadiningrat, an academic and an aristocrat who also had no affinity with the Islamic religion in the Japanese countryside.

which had tried to demobilise and depoliticise Islam. After its initial blunders, the Japanese military administration began to realise that the masses could only be mobilised with the help of the Islamic leaders (*kiai*) of the boarding schools (*pesantren*) in the Javanese countryside. As these schools formed the basis of the Nahdlatul Ulama, this meant that the NU suddenly had a key role to play. In November 1943, the Council of Indonesian Muslims (Madjelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia, abbreviated Masyumi) was established, which included the NU and the Muhammadiyah. NU leader Hashem Asjari became chairman of the Masyumi. Islamic leaders did not, however, become propagandists for the Japanese cause, for the Masyumi first and foremost looked after the well-being of its own religious community (*ummat*).²⁰ In Sumatra, the Islamic community was also given more freedom of movement. In November 1943, a Supreme Council on Islamic Affairs was established, dominated by the Muhammadiyah.²¹

The mobilisation of the youth began in elementary school. In April 1942, General Imamura had reopened the primary schools in Java. There was a uniform six-year primary school, where children from the elite were placed in the same class as children of commoners. In addition, more children from the lower social classes gained access to education. In 1944, some 2.6 million children attended primary school, 1.2 million more than in 1939. Secondary education was transformed into a three-year lower secondary school, followed by a three-year upper secondary school.²²

After the third grade of primary school, Indonesian became the language of instruction, which gave a huge boost to the spread of the national language. Children in the fifth and sixth grades had to learn Japanese. The curriculum emphasised physical training and moral education, which focused on discipline, self-sacrifice, obedience and respect for hierarchy. In 1943, the first Indonesian textbook for national history, written by Sanusi Pane, was put into use. The textbook taught children about the glorious past of the ancient kingdoms, followed by three and a half centuries of colonial

20 A different point of view was taken by the former PSII leader Kartosuwirjo, who was mayor of Bandung in 1943. He advocated close cooperation with Japan to shape a new world that would be guided by Islamic principles. Kartosuwirjo's stance did not sit well with the leadership of the Masyumi, who refused to give him a position in the new organisation.

21 In Aceh, the aristocratic *uleebalang* (the regional nobility) lost considerable ground when separate Islamic courts dominated by supporters of the PUSA were established in 1943. In June 1943, a large mass rally was held in Medan where Islam leader and literary critic Hamka announced actions against the traditional aristocracy. This led to rising tensions between the aristocracy and Islam in North Sumatra.

22 This division of secondary education has remained in place since Indonesia's independence.

oppression, which came to an end as a result of uprisings, nationalism and liberation by the Japanese.

From April 1943, young people between the ages of 14 and 25 were mobilised into a special youth corps (Seinendan, or Barisan Pemuda) where they received many hours of physical training and took Japanese language lessons. Most importantly, they were to be instilled with a new mentality (*semangat*). In older Malay texts, *semangat* referred to the soul, but the word took on a new meaning that encompassed the notions of taking action, collective enthusiasm and the will to act together.

When the tide of war turned against Japan in June 1943, orders came from Tokyo to begin training paramilitary militias. Local militias known as Keibodan were established throughout the island of Java to maintain order at the local level. The members of the Keibodan, aged between 25 and 35, received no weapons but did have military training. Many young people from the youth corps transferred to these militias. By early 1944, the youth corps had 500,000 members and the Keibodan 1,280,000 members. This produced a large reservoir of young people who were introduced to a new, militant mentality and who had mastered the rudiments of military action.

Separate organisations for women were also established in 1943. The Fujinkai was created for the wives of men who were members of Japanese mass organisations; they had a supporting function. The corps for young unmarried women, the Joshi Seinendan, also had a supporting role. In addition to frequent drills, these women had to appear at welcome ceremonies, produce stockings for Japanese soldiers, and plant *jarak* bushes in their yards whose nuts produced an oil that could be used as fuel.

Auxiliary troops

The youth corps and the Keibodan militias were supervised by the 16th Army. Because the 16th Army had been reduced to 15,000 troops in 1942, there was a severe shortage of support personnel. To make up for this shortfall, about 25,000 Javanese boys were recruited as auxiliary soldiers (*Heiho*) in the course of 1943 to perform supporting tasks for the Japanese army. From August 1943, they were also given military training. In Sumatra and Eastern Indonesia, the recruitment of Heiho started at a later point in time.

In October 1943, the volunteer corps PETA (Pembela Tanah Air, Defenders of the Fatherland) was established. Since July 1942, military training had been given on a small scale to Indonesian youth, initially to members of the youth wing of the 3A movement. When this was discontinued at the end of 1942, the Japanese military intelligence service took charge of recruiting

the youth in early 1943. A selected group of 50 boys underwent a gruelling training to become elite soldiers, with the Japanese commander himself participating in the training. Those who failed received corporal punishment. Such harsh disciplining was a new and shocking experience for these boys.

In September, PNI veteran Gatot Mangkupradja had written a letter – at the suggestion of Japanese lieutenant Yanagawa – to the leaders of the 16th Army calling for the creation of an Indonesian volunteer army to defend Java. General Harada immediately responded positively to ‘this ardent wish of the Javanese people’, after which the letter appeared in the press.²³ This was how the PETA originated. The attempt to make it seem as though the idea was an Indonesian initiative succeeded.

The PETA was the first ever armed force that fell under Indonesian command. Japanese instructors trained Indonesian volunteers in Bogor, who then trained their own battalion of 500 to 600 men in each residency in Java. In this manner, a total of 38,700 young men received military training. Also in Bali, three battalions were formed. The battalion commanders were usually somewhat older, educated men who came from the lower nobility or Islamic organisations. They became father figures to the boys. Sudirman, a schoolteacher from Banyumas, became battalion commander, while the young Suharto became platoon commander in Yogyakarta. The soldiers were local boys who spoke little or no Indonesian and who were often lured by the prospect of payment, clothing and adventure. They too were instilled with the new *semangat*, while the word *merdeka* was often used within their circles. Unlike other militias, the PETA was well armed with a total of 20,000 rifles.

In Sumatra, a people’s militia (Giguyun) known as the Laskar Rakyat was set up in the autumn of 1943 that was to eventually number 8,000 men. In Java, the Masyumi succeeded in forming its own militia at the end of 1944 that was separate from the PETA. This Islamic militia, named Hizbullah, had 500 officers and 50,000 men. Although the Hizbullah did not have firearms, it nonetheless grew into a powerful militia.

It was not until September 1944 that Sukarno was put in charge of his own militia, the Barisan Pelopor (Vanguard), which recruited young people between the ages of 17 and 25, especially in cities. By early 1945, the Barisan Pelopor had 80,000 members.²⁴

23 Sato 2010. Gatot Mangkupradja wrote the letter not with his own blood, as legend has it, but with ordinary ink and then on a typewriter.

24 In addition, there were numerous smaller militias of women, students, and Chinese as well as a small elite group trained as a suicide squad.

In total, nearly two million young people were members of a militia in early 1945. As a result of the militaristic training given from primary school onwards, the entire Javanese society also underwent a process of militarisation. A militant mentality had developed, along with a willingness to fight against the Allies and for freedom.

Total mobilisation and exploitation

After conquering the archipelago, the Japanese regime had immediately seized its oil reserves, and Japanese companies had taken over banks and large trading corporations. Because the colonial export economy no longer existed, the plantation sector came to a standstill, and after a while hardly any sugar and rubber could be produced anymore. Imports had also come to a halt, which resulted in a shortage of fuel and textiles. In mid-1943, colonial money was replaced by the rupiah, and a great deal of new banknotes came into circulation, which stimulated inflation. The economy steadily worsened.

In 1944, at the same time as the mobilisation of paramilitary groups, the military administration proceeded to mobilise the entire Javanese society in support of the Japanese war effort. To this end, the PUTERA was dissolved and a new organisation was created, the Jawa Hokokai (Javanese Service Society). While formally led by the well-known nationalist four-man team, in practice the Hokokai was tightly supervised by the military administration, while Javanese administrators were put in charge of implementing all sorts of tasks. At the village and district level, the *tonarigumi* system was put in place whereby hamlets of 10 to 20 households became the final link in the Japanese lines of command.

This new policy increased the power of the Javanese administrators and the village chiefs but also increasingly made them targets of criticism.²⁵

Romusha

As Japan was increasingly pushed into a corner by Allied forces, incurring more and more losses, it started to demand more labour from the Javanese population. The mobilisation of workers – *romusha* – was carried out by the Javanese administrators and the village chiefs. Initially this was done

25 On the east coast of Sumatra, the Bompa (Badan Untuk Membantu Pertahanan Asia, Body for Helping in the Defence of Asia) was established in 1943 in which nationalists played a prominent role. After that, similar organisations like the Jawa Hokokai were put to work throughout Sumatra to mobilise labour and resources.

on a voluntary basis, but when more labour was needed in 1943, villages were ordered to supply a quota of 20 to 30 men. Village chiefs often selected poor peasants and landless people who were then supervised by Indonesian foremen and put to work in ports and coal mines and in the construction of military fortifications, airstrips and railways, for a small remuneration. Although the work was called *kerja bakti* (volunteer work) carried out by *pradjurit ekonomi* (economic warriors), it was, in fact, a ruse for mass-scale forced labour. A total of 10 million Javanese were called up, 120,000 of whom were transported to Sumatra and 70,000 to mainland Southeast Asia.²⁶ In addition, at least 22,000 women were abducted to work in Japanese brothels. They were euphemistically called 'comfort women'. The same fate befell a few hundred European women.

The Japanese saw the *romusha* as disposable workers. They were forced to do hard labour for long hours and were given no clothes and too little food. Tens of thousands died of hunger, exhaustion and diseases such as malaria and dysentery. Countless labourers fled but died of exhaustion on their way home or were punished by the village chief on their arrival. Due to the many desertions, but especially because the military administration began demanding more and more labour, an increasing number of *romusha* had to be recruited. In the course of 1945, men were arbitrarily rounded up, and schoolchildren were also put to work. Families suffered from want because their breadwinners were absent, and the agricultural cycle was disrupted.

The construction of railways in particular claimed many lives. An estimated 15,000 Javanese *romusha* were killed in the construction of the Burma Railway and 25,000 in the 220-kilometre-long Pakan Baru Railway from West to East Sumatra. What is less well known is that a railway was also built in West Java, from Seketi to Bayah: a 90-kilometre route with 59 bridges constructed for the extraction of lignite from Bayah. Of the tens of thousands of *romusha* used to build the railroad and to extract lignite, thousands died from exhaustion, malaria and snake bites.

In September 1944, Sukarno and Hatta visited the mine in Bayah. After Sukarno gave a speech calling for everyone to fight alongside the Japanese against the Western imperialist powers, vowing that Indonesia's independence would come right after the victory, someone in the audience asked a question: why not obtain independence first and then fight with Japan against the West? The anonymous questioner was in fact Tan Malaka, who

26 Sato 1994: 158; Raben 1998. The term *kerja bakti* re-emerged during the New Order (1966–1998) and referred to the mobilisation of free labour for community projects.

had been working as a clerk and superintendent at the mine from the end of 1943 under the pseudonym Iljas Husein. He had arrived in Jakarta in July 1942 after the fall of Singapore via Sumatra, where he began a life of reading and writing. His book *Madilog: Materialisme, Dialektika, Logika* (Materialism, Dialectics, Logic), which he completed in 1943, was an ambitious attempt to apply Marxist analysis to Indonesian society. When his money ran out, he left for Bayah. As a supervisor at the mine, he set up a soup kitchen, a hospital, and even an orchestra and a sports club.

In his memoirs, Sukarno described the misery he had come across during his visit to Bayah. He saw 'wretched skeletons performing slave labour.' At the same time, he made propaganda for this 'voluntary labour' by having his picture taken near Jakarta in shorts, a shirt and a straw hat to urge people to sign up. He knew exactly what he was doing:

Yes, I was the one who put them to work. Yes, I shipped them to their death. Yes, yes, yes, I am responsible. It was awful. I handed them over to the Japanese; no one likes this ugly truth.

But, he added,

(...) if I have to sacrifice thousands to save millions, I will. As the leader of this country, I cannot afford the luxury of sensitivity.²⁷

A growing aversion and anger arose among the population against not only Sukarno but especially the village chiefs and Javanese administrators who had sent them to this hell.

Famine

Besides labour, the military administration also seized rice production. At the end of the colonial period, the annual production in Java had amounted to more than eight million tons of unhusked rice. Because the rice output lagged behind that of Japan, the military administration decided to intervene. It insisted on the use of better rice varieties, improvements in fertilisation and irrigation, and on the paddy plants being planted in neat rows. But little came of such efforts; from 1943 onwards, yields even gradually declined not only because farmers were reluctant to implement all kinds of changes but also as a result of Japanese mismanagement.

²⁷ Adams 1965: 220; 184–6, 193.

The Japanese military administration introduced a strictly planned economy in 1943, which required every residency in Java to be economically autonomous. Free trade was prohibited. On the basis of quotas imposed on all villages, farmers were obliged to transfer an average of 20 percent of their rice harvest at a fixed floor price. The quotas had to be delivered to rice mills owned by Chinese traders, who then resold the husked rice to the Japanese army. Significant pressure was put on the Javanese administration and the village chiefs to ensure that the quotas were delivered, but the rice harvest in 1943 was already 400,000 tons less than in 1941.

In 1944, the rice yield decreased even further both as a result of drought and because farmers withheld their harvest or deliberately produced less as they saw little point in supplying rice at such a low price. After each failure of a particular measure, the automatic reaction of the military administration was to impose even more impracticable measures, but in practice it had lost all control over agriculture. Prices were regulated once again, but this failed to make a difference. Due to the rigid autarky imposed on the residencies, shortages in one region could not be offset by a surplus elsewhere. In addition, the Japanese army requisitioned two and a half times as much rice in 1944 as the year before. Java supplied rice not only to the 16th Army but also to eastern Indonesia and to troops in the Pacific. The poorest farmers were hit the hardest because they had absolutely no leeway to get by. Food shortages were reported as early as 1943, and in the course of 1944 a widespread famine broke out.

In 1945 only 5.6 million tons of rice were harvested, while all of a sudden an extra 100,000 tons was requisitioned for the headquarters in Singapore where, as in Java, extra supplies were stockpiled in preparation for the approach of the Allied troops. The military administration had decided to bring the Javanese population to the lowest possible level of subsistence.²⁸ Widespread corruption among the Javanese administration exacerbated the emergency situation. A significant amount of rice disappeared via Chinese traders to the black market, where, by 1945, a kilo of rice cost four rupiah even though the official price was set at 15 cents.

The rice distribution system was no longer functioning, and the daily rations of it had been halved from 150 to 75 grams per person per day. A report by the Central Advisory Council on the emergency situation in Java stated that the elite could still cope but that the lower classes were suffering greatly. At its worst, the daily rations of rice fell to as low as 30 grams per person. Many tried to survive by concocting a mixture

28 Friend 2014: 265.

of soybeans, corn, cassava and sweet potato – cynically called *bubur* (porridge) *Asia Raya* or *menu perjuangan* (the combat menu) – but even these ingredients were sorely lacking.²⁹ In the Central Advisory Council, Hatta proposed first providing the people with adequate rations before supplying the Japanese army, but the military administration was not interested in his suggestion.

Medical care had long since ceased to exist, and a major lack of textiles had arisen throughout the archipelago. In the course of 1944, there was no more clothing available. Civil servants went to the office in burlap pants and shirts; others wrapped themselves in rags of rubber; but many had nothing left to wear. As a result, Muslims could no longer go to Friday prayers, and farmers worked naked in their fields. In 1944 and 1945, masses of emaciated beggars swarmed from the countryside to the cities, where they starved to death. Every day there were new corpses lying on the side of the road. In total, two and a half million people died in Java in 1944 and 1945 as a result of hunger, disease and exhaustion.³⁰ These are the forgotten victims of the Japanese occupation who are rarely – if ever – commemorated.

It was under these circumstances that people spoke wistfully of colonial times as the *zaman normal*, the normal time. There was considerable bitterness among the people directed towards the Japanese occupiers as well as anger against the corrupt members of the Javanese administration and Chinese traders.

Resistance

In contrast to the Philippines and the Malay Peninsula, where there was obstinate resistance against the Japanese regime, there were very few uprisings in the Indonesian archipelago. Just before the Dutch capitulation in March 1942, senior Dutch officials had given Amir Sjarifuddin 25,000 guilders to organise underground resistance. Sjarifuddin activated a network of former Gerindo members and communists who were mainly active in and around Surabaya. Former ARD agents who had joined the Kenpeitai provided their new bosses an invaluable service when they passed on information about the network that led to its dismantlement in 1943. Among the 50 detainees was Amir Sjarifuddin himself. He was sentenced to death, but as

29 The production of maize and cassava also fell between 1943 and 1945, from 2.2 to 0.9 million tonnes and from 8.7 to 3.1 million tonnes per year respectively.

30 De Jong 1985: 557–9; Van der Eng 2002.

a result of the timely intervention of Sukarno and Hatta, the death penalty was not carried out. Instead, Sjarifuddin remained in custody.

In Aceh in November 1942, an uprising led by a young Muslim leader was crushed, resulting in 100 deaths. In West Java, a series of uprisings took place in the first half of 1944. It began in February in Tasikmalaya, when the leader of a religious school protested against the compulsory rice supplies. Rich peasants who had the most to lose formed the core of the resistance, and the target of the protests was the local government that had imposed the levies. The military administration intervened forcefully, killing dozens and arresting 700 people. In Indramayu, the harvest had partially failed, but levies of 70 percent of the harvest were still imposed. The resistance here proceeded in a similar manner as in Tasikmalaya, and here too it was put down with ferocity.

Even though these were small-scale uprisings, they came as a shock to the Japanese administration, which began to realise that the policy of winning over the 'hearts and minds' of Islamic leaders had failed. This conclusion led to the removal of Husein Djajadiningrat as head of the Department of Religious Affairs. He was replaced by NU leader Hasjim Asjari.

In South and West Kalimantan, the Japanese carried out a campaign between 1943 and 1945 to quash what they claimed was a large-scale conspiracy. In the second half of 1943, mass arrests were made in Banjarmasin, and 1100 people were executed. Soon thereafter, between October 1943 and January 1944, the sultan's family and the aristocracy were almost completely massacred by the Japanese in Pontianak, and at the end of 1944, many members of the Chinese elite of Pontianak and Singkawang were killed. In total, 1500 hundred people were murdered, including twelve sultans. To this day, no evidence has ever been found of a plot to overthrow the Japanese. The Japanese campaign was most likely intended to eliminate the entire Dutch-speaking elite and to seize all their possessions.

Japan's defeats

From May 1944 onwards, the Japanese troops began to suffer more and more defeats in their battles against the Allied armies. By mid-1944, the north coast of New Guinea was in American hands. From there, the Allies bombed Makassar, Manado and the city of Ambon as well as the oil installations in Tarakan and Balikpapan. In September, Morotai was captured, allowing the attack on the Philippines to be launched from there. In February 1945, American troops captured Manila after heavy fighting. The final attack on Japan cost thousands of victims: the Battle of Iwojima in February 1945 killed

21,000 American and 30,000 Japanese soldiers. At the Battle of Okinawa in April 1945, 110,000 Japanese and over 12,500 American soldiers were killed.³¹

Approaching from the west, the British had entered Burma in November 1944 and were preparing to enter the Malay Peninsula. This meant the Japanese forces in the Indonesian archipelago were isolated at the beginning of 1945, with only radio contact possible between Tokyo and Batavia. From his headquarters in Dalat (in Vietnam), Marshal Terauchi delegated his authority to the commanders of the 25th Army in Bukittinggi and the 16th Army in Jakarta.

On 17 July 1944, Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo resigned and was replaced by General Kuniaki Koiso. In a last-ditch effort to extract even more labour and rice from the archipelago and to win the last vestiges of goodwill from the nationalists, it was decided in Tokyo in early September to grant Indonesia (excluding New Guinea) independence 'in the near future'. The naval command and the 25th Army had long resisted this move because they did not want to give up their grip on Eastern Indonesia and Sumatra. The statement was therefore kept intentionally vague, as it was unclear when 'the near future' would be. Nevertheless, Prime Minister Koiso's declaration on 6 September 1944 offered the nationalists the leeway they so coveted to raise their profiles.

To welcome the Koiso Declaration, mass rallies were held across the archipelago to convey to Tokyo the people's support and gratitude. The Indonesian flag and anthem were finally allowed, as was the slogan '*merdeka*'. On 8 September, Sukarno addressed a crowd in Jakarta and pledged to continue fighting life and death for the Japanese cause until victory was achieved; only then was freedom possible. On 14 September, the Indonesian flag was openly displayed for the first time in Yogyakarta in front of a crowd of 100,000 people. During mass meetings from 19 to 23 September in Bukittinggi on the east coast of Sumatra and in Tapanuli, the Japanese administration even required that the red-and-white flag be raised.

Belief in the Japanese victory had declined considerably by this point, and the resentment against Japanese rule was increasing by the day. The Japanese military administration nonetheless launched the New Life campaign in Java, but it was doomed to fail because the hunger and exhaustion among the people could no longer be disguised.

Meanwhile, a feeling of restlessness dominated the PETA. In February 1945, a revolt broke out in Blitar among PETA officers who were more

31 A total of 128,000 Allied soldiers were killed between 1941 and 1945, 80 percent of whom were Americans. On the Japanese side, one and a half million soldiers died.

than fed up not only with the harsh treatment they received from their Japanese superiors but also with the Japanese behaviour towards Indonesian women and their poor treatment of *romusha*. Led by officer Suprijadi, a mass uprising was prepared, but due to fears that the plans would leak out, an attack was launched prematurely on the local Kenpeitai barracks. Within 48 hours, the resistance had been brutally suppressed. Nothing is known about Suprijadi's fate. And in Aceh, two platoons of Laskar Rakyat rose up against Japanese officers as early as November 1944. In July 1945, a similar uprising occurred in Pematang Siantar. There was also resistance among PETA units in Tjilatjap and Ambarawa. There is no evidence, however, that this resistance was nationalistic in nature, as has been claimed.³²

The Central Advisory Council was still powerless. Hatta's complaints about the state of emergency in Java and the degrading treatment of *romusha* went unanswered. Moreover, it took a very long time before there was a follow-up to the Koiso Declaration of September 1944. Tokyo remained hesitant for so long that General Kumakichi Harada, the commander-in-chief of the 16th Army, decided to seize the initiative himself. On 1 March 1945, he announced the formation of the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Independence (Badan Penyelidik Usaha-Isaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia, BPUPKI), a cumbersome name for a committee that was to look into preparations for Indonesia's independence. The work got off to a slow start, however, for it was not until 29 April, the Japanese emperor's birthday, that the Committee was appointed by General Yuichiro Nagano, Harada's successor.

The pemuda

Before the Committee finally convened on 28 May, groups of young anti-Japanese nationalists started to become active in various places in Jakarta. They were called *pemuda*, which means 'youth', but the *pemuda* leaders were often not so young anymore – they were people in their 30s who had been politically active already in the last years of the Dutch East Indies. The crisis motivated them to take action, and the mass mobilisation of young people gave them a potential following. When indications of an imminent Japanese defeat began to emerge, groups of *pemuda* began to form loosely organised associations centred around student houses (*asrama*), where they discussed the progress of the war and the future nation, criticised the Japanese regime and expressed their dissatisfaction with the cautious and accommodating attitude of the older generation of nationalist leaders.

32 See Nugroho Notokusanto 1969.

There were roughly three groups of *pemuda* in Jakarta, which were in regular contact with each other. The first group consisted of students from the Medical Faculty who came from Dutch-speaking and Western-oriented elite families. Their *asrama* was located at Prapatan 10. These students were close to Sjahrir.³³ In 1943, they had gone on strike when they were forced by the Japanese to have their heads shaved. Arrests followed, which were overturned due to Sukarno's intervention. Despite this assistance, the students strongly criticised Sukarno. At the end of 1943, a delegation led by Sudjatmoko confronted him in Dutch about his far-reaching cooperation with the Japanese.

The second group, called Angkatan Baru (New Generation), met at Menteng 31. It had been founded back in August 1942 on the initiative of Hitoshi Shimizu of the Japanese propaganda service.³⁴ Shimizu wanted to steer the group in the direction of Japan's New Asia policy, but it gradually came to determine its own course. The group was more varied in composition than the *asrama* at Prapatan 10, and the educational level of its members also differed. Some of the students had already been imprisoned for participating in anticolonial actions. Sukarno, Hatta, Muhammad Yamin and Amir Sjarifuddin gave lectures there, and regular visitors included the young communists D.N. Aidit and Lukman.³⁵ The group had good contacts with journalists – including Adam Malik, B.M. Diah and the brothers Anwar and Harsono Tjokroaminoto – and therefore had access to reliable information. These students also gradually became more and more critical of the Japanese regime and of Sukarno.

The third group was also created on the initiative of a Japanese: Vice Admiral Tadashi Maeda, head of the Japanese Navy's liaison office in Jakarta. He had his own political agenda which differed from that of the Japanese army. After the Koiso Declaration, he set up the Asrama Indonesia Merdeka (The Boarding School of Free Indonesia) at Kebonsirih 80 in October 1944. The aim of the *asrama* was to rapidly prepare young people for leading positions in an independent Indonesia. Maeda hoped that they would remain sympathetic to Japan after the war.³⁶ Lectures at the Asrama Indonesia Merdeka were given by Sukarno, Hatta, Subardjo and Sjahrir, among others.

33 Sudjatmoko, Subianto Djojohadikusumo and Daan Jahja were among those in this group.

34 This place now houses a museum dedicated to the Revolution.

35 They were also the leaders of a smaller group, the Gerakan Indonesia Merdeka (Free Indonesia Movement).

36 His colleague Yaichiro Shibata in Surabaya also took a dissenting position within the navy by supporting the nationalists. In April 1945, he facilitated a visit by Sukarno and Subardjo to Makassar.

The list of students shows a great deal of overlap with the members of the boarding school at Menteng 31. Here, too, an increasingly anti-Japanese mood began to emerge in the course of 1945.³⁷

What united these groups was their opposition to the cooperative approach of the older leaders and to the empty Japanese promises. Whereas Sukarno remained faithful to the Japanese cause in his speeches, these students became increasingly indignant over the behaviour of the Japanese. In 1944, at the end of the month of fasting, they confronted Sukarno with poor beggars who barely had any clothes on their bodies. Sukarno, who initially thought he was dealing with admirers, stood there literally empty-handed.³⁸

Changes under Japanese rule

On the surface, there were similarities between the Dutch colonial regime and the Japanese regime. Both were characterised by highly repressive top-down policies. And both paid lip service to a policy of development while in practice self-interest and exploitation came first. Yet, in actual fact, there were more differences than similarities. While Dutch policy was aimed at *demobilising* Islamic and nationalist organisations, the Japanese regime focused on mass mobilisation. Under the Japanese, Islamic leaders were given much more leeway, Indonesian administrators were given more power, and Indonesian became the official language. The Dutch and the Dutch language disappeared from the public space, marking a turning point in the process of decolonisation.

What was also new was that the Japanese regime sowed the seeds of a corporatist model in which components of society – and not the individual – were part of a larger integrated whole, one that was ideally hierarchical and harmonious. Within this model, nationalist leaders were given the opportunity to present themselves to the people. It was only under Japanese rule that Sukarno became known to the masses.

The urban nationalists who had hoped to play a role in the New Asia after the Japanese invasion were left feeling cheated when the Japanese military regime decided in 1943 to mobilise the Muslim leaders. However, when even this failed to rally the masses, the Japanese turned instead to

37 There were rumours that Maeda anticipated a communist *coup d'état* in Japan, which was to lead to an alliance with the Soviet Union during World War III against England and the United States. To thwart a leftist power grab in Java, it was said that Maeda secretly trained infiltrators to sow discord among the communists (Kahin 1952: 115–21). There is not a shred of evidence for this claim.

38 Mark 2003: 575.

the administrative aristocracy, the *pangreh pradja*, who were still firmly in place, while nationalist leaders were put in a supporting role.

As the end of the war approached, hundreds of thousands of young people were mobilised, who thereby got a taste of an exciting new mentality (*semangat*). However, the vast majority of the people in Java were simply exhausted and starving. The Japanese regime had been reasonably well-disposed towards the middle class and the elite but was not at all concerned about the fate of the lower classes. A new generation of young nationalists rose up in revolt. They felt betrayed by the older generation of nationalist leaders and wanted to fight for freedom themselves and on their own terms. The nationalist youths from the Jakarta boarding schools and the thousands of young people who had been mobilised in various militias shared a sense of urgency as Japanese rule began to falter and Javanese society threatened to collapse. Driven by despair and resentment as well as the desire for radical change and a reckoning with the past, the youth had suddenly become an important player.

3 The Proclamation

May–September 1945

By mid-1945, it was clear that the end of the Japanese occupation of the archipelago was imminent, but it was by no means clear who would take power. Who among the Japanese was in charge? What were the Republican leaders planning to do, and who could they call upon for help? What did the *pemuda* want? And where were the Allies?

Pemuda in action and the tenets of the new Indonesia

In an attempt to harness the dynamics of the *pemuda* movement, the Japanese authorities founded an umbrella youth organisation called the Angkatan Muda (Young Generation) in mid-1944. They kept it under their strict control and forced a number of prominent *pemuda*, including Sukarni and Chaerul Saleh, to lead the organisation.

Despite Japanese efforts to keep the youth in line, the *pemuda* became increasingly independent and the Angkatan Muda evolved into a movement that turned against Japanese rule, as was evident during the Youth Congress held in Bandung from 16 to 18 May 1945, where delegates from youth organisations from all over Java gathered. This event was an opportunity for them to exchange ideas and get to know each other better.¹ Although the Japanese authorities believed they were firmly in control of the meeting, *pemuda* leaders did as they pleased. Once again, the *pemuda* levelled harsh criticism against the older generation of nationalist leaders, whom they accused of collaborating with the Japanese.

More important than the official speeches at the congress were the intensive informal contacts made, which led to two final resolutions: 1) all nationalist groups should be united under one leadership, and 2) Indonesia should become independent as soon as possible. The Angkatan Muda was fully committed to these resolutions. After returning home, the delegates ensured that the decisions reached at the congress were known all over Java. The *pemuda* had clearly seized the initiative.

Meanwhile, the Investigating Committee that had been established on 1 March to look into the preparations needed for independence (the Badan

¹ Statements regarding the number of participants ranged from 150 to 300 (Anderson 1972: 51).

Penyelidik Usaha-Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia, BPUPK) had started its work. Before this committee was officially inaugurated on 28 May, there had already been much public discussion about what an independent Indonesia should look like. The public was invited to give its opinion via letters submitted to newspapers and participation in discussion sessions in numerous cities across Java.

In November 1944, Sukarno had laid out the characteristics of an independent Indonesia in general terms. In a speech, he summed these up in what he called the Panca Dharma, or the five obligations: freedom, unity, sovereignty, justice and prosperity. He also emphasised that the citizens of Indonesia should serve the people and God, and fight for peace on earth. But to show his loyalty to the Japanese administration, he prioritised the fight-to-the-death struggle for Japan, only after which independence would come.

The public discussion that took place a few months later provided more clarity. A minority of the participants in the public debate defined the future Indonesia in cultural terms and argued that the nation should be based on old Javanese values and on village democracy with its commitment to consensus. Only a small minority advocated the introduction of Western democracy and respect for individual rights. For the majority, democracy was not high on the agenda. Influenced by the Japanese regime's propaganda, the majority preferred to give the state a leading role. This view held that the state and society should form a corporatist relationship, with the priority placed not on the individual but rather the collective. The nation was considered to be a large, interconnected family led by a powerful state. This view did not exclude left-wing ideas: the state was also seen as the servant of the people, responsible for improving welfare by means of a state-run economy. The main emphasis was therefore placed on hierarchy and leadership, and this suited the role that Sukarno envisioned for himself.²

The main elements of this public discussion were reflected in the decisions taken during the meetings of the Investigating Committee. The Javanese administrative corps (the *pangreh pradja*) and the nationalists were equally represented in the Investigating Committee, and the Arabs and Chinese also had some representatives, but Indo-Europeans were not represented. The Committee had a total of 70 members, which included eight Japanese delegates.

Convening at the People's Council building in Jakarta, the Investigating Committee was able to determine the basic principles of the new state

2 Van Klinken 2020.

over the course of two sessions. At the first session from 29 May to 1 June, general premises were discussed; and during the second session from 10 to 15 July, decisions were made.

The members of the Investigating Committee quickly agreed on the type of new state that Indonesia should become: a unified state and not a federation, which Hatta had favoured on pragmatic grounds. It should be not a monarchy under the leadership of the Sultan of Yogyakarta, which a small minority of aristocrats had called for, but a republic. Only 'indigenous' Indonesians should become citizens; Chinese, Arabs and Indo-Europeans could not be citizens because they were too closely linked to the colonial regime. The idea was that they might be eligible for citizenship at a later stage.

There were two viewpoints about the demarcation of Indonesia's borders, both of which envisioned a Greater Indonesia. The proposal submitted by Muhammad Yamin successfully advocated the adherence to the (alleged) borders of the fifteenth-century empire of Majapahit. That included not only the Dutch East Indies but also British Malaya and North Kalimantan, East Timor, the Philippines and all of Irian. A less far-reaching proposal put forth by Hatta, which included the Dutch East Indies as well as the rest of the Malay world but without Irian Barat (formerly New Guinea), was rejected.

There were major differences of opinion within the Investigating Committee regarding the internal relations between the different religious and ethnic groups of Indonesia. Here, the Committee members came up against the sharp racial, ethnic and religious dividing lines that had been drawn by the colonial state to counteract an awareness of national unity. The impasse in the discussion was overcome in masterly fashion by Sukarno on 1 June when he presented the five precepts (the Pancasila) on which Indonesia should be based. Building on the Panca Dharma but now completely stripping out his obeisance to Japan, he set out the five pillars. The first was Nationalism, which transcended regional differences. This was followed by Internationalism, because nationalism cannot stand alone but also involves solidarity with other countries. The third pillar was Democracy – not in the Western sense, but understood as the collective pursuit of consensus. The fourth pillar was Social Justice, and the fifth was Faith in One God. Without specifying exactly which god was meant, the last pillar emphasised the peaceful coexistence of Islam and other religions. Finally, he described mutual assistance (*gotong rojong*) as a guiding principle, one that was deeply embedded in the culture. In this way, Sukarno was able to maintain unity. The presentation of his five precepts deeply moved those who were present.

Yet the Islamic leaders on the Investigating Committee were not satisfied. They wanted more guarantees that would safeguard the position of Islam

in Indonesia, but they were met with opposition from the secular members of the Council, who did not want to establish a special status for Muslims in the Constitution. A committee was established to work things out, and a compromise was presented on 22 June.³ It stipulated that the belief in one God would be mentioned first – instead of last – in the Pancasila. In addition, the committee proposed addressing the concerns of the Muslims in a preamble to the Constitution, which would come to be known as the Jakarta Charter (Piagam Jakarta). This charter specified – against Sukarno's wishes – that the president should be a Muslim and that Muslims should follow Islamic law, which meant that Muslims were expected to pray five times a day, go on pilgrimage, make donations (the *zakat*) to the needy, and observe Islamic family law. It was thanks to this Charter that a potential crisis was averted.

A separate committee was charged with drafting the Constitution, bringing the ideas that had emerged in the public debate onto the political agenda. Under the leadership of the conservative lawyer Supomo, the committee chose a political system characterised by corporatism, hierarchy and leadership. Taking inspiration from authoritarian regimes such as Japan, Italy and Nazi Germany; Javanese notions of authority and harmony; and ideas derived from colonial *adat* law that emphasised ethnic and religious diversity, the contours of a centralist and corporatist state emerged. The Constitution emphasised the primacy of the state – one in which citizens were primarily made aware of their obligations. At the same time, the Constitution also provided citizens with certain rights, namely the freedom of religion, the freedom of association and the freedom of expression as well as the right to education. Not all ethnic groups were treated equally, however, for Article 6.1 of the Constitution stipulated that only a native (*asli*) Indonesian could become president. Indo-Europeans, Chinese and Arabs were thus deprived of this possibility.

In line with the authoritarian character of the state, the committee opted for a presidential system that gave much power to the head of state. Following the American example, the president was to appoint – and dismiss – the members of his cabinet and was allowed to veto decisions reached by parliament. He was also commander-in-chief of the armed forces and could rule by decree in an emergency.⁴

3 The committee included Sukarno, Hatta, Subardjo and Yamin, and as representatives of the Islamic line Agus Salim, Abikusno Tjokrosujoso and Wahid Hasjim.

4 An umbrella Council of People's Consultations (Madjelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, MPR) was to be established above the level of the parliament that would formally embody the supreme

The Investigating Committee concluded its work in mid-July. The Jakarta Charter was adopted only after an intense debate. On 17 July, the Japanese War Council in Tokyo decided that preparations could be undertaken for Indonesia's independence. But Tokyo brushed aside the ambitious plans for a Greater Indonesia, dictating that Indonesia would retain its old colonial borders.

Meanwhile, the *pemuda* had become very apprehensive about the proceedings of the Investigating Committee because of how obedient the nationalist leaders were to their Japanese patrons. It was for this reason that a new movement by the name of Angkatan Baru Indonesia (New Generation of Indonesia) was founded in Jakarta on 15 June at the instigation of Chaerul Saleh. This movement was more radical than the Angkatan Muda and demanded the swift formation of a democratic unified state without Japanese intrusion. The following statement epitomised the uncompromising rhetoric of the Angkatan Baru:

We, the youth of the New Generation, swear before heaven and earth: we are ready to die in the struggle for the eternal freedom of our homeland. Our blood boils, our hearts pump, our spirit explodes. In the name of the honour of the homeland, our people, our language, our flag, who have the right to a fruitful existence in Indonesia.⁵

In an effort to keep the *pemuda* in check, the Central Advisory Council urged the Japanese army leadership to give these young people more administrative positions, expand their military training and include them in the leadership of the Gerakan Rakyat Baru (GRB), a new organisation established to unite all existing organisations such as the Jawa Hokokai (Javanese Service Society) and Masyumi. In the initial stages of the GRB, the *pemuda* were, for the first time, given ample room to voice their opinion, with most of the representatives coming from the Angkatan Baru circle.

As it became increasingly clear to the *pemuda* that the Japanese defeat would not be long in coming, they demanded on 6 July that the older leaders adopt a stronger and more nationalist attitude. They asked for the statutes of the GRB to include an unambiguous reference to the future independent Republic of Indonesia, but this was unacceptable to the Japanese army command. In response, the *pemuda* withdrew their support for the older nationalist leaders and walked out of the meeting.

authority of the Republic. The MPR met only once every five years to elect the president and vice president.

5 *Soeara Asia*, 13 June 1945, in Van Klinken 2000.

It was thus without the participation of the youth that the GRB was officially inaugurated on 28 July by the Japanese commander-in-chief Nagano. The *pemuda* were bitter. The gap between them and the older leaders had become deep and wide. Not much became of the GRB in the end because it was soon overtaken by new, unforeseen events.

The Japanese defeat

On 6 August, the first atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima. The following day, the establishment of the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence (Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia, PPKI) was announced in Singapore, by which it was made clear that independence would encompass all of Indonesia. This marked a break from the administrative division of the archipelago into three units – Java, Sumatra and East Indonesia – that the Japanese had implemented.⁶

The PPKI consisted of 21 members including representatives from areas outside Java. The majority were older, more experienced, secular politicians and a number of prominent representatives of the traditional administrative elite, all of whom had acquired experience under the Japanese regime. The Japanese army leadership believed that this group guaranteed a smooth transition to independent Indonesian rule. And perhaps this belief was accompanied by the hope that the PPKI could put in a good word with the Allies after the Japanese defeat.

Subardjo was added as a 'special advisor' to the PPKI because of his position on the Naval Staff in Jakarta. His role was to tell the Committee what the Japanese standpoints were and to keep his Japanese superiors informed of developments within the Committee. Representatives of Muslim organisations were greatly underrepresented in the Committee, and the *pemuda* were absent altogether. The first meeting was set for 18 August, and the Japanese plan was for independence to be declared in September.

In a radio message on 7 August, Sukarno welcomed the establishment of the PPKI and the upcoming independence. He let the Dutch know that 'the Indonesians wanted to be independent. Don't try to mislead us with words. Our choice is freedom or death.'⁷

6 The Japanese apparently had not yet agreed among themselves on the nature of the new state because on 9 August the leaders of the Japanese navy met in Makassar to discuss the formation of a federation in which East Indonesia was to become a state led by aristocrats and intellectuals (Van Klinken 2003: 226–7).

7 Burgers 2010: 344.

On 9 August, Sukarno, Hatta, and the chairman of the Investigating Committee, Radjiman Wediodiningrat – accompanied by two Japanese escorts and Sukarno's personal physician – left for Saigon via Singapore to confer with Marshal Terauchi at the Japanese headquarters in Dalat. The day before, Sjahrir and some *pemuda* leaders had made a passionate appeal to Sukarno to stop cooperating with the Japanese and instead to declare an 'uncontaminated' independence on his own. Their efforts were in vain. While Sjahrir anticipated a swift collapse of Japanese rule, Sukarno and Hatta assumed that this could take a few more months.

On 12 August, Terauchi received Sukarno and Hatta in Dalat. He informed them that Tokyo had decided to grant Indonesia independence, and he installed them as chairman and vice-chairman of the PPKI. At that point, Sukarno and Hatta were unaware that a second atomic bomb had been dropped on Nagasaki on 9 August. On their way home, they heard in Saigon that the Soviet Union had declared war on Japan and had invaded Manchuria. Hatta still believed that Japan would not surrender for another few months.

After a dangerous journey – the airspace was by then controlled by Allied aircraft – the delegation arrived back in Jakarta on Tuesday, 14 August, where they were met by a cheering crowd, leaders of the nationalist movement, and high-ranking Japanese military personnel, including Vice-Admiral Maeda.

Independence: uncertainty and improvisation

Sjahrir was well informed about the international situation, which convinced him that the Japanese would capitulate very soon. He went to visit Hatta the very evening of his return to convince him once again that time was running out, and that the declaration of independence had to take place as soon as possible without waiting for the first meeting of the PPKI or for Japanese permission. This was the only way they could dispel any Allied accusation that the Republic was a Japanese puppet state. Sjahrir told Hatta that the colonial Dutch government-in-exile in Australia had made it clear via the radio that it would crack down on Indonesian leaders who had worked with the Japanese. Hatta's reaction was laconic: the fact was that Sukarno and he *had* worked with the Japanese, and it was now crucial not to become involved in a dispute with Japan. That night Hatta and Sjahrir went to see Sukarno, who felt that a proclamation outside the framework of the PPKI was impossible and also wanted to first consult with the Japanese authorities.

When Sjahrir left, he mobilised the *pemuda* and began writing a declaration of independence. Sukarno and Hatta went to Japanese military headquarters the next day – the morning of 15 August – accompanied by

Subardjo to find out whether the rumours of a Japanese capitulation were true. At headquarters, no one could explain exactly what was going on. Everyone was waiting for an announced speech by the emperor. Subardjo suggested going to the Navy liaison office to try to find out more. It was there that Vice Admiral Maeda confirmed – while expressing many reservations in a long-winded explanation – that the Japanese government had ordered a cease-fire but that he had not yet received any official confirmation. He promised to pass on all instructions from Tokyo immediately.

In the afternoon, word came in about the Japanese emperor's radio address declaring the Japanese capitulation. It was a huge shock not only to the Japanese occupying forces but also to the Indonesian leaders involved in the impending independence. Sukarno and Hatta realised that their plans for a controlled transfer of power under Japanese supervision were now unworkable.

The first session of the PPKI had been set for 18 August, but it seemed superseded given the circumstances, and because the Allies had ordered the Japanese army to maintain the *status quo* in Indonesia. The nationalists had thus missed the opportunity to establish their own state structure under Japanese supervision before the end of the war and to thereby present the Allies with a *fait accompli*. Hatta proposed that they nonetheless proceed with the first session of the PPKI, which Subardjo convened on 16 August, and began working on a text for the proclamation of independence.

The *pemuda* were by this time also aware of the Japanese surrender. A proclamation text written by Sjahrir was said to be circulating; it reached Cirebon later that day and was read out loud there.⁸ In the afternoon of Wednesday, 15 August, representatives of various youth groups met to prepare a proclamation untainted by any Japanese meddling. To these youths, it was unacceptable for the PPKI to play a prominent role in the proclamation. If the older leaders – especially Sukarno and Hatta – continued to hesitate and refused to cooperate in swiftly issuing a proclamation, the *pemuda* would declare independence themselves.

A fifteen-strong delegation of *pemuda* went to meet with Hatta, demanding that a proclamation be made immediately – broadcast on radio – followed by a seizure of power. Hatta replied that while he supported a revolution, he was against a putsch, alluding to Hitler's failed coup in Munich in 1923. Accompanied by Wikana, Chaerul Saleh, Sukarni and Adam Malik, the angry *pemuda* then left for Sukarno's residence. Hatta and Subardjo also rushed to Sukarno's after hearing from Wikana (who, like Subardjo, was

8 No copy of this version remains.

attached to the staff of the Japanese navy) that the *pemuda* were headed there. As a personal advisor to Maeda, Subardjo was to play an important role as liaison and mediator. His position on the Naval Staff shielded him from actions by the Japanese army and the Kenpeitai.

During the *pemuda's* meeting with Sukarno, Wikana acted as spokesperson. Full of fire, he repeated the demands of the *pemuda*, but Sukarno and Hatta refused to budge. They did not want to take any risks and therefore stuck to the Japanese scenario, which meant that the procedure of the proclamation had to go through the PPKI. Wikana argued that a refusal by Sukarno would lead to bloodshed and fatalities. What followed was a fierce debate in which Wikana and the *pemuda* felt they were not being taken seriously. They argued that the revolution was in their hands and ordered Sukarno to proclaim independence and the birth of the Republic that night, or else... In Sukarno's own words, this is what followed:

'Or else what?' I exclaimed, jumping out of my chair, pale with anger. 'Don't you dare threaten me. Don't you dare order me. You will do what I want. I will never let you force me!' I sprang into the midst of the armed young men, bowed my head, stretched my neck and gestured as if someone was cutting my neck. 'Here,' I mocked. 'Here's my neck. Go on and chop... go ahead and chop off my head... you can kill me... but I will never risk unnecessary bloodshed because you want to have it your way.'⁹

As they did not dare to kill Sukarno, the only thing the *pemuda* could do was leave his house. When Wikana gave an account of the meeting to Sjahrir and the assembled *pemuda* late that evening, they took Sukarno and Hatta's rejection of their proposal very seriously. They felt deeply humiliated and decided to take action. While Sjahrir disagreed with this course of action, he also did not object.

When the members of the PPKI showed up for their first session on Thursday morning, 16 August, Sukarno and Hatta were absent. Nobody knew where they were. Early that morning, Sukarno had picked up Hatta and Sukarno, along with the latter's wife Fatmawati and their son Guntur, telling them that their safety was in danger. An uprising by Indonesian auxiliary

9 Adams 1965: 238. The events leading up to the proclamation are taken from Adam Malik 1948, 1975; Adams 1965; Anderson 1972; Chaerudin 1973; B.M. Diah 1983; Dokumentasi pemuda 1948; Isnaeni 2008, 2015a, 2015b; Han Bing Siong 2000; Hering 2002; Iwa Kusumasumantri 2002; Kahin 1952; Sidik Kertapati 1964; Nishijima 1986; Raliby 1953; Subardjo 1978; Tan Malaka 1948; Wenri Wenhar 2014.

forces (PETA and Heiho units) against the Japanese army leadership was reportedly about to take place, and it was said that Japanese soldiers were out to kill the nationalist leaders. The group was taken by car to Rengasdengklok, 80 kilometres east of Jakarta, where the local PETA commander had captured a few Japanese soldiers, raised the Indonesian flag, and had read out a brief proclamation of independence.

Chaerul Saleh and Wikana were assigned to put the *pemuda* in Jakarta on high alert. Before long, Sukarno and Hatta realised that they had been kidnapped. They were forced to wait and see what would happen. During a conversation with Sukarno and Hatta, it became clear to the *pemuda* that the senior leaders had not changed their minds about the proclamation. They sarcastically asked their kidnappers whether the *pemuda* revolution in Jakarta was making good progress. The *pemuda* in Jakarta, meanwhile, waited in vain for news of armed attacks against the Japanese. It soon became apparent that there was a total absence of coordination in and around Jakarta, as a result of which only small groups of PETA and Heiho soldiers could be mobilised.

In the meantime, Subardjo – along with Nishijima, Vice-Admiral Maeda's aide – had been searching for both leaders, as was the Japanese army command. Nishijima then sought out Wikana, who eventually promised to bring Sukarno and Hatta back to Jakarta once Nishijima – speaking on behalf of Maeda – agreed to cooperate on a proclamation. When Nishijima and Wikana went to Subardjo's place, they encountered an emissary of Sukarno from Rengasdengklok who wanted confirmation of the Japanese capitulation and who reported that Sukarno and Hatta's position remained unchanged.

Together with this emissary, Subardjo left for Rengasdengklok under a Japanese escort. Once there, he was able to convince Sukarno to believe Maeda's guarantee that the Kenpeitai would not intervene and that the vice-admiral's official residence would be available for any further consultations. The entire group in Rengasdengklok returned to Jakarta early in the evening of 16 August, arriving at Maeda's elegant residence at around eight o'clock.¹⁰

The situation remained tense due to the ever-present fear of a Japanese intervention against Sukarno and Hatta, as well as the *pemuda*. The *pemuda* once again prepared themselves for armed resistance, which would have been no match against the superior force of the Japanese. Maeda did

10 Before 1942, the British Consulate-General was located here, at the former Nassau Boulevard 1. Later the road was renamed Jalan Imam Bonjol, and the building was preserved as the Museum Perumusan Naskah Proklamasi (Museum of the formulation of the text of the Proclamation).

everything in his power to prevent a further escalation. Because he did not want to bear the responsibility for a proclamation alone, he went to visit army leader Yamamoto together with Sukarno and Hatta. But Yamamoto made himself unreachable because it had become clear that the Japanese had been ordered by the Allied victors to maintain the *status quo*, which meant that he could no longer cooperate with any preparations for the proclamation of Indonesian independence. By keeping a distance, Yamamoto was avoiding any subsequent accusations from the Allies that he had not complied with their orders.

The trio then went to the residence of Yamamoto's close associate, Major General Nishimura Otoji, who was in charge of General Affairs, who reluctantly agreed to meet with them. During their conversation, he stood firmly behind Yamamoto's position. He also informed them that he was banning the PPKI meeting planned for 18 August.

Tired and frustrated, Sukarno and Hatta concluded that the Japanese army command would not give them any leeway.¹¹ They reported back to Maeda's residence early in the evening, where Miyoshi, an advisor to Nishimura, had also just arrived. Miyoshi was supposed to act as an observer and informant to the army staff, but he played a negligible role because he slept most of the time due to the amount of alcohol he had consumed in the preceding tension-filled days. Maeda's house became busier and busier as couriers and emissaries from various groups walked in and out.

Groups of *pemuda* had gathered at various locations in the city. Armed actions were called off at the last minute, and *pemuda* representatives were summoned to Maeda's home. A good portion of the PPKI members also gathered there after being summoned by Subardjo. By around two o'clock in the morning, some 50 to 60 men and women had been assembled. They had to wait, because the key men – Sukarno, Hatta, Subardjo, Maeda, Nishijima, his colleague Yoshizumi (one of Maeda's intelligence officers) and the exhausted Miyoshi – were in discussions in Maeda's study on the second floor. Maeda soon withdrew to his private quarters but was kept fully informed by his advisers. He played an important role in determining the final text of the proclamation.

The six finally agreed on a short and factual text: 'We, the people of Indonesia, hereby declare the independence of Indonesia. Matters concerning the transfer of power and other matters will be executed in an orderly

11 The claim by some historians that Nishimura had agreed to condone a proclamation under pressure from the *pemuda* – 'provided he knew nothing about it' (Anderson 1972: 80; Mrázek 1994: 267) – has been extensively and convincingly refuted by Han Bing Siong (2000: 240–43).

manner and in the shortest possible time.' Sukarno said to Hatta: 'You tell me [what to write], because your Indonesian is better, and I'll write it down.'¹²

This moderate and factual statement was objectionable to the *pemuda* who were present but received broad approval from the assembled PPKI members. Through Sukarni, the *pemuda* proposed an alternative second sentence clearly stating that the people were seizing power and calling on all government bodies that were under foreign management to be taken over. But this militant text had no chance of making it into the proclamation, for both the members of the PPKI and Maeda were against it.

The proposal to have the Proclamation signed by all present was also not acceptable to the *pemuda* because, they argued, if the PPKI members signed the document it would have the stigma of Japanese involvement. Conversely, the majority of PPKI members could not live with the proposal to have six *pemuda* sign their names under those of Sukarno and Hatta. Eventually, it was decided that only Sukarno and Hatta would sign the text. It was now three o'clock in the morning of Friday, 17 August.

A tired Sukarno cycled back to his house that night with Hatta on the back of his bike. It was still unclear whether the Proclamation would take place later that morning and, if so, how.¹³ The military authorities banned all public demonstrations concerning the Proclamation. They sent their troops out into the streets and tried to prevent the news from spreading via the radio and newspapers. Nonetheless, through the office of the Navy, the nationalists managed to distribute leaflets announcing the Proclamation and to spread the news on the radio and via the Japanese news agency Domei.

The initial plan was for the Proclamation to take place on Ikada Square, but this was forbidden by the Japanese military authorities at the last minute. A crowd nonetheless gathered there at around nine o'clock but were blocked by Japanese soldiers. Meanwhile, at Pegangsaan Timur no. 56,¹⁴ where the Proclamation was to take place at ten o'clock, approximately one thousand revolutionary fighters had shown up. They were members of the Peta and the Barisan Pelopor who had been ordered to repel a possible Japanese attack. By this point, there were also many spectators who had gathered outside the property.

12 Interview with Hatta (Kiers 1976).

13 See Yudhi Surjoatmodjo (2022), who has discovered new footage and information about the Proclamation.

14 This house was demolished in the 1950s by order of Sukarno, to the dismay of many. On the spot where the house stood is now a statue of the two 'proclaimers'.



1. The Proclamation

The Proclamation, signed 'on behalf of the people of Indonesia' by Sukarno and Hatta, could hardly have been shorter and bore the traces of Japanese influence. The text was dated 'Jakarta 17-8-'05', and that year stood for the year 2605 in the Japanese calendar. Delivering the Proclamation and a few sentences as introduction and conclusion took all of five minutes.¹⁵ The introductory sentences referred to the long struggle for independence, and they included a remarkable, self-justifying line. Sukarno said that while it seemed that Indonesia – including himself – had relied on Japan during the Japanese period, in reality Indonesia's own powers were being strengthened, and there had always been faith in those powers. In conclusion, he exclaimed:

We are now independent! There is no longer anything tying our country and our people down! From now on, we are our own state! An independent state, the Republic of Indonesia, independent forever. May God bless our independence!

Then the Indonesian flag was raised – sewn together the night before by Sukarno's wife Fatmawati – after which the national anthem was sung.

¹⁵ In the 1950s, an audio recording of the Proclamation was circulated that to this day continues to be played and is considered an original recording. This is not the case, however, which is evident from the fact that in the recording, Sukarno reads out the date 17 August 45 and not 17 August 05, the Japanese calendar year written on the text of the Proclamation.

Finally, Sukarno said a prayer of thanksgiving and withdrew to his house, tired and feverish. Hatta then addressed some latecomers who had missed the Proclamation, including some leading figures of the PPKI.

After this sober ceremony, the attendees rushed back home or to their safe house. It was not only the Muslim fasting month that made it quieter than usual; there was also a fear of being arrested by Japanese soldiers.

Between hope and fear: the beginning of the Republic

In the following days, it was essential that the fragile relationship between the Japanese troops and Indonesian Republicans did not collapse. The Republican leaders were apprehensive about a Japanese military intervention, while the Japanese army leadership feared a violent *pemuda* uprising. Japan had to demonstrate to the Allies that it could uphold the *status quo*, while the Republican leaders carefully sought to distance themselves from Japanese rule in order to show the Allies that the Republic was a democratic state in the making that could assert its authority on its own. It was not until well into September that the news of the proclamation penetrated the entire archipelago.

On Saturday, 18 August, the PPKI met as planned. Given the circumstances, the Committee was no longer an advisory body to the Japanese administration – it now acted as the provisional parliament of the Republic. Six additional members were appointed, including Ki Hadjar Dewantoro, Wiranatakusuma (the regent of Bandung), and Subardjo, hitherto advisor to the PPKI. Some *pemuda* leaders were also invited to join but declined to participate in what they saw as a ‘Japanese institution’.

The process of shaping the Republic was immediately put into high gear. The first task at hand was to adopt the Constitution, which had already been the subject of a separate deliberation prior to the PPKI meeting. Representatives of some Christian communities in East Indonesia appeared to have insurmountable objections to the preamble stating that Muslims should abide by Islamic laws. Led by Sam Ratulangi, the nationalist leader from Minahasa, who was in favour of a purely secular state, East Indonesia announced that it would not be part of the Republic if this provision was not removed. Following a proposal from Hatta, who agreed with Ratulangi, the preamble and the stipulation that the president should be a Muslim were deleted. Because orthodox Muslims were not represented in the PPKI, the Constitution was adopted without difficulty. Nonetheless, there was considerable indignation within Muslim circles at the way in which

a difficult and essential compromise had been swept aside. In their eyes, this was nothing less than perfidy.

The next important decision of the PPKI was its election by acclamation of Sukarno and Hatta as president and vice president. In order to improve the government's decisiveness, it was decided that Sukarno be allowed to govern by mandate for six months.

In the days that followed, the PPKI met to decide on the state apparatus of the Republic. A pragmatic approach was chosen: to ensure continuity of governance, all the existing regulations of the colonial and Japanese regimes were provisionally adopted. In doing so, the Republic inherited a repressive state structure.

Ministries were established, and Indonesia was divided into eight provinces.¹⁶ National Administrative Committees (Komite Nasional Indonesia, KNI) were established locally, starting in Java and in West Sumatra and Palembang. These were staffed by leaders of the Jawa Hokokai and the regional administrative elites. The PPKI was expanded and transformed into the Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat (KNIP), which was to serve as a provisional parliament.

Sukarno proposed the creation of a national unity party called Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI), which would operate in parallel with the new administration. This PNI was the continuation of the Gerakan Rakyat Baru (GRB), which had barely had time to get off the ground, and was intended to strengthen the bond between the leader and the people.

The attitude of the Japanese army command was ambivalent. On 21 August, the Japanese capitulation was officially announced. In an audience with Sukarno and Hatta, the army command indicated that it would adhere strictly to the *status quo* that the Allies had decreed. Nonetheless, the Japanese did not prohibit the meetings of the PPKI and the establishment of the administrative committees (KNI), the national party (PNI) and the Republican Security Forces (BKR).

Sukarno and Hatta addressed the people by radio on 23 August for the first time as the official leaders of the Republic. Their tone was cautious, and they used the words 'calm' and 'discipline' repeatedly. They emphasised that the Proclamation meant that the Indonesian people had taken their destiny into their own hands. The Republic was definitely not a Japanese creation.

16 West, Central and East Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, the Moluccas (with Irian Barat) and the Lesser Sunda Islands.

Hatta ended with a message to the *pemuda* that they should be careful not to forge their own path, which was different from that of the people.

The interim parliament (KNIP) was installed on 29 August, with 137 members (132 men and 5 women) who were appointed by Sukarno. Although prominent *pemuda* and orthodox Muslims were left out of the KNIP, Sjahrir and Amir Sjarifuddin – who was still in Japanese captivity in Malang – were included. They were among the few KNIP members who had not cooperated with the Japanese occupier.

The meeting of the KNIP in the Gedung Komidi, formerly the Weltevreden Theatre, took place under the watchful eyes of the Japanese military, even as certain leaders of the Republic remained in safe houses and some *pemuda* leaders, presumably on the initiative of the Kenpeitai, were being held captive. The atmosphere was therefore very tense. The entrance to the building was guarded by young people from the Pemuda Pelopor (Young Pioneers), who were armed with bamboo sticks. They were, of course, no match for the Japanese army, but the Japanese military leaders apparently chose to condone the meeting. It is likely that Subardjo and Maeda played a mediating role in order for the meeting to take place.

Sukarno gave a short speech, ending with the words: 'When asked about your numerical strength, answer: We are one.'¹⁷

The first session of the KNIP resulted in the adoption of a resolution – the 'Mosi Rakyat Indonesia' (the Resolution of the Indonesian People) – and a 'Pernyataan' (Declaration) of the KNIP to the Indonesian people. The tone and content of this Resolution and Declaration stood in stark contrast to the cautious radio speeches given by Sukarno and Hatta. The Resolution began with the statement that Dutch sovereignty had ended on 9 March 1942, after which the Indonesian people had managed their own affairs while the Japanese army had limited itself to military matters. In 1942, the Netherlands had been unable to guarantee the prosperity and welfare of the Indonesian people. With the Proclamation and the Constitution, Indonesia had now decided its own fate. Any other external power would always put its own interests above all else. Moreover, given that a number of sectors of the economy were still controlled by foreign capital, the nation was in effect not independent but instead was being dragged into imperialist wars. A less-than-full independence brought only war, poverty and misery. Following these observations, the Resolution demanded the recognition of Indonesian independence throughout the world as a condition for world peace. Every

17 'Djika ditanja berapa djumlahmu, djawablah: Satu' (Raliby 1953: 23).

Indonesian had to fight for 100% independence so that an Economic Plan based on the extraction of natural resources could be established – with the implication that these should become state property. The KNIP members vowed to dedicate themselves to consummating Indonesia's full independence. And finally, it was decided that the Resolution should be implemented in the interest of the welfare of the Indonesian people and of world peace.

The Declaration began with the observation that in the new situation after the end of the World War, the Indonesian people had arrived at a point where their fate was to be determined for centuries to come. The commitment of the people had been significant, and heavy sacrifices had been made for the welfare and development of the land and the people. And now there was the arduous task of bringing about world peace which, if achieved, would allow room for an improvement in the material conditions of the *murba* (the proletariat). For this reason, unanimous support for the government was necessary.

The term '*murba*' had never been used before, but after this point it was to be used often in brochures and speeches by Tan Malaka. The substance and tone of the Resolution and the Declaration also suggest that Tan Malaka was the one who had written it, for he was known to use such terms as '100% *Merdeka*' (full independence) and to advocate for the nationalisation of foreign investments.¹⁸ Although it will have escaped the notice of most KNIP members (except for a few insiders), Tan Malaka had apparently become the ghostwriter of the KNIP.¹⁹

The rise of Tan Malaka

In June 1945, Tan Malaka, alias Iljas Husein, was invited to Banten to participate in a meeting of young people in Rangkasbitung,¹⁹ where they discussed the developments in Jakarta and how their group should respond. Iljas Husein argued for the formation of an organisation that was not under Japanese influence. He was appointed as delegate and met several *pemuda* leaders in Jakarta. Back in Bayah in Banten province, he had been closely watched by the Kenpeitai and therefore thought it safer to leave. In early August, he was given permission by the Japanese

18 Three months later, Tan Malaka wrote a brochure entitled *Rentjana Ekonomi* (Economic Plan), in which he outlined his ideas about nationalising foreign companies and the nation's raw materials. See Chapter 6.

19 See Chapter 2 on the presence of Tan Malaka in Bayah during the Japanese occupation.

authorities to attend a *pemuda* conference in Jakarta as a representative of the mining staff.

In Jakarta, Iljas Husein spoke with B.M. Diah, who, as editor of *Asia Raya*, was well informed about recent developments. According to Diah, Iljas Husein looked unkempt with his short khaki pants, shirt and long stockings but came across as intelligent. His contact with Diah was cut off when the Kenpeitai apprehended the newspaper editor the next day. Iljas Husein returned to Banten to consult with the local *pemuda*, who authorised him to prepare a proclamation together with the *pemuda* in Jakarta.

Tan Malaka had to operate with the utmost caution and found it difficult to navigate his way around in Jakarta. He could not work out who could be trusted, who was pro-Japanese and who was an opportunist. He therefore dared not reveal his identity. For their part, the *pemuda* also did not trust the shabby figure of Iljas Husein, as the possibility of him being a Japanese agent could not be ruled out. It was not until 14 August that Iljas made contact with Sukarni, who granted him shelter. They talked for a long time but Iljas still did not dare to reveal his true name. Sukarni apparently did not ask for it either. By vacillating for so long, Tan Malaka, who was the first to use the term 'Republik Indonesia' in 1925, missed the decisive moment to become directly involved in the Proclamation.²⁰

While the *pemuda* continued to test the limits of what was possible after 17 August and were committed to a Republic free of Japanese contamination, Tan Malaka remained in the dark about the state of affairs in the confusing political landscape. The Japanese army command was still the most powerful player and on the lookout for *pemuda* who had expressed anti-Japanese sentiments. Under these circumstances, Tan Malaka failed to come into contact with leading figures of the independence movement because the *pemuda* were constantly in motion or in hiding, while he himself was a risk factor that was best avoided. In the end, he decided to seek refuge with people he knew from his time in the Netherlands: Hatta or Subardjo.²¹ Hatta was not exactly a friend and was also under Japanese

20 Adam Malik (1975: 60) called this a painful moment, also for the group surrounding Sukarni. They too said nothing in front of Tan Malaka. 'Just when they were hoping for the opinion and directions of someone of his stature, of someone with unbreakable willpower, someone whose life had been constantly dominated by struggle, someone who spent his whole life planning for the freedom of the oppressed people, they let him walk away, lost sight of him.' Although they suspected that Iljas Husein might be Tan Malaka, they did not dare to say so. Tan Malaka, for his part, was equally suspicious.

21 In 1922, Tan Malaka had briefly met Hatta and Subardjo after arriving in the Netherlands; see Chapter 1.

supervision, so Subardjo was the only one to whom Tan Malaka could turn. On 25 August, Tan Malaka presented himself to Subardjo, whose reaction was one of surprise: 'But you're Tan Malaka. I thought you were already dead because the newspaper claimed you were killed in clashes in Burma or later in Palestine.' Tan Malaka laughed and replied with a Dutch proverb: 'Weeds never perish.' He went on to explain the purpose of his visit. Until that point he had lived a nomadic underground existence, but he wanted to become active above ground and to get in touch with the leaders of the Republic.²² Subardjo offered him the use of the pavilion at his house, which Tan Malaka then used to receive *pemuda* leaders and prominent figures from the Republic. It was through Subardjo that Tan Malaka provided the texts of the Resolution and the Declaration that the KNIP eventually adopted on 29 August. Although Tan Malaka did reveal his real name to those who visited him, he did not want to appear in public just yet. His caution may have stemmed from his many years of underground existence, but the secrecy was also in Subardjo's interest, as the latter wanted Tan Malaka to play a role in realising Subardjo's own agenda.

The cabinet, meanwhile, was proceeding cautiously with the set-up of the new Republican administration. On 30 August, the conservative Javanese administrators were invited by Sukarno and Hatta to a meeting. Sukarno was set on winning over this group. They were reassured by his promise that he would maintain the existing governance structure and not remove anyone from office. The most prominent administrators were appointed provincial governors (such as Sutardjo, who became governor of West Java) or ministers (such as the regent of Bandung Wiranatakusuma, who became minister of the interior). The four princes in Yogyakarta and Solo also retained their positions and privileges. In doing so, all levels of the existing administrative machinery were maintained, which meant that they had now managed to survive two major transitions of power – first from the Dutch '*Tuan*' (lord) to the Japanese 'elder brother' and now to the Indonesian '*Bung*' (comrade). At the local level, however, there was resistance against the retention of incumbent administrators (see Chapter 4). The decision to form a leading state party, the Partai Nasional Indonesia, was quickly reversed on 31 August because it suggested that Indonesia was striving to become the type of authoritarian state that the Allies had fought against during the war.

The makeup of the first presidential cabinet, established on 4 September, was entirely in line with the direction in which Sukarno and Hatta wanted to take the country. Senior officials who had been heads of departments

22 Subardjo 1978: 359-60.

during the Japanese occupation were given ministerial posts, such as Supomo at Justice. They thus played a dual role, serving both the Republic and the Japanese administration. Hatta saw this as a way to seize power from within. Confidants of Vice-Admiral Maeda were also well represented. Subardjo received the post of Foreign Affairs, while Maramis and Gatot became Minister of Finance and Attorney General respectively. Older nationalist leaders were also given cabinet posts, such as Abikusno (Transportation) and Ki Hadjar Dewantoro (Education), while the position of Minister of Defence remained vacant in order to avoid offending the Japanese army leadership. Among these figures, the appointment of Amir Sjarifuddin as Minister of Information was notable because he was the only government official who had opposed the Japanese regime. Amir was still serving out a life sentence in Malang and was not released until 1 October, after which he was immediately brought to Jakarta. He had no time to put on appropriate clothing for the official state photograph and therefore appears in it wearing shorts and a collection of borrowed clothes.

The *pemuda*'s cautious attitude towards the Japanese army was gradually beginning to change as the latter began to lose authority and became less visible in the cities, having sent many of its troops to the countryside. At the same time, reports of the arrival of Allied troops were circulating. It was completely unclear what their intentions were and whether they would arrest the Republican leaders for collaborating with the Japanese administration. The Republican leaders could do nothing but wait in suspense.

Meanwhile, the *pemuda* witnessed the cabinet's passive attitude with increasing dismay. They formed an action committee in order to organise joint actions, but this unity among the *pemuda* did not last long. The Prapatan Group followed the government line and the cautious stance taken by Sjahrir, while the Menteng 31 group strongly objected to such an approach. The latter had gained a leader with the arrival of Tan Malaka, and they subsequently founded the Angkatan Pemuda Indonesia – abbreviated as API, which means 'fire' – on 1 September. The API reached out to young people, farmers and workers, calling on them to seize Japanese weapons and take over utility companies and other enterprises. On 3 September, the *pemuda* took over the railways in Jakarta, after which their actions spread to other companies. On the same day, the Antara news agency was re-established. On 11 September, Radio Jakarta fell into the hands of the *pemuda*. The cabinet stood idly by and, according to Adam Malik, had 'no plan, no decision – they were rudderless.'²³

23 Adam Malik 1975: 89.



2. Sukarno



3. Tan Malaka

The testament

Tan Malaka spent his time in his pavilion, where he received his sympathisers from Menteng 31 and spoke extensively with Subardjo. Gradually, he expanded his circle of insiders. Tan Malaka felt that the government should make more propaganda through slogans – in Indonesian and English – painted along the public roads. The slogans were intended not only for an Indonesian audience but also for the British troops who would soon be arriving.²⁴

Subardjo had not immediately informed Sukarno of Tan Malaka's presence. But on 9 September, a meeting took place in the utmost secrecy at the home of Sukarno's personal physician. The whole house was darkened ahead of the visit. Sukarno was accompanied by his adjutant, while Tan Malaka arrived by bike together with Sajuti Melik, a member of the Menteng 31 group. During the meeting, Sukarno came across as uncertain, indicating that he still did not rule out the possibility that the Japanese army would bring an end to the Republic. As an experienced international revolutionary, Tan Malaka, in turn, instructed the president of the young Republic on what to do. He said that the government had to relocate to the interior because Jakarta would become a battlefield after the return of the Dutch. Sukarno was impressed with Tan Malaka's wisdom, and in a moment of spontaneity he declared that if he himself

²⁴ See also Chapter 4.

were to be eliminated, Tan Malaka should succeed him. After a second meeting between the two of them, Sukarno agreed to draft a political testament in which Sukarno and Hatta would appoint Tan Malaka as their successor.

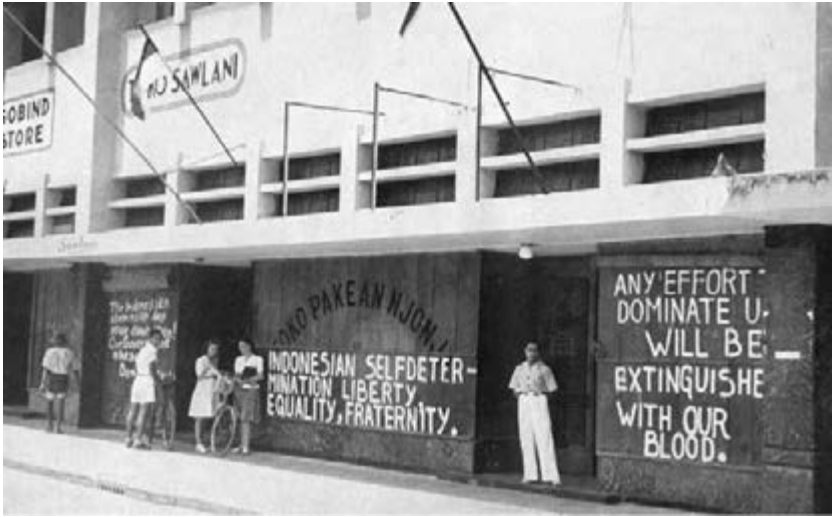
Sukarno submitted the draft text to Hatta, but the latter refused to sign it because he felt that Tan Malaka was too controversial a figure. Instead, Hatta agreed to designate four successors. New consultations ensued at Subardjo's home, where Hatta suggested that the foursome consist of representatives of the four main political currents: Tan Malaka (radical socialism), Sjahrir (moderate socialism), Iwa Kusumasumantri (left-wing Islam) and Wongsonegoro (conservative administrators).

The drafting of the testament showed how uncertain Sukarno was about his position. The document was kept secret, allowing Sukarno to bypass the KNIP, while the cabinet was only kept informed in vague terms. Hatta followed Sukarno on this matter but also managed to undermine Tan Malaka's position by designating three other successors. Accompanied by some high-minded text about mutual solidarity, the testament – titled 'Our instruction' – was signed by Sukarno and Hatta.

Subardjo was tasked with delivering the text to the other designated alternates but chose not to do so, possibly because he was unhappy that he himself had been passed over as successor to Sukarno and Hatta. By early September, Subardjo had become one of the most influential people in Jakarta. He was indispensable as an intermediary between the Japanese military, the cautious Republican leaders and the radical *pemuda*. Because of his connections with the Japanese, he had money, weapons, men, transport and means of subsistence, and as Maeda's agent, he was protected against actions by the Kenpeitai.²⁵ Given that the Republic was still in the process of building up its structure and was struggling to raise its profile, and the *pemuda* were suffering under Japanese repression, anyone who wanted to take action had to go to Subardjo, which was something Tan Malaka had noticed when he knocked on Subardjo's door. In early September 1945, Subardjo appeared to be at the centre of power within the Republic. But it was unclear what he wanted to achieve with that power.

Subardjo had an erratic past as a nationalist and communist, and then as a sympathiser of Japanese imperialism. He was no stranger to opportunism. In Jakarta, the group around Sjahrir believed he was a Japanese spy. When he joined the presidential cabinet, he quickly lost his standing among the *pemuda*. Subardjo realised that he would lose his grip on Tan Malaka the moment the latter came into direct contact with the *pemuda* of Menteng 31. Likewise, Subardjo's attempt to strengthen his position in the cabinet

25 In turn, Maeda sought to cultivate goodwill among Indonesia's new leaders, which he believed could benefit Japan in the future.



4. Battle cries in Jakarta

at the expense of Sukarno and Hatta failed: he had proposed that Sukarno and Hatta relocate inland to stay out of the hands of the Allies, leaving the day-to-day management of the Republic in the hands of a *Diktatur Perjuangan* (Combat Dictatorship) led by Subardjo, Iwa Kusumasumantri and Gatot, but his plan was firmly rejected by Hatta.

The demonstration on Ikada Square

The Japanese were still abundantly present when the first Allied warships dropped their anchors in the roadstead at Jakarta on 15 September. The cabinet took no action, but the *pemuda* quickly made up their mind to organise a large mass demonstration in support of the Republic. Such a gathering had already taken place in Surabaya on 11 September, and the Japanese troops had not intervened. Inspired by this, on 15 September the *pemuda* groups of Menteng 31 and Prapatan decided to organise a large event at the grounds of the athletic club *Ikatan Atletik Jakarta*, in the southeast corner of the large and centrally located *Ikada Square*. The date chosen for this event was 17 September, to commemorate one month of independence. For logistical reasons, the demonstration was postponed to Wednesday 19 September. Feverish preparations followed, but the Japanese army command in Jakarta announced that it would ban the gathering. Sukarno and Hatta, and a majority of the cabinet, also opposed the demonstration. Only the group around Subardjo supported the plan. Tensions quickly rose, and despite repeated consultations, the cabinet and the *pemuda* could not agree. On 16 September, the Japanese military

administration banned the carrying of weapons and all gatherings of more than five people. The Menteng youth then entered the city to mobilise the population to come and listen to their president on 19 September. Sukarno made it clear that he would not come, but the *pemuda* ignored him. They saw to it that the cabinet's explanatory statement to the press was not printed in any newspapers and that handbills carrying the message that the gathering had been cancelled were not distributed on the morning of 19 September. The cabinet's telephone connection was blocked. *Pemuda* foreman Sukarni then informed the cabinet that the gathering would take place.

Sukarno was nervous and angry and said that he did not want to be responsible for a massacre. 'Go find yourselves another president, find another leader, replace Bung Karno,'²⁶ he told the *pemuda* who had come to see him.²⁷ The cabinet met on Wednesday, 19 September, from 9 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon. 'They debated and deliberated but failed to reach a decision. Hour after hour passed without coming to a decision.' 'Sukarni would knock at the door intermittently and poke his head in with his bloodshot eyes, asking: "What's the decision?" The answer was invariably: "Not yet," whereupon he slammed the door with a smack.'²⁸

From early in the morning, Ikada Square had been flooded with thousands of people who had responded massively to the call of the *pemuda* and did not care about the Japanese show of force with their tanks, armoured cars, machine gun line-ups and soldiers with raised bayonets. The Japanese troops confiscated as many *bambu runcing* (pointed bamboo sticks) and pointed weapons as possible, but it was impossible for them to disarm all visitors.

From the morning, under the scorching hot sun of Jakarta, without drink, without food, battle songs and slogans resounded, and it is not difficult to imagine what might happen in this packed concoction of heavily armed Japanese soldiers, tanks, and armoured cars, and the groups of *pemuda* and the people with their hidden weapons, if just one side resorted to provocation.²⁹

Around noon, Suwirjo, the mayor of Jakarta, and Mohamad Rum, the head of the Republican administration (KNI) of Jakarta, asked the Japanese authorities on behalf of the cabinet for permission to allow the demonstration to go ahead, but this request was refused. A little later in the day,

26 'Bung Karno' refers to Sukarno. 'Bung' is an honorific term of affection meaning 'older brother' or 'comrade'.

27 Sujono Martosewojo 1984: 145–7.

28 Sujono Martosewojo 1984: 149; Margono Djojohadikusumo 1970: 144–9.

29 Sujono Martosewojo 1984: 148–9.

the army leadership reportedly agreed to allow Sukarno to appear at the demonstration provided he limit himself to calling on those present to return home. Another version has it that the *pemuda* sent the cabinet a message reporting the highly explosive atmosphere on the square, alleging that only the arrival of Sukarno and Hatta could diffuse the tension, and asserting that the *pemuda* would ensure their safety.

At this point, Sukarno decided to go to Ikada Square. He claimed that he wanted to prevent his refusal to appear at the gathering from leading to a bloodbath. Accompanied by a number of ministers, Sukarno and Hatta left for the square in three cars. At first, they were stopped by the most senior Japanese officer there. A polite discussion ensued, and Sukarno promised not to whip up anti-Allied sentiment and only to call for unity. The group continued on foot and was again stopped by a Kenpeitai officer. A heated discussion ensued, which the officer put an end to when a crowd began to approach them. Sukarno promised to speak for only a few minutes to calm the masses.

The president spoke for no more than five minutes. He asked the crowd to remain calm and to put their faith in the government, which would uphold the Proclamation at all costs. His order for everyone to go home calmly and in an orderly fashion was obeyed. The crowd of several tens of thousands began to leave the square.³⁰

Sukarno had demonstrated to supporters and opponents as well as to the Japanese and the Allies that he had the masses under control. The Republic had resisted Japanese orders through its display of strength and power. It was clear that the Republic could count on the support of the people who, despite the threat of Japanese violence, had come to Ikada Square by the tens of thousands in a short time and then calmly returned home at the behest of the president.

For many, the meeting was an unforgettable event. Abu Bakar Lubis, a student at the time, wrote:

Almost everyone cherishes a special memory that he carries with him throughout his life; the most beautiful experience from a time in which he was personally involved in an event that touched him deeply. [...] The mass gathering on the Ikada field on 19 September 1945 was a highlight, a manifestation without its equal of the ideals of the people [...]. Such

30 The attendance figures vary greatly depending on the source. On the Indonesian side, the number is estimated to have been between 100,000 and 300,000. Western sources are more cautious. The *New York Times* (23 September 1945) mentions 'some 10,000 nationalists'. Rear Admiral W.R. Patterson, head of the British occupation force, reported on 20 September: 'Crowd of 8,000 assembled yesterday. [...] Sukarno addressed the crowd for 3 minutes and told them to be good boys and behave themselves. They went home quietly and there were no incidents that night.' (Squire 1979: 71).



5. Sukarno's arrival at Ikada Square; Tan Malaka is circled

an event only happens once in a lifetime. It never happened before, and will never be repeated.³¹

The British intelligence officer Laurens van der Post sent an observer to the Ikada field and reported:

An Ambonese violently pro-Dutch [...] said that as he stood in the crowd waiting, an extraordinary excitement took control of him and everyone else there. By the time Boeng Sukarno came, his heart was beating so violently that he nearly swooned. All Mr Sukarno did on this occasion was to ask the crowd to go home and it went still trembling with excitement, the Ambonese going with them to report later on that it was 'the most remarkable experience of his life.'³²

Tan Malaka had also been present, as is evident from a few photos and a film fragment of ten seconds which shows him walking alongside Sukarno as the latter is on his way to the stage.³³ The fact that he was walking so closely next to the president indicates that he played a prominent role in this mass

31 Abu Bakar Lubis 1995: 125.

32 Van der Post 1996: 211.

33 Looking at pictures of the event, Harry Poeze managed to identify Tan Malaka by his characteristic tropical helmet, among other things. Hatta (Hatta 1978: 16; 1979: 27) also confirmed the presence of Tan Malaka on Ikada Square.



6. The first Republican cabinet



7. Sjahrir and Amir Sjarifuddin

gathering. Tan Malaka was satisfied with the turnout but strongly criticised the conduct of Sukarno and Hatta. In his 1948 autobiography he wrote:

They did not come to escalate the demonstration and use it to force Japan to hand over all means of power to the Indonesian people but to [...] give a speech. Not a speech with demands that would have unleashed the

fighting spirit with the promise to lead the mass action of the people, by the people and for the people, but to ask [...] the people for their 'trust' and 'faith' in them, and to order the people [...] to go home. Within five minutes, Bung Karno's speech was over. The people and the *pemuda* were disappointed and [...] went home.³⁴

The outcome of the demonstration

For the Kenpeitai, the gathering on Ikada Square was a humiliation. The next day, Kenpeitai agents raided Menteng 31, and a good number of *pemuda* were imprisoned. They were released after two days thanks to a cooperative prison warden. Sukarno also feared that he would be arrested by the Japanese and was therefore evacuated to Bogor for a few days.

On 23 September, another discussion took place at Subardjo's home between Sukarno, Hatta (and perhaps also Sjahrir) and Tan Malaka. After Tan Malaka made a strong plea for providing more detailed information to the people, Hatta asked him to become Minister of Information but Tan Malaka refused. He had no desire to take part in a cabinet whose cautious political line and public invisibility he disapproved of. He did express his support for Sukarno and Hatta but chose to take up an advisory role in what he called the 'shadow cabinet', of which Sukarno, Hatta, Subardjo, Sjahrir and himself would be a part. But within ten days, when it was revealed that Tan Malaka had been involved in a scheme by the *pemuda* to capture Japanese weapons in Bandung, Sukarno banned the shadow cabinet 'with a pale face and nervous voice'.³⁵ It was further proof to Tan Malaka that Sukarno was not a revolutionary but a *petit bourgeois* and that no lasting cooperation would be possible with him and his sympathisers.

Encouraged by Hatta, Tan Malaka left Jakarta on 1 October to travel around Java with the testament in his pocket. Still using his false name Iljas Husein, he wanted to investigate the conditions under which the people outside the capital lived. And as long as he was traveling, he could not get in the way of the Republican leaders in Jakarta.

Sukarno and Hatta and their ministers were able to breathe a sigh of relief. Japanese soldiers had, in the end, not intervened; British troops had not immediately arrested them but had even expressed some kind of recognition; and it seemed that the existing administrative apparatus was loyal to the government. The Republic had survived the first month of its existence.

34 Tan Malaka 1948, III: 63.

35 Tan Malaka 1948, III: 64-5.

4 Local Revolutions: *Bersiap* and *Daulat*

October 1945 to mid-1946

News of the proclamation spread slowly, and it was not until the end of September that it had penetrated all of Indonesia. It was at that point that many people began to wonder what *merdeka* actually meant. The Japanese would of course be gone, and it was clear that the Dutch would not be allowed to come back either, and that the old elites who had collaborated with the Dutch and the Japanese would have to be dealt with. But other than that, everything was up in the air. Would people no longer have to pay taxes? Who was in charge now? And wasn't there supposed to be a fight for freedom first?

The Republic was still mainly a Jakartan affair. Because the Republican leaders did not have a powerful administrative apparatus and their own army, they were unable to exert much authority at the local level. Although the Japanese troops had been instructed to maintain order until Allied troops had landed, what they did was simply retreat to their barracks, thus creating a power vacuum that local revolutionary *pemuda* took advantage of to start their own revolution. From October 1945, local revolutions broke out in Java and Sumatra that were accompanied by much violence and over which the Republican leaders had little control. This chapter examines what pattern these revolutions followed and who they were directed against.

In urban areas in Java and Sumatra, thousands of revolutionary youth organised themselves into numerous combat groups (*badan perjuangannya*) to fight for freedom and against the Allies. As in Jakarta, some of them were well-educated middle-class boys, but the vast majority were young people from the kampongs who had been mobilised during the Japanese occupation. What united them was a drive for revolutionary action. They adopted a style borrowed from the Javanese *jago* – a mixture of daredevil, hero and criminal – the Japanese samurai and the *koboi* (cowboy) they had seen in American westerns. Preferably armed with a revolver hanging on their hips, they were the boss on the street and in their neighbourhood. They were loosely organised, averse to institutional authority, and prided themselves on being able to ride the trams and trains for free. Their language was revolutionary and egalitarian. They practiced the old slogan coined by the pre-war journalist Mas Marco – *sama rata, sama rasa* (equality and solidarity) – addressing their leaders as *bapak* (father)

and their brothers as *bung. Merdeka, semangat* (spirit) and *darah* (blood) became the catch phrases of their revolution. Criminal gangs who also considered themselves revolutionary fighters soon joined the *pemuda*. The leaders of the *pemuda* groups were diverse in nature, and it was the charismatic figures who used violence to enforce their authority who quickly gained a large following. The mood at the beginning of the revolution, full of vitality and recklessness, is illustrated by Chairil Anwar's 1943 poem 'Aku' (I).

[...] I am a wild animal
 driven from his flock
 let bullets pierce my skin
 I keep going
 forward with my wounds and my pain
 attack
 attack
 until the suffering is over
 I do not care
 I want to live another thousand years¹

Within this atmosphere of revolutionary euphoria, in which impatient *pemuda* were itching to take action, the first British troops arrived in Jakarta at the end of September. They were ill-informed about the situation in Java. A month earlier, the British had promised to help the Netherlands restore its authority in Java and Sumatra. But on 29 September, Lieutenant General Philip Christison stated that the British had no intention of conquering Indonesia and that law enforcement was provisionally in the hands of the Japanese army until this task could be handed over to local authorities. The latter was interpreted as an implicit recognition of the Republic, thereby raising expectations on the Indonesian side.

The British commander-in-chief Lord Mountbatten had assumed that three brigades – about 1,500 mainly Indian soldiers – would suffice to evacuate 73,000 Japanese soldiers and over 100,000 European internees from Java. To accomplish this logistical operation, he planned to deploy his troops first in Jakarta, then in Semarang, and then in Surabaya. In the end, he needed three divisions – more than 45,000 men – in Java, which became involved in fierce fighting.

