

**Merdeka Down Under?**  
**Indonesian Civilians and Military Personnel in Australia**  
**(1942–1949)**

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September 2022

A thesis submitted to fulfil requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

## **Statement of Originality**

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Name: Judith M. Rozeboom

Date: 27 September 2022

## Abstract

This thesis examines the lives and treatment of the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) people who resided in Australia during WWII and their return to their home country after the war. It compares the lives before, during and after the war of European Indonesians and indigenous Indonesians. It assesses their lives to that of other newcomers to Australia. My research connects underused Dutch archival material, only recently released to researchers, with sources in Australian archives to provide a fresh insight into the history of indigenous Indonesians in the Commonwealth from the start of the Pacific War to the official Indonesian independence in December 1949.

The work can be divided into three main parts. The first part examines the histories of the KNIL, Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (Royal Dutch East Indies Army) and the KPM, Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij (Royal Dutch Shipping Company or Royal Packet Navigation Company) before the outbreak of the Second World War and the transition of both organisations into wartime conditions. With a component of transnational history, this military history focuses on the Indies army's composition and development mainly in the pre-war period, continuing with the conversion into a refugee army on Australian soil.

The second part recreates the KNIL, KPM and Indonesian civilian histories in Australia until the war's ending. A critical focus in this part of the thesis is on the legal aspects of the stay of all different groups from the NEI in their temporary homeland: the registration of aliens, the other status of newcomers to Australia, and the exact legal status of the NEI military, semi-military personnel, and civilians in the Commonwealth. I focus on the legal positions of KPM seamen and negotiated special rights, extra-territorial rights, for the KNIL.

The third and final part closely examines the post-war period in which many indigenous Indonesians ended up behind barbed wire and the negotiations between the Australians and the NEI 'Government-in-Exile', as well as the military high command. The internment camps on Australian soil were occupied by the Netherlands East Indies' people after WWII. I analyse why these NEI soldiers, semi-military personnel and even a few civilians were locked up in camps and not repatriated back to their towns and villages in the Indies. The research emphasises how the Indonesians returned to their home country, when and how they could leave the Commonwealth, and how they were received and perceived by their fellow countrymen and women.



## Acknowledgements

This thesis was made possible by the support of many kind individuals. First of all, I would like to thank my wonderful supervisors Sophie Loy-Wilson and Marco Duranti for guiding me through this long and beautiful process, for the conversations, the inspiration, and for their generosity in sharing their research passion and amazing feedback during the course of this research.

I would like to thank the University of Sydney's Department of History for their support. In particular Chris Hilliard, Frances Clarke, Andres Rodriguez, and James Curran who invested in me through various seminars and APRs. Their ideas and feedback have been instrumental to my research and writing. And Adrian Vickers, of The University's School of Languages and Cultures, for his support and help with the Indonesian sources.

Apridzani Syahfrullah, thank you for doing a great deal of research on my behalf in the Indonesian National Archives, ARSIP. The sources you discovered enriched and expanded my work in many ways. And Hans Bogaardt, thank you for your help with the statistical analyses.

I would like to thank the staff of the National Archives of Australia in Canberra and Sydney, NSW State Archives and Records, the State Library of New South Wales, and last but not least the Cowra Family History Group for their help and support.

The support I received in the Netherlands was fundamental too, especially from the staff at Nationaal Archief, Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie, and Peace Palace Library, all situated in The Hague. They have helped me so often when I was searching for specific sources, I was not able to uncover or when I had a short deadline or a flight to catch back to Australia.

I send my love and thanks to my amazing friends and family, their encouragement, and solid support has sustained me and been fundamental to my ability to complete my PhD in so many ways, giving me the encouragement to finish despite some obstacles.

Capstone Editing provided copyediting and proofreading services according to the guidelines laid out in the university-endorsed national 'Guidelines for Editing Research Theses'.