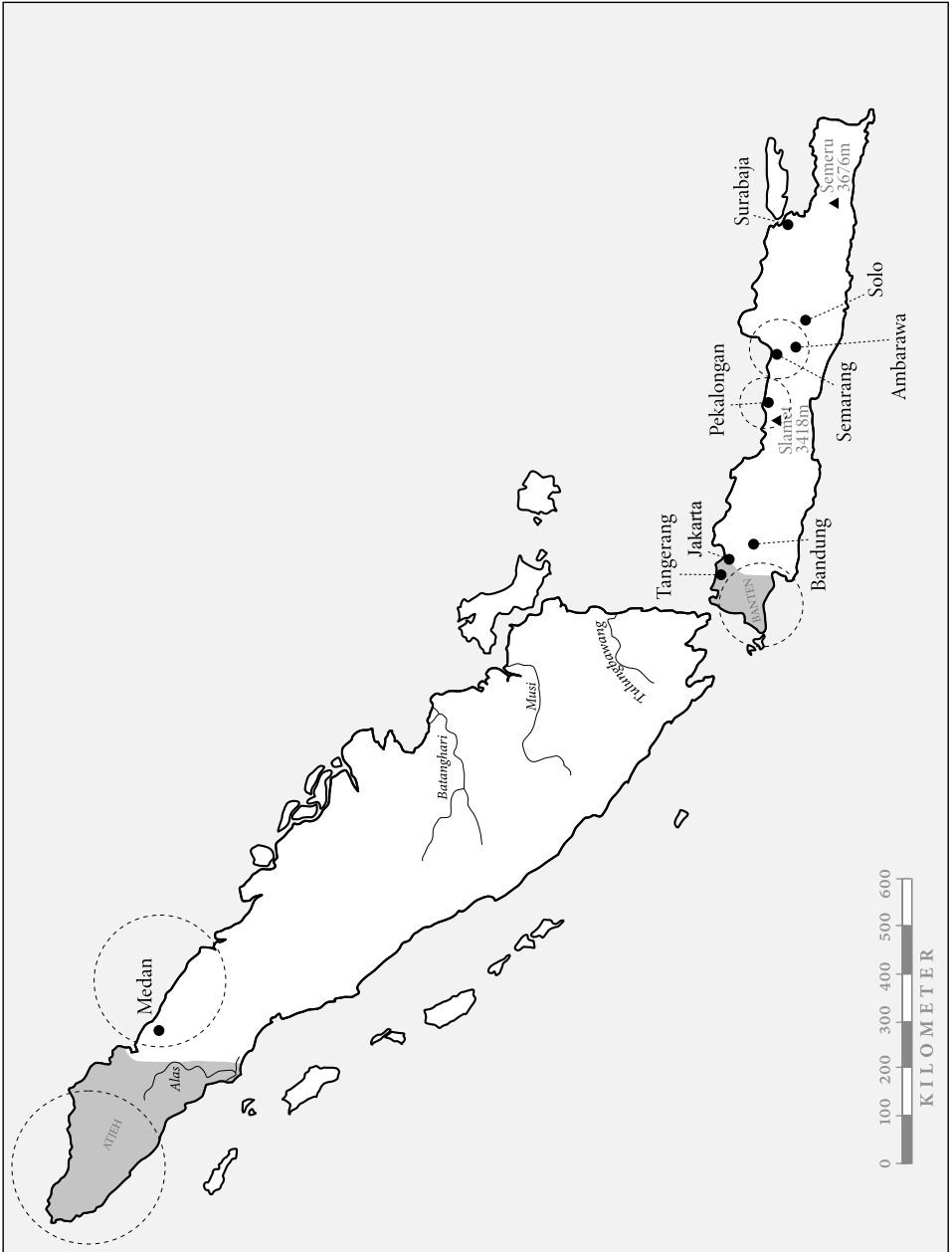
1 <https://titikdua.net/puisi-aku/>, accessed 12 October 2021.

When it became apparent that the British troops also included Dutch soldiers and members of the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) who were to prepare for the return of Dutch colonial rule, mistrust and unrest among the *pemuda* escalated. In a climate of rumours, provocations and incidents, attacks were carried out throughout Java on Europeans and Indo-Europeans who were suspected of wanting restoration of colonial rule. Chinese people who had collaborated with the Dutch and the Japanese were also targeted. This violence took place between October 1945 and mid-1946 and is called the *bersiap* period by the Dutch – a period that is given very little attention in the Indonesian historiography.² *Bersiap*, which translates as ‘be ready’, was a pre-war scouting slogan used by Indonesian youth to warn each other of the approaching enemy or to take action. In the memories of the Europeans who were threatened during this period, this slogan was often accompanied by the ominous sound of sticks being smashed against lampposts.

Violent reprisals were also carried out in Java and Sumatra against village chiefs and members of the indigenous administration who had collaborated with the Japanese. By deposing local authorities, the people took the law into their own hands. This was called *daulat rakyat* (sovereignty of the people).

Often these *bersiap* and *daulat* actions were accompanied by violence and atrocities, but such violence was not specifically Indonesian and has no particular cultural explanation. Similar actions took place in Southern and Eastern Europe in 1945 under comparable circumstances, including the collapse of a central authority, many free-roaming militias, countless weapons in circulation, and plenty of vengefulness against groups that had collaborated with the Germans. In this context, the euphoria of freedom in Indonesia regularly resulted in a euphoria of violence for which relatively defenceless minorities and authority figures were forced to pay the price. These attacks were part of the revolution because these authority figures and minorities had been pillars of colonial rule. Moreover, in Bandung, Semarang and Surabaya, there were also bloody clashes between British troops and revolutionary *pemuda* because it appeared to the latter that the British were blocking the road to freedom.

2 In volume six of the latest edition of the semi-official national history of Indonesia, *bersiap* is briefly mentioned in the margins of the narrative about the struggle for independence (Mestika Zed 2012: 202–5).



Map 2. Local revolutions in Java and Sumatra: October 1945 to mid-1946

Bersiap *in Jakarta*

Jakarta was the centre of the Republic, but there were still plenty of Japanese troops in the city. The first representatives of the Dutch government began arriving in September 1945, soon followed by British soldiers who established their headquarters there. The Republic, the Dutch and the British found themselves within walking distance of each other in the centre of the city, which became an intricate patchwork of enclaves controlled by different groups.

Immediately after the Japanese capitulation, groups of *pemuda* had formed and took control of the street using the slogan '*merdeka*', armed with swords, revolvers and rifles and dressed in all kinds of uniforms. This was a pattern that repeated itself in many cities in Java. Before long, two groups had emerged on the Republican side. One was the Republican Security Forces, the Badan Keamanan Rakyat (BKR), which many ex-members of PETA joined. The second group consisted of members of the more radical Angkatan Pemuda Indonesia (API) led by Chaerul Saleh, Sukarni and Wikana, which quickly gained a large following.

In mid-September, after the end of the Islamic month of fasting, the number and scale of the revolutionary actions increased. The API occupied government buildings, marking them with the slogan '*milik RI*' (property of the Republic of Indonesia), and made attempts to gain control over public transport and telephone traffic. In addition, they tried to grab weapons off of Japanese soldiers. These actions became an example for *pemuda* groups in other cities. Meanwhile, criminal gangs such as the one led by Iman Sjafei, who controlled the market in Senen, joined API without giving up much of their autonomy.

At the end of September, the Japanese troops withdrew from the centre of the city and the Europeans began to emerge from the camps to return to their old homes. They had no idea what had changed since 1942. As in other cities in Java, they assumed that colonial relations would soon be restored. Even if they had heard about the Declaration of Independence, they found it hard to believe that the Republic had any chance of succeeding. Arrogantly, a Dutch woman in Malang was heard commanding a trader as follows: 'Say, bring me butter and sausage tomorrow', while another Dutchman gave orders to have the central *alun-alun* (field) in Malang cleared so that relief supplies from the Red Cross could safely land there by parachute and so that 'the natives' could not get their hands on them³ – as if the Europeans had the exclusive right to the relief supplies.

3 Kwee Thiam Tjing 2004: 176.

Groups of *pemuda* controlled Jakarta's public spaces such as intersections and public transport. This made it difficult for the Europeans to return to the city.⁴ Water and electricity were cut off, servants were intimidated into not working for the Dutch, and shops and market traders were instructed not to sell anything to the Dutch or Indo-Europeans. Houses were raided and Europeans and Indo-Europeans kidnapped, murdered or mutilated. Similar incidents also occurred in other cities in Java.

In October 1944, fighting had already broken out in Jakarta between Indo boys and Indonesian youths. The trigger for such clashes was often the harassment of girls, which led to both sides trying to beat the other up, but the cause lay deeper. The Indo youths who had remained outside the camps had suffered intimidation and humiliation from Indonesian boys during the Japanese occupation and were now out for revenge. Conversely, the *pemuda* were convinced that the Indo boys welcomed the colonial regime because they had refused to register as Indonesians during the Japanese occupation.

In September 1945, some Indo boys organised themselves into militias to fight the *pemuda*. They soon received help from Ambonese and Menadonese soldiers of the KNIL who had returned from captivity and had banded together in the infamous Battalion X. They drove through the city in trucks while firing their weapons, fighting with the revolutionary groups and seizing weapons and motorcycles from the Republican police. Fights, reciprocal attacks and kidnappings between groups of European thugs and *pemuda* groups were the order of the day.

At the beginning of September, the first unit of the Allied organisation RAPWI (Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees) arrived to prepare for the repatriation of the 20,000 women and children from the Japanese camps in Jakarta. The camps were still being guarded by Japanese soldiers and were regularly the target of *pemuda* attacks. The RAPWI group moved into Hotel des Indes, where some Dutch people were also staying. This aroused suspicion among the *pemuda*, who suspected the Dutch of organising the return of the colonial state. This feeling was reinforced when the Dutch cruiser Tromp arrived on 16 September with a senior Dutch official – Ch.O. van der Plas – on board, accompanied by 100 marines.

At the end of September, the first British troops landed. They were greeted by a variety of slogans in the English language – inspired by the American Revolution – plastered on walls throughout the city.

4 Cribb 1991: 64–5.

‘We fight for democracy, we have only to win.’
 ‘For life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’
 ‘For the right of self-determination’
 ‘Indonesia never again the “life-blood” of any nation!’⁵

The British troops had given themselves a limited mandate regarding their task of maintaining order in the city. They often chose not to intervene in the face of *pemuda* attacks and the increasingly aggressive actions of Battalion X. On 9 October, President Sukarno wrote to Lieutenant General Christison: ‘When mob psychology replaces ideological arguments, who is going to guarantee the safety of Dutch and Eurasian non-combatants?’⁶ These were prophetic words, for the very next day dozens of Indo-Europeans were murdered in Depok, south of Jakarta. British troops arrived just in time to evacuate over a thousand women and children. The Republic then made an important decision. To prevent a further escalation of violence and to protect potential European and Indo-European victims against the *pemuda* violence, Republican Security Forces throughout Java began rounding up European and Indo-European boys and men – and later women and children – from mid-October and interning them in camps. At the same time, British troops saw to it that the actions of Battalion X were curbed.

At the end of December, the British troops launched a major operation to drive the militias out of the city. And from the end of February 1946, the evacuation of women and children from the Japanese internment camps was started.

Krawang

The API had also been chased out of the city by the British. Together with many other militias, they regrouped east of the city in Krawang. Various criminal gangs were already operating there, and they saw in the *pemuda* who had fled a welcome ally who could give their actions a revolutionary feel. The API leaders, in turn, discovered the potential of the gangs in Krawang – namely their weapons, knowledge of the terrain, and fighting spirit. At the end of November, this cooperation led to the establishment of the People’s Army of Greater Jakarta (Laskar Rakyat Djakarta Raya, LRDR), which appropriated power in Krawang. In addition to the People’s Army, there were

5 Zara 2016: 115; Fabricius 1947. Tan Malaka was the one who had come up with the slogans (Poeze 2007: 50–1).

6 Van der Wal 1971: 288.

numerous competing militias that remained active, looking for weapons and food. Over time, they lost the support of the Republican leadership in Jakarta, who did not want to be associated with criminal gangs. As a result, the LRDR increasingly came into conflict with Republican Security Forces.

The Battle of Bandung

Fierce confrontations took place in Bandung between revolutionary militias and Japanese and British troops. News of the proclamation had reached Bandung on the very day it was announced, but here too, the question arose as to what that independence actually meant. Were the Japanese really defeated, and if so, who were the new leaders? As in Jakarta, a Republican governing committee (KNI) was formed in Bandung in addition to Security Forces (BKR), both of which did not hold much sway.

In mid-September, as in Jakarta, the first clashes between Indo boys and *pemuda* took place, while rumours spread that the Dutch wanted to restore their colonial authority. The arrival of a RAPWI team, which included representatives of the NICA, only increased this suspicion.

Operating in the name of the Republic, those *pemuda* who were working in government institutions took over their offices from within, while other groups of youth took over the streets. This action, in turn, provoked reactions from Indo boys, who received support from Chinese youths. In an incident between Indo boys and revolutionary guards protecting a government building, one *pemuda* was shot dead. He was buried on 21 September in a procession that stretched for two kilometres. Clearly, the revolution had broad popular support: the revolutionary genie was out of the bottle.

In 1945, Bandung had a population of 340,000 of whom 30,000 were Europeans or Indo-Europeans who lived north of the train tracks that bisected the city from west to east; 40,000 Chinese lived south of the tracks. At the end of September, violent looting, kidnappings and murders took place targeting Indo-Europeans and Chinese. Squads of Indo-Europeans and Chinese put up a fight and were supported, as in Jakarta, by ex-KNIL soldiers, who formed their own battalion at the beginning of December under the nickname 'Andjing NICA' (NICA dogs).

At the beginning of October, the Republican leaders and the Japanese military reached an agreement whereby the KNI and BKR in Bandung could fly the Indonesian flag and order would be maintained by joint Japanese-Republican patrols. However, nothing came of this agreement because *pemuda* groups did as they pleased. They disarmed Japanese soldiers and organised an intimidating mob to put pressure on the Japanese authorities.

KNI and BKR leaders joined these actions, and between 7 and 10 October a large stock of weapons fell into the hands of the *pemuda*. They captured the airfield on 10 October, and that same day a large crowd surrounded the Kenpeitai headquarters. With the permission of the British high command in Jakarta, the Japanese military clamped down hard. Within 24 hours, the leaders of the KNI and the BKR were arrested and all revolutionary barricades in the city were cleared. Gatherings of more than three people were prohibited; if groups of four people were found, one of them was shot on the spot.

A week later, the first British Indian troops arrived and the Japanese soldiers began to retreat into so-called 'self-internment camps'. Deeply frustrated by the defeat they had suffered on 10 October, the *pemuda* groups sought revenge. They kidnapped and killed Indo-Europeans, Chinese and also members of the Sundanese administrative nobility. In total, an estimated 1,500 Europeans, Indo-Europeans and Chinese were killed in Bandung during this period.

The Republican leadership in Bandung accepted the presence of British troops in exchange for recognition of the Republican administration in the city. But the *pemuda* rejected this concession. They felt ashamed because they had suffered a defeat while their fellow fighters in Semarang and Surabaya had achieved success (see below).

At the end of November, a large number of militias came together and united under the umbrella of the API, igniting a fierce struggle for power in the city. British soldiers began to expel *pemuda* from the northern part of Bandung, where most Europeans and Indo-Europeans lived. As a result of this action, as many as 100,000 Indonesians fled from the northern part of the city to the southern part.

Attempts by the Republican government in Jakarta to mediate failed, but the young Republican soldier Abdul Haris Nasution was able to achieve more success. He had been admitted to the Royal Military Academy in Bandung in 1940, becoming head of the Seinendan youth organisation in Bandung during the Japanese occupation. In those years he had built up an extensive network in West Java. In August 1945, he joined the Republic. As commander of the Republican troops in West Java, he managed to incorporate a number of militias into the Republican army.⁷ Islamic militias such as the Hizbullah and Sabilillah, however, refused to join the Republican army and paid little attention to Nasution.⁸

7 In May 1946, he became commander of the newly formed Siliwangi division in West Java.

8 At the beginning of 1946, the Masyumi claimed that Hizbullah and Sabilillah had a total of five million fighters (Fogg 2020: 73).

From January to the end of March 1946, Bandung was relatively quiet. The British controlled the northern part, while the Republic held the south of the city. After the arrival of a substantial British reinforcement, General Douglas Hawthorn decided to drive out the militias from the south of the city. In an ultimatum, he demanded on 23 March that they evacuate within 24 hours. Given the superiority of the British troops, Nasution wanted to avoid a massacre and also not put his military supplies at risk. But the *pemuda* had their own plan. On the night of 24 March, they left the city and forced the population to join the evacuation by setting fire to large parts of South Bandung. It was mostly Chinese houses that went up in flames that night. In Indonesian historiography, the evacuation is called '*Lautan Api*' – sea of fire – and is regarded as one of the heroic moments of the revolution. But it was in fact a Republican defeat accompanied by the senseless destruction of much of the city.

The fighting in Semarang and Ambarawa

As in Bandung, fierce fighting broke out in Central Java around Semarang and Ambarawa between groups supported by Republican troops and Japanese and British units, which resulted in thousands of European internees becoming trapped in between. The outcome of the fighting, however, differed from the Battle of Bandung.

At the end of August, a Republican governing committee was formed in Semarang, headed by a senior administrator who had served under the Japanese. In the meantime, *pemuda* had set up their own organisation, the Angkatan Muda Republik Indonesia (AMRI). As in Bandung, the governing committee had little say in anything and it was the *pemuda* who determined the political agenda. They took the initiative to occupy government buildings as Japanese troops withdrew and left law enforcement to the local Republican forces. Just as in Jakarta and Bandung, it was not long before the first clashes took place between the *pemuda* and Europeans/Indo-Europeans who had left the camps in search of relatives and their former homes. Here, too, the arrival of a RAPWI team accompanied by NICA staff members aroused suspicion and agitation. What ensued was a series of attacks on Indo-Europeans, Ambonese and RAPWI personnel.

In mid-September, *pemuda* leaders staged a mass rally in Semarang to show that they were in control of the city. They also began to loot Japanese weapons, as occurred elsewhere in Java. There was even a formal handover of arms in early October. But Japanese elite troops remained fully armed. In Magelang, south of Semarang, Japanese soldiers handed over their weapons

to militias and left the city. In the Semarang area, workers seized power in factories and plantations.

The violence escalated in mid-October, probably because of the news that Japanese soldiers in Bandung had regained power there on 10 October. In Semarang, *pemuda* tried to tighten their grip on the city, while 2,700 Europeans and Indo-Europeans were interned by Republican troops as a precaution, as occurred elsewhere in Java.

On 14 October, elite Japanese troops recaptured Semarang, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of *pemuda*. A day later, groups of *pemuda* retaliated by massacring more than 300 Japanese civilians held captive near Semarang and in Ambarawa. In response, Japanese elite forces staged a ruthless act of revenge in Semarang, killing 2,000 *pemuda*.

On 19 October, Japanese troops had regained control of the city. British troops arrived a day later to evacuate 30,000 interned European women and children from camps in Semarang and Ambarawa. What they found when they arrived was a destroyed city. As in Bandung, the Japanese soldiers withdrew, which meant that the 800 British-Indian soldiers in Semarang had to confront a preponderance of well-armed *pemuda*.

At the end of October, Indian Gurkhas were sent to Ambarawa, 40 kilometres south of Semarang, to supervise the evacuation of internees who were temporarily being guarded by Republican Security Forces. Reports from Surabaya about heavy fighting between Gurkhas and *pemudas* (see below) had an immediate impact on the situation in Ambarawa, resulting in a battle breaking out between Gurkhas and *pemuda* supported by units of the Republican army. At the request of the British army command, President Sukarno and Minister Amir Sjarifuddin came to Ambarawa on 2 November. They managed to bring about a ceasefire, allowing for the evacuation of European internees to begin.

Developments in Surabaya, where British troops had launched an offensive against the *pemuda*, once again influenced the course of events in Semarang on 18 November: here too, *pemuda* clashed violently with British soldiers. The British troops were barely able to hold their own and were only able to repel the attacks when reinforcements arrived.

At the same time, new fighting erupted in and around Ambarawa, where the Gurkhas were able to complete the evacuation of Europeans after much difficulty, thanks to Allied air support. The internees also suffered casualties when some *pemuda* managed to enter the internment camps. On 1 December, the evacuation was concluded and the Gurkhas left Ambarawa. The British maintained only a small contingent of military personnel in Semarang, while outside the city Republican groups held power.

The Battle of Surabaya

Developments in Surabaya initially followed the same pattern as in Bandung and Semarang. When news of the proclamation reached Surabaya on 18 August, administrators and nationalist leaders first waited to see what would happen. *Bersiap* in this situation meant 'keep calm'.⁹ In addition to the uncertainty and doubt that existed at the time about what exactly was going on, the month of fasting which was still in full swing also had a delaying effect on events. By the end of August, a governing committee dominated by older nationalists had also been formed here, and former members of the PETA, Barisan Pelopor and Seinendan were being recruited into the Republican Security Forces. Shortly afterwards, the first *pemuda* militias emerged, while workers in and around the ports organised themselves into separate committees. Everywhere in the city, *becaks* (trishaws) were seen adorned with the Indonesian flag. When the month of fasting was over, the Republican administration organised a large mass gathering. And as in other cities, Europeans and Indo-Europeans began to leave their internment camps, assuming that they would soon be able to resume their former lives.

It was still relatively quiet in the city, but that changed in the third week of September when the first British troops landed and a RAPWI team with NICA staff members moved into Hotel Yamato, the former Oranje Hotel. One of the NICA staff, the Dutch officer P.J.G. Huijer, let it be known that he represented the British authority. The mood changed rapidly when groups of Indo boys started behaving aggressively. They tore down posters with revolutionary slogans and shouted 'death to the natives'. On 19 September, they hoisted the Dutch flag on top of Hotel Yamato, but the *pemuda* climbed onto the roof to tear off the blue stripe of the flag to turn it into an Indonesian flag. Many more violent confrontations followed the flag incident.

On 23 September, the umbrella organisation Pemuda Republik Indonesia (PRI) was established, led by Sumarsono, a 25-year-old who had been a member of the Gerindo in the late 1930s. The PRI grew into an organisation of 20,000 members and also maintained close ties with the kampong population of Surabaya. Just like in Bandung and Semarang, this *pemuda* organisation outflanked the Republican authority in the city.

While clashes between the *pemuda* and Indo youth continued, the PRI also targeted the Japanese military. With the help of a large crowd, it attacked armouries and the headquarters of the Kenpeitai. Compared to Bandung and Semarang, the force of this action posed much more of a threat to the Japanese. Although Kenpeitai agents fired on the crowd with live

9 Frederick 1989: 183.

ammunition, their headquarters was captured by the PRI on 2 October. The next day, with the agreement of the Japanese army command in Jakarta, the entire Japanese arms arsenal in Surabaya was transferred to the Republic, and most of the Japanese military personnel withdrew from the city. In total, Japanese commanders in Java supplied 72,000 light weapons, ammunition, mortars and other artillery to revolutionary militias.¹⁰

Because the Japanese army command in Surabaya no longer wanted to bear responsibility for the situation in the city, a *pro forma* surrender to the Dutch officer Huijer followed on the same day. In practice, however, this was a hollow gesture because the Japanese arsenal had largely ended up in the hands of the PRI and parts of the *kampong* population. By 4 October, Surabaya was in Republican hands.

Unlike in Bandung and Semarang, the transfer of Japan's enormous arms arsenal meant that the Republican fighters in Surabaya now had a considerable potential for violence. In the words of the writer Idrus, the *pemuda* were drunk on their victory, and a violent euphoria ensued that, in the course of October, manifested itself in a fanatical hunt for all remaining Japanese and (Indo-)Europeans.¹¹ The people's anger was directed at anything that was European and colonial or Japanese. European homes were looted, and Japanese soldiers who were imprisoned in the city were lynched in revenge for the Japanese actions against the *pemuda* in Semarang.¹²

As in other parts of Java, the internment of Indo-Europeans was started in mid-October, but instead of preventing violence, it put the internees in much greater danger. During the internment of 5,000 Indo-Europeans, their convoys were attacked, resulting in dozens being killed and several hundred being injured.

By early October, the PRI had established its headquarters in the colonial Simpang Club, where they interrogated Indo-Europeans and convicted those suspected of having connections with the NICA. The interrogations involved beatings; and whoever was convicted by the tribunal was beheaded or mutilated to death. Several dozen Indo-Europeans were murdered, and many more were seriously injured.

Meanwhile, a rift had developed within the leadership of the PRI. Sutomo, better known as Bung Tomo, left the PRI and founded his own organisation,

10 The arsenal included 19,000 rifles, 8,000 light machine guns and 700 heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, cannons and anti-aircraft guns, 16 tanks, 62 armoured cars and 190 trucks. See also Anderson 2018: 86.

11 Idrus 1976.

12 As a precaution, the RAPWI team and Huijer and his staff were imprisoned by the Republican administration. They were brought to safety by British troops on 26 October.

the Barisan Pemberontakan Rakyat Indonesia (BPRI, Combat Group for the Rebellion of the Indonesian People). Sutomo was not a *pemuda* leader like Sumarsono, nor did he have much affinity with the leftist movement; he thought of himself first and foremost as a nationalist. Before the war, he had been a member of the nationalist scout organisation and the moderate nationalist party Parindra and was familiar with the kampong culture in Surabaya. In a manifesto, he had made a carefully thought-out plea for national unity, democracy and equality.¹³ Under his leadership, the struggle in Surabaya entered a new phase.

On 25 October, 4,000 British troops – the majority of which consisted of Indian soldiers – landed in Surabaya. Unlike in Bandung and Semarang, the Japanese were no longer present when the British arrived. Brigadier General Mallaby based himself in the northern harbour area and was tasked with evacuating 10,000 internees from the south of the city. He spread out his troops in small posts across an unknown city, unaware that there were 20,000 well-armed *pemuda* and a kampong population ready to give everything to defend their city. The British high command in Jakarta made matters far worse when, on 27 October, General Hawthorn ordered leaflets to be dropped all over the city with an ultimatum to surrender all weapons within 48 hours. This demand was of course rejected, with PRI leader Sumarsono calling on his supporters to resist.

Just as fighting began to break out across the city between the British posts and armed *pemuda*, on 28 October British troops tried to bring to safety 200 Indo-European women and children who were staying outside the camps. The 17 trucks used to evacuate the women and children were accompanied by only 68 British Indian soldiers. From out of the blue, the convoy was attacked from a kampong, and 50 women and children were killed. The British-Indian soldiers managed to bring the other evacuees to safety with heavy losses. By the end of the day, the British troops were in danger of being overrun, and General Hawthorn made a personal appeal to Sukarno to mediate.

The violence in Surabaya (and in Bandung and Semarang) was bad for the international image of the Republic. Sukarno therefore made every effort to de-escalate the situation. On 29 October, he arrived in Surabaya with Hatta, Amir Sjarifuddin and General Hawthorn. In consultation with Brigadier General Mallaby and Republican leaders in Surabaya, it was agreed that the Indonesians could keep their weapons but had to guarantee a safe retreat for the internees. In turn, the British troops would withdraw to the

13 Poeze 2007: 127.



8. Mallaby's car after the gunfight

northern harbour area. On 30 October, the Republican leaders returned to Jakarta with Hawthorn. That afternoon, following a meeting, Brigadier General Mallaby was killed in an exchange of gunfire on Internatio Square in Surabaya.¹⁴ President Sukarno immediately apologised the next day and ordered the fighters in Surabaya to cease fighting. The fighting did come to a stop, as a result of which, just like in Semarang, British troops succeeded in evacuating 10,000 internees at the beginning of November.

That was not the end of Operation Surabaya for the British military. British headquarters was not going to take Mallaby's death – nor the fact that 250 British soldiers had been killed in fighting in the last days of October – lying down. A massive punitive expedition was therefore prepared. Between 4 and 9 November, 24,000 soldiers arrived in Surabaya by planes and tanks.

While Sutomo had presented himself in his writings as a balanced nationalist thinker, on Radio Pemberontakan he presented himself as a fanatical leader mobilising the kampong population of Surabaya for the decisive battle. Action, battle and blood were the core concepts of his appeals. He had quickly become a legendary figure after having vowed not to have relationships with women and to let his hair grow until victory was

14 According to Goodall (2019: 223), it may have been British gunfire that killed Mallaby.

achieved. He spoke about the duty of the youth and the common people in the struggle for freedom, but he also made a fiery appeal to people in the name of Islam to join the struggle:

Hey British soldiers! As long as the Indonesian bulls, the youth of Indonesia, still have red blood that turns a white cloth into a red and white flag, we will never surrender. Comrades, fellow fighters, and especially the youth of Indonesia, we fight on, we will drive the colonials out of our beloved Indonesian land. [...] We have long suffered, we have been exploited, we have been trampled. Now the time has come to seize our independence. Our slogan is: Merdeka or death. Allahu Akbar! [Allah is great.] Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar Merdeka!¹⁵

The call was also heeded by the Nahdlatul Ulama, which issued a fatwa calling on all believers to participate in the jihad in defence of the Republic.¹⁶

On 9 November, the British issued an ultimatum that was rejected by the leaders in Surabaya. The British troops then launched a devastating offensive that lasted three weeks and was accompanied by heavy bombing. Many kampongs went up in flames, and by the end, 90 percent of the population had fled the city and two-thirds of the city had been reduced to ashes. By 1 December, Surabaya – or what was left of it – was in British hands. In total, an estimated 16,000 Indonesian fighters and 400 British soldiers had died.

The battle for Surabaya went down in history as the greatest battle in the revolution, and 10 November was declared National Hero's Day. But it was the Republic's greatest defeat in material terms. Not only had the city and harbours been destroyed, but also the large arsenal of weapons that could have been put to good use by the Republican army. Moreover, the battle of Surabaya showed how little authority the Republican leaders in Jakarta had.

What the battle had shown was how determined the people of Surabaya were to fight. The British were therefore convinced that they should leave Java as soon as possible, especially because they could not fully rely on the loyalty of their Indian troops. For how long would they want to fight against

15 Speech by Sutomo, 9 November 1945; Sulistina Sutomo 1995. Sutomo was assisted by Muriel Walker, alias Surabaya Sue, who had lived in Bali under the name K'tut Tantri in the 1930s and who addressed the British troops directly in English-language broadcasts. On the Republican radio and on posters, the Indian soldiers were addressed in Hindi and called upon to show solidarity with the Republican struggle for freedom. This propaganda sowed doubt within their ranks and raised the question: 'Why should we die for the Dutch?' (Goodall 2019: 211).

16 Fogg 2020: 52. A large number of Hizbullah units from the Surabaya area took part in the battle.

Indonesian freedom fighters given the background of the independence movement in their motherland India? Another result of the battle was that many Dutch people became aware that the revolution was not the action of a small group of militant fanatics but was wholeheartedly supported by large sections of the population.

Bersiap and the hunt for Chinese

From mid-October 1945, attacks on Europeans and Indo-Europeans began occurring all over Java. People were taken from their homes or from trains, or mugged and kidnapped in the street, then murdered and mutilated. The perpetrators were mostly members of militias. The *buitenkampers* (those outside the camps) – a Dutch term used for those who were not interned during the Japanese occupation – were a particularly vulnerable group. The same could be said of employees of sugar companies along the north coast of Java. In Pekalongan, a number of Indo-European families who lived in the compounds of these companies and who were part of the management were murdered in mid-October. The attack was an act of revenge for the humiliations suffered by workers in the past; the victims were also suspected of being NICA agents.

In and around Surabaya, there was excessive violence against Europeans and Indo-Europeans. Sabarudin played a key role in this violence. He was part of the Republican Security Forces in Sidoarjo and later in the mountain resort of Pacet, where he was involved in mass murders and executions of a few hundred Indo-Europeans from late September 1945 to early 1946.¹⁷

Most of the murders of Europeans and Indo-Europeans took place between mid-October and the end of November 1945. After that, the violence subsided because the revolutionary groups in Jakarta, Bandung and Surabaya suffered defeats and because after 10 October the Republic started to intern large groups of Indo-Europeans to protect them against the *pemuda* violence. By the end of 1945, some 50,000 Indo-Europeans were housed in camps guarded by Republican troops. The camps were not completely safe because attacks regularly took place and Indonesian guards often committed violence. What might also have played a role in the Republic's decision to intern such people was that it thought it could use the prisoners as hostages in negotiations with the Dutch.¹⁸

17 Republican troops put an end to this at the beginning of 1946.

18 Van Delden (2007) puts the emphasis on the Republic's determination to protect the internees, while Bussemaker (2005) highlights its motive of hostage-taking.

The evacuation of the European internees proceeded slowly. Due to unsafe conditions and a lack of means of transport, the last groups were not evacuated until the end of 1947.

The *bersiap* was not directed exclusively against Indo-Europeans. An unknown number of Ambonese, Menadonese and assimilated Peranakan Chinese – groups that were associated with colonial rule – were also targeted in the attacks.¹⁹ In addition to Chinese neighbourhoods in cities, Chinese traders in the countryside and owners of Chinese rice mills along the northern coast of Java bore the brunt of the attacks. Although wealthy Chinese traders tried to buy their way out of the violence and Chinese communities organised their own militias (for example, the Pao An Tui), their neighbourhoods were raided on a regular basis and set on fire. One example where this happened on a large scale was Medan, where *pemuda* and criminal gangs looted Chinese homes. When British troops did not respond to a request for protection, Chinese leaders in the city organised their own militia, which guarded the Chinese quarter until early 1948. During the fighting in Surabaya in October 1945, some 1,000 Chinese may have died.²⁰

There was a particularly vulnerable group of Chinese in Tangerang, west of Jakarta. Since time immemorial, some 25,000 Chinese had lived there as tenants on the Private Estates, which were large privately owned farms. A small prosperous group of Chinese owned land there and collected taxes and were regarded as exploiters by the other tenants. At the start of the revolution, Islamic militias and criminal gangs from neighbouring Banten had come to Tangerang, increasing the potential for violence.

At the beginning of 1946, a shaky armistice was negotiated between British (and later Dutch) troops and Republican Security Forces and local combat groups. After a Dutch attack in April 1946, the Republican Security Forces withdrew and a neutral zone was formed under British pressure. Within this zone, local combat groups were given free rein. Aided by criminal gangs from Banten and encouraged by rumours that the Chinese were secretly collaborating with the NICA, these combat groups attacked the

19 Recent migrants from China, so-called *totoks*, were seen as 'foreigners' and were generally left in peace. An exception was the harbour town of Bagansiapiapi south of Medan, where many Chinese fishermen lived. In March 1946, fighting broke out here between Chinese militias and the Republican navy, resulting in dozens of deaths. The reason for this was the refusal of the Chinese community to hoist the Republican flag during the commemoration of the anniversary of the Chinese republican leader Sun Yat Sen's death.

20 Somers Heidhues 2012: 384; Twang Peck Yang 1998: 156. There are also reported to have been Chinese casualties as a result of British shelling.

Chinese community. Men were circumcised or killed, women raped, and houses looted and set on fire. Although Dutch troops returned to the city of Tangerang at the end of May, the murder of the Chinese continued in the countryside. An estimated 1,000 to 1,200 of them were killed. Most were defenceless peasants with very few possessions worth looting. In June 1946, Prime Minister Sjahrir and President Sukarno apologised to the Republic of China for the failure of the Indonesian Republic to protect the victims.

In contrast to the Europeans and Indo-Europeans, Chinese communities were attacked in 1947 and 1948 during the two Dutch military actions. Retreating Republican forces regularly used scorched earth tactics by burning down Chinese businesses and shops. And after Dutch troops left, revenge attacks were carried out against Chinese suspected of having collaborating with the Dutch. This was what happened to the powerful Kwee family, which owned sugar companies in West Java: they lost their possessions and were forced to flee. In July 1947, 21 Chinese were executed in an old factory in Malang, and various revenge attacks took place along the north coast of Java, such as in Cilimas near Linggadjati, where 250 Chinese were murdered. In 1948, a large number of Chinese were murdered near Nganjuk in East Java.²¹ A number of mass graves with the bodies of 200 Chinese were found in the vicinity of Blitar, and another in Purwokerto with 100 bodies.

It is not possible to determine the exact number of deaths from all these violent acts. According to Somers Heidhues, an estimated 10,000 Chinese were killed during the revolution.²² And with regard to Europeans and Indo-Europeans, Bussemaker, Cribb and Frederick conclude, based on imprecise estimates, that between 20,000 and 30,000 died.²³ However, in a well-substantiated article, Bert Immerzee states that this estimate is far too high. The number of European victims is probably somewhere between 5,000 and 6,000.²⁴

Daulat

The initial phase of the revolution was marked not only by violent confrontations between revolutionary groups and British troops and attacks on ethnic groups closely associated with the colonial system; in Java and Sumatra,

21 See Chapter 12.

22 Somers Heidhues 2012: 396.

23 Bussemaker 2005: 324; Cribb 2008: 436; Frederick 2012: 369.

24 Immerzee 2014; see also De Jong 1988: 744–45. Jeroen Kemperman arrives at the number 5,500 (*De slachtoffers van de bersiap*, 16-5-2014 on www.niod.nl).

indigenous administrators – sultans, regents, district chiefs and village chiefs – also came under attack. They were hated mostly because of their close cooperation with the Japanese occupiers in times of crisis and scarcity, but also because they had been the indigenous face of colonial rule, which the people felt should never be allowed to return.

As indicated previously, the term *daulat* was used for these actions to indicate that the attacked administrators had lost their legitimacy. By means of mass demonstrations they were forced to resign, and if they did not do so voluntarily, they were taken from their homes and offices and paraded around the town or village (*dombreng*). The shrewd village chiefs chose to abdicate without delay in favour of their sons or decided to voluntarily reduce the landholdings that had been allocated to them as salaries.

The revolution was also felt in the princely states in Central Java. In Solo, *pemuda* demonstrated their control of the city at a mass rally on 1 October, and workers took over sugar plantations in the area. In the course of October, Japanese troops withdrew after having handed over many weapons to Republican groups. The young Susuhunan Pakubuwono XII of Solo did not hold much sway and wisely sided with the Republic to save his skin. Many village chiefs followed his example and therefore managed to remain in office. The upheaval had taken place without bloodshed, although there were many attacks on Chinese shops and businesses.

In contrast to the hesitant monarch of Solo, the sultan of Yogyakarta, Hamengkubuwono IX, declared on 5 October that Yogyakarta was henceforth part of the Republic. By way of thanks, President Sukarno granted Yogyakarta, and thus the sultan, a special status. The sultan also pushed ahead with administrative reform, for the first time allowing the people to choose their own village chiefs. Because he had sided with the Republic and started to democratise the government, his authority among the people increased enormously. To keep his area under control, the sultan set up his own people's militia, the Laskar Rakyat Yogyakarta, to take the wind out of the sails of other combat groups. In the vicinity of the city, groups of *pemuda* and Republican forces occupied a large number of sugar factories. Yogyakarta had become a completely Republican city.

Socialist revolutions in Banten and Pekalongan

In Banten in West Java, and in the Pekalongan residency along the north coast of Java, regional revolutions of a leftist slant took place. There had been a long tradition of resistance in Banten. Back in 1888, a major uprising led by Muslim clerics had broken out, and in 1926 these ulama were again

involved in an uprising – together with communist leaders – against the colonial administration. In these uprisings, they called on a network of local strongmen (*jawara*). Like the rest of Java, Banten suffered from food shortages in 1945, and there was widespread resentment against members of the administrative aristocracy who had enriched themselves under Japanese rule. Unlike the rest of Java, *pemuda* did not play an important role in the local revolution.

The core of the resistance against the old aristocratic elite was formed by the ulama and old communists who had taken part in the 1926 uprising and had subsequently been interned in Boven Digul. They quickly managed to seize power in Banten. Japanese troops retreated, after which the old administrative elite fled *en masse*. Ulama took their place, but the leftist revolutionaries in Banten aspired to create a socialist society. They set up a Dewan Rakyat (People's Council), which was to function as the highest governing body, and also formed a People's Army (Laskar Rakyat) consisting mainly of *jawara*.

Tan Malaka had been involved in the seizure of power and the formation of the new left-wing administration in Banten, but he was unable to prevent it from ending in failure. The Dewan Rakyat followed its own primitive communist course, refusing to speak to representatives of the Republic, while *pemuda* were distrusted because of their urban background. From October 1945 to January 1946, the Dewan Rakyat seemed to be in control in Banten. Taxes were abolished, and food and clothing were distributed from Japanese stockpiles. But when these ran out, the popularity of the left-wing administration declined. In addition, the undisciplined behaviour of members of the Laskar Rakyat increasingly aroused resentment among the people.

The communist leaders had made a strategic mistake when they neglected to secure the support of the Islamic leaders, which left the revolutionary leaders isolated. When the internal violence in Banten increased towards the end of 1945, the Republican army intervened. In late December, the poorly organised Laskar Rakyat was disarmed and the leaders of the Dewan Rakyat arrested. The Islamic leaders eventually emerged victorious as a stable power.

In the Pekalongan residence, a similar attempted revolution took place in the regencies of Brebes, Tegal and Pemalang, a revolution that was nicknamed Peristiwa Tiga Daerah (Affair of the Three Districts). Here, too, there was a tradition of radical resistance dating back to the communist Sarekat Rakyat from the 1920s, and here, too, the people had been exploited by wealthy landowners, corrupt administrators and

owners of sugar mills. And as in Banten, a core group of former PKI members took the lead.

News of the proclamation travelled by train along the northern coast of Java and soon reached Pekalongan, where the news was greeted with amazement. Could a proclamation make a country independent just like that? But as someone remarked during a discussion, 'it is the proclamation itself that commands us to act.'²⁵ Combat groups quickly formed, adopting the slogans supplied by Jakarta. The older and moderate nationalists who were part of the Republican governing committee (KNI) and the representatives of the conservative administrative elite were hesitant to raise the Republican flag or to take other initiatives, as they were used to seeing which way the wind blows while waiting for orders from above.

Influenced by events in Jakarta – the landing of British troops, rumours about the return of the Dutch, the crackdown by ex-KNIL soldiers – combat groups took action to get their hands on Japanese weapons. As elsewhere in Java, the Japanese troops withdrew.

Food shortages and feelings of vengeance against administrative corruption during the Japanese occupation led to *dombreng* actions against the Javanese administrative elite in October. By the end of the month, the entire region had been subjected to *dombreng* actions. Most of the village chiefs were also deposed.

In Pemalang, Tegal and Brebes, left-wing resistance leaders seized power, sidelining the Republican KNI. The Republican Security Forces (BKR) were also unable to make a stand because the Republic needed all its available resources in the clashes against the British in Ambarawa. Only in the city of Pekalongan did the Republican administration remain in office.

As in Banten, the new leaders in Tegal, Brebes and Pemalang distributed rice and textiles from Japanese stockpiles to the people. In addition, they formed an alliance of combat organisations, but they soon became divided over the question of exactly how this should function. When the alliance also seized power in Pekalongan, their rule lasted only four days. At the behest of the Republican leaders in Jakarta, local Muslim militias and units of the Pesindo put an end to the alliance with an iron fist in December by arresting the leaders and their most important supporters in the region.²⁶ A total of

25 Lucas 1991: 78.

26 See Chapter 5 on the role of the Pesindo. One of the leaders of the Popular Front was Widarta. He had been involved in the resistance against the Japanese occupiers but was imprisoned by Republican troops. He was released in 1947 but then tried by communist party members who accused him of factionalism, support for Tan Malaka, and political mistakes made during the 1945 uprising. He was sentenced to death and was executed by Pesindo leaders.

1,600 men were imprisoned, thereby bringing an end to the adventure of the local communist revolutions.

Daulat in Aceh and on the east coast of Sumatra

Bloody *daulat* actions broke out in Sumatra, which targeted the aristocratic elites. By the end of August 1945, news of the Japanese surrender and proclamation had reached Aceh, and soon the old antagonism between the noble *uleebalang* and Muslim leaders resurfaced. As in other regions, the Republic had appointed a moderate nationalist in Aceh whose task it was to uphold the *status quo*.

Many *uleebalang* were convinced that the Dutch would soon return and saw no reason to join the Republic. This fuelled the anger of the leaders of the reform-minded Muslims, who were members of the Pusat Ulama Seluruh Aceh (PUSA, Association of Acehnese Ulama), and groups of *pemuda* who established the Pemuda Republik Indonesia (PRI) in September.²⁷ They emphatically identified themselves with the Republic and used Indonesian as a political *lingua franca*. On behalf of the PUSA, Teungku Daud Beureu'eh expressed his support for the Republic. The fight for freedom in his view was a *perang sabil*, a holy battle in which all Muslims had to participate. The PRI and the militias of the PUSA joined forces against Aceh's administrative elite. For the PRI, independence was paramount, but the PUSA was determined that Indonesia should also become an Islamic state.

Opposing the nationalists was a small group of militant *uleebalang* whose centre of power was in Pidië. The group was led by Teungku Mohammad Daud Tjumbok, a Western-oriented and aggressive man who had managed to get his hands on Japanese weapons. Japanese soldiers also distributed weapons to the Republican Security Forces, the PRI and the PUSA. In early November, Japanese troops withdrew from Pidië, and in December they moved out of Aceh, resulting in a particularly dangerous situation given the lack of a central authority and the fact that all parties were armed.

In early December, fighting broke out in Pidië between armed *uleebalang* and PRI/PUSA militias, which continued until early January 1946. Hundreds were killed and reinforcements for the PRI/PUSA came from all over Aceh. Meanwhile, the Republican administration was forced to side with the PRI/PUSA, while Republican Security Forces were not in any state to intervene. In early January, Teungku Mohammad Daud Tjumbok was defeated and a

27 At first the organisation was called Badan Pemuda Indonesia, but in December the name was changed to Pesindo, as in Java.

large number of *uleebalang* were executed. Ulama who were members of the PUSA took over the administration in Pidië.

A PUSA militia led by Husin al-Mudjahid then moved with a few thousand men to the east coast of Aceh and subsequently to the north. Wherever they went, they put an end to the reign of the *uleebalang* with great violence. As a true warlord, Husin al-Mudjahid proclaimed himself the leader of the people's army, the Tentara Perdjuangan Rakyat. At the beginning of March, he continued his journey along the west coast to the south of Aceh. By the end of March, hundreds of *uleebalang* had been killed and their power throughout Aceh had come to an end.

In April 1946, Teungku Daud Beureu'eh brought an end to the violence when he gave orders for Husin al-Mudjahid to be assassinated. His death signified the completion of the revolution in Aceh. The Japanese had departed, the *uleebalang* had been wiped out, and a dangerous warlord had been eliminated. PUSA leaders were in control, and the Dutch wisely decided not to interfere in Aceh.

In the colonial plantation area on the east coast of Sumatra, a similar conflict broke out between *pemuda* and aristocratic rulers, with moderate nationalists trying in vain to de-escalate the violence. Here, too, nationalist leaders from various backgrounds came to the fore. There were older moderate nationalists such as Mr. Muhammad Hasan, who was appointed by the Republic in August 1945 as governor of Sumatra; 1930s nationalist activists such as Gerindo leader Jacub Siregar and PKI leader Xarim MS, who had been imprisoned in Boven Digul; younger leaders such as Selamat Ginting and Ahmad Tahir, who underwent military training during the Japanese occupation; and men such as Timur Pane, who emerged as leaders of autonomous militias.

Initially, the old aristocratic elite still seemed to be firmly in the saddle, convinced that the Dutch would soon return. There were even rumours that the sultans were already forming a welcoming committee. The tide turned in late September when *pemuda* established their first combat groups and Governor Hasan and militia leader Xarim MS announced the country's independence at a mass rally in Medan. Not long thereafter, however, there was also a mass gathering in honour of the installation of the new sultan of Deli in a reaffirmation of the old *status quo*.

Things became restless when British troops set foot there on 10 October and the first Dutch administrative officials were sighted. Lieutenant Westering had arrived earlier with the task of forming a police force, for which he was recruiting ex-KNIL soldiers. Due to their arrogant and aggressive behaviour, Westering's men clashed with groups of *pemuda* in mid-October. The British put an end to this by disbanding Westering's police force.

In the meantime, outside of Medan all kinds of autonomous militant groups were being formed that positioned themselves along ethnic and political lines. Javanese and Batak people took up arms against Malay aristocrats, while left-wing and nationalist-oriented militant groups, such as those under the leadership of Jacob Siregar and Selamat Ginting, sometimes joined forces only to turn around and fight each other again. Those who had guns gained a following, and their leadership was confirmed by the demonstration of recklessness. *Merdeka* stood for personal freedom, autonomy, 'down with the Dutch and the nobility', no taxes, and electricity in every village.

At an early stage, the Karo Batak leader Selamat Ginting had managed to secure a truckload of Japanese weapons, making him a powerful leader of the nationalist Napindo Halalintar militia. Other leaders such as Timur Pane developed into outspoken warlords who took possession of plantations and made a fortune exporting tobacco, rubber and sisal. In the first ten months of 1946, these warlords exported \$126 million worth of goods to Singapore and Penang, which in turn enabled them to buy a large number of weapons.

Although British troops maintained order in Medan, they did not venture outside the city. At the beginning of December, they handed over authority to the Republican army led by Ahmad Tahir, but he, too, was unable to do much outside of Medan.

As in Aceh, a number of militant groups joined the Pemuda Rakyat Indonesia (PRI) in mid-October, which was later renamed Pesindo. As a result of the fighting in Surabaya, anti-British sentiment also surfaced in and around Medan, and *pemuda* began to hunt for Japanese weapons. In mid-December, a large arms transport was attacked near the town of Tebing Tinggi, after which fierce fighting broke out in which between 500 and 800 Japanese soldiers and 2,000 to 5,000 *pemuda* were killed.²⁸

Under the leadership of the Pesindo, a grand coalition was formed that included the nationalist, communist and Muslim militias. Then the attack on the sultans began. The Sultan of Langkat, following the advice of the well-known literary figure Amir Hamzah, tried to save his skin by siding with the Republic. His colleague from Siak did the same, but their gestures came too late. The *pemuda* demanded full *kedaulatan rakyat* (popular sovereignty) and made it clear that 'the will of the people is a tidal wave that cannot be stopped.'²⁹

At the beginning of March 1946, revolutionary forces put an end to the sultans' power in an extremely violent campaign. In Asahan and Labuan

²⁸ Reid 1979: 182.

²⁹ Reid 1979: 234. This action was supported from Java by the Persatuan Perdjuangan led by Tan Malaka; see Chapter 6.

Batu, sultan families were massacred; in Sunggal, Serdang and Langkat, the sultans were killed or driven out despite fierce resistance from aristocratic militias. Amir Hamzah was also killed in the fighting. Although the sultan of Deli was protected by British troops, he eventually had to give up his position. Some sultan families were massacred, hundreds of aristocrats were arrested, and countless noble houses were plundered.

Under the leadership of Selamat Ginting, the aristocratic administrators in Karoland were arrested and deposed. This action occurred without violence because the conflicts between the nobility and the people were not as sharp as elsewhere, and because there were family ties between the *pemuda* and the beleaguered administrators.

When the anti-aristocratic fury subsided in mid-March, the *pemuda* had no clear plan of how to proceed. Left-wing leaders tried to establish a command economy, but these attempts quickly became bogged down in corruption and conflict. Violence continued in many places as militias fought over income, influence and prestige. That is why in Karoland the word *repolusi* ('revolution' in the local vernacular) refers to the period in which hostility penetrated society and anyone could fall victim to senseless violence.³⁰

Ahmad Tahir declared a state of emergency in the name of the Republic, but his security forces were unable to do anything. In April 1946, Minister Amir Sjarifuddin and two colleagues visited the region, risking their own lives in doing so. At that time, a left-wing movement was threatening to seize power and replace Governor Hasan with Xarim MS. With great difficulty, Amir Sjarifuddin succeeded in convincing the leaders of the Pesindo to end the violence in the interest of the Republic. At the same time, communist hardliners were eliminated, and Selamat Ginting was finally able to settle his score with the left-wing militia of his competitor Jacob Siregar.

Local violence in an administrative vacuum

While the Republic formally came into being in Jakarta in August 1945, fierce and violent local revolutions erupted not long afterwards in Java and in North Sumatra, with an estimated 40,000 casualties. The revolutions coincided with a vacuum of power at the state level that emerged after the Japanese capitulation and broadly followed the same pattern. Young people took the initiative, getting hold of Japanese weapons and directing their anger at three pillars of the old colonial system: Europeans/Indo-Europeans, Chinese,

30 Steedly 2013.

and the local nobility who were seen as the embodiment of indirect rule. The returning Dutch and the British soldiers were considered the enemy because they symbolised the threat of recolonisation. The British soon understood the futility of stopping the revolution and retreated as quickly as possible. The fierceness of the fighting had its roots in the Japanese era, when thousands of young people were mobilised and trained to fight against the enemy on the colonial and Allied side. Violence became a way of life and destroyed Bandung and Surabaya. Attempts in Banten and the north coast of Java to start a left-wing revolution failed, but *daulat* actions in Java, Aceh and on the east coast of Sumatra put an end to the administrative privileges of the aristocracy.

The leadership of the Republic was forced to stand by and watch powerlessly from Jakarta, all the while fearing that its international reputation would be seriously damaged. While Republican leaders did manage to evacuate internees from Semarang and Surabaya, in Bandung and Surabaya they were unable to prevent bloody confrontations. Interventions in Banten, Pekalongan and on the east coast of Sumatra were successful only after most of the violence had already taken place and the people were desperate for security and for an authority that could be relied on.

5 The Dutch Reoccupation and Decolonisation

1945–1946

The first reports in Dutch newspapers about the Indonesian proclamation of independence appeared no earlier than 17 September 1945, a month after the fact.

This chapter examines the reaction in the Netherlands to the Republican declaration of independence. It also looks into what the Dutch people actually knew about developments that took place in the archipelago after 1942. As the Republic began to consolidate in Java and Sumatra and bring the many revolutionary militias under its control, plans were being made on the Dutch side for a reoccupation of the archipelago. This planning gave rise to all sorts of dilemmas. Should the old colonial system be restored? If so, where would the Netherlands get the people and resources to make that happen? And what kinds of ideas did the Dutch have about their future relationship with Indonesia? Was the Netherlands capable of moving beyond its colonial past?

Dutch powerlessness and British preconditions

The Japanese surrender on 15 August 1945 caught not only the Republican leaders by surprise but also the Dutch government, which had assumed that Japan would not be defeated until sometime in 1946. The Netherlands had come out of the war in May 1945 in a tattered state, and utterly incapable in August of restoring colonial authority in the Indonesian archipelago. The outpost of this reoccupation was in Australia, at Camp Columbia, not far from Brisbane, and consisted of a group of over 400 Dutch civil servants, 1,000 KNIL soldiers and 100 Indonesian personnel, all of whom had fled to Australia in March 1942. Under the leadership of H.J. van Mook, who was minister of colonies and lieutenant governor general, and Ch.O. van der Plas, the former governor of East Java, they made preparations to return to the Dutch East Indies.¹

¹ In April 1944, Van Mook left London for Brisbane. Until March 1945, he combined the positions of lieutenant governor general and minister of colonies. In 1943, Van der Plas had organised the evacuation of 500 political prisoners from Boven Digul to Brisbane to prevent them from

It was not only the Republican leaders and the Dutch authorities but also the British who were unprepared for Japan's sudden capitulation. Originally, the liberation of the archipelago was to be carried out by US troops. Van Mook had agreed with General Douglas MacArthur that the Americans would facilitate a return to Dutch rule. But in July 1945, at the summit of Allied leaders in Potsdam, it became clear that the Americans gave priority to the occupation of Japan. It was therefore decided that the task of liberating the Indonesian archipelago would be handed over to the British Southeast Asia Command (SEAC) led by Lord Louis Mountbatten. However, Mountbatten had his hands full, as his forces were already overstretched by operations in Burma, Malaya, Singapore, Thailand and southern Vietnam. As a result, the first British Indian troops did not land in Java until late September and in Sumatra until mid-October.

Van Mook had received assurances from Mountbatten that the British would support a return to Dutch rule. In early September, Van Mook and Van der Plas had assured the British Supreme Allied Commander that British troops would be greeted with cheers by the people and that the nationalist movement in the archipelago amounted to nothing. They made pains to clarify that the Republic was a Japanese creation and Sukarno a collaborator. Van Mook was convinced that a few ships carrying food would placate the people, and Van der Plas even argued that Sukarno and Hatta could be captured quite easily.

After the first British quartermasters arrived in Jakarta on 15 September, they quickly discovered that the Republic had a much larger following than the Dutch would have had them believe. Major General Yamamoto warned the British that bloodshed could only be avoided by promising Sukarno and Hatta independence without delay.² It was on this basis that Mountbatten decided to nullify his deal with Van Mook. He instructed Lieutenant General Philip Christison to pursue a pragmatic course and to get involved as little as possible in a Dutch-Republican conflict. It was against this backdrop that

falling into Japanese hands and being used for Japanese propaganda purposes. Some of them went to work for the Netherlands Indies Government Information Service (NIGIS) in Brisbane. Communist ex-Digulists were involved in the formation of the Serikat Indonesia Baru (SIBAR, Alliance of the New Indonesia) in August 1944. The idea was that immediately after liberation the SIBAR would become active as a pro-Dutch political party in the archipelago. While it may seem remarkable that the former prisoners chose to take part in this, their participation was in fact in line with the Soviet Union's directive to fight fascism together with the Western allies. Due to the sooner-than-expected Japanese capitulation and the proclamation of the Republic, however, nothing came of the plan (Poeze 2012).

2 Yong Mun Cheong 1992: 34–7.

Christison declared, upon his arrival in Jakarta on 29 September, that he had no intention of occupying Indonesia and that he would quickly share the task of maintaining order with local – i.e., Republican – authorities. Soon enough, the British experienced firsthand the ferocity of the revolutionary resistance in Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang and Surabaya.

Things were very different in East Indonesia, where the Republic had a weaker presence. The vast area was occupied by two Australian divisions, to which had been added some Dutch civil servants and a hastily assembled contingent of 5,000 former KNIL soldiers. Makassar, the largest city in South Sulawesi, was occupied on 21 September, and Pontianak on 16 October. The Australians – unlike the British in Java – helped to restore colonial rule in East Indonesia.

In South Sulawesi, where the Republic had a large following, the conservative government official C. Lion Cachet was put in charge of the colonial administration. He immediately banned pro-Republican demonstrations and had weapons confiscated. Incidentally, this did nothing to prevent Moluccan KNIL soldiers from clashing with local *pemuda*. This situation made it impossible for the Republican governor Sam Ratulangi, who had been appointed by Sukarno in late August, to do his work. In November 1945, Australian troops left East Indonesia and the Dutch took over. Although the area was formally under British control, the British presence in this part of the archipelago was minimal.

On 2 October 1945, Lieutenant Governor General Van Mook arrived in Jakarta.³ He was accompanied by a KNIL unit led by Major General W. Schilling. The city was bedecked with red-and-white flags, and English-language revolutionary slogans could be seen everywhere. A slogan pasted on walls and trams throughout the city greeted Van Mook and Van der Plas with the words: ‘Van Mook and Van der Plas, watcha doin’ here anyway?’⁴

The following week, during a visit to Singapore, Van Mook was told by Mountbatten that it was necessary for him to enter into discussions as soon as possible with representatives of the Republic. For the government in The Hague, however, this situation was unacceptable. From the Dutch point of view, the Republic did not represent the people. Moreover, Dutch officials felt they could not talk to Sukarno because he had ‘collaborated’ with the Japanese. Sukarno rejected this allegation. He argued that, in the Netherlands, Dutch officials had collaborated with the German occupiers.

3 According to the Dutch, the city was still called Batavia; the name Jakarta had been introduced during the Japanese occupation.

4 Van den Berge 2014: 203.

Moreover, since he was not a representative of the Dutch colonial authority, collaboration was not at issue in his case. And more than a decade of imprisonment and exile at the hands of the colonial state had given Sukarno little reason to show 'loyalty' to that state.

The Dutch refusal to talk to the Republican leaders led to indignation on the British side, as it amounted to the Dutch wanting to restore their colonial rule and expecting British troops to do the job for them.⁵ Pressured by Mountbatten, Van Mook was forced to talk to representatives of the Republic. And given the strength of the Republic and the absence of Dutch troops, Van Mook understood that he had no other choice. He opted to work towards a gradual process of decolonisation under his supervision, for which he sought to cooperate with moderate figures willing to maintain a link with the Netherlands.

Two meetings between Van Mook and Sukarno took place for the first time in late October 1945.⁶ Van Mook explained that the starting point of their discussions should be Queen Wilhelmina's speech on 7 December 1942, which had outlined a new kind of colonial relationship with a vague reference to future self-determination for Indonesia. Agus Salim replied that that speech was outdated: Indonesia was already independent, and while the Republic did want to cooperate with the Netherlands, it would only do so on the basis of equality.⁷ When the Dutch government learned that Van Mook had spoken to Sukarno, its reaction was one of fury particularly against Van Mook because he had defied The Hague's explicit ban by talking to Sukarno, which could be interpreted as a sign that the Netherlands was recognising the Republic. It was only through Queen Wilhelmina's personal intervention that Van Mook was not dismissed from his post.

On 1 November, Hatta issued a statement stressing that there could only be talks between the two sides if the Netherlands recognised the Republic. He also stated that the Republic needed foreign capital and was willing to respect the rights of foreign companies. The Republic was even willing to take over the national debt of the Dutch East Indies. However, The Hague – and Van Mook as well – were still completely in a colonial frame of mind and therefore chose to ignore Hatta's statement. They believed that Wilhelmina's 1942 speech and the 1941 report by the Visman Commission provided the

5 De Jong 2015: 34.

6 On the Dutch side, Van der Plas and P.J.A. Idenburg were present, and on the Republican side Hatta, Subardjo and Agus Salim.

7 Hatta 1981: 248–9. Sukarno had already intimated earlier that independence could no longer be negotiated because Indonesia was already independent (De Jong 2015: 33).

basis for modest reforms, such as expanding the powers of the Volksraad (People's Council); but they also felt strongly that the top leadership had to remain in the hands of the lieutenant governor general.⁸ Decolonisation was in the offing, but Van Mook had already defined the contours of a future Indonesia: it had to be a federation to prevent the Republic – or 'Java' – from dominating the 'outlying regions'.

Van Mook's ideas about a federation were not new. As early as 1917, he had indicated at a congress of the Indonesian Association of Students in Leiden that the East Indies could not be a homogeneous nation but that it would become independent in the future. In the new polity, he asserted, there had to be room for all population groups. In the 1930s, he further developed this idea as a member of the so-called Stuwgroep, arguing that there should be a federative East Indies Commonwealth that remained bound to the Netherlands. The fact that the Commonwealth was given the adjective 'East Indies' implied that Europeans born in the East Indies, like Van Mook, were also a part of it and should lead the new polity.⁹ Van Mook also placed much emphasis on the importance of good governance as a precondition for future independence. In short, decolonisation according to the Dutch model – and under the leadership of Van Mook – would be the paternalistic capstone of the Dutch Ethical Policy deployed at the beginning of the century.

It was striking that the Dutch authorities and Republican leaders knew so little of each other. There were no personal ties whatsoever – let alone friendships – between them. 'If you ask whether a Dutchman has ever stayed with an Indonesian, or whether any Dutchman has invited Indonesians to stay with him, your question will be met with silence,' Van der Meulen wrote.¹⁰ This was also true of members of the progressive Stuwgroep from the 1930s. Van Mook did not meet Sjahrir until 1945 in Jakarta. The only Indonesian he was friends with was his close aide Abdulkadir Widjoatmodjo.¹¹

Initially, Van Mook felt supported by the large deployment of British troops in Surabaya in early November (see Chapter 4), but the ferocity of the *pemuda* resistance forced the Dutch to face the facts. The Republic had far more support than they had assumed, and it managed to generate far more violence than the Netherlands could handle.

The question was therefore raised as to whether the Netherlands was capable of occupying Java by military means. In other words, was a full

8 See Chapter 1 for the Visman report.

9 Yong Mun Cheong 1982: 10–15; Van den Berge 2014: 44, 105.

10 Van der Meulen 1965: 176–177.

11 Personal communication from Tom van den Berge.

restoration of colonial authority realistic? Militarily, the Netherlands was suffering from shortages of everything. There were very few well-trained mid-level officers available in the Netherlands. A small group of marines had undergone training in the United States in 1943, and that was all the Netherlands had. There was no general military conscription at this point, so only volunteers could be recruited. Moreover, there was a severe shortage of arms and other equipment, leaving the Netherlands entirely dependent on British military support. In the archipelago, the pre-war colonial KNIL had come out of the war weakened and humiliated. Some 30,000 KNIL soldiers had spent the war years in Japanese captivity and were in very poor condition.

Despite the deplorable state of the Dutch military, the army leadership – Admiral C.E.L. Helfrich, General C.H. van Oyen and Major General J.H. Uhl – felt they had to take a hard line against the Republic. But the commander of West Java, Major General W. Schilling, spoke out against this view. He estimated that at least 200,000 men would be needed over a period of five to ten years to effectively control Java. As this option was completely unrealistic, he concluded that the Dutch had no choice but to negotiate with the Republican leaders.¹² Colonel Simon Spoor, head of the Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS), backed the hardliners. His intelligence agency never failed to portray the Republic as a Japanese creation that did not really represent the people. In fact, they claimed that the well-meaning people of Indonesia were being terrorised by militant fanatics who were bent on causing chaos through terror, and that as a result the people yearned for peace and order, which only forceful military intervention could restore. Spoor assured The Hague that a hard line would be successful.

The Dutch government chose to take the hard line. When the old army command was replaced on 23 December 1945, the relatively inexperienced Spoor became the new commander. He was assisted by another hardliner, Major General D.C. Buurman van Vreeden. Schilling, who had been nominated as army chief by Van Mook, was removed from his post and transferred to the Dutch military mission at Allied headquarters in Tokyo. This put Van Mook, who was for negotiation, in direct opposition to the military leadership.

Meanwhile, a few thousand Dutch soldiers in Malacca stood ready to come to Java in early November, but the British held them off, arguing that the troops were ill-prepared. Moreover, the British already had enough problems dealing with the unruly behaviour of returning KNIL soldiers

12 De Jong 2015: 42.

in Batavia and Bandung, with some of them even shooting at Republican vehicles in Jakarta and pulling over Sjahrir's car to threaten him. It was not until March 1946 that the British allowed Dutch military personnel to come to Java and Sumatra.¹³

The British had experienced firsthand the force of revolutionary violence during the battles of Semarang and Surabaya and therefore decided to leave as soon as possible. Mountbatten informed the British troops that they were to leave in March 1946, and the British subsequently put enormous pressure on the Netherlands and the Republic to reach an agreement before their departure. The British announced that they would only allow Dutch soldiers in once the Netherlands started serious negotiations with the Republic. The Republic feared that the departure of the British would give the Dutch the opportunity to clamp down and that therefore it was better to come to a settlement. For his part, Van Mook had become convinced that the Netherlands could not militarily 'pacify' Java and that it therefore had no choice but to negotiate with the Republic.

Negotiations

On 14 November 1945, a Republican cabinet was formed under the leadership of Sutan Sjahrir. He was considered by the Dutch to be an acceptable interlocutor, for he had eschewed any so-called 'collaboration' during the Japanese occupation. Moreover, in his manifesto *Perdjoeangan Kita* (Our Struggle) – of which a Dutch translation was published in January 1946 – he set out a vision in which independence went hand in hand with democracy, and he was also a proponent of negotiations.¹⁴ This moderate stance made him popular among Dutch social democrats as well. When, later on, the leaders of the Republic fled Jakarta on 4 January 1946 and relocated to Yogyakarta, it was Sjahrir who stayed behind in Jakarta to negotiate with the Dutch.¹⁵

On 17 November 1945, talks between Van Mook and the Republic were resumed. Van Mook designed a strategy to negotiate for the Republic to become part of a federal Indonesia that would, in turn, be part of a Union under the Dutch Crown.

13 In late 1945, on the initiative of Australian trade unions and ex-internees of Boven Digul, strikes broke out in Australia among port workers, mostly Indian sailors, to prevent Dutch ships from transporting arms to Java. This incident was the focus of Joris Ivens' well-known film, *Indonesia Calling* (Goodall 2019).

14 See also Chapter 6.

15 The journey from Jakarta to Yogyakarta took 15 hours by train.

Van Mook was up against not only a conservative military leadership but also politicians in The Hague who were not prepared to recognise the Republic. The lieutenant governor general travelled to The Hague in December for consultations, which resulted in the cabinet agreeing on 24 December to a very gradual decolonisation of Indonesia – a transitional period of 25 years was envisaged – after which the country would remain part of a Dutch commonwealth. On 10 February 1946, the Dutch cabinet made its position known. Indonesia's right to self-determination was recognised without a single mention of the Republic. This immediately encountered resistance in Indonesia, leaving Sjahrir with no room to negotiate. A Republican cabinet crisis followed, after which a new cabinet led by Sjahrir was formed in mid-March.¹⁶

In early March 1946, the British began withdrawing their troops as the first Dutch soldiers started arriving in Java.¹⁷ This transition increased the pressure on the Republic, and negotiations were soon resumed. Sjahrir demanded that the Netherlands recognise the Republic as an equal party, but this was unacceptable to the Netherlands.¹⁸ Van Mook thereupon put forth a proposal in a private capacity. Inspired by the Franco-Vietnamese agreement concluded earlier that month, he suggested that, just as Vietnam would be a free state within a French Union, the Republic would represent the island of Java within a Union with the Netherlands. In a secret counter-proposal, Sjahrir agreed to this to a large extent: he insisted on recognition of Republican authority in Java and Sumatra, in return for which he accepted the formation of a Union with the Netherlands. In doing so, Sjahrir took a political risk, for he was giving up a large part of Indonesia and it remained to be seen whether he could find sufficient support for this within the Republic.

On 27 March, Van Mook and Sjahrir reached an agreement. In exchange for Republican acceptance of a federation, Van Mook pledged that the Netherlands would *de facto* recognise the Republic in Java and Sumatra. The Netherlands and the Republic would then work together as equals within a Union under the Dutch Crown.

On 8 April 1946, Van Mook arrived in the Netherlands together with a Republican delegation and representatives from areas outside Java. Negotiations were to begin on 14 April at the Sint Hubertus hunting lodge on the Hoge Veluwe estate. It soon became clear that the agreement between Sjahrir

16 See Chapter 6.

17 Meanwhile, the British had decided to stay on in Java until the end of 1946 to facilitate the build-up of Dutch troops.

18 De Jong 2015: 45.

and Van Mook had gone much too far in the eyes of the Dutch government, for whom a formal recognition of the Republic was unacceptable. The Hague moreover refused to recognise the Republic's authority over Sumatra.¹⁹ On the eve of the first post-war elections, even the social democratic Labour Party, afraid of losing votes, did not dare to make a fuss about the matter. Van Mook had misjudged the political situation in the Netherlands and mistakenly led the Republic to believe that recognition of Republican authority over Sumatra would pose no problems. As a result, the Hoge Veluwe conference failed, leading to much bitterness on the Indonesian side. Sjahrir had stuck his neck out on the assumption that he could count on the support of the social democrats, but that trust had been betrayed. The Republican delegation went home empty-handed.

The elections in the Netherlands on 17 May 1946, which had hung like a shadow over the Hoge Veluwe meeting, resulted in a small gain for the conservative Catholic People's Party (Katholieke Volkspartij, KVP). The Labour Party (Partij van de Arbeid, PvdA) had to settle for second place. The coalition of the KVP and the PvdA nonetheless continued, this time under the leadership of KVP leader L.J.M. Beel. While there was a consensus within the coalition on the social policy to be pursued in the Netherlands, views diverged when it came to the issue of Indonesia. Prime Minister Beel stressed the importance of the unity of the empire, while PvdA leader and social affairs minister W. Drees wanted to *de facto* recognise the Republic.

On 17 June, Sjahrir took a tougher stance: the Republic demanded recognition of its authority over Java and Sumatra, and instead of a Union it wanted an equal bilateral relationship with the Netherlands. It also called for Dutch troop reinforcements to cease. The Netherlands did not respond to these demands.

Back in Jakarta, Van Mook decided to shift his focus. Negotiations with the Republic were at a standstill, and in Java the Netherlands was militarily powerless for the moment. He therefore focused on East Indonesia, where there appeared to be leeway to start work on forming a federation, as the Netherlands was given a free hand when the British left in May 1946. The idea was that if the federation was successful, other states favourably disposed to the Netherlands could gradually push the Republic into a corner. Moreover, this approach would safeguard the Netherlands' economic interests in the areas outside of Java.²⁰

19 However, the Dutch government did recognise the Republican participants as representatives of the Republic.

20 Oil and copra were the main exports from the so-called 'Outlying Districts'.

In late July 1946, Van Mook convened a conference in Malino, a resort town north of Makassar, which was attended by representatives from East Indonesia, Kalimantan, Bangka, Riau and Billiton. In the areas outside Java, a system of indirect rule had been introduced after 1900 whereby local nobility were allowed, under Dutch supervision, to act as representatives of colonial authority.²¹ Most participants in the Malino conference were from this colonial administrative nobility and thus had an interest in maintaining their privileges.²²

Van Mook held tight control over the proceedings in Malino and achieved what he wanted to achieve. The conference agreed to the formation of an Indonesian federation that would become part of a Union under the Dutch Crown. They chose the 'Indonesia Raya' as the national anthem, albeit in the old version in which 'Indonesia *mulia*' (exalted) was sung instead of 'Indonesia *merdeka*' (free, independent). The general opinion at the conference was that Java's dominance in the archipelago had to be avoided in the future. A small minority wanted to maintain their old colonial relationship with the Netherlands. Only a few participants rejected the federation and supported the Republic.

The Republic was firm in its condemnation of the result achieved in Malino. The crux of the criticism was that the Republic had been left out of the consultations, whereas it had been agreed between Sjahrir and Van Mook on 27 March that the federation would be formed in consultation with the Republic. Van Mook paid little attention to this critique and convened a follow-up conference at Pangkalpinang in Bangka in early October, where he invited representatives of the colonial minority groups – Indo-Europeans, Chinese and Arabs – to consent to the formation of a federation, which they did. One caveat was that the Indo-European Alliance insisted that New Guinea (Irian Barat) be reserved for the Netherlands so that it could serve as a new immigration country for Indo-Europeans who did not feel at home in an independent Indonesia.

To prevent Van Mook from once again making promises that The Hague did not agree with, the Dutch government appointed a 'Commission-General' which would henceforth negotiate with the Republic together with Van Mook. The chairman of the Commission-General was former prime minister W. Schermerhorn (Labour Party), and he was assisted by M. van Poll (who came from a KVP background) and F. de Boer, who was to be the employers' representative. The commission arrived in Jakarta on 17 September 1946. The Republic did not want to sit down at the negotiating table until it was

21 See Chapter 1.

22 Shortly before, the aristocratic elite in East Sumatra had been decimated by revolutionary militias; see Chapter 4.

bestowed recognition by the Netherlands, but time was running out. Over lunch, Sjahrir confided in Schermerhorn that he feared losing the support of England when the last British troops left Java at the end of November.

After the third Sjahrir cabinet was formed on 2 October, negotiations began on 22 October with the Commission-General under the chairmanship of the British diplomat Lord Killearn. The main bottlenecks were recognition of the Republic by the Netherlands and acceptance of a Union by the Republic. In addition, the Republic had great difficulty accepting the Netherlands being in charge of the decolonisation process until the transfer of sovereignty, scheduled for 1 January 1949. Because decisions could only be taken if Sukarno and Hatta personally participated in the negotiations, the conference was moved on 10 November to the mountain village of Linggadjati, which lay on the border with Republican territory. It was there that negotiations continued at the country house of the Kwee family, of Chinese descent, where Sjahrir regularly stayed. The talks were difficult, but on 12 November Sukarno invited the Dutch delegation to a dinner that Sjahrir did not attend due to a headache. During the meal, an agreement was reached on Indonesia's status: the country would not be 'free', as the Dutch had initially phrased it, but rather sovereign. As a sovereign state, Indonesia would receive international recognition and be on an equal footing with the Netherlands. This was the main prize for Sukarno at the time, so he was willing to make the necessary concessions. These involved the Republic accepting that Indonesia would become a federation and part of a Union with the Netherlands, where issues such as foreign policy, defence and finance were to be discussed. The agreement also meant that the Netherlands would finally *de facto* recognise the Republic in Java and Sumatra, but it also managed to ensure that the Republic's influence in the rest of the archipelago would be curbed and its own dominant economic position would be secured. The Netherlands also believed it was in control of the decolonisation process, but uncertainty remained on this matter.

Sjahrir was stunned that he had not been informed of the arrangements that had been made. He was nonetheless the one who ended up signing the treaty on behalf of the Republic on 15 November at his home on the Pegangsaan Timur in Jakarta – where independence had been declared on 17 August 1945.

Meanwhile, from March 1946 the Netherlands had started building up its army in the archipelago. By the end of November, there were more than 96,000 military personnel, most of whom were stationed in Java. They were concentrated in the Jakarta-Bogor-Bandung region and around Semarang and Surabaya. In Sumatra, Dutch troops occupied the cities of Medan, Padang

and Palembang, while in East Indonesia the troops were concentrated in Bali and South Sulawesi. Clear demarcation lines between Dutch and Republican territories had not been established anywhere, as a result of which there was constant small-scale fighting. For the first time, Dutch troops became acquainted with the regular Republican army and the many revolutionary combat groups that were now called *laskar*. The Dutch soldiers were up against an estimated 125,000 Indonesian fighters.²³

The hastily recruited and poorly trained Dutch military lacked equipment and operated without a clear strategy in a foreign environment. Many were under the impression that they were there to restore order in a society that would welcome them, but instead found themselves in an unclear war where the opponent was mostly invisible. The soldiers had been told that the opponents were criminal gangs and small groups of revolutionary fanatics who were inciting the people, which required that they take decisive action. This idea had its origins in the history of the KNIL during the colonial period, which operated under the notion that wherever there was local resistance, action had to be taken quickly and rigorously. The difference with the current situation, however, was that there was no longer a functioning colonial state; revolutionary resistance was moreover widespread.²⁴ In practice, the colonial tradition of brutal crackdowns – combined with the relative invisibility of ‘the enemy’ – often led to Dutch troops shooting before having even seen what they were shooting at.

Prior to the negotiations between the Commission-General and the Republic, a ceasefire had been agreed on 14 October that was adhered to with the greatest reluctance by both the Dutch and Republican commanders-in-chief, Spoor and Sudirman. Violations of the ceasefire were commonplace, partly because many *laskar* simply did what they pleased. In West Java, ceasefire negotiations had failed, and fighting between Republican and Dutch troops around the city of Sukabumi continued unabated. Fierce fighting broke out around Surabaya when Dutch troops launched an offensive at their own initiative to seize rice-producing areas, capturing the town of Mojokerto. After difficult negotiations, a fragile agreement was reached in the spring of 1947 to govern Mojokerto jointly, but within no time new battles had broken out. Fighting also erupted in and around Medan, which was brought to an end with great difficulty in early December thanks to a joint intervention by representatives of the Republic and Dutch authorities.

23 See Chapter 6.

24 Harinck 2021, Chapter 2. Moreover, very few KNIL soldiers on active service had had actual combat experience in the East Indies.

On 30 November, the last British troops departed, leaving behind 600 dead and 320 missing.²⁵ The Netherlands was on its own, and the Republic could no longer hope for British goodwill.

The agreement signed in November still had to be ratified, but it faced resistance in both the Netherlands and the Republic. In the Netherlands, the KVP opposed the agreement because the party did not want to recognise the Republic and because the party leader, C.P.M. Romme, demanded a separate status for New Guinea (Irian Barat). Protesters against the agreement from within Dutch society joined together to form the Nationaal Comité tot Handhaving der Rijkseenheid (National Committee for the Maintenance of Unity of the Kingdom), which essentially wanted to preserve colonial ties. On 23 November, the cabinet reluctantly agreed to ratify the agreement. To win over the KVP, much emphasis was placed on the importance of the Union which would keep the Netherlands and Indonesia tied to each other. This position was endorsed in the Lower House by a joint motion of the KVP and the Labour Party on 19 December. Signed by party chairmen Romme (KVP) and M. van der Goes van Naters (Labour Party), this motion constituted the 'dressed-up version' of the Linggadjati Agreement.

Lieutenant General Spoor had also opposed the agreement. At the end of November, he had on his own initiative threatened to unilaterally establish demarcation lines if Republican troops did not withdraw from Dutch areas in a timely manner. On 21 December, he wrote a letter to Prime Minister Beel in a final attempt to block the agreement, explaining that if it were up to him, the Republic would be quickly disposed of. He spoke out in vain against the political decision-making in The Hague, but no action was taken against his insubordination. Van Mook's position had by this point weakened, and calls for his replacement were growing louder in The Hague. On the Republican side, even more politicians and military were opposed to the agreement, a topic we will turn to in the next chapter.

The Republic of East Indonesia and military violence in Bali and South Sulawesi

While both sides rather reluctantly signed the agreement, the military leaders steered their own course, leading to a critical situation in Bali and in South Sulawesi. Given the difficult talks with the Republic and the even more difficult ratification of the agreement, Van Mook wanted to press ahead with the formation of the most important state, East Indonesia, which was

25 De Jong 2015: 100.

to become the cornerstone of the federal system. Its establishment was due to take place at a conference in Bali in late December.

The Allies deemed it unnecessary to send troops to Bali, as the island was reputed to be an idyllic island where the people lived together in harmony and focused on their religious rituals and art. An outbreak of the revolution could not possibly occur there. Australian troops designated to occupy East Indonesia therefore did not land in Bali in September 1945.

In August 1945, Republican leaders in Jakarta had appointed the moderate nationalist I Gusti Ketut Pudja as governor of the Lesser Sunda Islands – which includes the island of Bali – but after arriving in Bali, he was unable to achieve any substantial results. He had to contend with Balinese princes who had built up a strong position in the colonial system of indirect rule that had been in place since the 1920s and had subsequently cooperated with the Japanese. A consultation between Pudja and the princes took place on 10 October, which resulted in the latter taking over the new Republican governing committees (KNI). By the end of January 1946, Pudja realised he was completely powerless and therefore handed over his Republican authority to the council of princes who wielded power. In addition to this council of princes, something similar to a people's council was set up, but this was also dominated by the princes, as the council was chaired by Anak Agung Gde Agung, prince of Gianyar.

Despite the administrative dominance of the conservative princes, there was still armed revolutionary resistance in Bali, led by I Gusti Ngurah Rai, who before the war had been trained by the Dutch as the leader of a Balinese military militia. Former members of this group, supplemented by ex-PETA soldiers, had become part of the Republican Security Forces (Badan Keamanan Rakyat, BKR). There were also two Republican militant groups active, the Pemuda Rakyat Indonesia in Badung and the Pesindo in Buleleng. They were kept abreast of developments in Java via Radio Pemberontakan in Surabaya and were also in contact with Republican leaders in Jakarta. The tensions in Bali began to resemble a civil war, as pro-Republican members of the nobility turned against the conservative monarchs while young revolutionaries opposed the large landholdings of the nobility and rigid caste system that was being retained by the Dutch.²⁶ After a failed raid on Japanese arms depots by young revolutionaries, Japanese military officers began to conduct strict patrolling and advised the monarchs to form anti-Republican militias, leading to the escalation of local rivalries into violent clashes. In Gianyar, Karangasem and Klungkung, princely militias attacked

26 Schulte Nordholt 1996, Chapter 9.

Republican youths and rival members of the nobility who sympathised with the Republic. Unaware of the situation, 2,000 KNIL soldiers led by Captain J. König and Lieutenant Colonel F.H. Ter Meulen landed in South Bali on 2 March 1946. This KNIL unit, which called itself Gadjah Merah (Red Elephant), was made up of soldiers who had recently returned from Siam and Burma, where they had been prisoners of war. They used as their guide a 1930s handbook called *Island of Bali* by Miguel Covarrubias, which depicted Bali as a lovely and peaceful island. This image was quickly shattered when it turned out that a revolution was underway. The men of Gadjah Merah responded immediately with unruly violence. Within a week, they were engaged in fierce fighting with Ngurah Rai's group and other Republican fighters. The KNIL soldiers proved to be extremely trigger happy and did not hesitate to open fire and set villages ablaze. Using a dense network of military posts (*tangsi*), the Dutch military tried to suppress the Balinese resistance using extreme violence. Every month, they killed a few hundred, capturing a total of several thousand Balinese.²⁷

On 18 November, on the eve of the conference that Van Mook had planned to hold in Denpasar, Republican fighters led by Ngurah Rai carried out a raid on police barracks in Tabanan, capturing a substantial number of weapons. The next evening, while this success was being celebrated with Balinese dancing, Dutch soldiers were preparing for a reckoning. On 20 November, Ngurah Rai's group found itself surrounded near the village of Marga. He had made a fatal strategic mistake by not dividing his group into small units that would lay in hiding in the mountains. Instead, he had all his men take up position together in the open rice fields near Marga. While the group was bombarded from the air by a small Piper Cup aircraft with tear gas and hand grenades, Dutch soldiers opened sustained machine-gun fire on them. By the end of the morning, the entire group of 96 men had been massacred. This defeat has gone down in history under the name of Puputan Margarana as a heroic moment in the history of the Revolution but was, in fact, the outcome of a failed Republican strategy and ruthless Dutch violence.²⁸

Thus, just before the start of the conference in Denpasar, the Republican resistance in Bali was destroyed. There is no conclusive evidence that this violence on the part of the Dutch was deliberately perpetrated in order to ensure the peaceful conduct of the conference, but the timing and scale of the violence are noteworthy.

27 Robinson 1995: 96; Hoek 2021: 276–308. A total of 1,400 Republican fighters and 700 members of anti-Republican militias died during the Bali revolution.

28 See also Hoek 2021.

Radio Pemberontakan in Surabaya inspired revolutionary fighters in East Kalimantan as well. In January 1947, Javanese workers working in the oil industry in Sanga-Sanga revolted. They set up a Barisan Pemberontakan Rakyat Indonesia along the lines of Surabaya and received help from Javanese KNIL soldiers who had defected to the Republican camp. Dutch troops managed to regain control of Sanga-Sanga only after fierce fighting in which hundreds of civilians were killed.²⁹

The opening of the conference took place on 7 December at the Bali Hotel in Denpasar. The date was significant, as it alluded to Queen Wilhelmina's speech on 7 December 1942.³⁰ East Indonesia encompassed the entire eastern part of the archipelago but was sparsely populated with over 10 million inhabitants. Most of the regions were formally governed by aristocratic princes who were under the supervision of the Dutch. Some 70 representatives from different areas in East Indonesia participated in the conference, 55 of whom had been formally elected by regional councils, but the composition of those councils had been influenced by Dutch administration officials. The other 15 participants, who represented minority groups, had been directly appointed by the Dutch.

As in Malino, Van Mook took the lead in Denpasar. He set the agenda and sent away Republican journalists from Yogyakarta. Unlike at Malino, however, he was confronted with more resistance. Despite having influenced the selection of the conference participants, the Dutch had been unable to prevent at least 15 of them from taking a decidedly pro-Republican stance. Van Mook had taken the existing system of indirect governance as a starting point in the structure of the new state. His proposal was to divide the state into 13 autonomous regions, keeping the administration of rural areas in the hands of aristocratic princes. In urban areas, elected councils would be given an important role. Despite the predominance of local nobility in regional government, the state would not become a federal principality but rather a republic with an elected president. The name would be changed from the colonial-sounding 'Great East' (Groote Oost) to Negara Indonesia Timur (NIT, the State of East Indonesia), and a parliament would be created for the entire state, to which the cabinet of the NIT would be accountable. Because the noble elites considered this a threat to their position, a senate in which the princes had the majority was also to be established, with veto power.³¹ Most participants at the conference were in favour of an independent federal Indonesia – whether it be in a Union with the Netherlands or not – but for

29 Buitenhuis 2021.

30 See Chapter 2.

31 See Chapter 2.

many conservative regional rulers, the most important thing was that their own position was safeguarded.

At the conference, a heated debate was held over the status of New Guinea/Irian Barat. Minister Jonkman had announced on 10 December that the Dutch government wanted to give this region a separate status outside of the new state. The idea behind this was that in the future, Indo-Europeans who no longer felt safe in Republican areas could settle there. Van Mook defended this decision by pointing out that New Guinea did not belong to Indonesia culturally and that the NIT did not have the resources to develop the area economically. This was countered by the argument that the mineral resources of New Guinea would actually be of use to the state and that independent Indonesia should include the entire territory of the Dutch East Indies. The map of the Dutch East Indies that had hung in classrooms during the colonial era had always included New Guinea, and it was the visual persuasiveness of that classroom map that led the Indonesians to argue that New Guinea could not simply be separated from it.

There was also general discontent among the conference participants with the fact that the Netherlands wanted to exert too much influence in East Indonesia. Under Van Mook's plan, the central administration would be supervised by a Commissioner of the Crown until independence, while at the regional level, Dutch civil servants would remain active. In financial and economic terms as well, East Indonesia would remain under Dutch supervision. Representatives of various regions in East Indonesia argued that the Republic was taken more seriously by the Dutch and that their interests were ignored. They therefore demanded more of a say. Tellingly, Van Mook allowed East Indonesia to adopt the Indonesian national anthem but prohibited the use of the Indonesian flag.

The conference was concluded on 24 December with the creation of the state of East Indonesia. The first president of East Indonesia was then elected by the conference participants, who constituted the provisional parliament of the state. After three rounds of voting, the conservative Tjokorda Gde Raka Sukawati from Ubud in Bali was elected. He had been a member of the People's Council from 1924 to 1942. He defeated Republican nationalist Tadjuddin Noor, who was then elected president of the parliament.³² Finishing third was Nadjamuddin Daeng Malewa, a moderate nationalist from Makassar who had been a member of the Parindra. He was asked by Sukawati to become prime minister of the NIT's first cabinet. The capital

32 Anne-Lot Hoek has found a note in the archives of Maarten de Niet, a missionary consul, showing that votes in favour of Sukawati had been bought with 1000-guilder notes.

of the new state became Makassar in South Sulawesi, where the parliament would meet for the first time on 1 March 1947.

Indonesia now had two presidents: Sukarno, who strove for an undivided and independent Indonesia, and the conservative Sukawati, who wished to maintain a close relationship with the Netherlands. Indicative of the Dutch predominance over the state of East Indonesia was the fact that the state's first cabinet was formed not in Makassar but in Jakarta in early January 1947. Another reason for this change in location was the 'counterterrorist' campaign that Dutch troops were conducting at the time in South Sulawesi in response to actions by revolutionary militias.

Back in August 1945, Sam Ratulangi had been appointed Republican governor of Sulawesi by Sukarno and was stationed in Makassar. Like his colleague Pudja in Bali, he operated cautiously by engaging with the princely elite. This link alienated him from the *pemuda*, who established themselves as the true representatives of the revolution. In September 1945, 25 militant groups joined together to form the Pusat Pemuda Nasional Indonesia (Centre of National Indonesian Youth).

In late September 1945, 2,500 Australian soldiers landed in Makassar. They were accompanied by a group of NICA officials and 500 Medanese and Ambonese KNIL soldiers. As with Java, the arrival of the NICA and the KNIL led to disturbances and clashes with groups of *pemuda* in the ensuing months. Unruly KNIL soldiers shot at any Indonesian who wore a Republican pin. This was followed by an attack on a neighbourhood where many Ambonese lived, which resulted in 60 deaths. *Pemuda* also conducted a raid on a Japanese barracks. Australian troops intervened by disarming *pemuda* and banning KNIL soldiers from going out on the streets.

The Dutch civil servant C. Lion Cachet became head of the NICA in South Sulawesi and, like Ratulangi, tried to secure the support of the nobility.³³ But unlike in Bali, where most of the princes were sympathetic to the Dutch, the influential princes of Bone and Luwu supported the Republic. In October, the prince of Bone, Andi Mappanjuki, called on the other princes to join him.³⁴ In response to this, Lion Cachet forced the princes to sign a declaration of loyalty in December 1945. Very much against Lion Cachet's wishes, the

33 One notable figure who turned up in the NICA administration in Makassar was Mochtar Lutfi, a former nationalist leader who had been exiled to Boven Digul in 1937. In 1943, he and other prisoners from Boven Digul ended up in Australia, and from there he was sent by Van der Plas to Makassar in 1945 as a NICA adviser on Islamic affairs.

34 Andi Mappanjuki had fought at the age of 16 alongside Dutch troops in 1905 when they captured Bone. In Bali, most sovereigns had no direct memory of the colonial expeditions of 1906–1908.

Australians asked Republican Governor Ratulangi for help and advice. The latter agreed to help the Australians, but this cost Ratulangi much goodwill among the *pemuda*.

In early January 1946, the Australian troops handed over their duties to the British, who were formally overseeing the Dutch soldiers. In practice, this meant that the Dutch had to take control of South Sulawesi themselves. Lion Cachet decided to support the more conservative-minded nobility and gave Republican leaders no room whatsoever. Ratulangi was arrested and exiled to Irian Barat in early April 1946, just before the Malino Conference. Lion Cachet banned the nationalist Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI), which had 30,000 members, and had the pro-Republican princes of Luwu and Bone arrested, replacing them with figures sympathetic to the NICA. In mid-July 1946, the British transferred their authority over East Indonesia to Colonel H.J. de Vries, the commander of the Great East, and Lieutenant Colonel H.J. Veenendaal, the KNIL commander of South Sulawesi. They had under their command 2,700 KNIL troops in South Sulawesi, which were supplemented in November by 1,000 Royal Netherlands Army troops from the Netherlands.

Towards the end of 1946, *pemuda* violence escalated when revolutionary militias consolidated under the newly formed Laskar Pemberontakan Rakyat Indonesia (LAPRIS, Battle Group of the Revolt of the Indonesian People). In addition to this *laskar*, criminal gangs joined the struggle. They intimidated and murdered groups and individuals who were working with the Dutch, attacked Dutch military convoys, and cut off food supplies to Makassar. The NICA administration had very little support from the people due to its one-sided support of conservative members of the nobility. Given these circumstances, it knew that in order to enable the establishment of the state of East Indonesia, the revolutionary resistance had to be broken.³⁵ In September 1946, the leaders of the NICA and the Dutch military agreed that the best way forward was to fight terror with counterterror.

Accordingly, Lieutenant General Spoor decided to give *carte blanche* to a newly formed commando unit of 123 men – the Special Forces (Depot Speciale Troepen, DST) – led by 27-year-old Captain Raymond Westerling, to restore order in South Sulawesi. Westerling, who had previously been involved in clashes with *pemuda* in Medan, was given a very broad mandate and allowed to operate outside of the existing military hierarchy.

On 5 December 1946, Westerling arrived in South Sulawesi with his men. Six days later, a state of war and siege was declared, and the Dutch began their purge operations. The action involved rounding up the people of a

35 Harvey 1974: 155.



9. Westerling's campaign in South Sulawesi

village and 'cording them off', after which alleged 'terrorists' – based on unverified 'intelligence' – were picked out of the group and summarily executed on the spot. Villagers were also forced to identify 'perpetrators' on the spot. Out of fear, they pointed to random people, who were immediately executed. Kampongs were torched, and Westerling appointed new village chiefs and assembled local militias to fight the 'enemy'. In doing so, he further fuelled mutual distrust and violence.

It was not long before the first alarming reports of Dutch violence against the people reached the conference participants in Denpasar, but Van Mook denied the gravity of the situation. Both Van Mook and Lion Cachet – who had by this time been appointed resident of South Sulawesi – were nonetheless well aware of Westerling's actions and even approved of them. On 4 January 1947, in a letter to Lion Cachet, Van Mook stated that harsh military action in South Sulawesi was necessary to enable the formation of the state of East Indonesia.³⁶ The newly appointed prime minister of the new state, Nadjamuddin Daeng Malewa, confessed that he was more afraid of Westerling and his men than of the revolutionary *pemuda*.³⁷

36 At meetings in Makassar on 22 January and in Batavia on 31 January, the Westerling method was again endorsed by military and civilian leaders; Limpach 2016: 279; 293–4.

37 Sutherland n.d., Chapter 9.

People in Batavia were also well aware of Westerling's actions. A summit was held in early January that was attended by P.J.A. Idenburg (director of general affairs), P.J. Koets (Van Mook's chief of cabinet), W. Hoven (director of internal affairs), Attorney General H.W. Felderhof, and Resident Lion Cachet, where all gave their agreement to the actions taken by Westerling.

Military violence against civilians escalated when Colonel H.J. de Vries decided on his own authority to extend the special remit of the Special Forces to the KNIL units led by Sub-Lieutenant Veenendaal in mid-January. Part of the Special Forces moved on to Parepare in early February under the leadership of Lieutenant Vermeulen to conduct purges there as well, which followed the same pattern and took the lives of hundreds of people. Prisoners were also executed at random. This time, Lieutenant General Spoor realised that a line had been crossed. He prohibited all further summary executions and decided that Vermeulen should leave South Sulawesi. This failed to end the violence, however, as KNIL units continued their actions.³⁸

In early March 1947, the Special Forces returned to Java. From July 1946 to March 1947, an estimated 5,500 civilians had been killed: 2,000 by revolutionary *laskar* and 3,500 by Dutch troops.³⁹ The actions of the Special Forces were 'successful' to the extent that Republican guerrilla leaders decided to provisionally stop fighting and retreat north into the mountains. Although the campaign seemed to have restored 'order', allowing the state of East Indonesia to be launched, in fact what it had accomplished was the establishment of a colonial state of violence, one that was continued by KNIL soldiers.

The fragile treaty

In January 1947, the Commission-General returned to Java to sit down with representatives of the Republic and renegotiate the Dutch interpretation of

38 In Parepare, Major J. Stufkens and Captain B. Rijborz played a key role in the continuation of violent purges by KNIL soldiers in the northern part of South Sulawesi.

39 Limpach 2016: 269, 308. In March–April 1947, K.L.J. Enthoven was commissioned by Van Mook to conduct an investigation into the actions of Dutch soldiers. Enthoven's conclusion was that the military action was lawful, barring some excesses. In 1949, a new investigation into Dutch military action in Indonesia was conducted by the lawyers C. van Rij and W.H.J. Stam, who wrote a more critical report that included the role of Lieutenant General Spoor. It was not until 1954 that their report was even discussed in the Dutch cabinet, after which it was shelved. It was only in the 1969 Memorandum on Excesses – and subsequently in IJzereef's 1984 study – that more publicity was given to the bloody purge operations in South Sulawesi. None of those involved in the South Sulawesi campaign has ever been prosecuted for their part in the violence.

the Linggadjati Agreement.⁴⁰ Pressure was mounting in both the Netherlands and the Republic to reach agreement one way or the other. The Netherlands was on the brink of bankruptcy, and Finance Minister Piet Liefstinck made it clear that Dutch troops could only remain stationed in Indonesia until the end of 1947 at the latest, after which there would be no money left. In the Republic, people feared that once the British left, the Netherlands would have a free hand to intervene militarily in a brutal way. The purges in South Sulawesi were a foreboding of what was to come. The Republic also wanted a treaty in order to secure international recognition and support as soon as possible. After much difficulty, Sukarno and Hatta managed to raise sufficient support for the treaty on the Republic side.⁴¹

On 25 March 1947, the Linggadjati Agreement was officially signed at the Rijswijk Palace in Jakarta. It was the first time that Dutch and Republican flags hung side by side. The Dutch hosted a huge banquet for 25,000 participants, but the celebration could not hide the fact that a deep rift lurked beneath the veneer of solidarity. There were significant differences in the way the Netherlands and the Republic interpreted the agreement, as the Netherlands assumed it would be in charge of a controlled process of decolonisation while the Republic assumed that it was now on equal footing with the Netherlands. On both sides, the military leaders had their own ideas, and it remained to be seen whether the political leaders could control their armed forces. In addition, the position of the main negotiators – Van Mook and Sjahrir – had been significantly undermined, and it was uncertain how long they could continue to function.

Along the demarcation lines, the situation remained turbulent. Dutch and Republican troops continued to clash, and Lieutenant General Spoor's tacit approval of the excessive actions of Westerling's men and KNIL soldiers in South Sulawesi opened the door to similar actions elsewhere in the archipelago.⁴²

Despite all the tensions and uncertainties, President Sukarno had come out as the moral winner. The signing of the treaty earned the Republic international recognition. In 1947, the Republic was recognised – formally or *de facto* – by Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Australia, India, Pakistan, Great Britain and the United States of America.

40 See also Chapter 8.

41 See Chapter 6.

42 Harinck 2021, Chapter 2.

6 The Persatuan Perdjuangan

October 1945 to May 1946

Towards the end of 1945, the young Republic faced three enormous challenges. We have highlighted two of these in previous chapters: how to contain the violence of young revolutionary *pemuda*, and how to navigate between compromise and intransigence during its negotiations with the Netherlands and secure international recognition at the same time. The third problem was one that lay closer to home: who was in charge in the Republic, and what ideological course should be followed? Was the struggle for independence also a social revolution? This was the subject of intense debate between October 1945 and April 1946.

The Sjahrir cabinet

After the arrival of British troops on 29 September 1945, the Republican government stuck to its cautious wait-and-see approach, but the *pemuda* went into action. Besides putting up banners with slogans, hoisting the red-and-white flag, taking control of utility companies and organising mass demonstrations, they attacked Japanese barracks to get their hands on weapons with which to defend the Republic. The violence that resulted from this is described in Chapter 4. While *pemuda* across Java launched a revolution from below, the youth in Jakarta also interfered with the leadership of the Republic. They wanted to get rid of figures who had collaborated with the Japanese and saw Sjahrir as the one who could give substance to the Republic. He had built up a spotless reputation, having been the pre-war leader of a militant nationalist party and having spent years of exile in Boven Digul and Banda, followed by a period of passive resistance to the Japanese occupation. He had gathered around him a circle of young confidants whom he nudged in a socialist direction; in addition, he could count on the goodwill of communist and radical-nationalist *pemuda*. Moreover, he was acceptable to older leaders like Hatta. Sjahrir had initially doubted the viability of the Republic and had kept his distance by not accepting a key post. But in early October, urged on by the *pemuda* in Jakarta, he realised it was necessary for him to speak out more clearly.

Around the same time, another legendary figure – Tan Malaka – was in Bogor, just before embarking on his tour of Java. He received a stream of visitors, including Sjahrir, who visited him together with some *pemuda*.

The two agreed to work together. Tan Malaka believed that the Allies would soon bring Sukarno to trial for having collaborated with the Japanese and would dismiss independence as a Japanese concoction. This is why he, Tan Malaka, had to become president, while Sjahrir as prime minister had to assume the portfolios of defence, economic affairs and internal and external affairs. Sjahrir in turn advised Tan Malaka to compare his own popularity with that of Sukarno during his tour of Java.¹ Sjahrir himself had come to the conclusion that Sukarno's leadership was indispensable but that his dominance should not be allowed to continue. He therefore favoured a system of parliamentary rule in which the prime minister – preferably Sjahrir himself – would be accountable to the provisional parliament.

On 7 October, 50 members of the KNIP sent a petition to Sukarno and Hatta asking them to make the KNIP a full-fledged parliament. For Sukarno and Hatta, who realised that their leadership was controversial, this proposal was a solution to their problems. It allowed the cabinet at the time – most of whose members were tainted by the Japanese occupation – to give way to a democratic parliamentary system under their leadership, thereby making it agreeable to the Allies as well.

When the KNIP met on 16 October, Hatta announced that the president had decided to grant the provisional parliament the powers it had requested. Hatta documented his approval in 'Announcement of the Vice President No. X'. Although the name of the document raises questions as to why the announcement had not come from Sukarno and what No. X meant, there were, in fact, no hidden or mysterious intentions: Sukarno was not in Jakarta and Hatta had simply lost count of his announcements.

A Working Committee (Badan Pekeraja, BP) was created that included members of the KNIP, which would carry out the day-to-day work of the parliament. The Working Committee was accountable to the KNIP, which laid down the main policy lines. The idea for such a committee came from Amir Sjarifuddin, who had borrowed it from the Indian Congress Party.² Sjahrir and Amir were appointed *formateurs* of the Working Committee.

Within the KNIP, there was a heated discussion. *Pemuda* students criticised the government and the KNIP leadership, and Sukarni submitted a motion calling for more revolutionary leadership of the KNIP. On 17 October, the KNIP Working Committee was presented, which consisted of 15 men who had conducted themselves impeccably during the Japanese occupation and

1 Mrazek 1994: 305.

2 Or from a source closer to home – from the College of Delegates of the People's Council – but this was for obvious reasons a fraught comparison.

who were mostly supporters of Sjahrir. Sjahrir himself became chairman and Amir vice chair.

The KNIP was then expanded; Sjahrir nominated 38 new members, thereby securing a parliamentary majority. Benedict Anderson notes that Sjahrir had, in this way, staged nothing less than a 'silent coup' with the support of the Jakarta *pemuda*.³ Sukarni, who in fact sought the resignation of Sukarno and Hatta, resigned himself to the turn of events, as cooperation with Sjahrir was worth more to him at this point.

Sukarno and Hatta's actions during the Japanese occupation continued to plague them. Efforts to curb *pemuda* violence in several cities met with strong resistance from radical youths. Under these circumstances, Hatta issued a statement on 1 November that became known as the *Political Manifesto*. The *Manifesto* was mainly intended to win international goodwill, but it also tried to polish the image of the Republican leadership. The Japanese era was depicted in the darkest way imaginable, with the entire Indonesian people having fallen victim to Japanese brutality. By handing over Indonesia to the Japanese without any resistance to speak of and failing to make the people resilient, the Dutch colonial rulers had forfeited the right to criticise the Republic for its collaboration. On the contrary, under the Japanese occupation there was, in fact, resistance on a large scale, which was brutally suppressed. This resistance led to the rise of nationalism, which culminated in the Proclamation. The *Manifesto* further argued that restoring the Dutch colonial regime would be contrary to the Atlantic Charter and the principles of the United Nations. If the world allowed the Netherlands to have its way, Indonesia's natural resources could not be exploited; and this would be especially regrettable for neighbouring countries such as Australia, the Philippines and the United States. Moreover, it was the United States that was in the best position to provide support for Indonesia's reconstruction with credit and goods.

The *Manifesto* then went on to list the concessions the Republic was willing to offer the Netherlands: foreign companies would be protected; foreign capital would be given plenty of leeway, full civil rights would be guaranteed for Europeans and Indo-Europeans, general elections would take place, which could lead to a different government – and the Republic would even take on the national debt of the Dutch East Indies. Hatta's *Manifesto* could be interpreted as a sign of weakness from an insecure government attempting to gain foreign support, which was apparently considered more important than broadening its support base within the Republic itself. Such

3 Anderson 1972: 167–89.

a position was far removed from the radical *pemuda*, and a much wider circle of older nationalists were also likely to have been unhappy with it.

Sjahrir strengthened his position of power within the Working Committee and the KNIP and demonstrated to the world that he was building a Western-style democratic party system. At the same time, the question of whether Sukarno and Hatta could remain in power flared up once again. Sjahrir felt that the two were indispensable but no longer capable of leading the revolution, and therefore the incumbent presidential cabinet had to be replaced by a new parliamentary cabinet. Hatta and Sukarno had no choice but to agree to this.

On 14 November, the new cabinet was announced. Sjahrir became prime minister as well as minister of the interior and foreign minister, while Amir Sjarifuddin led the ministries of defence and information. Sjahrir and Amir Sjarifuddin were now at the helm. They were, at this point, the most powerful political ministers and the only outspoken ones. The cabinet had only 11 ministers, and apart from Sjahrir and Amir they were technocrats, most of whom had held high civil service positions during Dutch colonial rule. To his dismay, Subardjo was no longer part of the government because of his connections to the Japanese. The *pemuda* were also not represented, and only one minister had a clear Muslim background while four ministers were Christians.

Although the cabinet was now free of the stigma of having worked with the Japanese, it had as little political support as the previous one. Critics feared that major concessions would now be made to the Netherlands. When Sjahrir opened negotiations with Van Mook the day after the new cabinet had been installed, those fears were realised and the credit that Sjahrir and Amir enjoyed with the *pemuda* diminished rapidly. Political currents that felt excluded – Islamic political groups, senior nationalists and various left-wing groups – also felt the need to make their voices heard.

In late November, the KNIP met in Jakarta at the Salemba Medical School, where the new cabinet was given broad support: 84 voted in favour versus 8 against, with 15 abstentions. But it was clear that this change of leadership at the top of the Republic had been a matter that occupied the minds of only the older, experienced nationalist leaders and the *pemuda* in Jakarta; in the rest of the country, revolutionaries did as they pleased and the revolution followed its own momentum.

Party-building

There was yet another far-reaching announcement that had been made in Jakarta around this time. On the initiative of the Working Committee, Hatta had signed a decree on 3 November encouraging the formation of

political parties, and parliamentary elections were also announced for January 1946. Although the latter date proved to be too optimistic, parties did begin to form. Party-building fit into Sjahrir's vision of a democratic Indonesia and was already underway. The first party to be established was the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI). This PKI had no relation to the illegal PKI that had been re-established by Musso in Java in 1935; *that* PKI had remained underground. The new PKI was led by Muhammad Jusuf, who had been active in the anti-Japanese resistance in West Java. The party's programme included the nationalisation of land and the establishment of peasant soviets, the idea being that social revolutions had to bring to an end the exploitation of the common people.

Amir Sjarifuddin and Sjahrir each formed their own socialist party: Amir founded the Partai Sosialis Indonesia (Parsi), and Sjahrir established the Partai Rakyat Sosialis (Paras). On 17 December, they merged to form the Partai Sosialis (PS), but the PS continued to consist of two wings. Amir's followers came from the PKI, PNI, Partindo and Gerindo as well as the resistance against Japan, while Sjahrir's supporters came from the PNI Baru. While the latter preferred a Western-oriented framework party, the former sought to become a mass party and was not averse to *pemuda* activism. Amir was able to rally support among the people, but Sjahrir lacked the talent and temperament to appeal to the masses.

The return from the Netherlands of leaders of the Perhimpunan Indonesia, who were given high positions in the Partai Sosialis, greatly influenced negotiations with the Dutch. These leaders had been active in the Dutch resistance during the war and were confident that the experience of resistance they shared with the Dutch would lead to a peaceful end to Dutch colonial rule. The political programme of the PS was moderate and more social-democratic than socialist, promoting political democratisation, economic collectivism and social equality but not class struggle or revolution. However, there was also a less visible communist current within the party that still followed Moscow's Popular Front policy. The support of the PS for its own armed militias was prompted by dissatisfaction with the independent position held by the Republican army.

The Partai Buruh Indonesia (PBI, Indonesian Workers' Party), which originated from a federation of trade unions, was led by Sjamsu Harja Udaja, a union leader from Surabaya. The PBI had a radical programme that included class struggle, the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the formation of a socialist society. The PBI ultimately failed to unite the unions, which soon led to fragmentation into numerous small local unions. As a result, the PBI remained a small opposition party with syndicalist ideas.

Plans for an Islamic party resulted in the reconstitution of the Masyumi in early November. The old Masyumi leaders who came from the Nahdlatul Ulama and the PSII – such as Hasjim Ashari, Wahid Hasjim and Abikusno Tjokrosujoso – were sidelined. The new leaders – Sukiman, Abu Hanifah, Natsir, Rum and Sjafruddin Prawiranegara – were modernist, Western-oriented intellectuals who were ideologically close to the PS. They favoured Islamic socialism. A number of them were appointed to cabinet posts by Sjahrir, which allowed them to derive the authority needed to consolidate their leading role in the Masyumi.

After Sukarno's national unity party died in its infancy in late August, the nationalists took the most time to regroup. The image of their leaders had been stained by their collaboration with the Japanese occupier. Several groups finally united on 13 December, when the Serikat Rakyat Indonesia (Serindo, Alliance of the Indonesian People) was formed, whose core members had been members of the pre-war political parties of Partindo, Gerindo and Parindra as well as the Asrama Indonesia Merdeka.⁴ On 29 January 1946, Serindo merged with a number of small parties to form the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI), chaired by Sarmidi Mangunsarkoro, the Taman-Siswa leader from Yogyakarta.⁵ Significantly, no party programme was adopted. As a national party, the PNI primarily wanted to participate in government, and it soon claimed seats in the KNIP and in local governing councils.

Finally, two small Christian parties were formed, the Partai Katolik (Roman Catholic) and the Parkindo (Protestant). According to Anderson, all these parties were little more than small groups around a limited number of pre-war leaders such as Sjahrir, Amir Sjarifuddin, Sukiman, Sarmidi and leaders of the Asrama Indonesia Merdeka. The Partai Sosialis and the Masyumi were the most prominent at this time.⁶

Yogyakarta, the armed forces and the pemuda

Because the Republican leaders in Jakarta were under increasing threat and progressively restricted in their freedom of movement by British troops, the cabinet decided, at the invitation of Sultan Hamengkubuwono, to move to Yogyakarta in the still of the night on 3 January 1946. Only Sjahrir remained behind in Jakarta. He moved into the house on Pegangsaan Timur,

4 See Chapter 2 for the Asrama Indonesia Merdeka.

5 See Chapter 1 for Taman Siswa.

6 Anderson 1972: 230.

where Sukarno had declared independence. It was not only that it was more expedient for him to stay in Jakarta given the negotiations with the British and Dutch; he also felt more at home in the old colonial capital with its cosmopolitan character. More writers, poets and modern painters lived there, and there were better tennis courts. By contrast, for Sukarno the move to Yogyakarta meant that he no longer had to be constantly on guard, and he actually felt much more at ease in this centre of Javanese culture, which Sjahrir felt had little to offer.

Yogyakarta had sided with the Republic as early as August, with the support of the Sultan of Yogyakarta, and the city soon became a centre of Republican activities. The headquarters of the Republican army and some *pemuda* organisations had already moved to Yogyakarta, where they were able to operate undisturbed.

On 5 October, Sukarno renamed the Badan Keamanan Rakyat (BKR, the People's Security Agency) as the Tentara Keamanan Rakyat (TKR, the People's Security Army), as the word 'army' could now be used without any problems. A day later, a defence minister was finally appointed. This was a largely symbolic act, for the man who had been appointed – Suprijadi – had disappeared without a trace after leading the PETA uprising against the Japanese troops in Blitar in February 1945.

The leadership of the TKR fell to the former KNIL officer Urip Sumohardjo, who had the arduous task of building a disciplined army from the multitude of existing combat groups. His undertaking was made even more difficult by the fact that he had very little overview of the combat groups and hardly any weapons. To set up a proper organisation, he first sought support from former KNIL colleagues. On 14 October, a group of former KNIL soldiers announced that they had sided with the Republic.

Urip Sumohardjo was assisted by several young former KNIL officers who had attended the Military Academy in Bandung, including A.H. Nasution, T.B. Simatupang and Alex Kawilarang. However, they were as yet commanders without troops, as they were too far removed from the over 150,000 men who had emerged from the Japanese military mobilisation: the former PETA officers and their men, the *badan perdjungan* (militias), and the numerous local Laskar Rakyat. These groups operated autonomously and arranged their own armaments and food. And unlike the formal KNIL model, their leadership was based on the personal bond between the *bapak* (leader; literally 'father') and his followers. Discipline and hierarchy were often considered contrary to the spirit of the revolution.

On paper, the armed forces in Java were divided into three regional commands (West, Central and East Java) and 10 divisions, but in practice

this counted for very little. It was only in West Java that Major General Didi Kartasmita and his chief of staff Nasution managed to bring a large number of combat groups under their command.

Urip Sumohardjo's difficult position became evident once again when TKR officers met in Yogyakarta on 12 November to defy his leadership and choose their own leader. They appointed the 30-year-old Sudirman as their *panglima besar* (commander-in-chief). Sudirman had been a PETA officer in Banyumas in central Java. He had managed to obtain a large quantity of Japanese weapons and was widely acclaimed for his leadership in the battles of Semarang and Magelang. He exuded great authority and was credited with the qualities of a true *satria*, the selfless traditional Javanese warrior.

Sudirman averted a rift with the KNIL group by asking Urip Sumohardjo to stay on as chief of staff and leaving military-technical matters to him. He himself concentrated on preserving unity and safeguarding the autonomous role of the armed forces in the struggle for independence. In his view, the army stood *alongside* the political leadership of the Republic and not *under* it. To emphasise its own autonomy, the army leadership chose its own defence minister on 12 November: Sultan Hamengkubuwono of Yogyakarta. However, this move was unacceptable to Sjahrir, who presented his cabinet two days later, which included Amir Sjarifuddin as defence minister. Sjahrir and Amir nonetheless had no choice but to accept the election of Sudirman as commander-in-chief. It was the beginning of a protracted power struggle between the armed forces and politicians.

Amir Sjarifuddin regularly attempted to bring the TKR under government control, but Sudirman tried to undo these measures each time. For instance, Sudirman felt Amir's attempt to subject the army to ideological training was unacceptable because it would jeopardise the unity of his people's army. In early 1946, the TKR changed its name to Tentara Republik Indonesia (TRI, Army of the Republic of Indonesia) – to emphasise that the armed forces represented all of Indonesia.

The relationship between the army and politics was not the only one that was strained: both the army and politicians struggled in their relations with the *pemuda*. The energy and momentum of the revolution still lay with the *pemuda* and their combat units.

The reality was that, in order to take a stand against the Dutch, it was the army leadership and political parties that needed the *pemuda* and not the other way around. The *pemuda*, after all, were the ones that owned radio stations and utility companies, regulated public transport and organised public meetings. For the Republic, the *pemuda* were important because, despite their middle-class background, they were able to mobilise the masses.

But their desire for autonomy was of great concern to Republican leaders. It was not without reason that Sukarno insisted, both immediately after his arrival in Yogyakarta on 6 January and again during the first independence celebrations on 17 August 1946, on the importance of discipline and obedience to central authority. 'Only then can *pemuda* become heroes,' he said.

On 10 and 11 November, at the initiative of Amir Sjarifuddin, a major *pemuda* congress was held in Yogyakarta in which 29 organisations were represented and more than a thousand people participated. The aim was to bring the numerous *pemuda* groups together and thereby to get a better handle on them. The mood at the meeting was fiery and the proceedings chaotic. Sukarno, Hatta and six ministers sat on the podium. Amir, Adam Malik and Wikana delivered the main speeches. Tan Malaka was also present *incognito* and once again missed the opportunity to make a public comeback.

Amir did not succeed in forming one large socialist organisation, but he did manage to merge seven of the main *pemuda* organisations into the Pemuda Sosialis Indonesia (Pesindo) – which was no easy feat. The Partai Sosialis now had an armed wing with which the party could reinforce its views. For example, the Pesindo declared its support for the government on 15 December and also backed Amir's plans to reform the army. Thanks to Amir's material support, the Pesindo became a welcome counterweight to the army. Although a full merger of all *pemuda* groups was not achieved, a federation of *pemuda* organisations was formed – the Badan Kongres Pemuda Republik Indonesia (BKPRI) – which soon came to be dominated by the Pesindo. Besides the Pesindo, several more large *pemuda* organisations formed, incorporating many local militant groups. The Hizbullah was a collection of Islamic militant groups and affiliated to the Masyumi; the Barisan Banteng was loosely linked to the PNI. Numerous stand-alone Laskar Rakyat continued to exist, such as Sutomo's Barisan Pemberontakan Rakyat Indonesia (BPRI) in East Java, and the Laskar Rakyat Djakarta Raya, which stuck to the radical tenets of the *pemuda* in Jakarta.

The *pemuda* organisations provided parties with clout and access to the masses, and in many ways they were stronger than the parties. At this point in the struggle, army commanders failed to control these groups, with the exception of Nasution in West Java. Relations between the different groups were often strained, as they competed with each other to obtain weapons and resources. In addition, the militias claimed to be the true representatives of the people.

In retrospect and with due nuance, the *pemuda* congress can be seen as the end of the independent stance of the armed youth organisations, especially considering how many of them were incorporated into the newly

formed Pesindo. Together with the army, the parent parties of the *pemuda* militias began imposing their discipline on the *pemuda*, albeit in a process of trial and error, but moving steadily towards ever greater control.

In the city, the mood was festive. The streets were full of *pemuda* with long hair in battle gear, hastily assembled uniforms, boots, and pistols or knives hanging loosely from their hips. Especially the *pemuda* from Surabaya paraded their cars on Malioboro, Yogyakarta's main street, behaving as though they were already the victors.⁷ When couriers from Surabaya read out the British ultimatum on the main square, it was rejected by the *pemuda* with a great sense for drama. To loud applause and shouts of 'Merdeka!', the couriers who had brought the news from Surabaya returned to the battlefield.

Ideological explorations

As in the nationalist movement during the 1930s, there were very few major ideological debates in the young Republic. Sukarno and Hatta's objective was clear – independence – and their views were pragmatic. That Hatta was willing to make many concessions to achieve his goal was already evident from his *Manifesto* of 1 November. Whether the same applied to Sukarno was not yet clear, but his flexibility was demonstrated by his cooperation with the Japanese and his acceptance of Sjahrir as prime minister and of the latter's democratisation programme. Of all the leaders, only Sjahrir and Tan Malaka had a clear ideological story to tell, and between them, tensions began to grow.

In late October, Sjahrir wrote a brochure called *Perdjoeangan Kita* (Our Struggle) – published on 10 November – in which he presented his analysis of the state of play and a personal statement of principles. In a personally coloured text written as a heterogeneous whole and consisting of remarks for both domestic and foreign consumption, he mixed political analysis, tactical considerations, short- and long-term goals, practical choices and Marxist orthodoxy – sometimes polemical and at other times in a more veiled manner.

The brochure was soon translated into Dutch, and by January 1946, a total of three printings and 27,000 copies had already been made, which was a considerable achievement. Sjahrir's sympathisers in the Netherlands – the left wing of the Labour Party in particular – used the brochure to portray the Republic in a more favourable light.

7 See Chapter 4 on the Battle of Surabaya.

Sjahrir attributed the problems in the Republic largely to the consequences of social uprooting and the pernicious propaganda that had been spread during the Japanese occupation. He argued that the Republic's leaders had not seized the opportunity after the Japanese defeat to establish their authority because they had allowed themselves to be dictated by the Japanese, and he described them as waverers who lacked the courage to take responsibility. He also wrote off the indigenous civil servants as a feudal remnant and a tool of Dutch colonial rule. Sjahrir argued that the revolutionary-democratic struggle had to begin with a purge of all Japanese fascist elements. This pertained – among others – to Subardjo and his supporters who, in turn, came to deeply despise Sjahrir.

The *pemuda*, who looked up to Sjahrir as their leader, were also not spared. Although he praised their enthusiasm and willpower, Sjahrir concluded that the *pemuda* lacked insight and that Japanese indoctrination had taught them Japanese fascist methods. As a result, the revolution had degenerated into excesses against foreigners and minorities – actions that were extremely detrimental to the international standing of the Republic.

Sjahrir believed that, in the short term, the Republic had to adapt to the capitalist-imperialist dominance of the United States. This meant that the Republic had to give foreign capital more latitude, on pain of foreign military intervention. Sjahrir warned those who wanted to provoke a foreign attack that this would end in Japanese-style self-destruction. For the longer term, Sjahrir did have a Marxist vision which involved workers in Indonesia becoming the vanguard in the struggle against imperialism and participating in the international struggle for a socialist world order. This was the only concrete reference he made to a socialist Indonesia; how that was to be achieved, he left unexplained. Significantly, Sjahrir referred in this context not to class struggle but to class consciousness. This required leadership by well-trained foremen, which required a small, well-disciplined party – for which the pre-war PNI Baru was clearly the model. Finally, Sjahrir stressed that the revolution could only succeed if it was accompanied by democratisation, for there was no freedom possible without democracy.

Sjahrir was not the only one to set out his views. Tan Malaka published his *Manifesto Jakarta* on 7 September, two weeks after arriving at Subardjo's house. The manifesto was published anonymously and offered a utopian outlook for the future. Building on his 1926 brochure *Mass Action*, he laid out an orthodox-communist analysis of the new international balance of power and the Republic's position in it. Tan Malaka assumed that his Partai Republik Indonesia (PARI), which he had founded in colonial times, would become active again in what he called 'Aslia' – a contraction of Asia and

Australia – in which Southeast Asia and tropical Australia would be united in a sovereign republic.

Manifesto Jakarta also provided an analysis of the Japanese occupation, which had led to the greatest social upheaval in Indonesian history: the colonial economy had been transformed into a war economy, and millions of peasants had been employed as *romusha* to work in industry. It was under these circumstances that Indonesia had declared its independence ‘in front of all mankind’ on 17 August 1945. But would the Allies recognise this independence? Would the Atlantic Charter apply to the Indonesian people? The answer, Tan Malaka argued, was largely in the hands of the Indonesian people themselves. Unity between all groups of people in Indonesia had to be safeguarded through a ‘democratic unity party’. Independence could therefore only be realised once the material needs of the people were met. This step required a planned economy, one in which foreign capital had no place.

Finally, Tan Malaka discussed the issue of how the people could be mobilised: through political awareness and clear action – such as demonstrations and strikes – in support of identifiable causes. Initially, leadership had to be provided via illegal channels, with the party operating like a submarine using its periscope to keep track of the wishes of the *murba* – the proletariat – and influencing politics via legal organisations such as trade unions and moderate parties. The PARI was to be at the forefront of this process.⁸

Sjahrir and Tan Malaka shared an aversion to both the Japanese occupiers and their Indonesian accomplices. They also agreed in their analysis of international relations. But their paths diverged when it came to political strategy regarding whether or not to negotiate with the British and the Dutch, their evaluation of mass action and the role of *pemuda* and militant organisations, and economic policy and the class struggle. In terms of tone as well, the down-to-earth Sjahrir differed from the impassioned Tan Malaka with his utopian perspective.

Before becoming prime minister, Sjahrir visited Tan Malaka in late October in Serang in West Java, where the latter was supporting the ‘social revolution’ in Banten.⁹ As they both hailed from the Minangkabau, Sjahrir respectfully addressed him as *Engku*. They discussed the situation that had arisen after the British landing and foresaw that the British would eliminate ‘extremists’ and seek to win over ‘moderate’ Indonesians. Tan Malaka believed the key was to mobilise the masses to defend freedom. He

8 See Chapter 1. A reprint of *Manifesto Jakarta* appeared in late 1945 under the title *Siaran PARI*, with a foreword by Tan Malaka, who in this way made his name public.

9 See Chapter 4.

argued for a scorched-earth policy aimed at attacking all Dutch properties in Indonesia. He also rejected negotiations with the Netherlands, which he insisted could only take place after the Dutch recognised Indonesian independence.¹⁰

Sjahrir asked Tan Malaka to become chairman of the new Partai Sosialis. With the support of this legendary leader, Sjahrir hoped to cement his own position. And by detaching Tan Malaka from the opportunistic Subardjo, Sjahrir aimed to further erode the latter's position of power. For his part, Tan Malaka treated Sjahrir in a comradely way. Both agreed that Sukarno's leadership was weak and that his previous cooperation with the Japanese was damaging the Republic. However, Tan Malaka turned down Sjahrir's request for him to become party chairman. 'I can't,' he said, 'I'm a communist.'¹¹

After the meeting, there was disappointment in Sjahrir's camp. Tan Malaka had a big ego – he called himself 'TM' – and people considered him a fantasist and a Trotskyist. The rift between Sjahrir and Tan Malaka was definite.

Despite his great ambitions, Tan Malaka had not managed to break out of his isolation and had not become a leader of the *pemuda*. Instead, he went to Serang to inspire the revolution at the grassroots level there. Confident that similar revolutions were possible elsewhere, he then continued his journey across Java.

Travelling in the fledgling Republic in those months was not without risk. It was common for travellers to experience delays and to be detained every time they reached the territory of another armed unit. Everything was considered suspect and was grounds for arrest and even murder – a wrong word, anything having to do with the Netherlands, even a red-white-and-blue matchbox. Kidnappings ending in death were the order of the day. Tan Malaka was detained and imprisoned three times, narrowly escaping death. In Surabaya, he was arrested and had to prove in an absurd confrontation with a 'false' Tan Malaka that he was the 'real' one. Sumarsono, the leader of the city's *pemuda*, was the arbiter and had little trouble identifying the real Tan Malaka.

The Persatuan Perdjungan

In Surabaya, Tan Malaka was deeply impressed by the efforts of the *pemuda* and the people, who in a joint mass action had almost driven the British

¹⁰ Hatta 1974: 10.

¹¹ Interview of Maruto Nitimiharjo, Jakarta, 20 August 1980, in Poeze 2007: 110.

military force into the sea. From his tour of Java, he drew some conclusions: the policies of Sukarno and Hatta did not correspond to the wishes of the people and the *pemuda*, and there was a lot of distrust between militant organisations and parties – indeed, they were arresting each other's members and shooting each other.¹² Against the backdrop of Anglo-Dutch attempts to restore colonial power, he concluded that it was necessary to unite all parties, militias and the army to oppose Dutch policy. He finally abandoned his intention to remain *incognito*.

Time was running out, for Van Mook's proposals were crying out for a response and the leaders of the Republic did not believe in the power of the people. Inspired by the resistance in Surabaya, Tan Malaka set out his insights in three brochures that he wrote during his trip in November and December 1945: *Politik* (Policy), *Rentjana Ekonomi* (Economic Plan) and *Moeslihat* (Strategy). The form he chose to write in in order to reach a wide audience was unusual: he used a dialogue between five people, each of whom symbolised a different social group: Mr. Apal ('memorise') represented the intelligentsia, who were lampooned from the outset; Toké (Chinese for 'businessman') stood for trade; and Patjul ('chop') symbolised the peasant, Denmas (a contraction of *Raden Mas*, a noble title) the aristocracy, and Godam ('hammer') the steel workers. All five represented their own class, but collectively they were ready to fight for independence under Godam's leadership.

Politik provided a general framework of the form of government that Tan Malaka envisioned for Indonesia, with an explanation of the concept of 100% *Merdeka*, while *Rentjana Ekonomi* set out what a socialist economic order entailed and *Moeslihat* gave guidelines on how to fight. Tan Malaka opted for a pooling of forces that would lead to the formation of a fighting government, a people's army, an economic battle plan, the distribution of land among poor peasants, the right of workers to organise their labour, and the purging of foreign armies from Indonesia. The PARI had been removed from his programme and replaced with a broad-based unity organisation, the Persatuan Perjuangan (PP). Although he did not spell this out, his intention was for the PP to establish a communist state after independence had been achieved. These publications rendered his *Manifesto Jakarta* obsolete, and they outshined Sjahrir's *Perdjoeangan Kita*. But Sjahrir had by this point become the Republic's most powerful man.

Tan Malaka's clandestine existence came to an end in December 1945. In an ornate newspaper article, Muhammad Yamin introduced Tan Malaka

12 Tan Malaka 1991, III: 107–8.

as a leader of mythical proportions. While this seemed to be a deliberate publicity campaign, Yamin was, in fact, acting on his own, presenting Tan Malaka with a *fait accompli*. For in addition to a political programme, there was now a leader available to implement that programme. The only thing missing was a political movement, which became the subject of extensive secret consultations in the last weeks of December 1945.

On 4 January 1946, a large meeting was held in Purwokerto of 300 men and women representing all major political and (para)military organisations. All those at the meeting criticised the government for being lax in confronting British provocations and for its toleration of kidnappings, *rampok* (violent robberies) and executions. They also deplored the diplomatic track taken by the cabinet, which they argued was confused. What was needed instead was unity and coordination.

‘And then suddenly, the chairman said: “we ask saudara [brother] Tan Malaka to take the floor to respond to the reports”. The entire room fell silent and everyone held their breath [...]. He emerged from the audience – who had not recognised him – climbed up to the podium and stood there perfectly straight, in a short-sleeved shirt and shorts, with his left hand on his hip.’

Tan Malaka was speaking in public again for the first time in 23 years. According to Yamin, here stood the man to lead the revolutionary struggle: ‘He spoke as an experienced leader.’¹³ Tan Malaka talked about the need to form a Persatuan Perdjungan Rakyat, a united popular front. He also mentioned a minimum programme – a programme setting out the minimum demands that had to be met – the first point of which was Dutch recognition of 100% *Merdeka*. Negotiations would be possible only after such recognition and after the departure of enemy troops.

On the second day of meetings, Tan Malaka delivered a major speech on external and domestic developments which again culminated in a plea for the formation of the PP. Army Chief Sudirman spoke after him and supported the PP and the demand for 100% *Merdeka*. He argued that while the leaders of the Republic could be replaced, the army would fight on determinedly until 100% *Merdeka* was achieved, claiming that ‘It is better to be completely wiped out by an atomic bomb than to have *Merdeka* less than 100%.’ This last sentence made all the headlines and was thereafter quoted frequently. The formation of the Persatuan Perdjungan was decided unanimously, and the demand for 100% political and economic independence was endorsed. For the cabinet, Sudirman’s support for the PP and his emphasis on the autonomous position of the army were particularly worrying.

13 Yamin 1946: 31–3; Poeze 2007: 190, 192.

On 10 January, the minimum programme put forth by Tan Malaka was made public. The programme insisted on the recognition of 100% *Merdeka* and the departure of all foreign forces as preconditions for negotiations. It also included the establishment of a people's government and a people's army; the settlement of the issue of the European internees; and the nationalisation of agricultural, industrial and mining enterprises. The explanatory statement accompanying the programme stressed that it was impossible to amend the first point. Tan Malaka would brook no diplomacy in the struggle. This went directly against Sjahrir's negotiating policy. And the idea of nationalising foreign companies went against Hatta's policy. The point about the European internees seemed to be an opening for the Republic to use them as leverage – or as hostages.¹⁴

The minimum programme had the support of *pemuda* organisations and militias, and it was also endorsed by the army. Most political parties followed suit, partly out of opportunism. Moreover, the PP attracted the politically homeless such as Subardjo and his friends, who held a fierce grudge against Sjahrir's seizure of power. All at once, Tan Malaka's opponents – the Partai Sosialis and the Pesindo led by Sjahrir and Amir Sjarifuddin – had to fight to survive. Their attempt to keep the PP at bay by forming a National Union (Barisan Nasional) failed. The best tactic was therefore to join the PP and hollow out the organisation from within.

On 15 January, the founding congress of the Persatuan Perdjungan opened in Solo. Tan Malaka delivered a speech with a passionate call for unity. To finalise the minimum programme, a committee was set up that included representatives from the main organisations such as the Partai Sosialis, Pesindo, Masyumi and BPRI as well as Tan Malaka and Sudirman. From the beginning, the Partai Sosialis and the Pesindo tried to obstruct the committee's task. Their efforts succeeded, as no majority could be found for Tan Malaka's radical minimum programme. This was evident from the new and toned-down text that was approved: although 100% independence was demanded, the programme had dropped the requirement that foreign forces had to leave Indonesia first. Instead, it made room for diplomacy. Tan Malaka was forced to watch the socialists and the Masyumi strip down his minimum programme. Regarding the expropriation of all plantations, industry and mining enterprises, an amendment was added that this would apply only to foreign companies, which effectively removed the entire premise behind the plan to nationalise the whole economy. The minimum programme was now no longer a blueprint for a socialist or communist

14 See Chapter 4.

society. To preserve unity – or even to ensure the survival of the PP – Tan Malaka had no choice but to make this concession.

Halfway through the evening, the committee's decision was announced, which emphasised that the government was taking the country on a different path than what the people wanted but that the PP still recognised the government. The PP was not made up of rebels, it was argued, but the government did have to conform to the will of the people; otherwise, the PP would itself implement its programme. After all, the people had their own '*bambu-runcing* [sharpened bamboo] diplomacy.' After a brief closing address by Tan Malaka, the congress came to an end at midnight with three shouts of '*Merdeka!*' and the singing of the national anthem.

On 26 and 27 January, a second congress took place in which the internal organisation of the PP was established. All political and armed organisations participated except the Partai Sosialis and Sudirman, both not having shown up. A representative of the government was nonetheless present: Natsir, the information minister and a member of the Masyumi. He spoke in fancy phrases without saying much.

The authoritative newspaper *Merdeka* concluded on 1 February that the second PP congress did not augur well for the government. It argued that the government was not paying attention to the PP and its programme. Even though the PP backed Sjahrir, his government considered the PP a threat. The government leaders in their high-level positions were ignoring the wishes of the people; as former bureaucrats who governed from the peace and comfort of Yogyakarta, they had no understanding of politics and were clearly alienated from the people. The newspaper went on to proclaim the PP to be the true representation of the people. It recommended that consultations be held between the government and Persatuan Perdjungan and that the KNIP hold an emergency session before Sjahrir entered into talks with Van Mook.

Consultations between the government and moderate PP representatives finally took place on 8 February. After the meeting, the two sides talked of 'brotherhood and unity', but no concrete commitments were made. The leaders of the PP – Chairman Chaerul Saleh, General Secretary Sukarni and Tan Malaka the 'supervisor' – stepped up the pressure by organising mass rallies on 17 February on the occasion of six months of independence. Public opinion was now behind the PP, and the slogan '100% *Merdeka*' had become commonplace. The government had been backed into a corner and seemed to have lost the political initiative. It was clear to insiders, however, that the unity of the PP was fragile. The only thing the PP members had in common was a dislike of the cabinet.

On 16 February, the KNIP Working Committee passed a motion supporting the government's policy towards the Netherlands. A second motion stressed the importance of unity and called on the president to form a broader coalition cabinet and to call elections or expand the KNIP by appointing additional members. The first motion calling for support for Sjahrir's political approach was at odds with the second motion demanding a broader coalition. In the meantime, in Jakarta, Sjahrir tried to continue talking with the British and the Dutch. He saw no option but to continue his diplomatic strategy, but was forced to acknowledge that support for it was visibly waning. He therefore submitted his resignation to Sukarno on 23 February – a fact that was not made public and remained a closely guarded secret.

The confrontation

It was also announced on 23 February that the KNIP would meet on 28 February to discuss government policy and elect a new Working Committee. The date of the showdown between the government and Persatuan Perdjungan was now fixed. Sukarno had decided to follow Tan Malaka's initiative and to comment favourably on the PP's demands. He intimated that if Sjahrir failed in his negotiations with the Netherlands, he, the president, would dismiss him and form a new government himself, declaring that: 'The demands of the people are equal to the demands of the government.'¹⁵ Sukarno thus demonstrated that he had shaken off the fear and uncertainty of the first months of his presidency. Since moving to Yogyakarta, his self-confidence had increased. He travelled throughout Java from December to February, making numerous speeches to large, enthusiastic crowds. He was in a paradoxical situation: as president, he held a symbolic position without direct power, but this allowed him to keep his distance from day-to-day politics. And precisely because of this position, his status as a national figure who was above the parties grew. His hold on the masses, who saw in him the embodiment of the Republic, was great. In the precarious Republican balance of power, there was a growing realisation that his leadership was indispensable.

The PP had positioned itself as the voice of the uncompromising struggle, thereby mobilising not only the radical fighters but also the organisations and leaders that had been excluded from power by Sjahrir – and this included, as mentioned, almost all political parties.

A meeting of 58 militant groups, local councils and political parties – including Masyumi and Pesindo – and army units from Central Java had

15 *Boeroeh*, 25 February 1946, in Poeze 2007: 246.

taken place in Magelang on 8 February, which called on the government to make the PP the parliament and to discard the KNIP. Just before the KNIP meeting, representatives of the Laskar Rakyat from all over Java met in Magelang from 25–27 February. Sudirman gave a speech there in which he repeated, to the delight of those present, the statement that he would rather be wiped out by an atomic bomb than give up 100% *Merdeka*. The congress decided to establish a secretariat in Solo for all the Laskar Rakyat, which immediately became a member of the PP.

The KNIP session, with its 218 members and 200 other attendees, opened on 28 February. The tension in the room mirrored the situation outside. Solo was a leftist city, where the *badan perjuangan* had much more leeway than in Yogyakarta. There were rumours of troop movements for and against Sjahrir. Sudirman was aware of this and was visited by Chaerul Saleh and Gatot, who threatened him: ‘Soon we will take matters into our own hands.’¹⁶ Sudirman assured Sukarno, however, that his troops had the situation under control. Sjahrir and Amir Sjarifuddin were both being heavily guarded, as they and their fellow party members were concerned about their safety and doubted the loyalty of Sudirman, who sat on the stage with them.

When Sukarno took the floor immediately after the start of the session, he announced Sjahrir’s resignation, which, needless to say, caused quite a stir. The next item on the agenda to be dealt with was the proceedings of the Working Committee.

The next morning, the session restarted at ten o’clock. The chairman had decided that all participants would, upon signing the attendance list, hand over their weapons for safekeeping. For the first item, the report of the Working Committee was approved by a large majority, meaning that not only had the Working Committee’s support for Sjahrir’s policies been approved but also that the government and the KNIP had to be reconstituted. Despite his caretaker status, Sjahrir was then given a chance to defend his policies. He spoke for an hour and concluded that results could only be achieved through negotiations. Then Sudirman spoke, demanding the government to show decisiveness.

As many as 42 speakers registered for the debate that followed. Chaerul Saleh wondered why someone who had already resigned still had to be held accountable and argued that, given the current crisis situation, the president should quickly put together a new government. Chaerul Saleh threatened to call *pemuda* fighters into action. The meeting became restless, and the

16 *Putusan* 1948: 84 (Sudirman’s testimony, 23 March 1948).

tension in the room rose. After the lunch break, the chairman unexpectedly announced that the session had been adjourned to 2 March due to 'a very important issue, perceived as such by all members.'¹⁷

After announcing Sjahrir's resignation, Sukarno proposed appointing a committee to form a coalition cabinet under his leadership. Five members of the committee supported Sjahrir; the other five were opponents and belonged to the PP.¹⁸ Tan Malaka was absent in all of this, even though he was still in Solo. Unaware that Sjahrir had already resigned, he had expected the cabinet to be forced to resign via a vote of no confidence, after which a PP *formateur* could start forming a new government. But this expectation was dashed when Sukarno seized the initiative by announcing Sjahrir's resignation on 28 February.

Sukarno, Hatta, Sjahrir and Amir had apparently reached agreement on a common tactic against Tan Malaka and the PP. Sukarno had taken the initiative this time. His personal relationship with Sjahrir was frosty, but he supported the latter's general political direction. And Sukarno's initial admiration for Tan Malaka had by this point waned: as a 'bourgeois nationalist', he took issue with the minimum programme, and he did not like the fact that there were voices in the PP calling for Tan Malaka to be president.

Sukarno drew on his authority and prestige to establish a broad coalition cabinet, thereby bridging the gap between government and opposition. The strategy he chose involved breaking the unity of the PP by driving a wedge between the hard core around Tan Malaka on the one hand and the parties that were opportunistically opposed to both Sjahrir and the dominance of the Partai Sosialis on the other. He created this rupture by giving Muslims and nationalists, who were also unenthusiastic about the minimum programme, a stake in power. Meanwhile, the call for 100% *Merdeka* could be maintained.

Sukarno had blindsided the KNIP by taking things into his own hands. The committee he had set up met on 28 February at the house of Suroso, the high commissioner of the Republic in Solo, with whom Sukarno and Hatta were staying. Sukarno asked the committee for help in preparing a list of candidate ministers. Sjahrir and Amir were to retain their positions.

17 *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 4 March 1946 in Poeze 2007: 257–8.

18 The PP appointed Sukarni, Chaerul Saleh, Wali al-Fatah, Trimurti and Sri Mangunsarkoro to the committee while the Sjahrir group named Amir Sjarifuddin, Abdulmadjid, Kasimo (of the Catholic party) and Lukas Polhaupessy (of the Protestant party); it is not known who the fifth person of the Sjahrir group was.

Amir argued for continuity, while others demanded that the minimum programme be implemented. The meeting quickly degenerated into an argument. Finally, Sukarno asked the PP for a list of candidate ministers.

At nine o'clock in the evening, PP representatives met at the KNIP hall. Unanimously, they declared their adherence to the minimum programme. Sutomo even made the following threat: 'If the PP is unable to stick to the minimum programme, the BPRI will destroy the PP, and if the government is unable to implement the minimum programme, I will stage a coup against the government.'¹⁹

Tan Malaka was not present at the meeting at Suroso's house. Sukarni went to see him to ask him to take up a ministerial post but Tan Malaka's answer was evasive, arguing that the government should first answer the question of whether it would implement the minimum programme.

The next morning, Sukarni reported the PP's position to Sukarno. The latter responded flippantly and replied that the matter was easy to settle. Sukarni's concern that Hatta might reject the minimum programme was also dismissed by Sukarno: 'That's not a problem. I give you my guarantee that the programme will be accepted.'²⁰

At the KNIP plenary, Sukarno reported that his committee had not reached agreement. He then asked the KNIP to appoint a *formateur*, but after a heated debate, the KNIP proved unable to come to an agreement. Sjahrir had intimated that he would withdraw if Tan Malaka formed a cabinet. But Tan Malaka was not present and the PP was internally divided and proved unable to put forward a candidate. Sukarno then asked Sutomo from Surabaya whether he might be willing to become a *formateur*, but the latter did not feel up to the task. The opposition proved itself incapable of taking a stand.²¹

The unexpected adjournment of the KNIP meeting on 1 March led to a series of discussions that took place in both small and large groups. On behalf of the PP, Chaerul Saleh and Sukarni exerted maximum pressure on Sukarno and Hatta. As the largest group in the KNIP, they claimed the right to form a new cabinet. Hatta replied that while they may be the largest in the KNIP, more than three-quarters of the people were behind Sukarno and Hatta. Chaerul Saleh could not deny this, Hatta argued. He added that both he and Sukarno found the minimum programme to be unacceptable. Hatta refused to even discuss the issue of the nationalisation of 'enemy' property

19 Tan Malaka 1991, III:129-30.

20 Tan Malaka 1990, III: 130.

21 Van der Wal, Drooglever, Schouten 1971-1996, NIB 3: 552, 510.

or indeed the demand for 100% *Merdeka* without negotiation. In his words: "To gain recognition, negotiations must first take place."²²

Within the PP, there were now discussions about what to do if the minimum programme was rejected. They considered whether they should file a motion of no-confidence, but this could not be done until there was a new cabinet. An alternative minimum programme had been drawn up by Sukarno and Hatta, but this was rejected. It was clear that talks with Sukarno and Hatta had to be held again. Fierce discussions followed at the home of Suroso, but the participants dispersed late at night without having come to an agreement.

The next morning, on 2 March, Sukarni went to see Hatta to ask the latter to approach Tan Malaka. Sukarni believed that all problems could be resolved in a conversation between Hatta and Tan Malaka. Hatta was willing to talk, but he asserted that since he was the vice president, protocol dictated that Tan Malaka come to him. Sukarni stuck to his proposal and finally left, having achieved nothing.

On the government side, it was not clear whether a coup was imminent. There was, however, no reason to panic, as Sudirman had assured Sukarno and Hatta that the army remained loyal to them. Through their informants within the PP, Sjahrir and Amir were kept abreast of developments within the opposition. A Sutomo coup was unlikely, and the PP was hopelessly divided.

What was instrumental in this government crisis was the unanimity of Sjahrir, Amir, Hatta and Sukarno, with the latter three opting to stand behind Sjahrir's diplomatic approach. Even more important was the role that Sukarno claimed for himself. While his position had depended on Sjahrir's support back in October and November, this time the roles were reversed: Sjahrir was allowed to stay because it suited Sukarno.

The KNIP session opened with Hatta announcing that Sukarno had appointed Sjahrir as *formateur* with the task of forming a coalition cabinet. The rest of the meeting played itself out in an excited atmosphere. No more decisions were reached, and no statements were made about the new cabinet. In a state of confusion, the KNIP dissolved itself and entrusted the composition of the new KNIP to the president. Sukarno had won.

The second Sjahrir cabinet

Back in Jakarta, Sjahrir announced on 5 March that he wanted to broaden the government's support base by inviting the Masyumi and the PNI to

22 Poeze 2007: 263–4.

serve in the cabinet alongside his own Partai Sosialis. He also stated that he did not expect any major changes in policy. By this point, the term '100% *Merdeka*' had been so undermined that Sukarno was able to incorporate it unproblematically into the instructions he prepared for the forming of a government: negotiate on the basis of recognising the Republic as 100% *Merdeka*. In Jakarta, Sjahrir was in high spirits, according to his British interlocutor.²³

The Pesindo began to criticise the PP, and a whisper campaign was waged against Tan Malaka to portray him as a Trotskyist, a scatterbrain, and a Japanese or British agent. The leftist newspaper *Boeroeh* reproached the PP for criticising the government but not being willing to take power.²⁴

The composition of the new cabinet was announced on 12 March. The attempt to form a coalition cabinet had failed. Eleven of the 12 sitting ministers were renamed to the cabinet, which now consisted of 15 posts. The predominance of the Partai Sosialis was maintained, with Sjahrir and Amir in key positions. Specialist ministers without a party remained in their posts. The Masyumi ministers Natsir and Rasjidi also stayed on. Two more Masyumi members were appointed as deputy ministers. One of them was Sjafruddin Prawiranegara.²⁵ Haji Agus Salim, the partyless but authoritative veteran of Islamic politics, became deputy foreign minister. One striking cabinet appointment was Wikana as minister of state in charge of *pemuda* affairs – the same person who had said a week earlier that the PP should refuse to join the cabinet.

Chairman Sukiman of the Masyumi made it clear that he would adhere to the PP's programme, but the PNI took a softer stance, with Chairman Sarmidi Mangunsarkoro declaring he was confident that the cabinet would be able to do its job well.

The first major rift in the PP came when the Pesindo decided to withdraw from the PP on 13 March, arguing that stability was needed to form a central command against foreign attacks. A day later, PP Chairman Chaerul Saleh could not prevent the youth federation Badan Kongres Pemuda Republik Indonesia (BKPRI) from also leaving the PP, and therefore he resigned.

It was against this backdrop that the PP held a conference on 15 March in Madiun to lick its wounds and to figure out how to prevent more groups from leaving the party. Given the predominance of the Pesindo in Madiun,

23 From a statement by Clark Kerr to the Australian diplomat R.C. Kirby (Poeze 2007: 289).

24 *Boeroeh*, 8 March 1946, in Poeze 2007: 272.

25 The two belonged to the pro-Sjahrir wing of the Masyumi and had little regard for Chairman Sukiman, who opposed the cabinet.

there was always the risk of a violent confrontation. Eight hundred armed Pesindo members had arrived in the city, parading through the streets on the evening before the PP conference with a show of force. Blaming 'a full schedule', Sudirman did not attend the conference but sent observers instead.

Four hundred delegates from 40 organisations participated in the conference, where decisions could only be taken unanimously. The tone used when referring to the cabinet – especially Sukarno and Hatta – was unforgiving. After speeches by Tan Malaka and Muhammad Yamin, the conference passed two resolutions at two o'clock in the morning. The first resolution called for an all-out mobilisation to counter the Dutch threat, and the second consisted of a disparate list of demands such as the withdrawal of Dutch troops; the nationalisation of foreign companies; the extension of Indonesian sovereignty to include Malacca, all of Kalimantan, East Timor and Irian Barat – one of Yamin's hobbyhorses; and the establishment of cultural relations with progressive countries and trade agreements with countries that recognised the Republic. Then at half past two, after singing the national anthem and repeating the words '*Merdeka!*' and '*Berontak!*' (Resist!) three times, the congress came to a close.

The next morning, on 16 March, a mass gathering began at half past eight in the main square in Madiun, which was to conclude with a military parade. The turnout was not overwhelming. The various militias were unarmed, but the Pesindo showed up in full armour. Sukarni read out the decisions that had been taken at the conference. Tan Malaka finally spoke for no less than an hour and a half on foreign policy, the minimum programme and the viciousness of the colonial oppressors. At 11 o'clock, the gathering was brought to an end. All in all, the conference was not a success – and the situation was about to worsen.

Arrest

Abu Bakar Lubis was a staunch admirer of Sjahrir. He had been a medical student during the Japanese occupation and active as a *pemuda* in Jakarta in August, and was deeply impressed by the gathering on Ikada Square,²⁶ after which he moved into journalism. He spoke to Sjahrir on 10 March. They agreed that Tan Malaka's 'romantic revolutionary path' was not 'rational'. Sjahrir found it difficult to negotiate with the Dutch while this kind of agitation was going on. For Lubis, the conclusion was clear: the agitation had to stop and the instigators arrested. Without informing Sjahrir of his

26 See Chapter 3.

plans, Lubis left for Yogyakarta to discuss the issue with Subadio, one of the leaders of the Partai Sosialis, whereupon both went in search of Home Minister Sudarsono. This trio then went with Lubis' friend, Imam Slamet, to Solo, where Amir was being treated in a hospital. Ministers Sudarsono and Amir agreed to the arrest of Tan Malaka and other PP leaders. A decree they signed put Lubis and Slamet in charge of implementing this action. Back in Yogyakarta, Sukarno was informed of the decree. He approved the plan and gave 100,000 rupiah to cover the costs. Sukarno's secretary lent his car for this purpose.

On 16 March, Lubis and Slamet left early for Madiun, arriving after a long delay due to several flat tyres. With the decree in hand, Imam Slamet requested assistance from the police but was refused. The local commander of the TRI regiment also felt the group was not in a position to aid them. Then Lubis asked for help from the Pesindo unit, which agreed. Lubis asked the Pesindo to seal off the city so that the leaders of the Persatuan Perdjungan could not flee Madiun. In the meantime, he had contacted the commander of the military police in Madiun, an old school friend, who also pledged his cooperation. When Lubis' presence was noticed at the mass gathering on 16 March, however, it aroused suspicion within the PP circle. Immediately after the gathering, the PP leaders disappeared. As they did not have their own transport, they had to travel by train. The train for Yogyakarta arrived at the station in the evening. By closely monitoring movements at the station, the military police were able to arrest Yamin and Abikusno Tjokrosujoso. Upon his arrest, Yamin was told that Sukarno wished to speak to him. Tan Malaka and Sukarni, however, had not shown up at the train station and could therefore not be arrested.²⁷

At 11 o'clock the next morning, the first group of people who had been arrested at the train station left by car for Solo, where they were detained by Republican authorities. At about four in the afternoon, a hurried *pemuda* had reported to Tan Malaka that the exit roads from Madiun were closed and that Tan Malaka was being sought.

The arrest of Tan Malaka offers a fascinating insight into the complex relationships in a Javanese provincial town during the revolution. Pesindo leader Wali al-Fatah went to Tan Malaka's residence to tell him that, with the consent of local authorities, he would be taken to the president for a meeting. In the end, multiple people were complicit in the arrest of Tan

27 Abikusno's role in the PP leadership is not clear. He had been active in the PSII before the war and in the Masyumi during the Japanese occupation. Like Subardjo, he did not stand a chance of receiving a cabinet post or high government position under Sjahrir.

Malaka including the mayor; a senior TRI officer who was also an adviser to the Pesindo; and Haji Mukti, the local leader of the Masyumi with a position in the army and leader of the Laskar Rakyat in Madiun, which lived in a state of armed truce with the Pesindo. Haji Mukti was supposed to send his men into action if the Pesindo arrested Tan Malaka, but an arrest on government orders was something he could live with. It was agreed that Sukarni and Tan Malaka would be taken to Yogyakarta for a meeting with Sukarno.

The trip by car lasted all night and was repeatedly interrupted by engine failure and flat tyres. In Solo, they stopped at a military police building, where the detainees were imprisoned. Lubis and Slamet reported back to Amir and then went back to inform Sukarno at his residence in Yogyakarta; his assistant refused to admit them because Sukarno was resting, but changed his mind when Lubis and Slamet drew a pistol. The two then reported the latest developments to the president.

Taking action

The turn of events during the KNIP session and Tan Malaka's arrest tells us much about the way the Republic functioned. There were institutions and procedures, but when these did not work, individual interventions in the interests of the Revolution were permitted. The central government had no obvious authority; each action or measure it took was assessed on its merits by the army, combat organisations and power brokers at the regional and local levels. Old political networks from the colonial era and new *pemuda* groups formed during the Japanese occupation were linked by personal ties and often by family connections, which meant that political divisions took on personal overtones. In the absence of solid institutions, informal networks and personal connections helped to get things done. The Revolution wanted decisiveness and speed, which explains how one person – in this case Lubis – could feel impelled to take action in the interests of the Republic. This explains his deed. There are numerous examples of self-styled *pemuda* actions against alleged opponents during this period, which often led to people being executed or disappearing without a trace. That the leaders of the Republic agreed to Lubis' action says something about their irritation with the PP's actions, but also illustrates their reluctance to engage in a direct confrontation to eliminate their opponents. Because they apparently did not dare to do this, they transferred the risk to Lubis. If he failed, the Republican leaders could claim that they were not responsible. If the arrest were to trigger a revolt, those detained could always be released while the blame could be placed squarely on Lubis. The action taken by

Lubis appeared to have succeeded in all respects, as internal divisions in the PP meant that no wave of resistance followed the arrest of Tan Malaka and his supporters.

Tan Malaka remained in custody. He was a lone figure who had once again hesitated to step forward at decisive moments and had failed to seize power. The testament naming Tan Malaka as one of Sukarno's successors had become a distant memory. A draft government decree dated 29 March 1946 to revoke this testament was not made public.²⁸

The PP disintegrated even further. By challenging the PP to name a *formateur*, Sukarno had exposed the party's internal divisions. When the PP was unable to come up with someone, the initiative passed to the president. Because combat organisations in the PP competed with the army, which was regularly the target of criticism, Sudirman also turned away from the PP. While he was drawn to the PP's call for unity, when it came down to it, he remained loyal to Sukarno.

On 5 May, the Konsentrasi Nasional was established, a consolidation of all the organisations that were part of the PP, including the Partai Sosialis and the Pesindo. Its political programme was announced later that month. The call for 100% *Merdeka* was once again at the top of its programme, and on the economic front it continued to demand the nationalisation of large companies and agricultural enterprises. A meeting was held on 28 May between representatives of the Konsentrasi and Sukarno, Hatta and members of the cabinet. The conversation took place in 'an amicable atmosphere.' The sharp contrasts between the two sides were smothered in a display of unity. A week later, the PP decided to disband. Its attempt to make the independence struggle also a social revolution had failed.

28 The testament itself re-emerged in the early 1960s and fell into the hands of two former supporters of Tan Malaka, one of whom was Sjamsu. They believed the controversial document could cause problems and therefore proposed to Sukarno that it be destroyed. Sukarno agreed; he tore it up and burned it in their presence.

7 The Army

June–July 1946

After Tan Malaka and some of his supporters were arrested and the Persatuan Perjuangan was disbanded, peace appeared to have been restored in the Republic. Sjahrir's policies nonetheless remained controversial and a new struggle for power soon emerged, this time with the army playing a leading role.¹ It became a complex showdown that illustrated the way in which the revolutionary drive in the Republic often led to an individual or individuals taking action. The kidnapping of Sukarno and Hatta in August 1945 and of Tan Malaka and his supporters in March 1946 were examples of this. The desire for decisive action often clashed with the endeavour to operate methodically, making the revolution an unpredictable process with unforeseeable outcomes.

The four PP leaders who had been arrested in Madiun were transferred after a month from Solo to Tawangmangu, a mountain village with a pleasant climate where they stayed in comfortable bungalows. They were joined by Subardjo and Iwa Kusumasumantri, who chose not to wait to be arrested, given the uncertainty this entailed, and had given themselves up. The six were under military guard but had a significant degree of freedom and were allowed to visit Solo under supervision, where the subject of discussion was doubtless the progress of the negotiations with the Netherlands.

Immediately after his second cabinet took office, Sjahrir had informed Van Mook that he was willing to agree to a Dutch-Indonesian Union under certain conditions.² Van Mook then put forward his plan for an Indonesian Federation that would remain linked to the Netherlands through a Union. Sjahrir acceded to this in his secret counterproposal of 27 March but asked in return for recognition of Republican authority over Java and Sumatra. By dropping the demand for 100% *Merdeka*, he was taking a significant risk of arousing domestic opposition.

¹ This chapter is based on Poeze 2007: 307–492. There are many sources available about the crisis that occurred in the Republic in June and July 1946, allowing for a detailed account to be made of the course of events. In particular, the reports (Stenographic report 1948), written pleas (Yamin 1957) and the detailed verdict of the trial on the coup before the Supreme Military Court (Putusan 1948) – held in Yogyakarta in the first half of 1948 – together form a unique source of 900 densely printed pages. For information on how this process unfolded, see Poeze 2007: 873–944.

² See Chapter 5.

There seemed to be the possibility of an agreement, but during talks at the Hoge Veluwe in the Netherlands in April 1946, Van Mook and Sjahrir came up against a wall of resistance on the Dutch side. The trust that Sjahrir had placed in his Dutch sympathisers had been betrayed, and the imminent departure of the British and the arrival of Dutch troops did not bode well for the Republic. On 17 June, Sjahrir made it clear that his willingness to make concessions had waned. Instead of a Union, he now wanted equal bilateral relations with the Netherlands and demanded that the Dutch cease their troop reinforcements. As a result, the talks reached an impasse, but it was inevitable that the concessions Sjahrir had made would become known at some point. This was to put the relationship between the cabinet, the political parties and the army on edge.

Sudirman versus Amir Sjarifuddin; riots in Solo

Meanwhile, relations between Commander-in-Chief Sudirman and Defence Minister Amir Sjarifuddin had not improved. The political instruction of soldiers, provided at Amir's initiative by a special staff of the defence ministry, encountered much resistance and was seen by Sudirman as a harbinger of even more political intermeddling. Amir also tried to increase his influence among autonomous militias by establishing an umbrella body known as Biro Perjuangan. Sudirman responded by establishing his own Advisory Council for the Army High Command (Dewan Penasehat Putjuk Pimpinan Tentara), in which he appointed a number of leaders of those very same autonomous militias.

Amir's next move in the struggle for power was a major reorganisation. He decreed that the ministry would now determine policy and that the army leadership would have to confine itself to carrying out tasks. The military police was brought under the ministry, and its ten divisions in Java were reduced to seven.³

On 23 May, the commanders and chiefs of staff of these divisions were elected. The strongman in Yogyakarta, Major General Sudarsono, was not satisfied with the chief of staff that had been elected and managed to get his own candidate, Lieutenant Colonel Umar Djoy, appointed. In Solo, Major General Sudiro was elected – under significant pressure from the government – and not the popular Colonel Sutarto. But this move proved

3 The seven divisions were: 1. West Java, 2. Cirebon-Tasikmalaya-Tegal-Banyumas, 3. Pekalongan-Kedu-Yogyakarta, 4. Solo-Semarang-Madiun, 5. Pati-Bojonegoro, 6. Kediri-Surabaya-Madiun, and 7. Malang-Besuki.

unacceptable to Sutarto's supporters, so he remained in office and Amir had no choice but to appoint him.

Yogyakarta and Solo now had division commanders who had been elected against the wishes of the government. To strengthen their position, the division commanders sought support from the opposition and its affiliated militias. In this sense, they were on the same page as Sudirman.

The conflict over Sutarto's appointment in Solo coincided with major social unrest in the city, which came on the heels of protests directed against the authority of the princes in the autumn of 1945.⁴ Sutarto entered into an alliance with the Barisan Banteng in June 1946, which was headquartered in Solo and headed by Muwardi, a medical doctor. Thus, while Yogyakarta became the capital of the Republic under the leadership of Sultan Hamengkubuwono, Solo – forever Yogyakarta's rival – became the centre of the opposition against the Sjahrir cabinet. This position was made clear once again when Commander-in-Chief Sudirman established his headquarters there.

The prince of Solo was forced by the Barisan Banteng to renounce all his privileges, but the second prince – from the court of Mangkunegara – was unwilling to capitulate and instead appealed to the central government. In the meantime, mass meetings were held calling for all ties to be severed between that prince and the people. At the end of May, the government intervened by appointing a High Commissioner who was given far-reaching powers. The leaders of the mass meetings, including Muwardi and the local governing council, were arrested. There were strong protests against these arrests, and Sudirman subsequently personally ordered the prisoners to be released. In doing so, he openly turned against the Republican administration. It was under these circumstances that Sutarto had been appointed division commander.

A cabinet meeting involving Sukarno, Hatta and Sudirman was called to try to restore peace. On 1 June, a civil-military administration was established in Solo, with Sutarto as strongman. Thus, with Sudirman's support, the army had taken power together with the opposition in Solo. The army's position was further strengthened when a state of emergency was declared throughout Java and Madura on 6 June following heavy fighting between Indonesian and Dutch troops in West Java.

Sudirman's visit to Tawangmangu

Tan Malaka and the other political prisoners in Tawangmangu were no doubt paying close attention to all these developments. Sutarto's appointment

4 See Chapter 4.

enabled the prisoners to visit Solo without much risk in order to consult with their political friends. Yamin picked up the pen again, lashing out at Sukarno, Hatta and Sjahrir in a brochure.

In early June, Sudirman visited Tawangmangu for a few days for health reasons. He met some of the prisoners and invited the whole group to come and see him in his bungalow. Sudirman felt emboldened by the outcome of the power struggle in Solo, and the declaration of a state of emergency had also given him more leeway. During the conversation it became clear that his sympathy for the leaders of the *Persatuan Perjuangan* was undiminished. They shared an aversion to the *Partai Sosialis* and were worried about how the negotiations with the Netherlands were proceeding. Subardjo argued that the path followed by the Republic had to be changed. All agreed that the Sjahrir cabinet had to go. Yamin and Iwa even believed that Sukarno should also resign. When prompted, Sudirman promised to refer the matter to Sukarno. Yamin gave him a series of pieces he had written, including a new brochure on the political structure of the Republic in time of war which recommended that the president hand over his power during a state of emergency to the commander of the armed forces. Yamin had already worked out the plan in a subsequent document, which called for the resignation of the incumbent cabinet and the formation of a new coalition cabinet – with ministers appointed by the president and the commander-in-chief – to decide how to fight against the violations of Indonesian sovereignty. In Yamin's plan, Solo's semi-military governance model was taken to the next level. It is plausible that Sudirman had no objections to this.

Coincidence or not, on 6 June, Sudirman received a memorandum from his advisory council proposing the dissolution of the cabinet and the formation of a new, broader coalition cabinet whose members would be appointed by the president and commander-in-chief. The fact that Iwa and Subardjo were part of this advisory council despite their 'imprisonment' probably explains how Yamin's ideas had been adopted verbatim in the memo.⁵ There was a political-military opposition in the making whose plan it was to give the military more power.

5 This advisory council met weekly. Other members included the Martoatmodjo brothers Buntaran and Budhiarto; core members of the group of *pemuda* around the *Asrama Indonesia Merdeka*, which had been supported by the Japanese Navy in August 1945; Mohammed Saleh, the leader of the *Laskar Rakyat* in Yogyakarta; Sukiman on behalf of the *Masyumi*; Djody Gondokusumo on behalf of the *PNI*; and the moderate, authoritative jurist Supomo.

Growing pressure on the government

Meanwhile, rumours were spreading in Yogyakarta about concessions that Sjahrir had made to the Dutch, and there was heated speculation about the formation of a new coalition cabinet. The pressure was stepped up by the opposition parties Masyumi, PNI and PBI, which were able to count on the support of a number of newspapers. In the Yogyakarta newspaper *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, Sajuti Melik wrote almost daily commentaries in which he argued for a cabinet that 'reflects the revolutionary praxis of the masses.'⁶

A report published on 18 June by Reuters, which had been taken over by the Republican news agency Antara, revealed the secret concessions that Sjahrir had made to the Dutch. It was disclosed that Sjahrir had agreed to the formation of a federation, thereby relinquishing the notion of 100% *Merdeka*. In response, Sajuti Melik wrote that the people would revolt and that Sjahrir should be dismissed by Sukarno if he did not stick to the demand for 100% *Merdeka*. He concluded with the words of Sudirman: 'Never surrender! Don't acknowledge defeat! It's better to die on the battlefield!'⁷

Buntaran Martoatmodjo, a member of Sudirman's advisory council, had by chance tuned in to Radio Bandung on the evening of 20 June and heard the news of Sjahrir's concessions. The next morning he visited Sudarsono, the division commander of Yogyakarta, who was troubled by the surrender of the Republic's sovereignty over the territories beyond Java and Sumatra. Sudarsono, in turn, approached Sudirman to ask if he was aware of these concessions. Sudirman said he knew nothing about it but would ask Sukarno at a meeting later that day. After the meeting, Sudirman reported back to Sudarsono that the radio message was correct, adding that he disagreed with Sjahrir's proposals. He also said that if Sukarno wanted to move ahead along these lines, the president would have to dismiss the commander-in-chief. Sajuti Melik continued his attack on the government in the newspaper, concluding that the diplomatic route had come to a dead end and that there was therefore no other option but to fight. His article was, in essence, a call to war.⁸

The government was now in serious trouble. On 26 June, Sukarno and Amir signed some decrees intended to accommodate the army. Sudirman was appointed commander-in-chief of the entire armed forces, which was

6 Juti, 'Kabinet kita', *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 3 June 1946. The Konsentrasi Nasional quickly fell off the radar, as it failed to give the Sjahrir cabinet a broader basis.

7 J., 'Soal kita soedah tentoe', *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 20 June 1946; J., 'Sikap kita djoega soedah tentoe', *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 21 June 1946.

8 J., 'Batas diplomasi', *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 26 June 1946.

mainly a symbolic gesture because the navy and the air force did not amount to much. A military council headed by Sukarno was also established, in which many of the commanders of the armed forces were given a seat.⁹

On 27 June, the Islamic holiday of the Prophet's Ascension, the Masyumi held a mass rally on the northern *alun-alun* (main square) in Yogyakarta. Sukarno, Sudirman and the sultan were announced as speakers, and at the last minute Hatta was added to the list of speakers. He was given the thankless task of defending the government's diplomatic policies. The gathering attracted a large audience, including many members of armed groups. Sjahrir was not present.

At the end of his speech, Hatta explained what Sjahrir had demanded on behalf of the Republic: *de facto* recognition of the Republic in Java and Sumatra, and in the other areas a plebiscite within three years offering a choice between a red-and-white flag (of the Republic) or a red-white-and-blue flag (of the Netherlands).

He criticised the slogans he saw on banners in front of him. Painting slogans was not that difficult, he said, but the struggle for independence was much harder. Hatta left immediately after finishing his speech. The audience was shocked and disappointed, and some people simply walked away. Sukarno concluded the rally without saying a word about his vice president's speech. He did, however, praise the slogans on the banners.

Jusuf and Sudarsono take action

After the rally, a number of radicals came together, including Buntaran and Budhiarto Martoatmodjo, along with Iwa and Subardjo. Sudarsono also appeared, followed by Sajuti Melik. Also present was 23-year-old A.K. Jusuf, who had been appointed head of the overarching security forces in Yogyakarta (Tentara Pendjagaan Kota) by Sudarsono, the military commander of Yogyakarta.¹⁰ They were all outraged by Hatta's speech and

9 This military council was intended to provide a larger platform for the armed forces and was to operate alongside the National Defence Council (Dewan Pertahanan Negara), where the military input was much more limited.

10 Jusuf had attended meetings at Maeda's Asrama Indonesia Merdeka during the Japanese occupation and was considered by Sjahrir at the time to be one of his best pupils. In the first months after the Proclamation, Jusuf gained a reputation in Jakarta and Bogor. In December 1945 he arrived in Yogyakarta with the unit he led, where Umar Djoy introduced him to Sudarsono. Sudarsono had faith in Jusuf and appointed him head of the Tentara Pendjagaan Kota. Sudarsono praised Jusuf as a courageous and capable leader. That assessment must have made Sudarsono sensitive to Jusuf's request.

concluded that the cabinet was on the wrong track. Subardjo put it this way: 'They can't manage any longer; they've had their turn.' And: '*Kalau perloe* (If need be), then I will not hesitate to stage a *coup d'état*.'¹¹ A.K. Jusuf couldn't hold back anymore and drew his gun. He wanted to take action. Budhiarto suggested they apprehend Sjahrir, to which Subardjo winked at Jusuf. This suggestion found a willing ear in Jusuf.

Sudarsono had only been home for a short while when Jusuf showed up towards the end of the afternoon. Jusuf said he had decided to take Sjahrir prisoner. Sjahrir had arrived in Solo on 25 June to visit East Java with some members of the cabinet. As head of the security forces, Jusuf was responsible for maintaining order in Yogyakarta, but in Solo he could not act on his own authority. He therefore needed the permission of his commander Sudarsono. 'Let me take care of the matter,' said Jusuf, 'I just need an arrest warrant.'¹²

Sudarsono had no idea what they should do once Sjahrir was out of the picture. Neither Sudarsono nor Jusuf had a plan in mind, but both must have been spurred to action by the fact that taking action to save the revolution had already once before caused the desired shock effect. This time, Sjahrir was the target.

Jusuf left Sudarsono's house immediately. He drove past Budhiarto's house, where he picked up Iwa, who wanted to come along to Solo. They arrived in Solo at the beginning of the evening, where they happened to meet Yamin. Yamin had heard Hatta's speech on the radio and was troubled. Jusuf told them of his plan to arrest Sjahrir and showed him Sudarsono's warrant.

Jusuf carried out his plan that same night. But first he went in search of Sutarto, the military commander in Solo. After being presented with Sudarsono's warrant, Sutarto also gave his consent. He also ordered all outgoing telephone traffic to be blocked and motorised transport in the city to be monitored to prevent Sjahrir from escaping. Finally, he arranged to have an arrest warrant for Sjahrir written up, for which he called the acting chief of police out of his bed around midnight. The man asked if Sudirman or Sukarno knew about the plan. When this was confirmed, he wrote an arrest warrant for the chief of the local police station. With all these permissions, which together gave the impression of a proper hierarchical process, the kidnapping of Sjahrir went smoothly. At one o'clock in the morning, Jusuf appeared with four other soldiers at the place where Sjahrir was lodging. The police guards accepted the papers shown. Jusuf went in and knocked on Sjahrir's bedroom door. When Sjahrir asked: 'Is anything the matter?'

11 Accounts of this incident can be found in Poeze 2007: 398.

12 Stenographic report (SV) 1948: 25, deposition by Sudarsono, 5 March 1948.

Jusuf replied: 'I have to arrest you', and showed him the warrant. Sjahrir responded: 'What do you mean? The people still need me,' but he was taken away under gentle duress and without resistance.

Those who were staying together with Sjahrir at the Hotel Merdeka were also arrested.¹³ Only Sjahrir's secretary, Subadio Sastrosatomo, managed to escape with a minister, who was still in his pyjamas.

Jusuf had asked Sutarto, the military commander in Solo, where he could lock up Sjahrir and his followers. Sutarto had designated Paras, a village on the foothills of Mount Merbabu, 35 kilometres west of Solo. As soon as Sjahrir's group was brought there, Jusuf returned to Solo. After a few hours of sleep, he left together with Iwa and Yamin for Tawangmangu, where Tan Malaka, Sukarni and Abikusno were informed of the kidnapping. The internees then began discussing what they should do next. At the end of the afternoon, Jusuf left for Yogyakarta with Iwa and Yamin. Tan Malaka, Sukarni and Abikusno, who were following the events from some distance, were left behind. Tan Malaka was not happy with the turn of events and did not trust Yamin's actions.

It is unclear why Jusuf did not directly inform Sudarsono, his commander in Yogyakarta, that he had completed his mission and why he had left Sjahrir in the territory of another division commander. Nor was it clear what Sudarsono and Jusuf planned to do next. Jusuf must have felt that he had done his deed and that it was now up to others to take over.

On the morning of 28 June, a Friday, Sjahrir was expected at a cabinet meeting at ten o'clock. But when he did not appear and did not contact anyone, people began to suspect that he had been kidnapped. Rumours had been circulating for some time about a possible kidnapping of Hatta, Sjahrir and Amir, which would force Sukarno to comply with the kidnappers' demands. The instigators were described as 'the Tan Malaka group'. Concrete confirmation of the kidnapping came when a newsreel cameraman reached Yogyakarta with a message from Sjahrir's escaped secretary, Subadio. Later that day, Subadio arrived by train in disguise, but he could not say who Sjahrir's kidnappers were. The government was very concerned about the international repercussions that the kidnapping would have and feared that its image would be severely damaged. For this reason, they felt they had to find out as soon as possible who was behind this move and try to have Sjahrir released in secret. The cabinet took the decision on 28 June to

13 Those arrested also included Minister Darmawan Mangunkusumo, Major General Sudibjo (a director general at the ministry of defence), Mr. Sumitro and the economist Sumitro Djojohadikusumo.

declare martial law with immediate effect, without specifying exactly why. This decision reflected the atmosphere of crisis that the Republic was in and the need to exude unity and determination.

Sudirman as intermediary

Although the cabinet had not announced the news of Sjahrir's abduction, rumours quickly spread within the small political world of Yogyakarta. The military commander of Yogyakarta, Sudarsono, waited in vain on Friday morning for a report from Jusuf, who was still sleeping in the mountain village of Tawangmangu. It was therefore not Jusuf but the commander of Sukarno's bodyguard who informed Sudarsono about the kidnapping. Sudarsono then went to the offices of the Masyumi where party chairman Sukiman was meeting with representatives of the PNI and the Partai Buruh. Sudarsono told all those assembled the news of the kidnapping. Although Sukiman was a fierce opponent of Sjahrir, he reacted cautiously. He felt it was ill-advised to take direct action at that moment. He first wanted to give President Sukarno time to come up with a solution.

The government did indeed have to take action, and at midnight it took a drastic decision. At one o'clock in the morning of 29 June, Sukarno signed the Presidential Decree No. 1 of 1946 in which he announced that, due to internal events that endangered state security and the struggle for independence, he had decided, with the agreement of the cabinet, to temporarily assume full government power. With this decision, Sukarno had once again become the highest man in power. For Sjahrir's critics, this was a step in the right direction, as they were counting on Sukarno to be on their side.

Sudirman was in Yogyakarta, but Sudarsono had not yet informed him that he had ordered Jusuf to detain Sjahrir. Sutarto, the military commander of Solo, also told Sudirman nothing about his role in the event. Both were evidently convinced that they were acting in the spirit of the mission that the army had given itself to uphold the Proclamation and the Constitution.

On the morning of 28 June, Sudirman had heard from the subordinates of Major General Sudibjo – who was one of the prisoners in Sjahrir's company – that Sjahrir had been kidnapped. When Sudirman met Sukarno later that day, the president informed him of the declaration of martial law and also hinted that he agreed 'in principle' with a coalition cabinet but that it should be formed 'noiselessly'. Sukarno suspected that the kidnapers were in 'Sudirman's oppositional constituency', thereby signalling that the government was willing to change the composition of the cabinet. It was

assumed that Sudirman could be an 'intermediary' to convey this message to the kidnapers.

Sudirman immediately went in search of Sudarsono and asked him to make a list of candidate ministers for a new cabinet. Sudarsono, in turn, conveyed this request to Buntaran and Budhiarto, who were brothers. Together with Iwa, Subardjo, Yamin and Chaerul Saleh, they drew up a list of candidate ministers. In addition to reliable elders such as Supomo (justice) and Ki Hadjar Dewantoro (education), Subardjo was also in favour of including Tan Malaka on the list. But Yamin wanted to go even further. In a memorandum, he outlined the contours of a new core cabinet (Dewan Pimpinan Politik) and added a clarification for Sudirman. The memo called for the trial of all the members of the cabinet and of Vice President Hatta. Yamin thought it best to keep Sukarno on in the interest of national unity, but the president should hand over his power to the new government 'of the people and the army' – a government in which the army, led by Sudirman, would play a dominant role.

Budhiarto and Buntaran turned in their proposals to Sudarsono on the afternoon of Saturday, 29 June. He in turn took them immediately to Sudirman and told him: 'Here it is, just put pressure on them.' To this, Sudirman replied: 'I'll think about it', and left for Solo.¹⁴

Sukarno speaks

That same day, Sukarno called a press conference in the afternoon in which he explained the decision for him to assume all power with a vague reference to 'the critical situation'. He emphasised that the aim was still 100% *Merdeka* for the entire archipelago and ordered the military to fulfil their duties, a plea that no doubt referred to the kidnapping of Sjahrir, which he did not mention.

Meanwhile, rumours of the kidnapping were spreading, so in the evening the government circulated an official declaration signed by Sukarno that disclosed Sjahrir's kidnapping. The action was attributed to criminal accomplices of the Dutch who were trying to undermine the Republic. Right-minded citizens were called upon to cooperate with the release of the prime minister. The wording of the statement made it clear that there was no room for compromise.

Three journalists from the newspaper *Kedaulatan Rakjat* and the Antara news agency – Sumantoro, Adam Malik and Pandu Kartawiguna – decided

14 Poeze 2007: 413.

to investigate the matter. They left for Solo, where they arrived early Sunday morning. From Commander Sutarto they learned that Sjahrir had been detained by authorised parties from Yogyakarta with a warrant from Sudarsono, the commander of the Third Division. Sutarto was apparently distressed by the kidnapping and wanted to keep his part in it as small as possible. But when Jusuf returned to Sutarto later that morning to let him know that he was coming to pick up Sjahrir from Paras, Sutarto turned him away and told him that he would himself take the prime minister to Yogyakarta.

All the key players left for Magelang in the course of Sunday morning, 30 June, for a previously arranged meeting between the government and the army. Sukarno, Hatta and Amir were present as well as all the division commanders, including Sudarsono and Sutarto. Sudirman led the meeting. On the agenda were financial matters and martial law, but the most important topic was not discussed. Outside the meeting, Amir was informally told that Sjahrir was being held in Paras and that he had been detained with a warrant from Sudarsono. Amir even received a copy of the warrant. The informant in this case was most likely the division commander of Solo, Sutarto, who also indicated that he could guarantee Sjahrir's return. In this way he hoped to minimise his part in the kidnapping.