# Contents

<b>Statement of Originality .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Research assumptions, methods, sources and structure .....	10
Definitions of names, groups and people .....	19
Early Dutch East Indies history .....	26
Dutch East Indies history in the 1940s .....	28
Historiographical shifts on the Netherlands East Indies history in the 1940s by Dutch authors .....	31
The Netherlands, Netherlands East Indies and Australian literature on the Netherlands East Indies people in Australia, 1942–1949 .....	34
<b>Chapter 1: The Royal Dutch East Indies Army before 1942.....</b>	<b>39</b>
1.1 The colonial army recruitment in the nineteenth century .....	41
1.2 The changing army in the early decades of the twentieth century .....	47
1.3 The army's composition: Dutch, Ambonese, Menadonese, Javanese and other soldiers.....	51
1.4 The army in the 1930s until the onset of the Pacific war: the growth of the Indies Army .....	56
1.5 Conclusion .....	61
<b>Chapter 2: Who is arriving in Australia? Temporary residents from the 1920s ...</b>	<b>64</b>
2.1 Migration to Australia in the 1920s and 1930s .....	66
2.2 The 1942 Netherlands East Indies newcomers in Australia: their reception and treatment .....	72
2.3 The Netherlands East Indies people already living and working in Australia: seamen and pearl fishers.....	78
2.4 Conclusion .....	82
<b>Chapter 3: Jurisdiction over Netherlands East Indies military personnel, semi- military personnel and civilians .....</b>	<b>85</b>
3.1 Australia and its Allies: international laws, regulations and agreements (1930s–1940s).....	88
3.2 The daily juridical consequences for Netherlands East Indies people onshore and offshore .....	94
3.3 Negotiations for extraterritorial rights by the Netherlands East Indies military high command.....	102
3.4 Conclusion .....	109
<b>Chapter 4: People from the Indies and other newcomers in Australia: the war years .....</b>	<b>112</b>
4.1 Australia's migrants and aliens in 1943 and 1944 .....	115
4.2 The treatment of Australia's befriended foreign residents, aliens and military personnel.....	118
4.3 The treatment of alien enemies: who should be interned?.....	128
4.4 Daily life of alien enemies in internment camps .....	135
4.5 Indies people: the Australian registration during the war years.....	139
4.6 Indies peoples: civilian and semi-military internment around Australia.....	143

4.7 'Free' Indonesians: working in Australia .....	150
4.8 The 36th Australian Employment Company: the case of Asmawie .....	153
4.9 Conclusion .....	158
<b>Chapter 5: Internment camps on Australian soil: Casino and Lytton .....</b>	<b>162</b>
5.1 National and international events influencing the lives of Indonesians in Australia.....	165
5.2 Casino and Lytton: camps and numbers of imprisoned people .....	179
5.3 Trials, sentencing and treatment of Netherlands East Indies military personnel	185
5.4 Indonesian prisoners' personal experiences: conscientious objectors? .....	195
5.5 Conclusion .....	198
<b>Chapter 6: Return to the Indies?.....</b>	<b>201</b>
6.1 Reasons for returning: the Indonesian side of the story .....	203
6.2 Australian Government and the Netherlands East Indies Legation: opposite views.....	209
6.3 Repatriation and return to the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia .....	217
6.4 Back in the mother country .....	228
6.5 Conclusion .....	236
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>238</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>251</b>

## List of Abbreviations

36AEC	36th Australian Employment Company
ABDA	American–British–Dutch–Australian Command
ANRI	<i>Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia</i> [National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia]
CBS	Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [Statistics Netherlands]
CIDC	Casino Indonesian Defence Committee
EM	<i>Eervolle Melding</i> [Honorary Reference]
FARs A2	Forms of Application for Registration
GOC	Government of the Commonwealth
KNIL	<i>Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger</i> [Royal Dutch East Indies Army]
KPM	<i>Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij</i> [Royal Dutch Shipping Company or Royal Packet Navigation Company]
KRIA	<i>Kantoor Repatriëring Indonesiers in Australië</i>
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NAN	<i>Nationaal Archief</i> [National Archives (of the Netherlands)]
NEI	Netherlands East Indies
NIGIS	Netherlands Indies Government Information Service
NIMH	<i>Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie</i> [Netherlands Institute for Military History]
NSW	New South Wales
ONB	<i>Oranje Nassau Brozen medaille</i> [Orange Nassau Bronze medal]
PKI	Communist Party in Indonesia
POW	prisoner of war
RSSAILA	Returned Sailor’s Soldier’s Airmen’s Imperial League Australia
UN	United Nations
VOC	<i>Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie</i> [The Dutch East India Company or the United East India Company]
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II