After the meeting, Sudirman was immediately invited to the presidential palace for a meeting with Sukarno, Hatta and Amir, where he was ordered to secure Sjahrir's release and to arrest Sudarsono. When Sudirman stressed the need to act with caution, a heated quarrel ensued. Sudirman asked for more time, for he felt it was necessary to avoid the impression that the people of Solo were responsible for the kidnapping. He also said that he needed a written order to free Sjahrir and that he would take into consideration an arrest of Sudarsono. Hatta, Sudirman and Sukarno's chief of staff then began to write the text of the speech that Sukarno was to deliver that evening.

At the end of the afternoon, Sudirman left for Solo by train. Sudarsono saw him off, but Sudirman said nothing of the conversation he had just had in the palace. He only said that he would expect Sudarsono in Solo the next day.

On Sunday night, Sukarno gave a speech at eight o'clock that was broadcast by radio.

Saudara-saudara! The birth of a people is truly not easy. Since we proclaimed the independence of our people more than ten months ago, the State of Indonesia has had to face attack upon attack. Attacks from the outside, attacks from within.¹⁵

15 Poeze 2007: 418–21.

The president repeated the story that Dutch agents were trying to undermine the Republic from within by using the opposition to sow division. Opposition was necessary in a democracy, Sukarno argued, but it should not lead to destruction, for that would damage the international standing of the Republic. The kidnapping of Sjahrir endangered the Republic and therefore could not be tolerated. The Netherlands would then rightly claim: 'You see, the Indonesian people are not yet ready for freedom.' Sukarno then said there was a suspicion that the kidnapping was the work of a group 'more left-wing than left-wing, more radical than radical.' He went on to claim that, without knowing it, that group was cooperating with the Netherlands. Such left-wing radicalism was counterrevolutionary. This fifth column supported anarcho-syndicalist tendencies in companies, stirred up anarchy within lower-level administrative circles, and weakened discipline in the police and army – all under the banner of 'sovereignty of the people'. The majority was still loyal to the government, but there was a danger that the whole of society would gradually become poisoned.

Sukarno then declared that for the duration of martial law, he would have supreme command of the Republic, and he promised to lift martial law as soon as the situation returned to normal. Finally, he made a passionate appeal to the people to support him in the liberation of Sjahrir and his fellow prisoners in the interest of the well-being of the Republic. He ended with a prayer to God to support the country and himself.

It was a presidential speech in which Sukarno presented himself as a concerned father of the people, placing himself above all parties. He was not angry but sad, always serious and dignified. He blamed left-wing radicalism, putting Tan Malaka and his supporters on the defensive. Against his better judgment, he shielded the soldiers, who were ultimately responsible for the kidnapping. After all, Sjahrir had not yet been liberated, and for that Sukarno needed the full cooperation of Sudirman.

Sjahrir's release

Tensions were running high in Yogyakarta. For several weeks, the secret service had regularly been reporting the possibility of kidnappings and assassinations, much of which pointed to the group around Tan Malaka. Immediately prior to Sjahrir's abduction, there had been signs of an impending kidnapping of Sukarno, as a result of which Sukarno's guards had been reinforced with a battalion of the Eighth Division from Malang, which had been rushed to Yogyakarta. In the early hours of Monday, Amir came to the palace at two o'clock with the message that Sukarno would be kidnapped

that night. The guards were notified and were on high alert when a few cars arrived at 4 am. But it was Sjahrir who arrived at Sukarno's palace completely unexpectedly in the early morning of 1 July, accompanied by a number of armed fighters from the Barisan Banteng. He had presumably been released by Sutarto's officers. Sukarno hugged him, and his wife Fatmawati made coffee for Sjahrir's escort. That same day, the newspapers published a government statement saying that Sjahrir had been liberated by an army unit in response to Sukarno's speech and as an expression of loyalty to the president.¹⁶ Sjahrir laid low. He did, however, inform the Antara news agency that his kidnapping had only played into the hands of adventurers and dangerous forces.

A cabinet meeting was quickly called, where it was decided that Sjahrir should immediately leave for Jakarta to continue negotiations with the Netherlands. The government also decided to take strong action against the opposition.

Arrests

Sudarsono had left for Solo early Monday morning as instructed and reported to Sudirman at eleven o'clock. Sudirman told him that he would have to arrest him. But because he was concerned about a possible internecine struggle in the army, Sudirman did not make any moves to have the division commander from Yogyakarta locked up. At the time, both were not aware of Sjahrir's release. Sudarsono only heard about it in the early afternoon from one of the leaders of the Barisan Banteng. That afternoon, Sudarsono visited Sudirman again where he found his colleague Sutarto, who denied having anything to do with the kidnapping. Sudarsono later claimed that he was instructed by Sudirman to create a pamphlet stating that the kidnapping of Sjahrir had been carried out by a group fighting for 100% *Merdeka*. Sudirman made it clear that he was unimpressed by Sukarno's speech, and the pamphlet was apparently intended as a response to the president.

Later that day, Sudirman received an official order – signed by Sukarno – to detain Sudarsono and Jusuf, but by then the two were already on their way back to Yogyakarta.

In Yogyakarta, Amir Sjarifuddin drew up a list of 40 people to be arrested, the core of which was the group around Tan Malaka. The chief of the local police was charged with coordinating the arrests, which were to take place simultaneously at midnight. Because the police were understaffed and the

16 Poeze 2007: 421–2; Antara, 1 July 1946; *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 1 July 1946; *Boeroeh*, 1 July 1946.

army units could not be fully trusted, Pesindo units loyal to Amir were ordered to provide support. The arrest teams were formed in the evening, with last-minute changes still being made to the list of detainees. For example, Masyumi leader Sukiman was first put on the list but his name was later removed.

Military suspects had to be arrested by the army itself. Sudirman received that list of names in Solo in the afternoon. But because the government did not fully trust Sudirman, the same list was also sent to Umar Djoy, Sudarsono's chief of staff, and to Lieutenant Colonel Suharto, the regimental commander of the eastern sector of Yogyakarta. Suharto consulted with Umar Djoy about the most dignified way to arrest Sudarsono and Jusuf that would prevent blood from being shed. Suharto set up sentries along the roads and sent out patrols. He also had to somehow disarm Jusuf's battalion.

On Monday evening, Sudarsono returned to Yogyakarta after his visit to Solo. There he heard that there was a large crowd at the police station, where many Pesindo fighters had also gathered. When Sudarsono called Umar Djoy, the latter could not say anything over the phone but asked Sudarsono to come to him. When he arrived, Umar Djoy was in a state of confusion. He showed his commander the order, handwritten by Sukarno, which instructed him to deal with the 'Solo matter in connection with the kidnapping of Sjahrir.' There was nothing in the order saying that he should arrest Sudarsono. Sudarsono felt that this order should have been addressed to Sudirman. As for the police and Pesindo activity, Sudarsono concluded that an action against the army was imminent. He therefore ordered Umar Djoy to occupy the centre of Yogyakarta with some battalions – including the battalion led by Jusuf. Posts were also set up on Malioboro Road and at Tugu railway station. Umar Djoy thus appeared to be siding with his superior. Sudarsono went around the city once again and noticed nothing disturbing, so he went home.

That night, Yogyakarta was on high alert. Extra security was placed around Sukarno in his palace. Somewhat further north, several hundred policemen and Pesindo fighters left the police station around midnight to make their arrests. Even further north, the posts of the Third Division were ready to resist the actions of the police and Pesindo. Sudarsono believed he could count on them, but Umar Djoy was reluctant, while Suharto seemed willing to follow Sukarno's orders.

At midnight, the arrest teams left to apprehend Budhiarto, Buntaran, Iwa, Subardjo and Yamin. Subardjo was invited to come to the police station, where he was taken to a large room in the back. Others, including Budhiarto, Buntaran and Sajuti Melik, were dragged out of bed on the pretext that the

president wanted to speak to them. By morning, a total of 13 people were in the back room of the police station.

At around eleven o'clock the party was taken by truck to the large Yogyakarta prison of Wirogunan. Half the detainees in the truck still expected to be taken to the president, but the vehicle did not follow that route. In prison, they were each given a separate cell. Pandu ended up in the same cell where he had been imprisoned by the Dutch colonial administration 12 years earlier. Fifteen minutes later, two more detainees were brought in: Chaerul Saleh and Ibnu Parna. A total of 15 men had been detained; about 20 others had not been found, including Sukarni and Tan Malaka.

The detainees formed a heterogeneous group. Subardjo, Budhiarto and Buntaran had been part of the group around the Asrama Indonesia Merdeka in Jakarta – which had been supported by the Japanese admiral Maeda – and had also been members of the first cabinet. There were also critical journalists who had been sympathetic to Tan Malaka, such as Sumantoro and Sajuti Melik of *Kedaulatan Rakjat*. And there was a loyal core of Tan Malaka supporters, such as Adam Malik and Pandu of Antara, with their sympathisers Ibnu Parna and Chaerul Saleh. Mohammed Saleh was leader of the Yogyakarta Laskar. There were also a few members of the KNIP, and a large portion of the detainees were advisors to Sudarsono and Sudirman. The arrests had reduced Sudirman's advisory council to just a few men.

Sudarsono on the move

On Tuesday morning, 2 July, Sudarsono received a telephone message from Umar Djoy at half past eight that 15 men had been imprisoned in Wirogunan. Umar Djoy advised Sudarsono not to go to his headquarters as he might be arrested by the police or units of the Pesindo. Sudarsono stayed at home and at half past twelve, a worried Umar Djoy called again to say that Colonel Suharto feared that Sudarsono would be arrested at home and that, for his safety, it would be better if he placed himself under Suharto's protection in Wijoro. Sudarsono followed this advice and left immediately. It was in this graceful way that Sudarsono was put into custody without him even realising it.

Suharto had to find a way to get A.K. Jusuf to his headquarters in Wijoro. Jusuf had heard about the arrests early Tuesday morning when Iwa and Yamin came to visit him. Iwa felt he should return to Tawangmangu, while Yamin planned to find out what was going on first. Jusuf promised to take Iwa as far as Solo, but just outside the city they were stopped. Although Iwa was allowed to continue his travels, Jusuf was taken to Suharto in Wijoro.

Yamin was arrested a little later when he tried to take the train to Solo. He was also delivered to Suharto.

Sudirman's intervention

Sudirman came to Yogyakarta on 2 July. In the company of a large number of officers, he consulted with Sukarno and was given free rein to arrest Sudarsono. He decided to have Sudarsono come to Solo – again – so he could interrogate him. After three days, he would hand him over to Sukarno.

Umar Djoy was tasked with bringing Sudarsono from Wijoro to Solo together with Jusuf. Believing that Sudirman would protect him from being arrested, Sudarsono agreed. Yamin was allowed to join because he wanted to return to Tawangmangu. Accompanied by an armed escort, the party arrived at Sudirman's house in Solo late that night. To add to the confusion, Sukarno had changed his mind and informed Sudirman that Sudarsono should return to Yogyakarta immediately. But Sudirman did not comply.

That night of 2–3 July, Sudarsono and Jusuf were interrogated by Sudirman. They were not told that they were under arrest, and they did not behave accordingly. Sudarsono sat with his legs crossed and a pistol under his belt, while Jusuf carried his pistol machine gun ready to fire. Sudarsono explained at length his part in the kidnapping. As a division commander, he considered himself entitled to arrest any traitor regardless of his rank or position; he did not need permission from the commander-in-chief for this. Jusuf then gave a summary of how the abduction had proceeded.¹⁷

Sudirman then spoke briefly with Yamin, who explained his ideas and asked Sudirman for his opinion on the current situation. He also asked why the 15 detainees were still being held. Sudirman then ordered Sudarsono to return to Yogyakarta to free the detainees and to go with them to the president to ask for clarification and also for an explanation as to why Tan Malaka and some of his supporters had been arrested on 17 March. Sudirman also ordered Sudarsono to mobilise the Laskar Rakyat and Hizbullah, whose presence would help to add weight to their demand that a different cabinet be formed. The commander-in-chief concluded by saying: 'No matter how many times I am summoned to Yogyakarta, I will not come.'¹⁸

17 On Sukarno's orders, Major General Santoso was present at the interrogations of Sudarsono and Jusuf. But when they were completed, he left, so he was not present during the conversation that followed.

18 Sudarsono's and Yamin's statements stand in sharp contrast to Sudirman's affidavit in 1948, in which he denies everything that Sudarsono and Yamin had said. Sudirman had every reason to forget this late-night conversation, for a confirmation would have pointed the finger

Clearly, Sudirman had had enough of the current government. He did not feel taken seriously by the political leaders and wanted a radically different course to be taken. Later, Sudarsono stated that although the action ordered by the commander was illegal, the revolutionary situation demanded it. It was, yet again, time to take action.

The liberation of the prisoners

At around 3 am on Wednesday, 3 July, Sudarsono arrived at Wirogunan Prison in Yogyakarta. He told the hastily awakened director that he had been ordered by Sudirman to transfer the 15 detainees. Sudarsono left with one of them, Mohammed Saleh – the leader of the *laskar* in Yogyakarta – without telling him what his plans were, and he ordered the police to stand aside. The remaining 14 prisoners were taken by Jusuf in an open truck to Suharto's headquarters in Wijoro.

Shortly thereafter, Sudarsono arrived with two policemen and told Suharto that he had been ordered by Sudirman to submit a request to the president. Yamin, Subardjo and Chaerul Saleh were awake, and Sudarsono told them that the whole party would soon be taken to the president to resolve the issue of the arrests and to hand over a proposal for a new cabinet. When Yamin asked who would act as spokesman, Sudarsono replied that he would be. Yamin then began to write up four draft decisions in collaboration with Subardjo and Chaerul Saleh.¹⁹ The other ex-prisoners had no idea what Yamin was doing; indeed, most of them were asleep.

In the meantime, Sudarsono had ordered Jusuf to call Tawangmangu to have Tan Malaka, Sukarni, and Abikusno brought quickly to Yogyakarta. Sudarsono then issued another order: 'Pick up Bung Hatta and Bung Amir.' Suharto was present. He was caught off guard by the sudden arrival of Sudarsono and Jusuf, whom he had taken under his wing the previous day and then had to allow to return to Solo. Wijoro was now being used as a base for an action against the president, and Sudarsono clearly regarded Suharto as an officer loyal to him. Convinced that things were happening that were 'not good', Suharto ordered his Battalion 10 to impede Jusuf's action. Neither Sudarsono nor Jusuf were aware of this. Sudarsono prepared for his visit to

at him as the one who had orchestrated the events that were to follow. His version of the story is contradicted by the fact that he did not tell Sudarsono that he was under arrest and did not detain him in Solo but instead allowed him to go back to Yogyakarta.

19 These were numbered Presidential Decrees 2–5 and were to follow Presidential Decree No. 1 of 29 June in which martial law had been declared.

Sukarno and telephoned the head of the presidential guards to announce his arrival and to give orders that the guards remain passive. The head of the presidential guards realised that something suspicious was going on and woke the president around 6 am.

Sударsono and Jusuf in action

After Jusuf left to carry out his mission, Sudarsono set out with Mohammed Saleh to mobilise the Laskar Rakyat and Hizbullah. They drove to the house of Masyumi leader Sukiman and asked him to position his people in front of the palace and then go inside with Sudarsono in order to support the designation of the new cabinet. Sukiman promised to come.

At half past six, Jusuf stopped in front of Amir Sjarifuddin's house. The guards were caught by surprise and surrendered without resistance, allowing Jusuf to walk past them. Amir was awakened by his guard to say that there were soldiers in the house. When Amir came out of his bedroom, Jusuf was there facing him with his submachine gun. Amir was told to come with him and was not even given time to get dressed. He was placed next to the driver in the front of the army truck, while Jusuf climbed into the back with his men. As they drove away, the truck was suddenly shot at by the guards at Amir's house. Jusuf and his men jumped out of the truck and took cover. During the gunfight that followed, the driver panicked, and Amir ordered him to drive away quickly. Amir first had him drive past his ministry and was able to conclude that the entire city had not been occupied. He then let himself be driven to the palace, where he snatched the revolver from the driver.

When Amir arrived at the palace, it was in total confusion: frightened guards told him that Sudarsono was on his way. Amir rushed to Sukarno's bedroom and met the head of the presidential guards in the hallway, who confirmed that Sudarsono had arrived and that he had been ordered to remain passive. Amir gave him a dressing down and shouted: 'I don't trust any of you. It's all a set-up.'²⁰

Amir, still in sarong and pyjama jacket, found Sukarno, who was also in his pyjamas. Sukarno was greatly perturbed. He had assumed that Sudarsono was already in custody, which he had instructed Sudirman to do, but now he felt very uncertain about where the balance of power lay. The two agreed that the palace's security needed to be strengthened immediately. Amir quickly mobilised Pesindo troops, which were housed nearby in Fort Vredeborg and

only had to cross the street to take their positions. Hatta was then informed that he was in danger, whereupon he immediately came to the palace. Sukarno, Amir and Hatta discussed what stance they would take towards Sudarsono when he arrived at the palace. Amir felt sure that Sudirman was involved. They decided to reject Sudarsono's demands.

Meanwhile, things were going awry for Sudarsono. The head of the presidential guard had alerted Sukarno; the kidnapping of Amir and Hatta had failed; Sukarno was no longer alone in his palace; and it quickly became apparent that nothing had come of the mobilisation of the *laskar* and the Hizbullah. Sukiman had appeared but found himself alone, and he was invited to enter the palace.

Sudarsono knew nothing of all this when he came to Wijoro around half past seven to go from there to the palace. He found Yamin and his comrades sitting around the typewriter, Yamin having almost finished the presidential decrees they were going to have Sukarno sign. The other ex-prisoners were woken up and given coffee and something to eat, but there was no time to wash and change. Grubby in the clothes in which they had been arrested two days before, and most of them in pyjamas, they were loaded into a truck and driven to the palace.

The confrontation

Sudarsono did not have time to read through Yamin's decrees that were to be submitted to Sukarno to sign. In Decree No. 2, Sukarno was to dismiss the Sjahrir cabinet because it had failed in its fight for 100% *Merdeka*. In Decree No. 3, Sukarno was to hand over the defence of the country to the commander-in-chief of the armed forces and the political and economic leadership to the Council of Political Leaders (Dewan Pimpinan Politik). Decree No. 4 specified the members of this council, and No. 5 listed the new ministers.²¹ Yamin envisioned the Council as a kind of core cabinet that could act quickly in the case of an emergency, but he had not appointed a prime minister. The Council appeared to be a presidential cabinet, but Sukarno had been stripped of his executive power.

21 The new cabinet was to consist of Budhiarto Martoatmodjo (interior), Subardjo (foreign affairs), Supomo (justice), Tan Malaka (economic affairs), Wahid Hasjim (religion), Iwa Kusumasumantri (social affairs), Abikusno Tjokrosujoso (public works), A.A. Maramis (finance), Buntaran Martoatmodjo (health), Ki Hadjar Dewantoro (education), Muhammad Yamin (information), Roosseno (communications); ministers of state: Chaerul Saleh, Faturrachman, Gatot, Kartono, Patty, Sukiman, Sunarjo, Sartono, Sjamsu Harja Udaja, Sukarni Kartodiwirjo, Djody and Mohammed Saleh. The post of minister of defence was left vacant.

The Council put forth by Yamin was not a broad coalition cabinet because Masyumi, PNI and Partai Buruh each had only one representative on the list. Curiously enough, seven ministers from the first cabinet – who had had to step down because of their many ties with the Japanese regime – were also on the list. Although the group around Tan Malaka was not strongly represented, the six prisoners in Tawangmangu ended up in the cabinet as well as Sudirman's political advisers.

Most of the candidate ministers had no idea they were on the list. What Yamin's list made clear was that the old political veterans had tied their fate to the military and had entered into an alliance with radicals of various stripes.

Upon leaving Wijoro, Sudarsono said they were all going to the president, which came as a surprise to most of the group. It was only upon their arrival at the palace that Yamin handed Sudarsono the decrees that Sukarno should sign. It was still unclear what Sudarsono would say. Subardjo and Budhiarto were reluctant to speak – after a few sleepless nights, not having washed themselves for days and without clean clothes, they felt they were not fit to be seen by the president.

Arriving at the *alun-alun* at half past eight, Sudarsono did not find the Hizbullah and other *laskar* he had been counting on. A second surprise awaited him at the palace: a heavy guard of Pesindo men who did not allow his car to pass. The whole party had to disembark and enter the palace on foot, where they were led into a guest room.

While Sudarsono waited there, Sukarno, Hatta and Amir conferred and decided to receive Sudarsono alone. Sukarno sat in the middle, with Hatta to his left and Amir to his right. A few advisers listened in, and two *pemudas* with submachine guns provided security. Sudarsono was told that he would only be admitted to the room if he was unarmed. Although he protested, he had no choice but to surrender his weapon.

Upon entering the room, Sudarsono must have been astonished to see Hatta and Amir and to realise that something had gone wrong with Jusuf's action. He also noticed that Sukarno kept a long machete under his jacket and Amir a revolver.

Sudarsono began by saying that he had no malicious intentions, but Sukarno interrupted him with the question: 'What is the purpose of your visit?' Sudarsono confidently replied that he was carrying out an order from Sudirman to go to the president together with the prisoners and militias. He handed over Yamin's draft decrees and said that he had come as an emissary to the commander-in-chief to ask the president to sign the documents. The men behind the table read the texts carefully, after which Sukarno made it

clear that the request was rejected. He added that Sudirman would be called upon to do some explaining. Amir was sure that if Sudirman had really supported this action, he probably had the entire army behind him. While the immediate threat from Sudarsono seemed to have been overcome, the Republican leaders' concerns were far from over.

The government seeks support

After their conversation with Sudarsono, Sukarno, Hatta and Amir called the ministers and advisers to the palace. Sjahrir was also told to come immediately from Jakarta, and loyal troops and Pesindo units were called in to protect the palace. The key question was how Sudirman would react to Sukarno's rejection of Yamin's draft decrees. Sudirman was summoned to the palace, but he refused, citing the critical situation in Solo as the reason for his refusal. This was no made-up excuse, because after the kidnapping of Sjahrir, a few hundred heavily armed Pesindo members from East Java had moved to Solo where they had succeeded in occupying a number of buildings, disarming radical militias and threatening army posts.

Meanwhile, Hatta had reached out to Urip Sumohardjo, the chief of staff of the armed forces, who he thought might be able to play a mediating role. Upon being received at the palace, Urip said that he considered it inconceivable that Sudirman would have endorsed Sudarsono's demands. If that were indeed the case, that would be one less thing to worry about. What also had to be ascertained was whether the Masyumi, the Partai Nasional Indonesia and the Partai Buruh supported Sudarsono and Sudirman.

In the meantime, Sudarsono's entourage were still in the guest room and being politely treated as guests. They were even served snacks and drinks. The group expanded when the political leaders of the Masyumi, the PNI and the Partai Buruh arrived. After a few hours, Masyumi leader Sukiman was invited in for an interview. He denied knowing anything about the four draft decrees and was allowed to return to the guest room. In the afternoon, the party leaders were called in together to see Hatta, who told them that they had been 'exploited' by Sudarsono and could therefore go home. Sukiman thanked Hatta warmly. He was able to detach himself from Sudarsono without any further loss of face.

At eleven o'clock in the morning, the cabinet decided to take tough action. Sudarsono and his company had acted unlawfully and were therefore imprisoned. When they were allowed to leave the guest room at one o'clock, they were not taken to the president but were instead locked up in the palace and kept under heavy surveillance by Pesindo members. It was

only at this point that they and Sudarsono – who had been imprisoned separately – realised that they were prisoners.

Mohammed Saleh was the only one still at large. Upon arriving at the palace, he had parted from his peers to go and find out why units of the Laskar Rakyat and the Hizbullah had not shown up. Earlier that evening, a fierce battle had broken out when the Hizbullah was attacked by a Pesindo unit consisting entirely of Moluccans. The same Pesindo Moluccans had then taken up position on the main road between the radio station and the post office, and between the palace and Fort Vredenburg. The violence threatened to escalate, but at the last minute a truce was called: the Pesindo did not attack, in exchange for which the Hizbullah and the Laskar Rakyat withdrew. Mohammed Saleh concluded that the planned mobilisation of the Hizbullah and the Laskar Rakyat had ended in a complete failure. He went back to the palace, where he was immediately locked up with the other prisoners.

Surprisingly, Sudarsono's division did nothing that morning. His frightened chief of staff Umar Djoy was in hiding. The only action came from Suharto in Wijoro. His plan to prevent Amir's kidnapping had failed. He had heard that Jusuf was to have Amir executed in the mountain resort of Kaliurang, 20 kilometres north of Yogyakarta, and had rushed to Kaliurang to thwart this plan. When it turned out that Jusuf was not there, he returned to arrest him later that night. In the meantime, Suharto's units controlled the access roads to Yogyakarta, intercepting new heavily armed Pesindo units and preventing a further escalation of fighting in the city centre. Suharto had manoeuvred himself deftly between the interests of his commander, Sudarsono, and his loyalty to Commander-in-Chief Sudirman and President Sukarno. He had waited until it was sufficiently clear that Sudarsono's coup had failed and then acted purposefully by taking military control of much of the city.²²

Reaching a deal with Sudirman

The government was pleased to find out that Sudarsono's troops had not been mobilised. Now it was Sudirman's turn to be questioned. After repeatedly refusing to come to Yogyakarta, the commander-in-chief finally left Solo in the afternoon of 3 July and arrived at the residence of his chief of staff, Urip Sumohardjo, in Yogyakarta at six in the evening, where his entire

²² This action can in retrospect be seen as a dress rehearsal for a similar action by Suharto on the night of 30 September to 1 October 1965 when, as commander of the Strategic Reserve in Jakarta, he ended a coup by leftist soldiers and seized power in the city. See Elson 2001: 20.

staff was already present. He was told that, at Amir's instigation, Sukarno suspected him of being part of the rebellion. Sudirman expressed his shock. It was decided that Sudirman would go to the palace with his entire staff and that if the president was not convinced of their good intentions, they would resign collectively.

At the palace, Sudirman went to see the president and denied any involvement of the military in the coup. When the president did not react to this, Sudirman offered his resignation. Sukarno refused to accept his resignation, but Sudirman had the impression that the president was no longer convinced of the army's loyalty. Sudirman nonetheless signed the order suspending Sudarsono as division commander, after which he left the palace.

Upon returning to his staff, Sudirman reported what had happened in his meeting with Sukarno. Their reactions ranged from anger to dismay. At one o'clock in the morning, the entire staff was called to the palace. After half an hour of waiting, Sukarno appeared – in his pyjamas. Sudirman again denied any involvement in the coup. The president said nothing but only bowed his head and wept. The officers looked at him, saying nothing in return. Then Sukarno said:

In the name of Allah, *saudara*, you can see for yourselves. In the present and future, my soul will be one with your soul, and with your army. My soul will not change. It is impossible for me to go against you and allow you to resign the leadership of our armed forces.

The president was silent for a moment. One by one, he looked at the officers in front of him and said:

I still trust that you will lead the army. I ask you to trust my statements not lightly but earnestly in the interest of the struggle that we face.

The president was silent again. Then he said:

It's best we go home now. Going home knowing that nothing stands between you and me. That is why I reject your requests for resignation. I have full confidence in you to lead the army.

He then walked up to the officers and shook hands with each and every one of them.²³

23 *Sudirman prajurit TNI teladan* 1985: 80–1.

The meeting was over. It was a theatrical conclusion to a drama that had almost ended in tragedy. Behind the scenes, Urip had most likely played a mediating role that day and had worked on a solution, allowing Sudirman to save face and keep his position.

The government could not afford for Sudirman to resign because his position within the armed forces was too strong and the military threat from the Netherlands too great. In exchange for staying on in his position, Sudirman had to distance himself from Sudarsono and his group and unequivocally express his loyalty to the president. His entourage also had to be purged of political advisers who had been involved in the failed power grab.

The conclusion to the crisis

As in March, Sukarno played a decisive role in the latest drama. The threat had been averted, the opposition had been played off against each other, and for the moment he had restored the government's relationship with Sudirman. And just as in March, this attempted coup illustrated how much the chance actions of individuals and the compulsion to take action were to dictate the erratic course of events. Coincidence had brought Sudarsono, A.K. Jusuf, and the group around Budhiarto and Buntaran together on 27 June. Jusuf then kidnapped Sjahrir without having a clear plan about what should happen next. Looking for a way out, Sukarno hinted to Sudirman that he would be willing to agree to a coalition cabinet. When Sudirman asked Sudarsono for names of candidates, the latter complied. It was the zealous Yamin who gave these changes a constitutional form, which would have effectively made Sudirman the highest man in power.

After Sjahrir's release and the arrests that followed, Sudarsono and Sudirman were in a bind. At the height of the crisis, when no one had a complete grasp anymore of what was going on, Sudirman allowed Sudarsono and Jusuf to go to Yogyakarta on the night of 2–3 July with explicit instructions to put Sukarno under heavy pressure. And once again, Yamin was put to work.

The authoritarian and uncommunicative Sudarsono then let the situation slip completely out of control and found himself hopelessly isolated. He left his own division in the dark, as a result of which his chief of staff Umar Djoy and the strong battalion commander Suharto promptly submitted to the government's command to detain Sudarsono. And, not least, he left Sudirman in the dark for a long time about his role in Sjahrir's kidnapping. It was due to Amir Sjarifuddin's alert conduct that the mobilisation of combat groups eventually failed and Sudarsono was left empty-handed.

PERINTAH HARIAN.

Kepada Djendral MAJOR SOEDARSONO,
Kepala Divisi III, Jogjakarta.

Diberitahoeakan:

1. Bahwa moelai tanggal 3-7-1946 djem 21.00 Djendral Major SOEDARSONO kami schora sebagai Kepala Divisi III:

2. Bahwa kepada Kepala Staf Divisi III, Toean Oemar Djoj kami perintahkan memegang pimpinan Divisi III oentoeok sementara waktu :



Dikeloearkan di Jogjakarta,
pada tg 3-7-1946, djem 21.00.

Kepala Markas BESAR Tentara:
PANGLIMA BESAR:



10. The order decreeing the dismissal of Sudarsono

On 3 July, Sudarsono received the order declaring he was suspended with immediate effect.²⁴

Except for a small circle of people who were involved, no one knew exactly what had happened. Apart from Sukarno's radio address on 30 June and the announcement of Sjahrir's safe return, there was very little coverage of the crisis. On 4 July, Sudirman gave a radio address in the evening. Moved to the point of tears, he made an appeal for unity and warned against provocations and whispering campaigns that sought to sow division. He admitted that he himself had also fallen victim to this:

I tell you in all frankness that I was provoked a few days ago, that it was disclosed that I wanted to seize government power and sit on the throne of the head of state. Regarding such rumours, I make it clear to everyone here that I did not want to do anything of the sort; that if the presidential seat was offered to me, I would refuse. Let this penetrate everyone deeply so that the whispering campaign that prevails now leaves you unmoved. There are no disputes, no misunderstandings and no mistrust between the government leaders and the army leadership. Sukarno and Sudirman

24 In an interview in Jakarta on 24 September 1980, Sudarsono showed Harry Poeze the carefully preserved order and allowed him to make a copy of the document (Poeze 2007: 465).

are of a single mind in their fight for 100% independence. We form a close unity. As an Indonesian citizen and as commander-in-chief, I am obedient and loyal to the head of state. Hopefully all the suspicions and disputes among us will disappear. Let us all free ourselves from them and, obedient to the leadership of the Republic, face the calamity that now awaits us.²⁵

With this public genuflection to Sukarno, Sudirman was fulfilling an important part of the deal that had been made on 3 July. Not long thereafter, on 6 July, an official government declaration entitled 'Conspiracy to Seize State Power' was issued by Hatta and Natsir. The blame for the crisis was placed squarely on the group of Tan Malaka, Subardjo, Iwa Kusumasumantri, Sukarni and Muhammad Yamin, who had been seeking to seize state power by force. Their conspiracy had been going on for some time but had been detected at an early stage. This was the reason Tan Malaka, Muhammad Yamin, Abikusno, Sukarni and others had been arrested several months earlier. In Tawangmangu, they had tried to plan yet another *coup d'état* by inciting political parties, the army and militant groups. By abusing the name of the commander-in-chief, the commander Sudarsono came to the palace on 3 July to carry out his coup. The president, however, refused to be intimidated, and Sudarsono was disarmed and immediately arrested along with his followers. Tan Malaka's conspiracy aimed to eliminate Sukarno and ultimately also Sudirman, after which power would fall into the hands of Tan Malaka, Subardjo, Iwa Kusumasumantri, Mohammad Yamin, Sukarni and their loyalists. The negotiations with the Netherlands had been used by Tan Malaka as a means of agitation to bring down the government. 'In this way the people learn about the tricks and pranks of Tan Malaka. There was no tactic that was too demeaning for him.'

Thus, the government's fact-free account of the events made a scapegoat out of Tan Malaka, the man who had little or no involvement in the coup attempt, while ensuring that Sudirman was protected from censure.

The Working Committee of the parliament met from 7 to 9 July. Sukarno's actions were approved, and the government received unanimous support for its policy in negotiations with the Netherlands.

The prisoners remained locked up in the palace. On 5 July, Sudarsono was taken to Malang on a special train. The 15 others remained imprisoned in a seven-by-seven-metre room in the palace. They slept on the floor, on tables and in chairs, and were left completely in the dark about any developments. Slowly it began to dawn on them that they were the prime suspects of an

25 Poeze 2007: 466–7.

attempted coup. On 7 July, the 15 prisoners signed a letter to Sukarno in which they apologised for the disturbance caused and asked for permission to go home. On the evening of 10 July, the group was transferred to Fort Vredeburg. The street was cordoned off and traffic stopped as they crossed the road, accompanied by 15 guards armed with rifles, pistols and sabres.

Many more arrests followed that received very little media attention. Instead, the press expressed its general support for the government's policies and their confidence in Sudirman. The threat of a military takeover had passed.

8 Diplomacy and Warfare

August 1946 to January 1948

In this chapter, we explore the balance of power between the Netherlands and the Republic as well as the shifts that occurred in this balance. We also look at the roles that diplomacy and warfare played in this period. In both the Netherlands and the Republic, supporters of diplomacy and advocates of war vied with each other to gain the upper hand. What did a year and a half of diplomatic consultations and military force give rise to?

Relative stability

The crises outlined in the previous chapters demonstrated that the Republic's political leaders were vulnerable. The urge for revolutionary action among young people and within the opposition was at odds with the ambition of the Republican leaders to show the world that the Republic was a viable project. Yet despite the violence of local revolutions and the *bersiap*, and the threat of the Persatuan Perdjuangan and the army, there was a significant degree of administrative stability.¹ Despite *daulat* actions against administrators who had collaborated with the Japanese occupiers, the Republic's leaders managed to secure the support of the conservative Javanese administrative corps on 30 August 1945. And in turn, these administrators knew they were protected by the leaders of the Republic. They did need to adapt to the new circumstances, however. Because they were pragmatic, most of them managed to do so quite admirably.²

The Dutch authorities liked to create the impression that the Republic was in a state of irresponsible chaos. This was proved wrong when the first Dutch observers visited Yogyakarta in August and September 1946. What the journalist Frans Goedhart and Van Mook's close associate, P.J. Koets, encountered in the Republican territory was an 'orderly state' with a reasonably well-functioning administration. While there was a shortage

1 The exceptions were Aceh and East Sumatra, where the administrative aristocracy had been driven out. See Chapter 4.

2 Members of the colonial intelligence agency ARD, many of whom had worked for the Japanese during the war, also made a pragmatic choice after the declaration of independence. Some went to work for the Dutch NEFIS (Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service), while others joined the Pengawasan Aliran Masyarakat (Supervision of Social Currents), the Republic's new intelligence agency.

of textiles, food was abundantly available at prices much lower than in Jakarta. There was even a ship on the north coast ready to transport food aid to India. What struck the visitors was a greater self-awareness among the people, who were behaving more freely than before. They harboured no hatred for the Dutch, but it was clear that under no circumstances would they allow a return of colonial relations.³

Taxes were levied, and in many rural areas, land rent was collected. In West Sumatra, the Republican administration levied a 10 per cent tax on harvests and open air markets. But on top of that, militant groups imposed their own levies on the population, without the slightest regard for the government.

To get a grip on the economy, in October 1946 the Republic had introduced its own money – the ORI (Oeang Republik Indonesia) – to compete with Dutch NICA money. Sukarno's face was printed on ORI bills and Queen Wilhelmina on NICA money – the contrast could not have been clearer. Because the Dutch administration did not control much territory and the Republic forbade the use of NICA money, the ORI had greater circulation and therefore greater value, while NICA money failed to catch on and thus depreciated in value.⁴

On the economic front, *peranakan* Chinese entrepreneurs,⁵ who had already fallen on hard times during the Japanese occupation, suffered new blows. Many of their businesses, plantations, shops and homes were forcibly expropriated.⁶ At the same time, heavy levies were imposed on them under the banner of 'voluntary donations to the revolution'. In the Banyumas region alone, a sum of 400,000 guilders was raised among Chinese entrepreneurs in May 1946, which went to the *Fonds Perdjuangan* (Fighting Fund), the national loan of the *Fonds Kemerdekaan* (Freedom Fund), and the party coffers of the *Masyumi* and the *Partai Buruh Indonesia*.⁷ The army and militant groups also got in the act of imposing levies and extorting protection money.

Vice President Hatta showed little sympathy for Chinese entrepreneurs. In September 1946, he outlined his ideas for a Republican economy, which

3 This information comes from a report by Frans Goedhart (Pieter 't Hoen 1946) from August 1946, and a report by P.J. Koets from September 1946; Schermerhorn 1970: 3.

4 From 1 November 1946, all the money that Japan had put into circulation was declared invalid, but it was possible to exchange this money for ORI or NICA money.

5 The *peranakan* were descendants of Chinese migrants who had lived in Indonesia for centuries.

6 See Chapter 4.

7 Twang Peck Yang 1998: 151.

was to operate on the basis of cooperative principles. Chinese capital had no place in this model. Indeed, Hatta would rather join forces with Dutch capital than do business with Chinese entrepreneurs, even if the latter had become Indonesian citizens. It soon became clear, however, that putting this into practice would be challenging, for in order to survive, the Republican leaders desperately needed the new generation of Chinese traders (the *totok*). During the Japanese occupation, this group had emerged as assertive traders who knew how to adapt quickly to new circumstances and were not afraid to take big risks. While the established *peranakan* entrepreneurs had been firmly integrated into the colonial economy, the *totok* operated outside of it. Moreover, the latter had a large network that they could now take full advantage of. This was evident when, in 1946, the largest contribution to the national loan issued by the Republic came from South Sumatra with Chinese traders from Palembang providing 25 million in Japanese money.⁸

The port city of Palembang grew under the watchful eye of Republican governor A.K. Gani to become the Republic's trading centre. From there, contacts were maintained through clan connections between traders in Sumatra and Java and in Singapore, Penang and Manila. In Singapore and Penang, special Chinese trade associations were set up to focus on trade with the Republic.

The Republic exported mainly rubber from Sumatra and sugar from Java, which was in high demand, and imported arms, medicine, textiles, car parts and paper. Transport was provided by motorboats and landing craft, which came from Japanese and British army stocks that had been bought up by Chinese traders for a pittance. They did the same with the huge weapons arsenals left behind by the Japanese and Allied armies. Between September 1945 and November 1946, Chinese entrepreneurs made vast fortunes in this new market. From the end of the Japanese occupation until July 1947, exports from Republican areas amounted to an estimated 500 million guilders.⁹ Exactly how much of this benefited the Republic is difficult to determine, but these were significant sums that could be used to pay the salaries of the Republic's own civil servants and to purchase arms and ammunition.

The importance of these Chinese trade connections became clear once again when British troops left Java and Sumatra in November 1946 and the Dutch authorities started setting up trade blockades against the Republic.

8 Twang Peck Yang 1998: 221. Converted into NICA money, this amounted to about 800,000 guilders.

9 Twang Peck Yang 1998: 232.

The Dutch banned the import of arms and the export of products from plantations previously owned by Western companies. Although trade nonetheless continued, importers and exporters had to reckon with Dutch naval vessels trying to intercept Chinese transports. When the Dutch tightened their trade blockade in early 1947, shipments became riskier. Traders who were willing to take big risks and managed to get their shipments ashore saw their profits increase by 300 per cent.

The third Sjahrir cabinet, the Benteng Republik and Sayap Kiri

Despite the economic hurdles that were being steadily erected by the Dutch, the year that followed the 'July crisis' of 1946 marked a period of relative calm and stability for the Republic. On 13 August, the Working Committee of the Republican parliament asked President Sukarno to transfer his extraordinary powers back to the cabinet. He agreed and instructed Sjahrir to form a national cabinet, a process that took a long time. It was only on 2 October that the new cabinet was presented, which included no less than 18 ministers and 12 deputy ministers. Sjahrir remained prime minister and foreign minister, and Amir Sjarifuddin retained his strategic post as defence minister.

The new cabinet was more balanced in terms of the number of specialist ministers and the number of ministers affiliated with particular parties. While the Masyumi and the PNI respectively received seven and four posts, this did not mean that these parties wholeheartedly supported the cabinet policy. The new Masyumi ministers were Sjafruddin Prawiragnegara at finance and Mohamad Rum at home affairs. One of the new PNI ministers was A.K. Gani who, given his economic successes in Palembang, became minister for economic affairs.¹⁰ The new set-up made it seem as if the dominance of the Partai Sosialis had diminished, but because Sjahrir had recruited sympathisers from the Masyumi, he was assured of sufficient support for his 'diplomatic approach'.

The cabinet succeeded in securing the support of the new trade union, the Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia (SOBSI, Central All-Indonesian Workers Organisation), which had been formed in late November. This federation united over one and a half million workers in Java and Sumatra and was led by an executive committee that was in step with government

10 Setiadjit, who had become chairman of the Partai Buruh Indonesia shortly before, became deputy prime minister, and Sultan Hamengkubuwono of Yogyakarta was appointed minister without portfolio. Wikana remained minister of pemuda affairs.

policy. A key liaison figure was Deputy Prime Minister Setiadjit, who also became vice chairman of the SOBSI.

The most important political task for the cabinet was to have the Linggadjati Agreement ratified by the Republican parliament, the KNIP. In November 1946, during negotiations with the Netherlands, Republican leaders had agreed to the formation of a Federative Republic that would eventually become part of a Netherlands-Indonesia Union. They also recognised the economic claims made by the Netherlands.¹¹ Opponents of Sjahrir objected to this curtailment of the Republic's sovereignty within both the Federation and the Union and rejected the Dutch economic claims. The cabinet countered that the Republic needed a breathing spell to put its house in order and added that the country could not afford to enter into a large-scale military conflict. Nonetheless, opposition to the agreement quickly began to take shape. Despite being part of the cabinet, the PNI and the Masyumi turned against the agreement within weeks. Thereafter, more parties and organisations joined them: the Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, Sutomo's BPRI, the Barisan Banteng, the Laskar Rakyat Djawa Barat, as well as the newly founded Partai Wanita Rakyat (Women's Party of the People).

Another dangerous polarisation began to emerge in early December when a large number of parties and organisations rallied against the government. The Masyumi declared a 'Week of Rejection', and mass meetings were held all over Java. BPRI leader Sutomo took the initiative to unite the resistance through his radio stations. On 12 December, 25 organisations met in Malang to form an alliance that became known as the Benteng Republik. In his opening speech, Sutomo reminded those present that participation in the Benteng Republik implied a willingness to go to war. The plenary session agreed to the principle of 100% *Merdeka* for a sovereign, unitary state of Indonesia, which therefore meant that the treaty had to be rejected. And since parliament did not fully represent the people, those at the gathering argued that a plebiscite should have the final say. The Benteng Republik aimed to bring about such a plebiscite via agitation and the infiltration of government agencies.

In the days that followed, emotions ran high. More and more people called for the replacement of Sukarno and the Sjahrir cabinet, and some groups made plans to set up their own '17 August Division'. West Java's Islamic leader Kartosuwirjo even called for an armed march against the government.

Sukarno remained on the sidelines during this period, but Sudirman tried to calm things down by arguing that the agreement did not commit

11 See Chapter 5.

to anything definitively but only allowed the Republic a breathing spell. He reiterated that unity had to be preserved.

The Benteng Republik's attacks were mainly directed at Sjahrir and Amir Sjarifuddin, who launched a counterattack on 21 December by forming the Sayap Kiri (the Left Wing), which included the Partai Sosialis, the communist PKI, the Partai Buruh Indonesia and the Pesindo, along with a number of militant groups. In its manifesto, the Sayap Kiri stated that the Republic needed time to regain its strength so that it could continue its struggle against imperialism, fascism and the Dutch provocations. Tan Malaka was also brought up once again as a scapegoat to warn against internal discord. The Benteng Republik and the Sayap Kiri were pitted against each other, and the conflict appeared to escalate when Pesindo units prepared to attack Benteng Republik units in East Java, while *laskar* of the Benteng Republik entered the city of Solo.

Sukarno and the KNIP

The Working Committee felt that the KNIP had to give its verdict on the Linggadjati Agreement. However, it was questionable whether the KNIP in its current composition accurately reflected the political force field. The Masyumi therefore argued that elections should be held. A law regulating such elections had been passed in July 1946, but the commission charged with the implementation announced in December that elections could not be held for five months at the earliest. Since it was clear that a decision on the agreement could not be delayed for that long, President Sukarno decided on 29 December on his own authority to expand the KNIP from 200 to 514 members, which led to a fundamental reshuffling of the voting balance.

The number of seats held by political parties increased from 129 to 222. Five major groups now emerged: the Masyumi with 60 seats (up from 35), the Partai Nasional Indonesia with 45 seats (no change), the Partai Sosialis with 35 seats (no change), the Partai Buruh Indonesia with 35 seats (up from 6) and the Partai Komunis Indonesia with 35 seats (up from 2). Besides the parties, representatives of functional groups were also appointed (workers and farmers each received 40 seats and minorities 8 seats), and the number of representatives from areas outside Java was increased from 14 to 78. Finally, Sukarno took the opportunity to increase the number of representatives of stand-alone organisations and militias from 49 to 121.¹²

12 These numbers are taken from various newspaper reports but do not give a complete picture. Unfortunately, no reliable figures are available. See Poeze 2007: 551–2.

It goes without saying that in making these appointments, Sukarno favoured candidates who would vote for the agreement. Now he had to wait and see if this would actually work. The Sayap Kiri supported the new seat allocation, but the Benteng Republik claimed that it violated the principle of popular sovereignty.

In late December, Commander-in-Chief Sudirman personally intervened in the discussion. He strongly criticised Dutch military aggression, which had continued even after the agreement was signed in November. He stressed the need for readiness, thereby appearing to join the opponents of the agreement. A wave of mass rallies followed and new committees were formed – such as the Badan Pembantu Garis Depan (Organisation for Support of the Frontline) and the Panitia Persatuan Kelaskaran (the Laskar Committee of Unity) – in support of Sudirman's call for readiness.

The government became worried and tried to bring together the Sayap Kiri and the Benteng Republik, citing the need for unity. It succeeded on 7 January, when a mass gathering called Rapat Kebulatan (Meeting of Unanimity) was held, ending with a grand parade under the slogan: 'With or without Linggadjati, we fight on.' But ultimately this display of unity did not help much, as three days later the Benteng Republik met again and contested Sukarno's right to expand the KNIP as he saw fit. Tensions continued to mount, and the cabinet decided to postpone the KNIP meeting from the end of January to mid-February.

It was at this point that the conditions under which the Dutch parliament had approved the Linggadjati Agreement were revealed when the Commission-General of the Netherlands arrived in Jakarta on 13 January.¹³ The 'distorted' interpretation of the agreement undermined the last vestiges of trust that the Republic had in the Netherlands. The Republican cabinet immediately rejected this 'distortion', and plans were made at once to form a National Unity Front. The conflict between the Sayap Kiri and the Benteng Republik was thus rendered obsolete by this new development. On 18 February, a meeting was held with the leaders of the Benteng Republik and the Sayap Kiri as well as Sukarno, Hatta, Wikana and Sudirman. 'Unity' was now at the top of the agenda, and the meeting lasted five hours. It was decided that the discussion would be picked up again three days later, but when the Benteng Republik did not show up, it was clear that there was no unity.

Led by Sutomo, the Benteng Republik held its own meeting on 21 and 22 February in which it once again rejected the expansion of the KNIP. This

13 See Chapter 5.

time the criticism also focused on Amir Sjarifuddin's 'capitulation politics', which was why it was felt that Commander-in-Chief Sudirman had to be given a larger mandate to lead the struggle for independence.

Ahead of the KNIP meeting, rumours once again circulated that Sukarno, Hatta and Sjahrir would be kidnapped and that the session would be sabotaged. The intelligence unit of the military police began to closely monitor the movements of various opposition *laskar* and to report on the mobilisation of units of Sutomo's BPRI that were suspected of wanting to stage a coup.

On 25 February, the KNIP met in its former configuration in Malang, as parliament could only start meeting in its new expanded configuration after it approved the presidential decree. Sukarno opened the session and defended his decision to increase the number of KNIP members, arguing that as long as elections could not be held, he, as president, had to act as an 'arbiter'. A slew of speakers debated at length, with fierce accusations thrown back and forth between representatives of the Benteng Republik and those of the Sayap Kiri. Both camps had mobilised their *laskar*, causing tensions to rise at least as high outside the meeting room as inside. Ali Sastroamidjojo, the PNI spokesman, was visited in his hotel room by Pesindo youths from the Sayap Kiri. He was given a final warning at gunpoint and told that the safest recourse was for him to keep his mouth shut. When this incident became known, the Barisan Banteng, the Hizbullah and the BPRI threatened to take action if anything bad happened to Ali. Amir Sjarifuddin hastily promised to look into the matter. It was only through the concerted efforts of Sutomo that Kartosuwirjo was prevented from taking action against the Pesindo.

Two days later, with the old KNIP still hashing over matters, Hatta was finally given the floor. Sukarno had unexpectedly been called to Yogyakarta because his wife had fallen seriously ill. With a ferocity that was unprecedented for him, Hatta defended Sukarno's decision to expand the KNIP. After all, he argued, the aim was to obtain a wider representation of the people. And whoever refused to believe that would do better to find another president, he said. According to Abu Bakar Lubis, who attended the meeting:

[E]veryone woke up. His speech was heard in silence; the journalists forgot to write; they were unable to take note of anything. Everyone was amazed. After this lion had roared out, his last roar dying out, the members became excited. Others such as Sartono were pale. Ali bowed



11. Hatta speaks during the KNIP session in Malang
(Poeze 2007: 562)

his head. Still others were furious. When the applause had died down, the chairman called in the PNI and Masyumi factions for a closed-door consultation.¹⁴

Hatta's powerful speech had an effect. KNIP Chairman Assaat informed everyone present that the Masyumi and the PNI were withdrawing their opposition to the expansion of the KNIP, after which the old KNIP was dissolved.

From 28 February, the new KNIP met to decide on the agreement reached with the Netherlands, which had been defended by Sjahrir. On 5 March, the KNIP approved the agreement by 284 votes to 2, but the Dutch distortion of the agreement was rejected.¹⁵ On 25 March, the Linggadjati Agreement was formally signed in Jakarta with the usual festivities. At the same time, both the Republic and the Netherlands agreed to disagree on the supplemental interpretation added by the latter. The Republic had it on record that it had

¹⁴ Poeze 2007: 564 and footnote 253.

¹⁵ The representatives of Masyumi, PNI, Partai Rakyat and Partai Wanita rejected agreement, but had left the meeting before the vote took place.

taken note of this without agreeing to it. This agreement to disagree would soon prove to be an extremely shaky basis for further talks.

Demarcation lines and skirmishes

While the Linggadjati Agreement was concluded after much hassle, more and more troops were being amassed on both sides. The number of Dutch military personnel had more than tripled in a year, from 30,000 in June 1946 to 100,000 in July 1947. This was by no means the troop reduction that the Republic had insisted on during the negotiations.

Most of the Dutch troops were in the Jakarta-Bogor-Bandung corridor, while the rest were in and around the urban enclaves of Semarang and Surabaya in Java, and Medan, Palembang and Padang in Sumatra.¹⁶ They faced a Republican force that consisted of an estimated 800,000 men who were protecting the vast majority of Java and Sumatra. This was an impressive number, but in terms of armament, training and organisation, these troops were no match against the Dutch. In August and September, the Republican army had launched some frontal assaults against the Dutch enclaves that had ended in substantial defeats. From this experience, the Republican army leadership wisely concluded that they should avoid such confrontations.

After the departure of British troops in November 1946, the Dutch no longer felt constrained and proceeded to extend the borders of their enclaves. This was often done on the initiative of local commanders. Even after the ceasefire which had been agreed on 15 February, armed skirmishes continued to take place with great frequency. The occupation by Dutch troops of the towns of Sidoarjo and Mojokerto near Surabaya led to fierce fighting and protracted negotiations.

The Dutch had their military centre of gravity in West Java, where 56,000 men were stationed. Despite this substantial number, they experienced ongoing skirmishes with the dozens of Republican *laskar* who controlled the countryside. When the Angkatan Pemuda Indonesia (API) was expelled

¹⁶ The novels of Job Sytzen, writing under the pseudonym of Reverend Jac. Jonker, describe the life of a typical Dutch soldier in such an enclave. Sytzen had been stationed in Semarang as an army preacher. His books became bestsellers in the 1950s, with print runs totalling 250,000. These 'realistic novels' described the daily routine and danger of guard duty along the demarcation lines, homesickness, the annulment of engagements with loved ones left behind in the Netherlands, and steamy sex around the barracks. Dutch military violence is barely mentioned in them (Poeze 2019).

from Jakarta – along with other Republican militias – by the British, many of these groups united in the Laskar Rakyat Djakarta Raya (LRDR, later renamed Laskar Rakyat Djawa Barat), which was led by Chaerul Saleh. The LRDR had fought against not only the Dutch but also the regular Republican army, which, under Nasution's leadership, sought to control all these battle groups by force if necessary. In April 1947, the TRI managed to defeat the LRDR. Some members of the defeated militias felt unsafe and sought refuge with the Dutch troops, who saw this as a great opportunity to use these men against the Republican army. Thus, in March 1947, Lieutenant Koert Bavinck led a group of 2,000 men known as Her Majesty's Irregular Troops (Hare Majesteits Ongeregelde Troepen, HAMOT), which was deployed for espionage and sabotage operations in Republican territory. However, it soon became clear that the HAMOT could not be disciplined and were operating on the cusp between counterterrorism and banditry, so the unit was disbanded.

In West Sumatra as well, the regular Republican Army fought against local militant groups. Since the departure of the British, Dutch troops had control of the city of Padang, but the countryside was firmly in the hands of the Republic. However, over the course of 1946 and 1947, the stability of the Republican administration was increasingly being undermined by a struggle for power between the Masyumi and a coalition of leftist parties together with their respective militias. In March 1947, the left-wing opposition formed a 'popular front' in West Sumatra that took power but failed to deliver on promises to improve the economic situation. In this tense atmosphere, an unusual uprising took place in the district of Baso. Muslim and leftist leaders who had participated in the 1926 communist uprising founded a new communal society there in which individual property was abolished and land, cattle and women were shared. In April, the Republican army violently ended this 'experiment', killing 113 people. Not long thereafter, the leftist 'people's front' was cast aside and the old Republican administration restored.

These examples show that the Republican army was not only dealing with the Dutch but was also busy disciplining militias and intercepting leftist movements.

By mid-1947, the Republican forces consisted of 350,000 regular troops (TRI) and as many as 470,000 men who were members of a good number of large and small combat groups. To improve the effectiveness of the armed forces and to gain more control over the autonomous armed groups, the latter were transferred to the Republican army by presidential decree on

3 June 1947. The name Tentara Republik Indonesia (TRI) was also changed to Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI). This name change was a concession to those militias that did not want to be instruments of the state but wanted to fight in the name of the people and the nation.

Most of the militias did not oppose being absorbed into the army. Sutomo's BPRI enthusiastically consented to this, and in return Sutomo was immediately promoted to lieutenant general. Other major militias, such as the Laskar Rakyat, the KRIS and the Barisan Banteng, also joined the army. The downside was perhaps that their autonomy was curtailed, but in return they were given access to weapons, ammunition and financial support. Only the Hizbullah and the Sabilillah, which were affiliated with the Masyumi, decided to remain autonomous.

The militant groups that had joined were given the name TNI Masyarakat (People's TNI). They were expected to act as local auxiliary troops of the professional military. Officers of the 'real' army often looked down on these auxiliary soldiers with disdain. Defence Minister Amir Sjarifuddin, however, saw in the TNI Masyarakat an opportunity to strengthen his grip on the army.

Dutch demands and the fall of Sjahrir

After the official signing of the Linggadjati Agreement, the Netherlands and the Republic continued to talk in order to work out the details of the treaty. From the start, the negotiations were extremely difficult and protracted, as the Netherlands clearly wanted to keep a firm grip over the process while the Republic refused to accept this.

Officially, the Commission-General, headed by former Prime Minister Schermerhorn, had been sent to Jakarta by the Dutch parliament with the intention of monitoring Lieutenant Governor General Van Mook. It soon became clear, however, that Van Mook and the Commission were on the same page. The Dutch side clung on to the idea of a drawn-out 15-year decolonisation process that would take place within a strong Netherlands-Indonesia Union, in which the Netherlands would set the tone. This intention was clear from the Dutch insistence on a federation in which the Republic would be just one of many states, as well as from the administrative, economic and military preponderance it envisioned for itself during the transition period. Van Mook made it very clear that he would be the one holding the reins and that the Republic would be assigned only a secondary role. The Dutch proved incapable of grasping that the Republic was now the most important political factor in the archipelago. Instead, there were increasing voices on

the Dutch side calling for Yogyakarta to be brought to its knees by military means. Within the Dutch government, the conservative Catholic People's Party (KVP) endorsed such a hard line, but the Labour Party (PvdA) did not want to have any part in this. The social democrats were prepared to accept a light version of the Union and preferred to continue negotiations.

In late April 1947, Finance Minister Piet Liefstinck in The Hague presented a memorandum showing that the Netherlands was on the brink of bankruptcy. The military presence in 'the East Indies' was costing the country 3.5 million guilders a day, and if a flow of foreign exchange from Java and Sumatra was not quickly established to cover these costs at least to some extent, the situation looked bleak for the Netherlands. This meant that agricultural enterprises in Java and Sumatra had to be recaptured as soon as possible.

In the Republic, the Sjahrir cabinet no longer had to deal with the Benteng Republik, which gradually fell apart as the Masyumi and the PNI deliberated on where they stood. The Sayap Kiri had the wind in its sails. Mass meetings were called in support of the cabinet, and the first congress of the federal trade union SOBSI was celebrated on a large scale in May. But as negotiations with the Netherlands continued without yielding satisfactory results, criticism of Sjahrir's policies reared its head again.

The Republic refused to make substantive concessions during the negotiations, making the action taken by the right wing of the Masyumi in mid-May all the more bizarre. Out of an aversion to the policies of the Partai Sosialis, Masyumi Vice President Samsudin secretly approached the Dutch negotiators with a request for help in preventing an impending communist takeover in the Republic. He let it be known that the Netherlands could count on the Masyumi's support in the event of a military occupation of the Republic.¹⁷ He is likely to have believed that, in exchange, the Masyumi would be given a leading role in a new cabinet that would cooperate with the Netherlands. While this was strange coming from a representative of a party that criticised Sjahrir for the concessions he made to the Netherlands, it illustrated just how internally divided the Masyumi was. The Netherlands did not respond to Samsudin's rapprochement attempt.

Not long thereafter, negotiations stalled. On 27 May, Van Mook demanded that the Republic fully agree to the Dutch position. Prime Minister Louis Beel of the Netherlands, visiting Jakarta at the time, supported Van Mook's view and agreed with Lieutenant General Simon Spoor that military action was necessary.

17 Schermerhorn 1970: 534; Poeze 2007: 637.

The Republic initially rejected Van Mook's diplomatic coercion, but on 19 June Sjahrir, acting on his own, made some far-reaching concessions via the radio. He did so in the knowledge that the Republic was militarily no match for the Netherlands, but also because he knew he could not count on the support of Britain, Australia or the United States. His actions met with fierce criticism from his own Sayap Kiri in Yogyakarta. When Van Mook did not respond to his overtures, Sjahrir realised that his position had become untenable. His concessions may have made sense in Jakarta, but they were not accepted in Republican Central Java, where the notion of '100% *Merdeka*' still applied as a political guideline. Led by the communist wing, criticism within the Sayap Kiri against the prime minister increased, which did not bode well. Setiadjit, the leader of the Partai Buruh Indonesia and a confidant of Sjahrir, tried to salvage what he could, but his efforts were in vain. In fact, when Sjahrir left Jakarta on 25 June to defend his policies in Yogyakarta, he already knew he was fighting for a lost cause. Within the cabinet, he was still struggling to hold his own, but when word came on 26 June that the Sayap Kiri no longer supported him, his fate was sealed. On 27 June, Sjahrir tendered his resignation – his role had played itself out.

The Amir Sjarifuddin cabinet and the Dutch attack

Sukarno temporarily assumed control of the government, as he had done before. He tried to buy time by asking the Netherlands for further clarification on a number of issues, and he appointed four *formateurs* who were assigned to form a new cabinet: Amir Sjarifuddin (Partai Sosialis), Setiadjit (Partai Buruh Indonesia), A.K. Gani (PNI) and Sukiman (Masyumi). By inviting Gani and Sukiman to become *formateurs*, Sukarno tried to give the new cabinet broader support and to turn the opposition parties into allies. Gani and Sukiman used the opportunity to claim more cabinet posts. The PNI's demands were met, but the Masyumi overplayed its hand. Sukiman wanted to become prime minister and was rejected, given that, as a declared opponent of the Linggadjati Agreement, he was not the best person to negotiate with the Netherlands.

The new cabinet was presented on 3 July. Amir Sjarifuddin became the new prime minister and remained defence minister as well, as a result of which the Partai Sosialis' left wing gained influence. The left wing of the cabinet further included the Partai Buruh Indonesia, with Deputy Prime Minister Setiadjit, and the PKI. The PNI provided a number of ministers,

and A.K. Gani was both minister of economic affairs and deputy prime minister.¹⁸

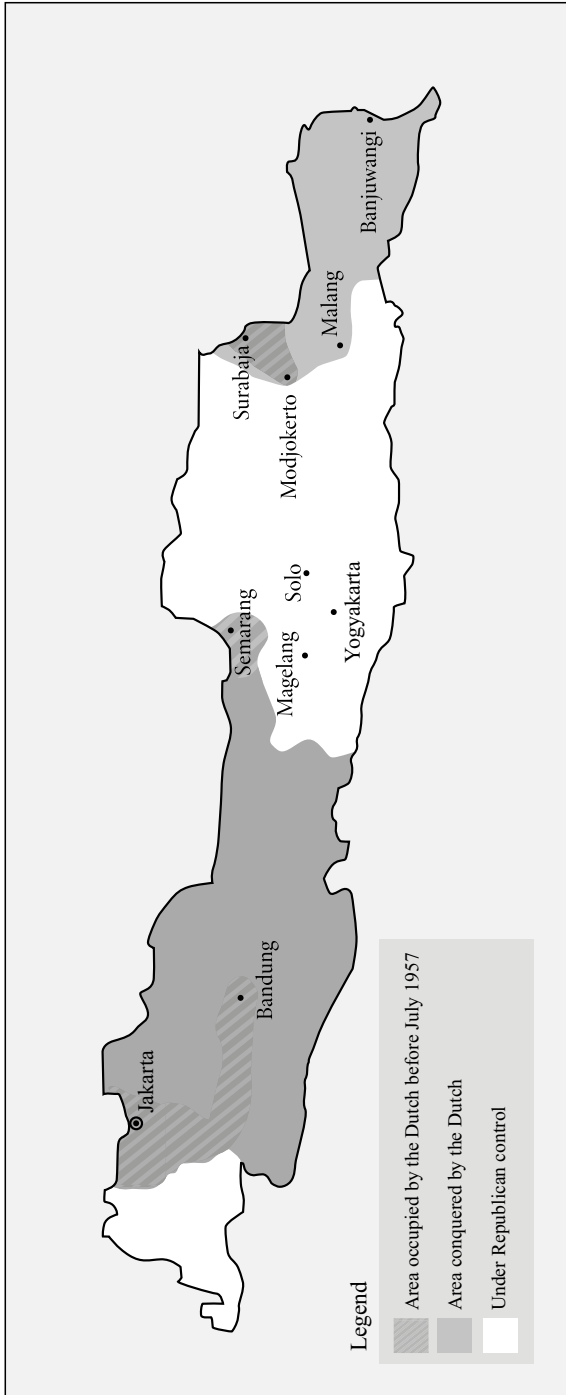
The Masyumi was not included in the cabinet, but Amir Sjarifuddin still managed to secure the support of Islamic politicians by deftly pulling the Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia (PSII) out of the Masyumi, with which it had merged in 1943, and bringing it into his cabinet. The fact that PSII leader Abikusno Tjokrosujoso was imprisoned alongside Tan Malaka was evidently not an impediment.

On 8 July, the new cabinet had little choice but to continue in the same vein as Sjahrir and once again make far-reaching concessions to the Netherlands, as the alternative was a Dutch military attack that did not bode well for the Republic. The only thing Amir Sjarifuddin opposed was the establishment of joint Dutch-Republican security forces to maintain order in Republican territory, which was seen as a *de facto* Dutch occupation. Van Mook stood firm and managed to secure the support of the United States, which recognised that the Netherlands was in very bad financial shape and needed revenue from its old colony quickly. In Washington, stability in Europe – where the Cold War was unfolding – was seen as more important than the decolonisation of Indonesia. The United States exerted significant pressure on the Republic to agree to the Dutch demands and, to ease the pain, promised to provide financial aid.

The talks continued but to no avail. Lieutenant General Spoor had long called for military action against the Republic. In his view, the Linggadjati Agreement had needlessly delayed the Dutch advance and had given the Republic time to strengthen itself. Deputy Prime Minister Drees still wanted to negotiate, but a telegram to the Labour Party ministers from a frustrated and weary Schermerhorn, a fellow party member and also chairman of the Commission-General, tipped the balance. In the telegram, Schermerhorn indicated that as far as he was concerned, the ‘pesthole’ Yogyakarta could be eliminated because the Republican government could not be reasoned with.¹⁹ By this point, the social democrats in The Hague had run out of arguments to prevent military action. Under the condition that the Republic would not be liquidated, they agreed to the plans of Van Mook, Spoor and Beel. The cabinet then decided on 17 July to authorise Van Mook to attack the Republic.

18 Haji Agus Salim succeeded Sjahrir as foreign minister. S.K. Trimurti became labour minister for the Partai Buruh Indonesia. Her husband Sajuti Melik was still in prison due to the 3 July coup. For the PNI, Maramis became finance minister and Wikana remained youth minister. Maruto Darusman (PKI) became the first communist minister.

19 Langeveld 2014: 469.



Map 3. The first Dutch military attack

The attack

On Sunday, 20 July, one day after the start of the Islamic month of fasting, Dutch troops entered Republican territories in Java and Sumatra. It turned into a 'tropical Blitzkrieg' that culminated in a major Dutch victory.²⁰ The Republican forces were overwhelmed by the speed of the attack. Preceded by air strikes and heavy artillery fire that wiped out Republican defences, columns of tanks and armoured cars – followed by infantry – entered Republican areas and swiftly captured strategic points. From Batavia, the towns of Krawang, Cirebon, Tegal and other towns on the north coast were captured; from Semarang, the Dutch managed to occupy Salatiga and Ambarawa; from Bogor and Bandung, Republican troops were driven out of West Java and Dutch troops were able to occupy the southern port of Tjilatjap; from Surabaya, the city of Malang was captured and, after a landing on the northeast coast, Probolinggo and Jember were taken over.

In central and eastern Java, the TNI tried here and there to stop the Dutch attack, but despite fierce resistance, the Republican forces did not stand a chance. They often had no time to apply scorched-earth tactics. Most of the TNI units and battle groups avoided confrontation and quickly retreated into the hills and mountains. The fighting resulted in an estimated 3,000 deaths on the Republican side and 169 on the Dutch side.

On the island of Sumatra, Dutch troops expanded the area they controlled around the cities of Medan, Palembang and Padang, but most of the island remained under Republican control.

The attack was also an economic success; it was not called 'Operation Product' for nothing. Over 1,100 plantations were captured in West and East Java and around Medan, as well as coal mines and oil wells around Palembang. Almost all the plantations had been abandoned, and a number of enterprises had been taken over by workers and neighbouring farmers, while others had been destroyed by the TNI. Nevertheless, a rebuilding of the old colonial export economy could be commenced in order to resume the flow of foreign exchange to the Netherlands.

The greatest tragedy occurred in East Sumatra, largely outside the purview of the Dutch, where internecine fighting erupted once again – as it had in March and April 1946 – in what was cynically called '*repolusi*', with thousands of people dying of violence and deprivation as a result.²¹ Republican troops and local militia responded to the Dutch attack launched from Medan using scorched-earth tactics, which forced peasants and plantation

20 Harinck 2021: Chapter 3.

21 See Chapter 4 for violence in 1946; Reid 1979: 266–7; Steedly 2013: 217–82.

workers to flee. At the same time, members of the Malay elite, operating under the wings of the Dutch army, began carrying out revenge operations against the militias that had defeated and humiliated them the previous year. Chaos and insecurity sparked a massive migration of townspeople, farmers and plantation workers fleeing westwards from the plain to the Karo Plateau. Dutch troops also moved in that direction to capture the towns of Pematang Siantar, Kabanjahe and Brastagi, causing a new stream of refugees; the violence escalated rapidly. TNI troops and rival militias led by local warlords chased the people out of these towns and set fire to them; more than 50 villages on the plateau were also reduced to ashes. At this point, the TNI troops and militias began to clash with each other. As a result, 250,000 people found themselves on the move. As they fled, they encountered militia roadblocks where they were often robbed. Moreover, countless refugees from the plain were murdered because they were mistaken for Dutch agents.

Thousands of people died of starvation, exhaustion and violence on the Karo Plateau in August 1947. A truce was not called for weeks. While Dutch troops now had Medan under their control as well as a few places in the interior, plantations in the plains and a few thoroughfares, it was weeks before the TNI was able to restore a semblance of peace on the Karo Plateau and its surroundings.

Intervention by the Security Council

Lieutenant General Spoor was in a winning mood and had plans in place to push on to Yogyakarta when the advance of Dutch troops was brought to a halt by the UN Security Council. On the initiative of Australia and India, the Security Council had been convened on 31 July. A day later, it adopted a resolution calling for a ceasefire and urging the involved parties to find a peaceful solution. As a result of the intervention of the United States, an earlier version of the resolution – in which the Netherlands was called upon to withdraw its troops and accept international arbitration – was watered down. In the end, the resolution was fairly mildly worded. Nonetheless, the Netherlands protested against this international interference given that it was a ‘domestic conflict’. It was from this lens that the Netherlands insisted on calling the military assault a ‘police action’, a term that was still used fairly unproblematically in the Dutch literature decades later. The Indonesian term *Agresi Belanda* (Dutch aggression) is a more apt phrase to describe the events.

The Dutch cabinet complied with the Security Council resolution and pledged to lay down its arms on 5 August, by which time the military

operation's objectives had been achieved and the battle could be ceased without much trouble. But Spoor was furious because his plan to conquer Yogyakarta had been obstructed. He was not alone: Van Mook, Prime Minister Beel and even Queen Wilhelmina were equally outraged. Van Mook even threatened to resign on 16 August if he and Spoor did not get their way with regard to Yogyakarta.

The military attack weighed heavily on the conscience of the Dutch Labour Party (*Partij van de Arbeid*), and its aftermath almost caused a cabinet crisis. At a party congress back in September 1946, the Labour Party had spoken out against using military force in Indonesia, and in the spring of 1947 a large demonstration by the Netherlands-Indonesia Association reminded the party of this stance. When Labour ministers nevertheless agreed to the attack on the Republic, it led to fierce protests by Jacques de Kadt, Frans Goedhart and Reverend J.J. Buskes, among others. Of the 115,000 Labour Party members, 7,000 cancelled their party membership. A special party congress was convened on 15 and 16 August – precisely as India was gaining its independence (15 August 1947) and ushering in a new era of independence in Asia. In the Netherlands, however, the call to occupy Yogyakarta grew louder and louder, forcing the Labour Party to choose which side it was on. But it failed to do so: the party leadership managed to keep its members in the fold with a vague resolution that neither approved nor disapproved of the military attack. Ministers Drees and Jonkman, ex-minister Logemann and the chairman of the Commission-General Schermerhorn were in favour of a gradual process of decolonisation, which they argued could only be achieved if Indonesia could demonstrate 'good governance'. Moreover, they were annoyed by the Republic's attitude during the negotiations, which in their opinion was not constructive. Even more important was a motive of a domestic nature: now that the Labour Party was finally in government, keeping its coalition with the Catholic People's Party afloat in order to introduce social legislation – including a national retirement pension – was considered more critical than swift independence for Indonesia.

The attack on Yogyakarta was thwarted at the very last minute because Deputy Prime Minister Drees threatened to bring the matter to the point of a cabinet crisis. His case was bolstered by the stance taken by the United States, which announced that it would no longer support the Netherlands in the Security Council if Yogyakarta was attacked. As a result, the Republic only narrowly escaped destruction.

The Security Council met several more times to discuss the 'Indonesia question'. The Republic urged the Security Council to call for the withdrawal of Dutch troops and also asked for international arbitration but to no avail.

However, at the suggestion of the United States, on 25 August the Security Council did establish a UN Committee of Good Offices made up of three members to play a mediating role during the negotiations. The Netherlands and the Republic were allowed to appoint one member each – Belgium and Australia, respectively – and these two members then chose the third member (the United States).

The Republic had meanwhile sustained extensive damage. It had lost two-thirds of Java's territory, including many vast rice-growing areas resulting in food shortages. The situation was made all the more pressing when a stream of 700,000 refugees fled to Yogyakarta from the areas the Netherlands had conquered.

At the same time, there was an upsurge in violence in Republican territory against Chinese communities suspected of collaborating with the Dutch. As a result, some 100,000 Chinese fled to areas that had been conquered by the Dutch.

The Dutch attack had further economic repercussions. Because the Republic had lost its main seaports and the Netherlands was imposing a stringent trade blockade, exports and hence foreign exchange inflows declined.²²

The Republic had suffered a heavy military blow with severe economic consequences, but it had not been defeated. It remained to be seen whether the Republic had actually suffered irreparable political damage.

Even after the ceasefire came into force, the fighting continued. Before the arrival of the Committee of Good Offices, Dutch troops established new demarcation lines, which came to be called the 'Van Mook Line'. Large-scale purge operations were conducted within the conquered territory to drive out Republican fighters, but this exercise soon proved to be much more difficult to do than had been anticipated. There were too few Dutch troops to properly control the vast expanse of conquered territories. Essentially, it was only the urban areas and throughfares that the Dutch troops more or less controlled, while Republican fighters could hide in the countryside and in mountainous areas.

The Republican army command took time to regroup its heavily battered troops but soon switched to guerrilla warfare, carrying out rapid surprise attacks on military and economic targets behind the new demarcation lines. These incursions mainly affected the Dutch agricultural entrepreneurs, who had returned to their plantations to restart production. In

²² At the same time, the value of the Republican rupiah fell while NICA money circulating in the conquered territories increased in value.

West and East Java, they were repeatedly attacked by groups of guerrillas. In Krawang, the resistance put up by itinerant *laskar* was so strong that the Dutch army command felt it necessary to deploy Captain Westerling's Special Forces.

In Yogyakarta, the Masyumi finally joined the cabinet, allowing the Republic to close ranks politically. This still took some doing, as peace first had to be made with the PSII, which had broken away from the Masyumi in July. The result of all the discussions and shuffling of cabinet posts was that the cabinet now had four deputy prime ministers and as many as 35 ministers, which was more than plenty for the decimated Republic – a result of the significant political division and the government's attempt to radiate national unity.

Renville

The intervention of the UN Security Council had raised the conflict between the Netherlands and the Republic to an international level. Hence, not only had the Republic been given a platform on which to seek international support but the Netherlands could no longer act entirely at its own discretion, as demonstrated by the Security Council's 1 November ban on further territorial expansion by the Netherlands. This was a political gain for the Republic.

The Committee of Good Offices did not arrive in Jakarta until late October. Its chairman was Frank Graham, an American academic who was sympathetic to Indonesia's quest for independence. Van Mook displayed a great reluctance to cooperate with the international mediators. As far as he was concerned, the Committee's role was purely a procedural one. Moreover, he was in no hurry to proceed with negotiations, preferring instead to continue forming new states with which to further isolate the Republic. However, Graham made it clear that it was not Van Mook but the Committee that was in charge. Indeed, when the Netherlands stated that it wished to discuss a ceasefire before turning to political matters, the Committee chose to support the Republic, which wanted to discuss these issues simultaneously.

On 8 December, negotiations began aboard the USS *Renville*, a US Navy ship. It was the only neutral ground on which the parties were willing to meet. Meanwhile, the Netherlands had to deal with reports of military atrocities committed by its troops, which did not help its international reputation. On 23 November, 46 prisoners of war taken by Dutch soldiers had died of suffocation in a locked freight car at Bondowoso railway station,

and in another incident, a military revenge attack on the village of Rawagede resulted in 400 civilian casualties on 9 December.

The starting point in the negotiations on the USS Renville was the Linggadjati Agreement, but this agreement had been violated by the Netherlands when it unilaterally began establishing a series of federal states.²³ The Committee made a number of proposals that were well received by the Republic, including a halt to the formation of new federal states by the Netherlands and, in due course, the withdrawal of Dutch troops to behind the old demarcation lines, after which those newly vacated areas could return to Republican rule.

The Netherlands was not happy with this approach and proceeded to substantially amend the proposals. The Republic was not mentioned once in the Dutch draft, and there was also no question of a withdrawal of troops and a return of Republican rule. The Dutch continued to form new states and also insisted on the establishment of a mixed Dutch-Republican police force to maintain order not only in the Dutch-controlled areas but in the Republic as well. As in July, the Netherlands announced that this was a final proposal that the Republic had to accept within a few days. Moreover, the Netherlands also decided to unilaterally establish an interim federal government. The Republic felt that it was being put on the spot and therefore refused to participate in this interim government.

The Committee of Good Offices, for its part, amended the Dutch proposal by adding some points that explicitly mentioned the Republic. For example, it insisted that the Republic be given a reasonable representation in the interim government as one of the states within the Federation that was to be formed. More importantly, the Committee dictated that within six months, plebiscites would have to be held throughout the archipelago on whether the regions wanted to join the Republic or one of the other states. This proposition offered the Republic the prospect of winning over the people.

On 13 January, the Committee of Good Offices held a final consultation with Republican leaders in the mountain resort of Kaliurang near Yogyakarta. It was on that occasion that Chairman Graham said the words: 'You are what you are.' By this he seemed to mean – according to the interpretation of Republican leaders, at least – that the Republic had control of its own army, finances and its conduct of foreign relations.

That was the good news. Graham went on to explain that the Republic had little to choose from. If the proposal was rejected, the Committee of Good Offices would relinquish its mandate. He added that the United States

23 See Chapter 9.

would not block a military attack by the Netherlands, which would in turn mean that the Republic would lose its international support and Yogyakarta would be taken over after all. When it came down to it, the United States chose to support the Netherlands for the sake of a strong Western Europe, where the Cold War was beginning to determine the political agenda.

Under heavy pressure, Amir, Hatta and Sukarno gave in and reluctantly decided to sign the Renville Agreement. It was a significantly worse deal than the Linggadjati Agreement and reflected the considerably weakened position of the Republic. By signing the new agreement, Republican leaders were trying to prevent another military attack by the Netherlands from putting an end to the Republic. They were hoping for some breathing room to regain military strength and clung to the last straw offered by the Committee of Good Offices: the prospect of plebiscites by which they could get the people of the archipelago on their side. On 17 and 19 January 1948, the two sides signed the agreement. The Netherlands had won; the Republic had suffered substantial losses but was not yet defeated.

The Hatta cabinet

Prime Minister Amir Sjarifuddin did not survive the Renville Agreement. After the Masyumi quit the cabinet on 16 January in protest of the concluded agreement, followed a few days later by the PNI, Amir's position became untenable. He resigned on 23 January.

As the Masyumi and the PNI could not agree on the allocation of seats for a new cabinet, Sukarno intervened and ordered Vice President Hatta to quickly form a national cabinet. That failed as well because the Sayap Kiri only wanted to join such a cabinet if Amir became prime minister again. Hatta subsequently presented a presidential cabinet on 29 January, which no longer needed to be accountable to parliament. The KNIP was thus sidelined.

The new cabinet was much smaller than the previous one, with only 16 ministers. In addition to the premiership, Hatta also took over the post of defence minister from Amir. Ministers from the Masyumi and the PNI formed the core of the cabinet. Masyumi leader Sukiman finally obtained a seat in the cabinet: he became interior minister.²⁴

24 Some familiar faces from the Masyumi were Sjafruddin Prawiranagara (economic affairs) and Natsir (information); and from the PNI, Maramis (finance) and Ali Sastroamidjojo (education). Agus Salim remained foreign minister. The cabinet was also supported by the Catholic and Protestant parties. Sultan Hamengkubuwono became minister without portfolio, thereby lending his prestige to the cabinet.

The Sayap Kiri had lost its dominant position, and the PSII had also been marginalised. Dissatisfied with the leftist profile of the Sayap Kiri, the group around Sjahrir split from the Partai Sosialis in mid-February and formed a new party: the Partai Sosialis Indonesia (PSI), which supported the Hatta cabinet. While the Partai Sosialis moved further to the left, the PSI followed a social-democratic course.

The confusing part of the new political landscape was that the cabinet and the opposition both supported the Renville Agreement. As the Cold War took hold in Southeast Asia, the contrasts between left and right became sharper within the Republic. At the end of February, the Sayap Kiri continued under a new name, the Front Demokrasi Rakyat (FDR, Democratic People's Front), which included the Partai Sosialis, the Partai Buruh Indonesia, the PKI, the Pesindo and the SOBSI. It was a communist-oriented opposition with a well-armed militia and a strong trade union.

The FDR had an immediate impact. During his tour of East Java, Sukarno had to face mass demonstrations calling for the return of 'Bung Amir' (Brother Amir). A large portrait of Amir was placed on the locomotive of Sukarno's train. In Madiun and Magetan, tens of thousands of people demonstrated, and during a speech the sound system was disabled, after which the crowd loudly chanted 'Bung Amir must return'. And in Kediri, a protest march with no fewer than 150 banners was held. The contours of a new conflict in the Republic had begun to take shape.

9 Federalism

1947–1948

After the First Military Action in July 1947 and the signing of the Renville Agreement in January 1948, the Dutch were feeling optimistic. After all, Dutch troops were not required to return to the positions they had taken before the attack, while 30,000 men from the Siliwangi Division of the TNI were forced to withdraw from West Java. The Netherlands was now doing everything it could to isolate the Republic. It was enforcing the so-called Van Mook Line (also known as the Status Quo Line), the outer limit of the Dutch expansion which in many places had been stretched even further. And a strict blockade imposed by the Dutch troops caused shortages of food and clothing in the Republican region in Central Java to increase dramatically. The Dutch blockade could not be broken because the Republican forces were no match for the Dutch army in a direct confrontation. The leaders of the Republic feared that a second Dutch attack would cause the Republic to collapse.

Internationally, the Republic could count on increasing goodwill, but the Netherlands continued to benefit from the support of the United States. The Republic was also dependent on the United States. Frank Graham, the chairman of the Committee of Good Offices, had promised to monitor the fairness of the referendums in which the people could decide whether they wanted to join a federal state or the Republic. It was this toehold that the Republican leaders desperately clung to.

The Republic had signed the Renville Agreement with its back against the wall, and Van Mook knew how little that was worth. In a letter to his son Kees, he wrote that ‘the signing shouldn’t be a problem, but thereafter the real trouble starts.’¹ With this in mind, he chose to marginalise the Republic as much as possible and to carry out his own plans. In the firm belief that he still had the reins firmly in his hands, and with the support of the Dutch cabinet, Van Mook decided to accelerate the formation of a series of docile states and a transitional federal government in which the Netherlands would be able to call the shots. In this chapter, we explore what Van Mook wanted to achieve with this federal government and, more importantly, what the people in the regions themselves envisaged. Did they have a say

1 Letter dated 23 January 1948; in Van den Berge 2014: 251.

in any of this? And did the states and the Republic allow themselves to be played off against each other?

The Negara Indonesia Timur and its search for its own direction

The flagship of federal Indonesia was the Negara Indonesia Timur (NIT), which was established in Denpasar in December 1946. The NIT comprised all the islands east of Kalimantan except for New Guinea (Irian Barat). The state had more than ten million inhabitants and more than a hundred so-called 'self-governing rulers', aristocratic leaders who exercised authority in a large part of the NIT. Most of these self-governing rulers felt far removed from the NIT capital of Makassar both in a geographical and a political sense.

The first cabinet of the NIT, assembled in Jakarta by Van Mook and President Sukawati,² was led by Nadjamuddin Daeng Malewa, an influential man in Makassar who was also one of the few who was willing to work with the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) in 1945. Resident Lion Cachet had tasked him with organising copra exports, which quickly became plagued by corruption.

It was abundantly clear that the NIT was a Dutch fabrication. The post of finance minister was held by the Dutchman M. Hamelink, who had worked at the Bank of Java (De Javasche Bank) in Makassar. Organisationally, the NIT was dependent on Dutch civil servants. Many Dutch people viewed the NIT with disdain. Dutch civil servants had great difficulty following the orders of Indonesian politicians who were now ranked above them. When President Sukawati arrived at his official residence in Makassar, he found that it had been emptied shortly before by Dutch officials and soldiers who had taken the furniture for their own use. The conservative Lion Cachet even played an active role in undermining the NIT's authority, for the South Sulawesi princes he had appointed declared – at his instigation – that they wanted to remain under Dutch rule and did not want to be part of the NIT. The NIT's interior minister, Anak Agung Gde Agung, repeatedly clashed with Lion Cachet and finally managed to have him transferred to Bangka at the end of 1947.³

Politics in the NIT took place mainly in Makassar, where the provisional parliament met. It had 80 members, 55 of whom were elected by local councils while the other 25 – who were representatives of minority groups such as Arabs and Chinese – were directly appointed.

2 For the appointment of Sukawati as president of the Negara Indonesia Timur, see Chapter 5.

3 Anak Agung Gde Agung 1996: 174–5.

After the parliament had convened, political parties were formed on the basis of the members' personal preferences. What the Dutch people had not foreseen was that the vast majority of the parliament would be in favour of an independent Indonesia – in a federal form or otherwise. Only a small minority wanted to maintain strong ties with the Netherlands.⁴ The largest party was the Progressive Faction led by Arnold Mononutu. In the 1920s, he had been active in the Indonesian Students Union in the Netherlands – the *Perhimpunan Indonesia* – together with Hatta and Subardjo and had also been a representative of the PI in Paris. The party he led in the NIT parliament had great sympathy for the Republic. In addition, there was the National Party comprising mainly representatives of the nobility from South Sulawesi, and the Democratic Faction, a loose group that represented predominantly Christian regions in East Indonesia – both of which were in favour of the establishment of a federal Indonesia.

The conservative President Sukawati was strongly committed to maintaining the autonomy of local self-governing rulers as well as nurturing a lasting bond with the Netherlands. He was up against the president of the parliament, Tadjuddin Noor, who was in favour of cooperation with the Republic and was supported by the Progressive Faction. Tadjuddin had repeatedly raised the issue of the actions perpetrated by Westerling's commandos and called for the release of political prisoners, as did the Progressive Faction.⁵ Van Mook considered Tadjuddin to be too much of a risk within the fragile structure of the NIT and insisted that a vote of no confidence be called against him.⁶ This happened in May 1947 during a chaotic session of parliament in which Tadjuddin was replaced by the conservative Sultan of Sumbawa. Fearing that he would be arrested, Tadjuddin fled to Yogyakarta.

While President Sukawati may have been a conservative, he did advocate for a separate treaty with the Netherlands in which the NIT would be recognised as an independent state and have permanent representation in The Hague. His hope was that this would allow the NIT to become a full-fledged partner alongside the Republic in talks with the Netherlands. Much to his frustration, his requests were rejected by the Dutch. Van Mook wanted to keep a tight grip on the reins and was loath to grant the NIT too much independence. In Republican circles, the NIT was quickly given the

4 This minority included, for example, the *Persatuan Timur Besar* (Alliance of the Great East) – which had a following in Ambon, Timor and Manado – and the *Twapro* (Twelfth Province) movement in the Minahasa.

5 In April 1947, 1,220 political prisoners were released.

6 Bouma 2020: 153.

nickname 'Negara Ikut Tuan' (the state that follows its master) – and not without reason. When the Netherlands launched its attack on the Republic in July 1947, the NIT government was not informed of the plan beforehand. And to the consternation of the Progressive Faction, the Nadjamuddin cabinet supported the military attack.

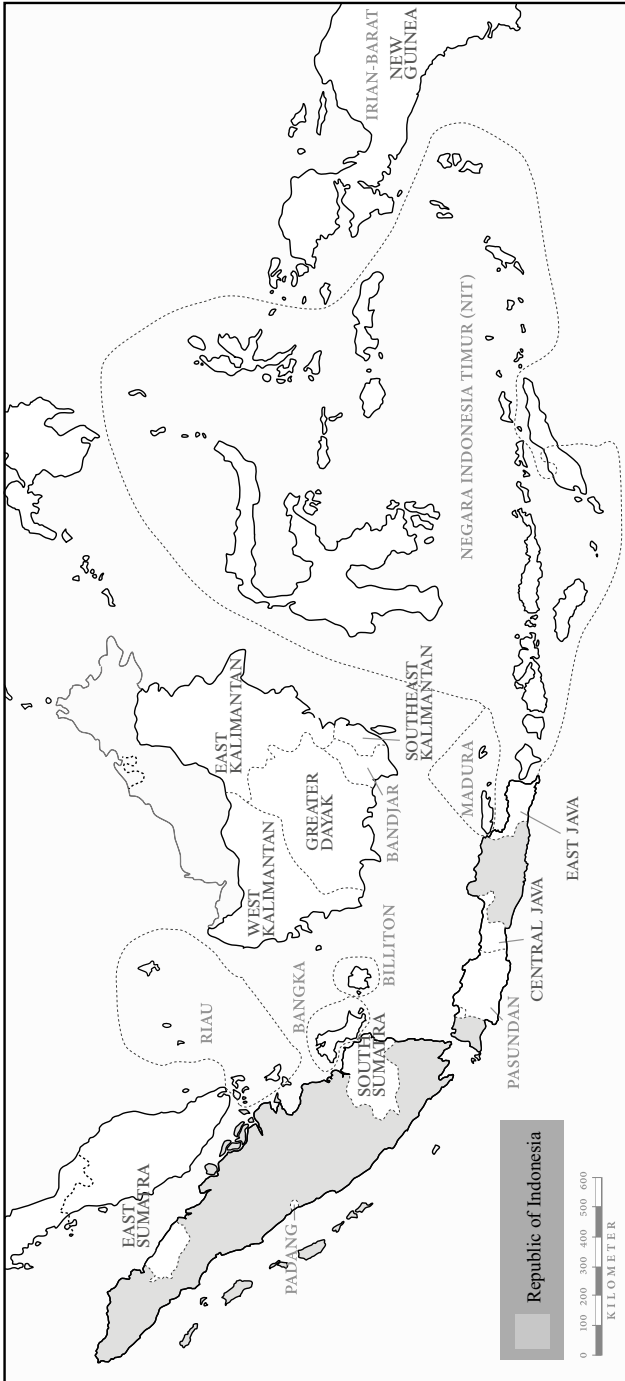
In early August 1947, a goodwill mission of representatives of the NIT and other states was sent to the UN Security Council in New York at the instigation of the Netherlands, where it was tasked with putting a positive spin on the Dutch decolonisation policy. The delegation was led by P.J. Koets, who was head of Van Mook's cabinet. President Sukawati, Prime Minister Nadjamuddin and Minister Anak Agung Gde Agung represented the NIT, while Sultan Hamid of Pontianak went along on behalf of the state of West Kalimantan. Members of the delegation were not expected to make statements on their own initiative.⁷

The visit was a fiasco because the Security Council would not allow the delegation to attend the meeting given that it did not represent one of the warring parties. But Sjahrir did address the Security Council on behalf of the Republic on 14 August 1947. He called for the withdrawal of Dutch troops, argued that the Netherlands was not abiding by the Linggadjati Agreement by unilaterally forming federal states, and asked the Security Council for international arbitration. The attempt by Dutch Foreign Minister Van Kleffens to portray the Republic as a radical minority that was not supported by the people failed miserably. Sjahrir's speech garnered much praise in the American press, while the Netherlands humiliated itself and the delegation from East Indonesia came away looking like a fool.

To make up for this disappointment, the delegation from East Indonesia was invited to visit the Netherlands in September 1947. During that visit, a major corruption scandal was brought to light in which Prime Minister Nadjamuddin played a key role. Towards the end of the fasting month, he had used his own companies to sell a consignment of textiles intended for government distribution, making a considerable profit. On 17 September Nadjamuddin was deposed as prime minister while he was in the Netherlands at that moment attending an audience with the queen. He was replaced by his deputy prime minister, S.J. Warouw, and sentenced to three and a half years of imprisonment in 1948.

The NIT's image was further damaged when, in an attempt to win over the Arab world, Sultan Hamid of Pontianak paid an ill-prepared visit to Egypt – which chaired the Arab League – and Saudi Arabia, and then to

7 Bouma 2020: 186.



Map 4. Federal territories

Pakistan. The visits yielded nothing. Shortly before, the Republic had booked success in the Middle East when Agus Salim managed to get the members of the Arab League to recognise the Republic.⁸

Another factor that worked against the NIT was the ineffectiveness of the new cabinet under Warouw. Although a good ophthalmologist, Warouw was a weak and conservative politician. He was heavily criticised by the Progressive Faction for also having supported the Netherlands' military action. Moreover, due to the Christian bent of his cabinet, he received little support from the National Faction, which was Islamic. In early December 1947, he resigned after a vote of no confidence was passed against him.

It was clear that if the NIT wanted to survive, it needed a stronger government. And in mid-December, this is indeed what it got when 27-year-old Interior Minister Anak Agung Gde Agung formed a cabinet in which all political parties were represented. As Prime Minister, Anak Agung Gde Agung broadly followed the position of the Progressive Faction but was primarily a convinced federalist who wanted to participate in discussions with the Netherlands and the Republic about the future of Indonesia.

Federal expansion

Using a divide-and-conquer strategy, Van Mook tried to isolate the Republic and to proceed with his own decolonisation process. During the Linggadjati conference, he had been working under the assumption of an Indonesian federation with four states (Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan and Eastern Indonesia), but after the Dutch military action in July 1947, he expanded that number to 14.⁹ As Sjahrir had already indicated in his address to the Security Council, Van Mook was not keeping his end of the bargain, for he refused to allow the Republic to be involved in the formation of states and for the people to express themselves democratically on their desired form of government. In addition, Van Mook was unilaterally forming states in territories where the Republic exercised *de facto* authority.

Together with the NIT, the states of Van Mook's Indonesian federation had a total of 35 million inhabitants on paper. While this was an impressive number, in practice there were far fewer on whom Van Mook could count

8 In his younger years, Agus Salim had come to know the Arab world while working at the Dutch consulate in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia.

9 This book does not discuss in detail the administrative variants within the federation (*negara*, autonomous regions and neo-countries); instead, all of the federation's territories are called 'federal states' here. At the Linggadjati conference, Hatta had consented to a federation that consisted of four states.

on for support because the new states in Java had very little authority and a majority of the people supported the Republic.

Almost everywhere in the federation, representatives of the colonial administrative aristocracy were appointed to positions of power. Supported by Dutch officials and protected by Dutch troops, they opted for a position of power within the federal model because they were afraid of losing their influence if the Republic came to power in their region.

At the Malino Conference, the delegates had discussed a plan to make the whole island of Kalimantan a single state, but this plan failed. There were significant ethnic differences between the island's different population groups and barely any interaction between them. The west coast was oriented towards the Malay world; the interior was populated by tribal groups collectively referred to by the Dutch as 'Dayak'; and the south and southeast formed a heterogeneous mixture of local communities and different groups of migrants. It was therefore an ill-judged plan to want to turn a geographical unit that lacked cultural and political homogeneity into a state. But this was not the only reason the plan was dropped. A strong movement was active in South and Southeast Kalimantan that sought to join the Republic, and the Dutch hoped to prevent this movement from gaining influence in the rest of Kalimantan by forming separate states in the south.

The only region with a pronounced aristocratic administration was West Kalimantan. Pontianak had a sultan family with Malay Arab origins whose family tree could be traced back to the prophet Mohammed. During the Japanese occupation, the governor Sultan Sharif Hamid was assassinated, along with much of the local aristocracy.¹⁰ Max Alkadrie, the sultan's son, survived because he had left Pontianak at a young age. He spent his childhood with a foster family in Singapore and went to school in Yogyakarta and Bandung. He then received officer training at the Royal Military Academy in Breda, after which he joined the KNIL. In 1942, he was interned by the Japanese in Java. In October 1945, he returned to Pontianak, where he was appointed Sultan Hamid II at the behest of Lieutenant General Spoor.¹¹ After his installation, the young sultan pushed for the early establishment of the state of Kalimantan, as had been discussed at the Linggadjati conference. In doing so, he showed his ambition to become the leader of a major state, like Sukawati in the NIT. But when this plan proved unfeasible in February 1947, he had to settle for the state of West Kalimantan.

¹⁰ See Chapter 2.

¹¹ We are indebted to Katja Paijens, who is writing a thesis about Sultan Hamid, for this information.

The other states in Kalimantan, such as East Kalimantan and Greater Dayak in Central Kalimantan, were not led by an aristocratic self-governing ruler but were governed by elected councils.¹² The establishment of the state of Greater Dayak contributed decisively to the creation of an identity of the region's scattered Dayak communities as one homogeneous ethnic group.¹³ In the new states of South Kalimantan and Southeast Kalimantan, the elected councils were dominated by supporters of the Republic.¹⁴

The leaders of the Republic protested in vain against the fact that they were not involved in the formation of the states in Kalimantan. In the course of 1947, when states were also formed in Sumatra and Java – territories over which the Republic formally had control – the Republic was also left out of the loop.

After the military action by the Netherlands, the sultan families in East Sumatra revived their hopes of restoring their former positions of power. In August 1947, under the leadership of Tengku Mansur, the Daerah Istimewa Sumatra Timur Committee was established. Mansur was related to the Sultan of Asahan and had been involved in establishing the nationalist Jong Sumatra League in his youth. But this time, he chose to defend the interests of the aristocratic elite. His committee represented the Malay people and opposed the Republic, from which the sultans expected little. With the support of Dutch soldiers, major demonstrations were held in Medan to show that 'the people' supported Mansur's initiative. At the same time, the sultan of Deli dreamed of creating something much grander: through his own Partai Anak Deli he wanted to form an independent federation of Malay sultanates, following the example of British Malaya. But his plans proved to be too ambitious. Van Mook recognised Mansur's committee as the provisional representative of the people, and when Prime Minister Beel visited Medan in December 1947, it was announced that the state of East Sumatra would be formed, despite the warning given by J.J. van der Velde, the top Dutch administrative officer in East Sumatra, that the Daerah Istimewa Sumatra Timur Committee was an exclusive project of the Malay elite which elicited a great deal of resistance from the other ethnic groups. The establishment of the state of East Sumatra was yet another unilateral Dutch action. It was also a signal to the UN Committee of Good Offices and to the Republic, who were meeting at that

12 These states were called 'neo-countries'.

13 Van Klinken 2004.

14 In South Kalimantan, the Serikat Muslimin Indonesia, founded in 1946, decided to turn against the policy of federal states and to call for accession to the Republic.

moment for the Renville negotiations, that the Netherlands was intent on going its own way.

At the end of January 1948, the state of East Sumatra was officially inaugurated, with Mansur as its leader. But it was all sizzle and no steak. Non-Malay groups had no say in the administration of the state, which only functioned in urban areas along the coast with the help of Dutch soldiers. Beyond that limited area, revolutionary warlords called the shots.¹⁵

In South Sumatra, the aristocratic leaders of nine districts (*marga*) submitted a petition to Van Mook in August 1947 requesting permission to form a front against the Republic. They were intent on safeguarding their own positions of power. In April 1948, the Dutch established an advisory council, which was subsequently upgraded to a representative council. Following a positive recommendation from this council, the state of South Sumatra was established at the end of August 1948. When the American journalist George Kahin visited the area in May 1949, he observed that the state was barely functioning. Only a few tasks had been handed over to it, and the governance of the state remained in the hands of Dutch officials. Moreover, martial law was still in force.¹⁶

The Dutch were unable to establish a state in Western Sumatra, where the Republic had a large following – not surprising given the prominent position held by West Sumatran leaders such as Sjahrir and Hatta in Yogyakarta. The Republican army nonetheless had trouble bringing the stand-alone militias in the region under control. There was also resistance from local traditional Islamic leaders, who felt shortchanged by the modern, educated and secular Republican leaders. The Islamic leaders and the militias joined forces and tried to overthrow the regional Republican administration in March 1947, but the rebellion was poorly organised and Republican troops quickly managed to fend off the danger.

In West Java, Dutch and Republican claims to regional authority overlapped. This situation was further complicated by Sundanese efforts to take control. In early May 1947, the former regent of Garut, R.M.M. Surjakartalegawa, proclaimed the new state of Pasundan. Back in November 1946, Surjakartalegawa had founded the Sundanese People's Party (Partai Rakyat Pasundan, PRP) to oppose Javanese Republicans. His party received support from Dutch civil servants and from the military commander Adriaan Thomson. Van Mook, however, was reluctant to support this movement because

¹⁵ See Chapter 4.

¹⁶ Kahin 1952: 383–6. Administrative councils were established in Bangka, Billiton and Riau in July 1947.

he foresaw problems with the Republic, given that the latter exercised *de facto* authority over the whole of Java. What followed was nothing short of a coup when, on 23 May 1947, PRP supporters in Bogor forced their way into Republican buildings and imprisoned Republican leaders with the consent of the local Dutch authorities.

This action by the PRP caught Van Mook by surprise. He was only willing to recognise the movement if the PRP had sufficient popular support. Van Mook felt that a referendum could not be held due to the political tensions in the region, but he did agree to a plan to convene a conference where representatives of the people could express their views. It took as many as three conferences before the state of Pasundan became a reality. The first one was held in October 1947. The Dutch Resident had appointed 45 delegates, 22 of whom were in government service, which prompted both the Republic and the PRP to boycott the meeting in protest. In the same month, during a visit to Krawang, Sukarno appealed to the people to block the establishment of the state, which led to assaults on supporters of the new state and the seizure – most lasting only a short time – by the Republican army of plantations that had been reclaimed by their former Dutch owners. By the end of 1947, 23 of the 28 plantations around Purwokerto had been abandoned by the Dutch as a result of Republican attacks.¹⁷

A second conference was held in December 1947, with the participants once again being selected by the Dutch administration. The conference nonetheless failed to secure sufficient support for the state. A third conference was needed, which met at the end of February 1948. This time, just over half of the attendees were elected by local councils, while the rest were appointed. The Dutch were unable to prevent Republicans from questioning the legitimacy of forming a separate state in Republican territory without a referendum. An attempt by the Republican Ali Budiardjo to organise a referendum was immediately forbidden by the Dutch. The conference finally agreed to ask Van Mook to establish a state and to recognise the conference participants as the provisional parliament. Kartosuwirjo, the Masyumi's regional leader, opposed this decision, and in March, he announced that he would make preparations to establish a separate Islamic state.

The former regent of Bandung, R.A.A. Wiranatakusuma, was elected head of Pasundan State. He was a respected supporter of the Republic.¹⁸ This was

17 Frakking 2012: 341.

18 Wiranatakusuma served briefly as a member of the first Republican cabinet in September 1945 (see Chapter 3) and then as chairman of the highest Republican advisory council.

a blow for the Dutch, whose own candidate, Hilman Djajadiningrat from Banten, had lost the election.

Wiranatakusuma appointed the Republican Adil Puradiredja as cabinet *formateur*, the person who leads the negotiations preparing the way for the formation of a coalition government. Puradiredja immediately announced that Pasundan would not distance itself from the Republic. From that moment on, the Dutch delayed handing over their tasks and powers to the state of Pasundan. Ninety percent of the civil service remained in Dutch hands, and at the end of 1948, Pasundan still did not have its own budget. Moreover, the areas outside the cities were highly insecure because Republican forces and Hizbullah and Sabilillah militias controlled large parts of the state and Pasundan's new security forces, created in February 1948, were ill-equipped to deal with them. The survival of Pasundan could thus only be secured with the support of Dutch troops.

A similar process unfolded on the island of Madura, which fell within the Republican sphere of influence but was occupied by Dutch troops in 1947. This led A.M. Tjakradiningrat, the Republican Resident of Bangkalan, to decide to cooperate with the Dutch. He was thus no longer a Republican but he did remain a nationalist.¹⁹ A referendum was held in January 1948 on whether Madura should become a state under the leadership of Tjakradiningrat. Although a majority voted yes in the referendum, they did so mainly for the economic security offered by Dutch protection. When the economy recovered a few months later and elections were held for the representative council, supporters of the Republic won the most seats. Just as in West Java, the handover of tasks and responsibilities from Dutch officials to the new state of Madura was only initiated in September 1949 and proceeded at an extremely slow pace. In the meantime, political meetings were prohibited, and the Dutch arrested half of the council members on suspicion of Republican sympathies.²⁰

In East Java, the top Dutch administrative officer, Ch.O. van der Plas, was given the task of forming a state in 1948. Such a state would have surrounded the Republic from three sides (Pasundan, Madura and East Java). But Van der Plas encountered so much unwillingness among the people of East Java that he decided not to hold a referendum. Instead, he sought the support of Muslim leaders, whom he invited to sit on a preparatory committee. His plan failed because the majority of the committee proved to be pro-Republican. His next move was to organise elections in August 1948 for

19 Kahin 1952: 235–8.

20 Kahin 1952: 382.

regency councils, which were marked by manipulation, intimidation and the arrest of Republican leaders. Van der Plas then selected a number of 'reliable' council members whom he invited to participate in the state's foundational meeting. In this way, he finally managed to scrape together a majority in favour of the establishment of the state. At the end of November 1948, the state of East Java was recognised by the Dutch administration in Jakarta; yet a year later, administrative tasks had still not been handed over.

The attempt by Dutch authorities to establish an autonomous region in Central Java came to naught. Semarang, Banyumas and Pekalongan had come into Dutch hands following the first military action, but there was no support among the people for a federal form of government. In March 1949, the Dutch decided that the three territories would form a 'political entity' whose status had yet to be determined – a solution that could not have been more vague.

In establishing the federal states, the Netherlands opted to form an alliance with what it considered to be the reliable administrative elite. But this elite primarily looked after their own interests and not those of the people they ruled. The Dutch were unpleasantly surprised by the strong pro-Republican movements in the NIT, Pasundan and Madura. While the other states were more supportive of the Dutch, they were, in fact, barely functioning entities. On paper the Federation may have looked formidable (see Map 4), but in practice most of the federal states did not amount to much.

The Negara Indonesia Timur caught between local rulers and the Republic

The strongest and most important state within the Federation was the Negara Indonesia Timur. After a difficult start, Anak Agung Gde Agung from Bali established himself as a decisive prime minister in December 1947. He also remained minister of internal affairs and became the most important person within the NIT. His cabinet had a broad support base, as it was backed in parliament by the Progressive Faction which held almost half of the seats.²¹ The Progressives were also strongly represented in the cabinet. Shortly after taking office, Anak Agung Gde Agung summarised his political programme in three points: 1) obtaining freedom, 2) cooperating with the Republic, and 3) realising a sovereign and federal Indonesia, one in which the NIT was on an equal footing with the Republic.

21 The plan to hold general elections for the NIT parliament in 1949 was not carried out.

The NIT's administrative structure was extremely complex and fragmented. The state was divided into 13 autonomous regions where many different ethnic groups lived. These regions were subsequently divided into no less than 115 districts where local princes wielded authority, assisted by advisory councils and supported by Dutch civil servants. In Timor and other islands in the eastern part of the state, little had changed compared to colonial times. But elsewhere, the situation was different. The Minahasa, the South Moluccas and Lombok had no aristocracy on which governance could be based; therefore elected councils with administrative responsibility were established, as in South Kalimantan and Southeast Kalimantan.

The administrative apparatus in South Sulawesi was similarly complex. The city of Makassar, like Manado and Ambon, was a municipality with an elected council. Eighty percent of the population was pro-Republican, but martial law was in force, which gave the Dutch army special powers. All political rallies and Republican newspapers were banned. The South Sulawesi region became an administrative maze of self-governing aristocratic rule and districts with elected councils, above which an umbrella governing body operated that was dominated by the aristocracy. At the same time, the regional parliament had a Republican majority. It was completely unclear who was in charge.

On the island of Bali, aristocratic families also dominated local governments. But unlike South Sulawesi, pro-Republican politicians were barely able to establish a foothold here. The highest governing body was the Council of Princes, which was advised by the Bali Council consisting mostly of officials employed by the aristocratic self-governing administrations. When it looked as though Republican nationalists might win a majority in the local councils of two principalities in 1947, the results of the elections were immediately declared invalid. Throughout Bali, Republican activities were prohibited, and martial law was declared on account of the hundreds of Republican guerrillas who were still active in the mountains.

The leaders of the NIT had the ambition to establish an autonomous and modern state government and to present themselves as federal nationalists, but in practice they were in many ways subordinate to, and dependent on, the Dutch administration in Jakarta. Despite their intention to replace Dutch heads of departments and local government officials with Indonesians as soon as possible, the Dutch continued to play an important role at all levels of the civil service. When the process of drafting a constitution of the NIT began in 1948, the preparatory committee consisted of a majority of Dutch people. And self-governing administrators often called on Dutch

civil servants to help them solve difficult issues. These factors confirmed the impression that the Dutch were still calling the shots.

The NIT was also financially dependent on the Netherlands. The 1948 and 1949 budgets amounted to approximately 180 million guilders and had a deficit of 100 million, which was covered by the Netherlands.²² Moreover, the Dutch administration in Jakarta controlled the NIT's import and export licenses. It also had a monopoly on the export of copra, which was in high demand on the global market but was supplied to Dutch companies below market prices.

The relationship between Indonesian administrators and Dutch civil servants was not the only one to be marked by tensions; this was also true of the relations between the leaders of the NIT and the local self-governing rulers. While the NIT political elite in Makassar wanted to introduce modern and democratic rule, most of the local self-governing rulers wished to continue wielding the aristocratic authority they had enjoyed in colonial times. They supported the NIT in order to keep out any dangerous anti-feudal Republican ideas. But even within the NIT, they were not confident that their position could be preserved. The local rulers clung to the colonial contracts they had concluded in the past with the Dutch Crown and saw little benefit to be gained in democratising governance, as it would have meant losing many of their privileges. They therefore opposed direct elections by the local councils and other such modernist innovations. They also opposed the government's proposal to use the Republican red-and-white flag as the NIT flag. Instead, they felt that a yellow stripe symbolising the princes' authority should be added, a proposal that was adopted by the government in Makassar.

As leader of the NIT, Anak Agung Gde Agung had to maintain a balance between various groups. Nationalism was strongly represented at the top political level of the state. The Progressive Faction even came to the conclusion in the course of 1948 that it would be better for the NIT to dissolve itself in order to join the Republic. Other politicians were also nationalists but were emphatically in favour of the federal form of government because they did not trust the Republic's intentions and wished to maintain their own cultural and political autonomy. The local self-governing administrations went the furthest in this standpoint, demanding that in addition to the NIT parliament a senate be established in which the princes would be in the majority. This came to pass in May 1949, and the senate was given the right to veto all legislation that affected the local self-governing administrations. But despite the fact that these administrations were firmly in control, they

22 Green 1978: 52-3; Anak Agung Gde Agung 1996: 375.

were unable to stop new ideas about freedom and equality from emerging. On the island of Savu, for example, in a small but popular library where Republican newspapers could be read, a retired lighthouse keeper, R. Rohi, made an impassioned argument on 31 August 1948 that it was no longer the case that the people were there for the prince, it was now the prince who was there for the people.²³

Unlike 'Indonesia', the NIT was not an 'imagined community' that evoked a sense of shared destiny. The NIT was not a nation but rather an archipelago of shared interests. Who would want to risk their life for the NIT? Nonetheless, as a political project, the NIT was a success at the national level. With the signing of the Renville Agreement, the Republic recognised the NIT as a state on 19 January 1948, and Anak Agung Gde Agung was able to work with the Republic towards the goal of establishing an independent but federal Indonesia.

The Renville Agreement also affected the political landscape in Bali, where Anak Agung Gde Agung came from. Once the Republic recognised the NIT, there was no longer any need for Republican guerrilla groups to fight the NIT, and Anak Agung Gde Agung managed to convince the guerrillas in Bali, who were hiding in the mountains, to lay down their arms. In May and June 1948, more than a thousand freedom fighters finally appeared out of hiding to surrender their weapons. They were temporarily interned, making it appear as though the reconciliation between the fighters and the NIT was a success. In fact, Anak Agung Gde Agung had simply eliminated the Republican fighters and strengthened the power of the princes in Bali. His brother became chairman of the council of princes.

Anak Agung Gde Agung was known as an opportunist who changed his position depending on which way the wind was blowing. In Bali, his home turf, he was a conservative aristocrat; in Makassar he was a modern and democratic administrator; and elsewhere, he presented himself as a progressive nationalist who wished to work together with the Republic. He embodied these three personas in equal measure, but his juggling act only worked so long as the federation remained afloat.

The Netherlands, the Republic, the United States and the Federation

After the signing of the Renville Agreement, the NIT and the Republic continued to strengthen their ties. In early January 1948, Anak Agung Gde Agung and Amir Sjarifuddin met in Jakarta and expressed their intention to

23 Duggan and Hägerdal 2018: 404.

work together, which resulted in a visit by a delegation of the NIT parliament to Yogyakarta in February. This goodwill mission was led by the chairman of the Progressive Faction, Arnold Mononutu, who, as already mentioned, had been Hatta's friend during their student years in the Netherlands. The delegation members were welcomed by Sukarno and spoke to Prime Minister Hatta, members of the KNIP and leaders of the Republican army. They also made a tour of some touristic sites. Hatta saw the value of a strategic partnership with the NIT and was not against the idea of a federal Indonesia, but Sukarno had his reservations. It bothered Sukarno that the NIT had approved the military action by the Dutch. For him, the Republic was and would always be the engine of the revolution. What sacrifices had the NIT actually made to fight for freedom? In his view, the federal states had opted for a course that supported the divide-and-conquer policy of the Dutch, which would inevitably lead to provincialism.²⁴

In the meantime, the Netherlands had very different plans for the federal states. In November 1947, it established the Komite Indonesia Serikat (KIS). This Committee for a United (read: Federal) Indonesia was chaired by Van Mook's confidant Abdulkadir Widjoatmodjo and was dominated by representatives from East Sumatra. The KIS had to make it clear to the world that not everyone in the archipelago supported the Republic and that an important movement was in favour of forming a federation.

Van Mook felt he had to pick up the pace. While the Renville Conference was still underway, he transformed the KIS into a Provisional Federal Council on 13 January 1948, which was a precursor to a transitional federal government. Husein Djajadiningrat, an academic with extensive civil service experience, became chairman. Prime Minister Beel, who was in Jakarta for talks at the time, embraced this initiative. While representatives of the states may have hoped to use the Provisional Federal Council to influence the political process, Beel was determined to have this council play only an advisory role. The Netherlands kept a tight rein on everything and ignored the NIT's demand that the Republic be included in the Provisional Federal Council.

In early February 1948, Hatta offered to assist in the formation of a federal Indonesia. He did this partly out of self-preservation, for negotiations on the implementation of the Renville Agreement had stalled and a new military attack by the Netherlands was looming. The main points of contention in the negotiations were the position of the Republican army during the period of transition – the Netherlands wanted control of all the armed forces in the archipelago but the Republic would not dream of relinquishing control

24 Elson 2008: 134.

of its own army – and the status of the Netherlands-Indonesia Union after independence. The Netherlands wanted a ‘heavy-duty’ Union that would still have influence in Indonesia, while the Republic preferred to have no Union whatsoever.

Given that the Americans were backing the Netherlands during the Renville negotiations, the Republic had no choice but to cooperate as much as possible with the plans for a federal Indonesia in order to hold off a second military action for as long as possible. Van Mook did not accept Hatta’s overtures to cooperate on the formation of a federal Indonesia, however, because he first wanted the two sides to come to firm agreements about the army and the Union.

On 9 March 1948, Van Mook presented the Provisional Federal Government (*Voorlopige Federale Regering*, VFR), which was to manage the transition to independence. The VFR was led by Van Mook himself and consisted of a dozen department heads. Six of them were senior Indonesian officials in Dutch service, including Abdulkadir Widjoatmodjo. Not a single representative of the Republic was included in the VFR, which looked very much like the East Indies government that Van Mook had envisioned back in the 1930s with its emphasis on good governance and its exclusion of Indonesian nationalists.²⁵

Around the same time, discussions were being held in Yogyakarta on the extent to which the Republic should meet the demands of the Dutch. The jurist Supomo recommended accepting Van Mook’s plans and settling for a modest position within the VFR, but other Republicans felt this would be going a step too far. Hatta was not against a federation provided that it be allowed to decide its own future, but that certainly did not appear to be the case with Van Mook’s VFR.

Politicians in the Netherlands – as well as Van Mook – were still operating on the conviction that the Republic was not a viable entity and that it had little to no popular support in most of the archipelago. They believed that in order to ensure good governance and to establish a well-balanced federation – one on which the Netherlands could assert its influence for a long time – Dutch sovereignty could under no circumstance be undermined during the transition period. With the Republic under pressure and also busy dealing with its own internal conflicts, and the Netherlands able to count on the support of the United States, Dutch political leaders had complete confidence that they would succeed in establishing a federal Indonesia under Dutch supervision.

25 Anak Agung Gde Agung 1996: 365.

Van Mook organised a conference in Bandung in late May 1948 which was attended by representatives of the federal states. The gathering was led by Adil Puradiredja from Pasundan and Sultan Hamid of Pontianak. The aim was to draw up plans for the establishment of the independent Indonesian Federation. The conference did not go smoothly. There was widespread opposition to the tight control that Van Mook exercised, and meetings became bogged down in disagreements about procedural issues. The participants wanted to express their own opinion and refused to indiscriminately accept Van Mook's plans any longer. To Van Mook's dismay, the conference dragged on until early July, when it was postponed to mid-August due to the fasting month.

In the meantime, there had been a gradual change in the American attitude towards the Netherlands and the Republic. Until early 1948, restoring the Western European economy – where the Netherlands occupied an important strategic position – had been high on the US agenda to counteract Soviet influence. In that context, it was considered appropriate that the Netherlands regain control of its former colony quickly and resume exporting from Java and Sumatra. This position was confirmed by Graham's support for the Netherlands during the Renville negotiations.

After Renville, Graham was replaced by the US diplomat Coert DuBois, who had been a US consul in Jakarta in the 1920s and appeared at first to be well disposed towards the Dutch. But over time, he began to develop more and more sympathy for the Republic and to distance himself from the hard line of the Netherlands. In addition, he questioned the viability of the federal states and was not in favour of plans to form an Indonesian federation without involving the Republic.

A clear signal of this shift in views within the UN Committee of Good Offices was the memorandum written in early June 1948 by the American and Australian members DuBois and Critchley. In it, they argued that: (1) the Republican army was inextricably part of the Republic and could not be brought under Dutch control, (2) an Indonesian interim government should be formed in which the Netherlands would have virtually no role, and (3) a constitutional convention should be established on the basis of free elections. This memo came as quite a shock to the Netherlands, but the government in The Hague still refused to see that the goalposts were being shifted. The same could be said of Van Mook, who used the VFR to continue implementing his own plan and wanted to enforce it with a second military action if necessary. But before he could do so, he had to wait for the results of the elections in the Netherlands on 7 July.

Under significant pressure from the Netherlands, DuBois was replaced on the Committee of Good Offices by US diplomat Merle Cochran. But this

switch did not help the Dutch position much because Cochran was on the same wavelength as DuBois. Indeed, the entire US State Department had shifted to a moderate pro-Republican course.

At this point, Marshall Aid to Western Europe was underway, and the last thing the United States wanted was for the Netherlands to spend this money on another military action against the Republic. Moreover, around this time an analysis by George Kennan of the State Department was circulating in Washington in which he predicted that the Cold War would move to Asia once the communist threat had receded from Western Europe thanks to Marshall Aid. Kennan noted in this context the Southeast Asian Youth Conference, held in Calcutta in February 1948, where the Soviet Union's new 'two-camp doctrine' had been propagated.²⁶ The State Department feared a wave of communist action in Southeast Asia. Under these circumstances, the United States felt that support for the moderate leaders of the Republic was the best strategy for countering the rise of a communist popular front within the Indonesian Republic. This view resulted in increasing American irritation with the Netherlands' intransigent stance towards the Republic.

The Netherlands was in danger of losing the support of not only the United States but also the federal states. The VFR Conference in Bandung was due to resume on 17 August 1948 but was overtaken by new developments. After it had adjourned in early July 1948, Anak Agung Gde Agung took the initiative to convene his own meeting of federal state representatives. This Federal Consultative Assembly (Bijeenkomst Federaal Overleg, BFO) was held in Bandung from 8 to 15 July, led by Adil Puradiredja and Anak Agung Gde Agung. By convening this meeting, the states made it known that they had had enough of Van Mook's authoritarian behaviour and that they felt the Republic should no longer be excluded from the negotiations. The meeting in Bandung also made it clear that the BFO states wanted to participate as a full-fledged partner in the discussions between the Netherlands and the Republic.

Anak Agung Gde Agung launched a bold plan in Bandung: while he was willing to have the BFO recognise Dutch sovereignty over Indonesia during the transition period, he proposed that the transitional government be led by an Indonesian triumvirate consisting of Hatta, Adil Puradiredja and himself. This transitional Republican-federal government would replace Van Mook's Provisional Federal Government, the VFR. Van Mook was given no role in the BFO proposal, which limited the role of the Netherlands to one High Commissioner who, together with the Indonesian interim

26 See Chapter 10.

government, would have a say in the finances, foreign policy and defence of the federation. The conservative states of East Sumatra, South Sumatra and West Kalimantan, which were keen to maintain a relationship with the Netherlands, finally agreed to this plan after much internal discussion. Even Sultan Hamid of Pontianak asserted that 'now we want to do it ourselves.'²⁷

Van Mook was deeply aggrieved by the BFO statement, especially because it had not been submitted to him first for approval but had been sent directly to the Dutch government in The Hague. He felt betrayed by the federation, his own brainchild, which was now acting independently and had, moreover, kicked him out. Even his own confidant, Abdulkadir Widjoatmodjo, explained to him that the BFO's actions brought an end to the sense of inferiority that the federal states always felt in relation to the Netherlands and the Republic, and that the BFO initiative offered a last chance for the Netherlands to come to some sort of understanding with the Indonesians.²⁸

The Dutch government invited a delegation of the BFO for a meeting in The Hague. Prior to their departure, a senior Dutch official from Jakarta wrote the following to Prime Minister Beel: '[...] you know how it works: offer them some recognition, a little bit of praise, some sound criticism (but not too harsh), a bit of show (but not too much) and then, after a stay of five to six days in the Netherlands, they can return.'²⁹ This was illustrative of the colonial disdain with which Dutch civil servants viewed the federal states. They seemed to have no confidence in their own creation, nor did they seem to think it possible that the leaders of the federal states were capable of undertaking meaningful actions.

When the BFO delegation arrived in The Hague, the elections in the Netherlands had already been held and a new cabinet had been named. The 7 July elections had been necessary to ratify a constitutional amendment establishing the new relationship between the Netherlands and an independent Indonesian federal state within a Union, which required a two-thirds majority in parliament.³⁰

27 Van der Wal, Drooglever and Schouten 1988: 375–7. An important concession was made to the conservative federal states: in independent Indonesia a senate was to be established in which every federal state – including the Republic – had one vote.

28 Van der Wal, Drooglever and Schouten 1988: 375–7.

29 Letter from L. Neher, representative of the Dutch government in The Hague, 26 July 1948 in Van der Wal, Drooglever and Schouten (NIB) 1988: 450.

30 The constitutional amendment was approved in September 1948. In the modified version of the amendment, the word Indonesia was used for the first time in an official Dutch government document.

By this time, there was a great deal of confusion and discontent among the Dutch people about what exactly was happening in Indonesia, who was actually in charge, and why all those young soldiers were still there risking their lives without even the beginning of a solution in sight. The people clearly felt it was high time to bring an end to it, but how to go about doing this was unclear. The election posters of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, VVD) clearly showed this dissatisfaction and impatience: 'Have you also had enough of the Republic of Indonesia? Vote for Pieter Oud.'³¹

In the elections, the ruling Catholic People's Party (KVP) retained its 32 seats in parliament, while the Labour Party lost two seats and went back to holding 27 seats. Thus, to reach a two-thirds majority, the government coalition had to be enlarged.³² After lengthy negotiations, the Christian Historical Union (CHU, 9 seats) and the liberal VVD (8 seats) joined the government coalition. Like the KVP, both parties were in favour of a hard line against the Republic and wanted to get rid of Van Mook, who they felt was far too lenient towards the Republic.³³

Despite having lost seats, the Labour Party's leader, Willem Drees, became prime minister. His priorities lay with social legislation in the Netherlands, so he handed over responsibility for resolving the 'Indonesian matter' to the KVP. It was agreed that the outgoing prime minister Louis Beel would replace Van Mook and would receive a new title: High Commissioner of the Crown. E.M.J.A. Sassen (KVP) – a cousin of the KVP leader C.P.M. Romme – replaced J.A. Jonkman (Labour Party) as minister of overseas territories. With the departure of Van Mook and Jonkman, the last representatives of the Stuwgroep of the 1930s had disappeared from the scene. They were replaced by Catholic hardliners who knew next to nothing about Indonesia but nonetheless had a clear opinion about it. Sassen saw the Republic as a communist threat, and Beel had no intention of talking to Republican leaders.

On 9 August, talks took place in The Hague between a delegation of the BFO and members of the new cabinet. Although Drees was happy with the BFO proposal for an Indonesian transitional government, it was rejected by the cabinet despite the BFO's warning that this would risk alienating many

31 De Jong 2015: 167.

32 At the time, the House of Representatives had 100 seats.

33 This left the following parties in the opposition: the Anti-Revolutionary Party (13 seats), the Communist Party of the Netherlands (8 seats), the Reformed Protestant Party (SGP, 2 seats) and the Welter List party (1 seat).

moderate Indonesians. Van Mook was once again deeply offended because he had not been allowed to attend the meetings between the cabinet and the BFO delegation. Sassen subsequently notified Van Mook on 12 August of his dismissal as lieutenant governor general in a coldly written letter that included a request that he remain in his post for the time being to deal with possible new developments within the Republic.

Beel was in favour of another military attack to bring the Republic to its knees and to unilaterally implement the Dutch plan for decolonisation. He was supported in this stance by Lieutenant General Spoor and Minister Sassen as well as his predecessor Van Mook. In the spring of 1948, the Netherlands still believed it was invulnerable. Even in August, the Dutch politicians responsible for the Indonesian question did not realise that the Netherlands had lost many friends in Indonesia and that it could no longer rely on the support of the United States. Paradoxically, this process of losing the support of the United States was soon to be expedited by a new crisis in the Republic.

10 Civil War

February–November 1948

During the first half of 1948, negotiations between the Netherlands and the Republic stagnated while Van Mook frantically continued to form federal states. The Republic had been weakened and humiliated by both the military attack in July 1947 and the Renville Agreement of January 1948. Clashes continued relentlessly along the Van Mook lines. As a result of the economic blockade by Dutch ships, shortages of clothing and medicine increased in the Republic. And in the meantime, new antagonisms were emerging in Yogyakarta, Solo and Madiun between politicians and between soldiers, culminating in a bloody civil war that brought the Republic to the brink of collapse.¹

Political regrouping

The Renville Agreement upended the more or less stabilised political relations that had developed in the Republic. The Masyumi and the PNI dominated the new cabinet led by Hatta, and the Partai Sosialis led by Amir Sjarifuddin lost influence because it was no longer part of the cabinet. After the latter party split off to create the social-democratic Partai Sosialis Indonesia, communists took control over the Partai Sosialis.

On the left side of the political spectrum, resistance to the Renville Agreement and to negotiations with the Netherlands resurged, and the slogan '100% Merdeka' was still very much in use. Muwardi, the leader of the Barisan Banteng in Solo, took the initiative to establish the Gerakan Revolusi Rakyat (GRR, People's Revolutionary Movement) at the end of January, which was joined by 41 organisations.² This radical left-wing opposition movement saw Tan Malaka as its ideological leader.

¹ This chapter is based largely on research conducted by Harry Poeze, a detailed account of which is published in Poeze 2007: 873–1391.

² The main organisations to join were the Partai Rakyat (People's Party, which had its origins in the PARI), the Partai Rakyat Djelata (Party of the Common People), the Angkatan Komunis Muda (The Young Generation of Communists), the PKI Merah (the Red PKI, a breakaway party of the PKI), the Partai Wanita Rakyat (Women's Party of the People), the Barisan Banteng (The Front of the Bull) and the Laskar Rakyat Djawa Barat (LRDB, People's Militia of West Java). This Laskar was based in West Java and was an irritant to the government and TNI. In January 1948, the LRDB was decimated by units of the TNI following a brutal confrontation.

The GRR's political programme was short but clear: it was against negotiations with the Netherlands, and it advocated for the establishment of a government with adherents of the GRR – if necessary by force. Banners displayed during a demonstration in Yogyakarta made this clear: 'Cancel Renville', 'Renville is colonial domination', 'Renville is the executioner of workers and peasants'.

Sutomo, the hero of the Battle of Surabaya who was also affectionately called Bung Tomo (Brother Tomo), sympathised with the GRR. He and his militia group were absorbed into the TNI, after which he was made a major-general. As a military officer, he was no longer allowed to give political speeches, but he worked out a clever solution to this problem. At a mass gathering, the popular Bung Tomo stood on the stage and gesticulated, but no words came out of his mouth; the speech was read out instead by his foster son, who was standing right behind him.³

The secret service reported that the GRR wanted to stage a coup in July 1948 in which Muwardi and his Barisan Banteng would play a key role. When rumours about this possible coup came out, they were strongly denied and little was heard from the GRR for some time.

The GRR had turned against not only the government but also the Front Demokrasi Rakyat (FDR, People's Democratic Front), whose leader was Amir Sjarifuddin. He was criticised for having supported the Renville Agreement, which he had signed. But in early March, the FDR made a complete turnaround by withdrawing its support of the agreement and demanding its abrogation.

In a secret decision, the FDR had defined its strategy on 5 February 1948.⁴ With the Partai Sosialis, the PKI and the Partai Buruh Indonesia setting the tone within the FDR, it turned against Hatta's 'Masyumi cabinet' and argued that Islam was essentially not compatible with communism. The FDR decided to reclaim governmental power via two tracks. The first track was above ground: propaganda would be made – in public and private meetings of members and outsiders, within the army, the police and among civil servants – for a return of the FDR in a government of national unity, and this would be disseminated through the press, pamphlets, placards and radio speeches. This emphasis on national unity was key to the FDR's decision not to openly attack Islam and was based on the belief that the Republic had to guard against the left-wing radicals of the GRR. The second track

3 For more on this, see Poeze 2007: 697, note 207. Sutomo did not last long in the TNI. At the end of January, he resigned from the army and became an independent militia leader again.

4 For more on this, see Poeze 2007: 716, 720–1.

involved preparing underground illegal actions – robberies, kidnappings, the use of criminal gangs – in order to sow social unrest in order to undermine confidence in the government and accelerate the inclusion of the FDR in a national cabinet.

The turnaround in the FDR's political programme led to a political strategy that was essentially the same as that of the GRR, but this was apparently no reason for either group to decide to work together. Too much had happened between the members of the two groups, with the repression of the *Persatuan Perjuangan* by the *Partai Sosialis* in 1946 still acting as an open wound.⁵

Plans for reorganising the armed forces

The FDR was able to capitalise on the armed forces' dissatisfaction with the cabinet's plans for reorganisation and rationalisation. Since March 1947, Hatta had been convinced that the Republican army had to become smaller, more efficient and more professional. During a working visit to Sumatra, he had experienced firsthand how local commanders acted autonomously and disobeyed orders from above. Most of North Sumatra was controlled by local warlords who simply ignored the Republic's central command – they had even attacked TNI troops. As a result, it was virtually impossible for the military to act in an efficient and coordinated manner. In November 1948, Hatta appointed Colonel Alex Kawilarang and Colonel Hidayat – both from the West Java Siliwangi Division – as new military leaders in North Sumatra and gave them the task of establishing a strong military hierarchy in the rebellious region. This intervention did not, however, solve the problems. Although a truce was reached in Tapanuli between rebellious militias and the TNI, Hatta had to resign himself to the *de facto* rule of the warlords.

In December 1947, a plan was formulated by the Amir Sjarifuddin cabinet for a reorganisation of the armed forces. This plan was subsequently approved by parliament, but it was only over the course of 1948 that the presidential cabinet led by Hatta moved forward with the ambitious Reorganisation and Rationalisation Plan (ReRa), which aimed to strengthen the power of the Republic *vis-à-vis* the numerous autonomous *laskar*. The plan's implementation was in the hands of Colonel A.H. Nasution who, as a result of the Renville Agreement, had been forced to leave West Java with most of his Siliwangi Division and had come to Yogyakarta. This evacuation was carried out loyally but with a heavy heart, for they had had to abandon strategic guerrilla

5 See Chapter 6.

bases. In late February, he was appointed deputy commander-in-chief in Yogyakarta. Nasution was a strong supporter of a modern and decisive army that was not influenced by party politics. In practice, he became the new strongman because Commander-in-Chief Sudirman was ill and weakened. Moreover, Sudirman was not eager to carry out the reorganisation because it clashed with his view that the TNI was not a professional state military but rather the armed forces of the people.

Nasution designed a reorganisation plan based on the lessons learned by the armed forces from the Dutch attack in July 1947, when it became apparent that Republican troops did not stand a chance in a direct confrontation with the Dutch army. This time a guerrilla tactic was chosen. Nasution worked out this tactic further in his concept of a 'total people's war' that was to be conducted by a decentralised force firmly rooted in society. This plan required that eight regional divisions be established in Sumatra and Java, which would come under the command of military governors. In each province, some five so-called *Wehrkreis* (military circles) were to be formed, and within these strategic circles, well-armed mobile battalions of about 500 men would operate. Beneath this level, less well-armed territorial battalions would be operating, supported at the village level by militias with local guerrilla tasks such as gathering information and mobilising the population to provide shelter and food for army units.⁶

Nasution envisaged a conventional elite army that was linked to the people through local auxiliary troops. Ideally, with the help of territorial troops, the mobile battalions would be able to carry out rapid attacks, raids and sabotage actions, after which they could disappear just as quickly with the help of the people. Although the term *Wehrkreis* refers to German military doctrines, the plan bore great similarities to the organisation of the Japanese army in Java at the end of World War II, when groups of poorly armed PETA soldiers had to operate as territorial troops under the well-armed and mobile Japanese army.⁷

Compared to the reorganisation plan, the rationalisation plan was more far-reaching in that it aimed to reduce the size of the armed forces – of which 350,000 belonged to the TNI and 470,000 to militias – to an efficient and disciplined military of 160,000 troops. This plan, which also sprang forth from the need to cut the government budget, met with strong resistance from regional and local commanders, who feared losing their autonomy,

6 Nasution 1965: 261. However, Nasution also highlights the fact that the centre of gravity of the *Wehrkreis* was at the level of the subdistrict (*kecamatan*) (1965: 168–77).

7 Nasution 1965: 176. Both Sudirman and Nasution had been part of the PETA.

income and prestige if their units were downgraded to territorial auxiliary troops.⁸

'Rationalisation' was also a euphemism for the dismissal and redundancy of many militias/*laskar* that had united under the TNI Masyarakat at the instigation of Amir Sjarifuddin and that were operating in companies, plantations and government departments. Thousands of members of this *laskar* were suddenly declared redundant. The measure also affected the *laskar* that were affiliated with political parties, which in turn stood to lose much political clout. The stakes were high, especially for the FDR, as Amir Sjarifuddin had managed to build up a large armed following via the TNI Masyarakat. The Hatta cabinet viewed rationalisation as the best way to break the FDR's influence on this *laskar*. Hatta lamented that as soon as one became a soldier, one looked down on all other kinds of work, and that many demobilised fighters therefore considered it beneath their dignity to seek other work.⁹

Solo, the powder keg of Indonesia

Solo was a political powder keg that could explode at any moment due to the presence of many armed groups. Not much had changed since the crisis in May–June 1946: the army and the opposition remained strong there, and the government was unable to take control of the city. In other words, there were plenty of sparks present to produce an explosion. The FDR and the GRR had their headquarters in Solo, and the Barisan Banteng controlled a force of 2,000 to 3,000 troops there. The FDR was backed by the sizable power of the Pesindo and the ALRI (Angkatan Laut Republik Indonesia, the navy) as well as a number of other units, all of which were united in the TNI Masyarakat. Solo was also the headquarters of the Fourth Division of the TNI, comprised of about 5,000 men, which had a reputation of being quite radical and was still under the leadership of Sutarto. And finally, the Tentara Peladjar (Student Army) was a more or less neutral factor in the city's balance of power.

The government's position in Solo had weakened as a result of the FDR having crossed over to the side of the opposition. This move was offset by the 35,000 men of the Republican Siliwangi Division who had ended up in

8 There was also opposition to the rationalisation plan within the army's most senior ranks. They feared this might be a harbinger of a new federal army that would be placed partially under Dutch command.

9 Hatta 1981: 282. The reorganisation had no effect on the Hizbullah's position in West Java, which had gained much influence after the departure of the Siliwangi Division.

and around Yogyakarta and Solo after their withdrawal from West Java. The Hatta government could count on these troops, which were relatively well armed, trained and disciplined.

Violence and kidnappings were commonly used to assert political power. The Barisan Banteng opposed the Pesindo, the Hizbullah objected to the PKI, and the princes' courts, which were fighting amongst themselves, were still being targeted by revolutionary groups. The moderate attitude of the Resident of Solo, Iskaq, also came in for criticism. Iskaq and his deputy Sudiro were kidnapped by communists on 9 November 1946 with the tacit support of the TNI. The Barisan Banteng managed to free Sudiro, and Iskaq's release came shortly thereafter following pressure from Yogyakarta. But the government was unable to take action against the kidnappers. Iskaq was transferred to another district; but his replacement, Sutardjo, who had been a senior administrator in colonial times, had even less credit with the city's political players than his predecessor and disappeared from the political scene before long. Other candidates did not dare to venture into this hornet's nest. In March 1947, Sudiro was appointed Resident, and he managed to maintain a fragile balance.

At the end of March, the Republican government in Solo turned its attention towards the units of Sutomo's Barisan Pemberontakan Rakyat Indonesia (BPRI), which it sought to demobilise as part of the rationalisation of the military. Another reason the BPRI units were targeted was that they had been accused of criminal activity, including the terrorisation of kampongs and the extortion of civilians. The plan encountered fierce resistance. The BPRI refused to cooperate in the reorganisation and barricaded itself. The government then requested help from the Tentara Peladjar, a strong army unit led by Achmadi. On 27 March, the Tentara Peladjar joined forces with the police to attack the BPRI. After a brief period of resistance, the BPRI surrendered, and 785 men were detained but quickly released.¹⁰ Soon after, units of the Barisan Banteng were also disarmed but not arrested. BPRI leader Sutomo rushed to Solo, where he attributed the conflict to a 'misunderstanding'. He asked for the return of all the weapons seized from the BPRI and even went on a hunger strike to force the issue.¹¹

The action taken by the Tentara Peladjar was part of a much larger operation that also targeted corrupt figures who had maintained close contacts with the FDR in Solo. Sukarno and Sudirman supported the purge, and the situation

10 The local BPRI commander Mardjuki was later sentenced to death and executed.

11 Reports of the outcome of the hunger strike could not be found in the press or anywhere else. The conflict was most likely resolved amicably.

was serious enough for a curfew to be imposed. The Barisan Banteng also called on its members in late March to remain 'calm and ready', emphasising that it wanted to resolve the issue 'without damage to our organisation'.

In early May, the Barisan Banteng spoke out in support of the government's policies and the fight against corruption. It also decided to have its members travel *en masse* to Yogyakarta on 8 May to pledge their allegiance to the president.¹² Led by Muwardi and Sutomo, 190 men, women and children appeared at the palace in Yogyakarta. In the palace garden, all visitors took an oath of allegiance to the government in front of Sukarno and his wife. Visibly moved, Sukarno responded to their gesture, and the group was given food and drink before they returned to Solo. Despite this moment of solidarity, the dismantling of the BPRI and Barisan Banteng had largely failed, and that did not bode well for dealing with the much larger *laskar* of the Pesindo or the Hizbullah.

The reorganisation of parts of the TNI also presented its own problems. The existing seven divisions were reduced to three, with the western and eastern parts of Central Java and East Java serving as bases. In addition, the Siliwangi Division was maintained as a General Reserve unit (Kesatuan Reserve Umum, KRU) with Solo as its headquarters. On 15 May, the TNI Masyarakat was disbanded. These proposals were signed by Sukarno on 4 May and caused no major resistance except in East Java where the Sixth Division under Sungkono refused to cooperate in any way. Citing the key military balance *vis-à-vis* the Netherlands, Sudirman subsequently postponed the entire reorganisation. This also suited the Fourth Division under Sutarto in Solo, which was able to retain its autonomy.

During a parade on 20 May, Sutarto's entire Fourth Division passed through the city followed by numerous *laskar* in a show of force against the plans of the government and the army command. At the presidential palace in Yogyakarta, a fierce discussion between Sukarno, Hatta and Sudirman finally led to the conclusion that the entire reorganisation plan had to be withdrawn. Sudirman was subsequently given a mandate to chart his own course. As a result, the 'old' divisions returned under their own commanders.¹³ For Nasution, all this was a bitter pill, for his plans had been pushed aside. In June, Sutarto's Fourth Division was renamed the Pertempuran Panembahan Senopati.¹⁴

12 In this way, the Barisan Banteng was able to distance itself from the GRR.

13 The category of 'division' was renamed Komando Pertempuran (Combat Command).

14 Senopati was the name of the founder of the sixteenth-century Central Javanese empire of Mataram.

The headquarters of the Siliwangi Division – now known as the General Reserve – was in Solo and a Siliwangi Brigade under Lieutenant Colonel Sadikin was also stationed there. The Siliwangi troops were not welcome in Solo. They were seen as an occupying force whose billeting costs weighed heavily on the people. The Senopati Division, with its radical populist streak, was very different from the Siliwangi Division, with its well-educated men who held elitist and sometimes conservative views. Ethnic differences between the Javanese Senopati and the Sundanese Siliwangi also played a role. Tensions arose regularly in both divisions' attempts to seize scarce goods and food. The consequences were dramatic for the Siliwangi soldiers in Solo, as the people refused to sell their food to them and horse-drawn carriage drivers drove right past them, ignoring their requests for transport. Added to all the slander and incitement, these actions had an impact on the state of mind of the troops.

The 3 July trial

The rising tension between the government and the FDR dominated the domestic political system in 1948. There may have been an opportunity for the government to deploy the GRR and Tan Malaka's supporters as a leftist counterweight to the threat posed by the FDR, but the mass arrests of leftist leaders in March 1946 and after 3 July 1946 were still an open wound that spoiled political relations.¹⁵ Some of those who had been arrested were gradually released. More than 20 men were still incarcerated, including the group involved in the 3 July coup attempt such as Sudarsono, Subardjo and Yamin.

Much to everyone's surprise, a trial against the 3 July coup plotters was brought to the High Military Court – led by the Leiden-trained lawyer Kusumaatmadja – in December 1947. Seventeen men were indicted but Tan Malaka, Sukarni and Abikusno were not among them, and no explanation was given for this exclusion.

The trial opened on 19 February and closed on 27 May 1948, after 39 days of hearings, with the reading of the verdict. In the trial room, a space of six by fifteen metres filled with dozens of people and with insufficient ventilation, the journalist Mashud noted that it became increasingly hot and oppressive over the course of the day. The only source of coolness was a gentle breeze from the back window through which the loud chatter of weaver birds in the papaya trees infiltrated the courtroom.¹⁶

15 See Chapters 6 and 7.

16 Mashud, 'Meski bumi tenggelam; 3 Djuli: perkara terbesar,' *Tindjauan* 1–11 (7 April 1948): 5–6.

The number of high-ranking defendants and witnesses made this trial unique in Indonesian history. The charge, which was based on Dutch East Indies law, was that an attack had been committed with the intention of bringing about a political upheaval. Twenty-one witnesses were examined, including Amir Sjarifuddin and Sudirman.

During the interrogation of Division Commander Sudarsono, Judge Kusumaatmadja was stunned by the lawless manner in which Prime Minister Sjahrir had been kidnapped in June 1946:

Judge: 'A division commander who is swayed by a chief of police to write an arrest warrant. You must have been in agreement with it.'

Sudarsono: 'I thought it was in the national interest.'

Judge: 'And what do you have to say in terms of the manner in which it was done?'

Sudarsono: 'He said, "Let me settle the matter." And the consequences were his responsibility.'

Judge: 'All this was carried out in the national interest. Didn't you think it would be good to first discuss this matter with the President?'

Sudarsono: 'I didn't think so because the President himself had advocated that anyone who betrayed his country should be eliminated.'

Judge: 'But this country is governed by the rule of law and there are limits to the authority entitled to you. And do not forget that the arrest was carried out on someone who held an official government post. That should first be discussed with your superior or the President or the Panglima Besar [supreme commander].'¹⁷

The words of the judge reflected his exasperation with the lack of understanding for the rule of law and clashed with Sudarsono's own ideas about his powers.

The public prosecutor found the defendants guilty of plotting a coup and called for a total of 91 years in prison for the 17 defendants. But Kusumaatmadja ruled that only seven defendants receive a total of 21 years in prison.

Although a paragon of independence and incorruptibility, Kusumaatmadja was under pressure from higher political powers. To Rev. Harahap, the person he considered his 'best friend', he confessed the following – which he had not even told his wife – in April 1949:

I was ordered not to give Yamin and his friends too severe a punishment, let alone the death penalty. For the first time in my splendid career, I had

17 *Stenographic report* 1948: 52, interrogation of Sudarsono, 6 March 1948.

to pronounce a verdict 'against my better judgment'. Do you know what all this has meant for me? I am now suffering from high blood pressure as a result of this wrongful verdict, which I was told was in the national interest and was necessary for equilibrium in the political situation. (Yamin and his friends were needed in the fight against Amir.) I am convinced that I will die as a result of this high blood pressure.¹⁸

This trial seemed to put the Republic on the map as a state governed by the rule of law, but the verdict that was imposed on the judge illustrated its political nature. On 17 August 1948, Sukarno pardoned the convicts, citing their invaluable support for the struggle for independence. Tan Malaka, Sukarni and Abikusno remained imprisoned.

Political rapprochement

On the political front, the FDR wanted to demonstrate that it was politically moderate in order to enable its return to government. It received unexpected help in this from the Masyumi, which at its party congress in late March had called on all parties to 'form a democratic front' so as to face the international crisis. What was remarkable about the Masyumi congress was the presence of Vice Chairman Abikusno,¹⁹ who had been freed from the Republican prison in Madiun by an armed Hizbullah unit just before the congress. The government took no measures against the Hizbullah.

The Masyumi's call for unity was welcomed by the other major political parties as well as the FDR. To demonstrate its goodwill, the FDR even stated in a manifesto that it supported the Renville Agreement and was in favour of negotiations with the Netherlands and a federal form of government.

Voices of unity also prevailed at the festive gathering on 20 May to commemorate the founding of the first nationalist political society Budi Utomo in 1908, which marked the official birth of Indonesian nationalism. Sukarno was presented with a resolution that stressed the need to pursue national unity. A week later, Prime Minister Hatta invited the parties for consultations to form a broad government.

During the consultations, objections were raised against the FDR joining the government, causing the talks to drag on and become mired in friction. The Masyumi and the PNI were in no hurry to form a government. It was not until mid-July that an agreement was reached on a National Programme, which

18 Harahap 1971, II: 22–3. Kusumaatmadja died in 1952 at the age of 53.

19 He had since returned to the Masyumi from the PSII.

appeared radical but was vaguely worded. Many issues – such as elections, agrarian reforms, labour legislation – had simply been put on the back burner.

When representatives of the FDR were invited to Hatta's house at the end of July, they expected to finally be able to discuss their participation in government. But Hatta sidestepped the subject, after which it became apparent that the Masyumi and the PNI were against the idea of a new cabinet. New consultations that took place in early August once again failed to lead to any result. The government had strung the FDR along for months. This was the point at which the FDR's above-ground track came to a dead end. It was clear that other actions were needed to regain power.

The strike in Delanggu

The FDR thus opted for extra-parliamentary action, and just such an opportunity arose in Delanggu, situated between Yogyakarta and Solo, where strikes had broken out at the end of May in a textile factory and nearby cotton plantations.

Fifteen thousand workers stopped working in the strikes. The SOBSI union of plantation workers, Sarbupri (short for Sarekat Buruh Perkebunan Republik Indonesia, the Union of Plantation Workers of the Republic of Indonesia), had many adherents among the workers in Delanggu and campaigned for their demands. Sarbupri demanded that workers in Delanggu receive higher wages and payments-in-kind in the form of rice and textiles, and that these benefits also be extended to seasonal workers and sharecroppers, who were precluded from such arrangements.

Negotiations with the employer, the government agency Badan Tekstil Negara (BTN), led nowhere. The conflict simmered for a few weeks, and after further negotiations the strikers suspended their action. The matter had not yet developed into a major conflict.

The conflict became serious when the leadership of the FDR decided to seek confrontation. The prospects for the FDR were favourable. The Sarbupri was strong in Delanggu, and a large majority of the workers supported the demands. The FDR was able to target the 'feudal and colonial methods' that the public company BTN used to organise its production. The intermediaries who had traditionally helped resolve conflicts between the factories and the labourers were now employed by the BTN as civil servants and were abusing their position, and officials in the ministry of economic affairs were their eager accomplices. This corruption was ultimately the responsibility of Sjafruddin Prawiranegara, the minister and Masyumi leader; as a result, he was the focus of the FDR's accusations.

Strikes in the textile sector were a touchy matter because there was a severe shortage of textiles in the Republic. Delanggu was, moreover, the largest producer of textiles. And the cotton in the fields was at that moment in its growth phase, requiring an enormous amount of care. If there were no workers to provide that care, the harvest would be ruined.

On 23 June, the SOBSI issued a call to strike that was heeded by 16,000 workers. The SOBSI had appointed experienced strike leaders who ensured that the strike proceeded in a disciplined manner. The press and the political parties of the FDR supported the action, and declarations of solidarity poured in.

The strike threatened to spread to other industries and take on larger political dimensions. In Delanggu itself, the conflict between workers and management turned into a confrontation between the FDR and the Masyumi as strikers clashed with members of the Sarekat Tani Islam Indonesia (STII, Islamic Farmers' Union of Indonesia). The STII had mobilised its members to take over the work on the fields as strikebreakers. Hizbullah fighters occupied nearby villages.

An explosive situation had arisen in Delanggu that the government wanted to neutralise swiftly, for which a commission of inquiry was appointed at the end of June. On 9 July, a three-day debate on the strike was initiated in the Working Committee of the Republican parliament. The centre of Yogyakarta was full of posters. A large number of FDR supporters had surrounded the parliament building, and protesters began to fire their weapons into the air. The representatives of the FDR in the Working Committee proposed that parliament adopt a decision in principle that vindicated the strikers, but its proposal was rejected. A resolution was nonetheless passed urging continued consultation. The FDR then hinted that the strike would be expanded. The Sarbupri threatened to call on all businesses in Delanggu to strike if the government did not promptly remove Hizbullah forces from the region.

A solution did not seem to be within reach, and in Delanggu the situation got out of hand. On 10 July – as the Working Committee was meeting – a grave incident took place when 25 members of the Islamic STII went to work in the cotton fields under the surveillance of the Hizbullah. Responding to this provocation, 500 strikers – led by Maruto Darusman, the Sarbupri chairman and PKI leader – demonstrated, resulting in a fight in which one person was killed.

When abductions began to take place back and forth, the government reacted quickly. A curfew was immediately imposed, and the TNI soldiers stationed in the region took up positions.

The SOBSI protested vehemently against the military intervention. Twenty-five SOBSI unions decided to initiate strikes in all the vital industries if the military refused to withdraw. The situation threatened to escalate.

According to the newspaper *Sin Po*, from the very beginning of the Revolution the military and the workers had never been united. During the Revolution, the military had increasingly expanded its influence within businesses and plantations in order to extract resources for its soldiers. Throughout the Republic, the military wielded power arbitrarily with the tip of the bayonet, to the detriment of good business management. Although the workers hitherto had no choice but to yield to this power, they refused to do so any longer now that they were supported by their own strong organisation.²⁰

Hatta decided to intervene. In mid-July he consulted with all the parties and managed to secure an agreement between the SOBSI and the BTN. The demands of the strikers were accepted in principle. Many executives had been abusive and would be prosecuted, but new strikes were to be banned.

Diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union

Relations between the government and the FDR were further muddied when, at the end of May, the Soviet news agency Tass announced that an agreement had been signed on 22 May 1948 between the Soviet Union and the Republic on the establishment of diplomatic relations. The Hatta cabinet reacted with surprise. The agreement embarrassed the government in its negotiations with the Netherlands but also worsened the already polarised domestic relations.

The agreement was signed in Prague by the Republic's special envoy, Suripno.²¹ Sjahrir had sent him to a youth conference in Prague, where he opened an information office of the Republic of Indonesia. His contacts also extended to the Soviet embassy in Prague. In April, Moscow recognised the importance of establishing relations with the Republic, whereupon the embassy in Prague expressed to Suripno its interest in exchanging consuls, provided the Republic took the initiative. The Cold War had begun, and in recognising the Republic of Indonesia, the Soviet Union was able to demonstrate its anti-colonial credentials.

²⁰ 'SOBSI siapken pemogokan di peroesahaan vital,' *Sin Po*, 17 July 1948.

²¹ Suripno had studied in the Netherlands and endured the German occupation there. He was a prominent member of the Perhimpunan Indonesia and had converted to communism. At the end of 1946, he returned to Indonesia.

In early January 1948, Suripno received a mandate from Sukarno to talk to the Soviets. At the end of May, the final decision was taken in Moscow to establish consular relations with the Republic.

In Yogyakarta, the government stated that it was not aware of the agreement with the Soviet Union, and Foreign Minister Agus Salim said Suripno was not authorised to conclude such a deal. Suripno was ordered to return to Yogyakarta immediately.

The Netherlands naturally reacted to this news with indignation because the Republic had not complied with the Renville Agreement, which stipulated that the Netherlands would manage Indonesia's foreign relations. Moreover, the agreement confirmed the increasing communist influence in the Republic. In June, Hatta hastened to assure the world that the agreement would not be ratified.

The FDR immediately launched a major publicity offensive, calling the agreement a diplomatic victory.²² The deal also brought Moscow closer to the FDR.

The arrival of Musso

Suripno did not appear in Yogyakarta until 11 August and was immediately received by Hatta. After the meeting, he informed the press that there was no agreement on diplomatic relations between the Republic and the Soviet Union but that a deal had been made to improve trade relations. Suripno's diplomatic career came to an end with this incident, and he subsequently became an activist for the FDR.

Suripno was accompanied on his long journey from Prague to Yogyakarta by his secretary, Suparto, who turned out to be none other than the PKI veteran Musso. The two had met in Prague in March 1948 and had had long discussions about the FDR and the PKI. Musso had been in exile in the Soviet Union since 1926 and had secretly returned to Java in 1935 at Moscow's behest. During his six-month stay, he had founded the PKI Muda (the Young PKI) in an effort to revive the PKI. Despite all the efforts of the Dutch, this illegal organisation had never been dismantled in its entirety. It was through the PKI Muda that a number of FDR leaders, including Amir Sjarifuddin, had been introduced to communism.

Musso was the ideal messenger for Moscow. He was a loyal follower of Stalin and had an almost legendary status in Indonesia. He also had a

²² The left-radical GRR also welcomed the agreement; the Masyumi and the PNI took a wait-and-see attitude.

reputation for being impatient and authoritarian, which was an endorsement for Moscow because after his return to Java he was sure to encounter resistance among his sympathisers. But there was a great lack of knowledge and understanding in Moscow about the latest developments in Indonesia. The same could be said of Musso after more than 20 years of exile.

The Soviet Union viewed the Republic after 1945 as a successful example of cooperation between communist and bourgeois parties, but this cooperation came to an end with the resignation of Amir Sjarifuddin following the Renville Agreement. In the meantime, in Moscow, the 'two-camp doctrine' of Andrei Zhdanov had been established as a guideline, which posited an irreconcilable conflict between the 'imperialist and antidemocratic camp' and the 'anti-imperialist and democratic camp'. The Central Committee and the Politburo in Moscow had some sharp words of criticism for the PKI: the acceptance of the Renville Agreement, the rejection of armed resistance, its collaboration with right-wing parties, and the fragmentation of communist forces across different parties. The party leaders in Moscow felt that this had to stop. Moscow wanted Musso to align the Indonesian communists with the new two-camp doctrine. Musso said that he had been sent by Stalin to prevent Indonesia from ending up in the American sphere of influence.²³

On 11 August, Suripno and Musso showed up in Solo, and two days later Sukarno received them at the palace in Yogyakarta. Their conversation took place in an easy-going atmosphere.

Before leaving, Bung Karno [Sukarno's nickname] asked whether Pak Musso would give his support to strengthen the state and promote the revolution. Pak Musso's answer was not elaborate: 'That is of course my duty. I come here to establish order.'²⁴

Musso said these last ominous words in Dutch. Thirty years earlier, Sukarno and Musso had been boarders together in the boarding house of Tjokroamirnoto in Surabaya. Their 1948 meeting was a one-off event.

The New Path

Musso immediately began imposing his political views on his party colleagues. The Politburo of the PKI met on 13 and 14 August, where Musso

23 Before leaving Europe, Musso had consulted extensively with Soviet diplomats and leaders of the Communist Party of the Netherlands.

24 The word 'pak' in Indonesian is short for 'bapak', which means 'father' and was used as a term of respect. *Revolusioner*, 19 August 1948, in Poeze 2007: 1091–2.

gave an account of the Party's organisational and political mistakes. After an 'in-depth discussion', a resolution was adopted that came to be known as *Djalan Baru untuk Republik Indonesia* (the New Path for the Republic of Indonesia). Major mistakes had been made, causing the PKI to lose its leading position. The fact that there was not one workers' party but three – the above-ground PKI, the Partai Buruh Indonesia and the Partai Sosialis, all of which were led by the illegal PKI – had led to much confusion.

During the exchange of views with Comrade Musso in the Politburo, criticism and self-criticism were freely shared. All Politburo members openly and unanimously acknowledged their mistakes and were ready to make amends as soon as possible.²⁵

The radical solution for the mistakes that had been made was the establishment of one legal workers' party. The illegal PKI – which still led the leftist movement – had to be disbanded, and the three Popular Front parties had to be merged as soon as possible into 'one workers' party with the historic name of PKI'.²⁶

The second part of *Djalan Baru* pertained to the political mistakes. The reformist policies of the PKI overlooked the fact that Indonesia was part of the proletarian world revolution. It had also been a great mistake for the Amir Sjarifuddin cabinet to voluntarily resign after the Renville Agreement, which then paved the way for a bourgeois government. Musso recalled Lenin's theorem here: 'The main question in any revolution is the question of state power.' The *Djalan Baru* maintained that it was the PKI's duty to complete the national revolution by combining all the progressive forces with the help of the FDR.

Djalan Baru was a forthright document. Its criticism of the leaders of the FDR was scathing. Musso spared no one, reproaching the top leaders of the PKI in a 'harsh and terrifying' manner and bringing them back into line with Moscow. The PKI leaders swallowed the criticism in good Stalinist fashion. Amir Sjarifuddin, the leader of the FDR, also offered little resistance. His resignation after the Renville Agreement was a cardinal sin in the political sense – and he clearly felt guilty about it. Musso was now the 'dominant figure, a very good speaker, a magnetic personality who brusquely' imposed his new path without encountering any challenge.²⁷

25 *Djalan Baru* 1951: 6–10 in Poeze 2007: 1095–6.

26 *Djalan Baru* 1951: 10–1 in Poeze 2007: 1096.

27 For sources, see Poeze 2007: 1099–1111. The quote is by Siauwi Giok Tjhan (interviewed by Poeze, Amsterdam, 19 November 1981).

Djalan Baru had been set down on paper on 14 August but was not made public until a week later. On 22 August, Musso gave a four-hour speech at the press club in Yogyakarta, where he arrived accompanied by a truck full of heavily armed Pesindo fighters. He said, among other things, that there were ties of friendship between him and Sukarno and Hatta but that he disagreed with them politically: 'They are *petit bourgeois*.' He made very clear his dislike for the incumbent Masyumi-PNI cabinet. He felt that this weak government had to be replaced by a strong communist government under his leadership. Supporters of Tan Malaka who had hoped for a rapprochement between their leader and Musso were disappointed, for Musso characterised Tan Malaka as a cursed Trotskyist. 'If I took power, I would have him summarily executed.'

When asked whether there was a possibility of civil war breaking out, Musso replied that it depended on the circumstances but that he hoped it would not happen. If the workers and farmers were forced into it, there would certainly be fighting. And, he said, 'the red troops of the Soviet Union could be swiftly directed here at any moment.'

Musso became confused when asked if he wanted to take Sukarno's place: 'Yyyy...yes; if the people want that. But... but... yes, that's how it is.'²⁸

Implementing the Djalan Baru

The executive committee of the SOBSI met with representatives of 32 of its unions on 22 August, where political mistakes were acknowledged and a new militant course was set out.

A PKI conference on 26 and 27 August approved Musso's plans and elected him as general secretary. No purge at the highest level was carried out: all the prominent figures of the FDR were welcomed back into the fold of the new Politburo, and the leaders of the illegal PKI were reinstated in the general secretariat.²⁹

In towns and cities, the PKI set up local Front Nasional committees that elected their own directors. It was through these committees that the PKI planned to mobilise the masses to overthrow the Hatta cabinet.³⁰ The SOBSI also made preparations for a confrontation. In the companies where the

28 Poeze 2007: 1107–10. Kahin (2003: 51) notes that Musso spoke an old-fashioned kind of Malay/Indonesian that dated from the 1920s.

29 PKI leaders Alimin and Sardjono were put on the sidelines as punishment for their moderate political line. Old disagreements between Musso and Alimin from their time in Moscow had apparently not been forgotten.

30 'Andyran Musso didjalankan', *Sin Po*, 7 September 1948, in Poeze 2007: 1116–7.

SOBSI had a large following, plans were made to resist Hatta's measures through the staging of strikes in all the vital industries and vandalism.³¹

Amir Sjarifuddin's divulgence

On 29 August, Amir Sjarifuddin caused a stir when he disclosed in an interview that he had been a member of the illegal PKI since 1935 and that the Gerindo he had subsequently led had been a cover for communist activities. This was followed by similar statements from Setiadjit, the leader of the Partai Buruh Indonesia, and others.

The general reaction to Amir's statement was one of great surprise. Sukarno, Hatta and Abu Hanifah could hardly believe it. Many knew Amir as a devout Christian and believed that this was incompatible with his avowed communist sympathies.

Amir became convinced in the late 1930s that the struggle against fascism required left-wing groups to cooperate with bourgeois parties in accordance with Stalin's popular front policy. His acceptance of 25,000 guilders from the Dutch authorities to organise underground resistance against the Japanese was in line with this philosophy. In those years he belonged to the leadership of the underground PKI. But was he indeed also a communist?

According to George Kahin, who had firsthand experience of Amir in Yogyakarta in 1948, Amir felt betrayed and humiliated by the United States after the Renville Agreement, as the Americans had not kept their promises. And thus he felt that the Republic was left with no other choice but to enter into an alliance with the Soviet Union.³² Others believed that his declaration was a tactical move to prevent Musso from depriving him of the leadership of the leftist movement in Indonesia – or else that he at least wanted to seize power together with Musso.

In his biography of Amir, Gerry van Klinken says he does not believe that Amir was already a convinced communist in the 1930s. Van Klinken believes that Amir's 'confession' should be seen as a dramatic gesture.³³

The Siliwangi officer Simatupang, who thought he knew Amir well, was also surprised. He was convinced that Amir was a committed nationalist and a devout Christian but doubted whether he was also a communist. Could Amir be a Christian and a communist at the same time?³⁴ An anecdote that

31 'SOBSI siapken lagi pemogokan', *Sin Po*, 14 September 1948, in Poeze 2007: 1117.

32 Kahin 2003: 31–2, 51. Coast (2015: 170) agrees with this.

33 Van Klinken 2003: 198–201.

34 Simatupang 1985: 96–7.

Simatupang recalled in the 1980s seems to dispel that doubt.³⁵ He said that during the struggle against the Netherlands, the churches in Yogyakarta were not visited by many Christians for fear that they would be mistaken for being pro-Dutch. An exception were the times when Amir preached – then the church was packed. He tended to preach about the prophets of the Old Testament such as Amos, Jeremiah and Isaiah – stories that focused on the fight against injustice, which he had read during his captivity under Japanese rule. The faith-inspired pursuit of justice was a key driver in Amir's life, and communism gave him the opportunity to achieve that justice.

Hatta's reaction

The leftist parties were in a rush to implement Musso's plans. On 30 August, the Party Council of the Partai Sosialis drew up an extensive self-criticism and decided to approve its merger with the PKI. The party leaders of the Pesindo expressed their full support for a merger. The executive council of the Partai Buruh Indonesia also agreed but had their reservations. In a meeting between PBI leaders and Musso, Trimurti questioned whether the PKI deserved to take on the leading role and could really win the trust of the people given the many mistakes it had made in the past. Musso replied that this was a Trotskyist question that did not deserve to be answered.

The next phase consisted of the screening of members of the merging parties. The 3,000 PKI members would mostly be allowed to join; but of the 30,000 members of the Partai Sosialis and of the much smaller Partai Buruh Indonesia, only half were able to pass the test. The left-wing radicals of the GRR were excluded from the merger plans. The PBI was scheduled to formally approve the merger in September but due to new developments (see below), this never happened.

On 31 August, Musso travelled to Solo where he spoke alongside Alimin at a public PKI meeting attended by 10,000 supporters. Musso listed all the mistakes of the past and argued that those responsible should be severely punished. The audience agreed, and many shouted 'String 'em up!' But, Musso continued, they had already been punished enough when they publicly admitted their mistakes. Musso claimed that the government consisted of feudal and petty bourgeois elements with a colonial background, which had to be replaced as soon as possible by workers and communists.

35 This information comes from Nico Schulte Nordholt, which in turn is based on discussions with Simatupang and Sitor Situmorang. See also Wellem 1982: 166, in which the missionary preacher J. Verkuyl confirms this interpretation.

The TNI was 'a fascist army, oppressing and robbing the people.' Alimin, in turn, called for agrarian reforms.

Soon after this gathering, the government determined its position. On 2 September, Hatta gave an account of his cabinet's policy to the Parliamentary Working Committee. In a speech of an hour and a half, he defended his policy and kept open the possibility of a diplomatic agreement with the Netherlands. According to Hatta, internal political opposition threatened the position of the Republic, especially after the FDR had shifted its stance from defending the Linggadjadi and Renville agreements to opposing them. The FDR opted for an anti-imperialist front led by the Soviet Union, which was odd, Hatta sighed: 'The parties responsible for Renville now want to withdraw from it. And the parties that were initially against Renville are now doing their best to implement it.' This was a consequence of the international conflict between the United States and Russia, Hatta explained, but he did not want to have to side with one or the other power: 'We do not want to become an object in the international political conflict.' Upholding the fledgling democracy was of paramount importance to the government, Hatta stressed, and if the welfare of the state were ever threatened, the government would take corrective action – with an iron fist, if necessary.³⁶

Finally, Hatta reminded the Parliamentary Working Committee that the plan was for his cabinet to be replaced shortly by a parliamentary cabinet. Despite the support given to the Program Nasional by the parliament, the mutual distrust between the parties proved too great to form a new government.³⁷

The FDR newspapers accused Hatta of trying to extend the life of his cabinet and of intimidating the FDR, concluding that a new FDR cabinet was needed. On 20 September, Hatta appeared before the Working Committee to respond to the criticism. There was a large audience, and the radio carried a live broadcast of the meeting. For two hours, Hatta patiently stated his views again. He reiterated that while the government would not suppress

36 In 1951 Roger Vailland claimed that secret talks took place between US and Republican delegations in the East Java mountain town of Sarangan between 18 and 21 July 1948. In exchange for USD 56 million, the Republic is said to have agreed to launch an attack on the PKI, which was codenamed The Red Drive. This is, however, fake news that was spread across the world by the Dutch Communist Party MP Paul de Groot and the communist newspaper *De Waarheid*. Cochran, who would have played an important role in such talks, could not possibly have been present at the secret discussion because he only arrived in Java on 9 August. He was indeed concerned about a possible leftist takeover but there is no trace of evidence that the Republic ever received USD 56 million. For a detailed explanation of the falsity of this claim, see Poeze 2007: 1186–9; 1330–2.

37 Poeze 2007: 1136–7.

any ideology of any kind, anarchist acts – no matter who the perpetrators were – and troublemakers who endangered the state would be eliminated. The government was well aware of the increase in the level of unrest and would use all its resources to restore calm. ‘We call on the people: support the government with your strength, your commitment and your trust.’³⁸

Hatta also mentioned – almost in passing – that the head of the District Court of Solo had decided on 15 September that there were insufficient grounds to prosecute Tan Malaka, Sukarni and Abikusno and had therefore ordered their release from custody. The fact that Abikusno had already been liberated at the end of March was not mentioned, as that narrative better suited everyone involved.

On 31 August, the army command also met to discuss the tense political situation. Colonel Nasution felt that Musso and his men were systematically trying to overthrow the Republican government and seize power, and that if the government was incapable of curbing Musso’s activities, the army would have to take measures. Sudirman agreed.

At the same time, the military leaders decided to reject the option of ‘wiping out’ the Musso opposition, as that would play too much into the hands of the Netherlands. The best way forward seemed to be to curb the opposition and bring it within ‘healthy limits’. This conclusion underlined the need to carry on with the thorough and rapid reorganisation of the armed forces, since it was crucial for the army to ensure that its troops obeyed their leaders, to not allow infiltrations and to not tolerate armed troops outside its organisation.

Musso stepped up the political pressure. He embarked on a tour of mass gatherings that spurred people into action. In front of large crowds, Amir Sjarifuddin and Setiadjit gave their support for Musso’s *Djalan Baru* and set forth their humiliating self-criticism. By this point, the Masyumi and the PNI joined in condemning the FDR, while the left-wing radicals of Tan Malaka’s GRR were also targeting their actions against the FDR. Speculation was mounting about a ‘swift and dramatic showdown’.

The Battle of Solo

In Solo, tensions between the Siliwangi troops and the Senopati units intensified when TNI Division Commander Sutarto was assassinated outside his home on 2 July. An extensive police investigation turned up nothing, but rumours immediately began to spread that the perpetrators were on the side

38 Poeze 2007: 1140–1.

of the Siliwangi. There was a suspicion that the government and Siliwangi were more than fed up with Sutarto's opposition to the rationalisation and reorganisation of the armed forces.³⁹

Sutarto was succeeded by Suadi, a sympathiser of Sudirman who had no clear political affiliations but was loyal to his troops. In the meantime, Pesindo troops had entered Solo and established their own headquarters there.

Several politically charged incidents took place during July and the first half of August. Outside Solo, left-wing naval troops clashed with the pro-government Mobile Brigade, but Sudirman brought this to an end. The next crisis was caused by the misconduct of soldiers of a Siliwangi battalion, which was subsequently removed from the city.

From mid-August onwards, the antagonisms intensified when military violence was accompanied by political actions by Musso, Alimin, Amir Sjarifuddin and Setiadjit, causing tempers to flare in Solo. The Masyumi called on everyone to support the government.

On 1 September, two local PKI leaders were kidnapped. The leaders of the Senopati sent five of its officers to investigate the two who were missing, but these five also disappeared and their bicycles were later found at Siliwangi headquarters. A day later, another Senopati officer who had been sent to investigate disappeared.

A confrontation between the Senopati and the Siliwangi seemed inevitable. When the Siliwangi did not return the kidnapped Senopati officers, it was regarded as highly likely that they had been killed. The Siliwangi leaders could no longer deny this and prepared themselves for an act of revenge by Senopati forces. Another factor in the escalation was the irritation felt by Siliwangi soldiers as a result of attempts by the FDR to infiltrate the Siliwangi. Siliwangi units outside Solo were ordered to enter the city, and reinforcements were requested from Yogyakarta.

Tensions flared even higher when, on the night of 8–9 September, 'armed military units'⁴⁰ raided the Pesindo headquarters in Solo and stole piles of documents.

The confrontations between rival military units and between competing political parties created an explosive situation. But it was crucial that 'calm' be maintained for just a few more days, for on 9 September, Sukarno opened the first National Sports Week (Pekan Olahraga Nasional, PON) in Solo in

39 The FDR was also suspected of being behind the assassination, given that it considered Sutarto to be too closely associated with Sudirman.

40 Presumably these were units of the Barisan Banteng.

the presence of Hatta, Sudirman, the Sultan of Yogyakarta and the Solo princes as well as many ministers and diplomats. It was a major event for the Republic, and a disruption of the event would have been a fiasco. In the beginning, the situation remained calm.

On 10 September, Suadi, the Senopati commander, issued an ultimatum to the Siliwangi to release the missing officers. Sudirman supported him and summoned Siliwangi commander Sadikin. But by openly siding with the Senopati soldiers, Sudirman abandoned his role as arbitrator and failed to get a grip on the events. The death of another Senopati officer as a result of Siliwangi fire opened the battle. The Siliwangi troops managed to hold their own with great difficulty until auxiliary troops from Yogyakarta came to relieve them. The centre of Solo was now in the hands of the Siliwangi. Negotiations on a ceasefire were conducted with little conviction on both sides.

On 13 September, the crisis deepened as a result of the kidnapping of Muwardi, the leader of the Barisan Banteng, from the hospital where he worked as a doctor. He disappeared without a trace, and his disappearance has to this day not been clarified. Due to Muwardi's kidnapping – most likely by a local Pesindo unit – the Barisan Banteng also became fully involved in the conflict.

The Siliwangi decided to continue its action, and as a result, new battalions entered the city. The occupation was completed on 14 September. The Senopati forces were driven out and had to regroup outside the city. On 15 September, Sudirman ordered all troops to retreat to their barracks. He also said that all Siliwangi troops should leave Solo, after which Senopati units could take up their positions again. But Nasution disagreed with this, whereupon Sudirman backtracked and had Nasution draft a decree that maintained the *status quo*, allowing the Siliwangi to keep their positions.

The Senopati soldiers were out for revenge and launched a counteroffensive on 16 September, which fell apart partly due to a lack of coordination. On 18 September, Senopati commander Suadi called on his troops and Solo's mass organisations of peasants, workers and *pemuda* to 'beat away the colonial army operating under the mask of Siliwangi, which has half occupied our city and region through deceit, and kick them out of the city and away from the Solo region. They must be destroyed to ensure the victory of the revolution.'⁴¹ Suadi's embittered call, broadcast by Radio Gelora Pemuda in Madiun, was in fact a declaration of war against the Siliwangi and the Republican government. His plea coincided with the FDR's takeover of Madiun (see below).

41 Poeze 2007: 1177–8.



12. Nasution



13. Musso

Meanwhile, Sudirman saw that his decree had had no effect. Late in the evening of 15 September, he proposed to the cabinet that military rule be imposed on Solo. The cabinet agreed, and the next day, after consulting with Nasution, Sukarno appointed Colonel Gatot Subroto as military governor of Solo.

Gatot Subroto came from the same region as Sudirman, with whom he worked together. Having started his career in the military police during the colonial period, he had recently been appointed head of the Military Police. He had a reputation for being able to maintain peace and order. Sudirman, Nasution and Gatot Subroto were in agreement that the civil strife could only be brought to an end with an 'iron fist', and Gatot Subroto was given all the powers to do so. Sudirman had thus completely changed his mind within a few days. With the Senopati having turned against the Siliwangi, maintaining unity within the armed forces was the deciding factor for the commander-in-chief.

On 18 September, Gatot arrived in Solo and immediately imposed a ceasefire. All battalion commanders were ordered to report to the office of the Resident in Solo. Those who failed to comply would be considered insurgents and would be dealt with swiftly and appropriately.

Gatot's words were clear. The blame was laid on the Senopati, and the Siliwangi were kept in their positions. The Senopati commanders had to surrender unconditionally to Gatot, with the risk that they would be removed

from office or worse. But not showing up would have made them insurgents and therefore outlaws. That same day, President Sukarno firmly backed up Gatot in a radio address that specifically addressed all the inhabitants of Solo. His speech appeared to prevent a further escalation of violence in Solo. Hatta's iron fist had made itself felt through the Siliwangi and Gatot Subroto.

Solo in context

Within the broader context of the showdown between the government and the FDR, the events in Solo were of great importance. The military conflict there followed its own dynamics, with local commanders playing a key role and the government and the FDR responding to their actions. There is no evidence that the PKI took the lead in Solo nor that the government took charge from the outset.⁴²

Sudirman played a striking role in the conflict. He initially supported the Senopati leadership and wanted the Siliwangi to leave the city. But he did not persist when Siliwangi leaders politely stated they would not follow his orders. Sudirman subsequently agreed to appoint Gatot Subroto as military governor of Solo, which in effect sealed the Siliwangi's victory. With the release of Tan Malaka and Sukarni on 16 September, the government tried to bring the GRR over to its side and to turn it against the FDR and the PKI.⁴³ There was now a political-military alliance strong enough to drive the FDR units out of the city if necessary.

With the Siliwangi and the government having won in Solo, the FDR was keen to minimise any involvement in the military conflict there. The speech that Musso was to deliver in Solo on 14 September was therefore cancelled, and Musso and Amir Sjarifuddin advised pro-FDR officers in Solo to lie low. The FDR press was ordered to use restraint in its reporting of the events in Solo. The newly merged party was still being built up, and nothing should jeopardise that process. Nor could the position that the FDR still occupied in Solo be further compromised. Maintaining its position in the second city of the Republic, which controlled the passage from Central to East Java, was of paramount importance, for it allowed the FDR to protect its dominant position in Madiun, the Republic's third largest city.⁴⁴

42 These assertions were adopted later by the government and the PKI leadership respectively.

43 In addition, the kidnapping of Muwardi presumably by the local Pesindo had driven the Barisan Banteng and the GRR into the arms of the Siliwangi. Incidentally, Tan Malaka was not happy about his own release. He demanded that he first be given a trial.

44 Later, during a search of Amir Sjarifuddin's residence in Yogyakarta, a document was found in which the FDR deemed its retention of Solo to be of great strategic importance.