## Introduction

I am prepared to consider favourably the granting of the authority requested by you for the detention of members of the Royal Netherlands Forces charged with or convicted of offences, on the understanding that the Commonwealth of Australia is indemnified against the cost of maintenance of the prisoners.<sup>1</sup>

The above quotation is a section of a letter written by Frank M. Forde, the Australian Minister for the Army, to the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) Rear-Admiral Frederick W. Coster. It is undated but was most likely written in early 1943. This passage from the letter encapsulates a part of Dutch East Indies' history at a time of crisis and dissolution: the Japanese army had infiltrated the colony, and Dutch officials, soldiers, and civilians had fled, some temporarily living in Australia. In exile, the NEI military high command, with Coster as one of their most prominent advocates, obtained extraterritorial rights in Australia. Until then, these military rights had only ever been acquired by the United States (US) Armed Forces. Such unprecedented Dutch powers, introduced in this moment of crisis, would play an important role in post-war Australian–Dutch relations and NEI military history, and would come at a significant human cost.

## Research assumptions, methods, sources and structure

Why research the history of the Dutch and Indonesians in Australia during the war years? Why examine the part of the Indies' history? Hasn't this story of decolonisation been told? As Dutch history professor Remco Raben in his oration acceptance speech already said in 2016, 'the Indies are *hot* ... Colonial history is confusing, sometimes sweet, sometimes unpleasant, but always confusing'.<sup>2</sup> In my opinion, this quotation from one of the Netherlands's leading historians of the colonial period sums up one of the key reasons

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<sup>1</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv.nr. 79, Letter from the Minister for the Army F.M. Forde to Rear-Admiral F.W. Coster, no date.

<sup>2</sup> Remco Raben is a history professor (by special appointment) at the University of Amsterdam and Utrecht University. His main research areas are colonial and post-colonial literature and cultural history. In his professorial acceptance speech, titled '*Wie spreekt voor het koloniale verleden?*' *Een pleidooi voor transkolonialisme*, he stated in Dutch, 'Indië is *hot*'. Remco Raben, "Wie spreekt voor het koloniale verleden? Een Pleidooi voor transkolonialisme" (Amsterdam, Indisch Herinneringscentrum, 2016), 5.

I wanted to research this topic. However, the legacies of Dutch colonial intervention in Indonesia remain problematic—remain troubling.

My research connects underused Dutch archival material, only recently released to researchers, with sources in Australian archives to provide a fresh insight into the history of indigenous Indonesians in the Commonwealth from the start of the Pacific War to the official Indonesian independence in December 1949. This research angle is essential if we are to properly understand the critical shifting relationship between Australia and Indonesia during World War II (WWII). Moreover, the changing and complex relationship between these two places after the war's end can be better explained through these sources—the relationship between the NEI authorities and military high command in the Commonwealth on the one side and the Indonesians on the other.

These sources help us chart Indonesian decolonisation in a new way: they reveal the deteriorating relationship between the NEI authorities and the Australian authorities, and they explain why the Australian Government's repatriation strategy of the 1940s was altered. The gradually shifting Australian attitudes towards the Indonesians were partially motivated by pressure from potential voters, unions and other stakeholders, partially because the strategy might have had an inhibitory effect on post-war economic recovery. Other reasons for Australians' changing attitude could be that the international conflict in the Indies went on, and no agreement seemed to hold. The Dutch archival sources give us insight into the relationship between the NEI and influential Australian institutions, such as the Australian unions.