The FDR and Madiun

During the civil disturbances in Solo, Musso was on a tour with Amir, Wikana and union leader Harjono to win support for his new politics and his leadership. From Solo, the group went on to Madiun, where Musso addressed several tens of thousands of people on 8 September. As with all his speeches, there was an empty chair on stage to which Musso pointed at the beginning of his talk with the exclamation: 'The exalted comrade Stalin!'⁴⁵

Musso's speech was also broadcast over the radio. His tone was fierce and irreconcilable. He introduced himself as follows: 'Musso is now back in your midst. I am Musso, who was exiled in 1926.' His message was that the leadership of the Republic should be placed in the hands of the workers – for example the PKI, the party under which they were united. As a result of mistakes made at the beginning of the revolution, 'including by the communists', the fruits of the revolution had not yet benefited the workers, peasants, women and youth. Only when that happened could the revolution be successfully completed. The aristocracy would lose its privileges, and the worker could become a manager. The land would be divided among the peasants, and the village chiefs would be chosen from among the poor peasants. The Dutch enemy had to be fought; every worker had to be trained in guerrilla techniques and prepared to use the scorched-earth tactic. Musso did not recognise the Linggadjati and Renville Agreements; and the Van Mook Line had no significance whatsoever. He spoke in a derogatory manner about Hatta's policy of compromise. The tactic should be to kill as many Dutch as possible and get rid of their weapons, even in the occupied territories. Muslims ought to take part in this as if they were in a 'holy war'. He denied following Moscow's instructions but did call for cooperation with the Soviet Union.⁴⁶

Musso's journey continued on to Kediri (10–11 September), where Setiadjit joined the group. Meetings were held in Jombang (13 September), Bojonegoro (14 September), Cepu (16 September) and Purwodadi (17 September). In each city, private consultations were held with the cadres in the region. Many people showed up to see Musso. All the leaders were talking about a Front Nasional cabinet, about the Soviet Union, about improving distribution and about land reform. Everywhere Musso went, people exuberantly waved their red flags and banners with hammer and sickle.

After a courier relayed the information about the FDR losing its dominant position in Solo, Musso and his entourage discussed the state of affairs

45 Poeze 2007: 1196, note 336.

46 Poeze 2007: 1189–95.

in Purwodadi. A tired Musso asked Amir Sjarifuddin how the balance of troops – which had been in their favour – could have led to defeat. Amir deferred to Wikana, who could only acknowledge that his reporting on this had proved to be too optimistic. After remaining silent for a while, they decided that there could be no return trip to Yogyakarta via Solo to start the ‘western’ part of the tour. The route was therefore shifted to the east – towards Bojonegoro.

The FDR parties had been in power in Madiun – which was strategically located at a crossroads of highways – since the beginning of the revolution. They relied there on the strong trade unions but also had a large following among villagers, who were susceptible to the promises of agrarian reform. The Pesindo had large armed units in Madiun.

Since the Hatta cabinet took office, the dominant position of the FDR in the region had been under attack by the Masyumi. The army leadership also took action: in its military rationalisation plans, Madiun was designated the military base of a TNI division. There were strong protests against this as early as May 1948 because it was clear that it would undermine the strong position of the FDR *laskar*. In July, clashes were reported between the leftist Brigade 29 and the pro-government Mobile Brigade of the Military Police.

The FDR in Madiun was led by Sumarsono, the Pesindo leader and chairman of the Federation of Pemuda Organisations (BKPRI) whose headquarters were in Madiun. The FDR had appointed him head of the Committee of Action in Madiun, which was to implement the Program Nasional and realise agrarian reforms. The radio station Gelora Pemuda in Madiun, which was controlled by the Pesindo, took on an increasingly radical tone. According to Sumarsono, these actions led ‘quickly to clashes with the government apparatus.’⁴⁷

In Sumarsono’s opinion, the FDR had ‘a tremendous influence’ in the region, and this was why the FDR leadership in Yogyakarta had decided to use Madiun as its base. This choice meant that the FDR in Madiun had to be reinforced with armed troops, as pro-government Siliwangi units had entered the region. Incidents and strikes followed, accompanied by inflammatory pamphlets. Troops from all backgrounds took up positions. The mood in Madiun became ‘almost untameable’.⁴⁸ Reports of the state of affairs in Solo baffled the leftists in Madiun, but they were unable to provide actual support to their comrades in Solo, for Sumarsono had been strictly ordered by the FDR leadership to stay out of the conflict there.

47 Sumarsono, ‘The Madiun Affair,’ in *Nationaal Archief (NA)*, PG 979, in *Poeze 2007*: 1197–8.

48 Sumarsono, ‘The Madiun Affair,’ in *NA*, PG 979, in *Poeze 2007*: 1199.

Outside the city, the leftist takeover was now in full swing.⁴⁹ Under the protection of FDR troops, activists moved into the villages. They denounced the Hatta government as bankrupt and powerless, while Tan Malaka and the Masyumi were traitors to their country who played games with the Republic. Only the FDR could save the country and the people. Village leaders were forced to resign, and the people were allowed to elect their own village chiefs. Local government bodies were put under pressure. Resistance was punishable by death. Entire villages were forced to join the FDR, and refusals to do so were followed by shelling and executions. The redistribution of rice fields and other possessions tempted numerous villagers to choose the FDR. Amir Sjarifuddin told a mass meeting in Madiun on 8 September that land reforms had already been carried out in 260 villages. In his testimony at the trial of all those involved in the so-called Madiun Affair, Sumarsono confirmed this focus on action in the villages. He explained that the FDR leadership specifically instructed the agricultural programme to be implemented quickly in order to increase the rural support of the FDR. This led to ‘clashes and conflicts’.⁵⁰

According to Sumarsono, he was sent to Kediri by his fellow administrators in Madiun to consult with the FDR leaders who were on tour there. This must have been around 10 or 11 September. After reporting the latest developments, he was instructed by the five board members (Musso, Amir, Setiadjit, Wikana and Harjono) to disarm the Military Police and the Siliwangi units in Madiun. On 17 September, Setiadjit and Wikana came to Madiun and were closely involved in the action that began the next day.⁵¹

The occupation of Madiun

In the early morning of Saturday 18 September, the FDR troops in Madiun – 1,500 strong – took action. They surprised the Military Police and the Siliwangi units, whose resistance lasted only a few hours. In the towns around Madiun, the Pesindo seized control. Shortly after daybreak, Madiun was firmly in the hands of the FDR. About 350 opponents had been taken captive. After the takeover, looting, arbitrary arrests and shootings followed and panic broke out among the people.

49 *Murba*, September 14, 1948, in Poeze 2007: 1199–1200.

50 Sumarsono, ‘The Madiun Affair,’ in NA, PG 979, in Poeze 2007: 1200.

51 This is confirmed by the Antara photographer who followed Musso’s tour. In an interlude he notes that ‘after arriving in Cepu [16 September] Wikana and Setiadjit went early to Madiun’ (Antara, ‘Berita dalam Negeri,’ 8 October 1948).

The red-and-white flag was torn up and replaced by a flag with hammer and sickle, and the portraits of Sukarno replaced by those of Musso. After the battle, an anonymous eyewitness saw *pemuda* in black uniforms with red handkerchiefs around their necks affixing placards in the name of the new Front Nasional government.

The FDR did not set up a national countergovernment but instead established a Front Nasional government for the region of Madiun (Pemerintah Front Nasional Daerah Madiun). On 20 September, the first issue of the daily newspaper *Front Nasional* appeared as the mouthpiece of the new regime.

The seizure of power was announced by Sumarsono in a radio address on Saturday morning at ten o'clock. Of his speech, only the concluding sentence has survived: 'From Madiun, victory begins.' The following sentences may have also been part of his speech:

The government consists entirely of traitors. Madiun has taken action. The revolution has broken out. The workers have disarmed the Republic's police and army. A new regime of workers and peasants has been formed. From now on, our weapons will continue to fire their hail of bullets until freedom, security and tranquillity are restored to our beloved Indonesia.⁵²

The tone was fierce, and the content made it clear that this event went beyond a local upheaval. The statements were in line with Musso's militant speeches. It is highly unlikely that the words of Sumarsono were put on paper without the knowledge of Wikana and Setiadjit.

Musso's group had arrived in Purwodadi on 17 September, and in a heavily guarded column the journey continued on to Madiun, where they arrived after midnight. The FDR leaders immediately met in conclave. The mood was cheerful, and they all embraced each other. Sumarsono gave his account of the military state of affairs, and Wikana and Setiadjit of the political measures that had been taken. Their actions were approved, and the leadership of the FDR collectively took the helm.

The most important thing now was for the example of Madiun to be followed elsewhere. Wikana was sent to Solo to lead the battle there, and Setiadjit went to Kediri. The pro-FDR army commander Sudiarto in Pati was tasked with capturing the northern cities. Instructions were also sent to Yogyakarta and Magelang specifying that the FDR parties were to 'join

⁵² The original Indonesian version of this speech has not been found – only fragments in English and Dutch have survived, which we have assembled in this quote. See Poeze 2007: 1206, note 368.

the general uprising, declare a Komite Front Nasional and a Front Nasional government on the ground, and legally realise the Program Nasional of the FDR, in particular the agrarian programme.⁵³ The Komite Front Nasional, which could be joined by anyone who supported the Program Nasional, determined the local programme, made decisions, and elected the local administrators. In Madiun, Harjono was elected chairman of the Komite Front Nasional. As military governor, Sumarsono was entrusted with the coordination of military and civil affairs in Madiun.⁵⁴ No overarching Front Nasional administration was established.

Involvement of the PKI leadership

Sumarsono's account of the events in Madiun clearly shows the involvement of the FDR leaders. In later PKI reports, this link between the PKI and what has come to be known as the Madiun Affair was absent in order to downplay their involvement, making it seem as though the insurgents in Madiun had acted on their own authority. According to this interpretation, the local rebellion in Madiun was partly provoked and exploited by the Hatta government to eliminate the PKI at the national level. This interpretation served the PKI well, for it allowed the party to legally take its place again in the Indonesian political system after 1950. Although its political rehabilitation did require that it adjust its ways, after the 1955 elections its return as a political factor in Indonesia was a fact. From the 1950s onwards, the Indonesian government also chose to interpret the Madiun Affair in the same manner. By downplaying the conflict and making it look as though what took place in Madiun was a purely local issue, the government was able to cover up the precarious position in which the Republic found itself in the civil war between nationalists and communists. Even later historians such as Kahin (1952), Pinardi (1967), Charles Anderson (1976) and Swift (1989) claim that the conflict in Madiun was local. In their understanding, the FDR leadership had been presented with a *fait accompli*, after which it had no choice but to join the rebellion. In the historiography, this view remains prevalent, and information that points to a different conclusion is ignored. None of these authors, however, were familiar with the report that Sumarsono

53 Poeze 2007: 1209–10.

54 Djokosudjono, who had led the military takeover with Sumarsono, became military commander of the new administration. The FDR leaders, including Musso and Amir Sjarifuddin, were not appointed to public office (except Harjono).

had prepared in November 1949 for the Intelligence and Security Group (IVG) of the Dutch army.⁵⁵

After the crackdown on the Madiun uprising, Sumarsono fled and managed to reach Dutch territory in late November 1948, where he was arrested. During interrogations, he withheld much of his involvement. He also claimed his name was Sudardjo – which was not exactly a lie because Sumarsono was a contraction of Sudardjo Marsono. He remained in Dutch custody until 30 July 1949 and then left as a free man for Jakarta, where he was arrested again on 29 October. On 11 November he put his signature to his report ‘The Madiun Affair’, which took up 14 typed folio sheets. As far as verifiable facts are concerned, it is a faithful report that does not depict his own role any smaller than it was.

It was only once Indonesia was independent that the uprising became a topic of discussion again – a discussion that went to the heart of the PKI’s *raison d’être*.⁵⁶ But this was not an issue for Sumarsono in 1949. He wanted to come clean and regain his freedom in exchange for writing a report on the FDR and the uprising in Madiun (and his role in it), break with his past and ‘return to the free and normal life of a citizen, with all its rights and obligations, and to act upon my religious beliefs as a good Christian.’⁵⁷

It is unlikely that the FDR leaders would have given free rein to local leaders in a leftist stronghold such as Madiun – certainly not after the return of Musso, for whom party discipline was paramount. This gives more credibility to Sumarsono’s report. This is confirmed by a reliable source: the Antara photographer who accompanied Musso. He reported to Antara that ‘after arriving in Tjepu [i.e. on 16 September], Wikana and Setiadjit went directly to Madiun.’⁵⁸

A different source provides yet another indication that the FDR leadership was closely involved in the uprising in Madiun. On 10 September,

55 This report (‘The Madiun Affair’) was found by Harry Poeze in NA, PG 979, in the late 1970s. In interviews held in Jakarta on 22 September and 23 October 1980, Sumarsono confirmed the course of the events as stated in his report. Later, in another interview with Poeze (Amsterdam, 11 November 2002) and in his memoir *Revolusi Agustus: Kesaksian seorang pelaku sejarah* (Jakarta, 2008), he retracted his version of the events without giving a plausible explanation.

56 See Chapter 13.

57 Sumarsono’s account is confirmed by his good friend Hariandja, who recorded his memories 30 years later while in exile: ‘Pokok2 tentang Peristiwa Madiun,’ University Library in Leiden (UBL), Collection-Leclerc H 1327-286. At the time, Hariandja was still a loyal communist. Sumarsono also figures in *Revolusi* by David Van Reybrouck (2021: 423–7) as the primary informant of the events in Madiun. He unquestioningly follows Sumarsono’s later account – the one that was ‘corrected’ by Sumarsono himself.

58 Antara, ‘Berita dalam Negeri,’ 8 October 1948.

Amir Sjarifuddin had in the utmost secrecy warned the Regent of Madiun, with whom he was friends, that a communist uprising would break out on 22 September. The Regent then fled to Yogyakarta, where he informed Hatta. Pro-FDR officials at the ministry of interior in Yogyakarta picked up the message and informed Musso – as well as Amir Sjarifuddin, ironically – who then decided to bring forward the action in Madiun.⁵⁹

The reaction in Yogyakarta

In August, Hatta expected a communist uprising to break out in November. Due to the events in Solo in early September, the leadership of the FDR had apparently decided to take action earlier.⁶⁰ Despite the information from the Regent of Madiun, the leaders of the Republic were taken by surprise with the news of the takeover in Madiun, which reached Yogyakarta during the afternoon on 18 September.

In Sudirman's absence, Chief of Staff Nasution took action. He visited Sukarno at nightfall, who urgently convened the council of ministers. But because Nasution did not want to wait for a decision from the council, fearing that the FDR would take action in Yogyakarta, he drew up a military plan of action that he presented to Sukarno. The latter agreed to Nasution's plan but said that it could only be implemented after approval by the cabinet, which would meet around midnight. In the meantime, Nasution mobilised the military units he could count on and divided the tasks. It only took the cabinet a few minutes to approve Nasution's proposal. Sudirman, who was by that point present, was given the mandate to execute the plan. Consultations continued thereafter until five in the morning. Simatupang, Nasution's deputy, was present at the meeting and noted the surprise and determination of those gathered. Sukarno wondered out loud: 'What does that Amir want?' And Hatta said: 'It is now a matter of life or death. Do or die.'⁶¹

Agus Salim told George Kahin: 'Glad that Communists have now shown their colours – for now the Government can take firm action against them.'⁶² He was convinced that the communists would not succeed.

Before daybreak, the purge in Yogyakarta was completed. The FDR units were disarmed and the SOBSI leaders, who were gathered in Yogyakarta for

59 Van Klinken 2003: 204.

60 It is interesting to make a comparison between the events of September 1948 and those of September 1965. In both cases, PKI leaders, forced by circumstances, decided to hasten their ill-prepared action, which was then violently crushed by the army (see Roosa 2006).

61 Simatupang 1985: 94–5 in Poeze 2007: 1217–8.

62 Kahin 1952: 294–5 in Poeze 2007: 1217–8.

a conference of the railway union, were arrested, as were a number of FDR leaders.⁶³ A total of 200 men were detained. A curfew was also imposed.

The FDR newspapers were banned, the printers closed, and many journalists arrested.⁶⁴ The buildings of the FDR and its press were put under surveillance; posters and banners of the FDR were removed. Instead, slogans like 'We recognise only the Sukarno-Hatta government' appeared.

Nasution had won. Together with Lieutenant Colonel Suharto, the local commander in Yogyakarta, he reported this success to Sudirman early on the morning of 19 September. The FDR had made a strategic mistake in not mobilising its supporters in Yogyakarta in time.

Sudirman appointed Colonel Sungkono, the division commander in East Java, as commander for the defence of East Java; Gatot Subroto became division commander of the Solo-Semarang region, and the Siliwangi Division was ordered to take back Madiun.⁶⁵ Sudirman, who was still ill, entrusted the execution of the action to Nasution. Unlike his hesitance in responding to the Solo conflict, this time the commander-in-chief had no qualms about cracking down on his old adversary Amir Sjarifuddin.

On 19 September, the government issued a brief statement that, under the leadership of the PKI and with the deployment of an East Java army brigade of the TNI, government services had been attacked and an unlawful takeover had taken place. 'The government is currently taking all means necessary to restore power and lawful governance in this region.'⁶⁶ The full support of the people was requested.

For Hatta and the parties in his cabinet – the PNI and the Masyumi – it was clear that no compromise was possible. Musso's conduct, the FDR's shift in direction, the intransigent language during Musso's tour and Sumarsono's radio address all made it clear that the FDR wanted to take power. If the FDR were to win, those currently in power could expect a reckoning. Sukarno may have hesitated for a moment, but even he understood that his role would have come to an end in the event of a takeover. Moreover, the government needed the support of the United States to come to a diplomatic agreement with the Netherlands, and it was clear that an uncompromising attitude

63 The FDR leaders who were arrested were Abdulmadjid, Djokosudjono, Sakirman and Tan Ling Djie. They claimed they knew nothing about the uprising in Madiun.

64 The FDR newspapers that were banned were *Buruh*, *Revolusioner*, *Suara Ibu Kota*, *Patriot* and *Bintang Merah*.

65 Sungkono had participated in the 1933 mutiny on the *Zeven Provinciën*, had been trained as a PETA officer during the Japanese occupation, and had led the BKR in Surabaya at the beginning of the Revolution. In March 1947, he was stationed in Kediri.

66 Poeze 2007: 1219.

towards the communist FDR would help the Republic in this regard. Thus, partisan political and military antagonisms not only became ever more intertwined but were also exacerbated as a result of their embroilment in the international context of the Cold War.

The Republic could not be certain that the military balance of power between the government and the FDR stood in its favour. While it was the case that the government could count on support from the Siliwangi, it was not clear that Nasution could rely on the strongman in East Java, Sungkono, given that the latter had successfully opposed Nasution's rationalisation plans. In Madiun, Sumarsono knew that Sungkono did not care much for Nasution and that he was on good terms with pro-communist troops in East Java. Sungkono would, in any case, oppose an act of aggression by the Siliwangi against the leftist Brigade 29 because the latter was part of his own division. Thus, Sumarsono believed that he could at the very least count on the neutrality of the East Javanese commander.

Dutch military intelligence also doubted Sungkono's loyalty to Yogyakarta. The conclusion was that the government and the FDR were roughly equal in strength but that the government was at a disadvantage because it had to deal not only with the FDR but also the Dutch military threat. Sungkono's position was decisive: if he supported the government, Madiun would be threatened from both sides, but if he sided with the communists, the communists had a good chance of success.⁶⁷

Mobilisation

On 19 September, at eight o'clock in the evening, Sukarno addressed the Indonesian people in a radio broadcast. Once again, he had to use all his prestige and magic to save his Republic. His tone this time was fierce and irreconcilable. There was no room for a settlement.

Saudara-saudara [Brothers], be well aware of the significance of what has happened! The PKI-Musso wants to conquer our state, the Republic of Indonesia. My beloved people, in the name of the fight for an independent Indonesia, I call on you: In this very critical period, when you and all of us are undergoing the most difficult trial in the determination of our fate, we have to choose between two [options]: following Musso and his PKI, which will bring bankruptcy to the ideals of an independent Indonesia, or

67 These were the assessments of the military balance of power by the Dutch Central Military Intelligence (CMI) and Didi Kartasasmita, cited in Poeze 2007: 1220–1.

following Sukarno-Hatta, who with God's help will lead an independent Indonesia that will not be dominated by any other country.

I trust that the Indonesian people, who have been fighting for their independence for so long, will not hesitate in determining their position. And if there is no hesitation, stand behind our old legitimate government and then take action without hesitation. Support the government and its institutions wholeheartedly in order to stamp out the rebellion and restore the legitimate government in the regions concerned. Take back Madiun! Madiun must return to our hands soon!

Musso responded at half past nine that evening via Radio Gelora Pemuda in Madiun:

On 18 September, the people of Madiun took state power into their own hands. In doing so, the people of Madiun have carried out their duty in our national revolution, namely that it should be led by the people themselves and not by any other class!

For three years, our national revolution has been headed by the national bourgeoisie, who have adopted a hesitant attitude towards imperialism in general and towards America in particular. That is the ultimate reason why the economic and political situation in the Republic as a whole continues to deteriorate.

Musso consistently portrayed Sukarno and Hatta as *ex-romusha* recruiters, Japanese servants, *Heiho* propagandists, and Quislings,⁶⁸ all of which revealed that, three years after the Japanese defeat, Sukarno and Hatta's 'collaboration' with the Japanese regime was neither forgotten nor forgiven.

Musso accepted Sukarno's challenge:

The Indonesian people have been asked by Sukarno to choose: 'Sukarno or Musso!' The people must respond to this: 'Sukarno and Hatta are servants of Japan and America! Traitors deserve death!' The people will surely answer: 'Musso has always served the Indonesian people.' Long live freedom! The war will be won!

There was no turning back: the conflict had to be fought.

68 Quisling was the proverbial name for a pro-German politician who betrayed his homeland – in this case Norway – in World War II. Musso's use of the term reveals his Western European frame of reference and his estrangement from his supporters, of whom hardly anyone would have known the meaning of this term.

In *Front Nasional* and via the radio, Musso presented an unadulterated blueprint for a communist Republic of Indonesia – no longer just for the Madiun region but for the entire Republic.

In Yogyakarta, Hatta convened the Working Committee of the Republican parliament on 20 September. At his suggestion, the Working Committee decided to grant the president unlimited power for three months. That same day, Hatta told the US diplomat Cochran that he hoped to suppress the rebellion within two weeks. But he himself was not convinced of this because the insurgents controlled the two seaports on which Yogyakarta depended. Moreover, the battle would require many men and much equipment, thereby weakening the Republic militarily against the Netherlands.⁶⁹

All those in the know characterised Sungkono's position as decisive. Because the land route from Yogyakarta to Kediri was closed – which demonstrated the strength of the FDR – the orders to Sungkono were transmitted by paratroopers. Sungkono hesitated, for he sympathised with the leftist units under his command. And following government orders meant he would have to work with the Siliwangi, with whom he felt no connection whatsoever. After much hesitation, he chose the side of Yogyakarta and national unity. He had the FDR troops disarmed by first rounding up the commanders using devious measures. A number of them were executed. Sungkono's choice tipped the balance of power in favour of Yogyakarta.

Madiun under FDR administration

The Front Nasional committees did not have enough time to establish themselves. On 27 September, however, the FDR did appoint new Regents (*bupati*) and heads of departments with 'anti-imperialist' reputations in the residency of Madiun. As the pressure from advancing Siliwangi troops increased, FDR soldiers ordered the arrest of members of the police, civil servants loyal to the government, and political leaders of the Masyumi, the PNI and the GRR. According to Sumarsono, they were all treated well, and he claimed that there were no massacres and no executions in Madiun. But a *Sin Po* journalist who travelled to Madiun on the first train from Solo in mid-October painted a very different picture in a four-part report called 'The Cruelty of the Communists'. He quoted an eyewitness who described a bloody reign of terror in which PNI and Masyumi members were imprisoned or killed.⁷⁰ This appears to be an exaggerated report, like that of Sumarsono.

69 Cochran's statements in Poeze 2007: 1215.

70 'Kekedjeman kaum communist,' *Sin Po*, 20 October/26 October 1948 (four articles).

Sumarsono did acknowledge that outside Madiun there were more casualties. His leftist administration in the city of Madiun had no control there: The 'mob [was] ferocious and lashed out.' This was especially true for regions with both Muslim and communist villages. The victims included local administrators, policemen, religious leaders, and Masyumi and PNI leaders and numerous villagers. In a number of cases, FDR units brutally settled old scores with their opponents shortly before fleeing.

The American anthropologist Robert Jay later noted that in PKI territories, a large number of communist gangs were mobilised.

[They] used their power to exterminate not only the central government officials but also those ordinary citizens against whom they bore ill will. They especially singled out orthodox Moslem teachers, students, and others known for their Islamic piety; these were shot, burned to death, or hacked to pieces, sometimes all three. Mosques and religious schools were burned and their adherents' houses sacked and destroyed. As these areas were re-occupied by loyalist Republican troops, those suspected of left-wing or anti-Moslem sentiments as well as the actual rebels were shot out of hand and otherwise subjected to mob wrath.⁷¹

The tension between the Masyumi and the FDR, which had been building up for months, was thus released in the most violent manner. The Masyumi did not sit idly by either – but the press in Yogyakarta was forbidden to write anything about this.

The attack on Madiun

For the leaders of the FDR in Madiun, it was already clear after a few days that they lacked popular support. It was only in Republican territory along the northern coast of Java that their call for a communist takeover had elicited a response by the people, but it remained unclear how strong that support was.⁷²

⁷¹ Jay 1963: 28.

⁷² Of note here is the visit to Madiun by Lieutenant Colonel Suharto, who had been commissioned by Sudirman to assess the situation on the ground. Did Sudirman want to obtain an assessment of the balance of power without the input of the Siliwangi? Suharto was shown around by Sumarsono and Musso and came away with a favourable impression of the conditions in Madiun. On his way back to Yogyakarta, he was apprehended in Solo by a Siliwangi officer, who asked his superior for permission to deal with the matter – a euphemism for execution. When it became clear at headquarters that the man they were dealing with was Suharto, he was



14. Executions of communists

On the evening of 20 September, the first signs of reconciliation from the FDR side appeared. The message sent out by FDR leaders was that the seizure of power in Madiun had not been intended as a prelude to an overthrow of the Republic but simply a local correction to the policies of Sukarno and Hatta, who continued to be accused by the FDR for their pro-Japanese stance. And the focus of the criticism had also shifted to the rationalisation plans of the armed forces.

On 21 September, the Republic's battle plan was drawn up, and the next day the attack on Madiun was launched. The advance of the Siliwangi troops was slow. After covering the first part of the journey by train, the troops had to walk from Solo for five days, 12 to 20 kilometres per day. The troops were unable to make rapid progress due to the lack of means of transport, the lack of wireless connections, the lack of terrain knowledge and unfamiliarity with the strength and position of the opponent. It was not until the troops reached Ngawi and Magetan that serious fighting took place, where the 5,000-strong Siliwangi army was too powerful for the rebels.

allowed to continue on his journey. This remains a difficult incident to interpret. Although he was acting on Sudirman's orders, Suharto went much further in his rapprochement with the PKI leaders and against the crackdown of the army and government. See also Poeze 2007: 1242–4.

Republican troops subsequently closed in on Madiun from two sides. On 27 September, Sungkono sent an expeditionary force of five battalions from Kediri in East Java to Madiun. One of the battalions was led by Sabarudin, who had played an extremely violent role in the Surabaya area at the end of 1945 and had re-emerged to indulge his bloodlust against leftist troops.⁷³

Near Madiun, 'a confused battle [ignited...] in which mortars and cannons were used.'⁷⁴ Madiun was captured late in the afternoon on 30 September;⁷⁵ the FDR had already left the city.

The flight from Madiun

Initially, the FDR had planned to defend Madiun to the death. The motto was that the city would become a second Stalingrad, but that plan evaporated. The day before Siliwangi forces took Madiun, FDR leaders and three battalions – in total 3,000 men – left the city in a long column with their families. The group also included TNI soldiers and Republican leaders as hostages. Cars and trucks were used for the evacuation, and radio transmitters and printing presses were brought along, together with millions in Republican money from the government printing office in Madiun. Those in the group who were armed were organised into the People's Army (Barisan Tentara Rakyat), with Djokosudjono as their leader. The FDR political leaders – Musso, Amir, Maruto, Suripno, Harjono and Sardjono – went along as political commissioners; they made the decisions.

Initially, the trek moved in an eastward direction to Dungus on the slopes of Mount Wilis, where the group could take up a position that was easily defensible with a hinterland that was ideal for guerrilla combat. From there they could continue to Kandangan, where Amir had had ammunition and weapons stored in preparation for a Dutch attack. However, an attack by Sabarudin's unit caught the FDR column by surprise, and in the devastation, most of the weapons and supplies were lost. In reprisal, the FDR executed several dozen hostages.

The FDR retreated further to Ngebel, which was also on the slopes of Mount Wilis. During a roll call, Commander Djokosudjono set forth his strategy. As 'Benteng Mobil' – a mobile fortress – the FDR troops would defend themselves against the TNI. The four days in Ngebel were used to prepare the organisation by appointing political commissars and establishing agitprop departments (for agitation and propaganda) for each battalion.

73 See Chapter 4.

74 For more information, see Poeze 2007: 1250.

75 The expedition led to 114 deaths and 45 wounded on the Siliwangi side.

It seemed as if the FDR was under the illusion that it could survive as a mobile regime. In reality, the flight from Madiun was a new debacle, for it was clear that the people were not responding to the FDR's call to revolution. The main force of the FDR troops was trapped on Mount Wilis; south of Madiun, some FDR units of significance were still active; the situation in the north was unclear. Raids and occupations of villages by a few hundred FDR soldiers led to much turmoil in the Magelang region of Central Java, but the Republic's authority there never came under serious threat.

In Yogyakarta, the reins were tightened. All demonstrations, meetings, pamphlets and banners were prohibited; the press was also censored, and speeches had to be submitted to the censor first. On 23 September, entire neighbourhoods were searched house to house in a large-scale TNI operation. The number of detainees reached 2,000.

During a search of Amir Sjarifuddin's residence on 20 September, a document entitled 'Towards a new phase in the military struggle' was found. It was dated mid-July and is likely to have been shared with only a very small circle of people. The seven-page document laid out the path that the FDR intended to follow. In the first phase, parliamentary means had to be deployed. Pressure on the Working Committee of Parliament was to lead to the acceptance of the Program Nasional and the formation of a new parliamentary cabinet in which the FDR would set the tone. Front Nasional branches had to be established to spearhead the campaign for a new cabinet. If this failed, demonstrations by workers, peasants and soldiers would be organised, followed by a general strike. If this yielded no results, the 'non-parliamentary' phase was to begin. The struggle then had to turn into a rebellion and a counter-government had to be formed.⁷⁶ The FDR had, in fact, adhered to this strategy.

With the reconquest of Madiun, the government had won a victory that greatly enhanced its prestige at home and abroad. The communists had underestimated Sukarno's popularity and Hatta's decisiveness. But as long as FDR troops and their leaders were still free, the Republic could not yet pronounce itself the winner.

President Sukarno gave a radio address on 1 October. He was delighted with the reconquest of Madiun but emphasised that the battle had not yet ended. The 'PKI-Musso tumour' had to be removed from the 'people's body'. The Australian diplomat Critchley estimated that government forces would

76 The Antara news agency reported the seizure of the document on 29 September. The original version has not survived, and as a result, doubts remain as to the authenticity of this document.

need another two months to eliminate FDR units from the difficult-to-access mountain region of East Java.⁷⁷

The Long March

TNI soldiers managed to isolate the FDR units but met with fierce resistance. To the southeast of Madiun, the FDR was driven out of Ponorogo following fierce fighting, after which the battle moved to the coastal town of Pacitan. All the cities north of Madiun were still in the hands of the FDR. The towns of Cepu and Blora changed hands four times during successive battles. The writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer, in one of his most beautiful stories which he tellingly titled '*Dia yang menyerah*' (Resignation), gives a poignant picture of what this meant for the people.⁷⁸ Their town was occupied by different soldiers each time – the Reds, the Nationalists, the Muslims and then the Dutch once more – and each time they had to wait and see what would be demanded of them and who would bear the brunt of the revenge actions, while political differences also became amplified within families. The only thing the powerless could do was resign themselves to their fate.

The troops that had been driven out attempted to establish guerrilla bases in hills and forests in order to launch new attacks from there. When Sukarno declared the revolt crushed on 22 October, he was being wildly optimistic, for in the south there were still four well-armed FDR battalions totalling 3,000 men. Djokosudjono led the Barisan Tentara Rakyat, while in practice the political commissars made all the decisions.

Musso was no longer with the FDR, as somewhere near Pacitan he had lost contact with the main force and failed to reunite with the troops. In the village of Balong, south of Ponorogo, he was detained on 31 October during a check. Shots were fired and Musso took off with a *dokar* (small horse carriage). A car carrying TNI officers tried to stop him, and another gunfight ensued. Musso refused to surrender – 'rather dead than surrender' – and holed himself up in an outhouse. He did not stand a chance in the gunfire and was mortally wounded.⁷⁹

At the end of October, the FDR troops were trapped in the Ponorogo-Pacitan-Wonogiri triangle, but it was certainly not the case that an iron cordon surrounded them. For that, the TNI troops were too few in number,

77 Critchley's statements in Poeze 2007: 1273.

78 Pramoedya Ananta Toer 1979.

79 An account of Musso's end can be found in Poeze 2007: 1279–86.



Map 5. The long march, September–December 1948

and they lacked speed and good information. A breakout of FDR units to the north was successful but came at the expense of significant losses. Those FDR leaders who were apprehended in the fighting were, as a rule, summarily sentenced to death.⁸⁰ On 5 November, FDR soldiers managed to capture

80 An exception to this was Alimin, who avoided execution following his arrest because Hatta ordered him to be evacuated to Yogyakarta.

the mountain resort of Sarangan on Mount Lawu but it was immediately abandoned so that they could move on to the Solo valley and Ngawi.⁸¹

By this time, the long FDR column had been wandering around for more than a month, moving first east, then south and finally west of Madiun. The column still numbered 1,500 FDR troops and party cadres along with their families as well as a growing number of villagers who were forced to walk with them. They served as hostages or living shields, or were brought along to prevent them from leaking information about the column's route.

The FDR leaders did not walk; instead, they rode horses. Cows, sheep and buffalo were also transported. The column was about five or six kilometres long. A district head who was forced to join the column described the reign of terror:

We walked all day, almost without stopping. Usually we walked along village roads, and if those roads formed only a narrow footpath then we became one long line. In mountainous terrain I only saw the front part of the column very far away, and when I reached the top of the mountain, the end of the column had not yet emerged from the vegetation of the trees of the last desa [village] that we had gone through.

The local chief had no idea what the purpose of the journey was nor where it was headed. Escape attempts were punished by execution on the spot. The food supply was inadequate. After a few days, many were exhausted, injured or sick.

But the guards of the column, who looked cruel, did not hesitate to kill anyone in the column who lost weight due to fatigue or illness or who tried to flee. And every kilometre there were those who fell behind ... and ended up dead.

The group usually relocated at night.

No talking was allowed, no smoking, and no lamp or flashlight could be used. This continued even when it rained. And if we had to pass through

81 In Sarangan, the troops had a surprising encounter with a group of German women and children who had been staying there since 1943. In May 1940, the Dutch authorities had arrested a few hundred German men, most of whom died in transport on the *Van Imhoff* when the ship was sunk by the Japanese in January 1942. Their wives and children were housed in Sarangan during the Japanese occupation and were still there in 1948 (Adler 2021).

a desa [village] on this march, the column first stopped and awaited the order of the scouts that we could continue. This was usually well into the night and sometimes the route went steeply up and down the mountain, not following an existing route through the woods. In this manner, all comrades without exception became exhausted. But it had already been decided that if comrades were too exhausted and wanted to rest, this was allowed but only at the stopping point. There were times that we lay down on the wet earth during the rain regardless of the mud and set off again when the order to do so was passed on from the vanguard. Nevertheless, despite all this, and despite the fact that sometimes rice could not be eaten for a day, to my knowledge almost no comrades fell ill, and they all remained active and carried on. However, there were also comrades who did not follow the rules and did not rest at the stopping point but instead sought a more pleasant place along the route at night. Because they slept, they were not spotted by their comrades in the column and were left behind, often falling into the hands of the enemy.⁸²

The column continued through a barren landscape, where leaves served as food. South of Randublatung, fighting broke out again. The attacks led to a temporary splitting of the column, and heavy losses were sustained. A few days later, east of Wirosari, the column would have had 800 armed men and a thousand relatives. Amir Sjarifuddin moved further towards the hills to the northwest and appeared to be heading for the Van Mook Line: the likelihood of survival in Dutch territory seemed higher than in the Republic. Under constant attacks by TNI units, Amir's main force quickly thinned out to just over 600 men.

Hatta asked the Dutch authorities on 27 November what they would do if the FDR troops entered Dutch territory. The answer was that they would be taken prisoner.

The column reached the marshland at Klambu, a few kilometres from the Van Mook Line east of Semarang, but the 500-kilometre-long march of Madiun, which had lasted two months, did not come to an end in Dutch territory. TNI troops had sealed off that escape route and had discussed the matter with the Dutch army. The Dutch were asked in advance for their understanding with regard to any FDR troops gone astray who may or may not end up in Dutch territory.

82 Hariandja, 'Pokok2 tentang Peristiwa Madiun,' in UBL, Collection-Leclerc H 1327-286. Also in Poeze 2007: 1293-4.

The last confrontation began on 24 November when the TNI attempted to surround Amir's group. On 26 November, most of the main force surrendered. The FDR fighters had lost their fighting spirit and were plagued by hunger and thirst. Most of the leaders managed to escape in the dark.

On 27 November, TNI troops carried out a purge operation in the Godang marshes that led to the arrests of Djokosujono, Maruto Darusman and Sardjono. This action was followed by the arrests of Amir and Suripno on 29 November. Setiadjit had already disappeared without a trace, and Wikana managed to flee.

When arrested, Amir Sjarifuddin – the former minister and prime minister – was dressed in pyjamas and sarong and armed with a gun; he had no shoes left. He had a beard and long hair, and he was limping and was skinny and pale after five days of dysentery. His glasses were still intact; his formerly inseparable pipe was gone. Among the top leaders of the FDR, Sumarsono was the only one who managed to evade arrest. He crossed the Van Mook Line with eight allies and turned himself in to the village police. At the end of November, another 1,500 soldiers of the FDR surrendered.

The Long March, named after the march led by Mao Zedong, had no heroic ending. Both parties – the government and the PKI – thought it best not to say anything about it, and as a result, the Long March never received recognition in the history of the Indonesian Revolution.

The end of the leftist movement and the victory of the state

A total of 35,000 FDR supporters were imprisoned, most of them military members of battle groups. The number of casualties in this civil war is unknown. Looking back on these events, Aidit, who became the PKI leader after the Madiun Affair – gave an estimate of 10,000 deaths on the FDR's side,⁸³ while the FDR was responsible for 1,500 deaths.⁸⁴

The government launched a major propaganda offensive that portrayed the misdeeds of the PKI and the FDR in the blackest of colours. All media were utilised for this purpose: radio, theatre, mass gatherings, meetings, *wajang* (puppet-shadow play) shows, posters and newspapers. The burials (which were sometimes reburials) of victims of FDR violence were used for official mass demonstrations against communism. Meanwhile, the TNI carried out numerous summary executions that were legitimised under the quasi-legal term '*hukuman militer*' (military verdict).

83 Aidit 1959: 107.

84 Hadi Soewito 1994, Part I: 250.

The civil war had shown how divided and unstable the power apparatus of the Republic was. Competing army units and battle groups allied to different political parties formed a toxic mixture of violence that brought the Republic to the brink of a fatal crisis. By early December, the campaign for power had been definitely won by Republican leaders. The left-wing movement was eliminated, and the chance to turn the struggle for independence into a social revolution was gone. In this sense, the victory of Yogyakarta was an important milestone in the process of state formation in the Republic. Nonetheless, the Republic was given no time to breathe because in that same month it was forced to confront yet another threat to its existence.

11 The Second Attack on the Republic

October 1948–January 1949

The last months of 1948 were decisive for the Republic. It had won, with difficulty, the internal struggle for power, but no sooner had it done so than a new danger loomed when the Netherlands increased the pressure on Yogyakarta and prepared itself for a new military attack. This chapter looks at what it was that made the Dutch believe they could win the war. Could the Republic survive another attack? And who could the Republican leaders appeal to?

The Republic in Yogyakarta: stately display and revolutionary spirit

For a long time, Yogyakarta had been a relatively quiet provincial city in Central Java that was known as the centre of traditional Javanese culture, a place where royal families had exercised dynastic authority since the mid-eighteenth century. In early 1946, when it became too dangerous for the Republican leaders to stay in Jakarta, they settled in Yogyakarta at the invitation of the young Sultan Hamengkubuwono, and this place became the capital of the Republic virtually overnight. From that moment, Javanese traditions and revolutionary dynamism, dynastic authority and presidential charisma characterised the city.

In exchange for his hospitality, Hamengkubuwono was granted a number of privileges by President Sukarno that strengthened his position as sultan. The sultanate – the city of Yogyakarta and its surroundings – became a Special Territory (Daerah Istimewa) over which he was appointed military governor. During the communist uprising in September 1948, the sultan deployed his own militia – the Laskar Rakyat Mataram – to maintain order in Yogyakarta.

President Sukarno stayed opposite Fort Vredeburg in the former official residence of the Dutch Resident, which was now upgraded to a presidential palace. Sukarno's mission was twofold: he had to unite the Republic and the people in the fight against the Dutch, and he had to show the outside world that the Republic was a respectable state deserving of international recognition.

Acting as a link between the Republic and the people, Sukarno was capable of exuding his electrifying charisma at public meetings as well as in his radio speeches, such as on 19 September 1948 during the great

crisis discussed in the previous chapter. Sukarno was acutely aware of his charms, which he was able to deploy not only at diplomatic summits but also during the lectures he gave to an audience of young women on the position of women.¹

On the morning of 17 August 1948, John Coast, the young British press attaché to President Sukarno, attended the independence celebrations at the presidential palace. What struck him was the tight protocol followed during the gathering, which was attended by members of the cabinet, the chairman of the KNIP, army leaders, senior officials and other guests. The rise of Sukarno and Hatta was announced by a master of ceremonies with the words '*Paduka jang Mulia Presiden*' and '*Paduka jang Mulia Wakil Presiden*' – His Excellency the President and His Excellency the Vice President – genteel words that date back to colonial times.

First the chairman of the KNIP, Mr. Assaat, gave a long speech, which was followed by some prayers in Arabic over which the master of ceremonies presided. Against the backdrop of stately decor and assisted by an aide-de-camp who stood at attention, Sukarno then began a long speech. Dressed in a grey-green uniform that he had designed himself and wearing his well-known *peci* (black cap), he began an overview of the struggle for independence from Linggadjati to Renville and the position of the federal states. He also made a heartfelt plea for national unity. He did not say a word about the growing tensions between the government and the left-wing opposition. According to Coast, Sukarno also referred to the American Revolution, the Atlantic Charter, and to figures such as Abraham Lincoln, Pandit Nehru and Harold Laski while weaving Dutch, English and French quotations throughout his text. The speech was followed by the national anthem '*Indonesia Raya*', which was played in a solemn manner at a much slower pace than normal.²

In the afternoon, Sukarno addressed a crowd in the open field north of the sultan's palace. He spoke about the meaning of freedom and the importance of self-respect and national dignity. He regularly repeated important passages two or three times in slightly different terms and used a question-and-answer rhetoric – 'Why is Indonesia not free yet? Because it is still suffering from Dutch slavery.' – after which the speech accelerated to

1 These were published in 1947 under the title *Sarinah: Kewadjaban wanita dalam perdjoeangan Republik Indonesia* (Sarinah: The task of women in the struggle of the Republic of Indonesia).

2 Coast 2015: 104–7. Coast was employed by the Republic as an editor and translator at the time. The references to America, India and the foreign quotations are not, however, mentioned in the published text of the speech; see Sukarno 1965, II: 43–74.

a well-directed climax that ended with the words '*Merdeka, sekali merdeka, tetap merdeka!*' (Freedom, once and for all).

George Kahin wrote later that Sukarno gave his audience the feeling of being part of a common historical movement that was on the road to victory. In doing so, he made the people part of the revolution and did not confine the fight for independence to politicians, diplomats and the armed forces.³

Vice President Hatta had listened to Sukarno's speech that morning, motionless and with a face that showed nothing. In addition to being vice president, he was prime minister and minister of foreign affairs and defence. He *was*, in fact, the government and formally answerable only to the president. Hatta was in many ways the polar opposite of Sukarno. He was by no means a compelling orator, except when he was genuinely angry, such as at the KNIP meeting in 1947 when the Linggadjati Agreement had to be approved. Meticulous and hardworking, Hatta gave the impression of being a rather hard-hearted administrator, but he was popular for his incorruptibility and he instilled confidence with his solid and steady conduct.

Hatta's offices – the prime minister's secretariat headed by Maria Ulfah Santoso, and the ministries of foreign affairs and defence – were housed together with the ministry of information in buildings made available by the sultan in Yogyakarta. Other less important ministries were located outside the city, such as in Magelang, where the government of the province of Central Java was also located.⁴ The ministries in Yogyakarta were full of typists and clerks who were shaping the new bureaucracy with their reports, statistics, carbon copies, stamps and initials. Despite the immense heat and the increasing scarcity of textiles, many of the senior male officials wore shirts and ties and jackets, while many of the women wore dresses. Some women wore short skirts that came above the knee, while office clerks and young guards came into the office in shorts and khaki shirts. Modern bureaucrats preferred to dress in Western-style clothes.

More important than the attempts to formalise the reputation of the state was the egalitarian slant of the Republic. The Indonesian language expressed this new sentiment. Popular leaders were addressed as '*Bung*' (brother): the president and vice president were popularly known as '*Bung Karno*' (short for Sukarno) and '*Bung Hatta*'. This was also true of the Minister of Information Natsir and many other revolutionary leaders. On the street they greeted each other with '*Merdeka Bung*' or '*Brontak (rebellion) Bung!*' The widely respected Commander-in-Chief Sudirman, however, was addressed

3 Kahin 1952: 45–6. Kahin was doing research in Yogyakarta for his dissertation.

4 According to Kahin (1952: 395), Yogyakarta had 10,000 civil servants working for the Republic.

as '*Pak*' (from the word *bapak*, which means father), as was the older and somewhat more aloof Agus Salim. This was also true of older office workers and drivers, who were politely addressed as '*Pak*'.

Groups of *pemuda* embodied the unfettered revolutionary freedom. For them, Yogyakarta was a sanctuary where they could take a break after the dangers and hardships on the front lines of the Republic. With their long hair, pistols on their hips and ammunition belts around their shoulders, they strolled down the Malioboro, the two-kilometre-long shopping street that offered the *pemuda* and everyone else who walked there – men and women, old and young, civil servants, workers, artists, widows of fallen warriors, beggars – the opportunity to give their voice to the new Indonesia. The *pemuda* were the epitome of youthful lawlessness, but they also represented the revolutionary fighting spirit of the Republic. Other flâneurs on the Malioboro dressed in their most modern clothes as representatives of the new era, while those who had no money to do so joined them to try to fit in.

Juxtaposed against the energy of the *pemuda* were the leaders of the Republic who tried to create order, hierarchy and state prestige. Henri Alers has rightly argued that one of the main themes of the Revolution was the tension between the revolutionary and socially engaged fighters and the administrators – what he calls a Red Merdeka and a Green Merdeka respectively – which created a permanent dynamic.⁵ The Republican leaders needed the enthusiasm – or *semangat* – of the young, but their undisciplined lawlessness remained a matter of great concern.

There was great admiration for the vigorous physical appearance of the fighters, which is why a sports programme was set up to make the scrawny Javanese boys stronger. In 1947, an Indonesian Olympic Committee was even established, but it was unable to send athletes to the London Games in September 1948.⁶

The restless *pemuda* also figured in the literary and visual arts. The central literary figure in what later came to be called the Angkatan 45 (Generation of 1945) was the poet Chairil Anwar. Unlike the writers associated with the magazine *Poedjanga Baru* from the 1930s, with their intellectual slant and abstract discussions about culture, Chairil Anwar – like the *pemuda* – stood right in the middle of the revolution and its dangerous daily life, bearing direct witness to it. He embraced the vitalism of the Dutch poet Hendrik Marsman ('I want to live in a grand and compelling way'). According to

5 Alers 1956.

6 Taken from Farabi Fakhri 2023.

Andries Teeuw, Chairil Anwar embodied the new language of the Revolution with its emphasis on humanity, honesty, struggle, suffering and death.⁷ He gave the language an unprecedented intensity and speed before his death by typhus in April 1949. An example of this is his poem 'Krawang and Bekasi' from 1948:

We who now rest between Krawang and Bekasi
 We can no longer shout '*Merdeka*', no longer take up arms
 But who doesn't see us in his imagination advancing with our hearts
 pounding?
 We speak to you in the silence of the quiet evening
 When the mind is empty and time is ticking away
 We died young, and what remains of us is bones covered in dust
 Remember us, remember us
 We did everything we could
 But the work is not finished, nothing has been achieved yet
 The work is not finished, no one can yet comprehend the meaning of four
 thousand, five thousand souls
 All that remains of us are scattered bones
 But they belong to you
 And you have to determine what they're worth
 We died for freedom, for victory, for hope
 Or did we die for nothing?
 We don't know, we can't say that anymore
 Only you can speak now
 We speak to you in the silence of the quiet evening
 When the mind is empty and time is ticking away
 Remember us, remember us
 Let our soul and enthusiasm live on
 Protect Bung Karno
 Protect Bung Hatta
 Protect Sjahrir
 We are corpses
 But give us meaning
 Guard the boundary between reality and dreams
 Remember us, remember us who live on alone in these dusted bones
 Thousands of us, between Krawang and Bekasi⁸

7 Teeuw 1979, II: 145–59. See also Chapter 4.

8 Translation based on Chairil Anwar 1993: 122–5 and Poeze and Schulte Nordholt 1995: 115–6.

The visual language of modern painting also contributed to the revolutionary zeal of the Republic, and even here the *pemuda* played a part. In early 1946, modern painters had followed the leadership of the Republic in their move from Jakarta to Yogyakarta. In the 1930s they had dissociated themselves from traditional conventions and broken away from the romantic 'Beautiful Java' style. They went in search of new modern forms, focusing on scenes of the everyday life of ordinary people. During the Japanese occupation, the political situation forced them to learn to make propaganda posters. Most of the painters, such as Affandi, the brothers Otto and Agus Djaja, and Hendra Gunawan, came from the better educated urban middle class, but Sudjojono, who came to play a leading role in Yogyakarta, was the child of a contract worker. He became the leader of Seniman Indonesia Muda (SIM, the Young Indonesian Artists), which strove for a true and expressive realism, depicting not only warriors but also ordinary people and everyday scenes.⁹

This identification with ordinary people and their daily needs revealed painful social contradictions that were at odds with the image of unity and stability which the Republic sought to create. These contradictions were exacerbated by the economic crisis that hit Yogyakarta in 1948 and by the fact that the promised reforms of land ownership and taxation were not implemented.

Inspired by the revolutionary atmosphere in Yogyakarta, women also began to make their voices heard. Their participation in the battle was often limited to a supporting and nurturing role which involved providing fighters with food and clothing and caring for the wounded. The Women's Congress held in Solo in February 1946 fought against this traditional division of roles. Instead of having to play a subordinate and subservient role, the women demanded equal participation in the struggle, but their efforts failed to make a change. When a group of women who had undergone military training arrived in West Java in June 1946 to fight with the men, they were sent to the kitchen by the commander and ordered to tend to the wounded, much to their indignation.¹⁰ Few women were to actually fight at the front in Java and Sumatra.

9 Raben 2009; Bianpoen 2009. Sudjana went to the front and made documentary sketches of the war. In 1948, a group associated with Affandi and Hendra Gunawan broke away from SIM, and Sudjojono founded the Pelukis Rakyat (People's Painters). Remarkably, in 1948 the Gemeentemuseum in Amsterdam exhibited the work of Otto and Agus Djaja, who were studying at the Amsterdam Art Academy at the time. In 2018, this exhibition was reprised at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

10 Galuh Ambar Sasi 2017.



15. *Bung Ajo Bung* poster by Affandi

In her study of the revolution in the Karo Highlands in Sumatra, Mary Steedley rightly observes that far too little attention has been paid to the role of women in the struggle for independence. She stresses that the supporting tasks assigned to women – supplying food, providing medical care, but also smuggling weapons and carrying out espionage activities – constituted a vital contribution to the fight. Moreover, women kept their households going while the men were elsewhere,¹¹ and that should also be seen as a substantial contribution to the struggle. Galuh Ambar Sasi, in her study on the role of women in Yogyakarta, points out that the absence of men was an additional burden in economic terms but also gave women more autonomy. And in sexual aspects as well, freer morals were the norm among the women in Yogyakarta.¹²

Although women were denied active participation in the struggle, they did successfully become involved in the political debate. Under the leadership of Sri Mangunsarkoro, the *Partai Wanita Rakyat* (PWR, Women's Party of the People) was founded in September 1946.¹³ The PWR was a radical party

11 Steedley 2013: 49; see also Lucas 1986.

12 Galuh Ambar Sasi 2017.

13 She was married to Sarmidi Mangunsarkoro, the leader of the left wing of Masyumi.

that allowed only women to join – a first in the world – and was ideologically close to Tan Malaka, rejecting the compromises of diplomacy and supporting the fight for 100% *Merdeka*.

Politically aware women also became vocal when Yogyakarta experienced an economic crisis in the course of 1948, which was accompanied by serious forms of corruption. Senior Republican officials were guilty of selling permits; homeowners demanded excessive key money from refugees desperately seeking housing in Yogyakarta; parents suddenly had to pay much higher school fees for their children; and wealthy officials were able to buy noble titles from impoverished Javanese aristocrats. Women's organisations collectively went to war against these stains on the image of the Republic.

The Dutch blockade

Very little research has been conducted on the financial foundation of the Republic. At the end of 1945 and beginning of 1946, there were hardly any Dutch troops in Java, which allowed the Republic to make use of the money reserves of the Dutch East Indies and Japanese regimes. Moreover, taxation still functioned to some extent. However, the *bersiap* and *daulat* actions, which forced many experienced administrators to vacate their posts, had a negative effect on taxation. And the arrival of Dutch troops and the Republic's exodus from Jakarta in January 1946 led to an even greater loss in Republican income.

Moreover, when Dutch troops gained control of more and more territory in Java in 1947, the value of Republican money came under pressure because it was only circulating in a small area. It also became increasingly difficult for the Republic to obtain foreign currency to pay for essential import goods and for the costs of diplomatic missions in New Delhi, Bangkok, Singapore, Cairo, London and New York.

There was income from the export of plantation products from Central Java, such as sugar, rubber, tobacco, kapok and vanilla, which were transported by Chinese ships to Singapore via Cirebon, Tegal and Probolinggo, but this came to an end after the Dutch attack in July 1947, which resulted in a more stringent Dutch blockade. Trade by land was no longer possible, and the Republic had lost its northern ports. The Dutch authorities officially only blocked the import of arms and related goods, but in practice they imposed a general blockade, barring fuel, tyres, parts of machinery, railway equipment, textiles and medicines (vitamins, bandages and anaesthetics, sedatives, vaccines) as well.

When John Coast arrived in Yogyakarta in August 1948, the city made a shabby impression.¹⁴ At the beginning of the revolution, Yogyakarta had had half a million inhabitants but after the Dutch attack in 1947 it was overrun by a million refugees. Meanwhile, the fertile rice areas in the north and west of Central Java were cut off from the city. Because railway lines hardly functioned anymore – there were only a few trains left, and they ran on wood – the supply of food from the east was also obstructed. There were virtually no cars. The entire leadership of the Republic had only one car, a Dodge.

On the Malioboro, most of the shops were empty. There was an acute shortage of textiles. Many people walked around in burlap clothing as they had done at the end of the Japanese occupation. Information Minister Natsir, who was known as a frugal man, had one worn-out shirt that he washed every night.¹⁵ According to George Kahin, the people on the streets looked malnourished, and children in particular suffered from vitamin deficiency. The situation became more precarious when a plague epidemic broke out in September 1948 and the rice harvest that year turned out to be poor due to drought. Partly because of inflation, the price of a kilo of rice skyrocketed from 1.66 to 17.50 rupiah in one year.¹⁶ Food scarcity and inflation led to the rapid impoverishment of the urban population, while rice farmers around Yogyakarta became richer, especially since taxes had remained the same since 1941 and were much less oppressive due to the devaluation of money.

By the autumn of 1948, the Republic had become almost completely isolated from the outside world. In order to maintain some international contact, the Republic chartered two small Dakotas (the RI 001 and RI 002) from the legendary pilot Bob Freeberg that flew once or twice a month to Manila and via Bukittinggi to Singapore and Bangkok. These flights also came in handy when the Republic tried to obtain foreign currency. In mid-1947, the Republican government decided to secretly export the stockpile of opium that still dated from the Dutch colonial era. Transported by speedboat and using Freeberg's two aircraft, shipments of opium were sold in Singapore and Bangkok. When the Dutch became aware of this smuggling in August 1948, Hatta immediately put an end to it because he knew the Republic could not afford an international scandal. John Coast was instructed to categorically deny the Republic's involvement in this trade.

14 Coast 2015: 97.

15 Kahin 2003: 44. His staff raised money to buy him a second shirt.

16 Kahin 1952: 67, 252.

The business contacts that Chinese traders managed to maintain with the outside world were crucial for the Republic. To stimulate trade with territories outside the Republic, Prime Minister Hatta established the Biro Kabinet in 1948, a special bureau directly under the prime minister dealing with business licenses, which granted licenses to important Chinese traders. These entrepreneurs came from the new group of Chinese immigrants – the so-called *singkeh* or *totok* – who, over the course of the 1940s, succeeded in supplanting the well-established *peranakan* elite.¹⁷ Such licenses were also granted to high-ranking military personnel, who were given a share of the profits for their services to protect commercial transactions in which rice from Dutch territory was clandestinely exchanged for sugar from the Republic; or rice, coffee, rubber, tea, tobacco and palm oil were exported to Singapore, Penang and Manila in exchange for imports of arms, ammunition and medicines.¹⁸

The armed forces

The Republic's biggest expense was the armed forces. Without the Republican army, the Republic was powerless, and thus the TNI had to be kept on its feet by all means possible. Initially, the armed forces were paid with money that came from Japanese and Dutch East Indies reserves and from taxes. In 1947 and 1948, additional funds were raised from Chinese entrepreneurs, and the Republican government also seized a portion of the profits from the sale of export products.¹⁹

After the communist uprising had been put down, the armed forces was in a stronger position. There was more unity in the army leadership, which was now dominated by men from the Siliwangi Division, and a close alliance had developed between Hatta, Nasution and the chief of staff, Simatupang. This did not mean, however, that the army could withstand a Dutch attack. The TNI suffered from a chronic lack of equipment and had to make do with weapons that had been smuggled from Singapore and Manila or raided from Dutch barracks and convoys. In addition, there was a severe shortage of telephones and radios, which made internal communication difficult.

17 See also Chapters 2 and 6; Twang Peck Yang 1998: 198–238.

18 In 1948, \$270 million worth of goods were exported from the Republic to Singapore; Twang Peck Yang 1998: 198–238.

19 In 1947, the Fonds Perjuangan Rakyat (People's Struggle Fund) had half a million rupiah, and in 1948 the new Fonds Perang (War Fund) had 730,000 rupiah in cash. To supplement this, loans were taken out and goods and assets of Western companies and Chinese entrepreneurs were seized (Julianto Ibrahim 2019).

The longer the Dutch blockade lasted, the more the army relied on the people to provide food and shelter. The autonomous *laskar* had to provide for themselves and did so by imposing levies on traders and entrepreneurs in their domains and also commandeering food from the people.

As indicated in the previous chapter, the Hatta cabinet's rationalisation and reorganisation plan had only been partially realised. As a result of the communist uprising, the troop reduction was not fully carried out, and very little of the reorganisation of the armed forces into *Wehrkreis* had been conducted. And the threat of a new Dutch attack put the continuation of the reorganisation at risk once again.

The Netherlands on a collision course

As mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, the KVP ministers in the new Dutch cabinet were in favour of a hard line against the Republic, as was Louis Beel, Van Mook's successor. These hardliners also further distanced themselves from the UN Committee of Good Offices, which had submitted a new reconciliation proposal on 10 September – through the American chairman Merle Cochran – that was broadly in line with an earlier plan presented in June.²⁰ The gist of this proposal was that there would be an Indonesian interim government with minimal input from the Dutch, that the TNI would not be placed under Dutch authority, and that free elections would be held for a constituent assembly. The Republic accepted the proposal as a basis for continued negotiations, but the Netherlands rejected it.

In Washington, meanwhile, there had been a shift in opinion in favour of the Republic, with the State Department supporting Cochran's proposal. When the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, D.U. Stikker, visited Washington in September, he received a chilly welcome. He could not fathom why the United States had abandoned the Netherlands.

Shortly after the outbreak of the communist uprising in Madiun, Cochran met Prime Minister Hatta in the mountain resort of Kaliurang. Hatta asked Cochran if the United States was willing to provide the Republic with the weapons he needed in his fight against the communist opposition. That was a step too far for Cochran, as it would have been too much of an affront to the Netherlands, which was, after all, an ally of the US. He did, however, promise to supply medical supplies and textiles.²¹

²⁰ See Chapter 9.

²¹ Poeze 2007: 1212.

Although the Dutch cabinet no longer had any confidence in the Committee of Good Offices, after much pressure from the US – which had threatened to suspend 100 million dollars' worth of its Marshall Aid that was destined for the Dutch East Indies – it decided to continue negotiations with the Republic. Hatta also wanted to sit down and negotiate, if only to postpone a second Dutch attack. He even reached out to the BFO by agreeing to a federal Indonesia with the states of Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, the Moluccas and the Lesser Sunda Islands.

At the beginning of November, Foreign Minister Stikker visited Yogyakarta to talk to Republican leaders without the Committee of Good Offices being involved. The consultation between Stikker and Hatta brought some degree of convergence. Hatta stated in a separate memorandum, which was intended only for the Dutch government and the Committee of Good Offices, that he was prepared to recognise Dutch sovereignty over the archipelago during the interim period and to grant the High Representative of the Crown more powers.²² He was even willing to let the Republican army become part of the future federal army. Lieutenant General Spoor wanted to dissolve the TNI as soon as possible and make the KNIL the core of the new federal army, but Hatta refused to give up control of the TNI during the transition period. After all, how could an army fighting for freedom be abolished before its goal was achieved?

Hatta was playing a dangerous game because he knew he would come under much criticism from the Masyumi, the PNI, and the army leadership for the concessions he had made. Stikker, for his part, received his share of criticism from KVP ministers and from Beel and Spoor for having made too many concessions. And thus a second visit to the Republic followed at the end of November, once again excluding the Committee of Good Offices. This time Stikker was accompanied by his colleague Sassen and the chairmen of the KVP and the Labour Party, who were there to ensure that he did not give away too much again.

The consultations in Yogyakarta achieved nothing. The Dutch delegation did not want to compromise on anything, and Hatta was also not allowed by his constituency to make concessions. At the beginning of December, the United States made one last attempt to persuade the Netherlands to reach an agreement. Washington even threatened to suspend Marshall Aid to the Netherlands but swallowed this threat after the Dutch protested fiercely. In the end, the United States did not dare to jeopardise the position of the

22 When the note was leaked to the Dutch press, Republican newspapers were given to understand that they were not to write about it (Poeze 2007: 1023–30).

Netherlands within Europe and had to watch with dismay as its ally refused to allow itself be called to order.

The Netherlands had broken off negotiations with the Republic, ignored the Committee of Good Offices, antagonised the United States and also further alienated the federal states. On 20 September, consultations had taken place in The Hague between Minister Sassen and the delegation of federal states that had come together to form the BFO. Sassen gave the impression at this meeting that he would involve the BFO in the formation of an interim government, which would pave the way for a federal Indonesia. The BFO delegation made it clear that the interim government had to be Indonesian, that the role of the High Representative of the Crown should be limited and that Irian Barat/New Guinea should be part of an independent Indonesia.

Behind these firm positions, there was profound disagreement within the BFO about its attitude towards the Republic. Negara Indonesia Timur, Pasundan and South Kalimantan wanted to form a transitional government as long as it was with the Republic, but conservative states such as East Sumatra preferred to keep the Republic at a distance. Under enormous pressure from the Dutch, the BFO delegation reluctantly agreed at the beginning of October to participate in the interim government without the Republic if necessary.

The BFO group was therefore bitterly disappointed when they found out that the Netherlands wanted to talk to the Republic in November 1948 without involving the BFO. A request by Anak Agung Gde Agung and Sultan Hamid to participate in the negotiations as a full-fledged partner was rejected by Stikker at the beginning of November, who evidently wanted to prevent the BFO from siding with the Republic during the negotiations. The BFO had been sidelined and felt betrayed by the Dutch government. This presented a considerable risk to the Dutch because the federal states would not support a Dutch military attack on the Republic this time around. The Netherlands still did not see that even in the federal states there was broad support for independence.²³

Before Minister Stikker's arrival in Jakarta, Van Mook was replaced by Beel on 3 November. On 4 November, Van Mook left the Indies for good. During a stopover in Singapore, he explained his vision to the assembled press one more time: Indonesia had to become independent, of course, but Indonesians needed help and guidance to be able to govern their country themselves.²⁴

23 Bouma 2020: 240–3.

24 Van den Berge 2014: 260.

This required time and Dutch involvement. His press conference marked the end of the Ethical Policy and the beginning of a modern paternalistic discourse on good governance.

Unlike Van Mook, Beel had no connection with the Indies. A straightforward conservative Catholic, Beel had no knowledge of the colony and no international experience. While Van Mook was able to provide some counterweight to Spoor, Beel admired the lieutenant general and leaned on him. Beel and Spoor were both opposed to the negotiations that Stikker was still trying to conduct with the backing of Prime Minister Drees; instead, they headed straight for a military confrontation. As early as 20 September, Spoor and Beel proposed that the Dutch intervene militarily, arguing that the Soviet Union had to be prevented from coming to the aid of the communist comrades in Java. But The Hague did not concur.

Spoor and Beel were still of the opinion that the Republic had to be eliminated first, and that only then could an interim government staffed with willing Indonesians be established. A federal Indonesia could subsequently become part of a Union with the Netherlands. This meant that the Republic would be reduced to a federal state headed by the Sultan of Yogyakarta, who was believed to be keen to cooperate with the Dutch. Prime Minister Drees was opposed to decimating the Republic because he considered it a full-fledged partner in negotiations. But, as in 1947, he was unwilling to sacrifice his domestic agenda of social legislation on a cabinet crisis over the Indonesian question.

After the attack in July 1947, the Dutch military had conquered many areas that they were subsequently unable to bring under their control. Battalion sections of a few hundred to a few thousand square kilometres that under normal circumstances required divisions of 10,000 to 15,000 men now had to be controlled by 500 men. At the same time, armed incidents increased along the demarcation lines between Republican and Dutch territory. Time and again, the overburdened Dutch troops had to face guerrillas who suddenly appeared, only to disappear just as quickly. In response, Dutch troops began to conduct large-scale purges. Those on the Republican side were often aware of such operations so that the guerrilla fighters were able to seek refuge. Because 'the enemy' was often elusive and the terrain too large and too unknown, the Dutch army command increasingly used heavy artillery, air raids and special forces to create a violence-based supremacy. And this approach led to more and more civilians – farmers, the elderly, women, children – being killed.²⁵ The situation was particularly explosive in West

25 Harinck 2022, Chapter 4.

Java. At the end of 1948, there were 11,000 TNI soldiers, 12,000 members of Islamic militant groups and 9,000 members of other revolutionary militias. Dutch troops, military units from the state of Pasundan, and militias set up by plantation owners were unable to stop the violence. From May 1948 onwards, more and more armed incidents were reported.²⁶

The Dutch military high command had grossly overestimated its ability to suppress the resistance. By mid-1948, the Dutch army had a maximum size of 150,000 men – too few to keep large areas under permanent control. Moreover, a significant portion of the troops consisted of new and inexperienced soldiers who had come to replace the first batch of soldiers, who had by then gained quite some experience. Spoor realised that his army could not win the guerrilla war, and this is why he wanted to eliminate the Republic. He assumed that eliminating the civilian and military leaders of the Republic would cause their followers to give up the fight.

After fierce disagreements in the cabinet, on 13 December it was decided – on the proposal of Minister Sassen – to attack the Republic no later than 18 December. At the same time, Hatta asked the Committee of Good Offices to make a last-ditch effort, and he also made some vaguely worded concessions. On 14 December, the cabinet met again in The Hague. The discord between the KVP and the Labour Party over this issue almost led to a cabinet crisis. On 16 December, the cabinet sent an ultimatum to Hatta via Beel and Cochran: the Republic had to unconditionally agree to all Dutch demands. It was decided that the attack would be postponed until 21 December.

But Spoor and Beel did not accept this postponement, and the cabinet relented. Unbeknownst to those in The Hague, Beel withheld the letter from the cabinet for a day and single-handedly shortened the ultimatum to a period of 24 hours. As a result, Hatta no longer had time to consult with his colleagues, but given the tone of the Dutch ultimatum this would not have made a difference. The Republic no longer bothered to send a reply.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Security Council had held its last meeting before the Christmas recess in Paris on December 16; thus The Hague assumed that its military attack would not be obstructed straight away by a Security Council resolution.

The attack

The leaders of the Republic did not expect a Dutch attack in the short term. Sukarno was convinced that the United States would block this, and the

26 Frakking 2017a.

Republic also felt protected by the presence of the members of the Committee of Good Offices near Yogyakarta in Kaliurang. Should the Dutch want to attack the Republic, it was assumed, they would only do so after a federal transitional government had been formed, after which a border incident would be used as an excuse to take action.

What the Republican leaders in Yogyakarta did not know, however, is that the Dutch military intelligence service in Jakarta had broken the secret Republican codes and had been well aware of the state of affairs in Yogyakarta since September.²⁷ For example, the Dutch knew that senior military officer Nasution and a number of staff members had left for East Java on 17 December to officially install Colonel Sungkono as commander of the Brawidjaja Division, and that many of the Republican troops based in Yogyakarta were holding exercises outside the city on 19 December.

An unsuspecting Republican delegation had left Yogyakarta on 18 December to pay a return visit to the state of Negara Indonesia Timur in Makassar. At a stopover in Jakarta, the delegation members were arrested.

Sukarno was also getting ready to leave the city. He was to be picked up in Yogyakarta on 19 December by an Indian government aircraft to attend a pan-Asian conference in New Delhi at the invitation of Prime Minister Nehru. After the conference in New Delhi, Sukarno was to fly on to New York where he would visit the United Nations. Hatta had been scheduled to fly with Sukarno to Bukittinggi on Sumatra to lead the Republic from there in case the Dutch attacked Yogyakarta, but he stayed behind in Kaliurang due to illness. The Indian aircraft was grounded in Jakarta by the Dutch authorities and never reached Yogyakarta.

On 18 December, just before midnight, Beel informed the representative of the Republic as well as Cochran, who was in Jakarta at the time, that the Netherlands no longer considered itself bound by the Renville Agreement. Because the Dutch had broken the lines of communication with Yogyakarta, this message could not be immediately forwarded to Kaliurang and the Republic. As a result, the Dutch attack, which began at daybreak on Sunday, 19 December, came as a complete surprise. Operation Crow – the code name of the action – started at half past six with an air raid on Maguwo airport east of Yogyakarta, where paratroopers, including members of the notorious Special Forces Corps, took control of the airfield within half an hour. They encountered little resistance: no anti-aircraft artillery came into play; the Republican air force – three Japanese-made aircraft – remained grounded; and of the 150 lightly armed soldiers on Maguwo, 128 were killed. Having

27 Kahin 2003: 77.

secured the airport, the Dutch flew in equipment and KNIL soldiers and marines from Semarang. They fought their way street by street to the centre of the city while airstrikes were being carried out, killing many civilians.

At ten o'clock, Sukarno held a cabinet meeting. The car in which Hatta was traveling from Kaliurang to this meeting was shot at. The gunfire killed the husband of Maria Ulfah Santoso, the head of Hatta's secretariat.

Contrary to an earlier claim that Sukarno would take charge of the guerrilla struggle in the event of a Dutch attack, and despite the insistence of chief of staff Simatupang to implement this plan quickly, Sukarno decided – with the agreement of the cabinet – not to leave his palace. He believed he could count on more international support if he allowed himself to be captured. But according to Sjahrir, Sukarno was too afraid to lead the guerrillas.²⁸

At eleven o'clock, Dutch troops had seized control of the telephone exchange and an hour later the radio station. As a result, it was no longer possible for Sukarno and Hatta to broadcast speeches in which they intended to call for the fight to continue.²⁹ At three o'clock, Dutch troops stood in front of the presidential palace. Sukarno ordered the palace guard not to resist and allowed himself to be captured along with Hatta, Sjahrir, parliament chairman Assaat and seven members of the cabinet, including Agus Salim. Most of them were interned on Bangka island the next day, but Sukarno, Sjahrir and Agus Salim were imprisoned separately at Lake Toba on 22 December.

On 20 December, members of the Special Forces Corps also occupied the mountain resort of Kaliurang. During that action, Hatta's secretary, Masdulah Nasution, was murdered for no reason,³⁰ and the members of the Committee of Good Offices were placed under house arrest.

Dutch troops also invaded other Republican areas in Java and Sumatra. On paper, a plan had been worked out by the Republican army leadership to prevent TNI units from engaging in a direct confrontation with the enemy. Instead, they were to start a coordinated guerrilla war. In practice, however, chaos reigned on the Republican side, and any form of coordination was hampered by a lack of communication.

The Dutch attack from the west met virtually no resistance, but the advance from Semarang to the south did encounter some, making it impossible

28 Abu Hanifah 1972: 299–300.

29 George Kahin, who was in Yogyakarta during the attack, smuggled the speeches of Sukarno, Hatta and Natsir out of the city, after which they were communicated via Republican channels (Kahin 1952: 393).

30 Vermeulen 2020. Perhaps Dutch soldiers mistook him for army chief Abdul Haris Nasution.

for Dutch troops to encircle Republican troops in Magelang and Wonosobo. In East Java, Dutch marines ran into tenacious resistance when moving south from Tuban, as did the KNIL's Battalion X, which advanced from Malang to Blitar and Madiun and found itself in a fierce fight with the troops of Colonel Sungkono. Dutch troops captured Madiun and Kediri on 25 December but failed to encircle Republican forces in the areas around Blitar and Kediri.

By the end of December, the Dutch forces had taken control of the most important cities on Java but had not succeeded in eliminating the Republican troops.

On the island of Sumatra, under the code name Operation Magpie, the Dutch occupied all major cities within two weeks. Around Padangpanjang, Bukittinggi and the oil fields of Djambi, this was accompanied by heavy fighting. After the operation, Dutch troops had more control over the surroundings of these cities, but vast areas still remained out of their reach. In West Sumatra, it was mainly the revolutionary organisations at the village level that generated support for the TNI and prevented the people from providing the Dutch with information. Once again, the Dutch wisely refrained from attacking Aceh.

The Dutch regime imposed a general censorship that remained in force until 1 January. Until then, even the Committee of Good Offices was not allowed to carry out an investigation. Prior to the action, the Dutch army command had told the troops that they would be liberating the Sultan of Yogyakarta and that the people would welcome them with open arms. But the people did not welcome them anywhere, and moreover the sultan had retired to his *kraton* (the sultan's palace) after the cabinet meeting on 19 December, where he tried to keep a makeshift Republican administration going. He remained in close contact with TNI commanders Latief and Suharto, who were located in Sleman near Yogyakarta.

The isolation of the Dutch

Back in the Netherlands, there was widespread approval of the attack. A NIPO survey showed that 61% of the respondents supported this 'second police action'. The general opinion was that it was high time the Republic was taught a lesson.³¹ Although the military intervention came under heavy criticism at a turbulent Labour Party meeting on 23 December, the party leader Van der Goes van Naters managed to calm tempers. He argued that anyone with the courage to assume government responsibility would get his

31 De Jong 2015: 199.

hands dirty, and moreover it was the Republic who refused to comply with a federal solution that was simply the best deal for all parties.³² Minister Sassen was of the opinion that the term 'Republic' could no longer be used because it no longer existed. He firmly believed that nothing stood in the way of the formation of a federal Indonesia that would be disposed towards the Netherlands. He was to be proved wrong.

Lieutenant General Spoor had three objectives: to eliminate the political and military leadership of the Republic, to occupy the Republican hubs, and to disable the Republican forces. He had achieved his first objective for the most part and his second objective to some extent, but he had no success whatsoever with his third.

Because Hatta had been arrested, he was unable to lead a Republican emergency government from Bukittinggi. This role was assumed by Sjafruddin Prawiranegara, the minister of economic affairs, who had been in West Sumatra since November to bring the province's finances into order.³³ Due to a lack of coordination, the five ministers who stayed in East Java with Colonel Gatot Subroto also proclaimed a temporary government, which was headed by Interior Minister Sukiman.³⁴

The situation became even more confusing when Kartosuwirjo, the leader of the Darul Islam movement in West Java, announced that he no longer recognised the imprisoned Republican leaders because they had surrendered and that he would henceforth lead the struggle for independence.³⁵

Tan Malaka also proclaimed himself the leader of the revolution. In early November he had been closely involved in the creation of the Partai Murba, which aimed to consolidate the leftist forces after the defeat of the PKI. Before the expected attack of the Dutch, and also because he no longer felt safe in Yogyakarta, Tan Malaka decided to go to East Java to prepare for the guerrilla war, given that he could count on a large left-wing following there, and division commander Sungkono was sympathetic to

32 In its 20 December issue, the social democratic newspaper *Het Vrije Volk* held the Republic responsible for the situation that had arisen. It argued that the Netherlands had had no choice but to intervene.

33 A message sent from Yogyakarta on 19 December never reached him. The emergency government in Bukittinggi was set up by Sjafruddin Prawiranegara on his own initiative (Simatupang 1985: 185–6).

34 The Republican government had decided on 16 December that in the absence of Sukarno (flying to India) and Hatta (due to illness), Interior Minister Sukiman would lead the government together with ministers Susanto Tirtoprodjo and Djuanda. This decision is what Sukiman and his colleagues invoked.

35 On Darul Islam, see Chapter 12.

him.³⁶ On 12 November, Tan Malaka left for Kediri, where he consulted with Sungkono. A military-civilian organisation was established in mid-December in Blitar to mobilise the people's resistance, with a large number of army units and combat groups participating. Tan Malaka considered this collaboration a personal success and believed it to be crucial for his Partai Murba.

Shortly after the Dutch attack on Yogyakarta, Tan Malaka gave a speech that was broadcast by Radio Kediri on 21 December in which he argued it was clear that diplomacy had failed. He called on his supporters to take up the fight by the people for '100% *Merdeka*' and declared that he would stand up to the Dutch to the very end. He did not cast himself as the alternative to President Sukarno, although he did hint that it might come to that. But he soon abandoned this restraint.

During the Dutch attack on Bukittinggi, Minister Prawiranegara was not captured because he had retreated in time to the mountains near Payakumbuh. His emergency government was in contact with Singapore and with guerrilla groups in Java via a strong radio station, but its significance was mainly symbolic. As long as the voice of the Republic was on the air and contact could be established with international bodies, the Republic was still alive. Moreover, it was made clear that Prawiranegara was the legitimate representative of the Republic and not Tan Malaka or Kartosuwirjo.

The Republican army leadership was deeply disappointed that the political leaders had surrendered without a fight. They believed that, since diplomacy had failed and the Dutch had shown their true colours, the armed forces had a responsibility to continue the fight. Commander-in-Chief Sudirman ordered his troops to withdraw. Severely weakened by tuberculosis, he set an example and immediately left by car for East Java, where he was taken from Pacitan further into the mountains in a palanquin. There among his troops, he embodied the moral leadership of the struggle and grew into a legendary hero.

Colonel Nasution had hastily returned from East Java to lead the forces in Java near Yogyakarta. He established his headquarters on the slopes of Mount Merapi. There, on 22 December, he announced that all of Java was under military rule. He also commanded the armed forces to switch to guerrilla warfare according to the *Wehrkreis* system, and he called on the people to support the army units. From his headquarters, he sent detailed instructions to his troops, but it is unclear how many of them reached their destination and, if they did, whether they were carried out. It remained very

36 On the role of Sabarudin, who offered his support to Tan Malaka in East Java, see Chapter 12.

difficult to coordinate actions with the very poor means of communication they had. Moreover, most local commanders paid little attention to orders from above. Much depended on the authority of division commanders to successfully implement the new strategy in their areas.

Due to the sudden Dutch attack, there was no time to bring the imprisoned leaders of the leftist uprising to justice. During the last cabinet meeting on 19 December, Sukarno had vetoed the decision to execute these leaders, but that same day 11 prisoners were executed nonetheless on the orders of Colonel Gatot Subroto. One of those prisoners was Amir Sjarifuddin. The following is an account from an eyewitness:

In the evening they were taken to the village of Ngalihan just outside Solo, where villagers had dug a mass grave. Amir asked the commanding lieutenant: 'Are you sure you want do this to me and my comrades?' The lieutenant replied: 'I'm just following an order.' Amir asked again: 'Have you thought this over thoroughly?' The Lieutenant: 'It's pointless to discuss this.' Comrade Djokosudjono intervened: 'I don't want to blame you, but this will harm our country.'

The lieutenant ordered his men to load the guns. Comrade Amir walked over to the lieutenant, slipping slightly as he did, and patted the lieutenant on the back and said: 'Give us time to sing.' The Lieutenant: 'Alright, but hurry up.' Comrade Suripno then asked: 'May I send a letter to my wife so she is informed?' The Lieutenant: 'Yes, no objection.'

The comrades then wrote letters. After this, they were entrusted to the lieutenant, one by one. The eleven men then sang 'Indonesia Raya' and 'The Internationale' together. After singing, Comrade Amir exclaimed: 'Workers around the world, unite! I die for you!' Comrade Suripno: 'I defend all of you with my body; I'm here for you.' Then these eleven heroic men were shot one by one, first comrade Amir Sjarifuddin, then comrade Maruto Darusman, Oei Gee Hwat, Sardjono, Djokosudjono and so on [Suripno, Harjono, Sukarno, Katamhadi, Ronomarsono and D. Mangku].³⁷

The next day, 130 PKI prisoners were killed in Kediri. However, 2,000 prisoners in Yogyakarta, including Alimin, were released to fight against the Dutch. In Madiun, imprisoned communists managed to escape. In West Sumatra, communist militias were less in danger of being attacked by Republican

37 Anonymous report that appeared in Aidit's brochure on 'Madiun' in 1955. There is a report by a second eyewitness that broadly confirms Aidit's version; Poeze 2007: 1323.

forces because they had joined TNI units in time. Communist units in Tapanuli, which were closer to Tan Malaka, did the same.

On 20 December, the units of the Siliwangi Division that were still in Yogyakarta moved to West Java, accompanied by their wives and children. The journey was made on foot and was led by Ahmad Wiranatakusuma, the son of the leader of the state of Pasundan.

TNI units remained active around Yogyakarta. They carried out an attack on the city on 29 December and an attack on Kaliurang from Sleman on 1 January. More spectacular was the surprise attack that took place on 9 January 1949: in broad daylight, a Mobile Brigade unit and a company of the KRIS led by Ventje Sumual penetrated to the centre of Yogyakarta and attacked Hotel Merdeka, where many Dutch people were staying. These attacks on Yogyakarta and the relocation of TNI troops proved that Spoor had failed to eliminate the Republican army.

After the Dutch had captured Yogyakarta, Beel and Spoor wanted to immediately form a federal government that was sympathetic to the Netherlands. And it went without saying that the Republic would not be a part of this federal government since it no longer existed from the point of view of the Dutch. Spoor called the Dutch attack 'the last act' and referred to the 'former TNI'.³⁸

But the prime ministers of the states of Negara Indonesia Timur and Pasundan refused to cooperate. Anak Agung Gde Agung and Adil Puradiredja denounced the Dutch attack in strong terms. And to make it clear that they denied responsibility for any of this, their state governments resigned. Adil Puradiredja refused to form a new cabinet, so Spoor ordered Pasundan's leader, Wiranatakusuma, to do so. On 28 December, a new cabinet led by Djumhana Wiraatmadja was formed, but he too demanded the release of the Republican leaders and the Republic's participation in a transitional government. Beel then threatened to establish a military administration in Pasundan, and troop commander Engles proceeded to arrest a number of political leaders. In late January, the Djumhana cabinet resigned, and under great political and military pressure from the Dutch side, a new cabinet was finally formed that was more accommodating of Dutch wishes but continued to demand that the Republic play a role in the negotiations with the Netherlands.

Meanwhile, violence had flared up again in West Java, leading to an extremely complex balance of power there. Dutch troops were shelled by returning Siliwangi units and supporters of Islamic leader Kartosuwirjo,

38 Groen 1989.

while many members of the Pasundan state security forces and militias that were supported to protect the plantations defected and joined the Republican forces. At the same time, Siliwangi troops and supporters of Kartosuwirjo fought each other, and sympathisers of Tan Malaka also joined the fray with their own Tentara Rakyat.

In nearby Banten, TNI troops withdrew to the southeast after the Dutch attack, but independent militias and groups of *jawara* remained active in the north. As a result, the Dutch had to face attacks by Republican guerrillas throughout Banten.

On 3 January, Prime Minister Drees left for Java. Along with Foreign Minister Stikker, he was of the opinion that the Republican leaders could not be ignored. But Beel blocked an attempt by Drees to speak to Hatta. What did take place was a meeting between Beel and Sultan Hamid, the chairman of the BFO.

Anak Agung Gde Agung had meanwhile formed a new cabinet in Makassar and became prime minister again. He declared that the Republic should participate in the negotiations, but within the BFO a rift threatened to erupt again. Supported by the leaders of South Sumatra and East Java, Chairman Hamid opted for a moderate course focused on cooperation with the Netherlands. A compromise was reached: Indonesia had to become independent soon, and the Republic had to be involved in the negotiations. Hamid refused to talk to Sukarno and Hatta but would agree to talk to Sjahrir and the Sultan of Yogyakarta, Hamengkubuwono. The latter, however, refused to receive Hamid.

On 18 January, a meeting took place between Drees and Sjahrir, who had been released from captivity.³⁹ Sjahrir demanded the release of the imprisoned Republican leaders as a condition for resuming negotiations. Two days later, Drees returned to the Netherlands. He had agreed with Anak Agung Gde Agung that a conference would soon be convened with moderate Indonesian leaders on the formation of an interim government. More importantly, however, Drees was convinced that no solution was possible without the Republic. Either way, he wanted a federation that included the Republic, and that spelled the end of the plans of Sassen, Spoor and Beel.

The immediate reason for Drees' visit to Java was a UN Security Council resolution that called for a ceasefire and the release of Republican leaders. Although the Security Council had gone into recess on 16 December, an urgent debate was held on 21 December at the request of the American representative in response to the Dutch attack on the Republic. Washington

39 Acute stomach problems had prevented Drees from going to Bangka to talk to Hatta.

was extremely displeased about the fact that the Netherlands had proceeded with the attack against the wishes of the United States. And the Security Council was shocked that the members of the Committee of Good Offices in Kaliurang had been endangered by the Dutch attack and had even been placed under house arrest.

Tough negotiations were needed in the Security Council for a resolution to be passed because the United States and the Soviet Union had been constantly thwarting each other with their veto ever since the eruption of the Cold War. Finally, on 28 December, a resolution was passed calling on both sides to come to a ceasefire and asking the Netherlands to release the Republican leaders within 24 hours. The Dutch government, working under the assumption that its victory was sealed, announced that it would cease fighting in Java and Sumatra on 31 December and 5 January respectively. On 10 January, the Republican leaders in Bangka were told that they were allowed to move freely but also that the Republic no longer existed.

Within the Republican circle, there was disappointment that the Netherlands had not been required to withdraw its troops. Suspicions about the position of the United States seemed to be confirmed by a 25 December commentary in *The New York Times* which stated that the Netherlands was important for Europe's economic recovery. It appeared as though the Netherlands had been reprimanded but had had no sanctions imposed on it.

Nevertheless, the Republican leaders had succeeded in drawing global attention to their conflict with the Netherlands, which led to more international pressure. Prime Minister Nehru held a conference in New Delhi from 20 to 23 January to organise international support for Indonesia. At this conference, a resolution was adopted that strongly condemned the Netherlands and called on the Security Council to take action. A report by the Committee of Good Offices, presented to the Security Council on 24 January, concluded that the Netherlands had not complied with the resolution of 28 December because Republican leaders were still imprisoned in Bangka.

This report was followed on 28 January by Security Council Resolution No. 67, which called for a ceasefire, the release of Republican leaders, the restoration of the Republic in Yogyakarta, the establishment of an interim government on 15 March, and the holding of elections for a constituent assembly by 1 October, after which the transfer of sovereignty had to be achieved before 1 January 1950. Oversight of this process was to be carried out by the United Nations Commission for Indonesia (UNCI), the successor to the Committee of Good Offices. Again, there was no demand for the Netherlands to withdraw its troops and no sanctions. The Dutch government haughtily replied that it would implement the resolution insofar as it was in

line with the responsibility that the Netherlands held for order and security in Indonesia.

After the Dutch attack, the Republic was still capable of making its voice heard, and its armed forces was by no means defeated. The BFO had turned away from the Netherlands, making it impossible to form an interim government. Moreover, the Netherlands stood alone internationally. Under pressure from the hardliners Sassen, Spoor and Beel, the Netherlands had dealt the Republic a heavy blow but in the process of doing so had manoeuvred itself into a position of deep isolation.

Beel had hoped to get the Sultan of Yogyakarta on his side by offering to appoint him head of a new Central Javanese state of Mataram. But Hamengkubuwono had never responded to his offers; instead, he had condemned the Dutch attack and refused to speak to Dutch soldiers. Only when Lieutenant-General Spoor threatened to enter the *kraton* with a tank did he allow a short audience during which he enquired when the Dutch troops were thinking of leaving.

The assumption that the Republic would go up in smoke as soon as the leaders were arrested and that the people would welcome Dutch soldiers with open arms was based on an illusion that, once again, showed how obstinate Spoor and Beel were. Although many senior Republican officials had been arrested and a desolate mood hung over Yogyakarta in early January, the Dutch were unable to take over the administration of the city. Many civil servants who had remained in their posts refused to work for the Dutch, as turned out to be the case elsewhere in Java. What Spoor had not foreseen at all was that among the people, the Republic was still alive and kicking.

12 Violence, Diplomacy and Independence

1949

The attack on Yogyakarta marked the beginning of a period of fierce fighting that resulted in thousands of casualties. This chapter makes an attempt to understand the reason for this escalation of violence and to determine how much of the violence can be ascribed to Dutch troops. We also examine the power relations between the hardliners and the pragmatic negotiators in both the Netherlands and the Republic, as well as the role that Republican military officers appropriated once their political leaders were imprisoned. Eventually, a military standoff led the Republic and the Netherlands to return to the negotiating table. In the latter part of this chapter, we look at how much international credit the Netherlands still had by then and what the Republicans were willing to give up to secure their independence.

Diplomatic openings

In late January 1949, hardliners in The Hague still believed it possible, with the help of so-called 'moderate' Indonesians, to liquidate the Republic and to establish a Federal Republic that was sympathetic to the Netherlands. But Prime Minister Drees and Foreign Minister Stikker no longer believed this was feasible. Stikker recognised the growing international pressure on the Netherlands to resume negotiations, and Drees understood that it was impossible for the Dutch to continue to ignore the Republican leaders in the talks. Beel, however, thought very differently. In late January, he launched a plan to arrange – without United Nations interference and excluding the Republican leaders – a transfer of sovereignty by 1 April 1949 to a Federal Indonesia that would remain in a Union with the Netherlands.

After his proposal was amended in The Hague by Drees and Stikker, Beel was allowed to present it in Jakarta on 26 February. Leaders of the BFO and the Republic were invited to participate in a Round Table Conference (RTC), also attended by the UNCI, to make arrangements for the transfer of sovereignty. While the Netherlands recognised that it could no longer ignore the Republican leaders, it refused to allow them to return to Yogyakarta, and it even envisioned that Beel would retain authority in the archipelago until the transfer of sovereignty. For Sassen, the minister for overseas territories, this small concession to the Republican leaders still went much too far. He

resigned on 11 February and was succeeded four days later by party colleague H.J. van Maarseveen, who did agree to the cabinet proposal.

For the Netherlands, it was crucial that the federal states support its plan. To this end, Beel met with BFO leaders, reporting on 31 January that they had agreed to his proposal. But Anak Agung Gde Agung was told during a visit to the interned Republic leaders in Bangka on 6 February that the Republic was opposed to the proposal. The Republican leaders insisted they first be released and the Republic restored in Yogyakarta before talks took place. Caught in the middle, the BFO had to make a choice.

Meanwhile, the town of Muntok in Bangka had become the Republic's temporary capital. Although Minister Sjafruddin Prawiranegara had been formally mandated to assume leadership of the Republic and was staying somewhere in the jungle in West Sumatra, the decisions were made at Hotel Menumbing in Muntok. Hatta and other Republican leaders had been interned there, and in early February, Sukarno and Agus Salim joined them.¹ Sjahrir was no longer with them. During their stay in Prapat, Sukarno and Sjahrir had shared a bungalow, where irritations between them had run high. Sjahrir had called Sukarno a stupid coward and accused him of vanity for wanting new shirts of the brand Arrow so badly. Moreover, Sjahrir insisted on adhering to the mandate given to Sjafruddin Prawiranegara to act as interim president. Sukarno interpreted this as a sign of disrespect, and the two were no longer on speaking terms. When Sjahrir flew to Jakarta in January to talk to Drees, he stayed there and no longer involved himself in politics.²

On 1 March, the BFO accepted the Dutch invitation to participate in the Round Table Conference. A delegation from the federal states went to Bangka once again to meet with Republican leaders on 2 and 3 March. The Republic's position was unchanged, but this time the BFO made an about-turn: Anak Agung Gde Agung backed Republican demands and managed to get Sukarno to agree to participate in the RTC.

After returning to Jakarta on 4 March, Anak Agung Gde Agung had some explaining to do. Beel was furious because he felt that Anak Agung Gde Agung had stabbed him in the back. That evening, emotions also ran high at a meeting of federal leaders. On one side were the states of Negara Indonesia Timur, Pasundan, Madura, Banjar, East Kalimantan and Southeast Kalimantan, which all supported the Republic. The other camp included states that did not want to relinquish their relationship with the Netherlands

1 They were first interned together with Sjahrir in Prapat, near Lake Toba.

2 Taufik Abdullah 2009: 188; Mrázek 1994: 385–6.

after the transfer of sovereignty (West Kalimantan) or were under attack by Republican guerrillas at the time (East Sumatra, South Sumatra, East Java). This group wanted to negotiate without the Republic. Anak Agung Gde Agung managed to get the majority of the states behind him, thereby keeping federal support for the Republic intact.³ Once again, the BFO had let the Netherlands down.

The United States also signalled that it would not consider the Dutch plan. There had already been calls in the US press as well as in Congress and among labour unions to stop all Marshall Aid to the Netherlands. In The Hague, Minister Sassen and KVP leader Romme were convinced that the Dutch people would be willing to make sacrifices if this aid was discontinued.⁴

In early February, the US Senate passed a resolution demanding that the Netherlands cease all hostilities and withdraw its troops, release Republican leaders and start serious negotiations. Policymakers in Washington feared that further delays in negotiations would jeopardise the Netherlands' economic position within Europe. On the Dutch side, a top diplomat by the name of J.H. van Roijen made it clear that he considered the Netherlands' stubborn line untenable, and he went on to urge that negotiations take place soon. Foreign Minister Stikker agreed.

A new Security Council resolution on 23 March offered an elegant way out of the impasse. In it, the content of the Security Council resolution of 28 January was by and large repeated, but this time the demand for the Netherlands to vacate Yogyakarta to enable the Republic's return was coupled with the Republic's promise to participate in the RTC.⁵ Republican leaders abandoned their hesitations and consented. Anak Agung Gde Agung had good cause for satisfaction, as it was partly thanks to him that all the parties had been brought to the negotiating table.

Guerrilla war

It soon became clear that the truce that had been agreed to in early January was worth less than the paper it was written on. In the months that followed, the war between the Netherlands and the Republic reached a bloody climax. The conflict was one in which military hardliners on both sides took charge

3 Meanwhile, during a UNCI visit to Bangka on 10 March, Republican spokesmen notified the delegation that Sukarno's promise to participate in the RTC was again off the table and that a decision on this would be taken later.

4 H.N. Boon in the VPRO Radio documentary 'Afscheid van Indië', part 7: 'Beel–Batavia', 13 September 1986.

5 For more information on the 28 January resolution, see Chapter 11.

and politicians were forced to take a back seat. The TNI leadership had decided to continue the guerrilla war. The Dutch army command was of the opinion that although an armistice had been concluded with the Republican army, action could still be taken against 'guerrilla gangs'. This was a rather artificial distinction, however, as all Indonesian forces had switched to all-out guerrilla warfare by the end of December 1948. In Java in particular, the military violence escalated and the war penetrated all levels of society for the first time.

Lieutenant General Spoor was furious that the Security Council's intervention had made a follow-up to the military attack on the Republic impossible. He estimated that it would take another three to six months for his forces to permanently eliminate the TNI. Still convinced that the restoration of Dutch authority was necessary before any negotiations could take place, Spoor also believed that 'peace and order' could only be restored by rounding up the Republican leaders and eliminating the TNI. Embedded in this belief was the assumption that the people of Indonesia actually sided with the Dutch. He failed to see that the guerrilla struggle had local roots and was supported by large sections of the population. Spoor still tended to overlook the political dimensions of the conflict. The army leadership did not show any capacity to learn, which meant that no adjustments were made to the old strategy – dating back to 1945 – of attacking the enemy head-on, striking them hard and only then sitting down to talk.

As in 1947, Spoor wanted to control the conquered areas of Java and Sumatra by carrying out 'restless patrolling' and hunting down the enemy. He continued to underestimate his opponents by portraying the guerrillas as 'incompetent dilettantes'.⁶ He may have been right from a classical military point of view, but this way of thinking revealed his failure to grasp the motivation and strategy of the Republican fighters.

Although Dutch troops had managed to capture large areas in Java and Sumatra, in practice it was only the major cities, businesses and main roads that they had – more or less – under their control. The countryside and mountain areas were controlled by Republican guerrilla groups. The Dutch patrols had limited effect, as their arrival was often detected well in advance, allowing the Republican fighters to escape in time.

As was the case with the first military attack, wishful thinking underpinned Dutch military action. The Dutch army command ordered its troops to destroy the local people's stocks of food and medicine, expecting the Republican troops to increase pressure on the people to supply them with

6 Groen 1991: 280–3.

food. It was believed that this would lead the people to seek refuge with the Dutch,⁷ but this did not work out as expected. Instead, an increasing number of counterattacks were carried out on the Dutch troops, and moreover the people were clearly not waiting to be saved by the Dutch liberators.

On the Republican side, TNI commander Nasution was forced to acknowledge that the Dutch attack had resulted in significant damage among his ranks. The casualties were high; weapons and ammunition were in short supply; units had disintegrated; and there was virtually no communication between them. No one knew exactly where Sudirman was, and Chief of Staff Simatupang did not know where Nasution was for a few weeks. Simatupang had appointed Lieutenant Colonel Sadikin as commander of the Siliwangi Division in West Java but, as later became apparent, Nasution had already appointed Lieutenant Colonel Abibamju to that position.⁸ After just over a month, communications between the various command posts located on the slopes of Mount Merapi, Lawu, Sumbing, Wilis and Kawi in Central and East Java had improved.

Unlike the Dutch army commanders, the TNI commanders had learned their lesson from the first attack in 1947. Head-on attacks against the much better armed Dutch troops proved to be futile, so a switch was made to all-out guerrilla warfare. But in early 1949, survival was the primary goal, which meant evading the enemy and retreating into mountainous areas. Referring to the prophet's temporary flight from Mecca to Medina in the year 622, Sudirman called this phase the *hidjrah*. After this phase, the plan was to exhaust the enemy via rapid attacks on bridges and trains; raids on convoys, enterprises and military posts; and surprise attacks on cities.

It soon became clear that the Republic was managing to hold its own in rural and mountainous areas. In West Java, troops of the Siliwangi Division and Darul Islam proved themselves to be more than a match for the Dutch. Republican combat groups also penetrated other federal territories in Java and Sumatra. In Central Java, attacks from the mountains on Dutch companies, roads, and rail and telephone links proved to be successful. Pull bombs hidden on roads and paths gave Dutch convoys countless headaches. Colonel Sungkono, the military commander of East Java, grew into a formidable warlord, controlling most of the southwestern part of this region.

Nasution concluded that the Republican troops in Sumatra had been insufficiently prepared for the Dutch attack. Moreover, strategic mistakes

7 Harinck 2021: Chapter 6.

8 Nasution 1965: 178–9. The appointments followed Daan Jahja's capture by Dutch troops in December 1948. Sadikin (near Bandung) and Abimanju (in Cirebon) both remained at their posts

had been made in facing the Dutch attack head-on, which had resulted in significant losses. And due to a lack of coordination, the guerrilla warfare was slow to take off.⁹ Because Aceh had retained its autonomy, it was decided that the resistance in the rest of Sumatra could be supported from there.

In East Sumatra, internal fighting between rival militias flared up again, and TNI forces had difficulty imposing order. But the guerrilla war against the Dutch troops went ahead anyway under the leadership of the military governor of North Sumatra, Dr. F.L. Tobing, and Lieutenant Colonel Alex Kawilarang. This was also the case in Central and South Sumatra, where the TNI had suffered heavy losses. In West Sumatra, TNI units managed to regroup, but it was mainly due to the efforts of the local village militias that the people were able to successfully boycott Dutch authority.

Infuriated that the Republic's political leaders had surrendered, Sudirman and Nasution no longer felt they could put their trust in them. They now felt responsible for continuing the fight. The 33-year-old Sudirman grew into a mythical figure. From his departure from Yogyakarta on 19 December until his return seven months later, he managed to evade the Dutch. Seriously ill, he was carried in a palanquin during most of his travels throughout East Java. From late February 1949, he stayed on the slopes of Mount Lawu, where he was in contact with his commanders. He was the epitome of the suffering leader who wanted to be close to his soldiers, a martyr and a paragon of courage and intransigence. In short, he represented all the qualities that the imprisoned Republican politicians did not have.

Directly below Sudirman in the military hierarchy came Nasution, the commander of the Java military administration to whom many managerial tasks had been delegated, and the chief of staff Simatupang. Ranked below them were the four military governors of West Java, Central Java-West, Central Java-East and East Java, all of whom had a large degree of autonomy.¹⁰ At the level of the residencies, the territorial commanders were in charge. It was under these commanders that the *Wehrkreis* – which formed the core units of the guerrilla force – operated, carrying out surprise attacks with relatively well-armed mobile battalions. The territorial battalions had a defensive task and were supposed to mobilise the people. All the way down the military chain of command, at the village level, was the Pagar Desa (village enclosure; acronym of *pasukan gerilya desa*, village militia).

9 Nasution 1965: 228–34. The Republican forces in Sumatra were under the command of Hidayat. Outside Sumatra and Java, Republican guerrilla groups led by Hasan Basri were active in Southeast Kalimantan.

10 In addition two mobile brigades joined the armed forces: Brigade Seberang, consisting of fighters from eastern Indonesia, and Brigade Peladjar, which consisted of university and high school students

The *Wehrkreis* was meant to be based on harmonious cooperation between the army, the public administration and the people. Nasution had worked out in great detail the military structure and the organisation of administration and justice, but in practice, little of this was realised.¹¹ The reality was that there was a high degree of improvisation, and military commanders and leaders of stand-alone combat groups called the shots. Their authority was based not so much on their military rank but on the authority they were able to command from their followers.¹²

Many Indonesian schoolchildren and students who took part in the struggle came into contact with village life, often for the first time in their lives. For them, dealing with villagers, walking barefoot, eating different food and experiencing the hardships of hiding in the mountains during battles were completely new experiences.

For the villagers, guerrilla warfare meant that the war was now creeping into their lives. Villages got caught in the line of fire, and villagers often became victims of Dutch actions against guerrillas. There were Dutch reprisals if villages were suspected of collaborating with 'the enemy'. But Republican punitive expeditions also took place at night in villages where Dutch troops had been spotted the day before.

Nasution did not mince his words when he explained how the TNI had to win over the people: if villagers were passive, or if winning their trust took too long and propaganda and agitation were not working, they had to be made into allies through intimidation and terror.¹³ Traitors had to be killed without mercy. The support of the people for the Republic was apparently not that self-evident.

Over the course of February 1949, Republican troops and militias undertook successful actions against Dutch soldiers, and the Dutch began to realise that they were not succeeding in their mission to destroy the Republic. An important symbolic victory was won by the Republic on 1 March 1949 when 6,000 fighters managed to penetrate into the centre of Yogyakarta in the early morning and hold out there for several hours.¹⁴ The action had been initiated by divisional commander Sugeng in consultation with Sultan Hamengkubuwono and was led by local commanders Suharto and Latief.

11 Nasution 1965: 255–343.

12 There was a similarity in this respect with the Dutch forces, which were also highly decentralised, with commanders often operating as they saw fit.

13 Nasution 1965: 188.

14 Elson 2001: 31. During the regime of Suharto from 1966 to 1998, an emphasis was placed on Suharto's leadership role in this military operation. De Jong (1988: 992–3) claims that the plan was devised by the sultan and worked out in consultation with Suharto. Groen (1991: 201) names Simatupang as the mastermind behind the attack.



16. Marching revolutionary fighters



17. Supreme Commander Sudirman (saluting) with Lieutenant Colonel Suharto next to him

In the afternoon, Dutch troops regained control of the situation and the infiltrators left the city, leaving behind 200 to 350 dead.

The operation had cost lives but had also shown that the Republic was alive and kicking. This made a deep impression on the BFO delegation,

which was to meet with Republican leaders on the island of Bangka the following day. The attack on Yogyakarta convinced BFO representatives of the strength of the Republican resistance and no doubt contributed to the support the BFO subsequently gave to the Republic.

In March and April 1949, Republican actions against Dutch troops continued to increase and a swift Dutch military victory became increasingly unlikely.¹⁵ As a result, pressure increased on the Dutch government to allow the Republic to participate in the Round Table Conference. But Nasution and Sudirman thought otherwise. In their eyes, the captured leaders could no longer represent the Republic; only the actual combatants could do that, and they therefore wanted to have a say in how the negotiations went. In the end, however, participation in the negotiations was decided in Muntok and not on the slopes of Mount Merapi or Mount Lawu. Despite their imprisonment, political leaders charted their own course, but the frictions between the politicians and the military were far from resolved.

Escalation of Dutch military violence

Dutch military archives show that there were 97,421 Indonesian deaths between October 1945 and August 1949 as a result of Dutch military action.¹⁶ Of this number, 61,500 (63%) died in the period between 18 December 1948 and 15 August 1949, clearly illustrating that these eight months represented the fiercest phase of the war.¹⁷ Most of the deaths occurred in Java (75,000) and Sumatra (10,500). Most scholars believe that the number of 97,421 is at the lower end of estimates because there was often deliberate underreporting or because many casualties of the mortar attacks and artillery shelling remained invisible; we can thus assume that the total number of victims was between 125,000 and 150,000.¹⁸ Victims of sexual violence have until recently been underreported.¹⁹ A total of 4,751 Dutch soldiers were killed, 2,526 of whom died in combat.

Two issues require further clarification: why were there so many more Indonesian than Dutch casualties, and why did most of the casualties occur

15 The number of Republican attacks was five- to six-fold higher than in October 1948 (De Jonge 2010: 232).

16 Harinck, Van Horn and Luttikhuis 2017; Harinck 2021: Chapter 6; Groen 1991: 212–3, Annexes 12 and 14.

17 During and after the first military attack in 1947, there were 19,000 Indonesian casualties.

18 See also Limpach 2016: 766. This does not include deaths caused by diseases or other hardships, nor the deaths that occurred as a result of internal Indonesian conflicts.

19 See Verweij 2016 and Scagliola and Vince 2020 for a first exploration of this topic.

between 18 December 1948 and 15 August 1949? Specific cases of military violence will not be discussed here, as an extensive literature on this precise topic already exists; indeed, a major study on Dutch military violence during the Indonesian war of independence was recently completed.²⁰ Instead, we look at factors that contributed to the escalation of this violence in the first months of 1949.

During the second military attack, just as in the first attack in 1947, the Dutch had captured new areas including Banten in West Java, large parts of Central and East Java, and Djambi and Bengkulu in South Sumatra. The size of the Dutch forces in Indonesia at that time was 150,000 men, but in December 1948 Spoor requested a reinforcement of another 120,000 men to complete his mission. This proved to be financially and logistically unfeasible.

Although the manpower and resources of the Dutch forces were totally inadequate, the army leadership stuck to its ambitious goal of destroying the TNI and 'pacifying' the conquered territory. As a result, a single battalion of 400 men had to somehow control areas with a few million inhabitants and the size of the province of Utrecht or Greater London. At most, these soldiers were able to keep the main town and some main roads under their control, but there were far too few troops to patrol the countryside intensively.

The army command decided to compensate for the lack of manpower by increasing the deployment of force, which led to extensive purges of specific areas. Such operations were often supported by airstrikes and artillery and mortar shelling and in many cases involved the use of excessive force such as prolonged shelling with heavy artillery, burning down villages, riddling houses with machine guns, and summarily killing captured persons.²¹ This last practice had been adopted by troops in Java and Sumatra since the intervention of the Special Forces Corps (KST) in South Sulawesi in 1946. KST commandos and KNIL soldiers often played an important role in these purges, but Dutch conscripts and volunteers also participated in excessive violence. Military personnel quickly became accustomed to such violence.

The guerrilla warfare meant that the battlefield was positioned right in the midst of society, and the Dutch strategy of large-scale counterterrorism only escalated this violence. Guerrillas often managed to evade Dutch

20 Van Doorn and Hendrix 1970; Groen 1991; Oostindie 2015; Limpach 2016; Luttikhuis and Brocades Zaalberg 2020; Van Reybrouck 2020: 456–70; Harinck 2020, Chapter 6; Groen et al. 2021: 325–43. For the results of the study on military violence, see Oostindie et al. 2022.

21 Harinck 2021: Chapter 6; Green 1991: 221. Between 1 January and 8 August 1949, there were 296 major purges in Java and 80 in Sumatra, and a total of 862 airstrikes were carried out between January and May 1949.

attacks in time, but the people were much more vulnerable. This led, in many cases, to civilians being the victims – intended or unintended – of Dutch military violence.

On the Dutch side, a colonial image of the enemy prevailed – one that emphasised the unreliability and brutality of the Republican fighters which could only be tamed by large-scale violence. This view meant that the Dutch would not even consider a modern counterinsurgency focused on undermining the opponent's position by winning the hearts and minds of the people. Instead, the Dutch army leadership continued to opt for large-scale purge operations accompanied by large-scale violence.

There were other factors that fostered the violence. From the very beginning of the war, the priority of the Dutch soldiers on patrols was to return to their camps alive. It was therefore prudent for them to shoot at anything that looked even slightly suspicious and only then to check and see who or what it was they had shot at. Patrols were regularly ambushed and soldiers killed. Not infrequently, these were followed by excessive reprisals, with villages being burned and innocent villagers murdered. And few prisoners of war were taken during patrolling; instead, suspects were often shot 'on the run'. Many cases were not officially reported, but the fact that the Dutch soldiers were trigger happy can be inferred from their usage of large quantities of ammunition, for which figures are available.²²

It was not only local commanders who were guilty of turning a blind eye to the excessive violence – army commanders and the politicians responsible were equally culpable. Lieutenant General Spoor considered complaints about the misbehaviour by Dutch soldiers 'as a rule very exaggerated' but at the same time acknowledged that there was some grain of truth in them.²³ In roll calls, he spoke out strongly against summary justice and excessive force, but he rarely took action against commanders who were responsible for such practices.

The strategy pursued by the Dutch military and the failure of the army leadership and politicians to take disciplinary action do not alter the fact that individual commanders and soldiers were very much responsible for the excessive violence they committed. But it was the military and political

22 Harinck 2021: Chapter 6. Protschky (2020) demonstrates that Dutch soldiers exchanged photos of Indonesian victims of Dutch violence among themselves. In addition to such mementos of the war, she also found pictures of Indonesians who had been victims of Republican guerrilla fighters in photo albums of Dutch soldiers. These albums also showed pictures of Dutch soldiers providing humanitarian aid, thus providing justification for the documented violence.

23 Groen 1991: 213.



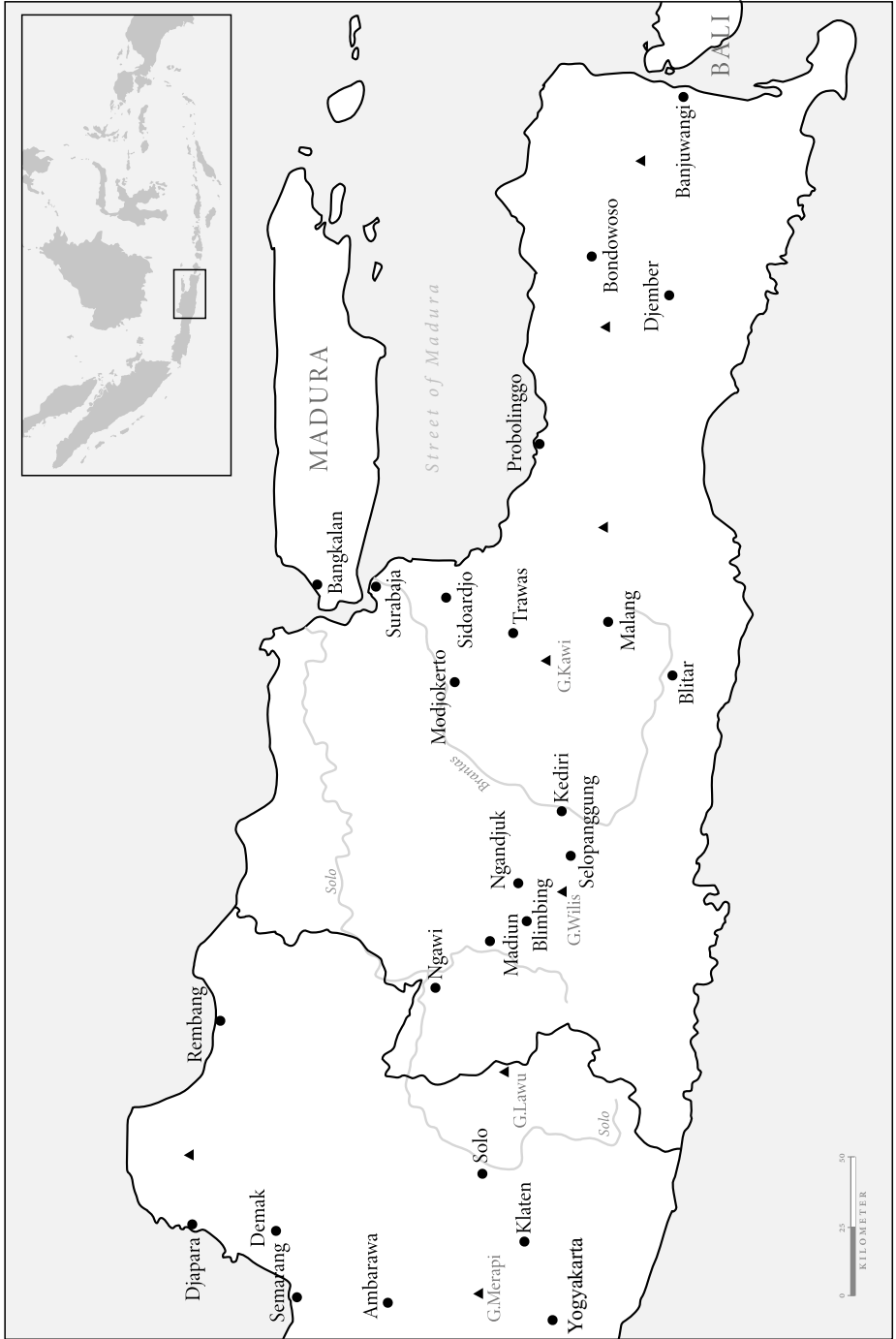
18. Sungkono, division commander of East Java

leaders who were ultimately accountable for the scale and structural nature of this violence.

This military violence remained out of the field of vision of Dutch historians for many decades because it was not in line with the Netherlands' self-image as a civilised country. Indonesian historians did write about specific cases of Dutch violence but chose to emphasise their successful struggle against the Dutch and the achievement of independence. And Anglo-Saxon historians have also overlooked the scale of violence. Somewhat provocatively, Robert Cribb described the war as 'a long fractious ceasefire punctuated by brief bouts of heavy fighting.'²⁴ However, new insights have since revealed the structural nature of the excessive Dutch military force, which peaked in the first half of 1949.²⁵

²⁴ Cribb 1994: 75.

²⁵ Compared to the French military campaign in Vietnam in the period 1945–1954, which resulted in 400,000 deaths among Vietminh fighters and civilians and over 92,000 casualties among French-Vietnamese troops (Harinck 2021: introduction), the violence inflicted by the Dutch troops was not more extreme. This comparison in no way condones the scale and intensity of the violence in Indonesia.



Map 6. East Java in 1949

The war between the Dutch army and the Indonesian forces revealed a major difference in motivation. While Dutch soldiers increasingly began to doubt the purpose of the war and wanted nothing more than to come home alive, countless young Republican fighters were willing to risk their lives for freedom. Their spirit and courage made them strong but also vulnerable, contributing to the high number of casualties on the Indonesian side.

The leaders of the TNI were not particularly interested in maintaining discipline in the area of humanitarian self-restraint, nor were they capable of disciplining local commanders given the considerable autonomy the latter enjoyed. Moreover, the TNI leadership had to contend not only with Dutch attacks but also with wayward warlords, insurgent Muslim fighters in West Java and the remnants of the leftist movement led by Tan Malaka.²⁶

After the communist uprising was put down, Tan Malaka was the only remaining leftist leader still at large. Shortly after the Dutch attack on Yogyakarta, he had spoken on the radio to call for an all-out people's war. During his captivity, he had written a manual for just such a guerrilla warfare, which had also been read and praised by Nasution.²⁷ In East Java, Tan Malaka could count on protection from division commander Sungkono. He also received support from Major Sabarudin, a criminal warlord who had recently rejoined the TNI.

Sabarudin had been in charge of supervising Japanese prisoners of war and European detainees as head of the military police in Sidoarjo in late 1945 during the Battle of Surabaya. In that position, he was guilty of numerous acts of torture and rape and was responsible for the murder of dozens – perhaps hundreds – of Indonesian, Dutch, Chinese and Japanese prisoners.²⁸ On the orders of the TNI leadership, he had been arrested in February 1946. In April 1947, he was convicted by the High Military Court in Yogyakarta for mutiny and unlawful detention. During the first Dutch attack, he managed to escape from the prison in Ambarawa in 1947 and, after traveling around, ended up in Kediri in May 1948, where he was protected by a TNI commander he still knew from his time in Surabaya. Because he subsequently participated very successfully in the crushing of the communist uprising, during which he executed a number of TNI officers with communist sympathies, he was rehabilitated in October 1948. He was allowed to form his own battalion – Battalion 'S' – and operated in the knowledge that he was protected by Colonel Sungkono.

26 See Chapter 4. This paragraph is based on Poeze 2007: 1415–1553.

27 This manual was titled *Gerpolek*, an acronym of *gerilya*, *politik* and *ekonomi*. See Chapter 10.

28 For more on Sabarudin, see Poeze 2007: 1034–46.

Sabarudin invited Tan Malaka to come to Kediri, where they explored the possibility of forming a military-civilian organisation as a basis for an all-out people's war.²⁹ But when the second Dutch attack began and Dutch troops occupied Kediri in late December, they had to escape.

The two comrades established a new headquarters nearby in the village of Blimbing in the Brantas Valley. Tan Malaka wrote a daily pamphlet there, distributed in stencilled form, that included militant calls for the people to resist as well as fierce attacks on the political leaders of the Republic, who in his view had committed treason by negotiating with the Dutch and, moreover, had allowed themselves to be captured. He also used strong terms to attack the TNI leadership, which had fled to the slopes of Mount Wilis during the first Dutch attack. He called on soldiers to depose their officers and follow the example of Sabarudin's battalion, which *was* fighting the Dutch.

In criticising the TNI, Tan Malaka made himself vulnerable. Meanwhile, Sabarudin was once again causing problems by ignoring the military hierarchy and clashing with other TNI units over food supplies and other sources of income.

Colonel Sungkono's headquarters was located on the slopes of Mount Wilis, where Republican ministers Sukiman, Supeno and Susanto Tirtoprodjo were also located. When word arrived there that Tan Malaka and Sabarudin had formed a counter-government with Tan Malaka as president and Sabarudin as commander-in-chief, Colonel Sungkono had had enough.³⁰ To put an end to Sabarudin's continued insubordination and Tan Malaka's rebellion, he ordered his troops to attack Blimbing.

On 19 February, Blimbing was surrounded and Battalion 'S' of Sabarudin disarmed. Eighty people, including Tan Malaka and Sabarudin, were captured. There was great confusion when the area was attacked at the same time by commandos of the Dutch Special Forces Corps, who were tasked with hunting down military and political leaders of the Republic. During that action, which lasted five days, Dutch troops rounded up civilian Republican administrators of East Java and shot dead Minister Supeno.³¹ Hundreds of TNI soldiers and civilians were summarily executed.

29 On 14 December, the *Gerakan Pembela Proklamasi* (the Movement in Defense of the Proclamation) had been established for this purpose.

30 This counter-government had been formed on 9 February. Jonosewojo, Sabarudin's old commander, was also part of it. Jonosewojo defected to Sungkono shortly after 9 February and was put in charge of preparing a military action against Sabarudin and Tan Malaka.

31 Minister Sukiman surrendered and was allowed to return to Yogyakarta. Minister Susanto managed to escape.

In the ensuing chaos, Sabarudin and Tan Malaka managed to escape when their guards took flight. Chased by KST commandos and TNI troops, Sabarudin managed to get away.

Tan Malaka followed a different route with a small group. After two days of walking, he was picked up by second lieutenant Sukotjo on 21 February near the small village of Selopanggung. On Sukotjo's orders, Tan Malaka was executed without a trial and buried in the forest behind Sukotjo's camp. No report was made of the execution. Rumours long circulated that Tan Malaka was still alive and somewhere in East Java, but his death provisionally marked the demise of the leftist movement within the Republic.³²

Darul Islam

In West Java, the TNI was dealing with a full-blown civil war. When the Siliwangi Division returned there from Yogyakarta in early 1949, it clashed not only with Dutch troops but also with Islamist militias that had united under Kartosuwirjo's leadership in early 1948.

Kartosuwirjo had become a member of the Masyumi at the beginning of the revolution and sat in the provisional Republican parliament (KNIP) on its behalf in 1946 and 1947. In 1947, he became leader of the Masyumi branch in West Java and began to criticise the Republican leaders for making too many concessions to the Netherlands during the negotiations. Like many leftist leaders, Kartosuwirjo turned his back on diplomacy and opted to fight. But this did not lead him to seek an alliance with the leftist movement, for Kartosuwirjo harboured a deep aversion to communism.

32 Harry Poeze also conducted research on Tan Malaka's demise. He found a number of documents, conducted relevant interviews, and received help from Helen Jarvis, who translated Tan Malaka's autobiography into English. During a stay in the Kediri region in 2005, he tracked down a number of those who had been involved with Tan Malaka. The data he collected in this way made it possible to reveal when (21 February 1949), where (Selopanggung) and by whom (second lieutenant Sukotjo) Tan Malaka met his end. This was made known in 2007 at the presentation in Jakarta of Poeze's book *Vilified and Forgotten*. But the question of the location of his grave remained. In 2007, upon yet another investigation in Selopanggung, with help also from journalists in the region, it became clear that his remains had been moved to the Selopanggung cemetery in August 1949, with only a boulder with no inscription marking the grave. At the direction of Poeze, an excavation was carried out on 12 September 2009. The forensic examination of the remains that were found in the grave revealed a high degree of probability that Tan Malaka had been buried here. However, the remains found were not sufficient to allow for DNA testing. For Tan Malaka's admirers and for fellow Minangkabau people (West Sumatra) and students, Selopanggung has become a kind of pilgrimage site. In an elaborate ceremony, an urn containing earth from the grave in East Java was interred next to his birthplace in Pandangadang (West Sumatra) in 2019.

After the Renville Agreement, his opposition to the Republic increased because too many concessions had been made and because Islamic parties had no influence in Hatta's cabinet. One beneficial consequence of the Renville Agreement for Kartosuwirjo was that the Siliwangi Division were forced to leave West Java, allowing the Islamist militias that remained to take their place. As regional leader of the Masyumi, Kartosuwirjo had a large network in West Java and managed to get the Hizbullah and Sabilillah militias on his side, thus filling the vacuum left by the departure of the Siliwangi troops.³³

In February and March 1948, Kartosuwirjo convened meetings with 160 Islamic groups and established the Darul Islam/Tentara Negara Islam Indonesia (DI/TNII, House of Islam/Army of the Islamic State), which was led by his lieutenant Raden Oni. Despite his sharp criticism of the Republican leadership, Kartosuwirjo did not yet want to sever his relationship with the Republic. In turn, Republican leaders supported Darul Islam's fight against the Dutch.

Nevertheless, the idea of an independent Islamic state gradually began to take shape. When the Republican leaders were captured in December 1948, Kartosuwirjo called for a jihad and argued that a Negara Islam Indonesia was the only legitimate body that could continue the fight against the Dutch. He even went so far as to refer to the fall of Yogyakarta as a gift from Allah.

These developments led to a confusing situation in West Java. Leaders of the federal state of Pasundan became increasingly convinced that Dutch troops were unable to protect them from Darul Islam attacks, and for this reason they sought rapprochement with the Siliwangi Division. For their part, the leaders of the Siliwangi Division were willing to fight with the Dutch against Darul Islam. In March 1949, a Siliwangi brigade led by Ahmad Wiranatakusumah, the son of the *Wali Negara* (head of state) of Pasundan, reported to the Dutch commander of the region, after which Dutch troops handed over control of certain areas to the Siliwangi Division. Reports circulated that the Siliwangi Division were attacking the Dutch during the day but fighting with them against the Darul Islam at night. Together, they also undertook actions against stand-alone *laskar* in Krawang.³⁴

Dutch troops were increasingly forced onto the defensive in this confusing battle, and even the deployment of the Special Forces Corps could do little to change this. However, unlike the leftist movement which had been virtually eliminated, this Islamic movement managed to prevail as a major power factor in West Java.

33 See Elson and Formichi 2011; Van Dijk 1981: 69–126.

34 Elson and Formichi 2011: 479–80; Formichi 2012: 130; Groen 1991: 204; Cribb 1991: 176–9.

Warlords

Besides fighting leftist and Islamist opponents, the TNI leadership also had to deal with autonomous commanders who, in the course of 1949, began to assert themselves as powerful warlords. The Republican forces, meanwhile, no longer took the slightest notice of what the civilian rulers were doing. Minister Susanto, who had managed to escape the Special Forces Corps attack in late February, went on a long tour of East Java in March and April 1949 to investigate the state of the civil administration. He was accompanied by the acting governor of East Java, Samadikun. They covered, largely on foot, 350 kilometres over 40 days, meeting with military and civilian leaders along the way. Their conclusion was clear: the civilian administration was unable to function because it was being pushed out almost entirely by the armed forces.³⁵ Government officials were being intimidated by TNI commanders who forbade them from cooperating with the Dutch. Officials from the state of East Java bore the brunt of this scare campaign. From January to August 1949, 654 civil servants suspected of collaborating with the Dutch were killed and over a thousand kidnapped in Java.³⁶

Compared to Java, the civil administration in West Sumatra was given more leeway to get on with its work, although many administrative positions were, in fact, held by former military personnel. Local resistance organisations (Markas Pertahanan Rakyat) functioned well, and even in the cities the underground civil administration was heavily involved in decision-making. As a result, the TNI had less influence in West Sumatra.³⁷

In East Java, the TNI leadership had to deal with many autonomous warlords. Officially, most of these leaders had joined the TNI with their militias, but they had no intention of relinquishing their independence. Each of these groups tried to secure as much food, weapons and ammunition as possible and also imposed taxes on villages and businesses. One of these leaders was Sutomo, who had had a leading role in the Battle of Surabaya in November 1945. With his BPRI, he stayed on the slopes of Mount Wilis, where his autonomy went unchallenged. The same applied to the *laskar* of the Hizbullah which had reluctantly become part of the Second Brigade led by Lieutenant Colonel Surachmad in Kediri in 1948. What both groups had in common was an aversion to communists, but otherwise the Hizbullah men wanted to be left to their own devices.

35 Ari Sapto 2018: 152–5.

36 Harinck 2021: Chapter 6.

37 Kahin 1979: 309, 314, 342.

The Sixteenth Brigade led by Lieutenant Colonel Joop Warouw also tried to give up as little autonomy as possible. Warouw had left the KNIL in November 1948 to join the side of the Republic. His brigade comprised fighters from Kalimantan, Sulawesi, the Moluccas and Bali, and his headquarters were in a tea factory on the slopes of Mount Kawi. The extent of his independence is demonstrated by the fact that he granted protection to Sabarudin, who showed up with 300 followers in mid-1949 while on the run from TNI troops.

Officially, the *Wehrkreis* was the formal basis for mobilising manpower and food for the armed forces in an orderly manner. In practice, however, village chiefs often found themselves caught between the demands of Republican troops and the interventions of Dutch soldiers. In addition, Republican soldiers appropriated the land and market tax, a portion of the maize harvest and the *zakat* (Islamic collection for the poor). They also imposed levies of up to half the harvest on the coffee, tea and sugar plantations that were still functioning. In Kediri, new taxes on cigarettes and cinema tickets were introduced.

Civil servants who no longer received salaries were still paid in kind in the form of food, but as a rule, the soldiers appropriated most of it. Clothing was no longer available.³⁸ The TNI applied scorched-earth tactics when Dutch troops approached, setting fire to the plants and stocks on the plantations, which was often at the expense of the workers living there. This grim situation was captured by the ironic lament of a worker on a plantation near Malang: 'When will this *merdeka* end?'³⁹

Military coercion and terror also affected the Chinese people living in the archipelago. Local Chinese traders were required to make substantial contributions, in return for which they enjoyed a degree of protection. But after the second military attack, revenge attacks against Chinese took place again, as they had in 1947. In December 1948, 750 Chinese men in the town of Nganjuk were killed when they were locked in a barn that was then set on fire. Those who tried to escape were shot dead.⁴⁰

Local commanders were not the only ones who became warlords, as the divisional commander and military governor of East Java, Sungkono, and other senior commanders proved. After the second military attack, it had become much more dangerous for Chinese traders to do business with areas outside the Republic. To conduct such transactions, military protection was necessary, and this drove traders and military commanders

38 Ari Sapto 2018: 221–31.

39 Leksana 2020: 31–2.

40 Limpach 2016: 161.

into each other's arms. New trading houses emerged, such as the Trading Company Madiun, which was headed by Mustopo, the commander of the General Reserve of the Siliwangi. Together with Chinese traders, he imported weapons in exchange for sugar. Lieutenant Colonel Prangko Prawirokusumo, a confidant of Lieutenant Colonel Sungkono, was also involved in arms imports through his Prangko Trading Company, which he financed with the sugar that Sungkono had in stock. In East Java, Sungkono controlled numerous plantations and was directly involved in arms imports through his connection with the Chinese entrepreneur known as Tony Wen (Wen Kin To).

Outside Java, the military governor of South Sumatra, A.K. Gani, was engaged in numerous commercial transactions together with his associate Djauw Pok Lie, who operated his own ships. Together they exchanged rubber and tea for large quantities of arms imported from the Philippines. Chinese entrepreneurs also extended substantial credits to military commanders, which they used to feed and clothe their men.

This period laid the foundation for future ties between senior military officers and Chinese entrepreneurs. The role of the new Chinese trading elite was crucial in the final phase of the war. The transactions in which they were involved were in the millions of dollars and, without them, the Republican armed forces would have been considerably weaker in 1949.⁴¹ Sungkono became the most powerful warlord in Java thanks to his trade contacts.

The diplomatic breakthrough

Lieutenant General Spoor remained unabatedly optimistic about the progress of the war. He believed that the Dutch troops were achieving successes and that the TNI was becoming demoralised. But in reality, Dutch troops were being forced onto the defensive, despite their superior weapons and the deployment of heavy artillery and air strikes. Numerically, the Republican troops were in the majority. They were elusive, carried out attacks constantly, and were prepared to suffer heavy losses.⁴²

Thanks to their unbridled efforts, the revolutionary armed forces managed to bring the Dutch advance in East Java to a halt under the leadership of

41 For an overview, see Twang Peck Yang 1998: Chapter 7. Not all entrepreneurs belonged to the so-called *singkeh* or *totok* Chinese. Bob Hasan is an example of a *peranakan* entrepreneur who successfully adapted to the new circumstances.

42 Groen et al. 2021: 343. From January to August 1949, Republican troops carried out more than 3,000 attacks in Java and 800 in Sumatra.

division commander Sungkono. This achievement was decisive for the course of the war. During March 1949, it became clear that a stalemate had arisen. In a memorandum dated 19 March, Chief of Staff Simatupang argued that the TNI could not win the war but that its guerrilla strategy ensured that the Indonesian armed forces could not lose. However, continuing the fight would be irresponsible, as it would inflict too much damage on society, which could in turn cause the TNI to lose popular support. Simatupang concluded that there was no other option but to return to the negotiating table.⁴³

On 14 April 1949, negotiations were started at Hotel des Indes in Jakarta between the Republic and the Netherlands, chaired by the UNCI's Merle Cochran. The final push for this discussion had been made the week before, when Foreign Minister Stikker was told during a visit to Washington that if the Netherlands did not resume negotiations with the Republic, it could not count on military support from the United States under the newly established North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).⁴⁴

The delegations were led by the diplomat Van Roijen (on the Dutch side) and Mohamad Rum (on the Indonesian side). The BFO was not present at the talks, since the negotiations were mainly about the conditions for the restoration of the Republic in Yogyakarta. Regular consultations did nonetheless take place between the leaders of the BFO and the Republic.

The talks at Hotel des Indes were no longer about whether the Republic would be allowed to play a role in the final stage of negotiations, but rather the conditions on which Republican leaders would participate in them. The return to Yogyakarta was therefore the thorniest issue on the agenda, and a compromise on it was finally reached after three weeks of negotiations.

After Sukarno and Hatta gave their blessing on 6 May from Bangka, the agreement was announced the following day. The Netherlands recognised the Republic as a separate state within the Indonesian Federation and pledged to vacate Yogyakarta by the end of June. This incidentally meant that the Netherlands still occupied other parts of the Republic in Java and Sumatra. To hold onto these conquered areas, the Netherlands demanded that the Republic agree to an immediate ceasefire, but under pressure from the TNI, the Republic refused to discuss this issue until after returning to Yogyakarta. It was at this point that Merle Cochran intervened by offering a compromise in which the Republic would immediately agree to a ceasefire but that it would only take effect after the Republican leaders returned to Yogyakarta.

43 Groen 1991: 220–21.

44 Van Reybrouck 2020: 472–3.

It was only after Cochran's pledge of the United States' support for the full sovereignty of independent Indonesia that the Republic agreed. This support made the Netherlands-Indonesia Union a sham, as the Netherlands could no longer assert its control over a sovereign Indonesia. For its part, the Netherlands appeared to have booked a success when it stipulated that Indonesia would have a federal structure, with the BFO states receiving two-thirds of the parliamentary seats and the Republic only one-third. But the Republicans knew that they could revise their relations with the other states after independence and without the interference of the Dutch.

One agreement that had far-reaching consequences was the general amnesty for excessive acts of violence committed during the war. It included Indonesians who had committed murders during the *bersiap* period but also Captain Westerling and other Dutch and Republican soldiers.⁴⁵ With regard to political prisoners, it was agreed that those imprisoned after 17 December 1948 would be released.⁴⁶

The Netherlands and the Republic agreed to develop these agreements at a Round Table Conference (RTC) in which the BFO would also be allowed to participate. It was further agreed that Indonesia's independence had to be realised before the end of the year.

As soon as he saw the deal that Van Roijen had made with the Republic, Beel resigned as High Representative of the Crown. He found it unacceptable that the Netherlands had recognised the Republic as an equal partner. Beel was replaced by the conservative diplomat A.H.J. Lovink, who arrived in Jakarta in early June. Lieutenant General Spoor was also deeply shocked by the agreement. Along with his staff, he felt caught off guard and betrayed because his military ambitions in the East Indies were now definitively coming to an end. After much hesitation, Spoor decided nonetheless to stay on so as not to abandon his troops. Disillusioned and exhausted, he suffered a heart attack not long thereafter, on 23 May, from which he died two days later. He was succeeded by his chief of staff, Major General D.C. Buurman van Vreeden.

In the Netherlands, the agreement was opposed primarily by KVP leader Romme and former prime minister Gerbrandy and his National Committee for the Maintenance of the Kingdom's Unity (Comité Rijkseenheid). Romme tried but failed to garner enough support to topple the government, but he insisted that New Guinea be preserved for the Netherlands.

45 De Jong 2015: 267–8.

46 Spoor wanted to exclude this category from the scheme because in his view many, if not most, of these prisoners were 'criminals and bandits' (Kahin 1952: 424).

In Indonesia, the BFO quickly agreed to the outcome of the negotiations, since the deal gave significant leeway to the federal states.⁴⁷ The Republic, however, was divided. It was difficult for the Republic to accept that it would be in the minority in the new federation amid states that had been put together by the Dutch. Sjafruddin Prawiranegara, who had not participated in the negotiations but still formally held the presidential mandate, felt that too many concessions had been made. He demanded that the Republic be given outright control over all of Java and Madura. In early June, Hatta travelled to Aceh to persuade Sjafruddin and Colonel Hidayat, the military commander of Sumatra who had come on foot from central Sumatra, to accept the agreement. He succeeded in doing so, but the resistance within the armed forces was even stronger. Leaders of independent militias and Darul Islam immediately rejected the agreement. In their view, they were the ones who had fought while the politicians sat safely on Bangka Island and now once again emerged from negotiations with a feeble compromise.

In a letter dated 6 May, Commander-in-Chief Sudirman informed Simatupang that he would reject the agreement. Nasution also preferred to fight on because he noticed that Dutch military positions were weakening. Final victory appeared to be within reach.⁴⁸ But he too recognised that a continuation of the war was too heavy a burden on the people and that popular support for the TNI would fall. While Simatupang and Nasution finally concluded that the Republic had no choice but to negotiate, Sudirman had not yet reached that point.

On 22 June, the 7 May agreement was officially signed. It paved the way for the restoration of the Republic in Yogyakarta, for the Round Table Conference, and for independence. But it did not mean the struggle was over.

Both the Dutch and Indonesian armed forces intensified their actions to capture as many territories as possible before the ceasefire came into force. In West Java, fighting flared up because Darul Islam rejected the agreement. On the Dutch side, however, the soldiers became increasingly exhausted and demoralised. Many servicemen felt betrayed by politics, which they saw as having given away the East Indies for nothing. Had they then risked their lives for nothing? Moreover, due to a shortage of troops, many had to wait a long time for their demobilisation. By this point, the desire of Dutch soldiers to return home alive became even more of a priority and they avoided direct

47 The state of East Sumatra did object to the fact that there were too few states in Sumatra; and Minahasa, Ambon and Timor in the NIT expressed their wish to be allowed to participate in the RTC to ensure closer ties with the Netherlands.

48 Interview in Kiers 1976.

contact with the people and their opponents as much as possible. They no longer found the risks acceptable for a platoon to move further than five kilometres from the camp.⁴⁹ Instead, the deployment of heavy artillery was further intensified, thereby increasing the risk of civilian casualties.

In a last-ditch attempt to turn public opinion in the United States in their favour, the Dutch embassy in Washington engaged a US public relations agency which arranged for a visit to Java by a number of US journalists. The visit was tightly orchestrated to show the Netherlands' constructive intentions in particular, while Sukarno and his Republic were portrayed in an unfavourable light. The underlying message was that, against the backdrop of the Cold War, only the Netherlands would be able to reverse the tide of communism. The charm offensive appeared to have been a success, but on the return journey the KLM plane carrying the journalists crashed near Bombay on 12 July 1949, killing all on board. As a result, the journalists' stories no longer made it into the newspapers.⁵⁰

The Republic, the TNI and the BFO

On 18 June 1949, Sultan Hamengkubuwono declared a ceasefire in Yogyakarta, allowing for the departure of Dutch soldiers and the return of Republican leaders to begin. The situation was highly uncertain, as there was a fear that leftist militias would continue fighting, while it was by no means clear how Dutch troops would behave. Nonetheless, the situation remained calm. The street markets slowly began to reopen and UN observers started arriving, accompanied by the first foreign journalists. In the last week of June, the Dutch evacuated Yogyakarta, but tens of thousands of Chinese also fled the city, fearing reprisals from Republican troops. In this tense atmosphere, the sultan formally took over administration from the Dutch on 1 July and TNI troops returned.

On 6 July, Republican leaders landed at Maguwo airport. Cheered on by tens of thousands of people, they made their way back to their capital city. Sjafruddin Prawiranegara arrived a week later and formally handed over his mandate to Sukarno on 13 July during the first cabinet session of the Republican government. In the following week, the Working Committee of the Republican Parliament approved the 7 May agreement.

The return of Commander-in-Chief Sudirman was a more difficult matter. Simatupang had already warned Republican leaders in his report of 19 June

49 Groen et al. 2021: 339.

50 Zweers 2013: 308–42.



19. Sukarno receives Sudirman

that they had taken a big risk by blindly relying on US support during the negotiations. Sudirman went a step further by rejecting the agreement. He did not want to simply give away the ascendancy his troops were beginning to gain. He distrusted the Republican leaders so much that he wanted to be the one who would set the terms on which negotiations with the Dutch could take place.

It was not even certain whether Sudirman would return to Yogyakarta. It was only after much pressure from the sultan, Gatot Subroto (the military commander of Solo), and chief of staff Simatupang that Sudirman set out for Yogyakarta. Simatupang met up with the critically ill army chief – who was still surviving on one lung – in Wonosari and joined him on his journey.

Together they arrived in Yogyakarta on 10 July, where an even larger crowd welcomed the legendary army chief. The meeting with President Sukarno the following day is captured in an iconic photograph showing a dead tired Sudirman resting his head on Sukarno's shoulder. In the photo it appears as though he is giving in, but this was far from the case.

During two lengthy talks with Sukarno and Nasution, Sudirman made it clear that, as far as he was concerned, nothing had been won yet and therefore the fight had to continue; otherwise, he would resign. Without Sudirman's support, the agreement reached would be worth nothing, fighting would erupt again, and the United States might then side with the

Netherlands. It is for this reason that Sukarno put Sudirman under great pressure in early August by indicating that Hatta and he would also resign in case Sudirman would persist. Emotions ran high, and both men were in tears when Sudirman finally gave in. 'Then show us what you've got, because it's not over yet,' he is alleged to have said. Nasution assured him that he would rather have a bad policy with united leaders than a good policy with a divided leadership. Once again, Sukarno – with Nasution's support – had managed to defuse a major crisis within the Republic.⁵¹

Meanwhile, the federal states were also trying to prepare for the big diplomatic endgame. They were impressed by the military strength of the Republic and recognised the weakened position of the Netherlands. To secure the future of the federal states, it was therefore crucial for them to reach an agreement with the Republic before the RTC began. When Sultan Hamid as chairman of the BFO requested the Republic's permission to participate in the RTC on 10 May, Sukarno was not in favour. Where were the states during the last few months when their support had really mattered? Had they fought along? But Hatta insisted on the BFO participating, and the tension was lifted when the UNCI officially invited the BFO to participate in the RTC on 26 May.

In mid-June, a BFO delegation travelled to Bangka for consultations, but Republican leaders still kept them at bay. They were opposed to an expansion of federal states in Sumatra and preferred to limit the total number of states to three – Republican Java and Sumatra, Kalimantan and the NIT – which was in line with the position Hatta had already taken in 1946.

After the Republic's return to Yogyakarta, Sultan Hamid and Anak Agung Gde Agung proposed that a conference be held to ensure that the Republic and the BFO would act in unison during the RTC. This time, the Republic was more forthcoming. The two sides met during the Inter-Indonesian Conference which was held from 19 to 22 July in Yogyakarta and – after a break due to Lebaran, the end of the Islamic fasting month – from 31 July to 2 August in Jakarta.

On its arrival in Yogyakarta, the BFO delegation was warmly received by Tadjuddin Noor, who had narrowly escaped Makassar three years earlier.⁵² Sukarno's attitude was also very different this time. He presented his '*Trasé Baru*', the new path to independence that the Republic and the BFO would take together. It was a strategic embrace of the BFO that convinced Sultan Hamid that the Republic and the BFO genuinely stood side by side.⁵³

51 Poeze 2007: 1499–1501.

52 See Chapter 9.

53 Alers 1956: 211.

The federal states were delighted with the outcome of the conference, which stipulated – in line with the 7 May agreement – that Indonesia would become a federal republic with a president as head of state. The federation would be a democracy with an elected parliament, of which two-thirds would come from the states and one-third from the Republic. In addition, there would be a senate in which each state would be represented by two senators. This senate would have an advisory role and would only operate as a co-legislative body on matters affecting the states. Citizenship would be granted to Indonesians, Chinese, Arabs and Europeans who wanted to become Indonesians. The federal state was to fly the red-and-white flag; and the ‘Indonesia Raya’ would become the national anthem, Indonesian the language of instruction, and 17 August a national holiday. Finally, the conference accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which had been drafted on 10 December 1948 under the auspices of the United Nations. The Netherlands-Indonesia Union was not mentioned at all.

Regarding the role of the army, only the Republic’s position carried weight, and it determined that the TNI would be the backbone of the Indonesian armed forces. Indonesian KNIL soldiers would be allowed to join the TNI under conditions that were yet to be determined. This meant that Sultan Hamid’s desire to maintain a special military relationship with the Netherlands was off the table. While the Inter-Indonesian Conference was in full swing, the political and military leaders of the Republic decided on 21 July to agree to an armistice. An agreement was subsequently reached with the Netherlands on 1 August for the armistice to take effect on 10 August in Java and five days later in Sumatra.

Sudirman’s announcement of the armistice, delivered on 3 August, still met with resistance from certain circles. East Java’s military governor Sungkono was against the decision. He had developed his own plan which envisaged a long-term continuation of the struggle. Only after heavy pressure from Sudirman did he reluctantly submit to the truce. Commander Joop Warouw, by contrast, took no notice of Sudirman’s order and continued the battle.⁵⁴

Just before the ceasefire was to come into effect, Lieutenant Colonel Slamet Rijadi’s troops invaded Solo on 7 August. After the Dutch threatened to unleash a large-scale bombardment, they left the city again after three days. The Dutch commander-in-chief Buurman van Vreeden, in turn, suggested taking up arms again in response to what he called Indonesian provocations, but The Hague chose not to react to his statements.

54 Ari Sapto 2018: 269–73.

After the TNI and the Dutch forces complied with the ceasefire, the internal conflicts on the Indonesian side were far from over. In Central and East Java, TNI units continued their hunt for leftist militant groups. In Central Java, thousands of communist fighters who had been released in December 1948 by the leaders of the Republic to fight the Dutch had gathered in the Merapi and Merbabu mountains. TNI troops led by Slamet Rijadi opened a major offensive against these groups to ensure they did not expand their influence after the ceasefire came into effect.

In East Java, Sabarudin's battered brigade had managed to escape from a TNI attack in February 1949. In early March, he was caught once more but slipped away yet again. He was able to link up with Joop Warouw's brigade on the slopes of Mount Kawi. It was here that Sabarudin and Warouw formed a pact known as the Kawi Pact together with the fugitive Murba leaders – supporters of Tan Malaka – in late June 1949; but this cooperation, based on a loose arrangement, soon fell apart.

By order of Colonel Sungkono, actions against leftist militias intensified in June and July 1949, and Sabarudin was increasingly driven into a corner. He went to Surabaya in November, after which he was picked up by a TNI unit and summarily executed under 'military law' on 24 November 1949. Joop Warouw's brigade was also trapped by the TNI. Warouw turned himself in and subsequently continued his military career in Sulawesi.⁵⁵

In West Java in October, units of the Siliwangi Division eliminated the Tentara Rakyat, a militia adhering to Tan Malaka's ideology that was led by Chaerul Saleh and Kiai Achmad Chatib.

Unlike in Java, the TNI in Sumatra did not carry out a hunt for anything and everything that was leftist. A number of communist groups had sympathised with Tan Malaka, but they had not joined his 'total people's war'. In Tapanuli, the communist leader Xarim MS had a good relationship with the TNI, partly because his son was commander of a TNI unit operating from Aceh.

In West Java, fighting between Darul Islam and the TNI intensified after the 7 May agreement – an accord that only confirmed for Kartosuwirjo that the Republic had once again betrayed the struggle for independence. He was estimated to have a force of between 12,000 and 15,000 men that controlled large parts of the region. Hatta had made one final attempt to prevent a definitive rift between the Republic and Darul Islam by sending Minister Natsir to West Java, but the latter returned empty-handed.

On 7 August, Kartosuwirjo proclaimed the state of Negara Islam Indonesia and presented himself as the only leader who had remained true to both

55 See Chapter 13.

the ideals of the revolution and Islam.⁵⁶ The struggle between the TNI and Darul Islam had become a grim civil war that led to chaotic situations. For example, there were rumours that in his fight against the TNI, Kartosuwirjo sought support from Captain Westerling who was at that point in Bandung, while the *Wali Negara* of the state of Pasundan allegedly sought support from Kartosuwirjo to uphold his state's autonomy against the Republic.⁵⁷

The Round Table Conference

On 17 August 1949, Indonesia's independence was celebrated throughout Java for the first time. Six days later, the opening of the Round Table Conference took place at the *Ridderzaal* (Hall of Knights) in The Hague. The Republican delegation consisted of 57 members and was led by Vice President Hatta. Simatupang was also part of the delegation to ensure that the interests of the armed forces were protected. Although quite a few political heavyweights had travelled to The Hague, most of the work was done by Hatta and, to a lesser extent, the economist Sumitro Djojohadikusumo.⁵⁸

The BFO delegation consisted of as many as 89 men, as all states wanted to be well represented. Officially, Sultan Hamid was the leader of the delegation, but it soon became clear that Anak Agung Gde Agung had the most influence, partly because he was respected by the Republic. According to John Coast, who was present at the conference as the assistant to Mohamad Rum, the BFO delegation came across as timid and did not make much of an impact.⁵⁹ The Dutch delegation was led by Minister Van Maarseveen but the main negotiator was Van Roijen. Prime Minister Drees also took part in the talks during moments of crisis. The UNCI chaired the conference under the leadership of Merle Cochran.

The Indonesian delegations were accommodated in the Palace Hotel on the boulevard in Scheveningen, which had a dreary atmosphere. There was little to do in post-war Holland, and the approaching inclement autumn weather did not bode well either. There were a few good restaurants in The Hague, but in Scheveningen the Indonesians had to make do with 'Pronk's Herring Stall', while in their hotel they had to content themselves with a meagre Dutch breakfast. They met with the Dutch delegation members only

56 The Masyumi had from 1946 also advocated an Islamic Indonesia but did so without rejecting the Republic's right to exist.

57 Elson and Formichi 2011: 475.

58 The delegation also included Mohamad Rum, Muhammad Yamin, Ali Sastroamidjojo, Djuanda, Leimena, Sujono Hadinoto, Supomo and Sukiman.

59 Coast 2015: 268.

during the formal sessions, and beyond that there was virtually no contact. The two sides remained strangers to each other.⁶⁰

The final session of the conference was set for 1 November. That left enough time for the agreement to be ratified in both countries and for the transfer of sovereignty to take place before the end of 1949. Initially, the pace of the meetings was slow, but as the deadline approached, work continued from early morning until late at night.

As in his famous 1928 speech, Hatta referred to the famous Dutch author Multatuli in his opening remarks on 23 August when he said that the Netherlands had misjudged Indonesia: 'The gentlest people on earth have become rebellious.'⁶¹ This soon became apparent when negotiations started and the Republic and the BFO together made it clear that they did not want to pursue a strong Union. While the Netherlands got what it wanted – a union – it was ultimately reduced to a non-binding consultation that would take place twice a year.

When economic relations and the financial settlement of the transfer of sovereignty were put on the agenda, however, the Indonesian delegations were forced to make substantial concessions. Indonesia's economic position was weak. The country needed Dutch loans and had to allow the monetary system to remain under Dutch control through the Bank of Java. It was agreed that Indonesia could only make changes to economic legislation in consultation with the Netherlands, and large Dutch companies in Indonesia were allowed to continue to operate freely.

The Netherlands took a hard line on the issue of how to settle the Dutch East Indies national debt, which in 1949 came to a total of 6.1 billion guilders, including the 3.5 billion that the war effort had cost. The Netherlands demanded that Indonesia assume this debt in its entirety, but the Indonesians refused to do so. Sumitro Djojohadikusumo presented a calculation to show that the Netherlands still owed Indonesia 500 million guilders. The Indonesians then expressed their willingness to take over part of the pre-war debt (2.6 billion guilders worth), but the Dutch vetoed this. When the negotiations threatened to stall, Merle Cochran proposed a compromise that amounted to 4.5 billion guilders that Indonesia had to pay the Netherlands. At the same time, he promised the Indonesian delegations that the United States would provide generous credit to Indonesia after independence to help ease its debt burden. Hatta acquiesced but was not happy with Cochran's change in tack. After promising earlier in the year to give his full support to

60 Coast 2015: 270–1. After some time, the delegations moved to the Kurhaus Hotel.

61 De Jong 2015: 279; see Chapter 1, p. 29.

Indonesia, the American diplomat over time began to put more emphasis on the interests of the United States. In the light of the Cold War, the alliance between the United States and the Netherlands was given greater priority, and Indonesia's interests were made subordinate to this.⁶²

With regard to Indonesia's military, the Republic's demands won the day. Although the Republic and the BFO were in agreement that Dutch soldiers should leave at the earliest moment possible, they differed fundamentally in their approach to the KNIL. The Republic wanted the KNIL to be disbanded, after which KNIL soldiers could choose whether or not to join the TNI. The BFO delegation, however, wanted to keep the KNIL stationed in the federal states for a period of time and for the TNI to remain in Java and Sumatra. The BFO proposal came to nothing, however. Although Lieutenant General Spoor still believed in late 1948 that the KNIL should form the core of the federal army, by the fall of 1949 the Netherlands had changed course completely and was willing to dismantle the KNIL swiftly.

The negotiations came under increasing pressure when military tensions rose in Java during October. TNI units had taken control of more areas, causing Dutch troops to threaten to counterattack. In response, the TNI demanded the immediate departure of the Dutch troops, a demand that was adopted by Hatta on 16 October. Lovink in Jakarta then proposed concentrating the Dutch troops in a number of urban areas ahead of their departure for the Netherlands. By giving in to the pressure from the TNI, the Dutch left the countryside to the TNI and in doing so prevented a fatal confrontation between Dutch and TNI troops. The result was that more and more of Java fell definitively into the hands of the Indonesian military.

On 29 October, the new constitution of the Federal Republic of Indonesia was signed at the Kurhaus Hotel in Scheveningen. In terms of its substance, the constitution was an elaboration of the agreements reached at the Inter-Indonesian Conference, and it explicitly laid down the protected status of the traditional self-governing administrations.⁶³ Remarkably, the Republican delegation showed little interest in the constitution according to the BFO delegation's general affairs secretary, who wrote: 'Nobody believes that much will come of the Federal Structure, no *negara* will remain, not even East Indonesia.'⁶⁴

62 Kahin 2003: 116–25. United States aid to the Netherlands stood at USD 979 million at this point (Hoek and Van der Kleij 2020).

63 Anak Agung Gede Agung 1996: 635–47.

64 H.G. Schulte Nordholt, 'De Ronde Tafel Conferentie, 31-10-1949', Collection Henk Schulte Nordholt.

On the margins of the conference, two regional organisations – the Twapro (short for 'de Twaalfde Provincie' or the Twelfth Province) from the Minahasa and the Persatuan Timur Besar (the Covenant of the Greater East from the Minahasa, the Moluccas and Timor) – tried to make their voices heard at the conference. They were intent on maintaining links with the Netherlands, but their attempt failed because only federal states and not smaller regions had the right to self-determination.

The most controversial topic at the conference was the question of Irian Barat (which the Dutch still referred to as New Guinea). For KVP leader Romme, New Guinea was the quid pro quo for his acceptance of the transfer of sovereignty. His stance was supported by the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP), the Christian Historical Union (CHU) and the liberal VVD. The Dutch delegation presented a number of formal arguments as to why New Guinea could not be part of Indonesia. For one, the area was culturally very different from the rest of Indonesia. They also claimed that the people of New Guinea were not yet capable of governing themselves and that the region first had to be developed. Moreover, the Dutch wanted the area to become a migration destination for Indo-Europeans who wanted to leave Indonesia. The Republic and the BFO rejected these arguments, arguing that Irian Barat was inseparable from Indonesia. What played a role here was that the area had always been part of the visual representation of Indonesia depicted on the map of the Dutch East Indies that had hung in countless classrooms across the archipelago. By contrast, the eastern part of the island and Portuguese (East) Timor – both of which were not coloured in on the Dutch East Indies map – did not evoke any feeling of connection.

As the 1 November deadline approached, a resolution on the issue remained elusive. On the night of 31 October to 1 November, Drees also took part in the talks. He explained to Hatta and Anak Agung Gde Agung that the KVP's position was unchangeable. The Dutch parliament would only approve the transfer of sovereignty if New Guinea/Irian Barat remained with the Netherlands. At this point, Cochran intervened again. His compromise was that the New Guinea/Irian Barat issue be removed from the negotiations and resolved by mutual agreement within a year. Hatta, exhausted as a result of two months of continuous negotiations, finally agreed. Romme was satisfied, but Anak Agung Gde Agung made it clear that this outcome would weigh heavily on the future relationship between Indonesia and the Netherlands.

On 2 November, the closing session of the conference took place in the *Ridderzaal* in The Hague. Vice President Hatta, Sultan Hamid and Minister

Van Maarseveen signed the document stipulating the transfer of sovereignty. This was 'the crowning moment of Hatta's life', as John Coast wrote.⁶⁵ This was what he had striven for all his life: Indonesia had won its independence, and all the Dutch troops were going home. That was the most important thing.

The Netherlands had also come away with something: it had retained possession of New Guinea for the time being; its business interests had been safeguarded; and financially it had extracted the maximum possible. Nonetheless, the fact remained that the Netherlands had suffered a humiliating defeat. According to the BFO's general affairs secretary, by not showing any generosity during the conference, the Netherlands had acted more like a haggler than a negotiator. And the issue of New Guinea/Irian Barat had ended in a moral defeat. As one participant of the RTC put it: 'The overall result of the conference is, broadly speaking, that the last ounce of trust the Netherlands had enjoyed has been squandered.'⁶⁶

The process of getting the Dutch parliament to approve the agreement had its moments of suspense. Passing the Sovereignty Transfer Act required a two-thirds majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. On 8 December, a narrow two-thirds majority of the House of Representatives (71 for and 29 against) voted in favour of the outcomes of the RTC. On 21 December, the Senate also gave the green light by a narrow margin – 34 vote for and 15 against.⁶⁷

In Indonesia, the Negara Indonesia Timur parliament voted on 28 November in favour of the agreements made in The Hague. On 14 December, the Republican parliament – the KNIP – met again in Yogyakarta for the first time since March 1947.⁶⁸ There was criticism about the fact that Irian Barat was being given away and that Indonesia would be taking over three-quarters of the colonial national debt, but the KNIP nonetheless accepted the negotiation result by a large majority.⁶⁹

65 Coast 2015: 279.

66 H.G. Schulte Nordholt, 'De Ronde Tafel Conferentie, 31-10-1949.'

67 In the House of Representatives, the KVP, the PvdA, the VVD and four members of the CHU voted in favour. In the Senate, the KVP, the Labour Party and the VVD together had the required majority to pass the agreement while the CHU voted against it.

68 Of the 535 original KNIP members, only 352 turned up. Some had been removed from office as a result of their involvement in the 1948 communist uprising, while others simply failed to reach Yogyakarta.

69 Poeze 2007: 1605. Leftist groups such as the Partai Murba and the Partai Wanita Rakyat voted against. The PSI cast blank votes because its leader, Sutan Sjahrir, had been left out of the negotiations.

Independence

The Federal Republic of Indonesia (Republik Indonesia Serikat, RIS) was set up rapidly – within a week – in December 1949. On 14 December, its first constitution was signed by the Republic and the other states. Two days later, Sukarno and Hatta were elected president and vice president of the RIS by 16 representatives of the federal states. On 17 December, they were officially sworn in at the *kraton* of the sultan of Yogyakarta.⁷⁰

Sukarno appointed four *formateurs* – Hatta, Hamengkubuwono, Anak Agung Gde Agung and Sultan Hamid – to form the first cabinet of the RIS, which was presented on 20 December. Hatta became prime minister, Hamengkubuwono defence minister, Anak Agung Gde Agung home minister and Sultan Hamid minister of state. Of the 17 ministers, five were from the BFO states, including Arnold Mononutu as information minister.⁷¹

By way of thanks for the fact that Yogyakarta had hosted the Republic for four years, the first national university was inaugurated there on 19 December: the Universitas Gadjah Mada, named after the legendary military leader of the ancient kingdom of Majapahit. Located in Yogyakarta's *kraton*, this university with its six faculties symbolised the development of the new nation-state's own intellectual capacity.

The conclusion of the long struggle for independence took place on 27 December in Amsterdam and Jakarta. The transfer of sovereignty took place at the Palace on Dam Square at 10am. For Prime Minister Drees, this brought an end to a four-year nightmare. The document was signed by Queen Juliana, Prime Minister Drees and four ministers, and was accepted by Hatta. In her speech, Juliana referred to the damage done:

No longer do we stand in opposition to each other. We now stand side by side, however violated and torn and full of the scars of resentment and regret [...] It is a privilege to perform this act of transferring sovereignty, in front of history, or rather the face of God. He knows why this union in freedom was not achieved earlier or later, and He knows the failure of generations...⁷²

70 As Sukarno and Hatta had become respectively president and prime minister of the RIS overseeing all the federal states, on the same day, Assaat was designated interim president of the Republic of Indonesia (the federal state based in Yogyakarta) and Susanto Tirtoprodjo was appointed interim prime minister.

71 Cabinet members included Sjafruddin Prawiranegara (finance), Supomo (justice), Wahid Hasjim (religious affairs), Leimena (health), Wilopo (labour), Abu Hanifah (education), Djuanda (welfare) and Kosasih Purwanegara (social affairs).

72 De Jong 2015: 296; *NRC Handelsblad*, 23 July 1999.



20. Sukarno's arrival in Jakarta (*Illustrations of the Revolution* 1949)

The speech was also broadcast in Jakarta, where the transfer of administration was then held at the former Rijkswijk Palace – henceforth called Istana Merdeka (Freedom Palace) – located on the old King's Square – henceforth known as Medan Merdeka (Freedom Square). In the presence of Lovink, the last Dutch authority figure, and Hamengkubuwono, who represented the RIS, the Dutch flag was lowered and that of the RIS hoisted. It was the same flag that had been used at the declaration of independence on 17 August 1945 and had since acquired a sacred status.⁷³

Sukarno was not present at the ceremonies on 27 December. His moment of glory came the next day when he made his return to Jakarta. Arriving from Yogyakarta in a red-and-white painted Dakota, he was surrounded by a crowd of hundreds of thousands of cheering people as he made his way to Istana Merdeka where he was to take up residence. For Hatta, the conclusion of the RTC on 2 November and the transfer of sovereignty in Amsterdam constituted the culmination of all his work. But for Sukarno, his arrival in Jakarta – or, as he himself described it, his homecoming – was the climax of all those years of struggle for his country's independence.⁷⁴ In the middle

73 At the same time, in Yogyakarta the authority of the Republic (in Java, Sumatra and Madura) was transferred to the RIS.

74 Hatta had promised not to marry until independence was achieved. He got married on 18 November.

of that immense crowd, this was the greatest moment in his life. It was also simultaneously the pinnacle of the nation, at the very beginning of its existence, which had now become so tangible and was almost exploding with joy and energy.⁷⁵ On the steps of the palace, Sukarno said in his speech: 'I have been away from Jakarta for four years – four times 365 days. It feels like 40 years. I salute you all: officers and soldiers, civil servants, comrade *becak* drivers, comrade vegetable sellers, the lowest officials – no one should be forgotten. I thank you all.'⁷⁶

75 Taufik Abdullah 2009: 183.

76 *Lukisan Revolusi Indonesia*, n.d.: 50. This moment has taken a back seat in Indonesian historiography, which highlights 17 August 1945 and the Republican leaders' return to Yogyakarta on 6 July 1949 as key moments.

13 Unity

1950

In January 1950, President Sukarno was finally able to pay his first official state visit – to India.¹ For the Netherlands, the ‘Indonesian question’ – as the struggle for independence was referred to in the Low Countries – had finally come to an end on 27 December 1949, to the relief of many. But in Indonesia, the struggle was far from over and new problems immediately emerged. Many new nation-states tend to be a sorry sight shortly after independence, and Indonesia was no exception. The country’s infrastructure had been severely damaged by the war, and the people suffered from a lack of just about everything: housing, work, clothing, means of transportation and medicine. There was a euphoria that came from having won the war and the freedom they had obtained, but chaos also reigned and a resurgence of violence loomed. The big question was: would the federation survive? And could the violence that had flared up in previous years be reined in?

The fragile state

Pressured by the Dutch, Indonesia had become a federation that consisted of unequal parts which were only loosely connected administratively. As the capital of the Federal Republic of Indonesia (Republik Indonesia Serikat, RIS), Jakarta presented a most desolate sight. Public services barely functioned, and the city was overrun with refugees from West Java and fortune seekers hoping to get a job in one of the new government’s ministries. Sukarno resided in the Istana Merdeka on Medan Merdeka Square. Although he was president of the Federal Republic, his heart lay with the Republic in Yogyakarta (which had now become a federal state like all the others).

Opposite the presidential palace, Prime Minister Hatta lived in the former official residence of Lieutenant General Spoor. The ministry of defence, headed by Hamengkubuwono, was on the south side of the square, and next to it was the ministry of information headed by Arnold Mononutu, who was both a nationalist and a federalist. His staff included many Dutch people from the information service who had worked for Beel and Lovink. Not far from there, the former building of the Volksraad (the pre-war People’s

¹ He had been ready to leave for New Delhi as early as 19 December 1948, but the Dutch military attack on Yogyakarta prevented this. See Chapter 11.

Council) housed Prime Minister Hatta's office, which continued to be headed by Maria Ulfah Santoso. Hatta understood that governing was still a matter of improvising, and this is why he had put together a cabinet composed of pragmatic ministers. Hatta also ran the ministry of foreign affairs from a nearby building that had previously been used by the Council of the Dutch East Indies. He would have preferred to see Sjahrir as his neighbour at the Foreign Office, but the two had drifted apart. Sjahrir reproached the Republican leaders for having talked to the Dutch during their imprisonment on Bangka while the legitimate Republican government-in-exile was in West Sumatra. Sjahrir was not liked by Republicans of the Partai National Indonesia (PNI) nor by the military leaders. They considered him too Western and had not forgotten that he had, in their opinion, made far too many concessions during the negotiations with Van Mook in 1946 about the Linggadjati Agreement.

The parliament of the RIS consisted of 150 members, 50 of whom were from the Republic in Yogyakarta. The remaining 100 represented the 15 other federal states. In Yogyakarta, people felt short-changed by the disproportionate ratio apportioned to their federal state: it had been the one that had fought for freedom, and yet the federal states – which had cooperated with the Netherlands – now formed the majority. Moreover, the borders between Yogyakarta and the other states in Java had remained unchanged since the Renville conference, and this was also considered a great injustice in Yogyakarta.

At the opening of the new federal parliament on 15 January, President Sukarno gave a speech which was less impassioned than his earlier orations. He chose instead to focus more on the administrative situation. This was not surprising because one of his speechwriters was Jaap Hangelbroek, the Dutch adviser to Minister Anak Agung Gde Agung.² There were still quite a few Dutch officials working at all the ministries; they acted as advisers and embodied the administrative memory of the colonial state. Many of them found it difficult to adjust to their new role as servants of independent Indonesia. Moreover, they were made to feel unwelcome by young Republican officials who would have preferred a fresh start for their country.

The new education minister, Abu Hanifah, also had to deal with the legacy of the colonial bureaucracy. He had the task of transforming a colonial education system into one that was focused on national unity and development. He too had Dutch advisers who helped him establish the Universitas Indonesia in Jakarta. Abu Hanifah appealed to Dutch professors and lecturers to help with the establishment of post-secondary education, but his efforts

2 Bunnik 2020: 184.

encountered fierce opposition from young Indonesian nationalists who wanted to get rid of the Dutch teaching staff immediately. Outside the capital, the continuity of the former indigenous public administration helped to ensure a significant degree of administrative stability. Former civil servants of the Dutch East Indies Interior Administration were still employed at the top levels of the ministry of the interior, while at the local level many members of the old administrative elite remained in office. They had made a smooth transition from the Dutch colonial regime to the Japanese regime, and had been attacked by *pemuda* in 1945 during the *daulat* actions, but were thereafter employed again by the Republic. Having survived the struggle for independence, those who had at least not too obviously consorted with the Dutch were now able to serve the new nation. On Java, they were no longer called *pangreh pradja* (rulers of the realm) but *pamong pradja* (servants of the nation). The same applied to the administrative elites outside Java: their position no longer went unchallenged, as new Republican leaders demanded their share of government posts and tried to secure positions in the local civil service for their supporters. As a result of political appointments and the merging of the federal and Republican bureaucracy – numbering 180,000 and 240,000 officials respectively – the total number of civil servants had risen to 420,000, which was a fourfold increase compared to 1940. How could all their salaries be paid while the national economy was in a major crisis?

Just how difficult it was for the government to function became apparent when a major shortage of paper, ink and other office supplies occurred. Dutch trading firms such as Borsumij, Lindeteves, Internatio, Jacobson van den Berg and Geo Wehry – which together controlled 60 percent of the imports of consumer goods – had purportedly decided to temporarily freeze imports from early January.³

To save costs, Hatta wanted to almost halve the civil service, but he encountered considerable political resistance. And there were more pressing problems. The Indonesian economy was in a bad state in 1950. Since the late 1920s, with a brief interruption in the late 1930s, nothing had been done to maintain the infrastructure for 20 years, and it had subsequently deteriorated even further as a result of both the Japanese occupation and the war with the Netherlands. The export economy came to a virtual standstill, while inflation went up and the budget deficit quickly rose to 1.7 billion guilders. When the rupiah became the national currency in March 1950, the government in Jakarta decided to devalue and reform the currency. The value of the rupiah

3 Ari Sapto 2018: 242; Lindblad 2008: 127. These companies allegedly took this decision in order to pressure the new government into not getting in their way.

was reduced to 30 percent of the guilder. Paper bills were literally cut in half, reducing their value by 50 percent: the left half could be kept as currency (ten rupiah was only worth five), while the right half could be exchanged for government bonds. Half of every savings account was blocked.

Freedom, political agitation and the economic crisis led to an explosion in workplace agitation. Never before had there been so many strikes as in 1950. Low wages, desperate needs, protest against the federation and the promise of a better future drove thousands of workers in Java and Sumatra to go on strike. In East Sumatra, workers and migrants from Tapanuli even went so far as to occupy plantations. An estimated 700,000 working days were lost each month.⁴ Some relief was provided by very modest loans from the Netherlands and the United States. During the first ministerial consultation of the Netherlands–Indonesia Union in March 1950, the Netherlands granted a loan of 280 million guilders. Merle Cochran, who had been appointed United States Ambassador to Jakarta, offered a USD 100 million loan on behalf of his country – far less than the lavish promises he had made at the Round Table Conference.⁵

Towards the end of the year, exports seemed to pick up due to a rise in demand for rubber as a result of the Korean War. But it was a fragile recovery, one that was soon overshadowed by a resurgence of violence.

The armed forces

The biggest problem Hatta faced was the position of the armed forces, which had been operating practically autonomously since December 1948 but now had to submit to government authority once again. This was no easy transformation because the armed forces were more prepared for battle than for peace and demobilisation.

The leadership of the Federal Armed Forces (Angkatan Perang Republik Indonesia Serikat, APRIS) was appointed at the same time as the transfer of sovereignty on 27 December 1949. Most of the top leaders of the APRIS came from the TNI. General Sudirman remained commander-in-chief in name, but he was too ill to carry out his duties. One rank below him in the hierarchy was the armed forces' chief of staff, Simatupang. When 34-year-old Sudirman died of tuberculosis on 29 January, the position of commander-in-chief remained vacant in tribute to this legendary hero, while 30-year-old Simatupang became his successor as chief of staff.

4 Feith 1962: 84.

5 See Chapter 12.

The army came under the command of 32-year-old Nasution, assisted by 30-year-old Alex Kawilarang, who soon came to play an important role as a trouble-shooter. These military leaders, who came from outside Java, had been in class together at the Royal Military Academy (Koninklijke Militaire Academie, KMA) in Bandung shortly before the war. Anthony Reid claims that it was thanks to them that the armed forces did not seize power.⁶ They belonged to the cadre that wanted to transform the armed forces into a small professional army, and their task was to ensure that thousands of soldiers were demobilised and that unwilling warlords and leaders of militant militias brought into line.

In 1950 the armed forces numbered 200,000 military personnel, 100,000 civilian personnel and 350,000 members of militias affiliated with the army.⁷ Compared to the beginning of the war of independence, there was much more hierarchy and cohesion within the armed forces, but power relations were still heavily dependent on personal loyalties. Attempts from above to demobilise soldiers met fierce resistance from officers who did not want to abandon their men and wanted to safeguard their own position.

The visible presence of 80,000 Dutch soldiers, who were waiting for repatriation, and 62,000 KNIL soldiers, for whom the future was not yet clear, engendered additional tension. KNIL soldiers had long assumed that they would form the core of the new federal army, but in this they were sorely disappointed.

At the end of December, it became clear that the KNIL would be disbanded in July 1950 and that KNIL officers could not count on staff positions in the federal army. This news led to much bitterness among KNIL soldiers. In the course of 1950, approximately 19,000 of them were demobilised and another 26,000 transferred to the federal army. As there was still no solution for 17,000 men, they were temporarily assigned to the Dutch Army. The transition period was anything but peaceful, however, because across the archipelago, KNIL units were besieged by Indonesian troops and revolutionary militias who were out for revenge.

The breakdown of the federation

The biggest crisis in the first year of independence concerned the legitimacy of the federation itself. The quest for national unity – as the consummation of the struggle for independence – was driven by nationalist leaders in

6 Reid 1974: 155.

7 Nasution 1965: 99.

federal territories as well as PNI politicians who could count on Sukarno's full support.

Hatta was not a very vocal opponent of the federation – a standpoint he shared with several ministers from the Masyumi and the PSI – because he saw administrative decentralisation as a useful principle for governing the vast archipelago. But he soon saw that resistance to the federation was growing. The PNI was mobilising its supporters and holding large demonstrations, while military units and militias were infiltrating federal areas and kidnapping officials who worked for the federal states. This chain reaction of political agitation and military violence began in January 1950 in Bandung in West Java.

West Java was still a very unsafe area even after independence. The Negara Islam Indonesia (NII), led by Kartosuwirjo, was expanding its influence there and had a well-armed army known as the Tentara Islam Indonesia (TII).⁸ The TII had its own uniforms and no longer fought against the Dutch but against Republican troops, which were forced to give up more and more ground due to illness and fatigue. By mid-1950, the NII controlled the area south and southeast of Bandung, while units of the TII had also infiltrated Central Java. Bandung was still in Dutch hands, but in October the TII approached Bogor. Numerous murders were committed and hundreds of people suspected of anti-TII sympathies were kidnapped. The unstable situation unleashed a stream of thousands of refugees headed for Jakarta.

The state of Pasundan came under pressure because it could no longer count on Dutch military support, while Republican troops were also withdrawing. It was against the background of these tensions that Raymond Westerling resurfaced. He had been demobilised in mid-1948 and had settled in Bandung, where he established a company that provided security for shipments and took action against 'the gangs' in West Java. For this, he had recruited old comrades-in-arms from the KNIL and the Special Troops Corps. He was able to count on the support and sympathy of the leaders of Pasundan and of the commander of the Dutch troops in Bandung. By the end of 1949, he had 800 well-armed troops, which he called the Angkatan Perang Ratu Adil (APRA, the Corps of the Just Prince).

In early January, Westerling demanded that his APRA be recognised as Pasundan's official army. Prime Minister Djumhana Wiraatmadja was open to this because he needed the APRA to keep Kartosuwirjo's units at bay, but Wiranatakusuma, the leader of Pasundan, wanted nothing to

8 The TII was allegedly receiving weapons from Manila, the largest post-war arms market in Southeast Asia.

do with Westerling; therefore he gave up his position as head of state of Pasundan. Prime Minister Hatta intervened by appointing a government commissioner representing the RIS to put things in order. Although Hatta demanded from the Dutch that Westerling be arrested immediately, the Dutch army command let him get away with just a reprimand.⁹

Unhindered, Westerling swung into action. On 23 January, he occupied a number of strategic positions in Bandung, killing 60 APRIS soldiers and dozens of civilians. The action appeared to be successful, but Westerling had hoped that Dutch troops and KNIL units would join him in a coup against the federal government in Jakarta. Although such support was not forthcoming, he continued with his plan. On 26 January, he headed for Jakarta to demand the resignation of the Hatta cabinet and to assassinate Defence Minister Hamengkubuwono, Secretary General Ali Budiardjo and Chief of Staff Simatupang. His plan came to nothing, as federal troops quickly took control of the situation.

Simatupang threatened military action against Dutch troops in West Java if Westerling was not arrested immediately. The Dutch commander-in-chief Buurman van Vreeden then hurriedly went to Bandung and ordered Westerling to stop his action. In the weeks that followed, the APRA was dispersed by Indonesian troops and Westerling was whisked away in a Dutch military aircraft to British Malaya in the deepest secrecy. At the end of February he resurfaced in Singapore, where he was arrested. However, at the intervention of Prime Minister Drees he was allowed to leave for the Netherlands. He was never held accountable for his actions and has never appeared in court.

Westerling's action had a devastating effect on the already fragile federal system. The federal government was furious with the Netherlands and suspected the Dutch army command of complicity. The state of Pasundan was completely dismantled: its political leaders were arrested, and at the end of January the Pasundan parliament approved a proposal to dissolve the state. At the beginning of February, an emergency act came into effect whereby the federal government assumed authority over West Java.

The federal system had been irreparably discredited. All over Java and in many cities in the rest of Indonesia, mass demonstrations were held demanding the dissolution of the federation and the accession of the states to the Republic in Yogyakarta. In March, ten more states fell like dominoes.