Conflicts between the Indonesian Republican independence movement and the Netherlands Government after 1945 had been a focus of the 'Dutch history wars' and have been analysed by many international scholars.<sup>3</sup> I have started my research by contextualising Indonesian history within the Dutch history wars and thereby describing shifts in historical consciousness in the Netherlands in recent years over the legacies of Dutch imperialism in Asia. I have tried to accomplish this by comparing more recent

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<sup>3</sup> A few key examples of colonial history wars' publications from various periods: Cornelis Smit, *De Indonesische quaestie: de wordingsgeschiedenis der soevereiniteitsoverdracht* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1952); Margaret L. George, *Australia and the Indonesian revolution* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press in association with the Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1980); J. Hoffenaar, "De militaire aftocht uit Indonesië, 1949-1951," *Militaire Spectator* 159, no. 9 (1990); Petra M.H. Groen, *Marsroutes en Dwaalsporen. Het Nederlands militair-strategisch beleid in Indonesië, 1945-1950* (Den Haag: SDU uitgeverij Den Haag, 1991); Rémy Limpach, *De brandende kampongs van Generaal Spoor* (Amsterdam: Boom uitgeverij, 2016); Gert Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië 1945-1950. Getuigenissen van een oorlog aan de verkeerde kant van de geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2016).

publications—those published in the last ten years (e.g., books and journal articles since 2012)—to earlier publications from the previous century, publications by both Dutch and non-Dutch scholars. The primary reason for this research is that historians have written so much on the Dutch history wars and Dutch twentieth-century imperialism over the last decades that I wanted to emphasise the existing change in the historical approach and how this current debate would influence my approach to my research topic. Thus, one of the goals of this introduction is to analyse contemporary currents in historical thinking.

My thesis focuses mainly on a largely underexplored part of the Dutch decolonisation period: the first few months and years after the capitulation to the Imperial Japanese Army, when so many European and Indonesians were temporarily residing in Australia. This thesis relied primarily on archival materials from the Netherlands' archives, such as The National Archives and the Netherlands Institute for Military History (NIMH) in The Hague. By researching archival sources from these Dutch institutions, I was able to reconstruct and analyse a part of Australian history that remains under-researched; despite some brilliant recent scholarship, we still know very little about the fate of Indonesian servicemen interned in Australia in places such as camp Lytton (QLD) and other similar camps. We need to document their experiences in order to properly understand this period in Australian history. Their experiences are essential, in my opinion, if we are to tell a more complete account of the experience of *Indisch*-Dutch people who found refuge in Australia during and after WWII.

The indigenous Indonesians' unique experience in the Commonwealth did not start at the proclamation of the Indonesian Republic in the early days after WWII. My research investigates the treatment and detention of 'friendly aliens' from the occupied territories of the NEI who were residents in Australia. The treatment of these predominantly non-white residents of this Allied country, by both the NEI temporary government in Australia and the Australian authorities was an exceptional phenomenon. Their treatment during the war was akin to that of 'enemy aliens'. It bore similarities to the treatment received by the Japanese and the Germans in Australia. But why was this? These Indonesians were not enemy aliens; they were from an Allied country. Their treatment at the hands of Australian authorities was unprecedented. These questions are vital if we are to understand why the lives of Indonesian KNIL, merchant seamen and civilians were so different from that of other refugees in Australia. To answer these questions, I have again combined research materials that could only be uncovered in the Netherlands as well as discovered sources from Australian archives and libraries. The

combination of the two countries' sources has given me a new insight into the development of Dutch political and military interventions in Australia during this period., allowing me to interrogate the military and legal infrastructure which created the conditions for Indonesian arrival, internment and prosecution in Australia. This was an exceptional phenomenon which is still not fully understood in Australian or Dutch historiography.

My approach seeks to draw three lines of historical inquiry together—transnational histories, histories of migration (social history) and military law histories—without a great emphasis on the actual armed battles of WWII or the Dutch–Indonesian decolonisation period. The sources I have analysed for this research journey were often not the obvious ones. Historians do not typically use military archives and sources from different countries to explore a mainly, though not exclusively, social history. This study is partially based on military archival sources and sources from civil interest groups, such as letters, newspapers and magazine articles from the 1940s.

In this thesis, my primary focus is the treatment of Indonesians and Dutch-*Indisch* in Australia: Allied soldiers in the Royal Dutch East Indies Army [*Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger* (KNIL)], merchant seamen who resided in Australia between the end of 1941 and 1949 and civilian Indonesians who found refuge in Australia. In my research, I have mainly explored the merchant seamen's history of the Royal Dutch Shipping Company or Royal Packet Navigation Company, KPM [*Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij*], the largest and most established shipping company of the Indies at the outbreak of WWII. However, there existed other, smaller shipping companies in the NEI. The main reason for concentrating on this large shipping company and its merchant seamen was that before WWII, the KPM was the most sizeable of the NEI shipping companies, with an Australian connection (one of its headquarters was on George Street in Sydney), a historically recognised influence on the war developments and an essential role in the post-war history of the NEI and Australia.<sup>4</sup> The Dutch sources related to the KPM and its history appeared to have been largely overlooked in much of the historical research on wartime Australia. One reason for this could be that those sources were previously inaccessible due to strict archival regulations; another reason might be that some scholars could not analyse these Dutch sources in the Netherlands National

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<sup>4</sup> Jack Ford, "The 'Floating Dutchmen': The Netherlands Merchant Navy in the Pacific War," *Journal of Australian Naval History* 6, no. 1 (2009): 80.

Archives (NAN) and other smaller Dutch archives. In my research, I have found evidence that NEI policymakers and KPM decision-makers executed their influence and partially influenced the fate of the Indonesian seamen and other civilians from the NEI.<sup>5</sup>

The history of the shipping company KPM in the 1940s—and its potential to rewrite histories of the end of the Dutch Empire—has not been studied, even though the KPM had a tremendous influence on the post-war reoccupation ambitions of the Indies by the Dutch. The Dutch and NEI governments tried to use the shipping company to relocate people and equipment from Australia back to the colony. Still, they were limited by the changes in the relationship between the seamen, the Australians—both the authorities and unions—and the Dutch/NEI rulers. No history of this company has examined the treatment of KPM's merchant seamen in Australia during the Pacific War and after the war had ended. Moreover, the legal position of these merchant seamen in Australia is not been comprehensively analysed and published by recent scholars, and so little is known about the exact legal status of the KPM personnel and merchant seamen in Australia. Therefore, I focus on determining if mercantile seamen could be described as civilians, semi-military personnel or even armed forces members: their exact legal status appeared to be unclear. The laws and regulations that those merchant seamen had to obey might have been only the Australian laws, the criminal laws and the immigration laws of the 1940s but could at the same time have been the NEI military laws. I have utilised many archival sources on this topic from the Netherlands, combined with a few from Australian archives and many secondary sources. An especially valuable source collection related to this topic was archived at the NIMH; this is the extensive De Vries archive on WWII military correspondence.<sup>6</sup> Other significant related sources were retrieved from the National Archives of the Netherlands; a few prime examples were 'Stukken betreffende de Nederlandse koopvaardij en hun personeel in Australië' and 'Stukken betreffende de jurisdictie over de Nederlandse koopvaardijsschepen'.<sup>7</sup> Although there were very limited scholarly publications specifically on the KMP personnel and their legal status during the war years, many lawyers and legal historians have written about merchant seamen and status change, predominantly relating to American sailors

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<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 45, Inter-Office memo by B.S. van Deinse, 28 May 1942; NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 45, Letter from F.W. Coster to the Board of KPM Sydney, 19 May 1942.

<sup>6</sup> NIMH De Vries collection: H.J. de Vries was a Colonel at the KNIL. The collection is only accessible on location, and one needs special permission to access the archival materials.