As early as September 1949, large demonstrations had been held in Surabaya and other cities in East Java and Madura calling for accession

9 According to Fredrik Willems, the APRA was founded in early 1949 at the instigation of Lieutenant General Spoor (Lardenoye 2012).

to the Republic in Yogyakarta. In January, Colonel Sungkono (the military governor of East Java) and President Sukarno, who was visiting Surabaya, gave their verbal support to the demonstrators. At the end of January, strikes broke out throughout East Java and the state was placed under military rule. In Madura, the leader of the state resigned.

Beyond Java, the Sultan of Kutai announced at the end of January that he was in favour of joining the Republic, and in Southeast Kalimantan, actions and strikes had already been staged under the leadership of Hasan Basri demanding the same. In South Sumatra, the father of the leader of the federal state had been murdered in August. Pressured by all the large demonstrations, the son finally resigned his position in February 1950.

In February, Anak Agung Gde Agung, the interior minister of the RIS and a champion of the federal cause, was given the thankless task of preparing for the abolition of the federal states of Sumatra and Java. At the beginning of March, he issued an emergency measure on the basis of which another 11 states joined the Republic in Yogyakarta.¹⁰ Formally, referenda should have been held to ratify this step, but the government in Jakarta conveniently interpreted the mass demonstrations as such.

By the end of March 1950, there were only three federal states remaining in addition to the Republic in Yogyakarta: East Sumatra, West Kalimantan and the Negara Indonesia Timur. East Sumatra was led by a close-knit and wealthy Malay elite who had suffered greatly from the bloody social revolution in 1946 and now wanted to keep the federation afloat at all costs so they could defend themselves against a resurgence of Republican violence. Nevertheless, the state government was unable to prevent demonstrations in Medan in favour of accession to the Republic in Yogyakarta; there was also widespread unrest in Asahan and Tapanuli. In response, the Malaysian elite organised a counterdemonstration with the slogan 'Do we want terror again?'

After the abolition of 12 federal states, Hatta felt that, as far as he was concerned, things should remain the way they were. Back in 1946 he had already agreed to a federation with three states – the Republic (which included Java, Madura and Sumatra), Kalimantan and the Negara Indonesia Timur (NIT) – and he was still willing to live with that.¹¹ Anak Agung Gde

10 These states were: 1) South Sumatra, 2) Central Java, 3) East Java, 4) Madura, 5) Banjar, 6) Southeast Kalimantan, 7) Greater Dayak, 8) Bangka, 9) Billiton, and 10) Riau. East Kalimantan was disbanded in early April. These were not all full-fledged federal states in the formal sense but rather autonomous areas.

11 Feith 1962: 65. The entire island of Kalimantan – with the exception of West Kalimantan – had by this point joined the Republic in Yogyakarta.

Agung's only hope was that the NIT would survive. But the reality was that the federation could no longer be saved.

In the federal parliament in Jakarta, the PNI demanded the abolition of the remaining federal states and the formation of a unitary state. They were joined by members of parliament who came from federal states. The word 'federation' had become contaminated because it was associated with a colonial divide-and-conquer policy and Dutch military interventions. Proponents of the federation – or even those who advocated a high degree of administrative decentralisation – came under fire. A number of Masyumi politicians were arrested on suspicion of supporting the state of Pasundan. And when Sultan Hamid was arrested on 5 April, West Kalimantan became the next state to fall, followed by the NIT.

Hamid was arrested in Jakarta for his alleged involvement in Westerling's coup plans. He confessed to having spoken to Westerling beforehand and was suspected of agreeing to the plan in order to become minister of defence in a new federal government after the assassination of Hamengkubuwono. Although Hamid was dissatisfied with his subordinate position in the federal cabinet, he had informed Westerling in Jakarta on 24 January that he was distancing himself from the coup. Nevertheless, Hamid was a convenient target due to his outspoken pro-Dutch attitude. Top Dutch officials in Jakarta thought he was a vain man who often made rash statements ('an amazing screamer') but did not believe he was involved in the coup.¹² With the arrest of Hamid – who was sentenced in 1953 to ten years in prison – the state of West Kalimantan also ceased to exist. After demonstrations and strikes in Pontianak and a decision by the regional parliament to join the Republic of Yogyakarta, the state was disbanded on 17 April 1950.¹³

The fall of the Negara Indonesia Timur

Towards the end of 1949, the formation of the federal state of Negara Indonesia Timur was completed and the institutions seemed to be functioning. There were still 140 Dutch advisers guiding the new rulers through the bureaucratic processes. However, with Prime Minister Anak Agung Gde Agung having left to join the federal government in Jakarta, the NIT

¹² Bunnik 2020: 180–1.

¹³ What Hamid bequeathed was the design of Indonesia's logo: the Garuda with the coat of arms bearing the five symbols of the Pancasila, and below that the motto of the country '*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*' (Unity in diversity).

had lost its key politician, the one who had the best political antenna. This allowed the conservative president Sukawati to play an increasingly prominent role.

After elections were held, the new parliament of the NIT convened in February 1950. A narrow majority was in favour of the federation, but a significant minority was outspokenly pro-Republican. The new cabinet, led by the federalist D.P. Diapari, therefore had a shaky foundation.

East Indonesia saw its fair share of demonstrations against the federation. After a fierce speech on 13 February by Mr. Assaat, President of the Republic in Yogyakarta, calling for the dissolution of the NIT, demonstrators took to the streets in Lombok and Makassar to demand accession to the Yogyakarta Republic. In Makassar, the demonstrators also turned against the conservative *radjas* (princes) who had been appointed by the Dutch in 1946. These *radjas* in turn rallied their supporters to show support for the federation.

Tensions quickly rose in Makassar after the release of nationalist fighters who had been imprisoned by Dutch troops in 1946 and the arrival of guerrilla fighters who had been hiding in the mountains. In total there were about 10,000 men who wanted to take revenge on everything that was KNIL and pro-federation.

In mid-March, the unrest became too much for the Diapari cabinet to handle. On 17 March, thousands of people demonstrated against the NIT. An announced counterdemonstration was cancelled at the last minute because a hand grenade had been thrown into the house of one of the organisers. In the South Sulawesi Council, the pro-Republican faction asked the RIS cabinet in Jakarta to intervene militarily. Meanwhile, President Sukawati and his former justice minister Chris Soumokil considered separating the NIT from the Indonesian federation.¹⁴

There were still 4,000 Moluccan KNIL soldiers in Makassar who were waiting to be demobilised. At the end of March, a group of APRIS quartermasters came to prepare for the arrival of more than a thousand APRIS soldiers. In Jakarta, Defence Minister Hamengkubuwono had decided to send members of the former 16th Brigade from East Java to Makassar for this purpose. This brigade was led by Joop Warouw and consisted largely of men from Sulawesi and the Moluccas.¹⁵ They knew the region and had no sympathy whatsoever for the federation. Their arrival was therefore seen as a declaration of war against the NIT and aroused the anger of KNIL soldiers in Makassar in particular, who had gradually been losing confidence in

14 Chauvel 1990: 333.

15 See Chapter 11.

their Dutch commanders and did not want to passively watch the APRIS abolish the NIT.

The initiative was taken by captain Andi Aziz, a former KNIL soldier who came from a noble family from South Sulawesi. He had recently transferred to the APRIS with two companies, but his loyalty to the APRIS did not hold up for long. Andi Aziz was an adjutant to President Sukawati and a staunch opponent of the Republic. After consulting with Attorney General (and former Justice Minister) Chris Soumokil, R. Metekohy (the Chief of the Accounts Office) and Sukawati, who pledged 20,000 guilders in aid, Aziz decided to prevent the APRIS troops from landing. When the ships with APRIS units appeared off Makassar on 4 April, Aziz and his men – which he had renamed Pasukan Bebas (Free Troops) – raided a weapons depot the next day and laid a cordon along the coast. He also detained the APRIS commander for East Indonesia, Colonel Mokoginta. When arrested, papers were allegedly found in Colonel Mokoginta's house suggesting that the APRIS troops had been instructed to dismantle the NIT.¹⁶

That same day, the NIT government resigned to show that it had nothing to do with Aziz's action. President Sukawati also denied any involvement. But Aziz's action evoked memories of Westerling's coup, and as a result the NIT was irretrievably discredited.

In the meantime, Aziz's supporters grew to 800 men because a large number of KNIL soldiers had joined them, and in Makassar fighting broke out against the returning guerrilla fighters.

Colonel Mokoginta, who had since been released, left for Jakarta on 10 April for consultations with Prime Minister Hatta. He returned with a compromise proposal to Aziz: there would be no APRIS troops landing in Makassar, the liquidation of the NIT was not on the agenda, and Aziz's power grab would not be punished. The catch was that Aziz had to come to Jakarta. Aziz did not trust the offer and declined. The RIS government then summoned Aziz to come to Jakarta and ordered his men to return to their barracks. When he did not respond to this either, President Sukarno spoke up. In a radio message on 13 April, he called Aziz to order. His message was that soldiers do not decide the future of states. He made it clear that Aziz was an insurgent and had to surrender without delay. At the same time, he ordered Lieutenant Colonel Alex Kawilarang to put things in order in South Sulawesi.

Despite Minister Hamengkubuwono's promise that he would be given safe passage, Aziz was arrested on 14 April immediately upon his arrival in

16 Chauvel 1990, Chapter 17; Harvey 1974: 198–9.

Jakarta.¹⁷ Outraged by Jakarta's military action and disappointed by the lack of support from the Netherlands, President Sukawati once again considered making the NIT an independent state, after consulting with Soumokil and Metekohy. But he received too little support from political leaders and the leadership of the KNIL to implement such a plan.¹⁸

On 20 April, the APRIS troops finally landed and took over power in Makassar. Aziz's supporters were disarmed, and several politicians, including Prime Minister Diapari, were arrested on suspicion of supporting Aziz's coup.

Among the APRIS troops that landed in Makassar was the Mataram Brigade led by Lieutenant Colonel Suharto. Opposite his headquarters in Makassar lived the Habibie family, whose mother came from Yogyakarta. Suharto often visited the family because Mother Habibie cooked delicious Javanese food. That is how he met the 14-year-old Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie. When the boy's father died suddenly, Suharto took the boy into his care as his foster son.¹⁹

On 21 April, one day after the APRIS troops' seizure of power, President Sukawati announced that he was ready to talk about the formation of a unitary state. He did not want a humiliating accession to the Yogyakarta Republic but an agreement between equal partners. To alleviate the suffering of defeat, he was granted this elegant retreat. From 3 to 5 May, Hatta consulted with Sukawati and Mansur, the leader of East Sumatra, about the formation of a new unified state. To this end, not only the NIT and East Sumatra but also the Republic in Yogyakarta had to be dissolved. On 19 May, Yogyakarta agreed.

The Republic of the South Moluccas

The federation was liquidated within five months, but the military violence in eastern Indonesia was far from over. In the southern part of the Moluccas, the pro-Republican and primarily Islamic Partai Indonesia Merdeka (PIM) had the majority in the South Moluccas Council after elections held at the end of 1949. The pro-federal and pro-Dutch Persatuan Timur Besar, which was dominated by local *adat* chiefs and supported by Moluccan Christians, formed a minority.

17 In 1953, Aziz was sentenced to 14 years in prison; he was pardoned in 1956.

18 Chauvel 1990: 344; Anak Agung Gde Agung 1996: 760.

19 Elson 2001: 48. And 48 years later, in 1998, Habibie would succeed Suharto as Indonesia's third president.

At the beginning of 1950, the antagonisms in the South Moluccas were thrown into sharp relief by the arrival of Moluccan soldiers who had served in the Special Troops Corps. In April, they became increasingly nervous – along with the KNIL unit stationed in Ambon – about the news from Makassar. Things took a turn for the worse after Soumokil arrived on 16 April; he had interpreted Sukarno's radio speech on 13 April and his ultimatum to Andi Aziz as a declaration of war against the NIT. After first flying to Minahasa with a Dutch military aircraft to find out whether he could count on support there, he travelled on to Ambon.

Meanwhile, the KNIL soldiers in Ambon no longer took orders from their Dutch commander; instead, Sergeant Major Nussy had assumed the lead. Under pressure from the soldiers, the Partai Indonesia Merdeka turned against Jakarta.

On 18 April, a large demonstration for an independent NIT had been organised in Ambon by Soumokil, together with Manusama, the leader of the Gerakan Demokrat Maluku Selatan (Democratic Movement of the South Moluccas) and member of the NIT senate in Makassar. But a day later, the Minahasa Council voted to join the Republic in Yogyakarta, and on 21 April, Sukawati threw in the towel and Aziz's men surrendered. Soumokil and Manusama were now on their own.

Like Soumokil, it had been many years since Manusama had been to the Moluccas. Arriving in Ambon, they brought with them the anti-Jakarta resistance and the violence they had experienced in Makassar. Manusama had worked in education and had experienced at close hand the fierce clashes in the autumn of 1945 between groups of *pemuda* and Moluccan KNIL soldiers in Jakarta. During the demonstration on 18 April, he recalled those events, describing how the APRIS soldiers would soon be going on a rampage on the Moluccas just as the *pemuda* had done in Jakarta back in 1945.

On 24 April, Soumokil and Manusama organised another mass meeting. Driven by fear of the federal Indonesian army and anger about the demise of the KNIL, the loss of federal autonomy and the dissolution of their ties with the Netherlands, they put pressure on the chairman of the South Moluccas Council, J. Manuhutu, to proclaim the independence of the Republik Maluku Selatan (RMS, Republic of the South Moluccas). The actual proclamation of the RMS took place the following day, whereby J. Manuhutu became president and Manusama minister of education. The flag – blue, green and white – was said to have been a copy of the flag of Pattimura, the famous rebel of the early 1800s. Members of the PIM were then arrested, and violence broke out against Moluccan Muslims. To indicate that they did not want

to be involved with the RMS, the leaders of the North Moluccas, led by the Sultan of Ternate, joined the Yogyakarta Republic in early May.

The government in Jakarta tried to talk to the RMS leaders, but the latter refused to enter into discussions until Jakarta recognised the RMS. In the meantime, they hoped – in vain – for support to come from the Netherlands. But Jakarta's patience was running out, and on 13 May Hatta decided to intervene militarily. He ordered Alex Kawilarang, now military commander of East Indonesia, to eliminate the RMS. On 16 July, 5,000 APRIS soldiers, including a considerable contingent of Moluccan soldiers, landed on the South Moluccas, where they encountered fierce resistance from 1,500 well-armed elite soldiers with extensive combat experience (many of whom were former KNIL or Special Forces soldiers) who were helped by several hundred volunteers. On the island of Buru, APRIS forces led by Slamet Rijadi suffered heavy casualties. After an interruption in the fighting due to new disturbances in Makassar (see below), APRIS units resumed the battle at the end of September and only succeeded in capturing Ambon at the beginning of November. Slamet Rijadi was killed. At the beginning of December, the resistance of the RMS troops was finally broken. Soumokil managed to escape, however, and hid for many years on the island of Ceram. He was not captured until 1963.²⁰ Both sides had suffered great losses: it is estimated that a thousand soldiers died and 5,000 civilians were probably killed.

Violence in Makassar

While the actions against the RMS were in full swing in July, new disturbances broke out in Makassar. This time the conflict was between APRIS troops and Republican guerrillas who had been released or were returning from the mountains. The guerrillas were deeply frustrated that their sacrifices were not recognised by Jakarta – as if freedom had been fought only on Java. They resented the fact that they were not collectively included in the ranks of the APRIS while KNIL soldiers – who had been on the opposing side – did have that privilege. This was because the APRIS commander Kawilarang wanted nothing to do with the guerrilla fighters, whom he considered unruly and semi-criminal gangs.

In mid-May 1950, the first clashes broke out in and around Makassar, after which an uneasy ceasefire was observed until the beginning of August due to the APRIS operation against the RMS. The guerrillas retreated to the

20 Soumokil was executed on 12 April 1966 on an island north of Jakarta.

mountains and the APRIS soldiers who stayed behind controlled Makassar, but outside the city they held little sway. The APRIS troops also lacked discipline, which is why Suharto's Mataram Brigade was sent back early to Java in September.

The lack of discipline went even further than that, as the case of Kahar Muzakkar from South Sulawesi illustrates. He was in charge of a portion of the APRIS troops in Makassar. This was a man who, at the beginning of the revolution in Java, became leader of the *Kebaktian Rakyat Indonesia Sulawesi* (KRIS, Devotion of the Indonesian People from Sulawesi), a Republican militia, most of whose members came from South Sulawesi. Between 1948 and 1949, he had been tasked with organising infiltrations in South Sulawesi. Based on his achievements, he believed he was entitled to the post of territorial commander of East Indonesia, but the position was given to Alex Kawilarang instead. His frustrations increased when his proposal to make guerrilla fighters in South Sulawesi a separate division within the APRIS placed under his command was rejected. Finding that he was well-regarded among the guerrilla fighters based outside Makassar, in early July he moved into the mountains and gathered 15,000 men under his command. He thereby formed his own division after all, which he named Hasanudin after the seventeenth-century monarch of Goa who had gone down fighting against the VOC. A second guerrilla movement, in addition to the *Negara Islam Indonesia* in West Java, had thus emerged that turned against the authority of Jakarta.

Meanwhile, in Makassar there were still about 4,000 former Moluccan KNIL soldiers with their families who continued to await demobilisation in an encampment that was far too small for them. With the fighting in the South Moluccas in the background, tensions mounted between them and APRIS soldiers at the beginning of August 1950. Sukarno paid a lightning visit to Makassar to calm things down, but to no avail. After some small skirmishes, 300 KNIL soldiers made a sortie on 6 August and captured part of the city. APRIS troops counterattacked, even receiving assistance from Kahar Muzakkar's Hasanudin division. Makassar turned into a battlefield, and hundreds of people were killed.

The battle in Makassar even threatened to escalate into a Dutch-Indonesian conflict when it turned out that a Dutch warship was on its way to Makassar to evacuate the KNIL soldiers. This led to consultations between Prime Minister Hatta, Simatupang, High Commissioner of the Netherlands in Jakarta H.M. Hirschfeld and the Dutch army command. It was only with great difficulty that the Dutch commander General J. Scheffelaar and Alex Kawilarang were able to bring about an armistice on

9 August. The KNIL soldiers were then evacuated. Much of Makassar was destroyed, and estimates of the death toll ranged from a few hundred to a few thousand.²¹

The evacuation was problematic for the Moluccan KNIL soldiers because they did not want to go to Java and were not permitted to go to the South Moluccas. In the end, a Dutch judge ruled that they and their families could not be evacuated to Republican territory. Instead, a provisional arrangement was made for them to be taken to the Netherlands. They arrived there with their families in the first half of 1951, where they were immediately discharged from military service and 'temporarily' housed in shabby barracks that had served as prison camps during the war. This was the beginning of a new tragic chapter in their history.²²

The new Republic

On 19 May, the federal government in Jakarta signed an agreement with the Republic in Yogyakarta on the formation of a new republic. A committee headed by the respected jurist Supomo was put to work, which presented the draft for an amended constitution at the end of July. This was adopted on 14 August by both the parliament of the RIS and the KNIP in Yogyakarta, after which it was signed by President Sukarno the day after. By casting aside the federation, Jakarta had clearly rejected the Dutch interpretation of decolonisation. Instead of the 16 states of the Federal Republic, Indonesia now had ten provinces.²³ As in 1945, Sukarno became president and Hatta vice president. For them, the ideal of 17 August 1945 – an independent unitary state – had finally been realised.

With the new constitution of August 1950, Indonesia no longer had a presidential government but a parliamentary system.²⁴ It was stipulated that the country would be a parliamentary democracy. The president appointed the cabinet *formateur* and was given the right to dismiss parliament,

21 One of the victims of the fighting was Mochtar Lutfi, an Islamic nationalist who had been exiled to Boven Digul by the Dutch in the 1930s and who played a role in the nationalist resistance in South Sulawesi after the Japanese occupation (see Chapter 5). During the riots, he had called for a jihad against the KNIL in a fierce speech. Soon after, he was shot dead in his home.

22 See Steijlen and Smeets 2006.

23 These ten provinces were: North Sumatra, Central Sumatra and South Sumatra; West Java, Central Java and East Java; Kalimantan; Sulawesi; the Moluccas and the Lesser Sunda Islands. Yogyakarta and Jakarta became special areas.

24 The new constitution was of a provisional nature because it was only after general elections had been held that a new parliament could draw up a definitive constitution.

provided he called new elections within 30 days. Otherwise, the position of president was mainly ceremonial in nature.

Pending new elections, the provisional parliament was composed of members of the existing parliaments of the RIS (129) and the former state of Pasundan (19), the senate of the RIS (29), the Working Committee of the KNIP (46) and the Supreme Advisory Council of the Republic in Yogyakarta (13), totalling 236 members. The conservative and federalist senate was abolished.

On 17 August 1950, Indonesia celebrated its fifth anniversary of independence and the establishment of a unitary state.²⁵ Sukarno's speech was therefore entitled 'From Sabang to Merauke'.²⁶ Indonesia was, however, not quite complete because Irian Barat was still missing. On this matter, Sukarno remarked: 'We can only recognize the *de facto* control of the Netherlands over Irian Barat for this year. If we don't reach an agreement before the end of the year, there will be a major conflict. We will continue to fight for Irian Barat to return to the bosom of the Indonesian motherland.'²⁷

In December of that year, talks on the issue of Irian Barat took place in The Hague between Dutch and Indonesian government delegations. It soon became clear that the Netherlands had absolutely no intention of adhering to the deal it had made to reach an agreement within a year. Prime Minister Drees was furious that Indonesia had not kept to the agreements of the Round Table Conference by destroying the federation. As a sign that the Netherlands wanted to remain in 'New Guinea' for the time being, a Dutch governor was appointed, a multi-year budget was drawn up and a new currency was introduced. Not only was there much to be done in developing the area, there was also a large amount of precious raw materials waiting to be extracted.

On 22 August, the *formateur* Natsir presented the new government he would be leading. The new cabinet had a social-democratic streak and was staffed with pragmatic ministers, just like the Hatta cabinet. The government was supported by the Masyumi (the largest party in parliament), the PSI and a number of smaller, predominantly Christian parties, which together accounted for a majority of 127 seats. The government coalition relied on the middle class, while the opposition could count on a large following among

25 More than a month later, on 28 September, Indonesia's international recognition was sealed by its accession to the United Nations.

26 Sabang and Merauke are located on the westernmost and easternmost points of the country respectively.

27 Anak Agung Gde Agung 1996: 792–3.

the great mass of small farmers and workers. The opposition was led by the PNI, which had not wanted to participate in the governing coalition because it was not offered enough ministerial posts, and a leftist bloc including the new PKI which had opted for participation in the parliamentary democracy.

The old PKI had been wiped out by the suppression of the communist uprising in September 1948. Another left-wing party, the Partai Murba which was affiliated with Tan Malaka, had barely had a chance to develop and became effectively leaderless after the death of their legendary leader. During the second Dutch attack on Yogyakarta, many communists had taken part in the fight against the Dutch and had thereby built up some political credit, which led to the lifting of the ban on the PKI in early February 1950. Alimin, the PKI veteran who had survived all the storms, condemned Musso's rebellion. In July, Aidit and Lukman, who represented a younger generation of party leaders and who had been in hiding since December 1948, began to appear in public again and took over the leadership of the party. They in turn condemned Alimin, arguing that the uprising in Madiun was the result of a provocation to which Musso was forced to respond by means of force. Under the leadership of Aidit and Lukman, the PKI made a new start, adopting the strategic precept of loyalty to Sukarno.

Despite the establishment of the new unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia, the violence had not come to an end. Civil war raged in West Java, where Kartosuwirjo, as president of the Negara Islam Indonesia, demanded that Islam become the guiding principle of the Republic of Indonesia. Towards the end of 1950, Alex Kawilarang was appointed military commander of West Java following his successful actions in South Sulawesi and the South Moluccas, but this did not mean that an end to the conflict was anywhere in sight.²⁸

In South Sulawesi, the guerrilla war led by Kahar Muzakkar had also still not been resolved. The Natsir cabinet promised Kahar Muzakkar an amnesty and was prepared to include his men in the TNI (as the national army was once again called). But when it turned out that they would be placed in the vaguely defined and inactive National Reserve, Kahar Muzakkar lost interest and took up arms again.²⁹ In the South Moluccas, the RMS had still not been defeated definitively because the fugitive Soumokil remained somewhere on the island of Seram.

28 Kartosuwirjo was captured in 1962, sentenced to death and executed.

29 Kahar Muzakkar founded his own state in the mountainous region of South Sulawesi and joined the Darul Islam movement in 1955. In February 1965, he was killed in clashes with Indonesian troops.

A much more general security problem was posed by the thousands of soldiers and members of militias who were looking for a new life after independence but found it difficult to let go of the status they had grown so attached to. Accustomed to violence, they found it extremely challenging to return to a peacetime society.

The fighting in Makassar inspired freed guerrilla fighters in Bali to take revenge on the feudal noble leaders who had imprisoned them in 1946 and 1947. In the early 1950s, they murdered and kidnapped people all across Bali who had collaborated with the Dutch. In East Sumatra, the fighting between autonomous militias and the TNI continued. And the same situation was playing itself out in Central Java, where members of left-wing militias were active in the Merbabu and Merapi Mountains.

East Java in particular became the epitome of lawlessness.³⁰ The military state of emergency was still in force here, and the military governor Sungkono was by far the most powerful man. Like a true warlord, he had combined military power with administrative influence and built up a large economic power base. He controlled plantations and export companies, and maintained relations with the underworld of Surabaya. His staff members enriched themselves through corrupt practices. With Sudirman's death in the early 1950s, Sungkono lost his patron and was increasingly beleaguered as demonstration after demonstration was held against the corrupt military regime under the slogan '*Hapuskanlah Pemerintah Militer*' ('Down with the military regime'). In early June, Sungkono was honourably discharged and promoted to the defence ministry, where he became 'general adviser'. His chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Suwondo, was appointed governor of the military academy.

In early September, military rule in East Java was abolished, but this did not resolve the problems. In May, there were still 75,000 soldiers in service, 40,000 of whom were armed. Out of a sense of loyalty to his men, Sungkono had long ensured they would not be demobilised, but eventually 30,000 soldiers were discharged from active service, and came away feeling as though they had been discarded and stripped of their identity. The same fate befell the federal Tjakra regiment of Madura, which was to have been formally included in the APRIS but was rejected by the APRIS leadership. Another group that suddenly found themselves out on the streets was the demobilised KNIL soldiers. Some of them formed new militias with names like 'Gadjah Merah' (Red Elephant) and 'Andjing Gila' (Mad Dogs); they were hired to guard plantations and tobacco barns, but also sought revenge against their old enemies of the TNI.

The distinction between law enforcement and crime became completely blurred in this period in which violence was everywhere and security was a scarce commodity. This was true for all of Java. In Jakarta, for example, Imam Sjafei, a former leader of a *laskar* that had been incorporated into the TNI, returned in 1945 to his old home base in Jakarta's Senen district, where he combined his criminal and security-related activities with his efforts to mobilise the masses for political purposes.³¹

Apart from demobilised soldiers, the tens of thousands of members of the countless autonomous militias that had fought in the war posed an almost insoluble problem. They had returned to society but felt far from welcome there. They had lost their status as heroic fighters, and the fighting had left them with little education and no employable skills, while the one thing they were good at had suddenly fallen into the stench of criminality. The government did its best to provide training for these young men, but by 1953 only 30,000 had benefited from it. Frustrated, many joined new militias such as the Barisan Sakit Hati (Group of the Grieved), who also sought work in the market of prestige and violence.

Violence was a brutal and explosive by-product of the 1940s that had seriously infected society. This was illustrated by the way in which the writer Y.B. Mangunwijaya described a festive gathering held in Malang in 1950 to honour guerrilla fighters who had returned from the mountains. When they were received there as heroes, their leader Major Isman spoke.

'Please don't praise us as heroes,' he said. 'We are not heroes, we were criminals, we killed [our own] people, we raided and burned their houses. We are still young, but our hands are stained with blood. Yes, we acted on behalf of the independence of the Republic of Indonesia. But we were murderers. Help us. Don't treat us like criminals, but give us the chance to become normal people again, ordinary citizens in society, to build our country.'³²

31 Cribb 1991: 183.

32 Tota 1985; Khudori 2001; see also *NRC Handelsblad*, 4 November 2016.

Epilogue

The Indonesian revolution was a dangerous and unpredictable process. While it was certainly the revolutionaries who made the revolution, it was the revolution that made many more people into revolutionaries. The leaders of the revolution faced the immense task of channelling this eruption of energy towards victory.

When Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed Indonesia's independence on 17 August 1945, the Republic did not count for much. It had no party cadre, hardly any administrative foundation and no army. What it did have was many undisciplined groups of fighters whose actions threatened to undermine the Republic's credibility on the world stage. Internationally there was sympathy but as yet no support. And the Republic not only faced the task of fighting the British and the Dutch, it also had to surmount several major internal crises. It was therefore nothing short of a miracle that five years later the Republic was able to celebrate the creation of a unitary state.

Personal authority in times of crisis

Due to the weak institutional basis of the Republic and the attitude taken by the Netherlands, it was completely unpredictable as to how the conflict would play out. The trajectory of the revolution was not governed by the unfolding of impersonal and unstoppable social processes; on the contrary, it was primarily specific people and coincidences that determined the course of events in the struggle for independence. Moreover, there was considerable scope for individuals to take action, the consequences of which they often could not foresee. The revolutionary process involved myriad individuals and organisations, military units and armed groups, local and national politicians; it encompassed international diplomacy, idealism and opportunism, patriotism and banditry, heroes and cowards, luck and chance, vigilance and errors. In a complicated dynamic, all of this culminated miraculously in victory for the Republic. This description of the revolutionary process is at odds with Indonesia's later national conceptualisation of the war of independence in which the myth of a shared revolutionary rhetoric holds sway, along with the myths of the united *pemuda* as the driving force of the revolution and the heroic role of the military as saviours of the revolution.¹

1 Poeze 2007: 2003.

In such an interplay of forces, much depended on the personal sway of the leaders. A handful of key figures determined the precarious outcome of the serious crises faced by the Republic. Two people – Sukarno with his great charisma, and Hatta the steady negotiator – increasingly took on pivotal roles. They survived clashes with the social democrat Sjahrir, the communists Amir Sjarifuddin and Musso, and the leftist radical Tan Malaka. In the relationship between civilian leaders and the powerful but divided military, the former eventually retained the upper hand. Nasution gave his support to the civilian leaders, but Sudirman's attitude was sometimes unpredictable, and the wayward Sungkono went his own way in East Java. Finally, there was the federal leader Anak Agung Gde Agung, who came to the aid of the Republic at the decisive moment.

Even before independence was declared, the first crisis occurred when Sukarno and Hatta were kidnapped by impatient *pemuda*. In a chaotic situation, in which it was unclear how Japanese troops would react, Indonesia proclaimed its independence. It was Sukarno and Hatta who managed to calm tempers and prevent a Japanese military intervention. Shortly thereafter, the second crisis arose when *pemuda* organised a meeting on Jakarta's Ikada Square on 19 September against the explicit ban of the Japanese authorities. This time it was Sukarno who brought the full force of his authority to bear by sending the crowd home, preventing the Japanese from intervening and thereby establishing his authority. In November 1945, however, Republican leaders failed to bring the *pemuda* under control in their battle against the British in Surabaya. They did manage to allow the evacuation of European internees to take place; if they had failed to do so, the Republic's international image would have been severely damaged.

No sooner had Republican leaders extinguished that fire than they had to deal with a left-wing opposition movement that wanted to take power under the leadership of Tan Malaka. However, at a meeting of the provisional parliament in Solo in March 1946, Sukarno deftly broke up the opposition. The subsequent arrest of Tan Malaka and his supporters by youths who wanted to make a difference and the performance of spontaneous actions was characteristic of the *ad hoc* nature of politics in the Republic. Not long thereafter, in July 1946, a new crisis arose – a takeover attempt by the military that almost succeeded – which most likely had the support of Sudirman. With more luck than wisdom and thanks to a lack of coordination on the military side, Sukarno and Hatta, together with Amir Sjarifuddin, managed to avert the danger. In March 1947, Hatta had to throw his full weight behind the meeting of the Republican parliament in Malang to convince them to approve the Linggadjati Agreement. A rejection by the parliament would

have given the Dutch free rein to intervene militarily, while the Republic would no longer have been able to count on international support.

The biggest test of strength took place in September 1948, when an internal military conflict coincided with an attempt by communist leaders to take power. It was a civil war in which Sukarno and Hatta uncompromisingly went on the counterattack, and troops led by Nasution and Colonel Sungkono managed, with great effort, to defeat the opponent after a full two months of fighting. If a communist regime had come to power, the Dutch could have seen it as a license to implement Lieutenant General Spoor's plans, and they would have been backed by the United States. Indeed, L.J.M. Beel, the highest Dutch representative in Jakarta, alluded to just such a scenario. Under a communist regime, the troops of Nasution and Kartosuwirjo would probably have started a guerrilla war against Musso's rule, possibly followed by a US supported Dutch military intervention. Under these circumstances the Republic would most certainly have collapsed.

In December 1948 and March 1949, Anak Agung Gde Agung took a decisive step by siding with the Republic on behalf of the federal states. And in August 1949, Sukarno and Nasution together managed to persuade Sudirman to agree to negotiations with the Netherlands.

The last critical phase of the war of independence took place in early 1949 when the political leaders of the Republic were imprisoned, leaving the armed forces – regular troops and militias – with the task of halting the Dutch military advance. The battle, which was mainly fought in East Java, proved that Sudirman's presence was important but that Sungkono's leadership was the deciding factor. While the revolution at its outset had been propelled forward by the enthusiasm of the *pemuda*, the bloody end of the war was marked by the determination of countless young fighters who risked their lives in battles against the Dutch troops.

In each of these critical moments, events could have led to a different outcome, but time and again the Republican leaders managed to safeguard the interests of the Republic. Sukarno played the leading role, opting in each crisis for a moderate solution wherever possible and gaining authority each time. In this way, Sukarno was able to transform himself from a figure compromised by his collaboration with the Japanese occupiers into the undisputed leader of the Republic.

Winners and losers

The revolution ultimately brought about a change of regime, which took place in two steps. First, at the end of 1949, independence was achieved at

the negotiating table, with Hatta making painful concessions for pragmatic reasons. The following year, the struggle was completed with the creation of the unitary state. In the process, however, state formation won out over efforts to also bring about a social revolution, which were brutally suppressed.

The winners of the revolution were the secular political leaders and the military leadership of the Republic. The relationship between these two groups nonetheless remained strained. Nasution and his colleagues blamed the political leaders for surrendering in December 1948. From the ensuing guerrilla war that unfolded in 1949, military leaders drew the conclusion that it was ultimately the armed forces that had won the battle. And it was from this conclusion that they would in subsequent years, derive their right to continue to watch over national unity as they saw fit.

The war of independence had many losers – not least, of course, the Netherlands, which had to give up its colony. Hilmar Farid rightly points out that the decision of the Netherlands to send troops to Indonesia in 1945 laid the basis for acts of extreme violence that took the lives of an estimated 150,000 Indonesians.² Attempts by the Netherlands to have the process of decolonisation take place gradually under its own supervision failed. As a poor consolation, the Netherlands was allowed to keep Irian Barat (New Guinea) for a while and was able to obtain financial and economic concessions from Indonesia. But this also meant that the Dutch lost the last vestiges of any goodwill it had from its former colony. It would be years before the Netherlands re-established ties with Indonesia. With the dismantling of the federal state, the traditional Indonesian nobility, which had been part of the colonial administration based on indirect rule, also lost much of its power.

The revolution had brought people closer together socially. Old hierarchical differences were no longer self-evident – something that was reflected in a new egalitarian language – and leaders had to prove themselves by being concerned about their people. Merdeka offered the lower classes hope for a better future, and trade unions and left-wing parties seemed to seize this opportunity. But in the end, nothing came of these ambitions.

The big losers were the left-wing leaders, who had tried not only to make the revolution a struggle for independence but also to bring about a social upheaval. Subardjo – an opportunist who was at times a communist, an admirer of Japan and a supporter of Tan Malaka – seemed to have the unspoken wish to become president himself, but he was the first to disappear from the scene. He was followed by Tan Malaka, who at the beginning of the revolution missed a number of opportunities to play a significant role in the revolution,

2 Farid 2022: 488.

while his leftist movement Persatuan Perdjjuangan fell apart due to internal division. He landed in prison in March 1946. It was not until September 1948 that he was released, but by then it was already too late. Surrounding himself with the wrong crowd, his attempt to declare himself president was lost in the tumult. Tan Malaka was a tragic figure who failed to put his revolutionary ideas into action. He was executed and given an anonymous grave. At the other end of the leftist spectrum, Sjahrir was pushed aside because he had made too many concessions to the Dutch. Many considered him too Western, and his constituency was too small to survive in the Republic.

Musso, the legendary communist leader of the 1920s who had returned from Moscow after years of exile, thought he could bend history to his will, but he remained trapped within a Stalinist vision with which he made few friends. He was killed during the civil war in October 1948. Amir Sjarifuddin was also slain in the same war. He was driven by ideas of social justice and was an enigma to many because he combined Christianity and communism. His left-wing FDR eventually lost out to Hatta and Nasution, and he was executed by a military firing squad – to the horror of Sukarno and Hatta, incidentally.

With these leaders eliminated, a broad-based desire for social reform was also lost. Clearly, *merdeka* meant freedom but did not imply social justice.

Among the winners *and* losers were the millions of women who have remained largely invisible, also in this book. Their stories are rarely recorded. For most of them, the period between 1942 and 1950 was one continuous crisis. They had the task of keeping their households – and thus also society – running while their husbands and sons were often away from home, either as *romusha* or as warriors somewhere on a battlefield. The impact of the war on their lives came in the form of a bomb that suddenly fell on their neighbourhood, or enemy patrols that posed danger, or a combat group that they had to provide with food, and the constant shortage of the necessities of life. But apart from all these burdens, they also attained more freedom and autonomy because their husbands were away from home.

Legacies of the revolution

The 1950s were initially characterised by a new optimism and faith in the future. Looking back on that time, the writer Ajip Rosidi said that the future looked ‘bright, radiant, overwhelming’ to him as an 18-year-old boy in the early 1950s. ‘And,’ he added, ‘there was so much of it.’³ Led by the poet Asrul

3 Quote from a workshop in Leiden in 2009 (Schulte Nordholt 2011: 391). See also Lindsay and Liem 2011.

Sani, a group of young writers proclaimed themselves heirs to a world culture in a manifesto that appeared in 1950. Their gaze was outward-looking, and they believed that boundaries were irrelevant. In their opinion, a national culture was not inherited but had to be actively created, with modernity as a source of inspiration.⁴ An expression of this outward and forward-looking optimism was the Asia-Africa Conference held in Bandung in 1955. Sukarno established himself there as one of the leaders of a new movement of non-aligned countries that wanted to extract themselves from the two camps that had formed during the Cold War. The conference inspired African leaders to cast off their colonial regimes.⁵ David Van Reybrouck sees the conference as the apotheosis of the Indonesian Revolution, which in this way acquired global significance.⁶ While this is true, the euphoria was short-lived.

As Farabi Fakhri explains in his brilliant book on Indonesia in the 1950s, the belief in the malleability of society through planning, technology and social engineering as part of a new modern developmental way of thinking.⁷ The state established itself as the engine of modernisation, and the military emerged as the new managers. In this context, modernisation did not prove to be a reliable ally of democracy.

The 1955 elections did not provide a new constitution, and political stagnation ensued. It soon became apparent that the ideals of a new citizenship were not anchored in solid institutions. Many became disillusioned as a result of widespread corruption. Moral decay became a theme in many novels and stories.⁸ An inward-looking nationalism emerged that sought to anchor the nation's identity, within the confines of its national borders, in its own cultural past. In the latter half of the 1950s, the international solidarity expressed at the Bandung Conference was overtaken by events in the Cold War. As in many other countries in the postcolonial world, the political system in Indonesia took an authoritarian turn.

It was within this climate that the new state eradicated the last vestiges of the Dutch-imposed decolonisation. In 1956, Indonesia dissolved its Union with the Netherlands. It also no longer considered itself bound by the agreements of the Round Table Conference and stopped paying off its 'debts' to the

4 Taufik Abdullah 2009: 202; Lindsay and Liem 2011: 10–11.

5 Wildan Sena Utama 2017.

6 Van Reybrouck 2020: 492–501.

7 Farabi Fakhri 2020.

8 See, for example, *Twilight in Jakarta* by Mochtar Lubis from 1963 and *Bericht uit Kebayoran*, a collection of stories by Pramoedya Ananta Toer translated into Dutch (1978).

Netherlands.⁹ In 1957 and 1958, it proceeded to nationalise Dutch companies and to implement a large-scale *indonesianisasi* of the economy in which senior military personnel – in partnership with Chinese entrepreneurs – acquired lucrative positions in companies. These developments spurred tens of thousands of Europeans and Indo-Europeans to migrate to the Netherlands. A much larger number had already done so earlier.¹⁰

An issue that was not resolved during the Round Table Conference, nor during follow-up consultations, concerned the status of Irian Barat. The Netherlands made no plans to leave, while Indonesia increased the pressure to annex this last part of the Dutch East Indies. In 1960, Indonesia severed its diplomatic ties with the Netherlands, after which Indonesian soldiers infiltrated Irian Barat. In 1962, the Netherlands gave up its last colony in Asia under international pressure, especially from the United States, and due to the threat of an escalating military conflict.

The status of Irian Barat, which by this time had been renamed Irian Jaya, remained controversial. It was agreed that the people of the region could decide their future under the supervision of the United Nations. The ‘referendum’ held in 1969 was, however, a farce. Under pressure from Indonesian authorities, a group of a thousand selected leaders argued in favour of joining Indonesia. Many in Irian Jaya felt betrayed by the Netherlands, the United Nations and Indonesia.¹¹

Two major domestic conflicts also emerged from the revolution. In 1957, uprisings broke out in Sumatra, Sulawesi and Kalimantan against the central government in Java. They were led by disgruntled soldiers and fuelled by dissatisfaction with the way ‘Java’ took control of the national economy at the expense of all the other areas. In 1958, a counter-government was established in Sumatra under the leadership of Sjafruddin Prawiranegara. One factor that contributed to the rebellion was the desire for more regional autonomy, a desire that had taken shape in the federation but was given little space within the unitary state. Military intervention swiftly put an end to the uprisings. General Nasution managed to strengthen his position during this conflict by eliminating many of his rivals.

9 The debts were already 90% paid off (Lindblad 2008: 179).

10 In total, more than half a million Europeans and Indo-Europeans migrated to the Netherlands between 1945 and 1965. Many Indo-Europeans did not feel welcome in the Netherlands because the Dutch were not at all enthusiastic about their arrival. A great deal has already been written on this subject, which is beyond the scope of this study. See, among others, Bosma 2009; Van Leeuwen 2008; De Vries 2009.

11 Vlasblom 2019.

A second conflict took place in West Java but also branched out to Aceh and South Sulawesi. In West Java, Darul Islam's struggle against the central government in Jakarta was still in full swing. In 1959, the leader of Darul Islam, Kartosuwirjo, formed an alliance with Islamic resistance leaders in Aceh and South Sulawesi. It was not until 1962 that government forces succeeded in arresting Kartosuwirjo. He was sentenced to death, and after his execution, the Darul Islam movement fell apart.

An important legacy of the revolution – and one with which we closed the last chapter of this book – was the violence of revolutionary militias that remained active after independence.¹² Until well into the 1950s, the reintegration of revolutionary fighters into society remained problematic. Many fighters were disillusioned, did not feel welcome, and were unable to connect with 'normal' social life. A number of films from this period, including *Lewat Djam Malam* (After the Curfew) by Usmar Ismail from 1955, depict this problem in the most penetrating manner. Other revolutionary fighters joined criminal gangs that made society unsafe. In an attempt to quell the violence of these gangs, the army and police formed their own civilian militias to ensure that their villages were safe. These groups, in turn, gained a certain degree of autonomy. Between 1951 and 1956, the army, police and civilian militias in Central Java succeeded in curbing the violence of criminal militias. This work also laid the foundations for continued cooperation between the armed forces and militias, with the former delegating the perpetration of violence to the latter in times of political crisis. When the Communist Party (PKI) began to establish itself as a formidable competitor to both Islamic parties and the army after its strong showing in the 1955 elections, the alliance between military and militias was deployed as a counterweight to the PKI.

As a result of the regional uprisings, the political impasse in Jakarta and the increasing popularity of the PKI, President Sukarno was persuaded by General Nasution to declare martial law in 1957 and to dismiss parliament. Clearly, national unity was more important than democracy in Indonesia at that time. Sukarno introduced what he called Guided Democracy (*Demokrasi Terpimpin*), an authoritarian system in which a limited number of political parties – including the PKI – and representatives of 'functional groups' represented society. In the end, it was the president who spoke for the people.

The revolution had now been definitively won by the state, but that did not mean that the desire for social change had disappeared. In November 1956,

12 For more on the continuity of militia violence, see Schulte Nordholt 2002 and Mudhoffir 2021.

just before his resignation, Vice President Hatta wondered whether the revolution meant only the 'freedom to oppress, inequality and strife, and the freedom to live in poverty and misery.'¹³ The PKI and its associated trade unions were an important force seeking social and economic reforms and established themselves as a cultural movement, while at the other end of the spectrum, an anti-communist bloc of soldiers and Muslim organisations emerged. The president had to maintain a precarious balance between these two sides. From as early as 1926, Sukarno had advocated a fusion of nationalism, Islam and communism,¹⁴ and this was the moment he had to somehow put it into practice. In an atmosphere of increasing polarisation and economic decline, the PKI focused on class struggle, something that had not been possible during the revolution. All this led to a shadowy coup attempt by communist leaders on 30 September 1965, after which the army – led by General Suharto and supported by Islamic militias – committed mass murder on an unprecedented scale of anyone suspected of being left-wing. It echoed what had happened in September 1948, but the scale of the violence and the death toll were many times greater. The army had learned that planning and social engineering could also be used to systematically remove its enemies from society. Thus, the revolution eventually culminated in a counter-revolution in which left-wing groups and civilian politicians were defeated and the military took power. In his novel *Durga Umaji*, the writer Mangunwijaya described this nightmare of violence in an inimitable way.¹⁵

Decolonisation in the Netherlands

And what about the Netherlands? Did a decolonisation process also take place there? For a long time, this did not seem to be the case. In the 1950s, the Dutch preferred to put their traumatic loss of the Dutch East Indies behind them as quickly as possible. One report that came out which was critical of the Dutch military violence in its former colony disappeared in a desk drawer in The Hague. The Dutch government could not bring it upon itself to invite President Sukarno for a state visit and to treat him as an equal.¹⁶

In 1963, diplomatic relations were formally restored, but it was not until the end of the 1960s that ties with Indonesia were strengthened. The new relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia culminated in

13 In Raben 2007: 27.

14 See Chapter 1.

15 Mangunwijaya 1985.

16 See Van der Kaay 2022.

reciprocal state visits in 1970 and 1971. Development aid became the core of the new relationship. The Netherlands' first ever minister of development cooperation, Theo Bot, played a crucial role in this. He was the founder of an international consortium chaired by the Netherlands that channelled international aid to Indonesia from 1967 to 1992. The chairmanship placed the Netherlands in a delicate position. As a small country, it had little to say within the consortium, and as a former coloniser, it had little room to address human rights violations.

Dutch development policy in Indonesia was an echo of its Ethical Policy from the beginning of the century. Indonesia now had to deal with the expert expat who did not always manage to suppress a certain sense of superiority, a demeanour that stood in the way of building an equal relationship. Between 1967 and 1992, the Netherlands provided more than 5 billion dollars in aid, slightly more than it had recovered from Indonesia in the 1950s. Investments were also made in the area of scientific cooperation.

Under Development Minister Jan Pronk (1973–1977 and 1989–1998), the Netherlands' development policy was politicised and human rights violations were repeatedly raised. By the 1990s, bilateral relations had changed dramatically without The Hague being fully aware of it. In the 1970s, Indonesia was at the receiving end; but 20 years later, it was less in need of help and much more self-assured. This change became clear in early 1992 when President Suharto, irritated by Minister Pronk's repeated interventions and criticism of the actions of Indonesian soldiers in East Timor, withdrew from the consortium founded by the Netherlands. His decision found broad support within Indonesian society.

A difficult period of reorientation followed, one that was characterised by caution and the absence of a clear vision. The state visit made by Queen Beatrix in 1995 was typical in this regard. She was invited to attend the fiftieth anniversary of the Republic on 17 August, but this led to protests by war veterans in the Netherlands. Moreover, the Dutch government was unwilling to symbolically recognise 17 August 1945 as the beginning of the Republic with the presence of the Queen. The state visit therefore began a few days after 17 August and ended in failure, especially because the Netherlands could not bring itself to unequivocally condemn the violence of its colonial past.

After the fall of President Suharto, the aid relationship with the Netherlands was restored but was placed in a multilateral framework. This structure steered the relationship between the two countries into safer waters, with Minister of Foreign Affairs Ben Bot becoming the first Dutch minister to attend the celebration of Indonesian independence in Jakarta on

17 August 2005. This gesture, as well as his statement that the Netherlands had been 'on the wrong side of history' during decolonisation, were much appreciated on the Indonesian side. The visit marked an important step towards the consummation of decolonisation.¹⁷

It was to take another 15 years, however, for the Netherlands to acknowledge the violence that Dutch soldiers inflicted during the Indonesian war of independence. During a state visit in 2020, King Willem-Alexander publicly apologised for this in Jakarta. The fact that this visit took place in March and nowhere near the 17th of August was characteristic of the changing relationship between the two countries: Indonesia no longer considers the Dutch presence on that day relevant.

In the meantime, the Netherlands is gradually slipping further out of sight in Indonesia. For the Dutch, Indonesia is mainly a holiday destination and a country where many families have a cherished or hidden past.

17 Taken from Oostindie and Schulte Nordholt 2006: 574–5.

Biographical Sketches of Some of the Main Characters

Sukarno (1901–1970), born in Surabaya, was the son of a schoolteacher. As a member of the lower nobility, he was allowed to use the title *raden*. He was educated at a village school, a European Primary School and Higher Secondary Education (*Hogere Burgerschool*, HBS), after which he attended the Technical College in Bandung where he graduated as an architect in 1926. He did not practice his profession for very long, however, as he ended up plunging into politics. He managed to gather a large following by virtue of his oratory talent, which he utilised to advocate a radical policy centring on mass action and non-cooperation with the colonial ruler. This effort eventually led to him being tried in court, along with three associates, in August 1930. Sukarno was sentenced to four years in prison but was released early, in December 1931. Sukarno resumed his protest actions and, in August 1933, was once again arrested. This time there was no trial, as the general sentiment among the Dutch authorities was for harsh repression which they believed was most effectively meted out by exile to Boven Digul. Faced with this prospect, Sukarno was driven to desperation. He wrote four letters to the Dutch colonial government in early 1934 promising to withdraw from the nationalist movement in exchange for being exempted from exile. His letters fell on deaf ears, however; he was exiled indefinitely to Flores and in 1938 was transferred to Bengkulu. During his trial and imprisonment, he was supported by a number of Dutch social democrats, one of whom was J.E. Stokvis, a member of the *Volksraad* (People's Council). In 1931, Stokvis proposed to the leadership of the Dutch labour party, the *Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij* (SDAP), that Sukarno be nominated as a candidate for the Dutch House of Representatives, but the plan floundered.

When the Netherlands was invaded and occupied by Germany in 1940, Sukarno declared his solidarity with the Dutch regime. But when the Japanese threat became real, the Netherlands did not seize its chance to cooperate with the nationalist movement. Sukarno and Hatta then opted to cooperate with Japan, seeing it as the most promising route to independence for Indonesia. Their collaboration with the Japanese sometimes went quite far, and after 1945 this generated strong criticism even among Indonesians. The Netherlands considered Sukarno and Hatta to be collaborators with Japan, but such labelling was rather narrow-minded. For why would Sukarno

and Hatta and many others be loyal to a government that had exiled them for eight years without a trial?

Sukarno became a key player in a revolution in which his voice became increasingly important as time went on. It was his voice that also enabled the Republic to overcome successive crises, which was nothing short of a miracle. In the mid-1950s, as Indonesia fell into a steady political and economic decline, Sukarno was the key figure trying to maintain a precarious balance between the driving forces in the country: soldiers, Muslims and communists. The political parties had been marginalised. Veterans of the war of independence calling themselves Angkatan 45 (the Generation of 1945), led by Chaerul Saleh, emerged as a new power factor. They were an unwanted threat to both soldiers and communists, but Sukarno saw them as a new and welcome player in the struggle for power. The outcome of this power struggle ultimately led to the establishment of a military regime in October 1965 following a number of chaotic days. In 1966, Sukarno was removed from office by General Suharto, and he spent the last years of his life in domestic exile.

Mohammad Hatta (1902–1980), of Minangkabau descent, was born in Bukittinggi to an *ulama* who died when Mohammad was still a baby. He was raised by his wealthy, religious family. He attended a European Primary School, a lower secondary school and a vocational secondary school. Thanks to a Dutch scholarship and support from his family, in 1921 he was able to enrol at the Rotterdam School of Economics to study economics. Before long, his studies became subordinated to the political activities that he undertook as leader of the Indonesian students in the Netherlands. From 1926 to 1930, Hatta was president of their association, Perhimpunan Indonesia, and editor of its magazine *Indonesia Merdeka*. At the time, it was more often the case that an Indonesian would mould his identity in the Netherlands than in his home country. It is therefore not without reason that people consider Leiden to be the birthplace of Indonesian independence. In 1932, Hatta became a doctoral student and returned to Indonesia. He had gained renown as a result of the trial that had been held against him in the Netherlands in 1927, which had ended in his acquittal. (A similar trial against Sukarno in the Dutch East Indies had resulted in four years in prison, but this was apparently no reason for the colonial government to reflect on the difference in case law in the Netherlands and the East Indies.) Hatta also established contacts with students from other colonial territories. He worked for some time with communists who, on behalf of the Comintern, were trying to get a grip on the anti-imperialist movement, but Hatta drew a line at some point and proved

thereafter to be a steadfast anti-communist, even though others he dealt with were more sympathetic to Moscow. When Hatta returned to Indonesia, the Perhimpunan Indonesia was taken over by communist students and he was expelled from his own brainchild. In Indonesia, Hatta was unable to escape repression: he was arrested in February 1934 and exiled to Boven Digul together with Sjahrir. After a year, he was moved to the idyllic island of Banda, as the colonial authorities deemed imprisonment in the unhealthy Digul alongside all the communists there to be too tough for intellectual nationalists. In 1934 another attempt was made to elect an Indonesian to the Dutch House of Representatives. Hatta was asked to run for office by the Independent Socialist Party (Onafhankelijke Socialistische Partij, OSP), a radical offshoot of the SDAP to which many of Hatta's comrades-in-arms had gravitated. The irony of his exile to the Netherlands was that Hatta now enjoyed the right to freedom of speech. Although Hatta was sympathetic to the idea of standing for election, Sukarno immediately protested vehemently and considered it a violation of the principle of non-cooperation that the nationalists were meant to adhere to. Hatta refuted this, arguing that the House of Representatives was a body independently elected by the entire population, while the Volksraad was only a colonial organ. Hatta nonetheless eventually stood down, and the OSP did not win a single seat. On the island of Banda, Hatta had plenty of time to delve into his books. His years of exile there came to an end in 1942 with the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies. The vague promises made by the Japanese, as well as Sukarno and Hatta's own optimistic expectations, led the two to agree to cooperate with Japan. After the defeat of the Japanese in 1945, Sukarno and Hatta worked closely together in the struggle for independence. They had few disagreements and complemented each other well, proving that the cultural differences between Java (Sukarno's birthplace) and Sumatra (Hatta's birthplace) could be overcome. Hatta's power grew when he took on the positions of both prime minister and defence minister in early 1948. He played a crucial role at the Round Table Conference held in The Hague in the autumn of 1949. But in independent Indonesia, his position as vice president was increasingly hollowed out. By December 1956, Hatta had had enough and therefore resigned. He spoke out against the government from the sidelines until Sukarno put him under house arrest. After 1965, he became a highly regarded elder statesman who was listened to politely. Over his lifetime, Hatta wrote many books: his collected works consist of seven volumes (1998–2001). His memoirs remain unfinished, and the parts that were completed show clear signs of his gradually failing memory. There is as yet no full-fledged biography of Hatta.

Sutan Sjahrir (1909–1966) was of Minangkabau descent and was born in Bukittinggi, where his father belonged to the elite as a chief prosecutor. Sjahrir went to Dutch schools, and with a diploma from the General Secondary School in Bandung in hand, he left for the Netherlands in 1929 to study law. Before leaving, he had already been active in nationalist youth organisations; once in the Netherlands he continued his anti-colonial agitation in close collaboration with Mohammad Hatta, who had been studying in the Netherlands since 1921 and was politically active as leader of the Perhimpunan Indonesia. Sjahrir's study soon became secondary to his political work. After consulting with Hatta, he returned to Indonesia in 1932. He became active in the Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia (PNI Baru), which Hatta also joined after his return. Ideologically, the PNI Baru was no different from the Partai Indonesia (Partindo) founded by Sukarno. They shared key core principles such as the notion of self-help and non-cooperation with the colonial system. In its revolutionary activity, the PNI Baru emphasised raising nationalist consciousness through educational training as opposed to the mass action advocated by Sukarno. Both tactics led to a dead end: in February 1934, Sjahrir and Hatta were arrested, thereby condemning the PNI Baru to impotence. Earlier, Sukarno and his party Partindo had met the same fate. Sjahrir and Hatta were exiled to Boven Digul. After a year they were transferred to Banda, where they spent their days in a kind of golden cage, without the right to a trial, until the Japanese attacked the archipelago. Sjahrir wrote letters to his sweetheart, Maria Duchâteau, whom he was prevented from marrying by the colonial government. These letters have been preserved, with a selection appearing in 2021 under the title *Wissel op de toekomst: Brieven van de Indonesische nationalist aan zijn Nederlandse geliefde* (A change for the future: Letters from the Indonesian nationalist to his Dutch lover). The letters are unique documents about the daily life and spiritual development of a very gifted young man. Sjahrir and Hatta were liberated by the Japanese in 1942. During the Japanese occupation, Sjahrir remained neutral, keeping his distance from the occupier but not joining the resistance as Amir Sjarifuddin did. He formed a circle of sympathisers around him who committed themselves to Sjahrir as a person and as a political leader after the proclamation of independence. He became prime minister of three successive cabinets from November 1945 to June 1947, at which point his political credit had been exhausted. Sjahrir was subsequently deployed as a traveling ambassador of the Republic. In February 1948, Sjahrir founded the Partai Sosialis Indonesia (PSI), which reflected his long-time social-democratic ideas as well as his emphasis on education and the development of a cadre. In the turbulent 1950s, the PSI

came under increasing threat as a result of the PKI's constant propaganda measures. Sukarno bowed to the interests of the PKI, and in 1962 the PSI was banned and Sjahrir imprisoned. He was allowed to leave for Switzerland for medical treatment and died in a hospital in Zurich shortly after the fall of Sukarno. Buried in Jakarta with great honours, he was proclaimed a national hero ten days after his death. But it was too late to make up for Sjahrir's substandard treatment during his lifetime.

Amir Sjarifuddin Harahap (1907–1948) was born in Medan into a wealthy Batak family but chose not to use the family name Harahap nor his aristocratic title. An intelligent young man, Amir attended the European Primary School and, at the insistence of his nephew who had obtained his doctorate in Leiden and had become a member of the People's Council, left for the Netherlands in 1921, graduating from secondary school there in 1927. He did not follow in his nephew's footsteps to continue his studies in Leiden but instead enrolled at the Batavia Law School. Almost immediately, Amir became involved in the nationalist movement. He played an important role in the student congress, where the Youth Oath – 'Indonesia as one country, one people and one language' – was taken in 1928. In his private life, his conversion from Islam to Protestantism was startling. It was the result of a period of deep reflection in which some prominent Dutch Protestants played a role. His activities as a board member of Partindo and as a prolific journalist increasingly attracted the attention of the colonial police. He was arrested and sentenced to one and a half years in prison in Bandung (1933–1935). From this experience of colonial repression, Amir drew the conclusion that non-cooperation as a means of struggle was a dead end – a conclusion that led to the founding of the Gerindo party in 1937. Amir became the party's president in 1939. The Gerindo became the receptacle for all radicals, with input from communists as well. Gerindo's opposition to fascism aligned with the communist Popular Front policy, which had been prescribed by the Stalinist Soviet Union as a guideline for action from 1935 after the seventh Comintern Congress. Amir claimed in 1948 that he had been a communist since 1935, a statement that was received with much disbelief. But if we were to interpret this statement as Amir's sympathy for the anti-fascist movement that was meant to bring all the democratic forces together, then it sounds accurate. Amir could not have become a formal member of the PKI, however, since the PKI had been shut down since 1926. An attempt by Musso in 1935–1936 to establish a new PKI during a secret visit to Java was nipped in the bud, resulting in his imprisonment and exile. The Gerindo remained active and tried to evade government repression,

which Amir succeeded in doing until June 1940 when he was arrested. In a surprising turn of events, he was appointed to Van Mook's Department of Economic Affairs in June 1940. The Dutch East Indies government had so much confidence in Amir that, shortly before the Japanese occupation, it entrusted him with 25,000 guilders to set up a resistance movement. He did indeed use this money but was soon arrested by the Japanese police and tortured and sentenced to death. It was only after the intercession of Sukarno and Hatta before the highest army commander that Amir's life was spared. After the Proclamation, Amir was freed from his prison in Malang. Amir and Sjahrir formed an alliance that became increasingly strained, with communism being pitted against social democracy. Sjahrir was let down by his own Partai Sosialis, and in July 1947, Amir took over Sjahrir's position as prime minister. He was the first and only communist prime minister Indonesia has ever known, but his term was not a successful one. Forced to swallow criticism from Musso who had just returned from Moscow, he had no choice but to follow Musso in the communist uprising, which ended in an inglorious defeat for Amir. The Republic never tried him for his involvement in the Madiun Affair. When the Dutch launched their attack in December 1948, the Republican cabinet was divided over what to do with the 11 most prominent prisoners, which included Amir. Four ministers were in favour of having the prisoners executed and four were against, with four abstentions. In the end, Sukarno decided that there was to be no execution. But the military governor Gatot Subroto took no heed of Sukarno's decisions and had the 11 men shot.

Tan Malaka (1894–1949), of Minangkabau descent, received the aristocratic title of *Datuk Tan Malaka* – in accordance with the *adat* rules – through the female line in his family when he left for the Netherlands in 1913. He was proud of his title, as he was proud of his Minangkabau identity. But as a revolutionary, it would of course not do for him to bear a title of nobility. He did however adopt the name Tan Malaka instead of his birthname Ibrahim. He was admitted to the teacher training college for native teachers in Bukittinggi. A teacher who was impressed by Tan Malaka brought him along on his Dutch leave in 1913 and arranged a place for him at the teacher training college in Haarlem. Tan Malaka obtained his teacher's certificate but failed his final exams. It was in the Netherlands that he first became aware of the injustice inherent in the relationship between the Netherlands and the East Indies. After returning to the archipelago, this feeling was reinforced by his work as a teacher among the plantation workers – the contract coolies – in North Sumatra. Tan Malaka left for Java and in no

time became a member of the PKI as well as the chairman and founder of nationalist schools. He was arrested and given a choice between exile on a distant island and exile from the East Indies. He chose to leave the country. Upon arriving in the Netherlands in May 1922, he was received as a martyr and immediately put on the communist list for parliamentary elections as the first Indonesian candidate ever. But his place turned out to be very low on the list, with little chance of being elected. He then left for Moscow, where he spoke at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. He garnered much applause for his speech in which he advocated cooperation between communism and Islam, but his proposal was not adopted. Tan Malaka then became the Comintern's representative for Southeast Asia with decision-making power over all matters relating to the communist parties in that region. In 1926 his role led to his embroilment in a dispute with Musso and Alimin over plans for a communist insurgency. Dissatisfied with the policy of the PKI and with Soviet doctrines, Tan Malaka broke with Moscow and founded the Partai Republik Indonesia (PARI) in Bangkok in 1927. The party was such a secret that Batavia and Moscow only found out about its existence after many years. In Moscow, the PARI was called a Trotskyist creation, and the colonial government arrested a number of PARI supporters and sent them off to Digul. Tan Malaka lost all contact with Indonesia and was an English teacher at a Chinese school in Singapore. After the Japanese invasion, he returned to Java under the alias Iljas Husein. In the reading room of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences, he wrote his principal work, *Madilog* – an acronym for materialism, dialectics and logic – which was a thick treatise on the adaptation of Marxist teachings to Indonesian conditions. He then worked at a lignite mine in South Banten until the Japanese capitulation. In August 1945, through bad luck, he missed the opportunity to be involved in the proclamation of independence. During the war of independence, he repeatedly challenged the incumbent Republican rulers but ultimately came out the loser in the confrontation, earning him two and a half years in prison without trial. But there was worse to come: in February 1949, an unforeseeable chain of coincidences led to his execution by a second lieutenant of the TNI in a hamlet on the foothills of Mount Wilis. His grave there lay nameless for more than 50 years.

Sudirman (1916–1950) was born in the North Javanese district of Rembang. The year and day of his birth were not recorded and were granted posthumously by the Indonesian government. Sudirman grew up in the household of his uncle, who was *wedana* (district head), to which he also owed the aristocratic title *raden*. This family connection most likely also facilitated

his admission to the Hollandsch-Inlandsche School (HIS), a Dutch school for natives. He then studied at a Muhammadiyah high school and subsequently at a teacher training college, after which he taught at a moderate, modernist Islamic school. During the Japanese occupation, he enlisted as a recruit for the PETA and became battalion commander in Banyumas. His commitment to his subordinates earned him much respect as well as the suspicion of the Japanese, who suspected him of subversive action. They sent him on leave and even considered putting him to death. After the Proclamation, Sudirman became commander of the Republican forces in Banyumas and Kedu. He was successful in the fight against the British and the Japanese in Ambarawa, where he captured a large number of weapons. His prestige led unexpectedly to his election by other commanders as commander-in-chief in November 1945, to which the Republican government and in particular Defence Minister Amir Sjarifuddin were opposed, but had little choice but to accept. Thereafter, Sudirman and Amir continued to have a fundamental difference of opinion: Sudirman wanted an autonomous people's army, while Amir wanted to control the armed forces politically. Sudirman safeguarded his position of autonomy based on his view that the army occupied its own independent position in the struggle, separate from the authority of alternating governments. Sudirman was suspected of being an advocate of a form of government in which the army sets the direction of the country, and a few times the country came close to just such a coup. In September 1948, the commander-in-chief was diagnosed with tuberculosis and from that moment began to steadily weaken. As a result, he was forced to delegate more and more of his tasks to his chief of staff Nasution, whose timely intervention in September 1948 saved the Republic from certain demise. When Yogyakarta was occupied by the Netherlands in December 1948, Sudirman fled to Mount Wilis. He roamed around the mountain, usually in a palanquin, in order to stay out of the hands of Dutch troops. Tan Malaka was also wandering around Mount Wilis at the same time, but they did not run into each other. In early August, Sudirman, Sukarno and Nasution met again in Yogyakarta. Sudirman refused to give his assent to the agreement with the Netherlands on the end of the war. It was only with much drama and tears that he finally went along with the deal. He died in a hospital on 29 January 1950.

Sudirman was popular with his troops, who were inspired by his ascetic way of life and his unyielding commitment to his army as guardian of the revolution. In the few statements that he made – roll calls, newspaper pieces and speeches – that still survive, Sudirman showed his own style of leadership combining Islamic and Javanese virtues. Unfortunately, only

40 pages of such statements have been tracked down, spread out over 17 works. Sudirman rose to the highest rank in the pantheon of Indonesian heroes, becoming a central figure in the history of the army: under his leadership, the army saved the revolution in 1949 when the political leaders were imprisoned. At the military academy, the final year ends with a march of 100 kilometres in the footsteps of Sudirman's palanquin – a spiritual immersion designed to strengthen the *esprit de corps*.

Abdul Haris Nasution (1918–2000), originally a Batak from North Sumatra, went to the Hollandsch-Inlandsche School (HIS) and in 1931 continued his education at the Hollandsch-Inlandsche Teacher Training School in Bukittinggi – the same teacher training school where Tan Malaka had been trained 20 years earlier. After a few years of study, the school – the only secondary education institute on Sumatra – was closed due to budget cuts. Nasution went to Java and obtained his teacher training diploma and a diploma from the General Secondary School (Algemeene Middelbare School) in Bandung. He became a teacher at a private HIS in Bengkalis. It so happened that Sukarno had been exiled there in 1938, where he was allowed to move freely within a prescribed territory. The young teacher Nasution spent a lot of time with the popular leader. Until 1940, Nasution wandered about, always short of money. In 1940, after the German occupation of the Netherlands and with a government that was looking for military reinforcements, he signed up for the Corps Training Reserve Officers (Corps Opleiding Reserve Officieren, COR), which trained Indonesian non-commissioned officers for the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (Koninklijke Nederlands-Indische Leger, KNIL). In 1942, Nasution was sent into battle with the rank of ensign. During the Japanese occupation, Nasution kept a low profile but was involved in the Barisan Pelopor, a fighting corps of radical youth in West Java, where he built up a wide network. After the Proclamation, his star rose quickly. He organised the People's Security Army (Tentara Keamanan Rakyat, TKR) in West Java, becoming chief of staff and then commander of what would come to be called the Siliwangi Division. Nasution managed to transform this division into a strong and effective instrument. Unlike many other divisions, party political motives played no role with the Siliwangi, and Nasution emphasised military professionalism. Nasution supported the government and discovered that a hesitant Sudirman did not always choose to stand by his side. In the Republican leaders' darkest days, it was Nasution's decisiveness and organisational capability that allowed the Republic to survive. After 1950, Nasution became army commander several times but also experienced setbacks, as a result of which he was sidelined. In a period

in which he was unemployed in the early 1950s, he published *Sekitar perang kemerdekaan Indonesia* (On the Indonesian war of independence), a unique reference in 11 thick volumes. On the night of 30 September to 1 October 1965, Nasution was on the list of generals who the perpetrators of a left-wing military coup led by Commander Untung were planning to arrest. Nasution was able to get away in time, but his daughter was killed. During the military takeover that followed the coup attempt, Nasution was marginalised by Suharto and from then on no longer played a significant role in Indonesian politics. He later published another ten-volume autobiography.

Musso (1897–1948), originally from East Java, was a militant leader of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) who intervened at crucial moments and steered his party towards confrontation with the colonial regime in 1926 and with the Republic in 1948. He was active in the PKI at a young age and was influenced by men of renown such as G.A.J. Hazeu, the internal affairs advisor to the colonial government; Henk Sneevliet, who founded the PKI; and Tjokroaminoto, leader of Sarekat Islam, the first mass popular movement in Indonesia. Together with Alimin, his ally for many years, he was active in the fledgling PKI where they clashed with the colonial government and were subjected to a whole arsenal of legal provisions against them. At the end of 1925, the PKI decided to start a rebellion. Tan Malaka, who had been exiled in 1922, was representative of the Comintern in Southeast Asia, and Musso and Alimin were sent to him to get his consent. Tan Malaka was against a rebellion, which he thought would be doomed to fail, but he was surreptitiously bypassed when Musso and Alimin then left for Moscow to obtain approval for a rebellion. They were severely admonished there for having planned a rebellion without prior consent from Moscow, but the course of events in Indonesia was now irreversible. Following the predictable debacle of the uprising in 1926, a bitter feud ensued between the PKI leaders, pitting Musso and Alimin against Tan Malaka. The dispute also erupted among the communist political prisoners in Boven Digul, and later during the revolution. For 20 years, Musso wandered around the Soviet Union and Western Europe, even staying secretly in Diemen, a small town near Amsterdam, for a while. In 1933 he emerged publicly as a candidate for the Dutch House of Representatives for the communist party but was not allowed to take his seat in parliament because he was not a registered Dutch resident. He then went to East Java illegally for half a year to explore the political situation there. In 1948, he reappeared in the Republic, hard-handedly reforming the communist movement and plotting a takeover that began in Madiun in September 1948. The uprising rocked the Republic, and

it took a full two months for the Republic's power to be restored. Discord within communist circles was partly responsible for the Republic's success in thwarting a communist takeover through a divide-and-rule policy. Musso was killed in the bitter battle: found roaming the mountains, he was cornered by Republican soldiers on 31 October but refused to surrender. A gunfight ensued, and he was shot dead. Republican press reports claim that Musso met his end in an outhouse.

Anak Agung Gde Agung (1921–1999) was the eldest son of the Prince of Gianyar in South Bali. Unlike the royal houses of Badung, Tabanan and Klungkung, Gianyar had not resisted the Dutch colonial expansion at the beginning of the twentieth century. In return, the royal house remained in power, albeit under Dutch supervision, and the monarch also managed to hold his own against his greatest enemy, the Cokorda of Ubud. In 1938, the princes of Bali became the most important link in the chain of indirect colonial rule, and Anak Agung's father was 'restored' as prince of Gianyar. He was known as an authoritarian figure but, as a former administration official put it, 'we couldn't fire him right away.' After completing his secondary education in Malang, Anak Agung went to study at the Batavia Law School, but had to abandon his studies in 1941 due to the encroaching war. He married a woman from the aristocratic family of Ubud, thereby provisionally sealing the peace between the rival noble families. In 1943, at the age of 22, he succeeded his father when the old and wayward monarch was exiled to Lombok by the Japanese. When the Revolution broke out in Bali in September 1945, Anak Agung founded his own militia, the Pemuda Pembela Negara, to defend the interests of the royalty against groups of young nationalists. In 1946, Anak Agung participated in the Malino Conference and was involved in the establishment of the State of East Indonesia (Negara Indonesia Timur, NIT). His father-in-law, Tjokorda Sukawati from Ubud, became president and Anak Agung became interior minister. The NIT was plagued by internal conflicts, but this changed when Anak Agung became prime minister in December 1947. He formed a cabinet that had broad support and established himself as the leader of the federal states in all interactions with the Netherlands. He also successfully sought rapprochement with the Republic in Yogyakarta, while his brother represented the interests of the royal elite in Bali. In late 1948 and early 1949, when the Republican leaders were imprisoned, Anak Agung ensured that the federal states sided with the Republic, as a result of which the Netherlands was driven into isolation. At the Round Table Conference in The Hague, Anak Agung once again emerged as the leader of the federal states. He was minister of the interior

in the cabinet of the Republik Indonesia Serikat from December 1949 to August 1950. In that position, he had to stand by helplessly as his ideal of a federal Indonesia perished. In 1951 he was promoted (or 'kicked upstairs') to the position of ambassador to Brussels and Paris. In 1955 he returned to Jakarta to take up the post of minister of foreign affairs (1955–1956). Together with his sympathisers Sjahrir and Hatta, he opposed the authoritarian tendencies of President Sukarno. In 1962 he was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy against Sukarno and was imprisoned in Madiun until 1966. His redemption came in 1970, when he was appointed ambassador to Vienna. During the last 20 years of his life, Anak Agung wrote thick volumes about the role of the NIT during the Revolution, Indonesia's foreign policy in the 1950s, and the history of Bali. In 1980 he obtained his PhD at the University of Utrecht on the significance of the Renville Agreement. He passed away in 1999, and although he had alienated himself from the people in Gianyar due to his long absence, in September of that year his family organised an impressive cremation.

Sungkono (1911–1977) is without a doubt the least known person among the people presented in these biographies. His position during the communist uprising in September–October 1948 saved the Republic from possible ruin. In 1949 he was the embodiment of the determined Republican resistance in East Java against the advancing Dutch forces.

Sungkono came from a middle-class background and attended the Hollandsch-Inlandsche School (HIS) and a lower secondary school. He then signed up for the Royal Navy, which sent him to the Training School for Inland Seaman in Makassar for two years. Back in Surabaya, he held the rank of corporal and was a technician in the navy yard. He was a member of the Inlandsche Marinebond, a labour union of Indonesian marine personnel. But the colonial government made it clear that there was no room for political positions or actions. On several occasions during the economic crisis, workers' wages were cut. At the beginning of 1932, after yet another wage reduction, demonstrations and strikes erupted in Surabaya, culminating in the mutiny on the armoured ship *De Zeven Provinciën*. The mutiny was brought to an end by a bombing that claimed many victims. The insurrection prompted the colonial government to intensify its repression of anticolonial action. While Sungkono was not on board the ship, his involvement in the strike meant he was prosecuted for refusing to work, with a penalty of eight months in prison and dismissal from the navy yard. During the Japanese occupation he was commander of a PETA company, which led to him being chosen to lead the Republican army in Surabaya. He subsequently

became the highest military commander in East Java. Sungkono was a sympathiser of Sudirman but unpopular with other army leaders and the government, who considered him not capable enough for his position. It was thus no surprise that Sungkono was scheduled to be replaced under the army reorganisation plan of late 1947. He refused, a position in which he was supported by his divisional units and, tacitly, Sudirman. The standoff lasted until September 1948, when the PKI revolted. Both the Republican government and the PKI then tried to secure the support of Sungkono, and both sides realised that his choice could be decisive for the outcome of the conflict. Sungkono hesitated but eventually chose Yogyakarta, which had already appointed him military governor of East Java. Sungkono was commander of a politically very heterogeneous division. Many of the units had their own agenda, and internal violence was endemic. Nevertheless, Sungkono managed to unite his troops under the name of the Republic in the fight against the Dutch. East Java became the scene of the fiercest fighting in 1949. While the political leaders were imprisoned, Sungkono managed to stop the advance of the Dutch army. The result was that negotiations between the Netherlands and the Republic were resumed. Sungkono then opposed the results of those negotiations, together with Sudirman.

After the transfer of sovereignty on 27 December 1949, Sungkono remained in office. But the situation in East Java got out of hand, and there were fierce protests against the lawlessness and corruption there that made his position untenable. With the efforts of the Sultan of Yogyakarta, Sungkono finally agreed – after being handled with kid gloves – to being appointed general advisor to the minister of defence, with a promotion to major general. He then fell into oblivion. The excesses of his last six months in East Java stood in the way of him being awarded the title of *Pahlawan Nasional* (national hero). He was not destined to have his own biography either. There is a highway in Surabaya named after him as well as a few more roads elsewhere, but other than that he has not been commemorated. His life and fate are characteristic of the warlord for whom there was no place in the Republic after 1950.

Hubertus Johannes van Mook (1894–1965) was born in Semarang to European parents. His childhood and school years in the Dutch East Indies left an indelible mark on his actions and his way of thinking. He went to the Higher Secondary School (Hogere Burgerschool, HBS) in Semarang and left for the Netherlands in 1912 where he was to study chemistry at Delft University. But in 1916 he switched his study to Indology, which prepared him for a career in the Dutch East Indies government. He used his

skills at the organisational level to establish an Indonesian Association of Students (Indonesisch Verbond van Studeerenden). The Association, with its remarkable name (Indonesian and not Dutch East Indies), encompassed a diverse group of student organisations, from prospective soldiers to Indonesian students. As chairman, Van Mook led several conferences. Another board member was J.A. Jonkman, who he was to work with 30 years later when the latter was minister of overseas territories. At one such conference organised by the Association, he also most likely shook hands with Tan Malaka. In 1918, Van Mook began his lustrous career in the civil service in the Dutch East Indies. He was appointed a member of the People's Council (Volksraad) in 1931. The conservative wind then blowing in Batavia led to resistance against him in the civil service, also because Van Mook openly expressed his progressive ideas in the magazine *De Stuw*. After the German occupation of the motherland, he received much praise as head of Economic Affairs for his successful diplomatic resistance to Japanese demands for access to cheap raw materials. This led Governor General Tjarda van Starkenborch Stachouwer to send Van Mook to Australia in March 1942 – shortly before the Dutch surrendered to Japan – to represent the interests of the Dutch East Indies. During the war years, Van Mook was both minister of the colonies and Lieutenant Governor General. To the irritation of the Dutch government in exile, Van Mook singlehandedly took control of policy on Dutch East Indies affairs, especially with regard to the future of the Dutch East Indies. This position did not change after the Japanese capitulation on 15 August 1945. The policy pursued was too little and too late, however, on the part of Van Mook but especially on the part of the Dutch government and the Dutch parliament. Van Mook did not keep his criticism of The Hague to himself, thereby encountering increasing political resistance among Dutch politicians.. And his political credit also ran out in the Republic. Confidence in the sincerity of his intentions largely disappeared with the Netherlands' first military action and with Van Mook's ostentatious attempts to form a federal state. Such a state would assure the Dutch of lasting influence on its colony and, moreover, did not give the Republic a role in accordance with its position. In October 1948, Van Mook's interference with 'his' East Indies came to an end when he was informed by E.M.J.A. Sassen (Minister of Overseas Territories) and Beel (the High Representative of the Crown) – both of the Catholic People's Party (Katholieke Volkspartij, KVP) – of his dismissal via a rather rude, hastily scribbled note. He was not offered an honourable government position. Things worked out better for those directly responsible for the fall of Van Mook: Beel became vice president of the Council of State (Raad

van State) and Sassen was appointed the highest Dutch representative to the European Community. Van Mook went abroad and wrote a few books, performed duties for the United Nations and lectured at American universities. He ultimately settled in the south of France. In the Netherlands he was forgotten – even his obituaries did not go beyond a brief summary of the most important facts of his life.

Simon Hendrik Spoor (1902–1949) went in a completely different direction from his father, who was a violinist in the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. In 1923 he chose a military career with the KNIL. His career went well, with additional training at the Military Academy (Hoogere Krijgsschool) in the Netherlands, where he also held a teaching position at the Royal Military Academy. At the outbreak of war with Japan, he was captain of the general staff of the KNIL. By order of the Governor General, he fled to Australia, where he was soon appointed head of the Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS). When he returned to a chaotic Indonesia, Spoor proved to be a hardliner and was appointed army commander, bypassing W. Schilling who was more senior than Spoor and therefore more eligible for appointment. But Schilling's different views on the revolution and his willingness to negotiate with the Republic made him unacceptable. Spoor misjudged just how widespread the support for the Republic was. He also underestimated the Republican armed forces. Because of these incorrect assumptions, he criticised the Dutch government's policy of compromise. His sympathisers in the Netherlands were looking for ways to get the Dutch government to change course. Spoor did not shy away from propagating his ideas widely, and in this respect he was an atypical, politically operating soldier. He was outspoken in his relationship with Van Mook, but in the end he remained loyal to political authority. In confronting the Republican guerrilla fighters, he placed his bets on a strategy of increasing the number of troops and military force and tacitly allowed excessive force used by his own troops to go unpunished. The conflict became too much for the decisive but overburdened Spoor. On 7 May 1949, following the agreement between the Netherlands and the Republic that sealed the Dutch defeat, he too was forced to face reality. He died on 25 May 1949, a few days after his promotion to General. Rumours that he was poisoned circulated almost immediately – and still do. The cause of death was most likely overexertion, exhaustion and disillusionment. His dream of a federal Indonesia – one in which the Netherlands and the KNIL were to occupy an important role for a long time to come – was lost forever.

Willem Schermerhorn (1894–1977), a farmer's son from Schermerpolder in North Holland, graduated from the University of Delft in 1918 as a civil engineer. A lustrous career in science followed, during which he became a professor in Delft in 1926. His specialism was aerial mapping, and he mapped New Guinea in 1936 on behalf of the Batavian Petroleum Company. Within society, he moved within liberal Protestant circles. He regularly spoke for VPRO Radio and was active in intellectual anti-fascist organisations. During the German occupation he was involved in the student and professor resistance. He was imprisoned for a year and a half in the Beekvliet hostage camp in Sint-Michielsgestel in the company of numerous prominent figures, where plans were forged for a reform of the Dutch political system. After his release in January 1943, he went into hiding. When the Netherlands was liberated in 1945, Schermerhorn became prime minister of the first post-war cabinet. He was one of the leaders of the Dutch People's Movement (Nederlandse Volksbeweging, NVB), a party that was based on the political philosophy of a personalist socialism. The NVB was not a success. But when he became leader of the Labour Party (Partij van de Arbeid, PvdA), which was the successor to the Social Democratic Workers Party (Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiders Partij, SDAP), all hopes were vested on Schermerhorn bringing about a 'breakthrough' in Dutch politics towards a broad progressive movement in the elections of May 1946. This failed when the 'old' party's ways proved to be intractable. A suitable position was found for Schermerhorn as chairman of the Commission-General for the Dutch East Indies, which was to assist Van Mook in the negotiations with the Republic (May 1946–October 1947). Thanks to the good relationship between Schermerhorn and Sjahrir, the negotiations were initially successful. But opposition to the negotiations among the rank and file in the Netherlands and within the Republic ultimately led to the first military action in July 1947, to which Schermerhorn also gave his assent. He later regretted this and even felt remorse, as he often and openly declared. He remained a PvdA member (on the left wing of that party) and member of parliament until 1963. For years he called for the publication of his diary – which the government managed to prevent until 1970 – about his years in the tropics as chairman of the Commission-General. The unique document has since become an indispensable source about the Linggadjati Agreement and the run-up to the first Dutch military attack on the Republic.

Louis Joseph Maria Beel (1902–1977), born in Roermond in the south of the Netherlands, grew up within the Catholic pillar of Dutch society, which was dominant in that part of the country. He studied law in Nijmegen and obtained his doctorate there in 1935. He aspired to a scientific career but

earned his salary as a civil servant in local government, becoming deputy municipal secretary in Eindhoven in 1940. He refused to work under the German occupiers and was therefore dismissed and went into hiding. In the uncertain months of 1944 and 1945, when the main Dutch rivers served as the front line, Beel was put forward as a representative of the Catholic population to play a role in the liberated section of the Netherlands. Queen Wilhelmina, who had appropriated more power than was constitutionally permitted, took a liking to Beel, and this explains his appointment as interior minister in the Schermerhorn cabinet. He advocated for cooperation between the Catholics and the socialists to get them to agree on a social pact to ensure the country's reconstruction and a broad-based rise in prosperity. On this issue, Beel and Drees got along well. A potential point of contention was the policy towards Indonesia, which until 1948 had been determined by PvdA ministers with experience in the Dutch East Indies. This changed in the new cabinet following elections under heavy pressure from KVP leader C.P.M. Romme, who nominated Sassen as Minister of Overseas Territories and Beel as successor to Van Mook. After the first military action and several visits to Indonesia, Beel came under the influence of army commander Spoor and converted to the hard line against the Republic. He wanted a new military action to eliminate the Republic, after which the moderate forces, notably the federalists, could erect a 'heavy-duty' Netherlands-Indonesia Union. Such a Union would allow the Netherlands to exert its influence in Indonesia for years to come. Beel was in Jakarta when the communist uprising broke out. He wrote to Sassen that same day: 'Never has the situation been more serious than now, but never has an operation been more responsible and more defensible internationally than now. [...] It's now or never. If the Republic is powerless or is going to collude with the communists, then the Netherlands must act. It would be fatal if this unique God-given opportunity was not taken advantage of.' Little was left of the sensible minister he was back in the Netherlands. Indeed, Beel kept insisting on military action. He even went so far as to deliberately delay communicating compromise proposals sent from The Hague in December 1948 so that the Republic had no time to formulate an answer to them. The military action that Beel wanted so badly was launched on 19 December 1948. What appeared to be a military success soon turned into a political debacle. Beel sought a way out by formulating a new diplomatic solution. His efforts were in vain, however, as Sassen submitted his resignation on 11 February and Beel's proposals were dismissed. On 11 May, he resigned and had to prepare for an inglorious return to the motherland. This did not, however, signal an inglorious end to his political career. After a short period as a professor, he became minister again from

1951 to 1956. In 1958 he was appointed vice president of the Council of State. He was subsequently involved as a *formateur* or *informateur* in the formation of every government until 1973. As the most important advisor to Queen Juliana, he was a kind of 'viceroy' of the Netherlands. Beel's memoirs were never written: just as with Sassen and Romme, he apparently felt no need to give an account of his thoughts and actions.

Dirk Uipko Stikker (1897–1979) studied law and worked as a banker before joining the board of Heineken's Beer Brewery in 1935. He was closely involved in the international activities of that company, gaining experiences that made him more sensitive to the international dimensions of the issues facing the Netherlands. This was especially true after 1945 and particularly regarding the 'Indonesian question'. During the German occupation, Stikker had been involved in the preparation of a consultation structure between employers and employees, which was crucial in ensuring that the reconstruction of the Dutch economy went smoothly. Dissatisfied with the lack of a liberal party, he founded the Freedom Party (Partij van de Vrijheid) in March 1946, which won six seats in the House of Representatives. He strongly opposed the government's Indonesia policy because he found it too weak. With the same standpoint, the party won eight seats in the 1948 elections, a gain that can partly be attributed to the participation of the political veteran P.J. Oud and his supporters who no longer felt at home in the PvdA. In January 1948, Stikker and Oud founded the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, VVD). The Netherlands' new relations with Indonesia required a change in the Dutch constitution, for which the support of the VVD in the Senate and House of Representatives was needed. Stikker was given the post of foreign affairs minister in the new cabinet, with his colleague E.M.J.A. Sassen as minister for overseas territories. Together with L.J.M. Beel as Van Mook's successor, the hardliners were given plenty of room to put their vision into action, while the PvdA was relegated to the sidelines. Stikker was involved in the formulation and implementation of the policy on Indonesia, alongside Sassen. The latter, who according to Stikker was 'an intelligent and tenacious man who nonetheless did not stand out for his tact', kept Stikker out of this portfolio as much as possible. He also ignored the messages Stikker was receiving from the American side that revealed their growing irritation with the reluctant attitude of the Netherlands. Marshall Aid and the forthcoming North Atlantic Treaty Organization also played a role in this. Stikker realised in time that the Netherlands was internationally isolated and that a Dutch exit from Indonesia was inevitable. Stikker's insight into international affairs

and relations led him to resign in 1951 when his own VVD party – but not the entire Lower House – rejected his policy on New Guinea. Although this rift was repaired, Stikker left a year later for London to become ambassador there. In 1958, he became the highest Dutch representative to NATO and crowned his career with a stint as Secretary General of NATO.

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