<sup>7</sup> 'Stukken betreffende de Nederlandse koopvaardij en hun personeel in Australië', is inv. nr 45 and 'Stukken betreffende de jurisdictie over de Nederlandse koopvaardijsschepen', inv. nr 48 of the NAN, 2.05.50.02, Inventaris van het archief van het Nederlandse Gezantschap / Ambassade in Australië (Canberra), (1940) 1942-1954.

and extraterritorial laws. Two examples of these related scholarly publications are 'Prosecutions of extraterritorial criminal conduct and the abuse of rights doctrine', by A/Prof Danielle Ireland-Piper, and 'What is extraterritorial jurisdiction?' by Professor of Law J. Colangelo Anthony.<sup>8</sup>

At the start of this research project (through previous research for my master's degree), I already knew that NEI military personnel were still under Dutch/NEI authority in Australia. The NEI military justice system bound this group of Indonesian soldiers because of negotiated extraterritorial rights. One of the principal queries was if these negotiated NEI laws also applied to NEI merchant seaman. This research question is strongly connected to the question about merchant seamen's legal status.

Another related research topic is the treatment of Indonesian seamen: were these immigrants treated fairly and equally by the NEI and Australian authorities in Australia, and exactly how were those KPM seamen and civilians judged and treated by their fellow compatriots after their return to their homeland? My research did not immediately stop when the Indonesians were gathered on Australian soil to be returned to various parts of Indonesia and the NEI, as I examined the consequences of their late return to their specific home regions. I have attempted to analyse the journey back to the NEI and the reception of the returning military personnel, merchant seamen and ordinary civilians, although it is challenging to discover sources on this particular topic. The existence of sources written by Indonesians was minimal; the literacy level of those lower-level KNIL military personnel and other indigenous Indonesians in Australia was low. This difficulty in finding Indonesian sources will be further addressed in the body of this thesis. I did analyse some sources on the returning Indonesians. Still, these are primarily created by either European Indonesians, Dutch politicians and high-ranked military personnel, or Australians, such as newspaper reporters.

For my research on the histories of the people from the Dutch East Indies, I have used many different newspaper articles to demonstrate the stories of the NEI people in Australia. I have used as many distinctive newspapers as possible, from the Netherlands, the Indies, and Australia, to analyse the events in the 1940s and to show, as much as possible, the Indonesian side of the story. While analysing the articles, I realised that

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<sup>8</sup> Danielle Ireland-Piper, "Prosecutions of extraterritorial criminal conduct and the abuse of rights doctrine," *Utrecht Law Review* 9, no. 4 (2013); J. Colangelo Anthony, "What is extraterritorial jurisdiction?," *Cornell Law Review* 99 (2014).

many journalists could have been biased, limited in their sources, or both. I did recognise the limitations of newspaper articles, as many papers were very politically orientated, such as the Australian Communist newspaper *Tribune*, or it depended a lot on where the paper was produced, as in which (part of a) country. The limitations of press releases and newspaper articles have, of course, been recognised by other researchers as well. For example, related to the KPM shipping history, Heather Goodall recently wrote on the post-war black ban of NEI ships. She argued that the Australian mainstream press repeatedly advocated for Australian Government intervention in the boycott, primarily to release vessels to aid the Dutch and the British and bring Australian troops home. Little emphasis was on the roles of dockworkers and shipping personnel from a non-European background in the Australian newspaper articles of the time. Other countries' newspaper articles, like those written by Indian journalists, mentioned the specific roles of each government, the Indian seamen's role in the black ban of Dutch ships was unmistakably recognised, and their role in the defence of Indonesia and the region's struggle to end colonialism.<sup>9</sup> Still, I did use many newspapers of those days, as I consider they gave a valuable source of information on the lives and treatments of Indonesians in Australia, news, details and perspectives on their lives that otherwise could not have been uncovered.

During my research for this project, I delimited my topic to ensure this study could be conducted within manageable limits; some subjects were disregarded or merely mentioned in passing. For example, the examination of the treatment of KNIL soldiers and Dutch civilians who stayed behind in the NEI during the Japanese occupation is only mentioned indirectly. Contemporaneously, while the significantly reduced but remaining KPM Indonesian *interisland*—between the islands of the NEI archipelago—shipping activities between 1941 and 1945 might be considered partially related to this research topic, it is nonetheless only brought up a small number of times. Further, the leading figures within the NEI military high command and the NEI 'government-in-exile' (or Netherlands Commission or Legation) were named a few times without going into too much depth for most of them. Nor was it my main objective to write biographies on all influential people involved. Therefore, I have concentrated my research mainly on

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<sup>9</sup> Heather Goodall, *Beyond borders: Indians, Australians and the Indonesian Revolution, 1939 to 1950* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 341.



Indonesian activities in the Commonwealth during the war years and the immediate aftermath.

I struggled to identify the Indonesians who were tried before the court in Australia. I have examined some trial transcripts from trials that occurred during the Pacific War in the Commonwealth, but my main emphasis is on the military and civilian trials that happened in the first year after the war. My principal focus is the extraterritoriality negotiations between the Indies government-in-exile/Netherlands Legation and the high command on the one hand and the Australian Government on the other, along with the consequences of those extraterritorial legal rights for Indonesians residing in Australia. The reason is that these rights gave the NEI military high command the power to court-martial their own military personnel on foreign soil. While these negotiations were a turning point in the NEI military high command's relationship with their own soldiers, as well as in their relationship with the Australian authorities after the war's closing, these unique historical negotiations and the rights that gave the Dutch/NEI unprecedented powers have not been thoroughly analysed before. I have extensively searched for the lost court transcript documentation on the Indonesian servicemen and the mercantile seamen prosecuted by the NEI military high command in late 1945 in Australia. In the historical records I found, there are only glimpses into the events. These glimpses gave a valuable but limited insight into how the military justice system treated these Indonesians.

I have examined the roles played by the NEI 'government-in-exile' and the NEI military high command, thereby not losing sight of the critical roles played by the Curtin and Chifley governments and their civil servants for several reasons. First, one of the main reasons for analysing these roles and proceedings in a historical context was to contemplate the extent to which the Australian Government was bound or guided by the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* (better known as the White Australia policy) in their decision-making negotiations with the NEI.<sup>10</sup> A critical second, though very much related

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<sup>10</sup> The White Australia policy (or WAP) is a term for what is officially known as the Restrictive Immigration Policy, which originated with the Australian *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, first drafted by Australia's second prime minister, Alfred Deakin. This policy was amended several times; by 1925, the Act had been amended six times. The *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* came into force in December 1901 and remained in force until 1959, when it was completely replaced by the *Migration Act 1958*. The restrictive policies of the *Immigration Restriction Act* were progressively dismantled after World War II. The *Immigration Restriction Act* (and its amending Acts) constituted the basic statutory authority for the White Australia policy. This Act effectively excluded non-European immigrants from permanently migrating to Australia. The law's unwritten objective was to create an ethnically homogeneous society in Australia by prohibiting undesirable immigrants, without specifying the basis of such undesirability. Some foreign non-white business visitors, merchant seaman and students were allowed entry (some permanently, but many temporarily), as well as special skilled workers such as cooks and divers in the pearling industry. See James

to the first, reason for extensively researching the roles of the Government of the Commonwealth (GOC) and local governments was that I wanted to emphasise the consequences of these authorities' actions on Australian society and, additionally, the effect the actions had on the lives of Allied refugees and those of local civilians in both the big cities like Sydney and the smaller towns like Casino, New South Wales (NSW). The third reason for analysing the roles of the NEI and Australia is the principal question of responsibility. Who should be held responsible for the treatment of Indonesians in Australia between 1942 and 1949—the treatment that I argue constituted a severe breach of their human rights? This responsibility question extends beyond feelings of discomfort or an apology after seventy years; this is ultimately a question of reparations and restorative justice. But who should be held accountable? A core emphasis of existing public debates in the Netherlands is the role played by the Dutch Government in the mother country (i.e., the Netherlands), the NEI Government and the Dutch military in the years from 1945, the time of the Indonesian Proclamation of Independence to December 1949, the signing of the Indonesian Independence. This study brings into the picture the story of a group of marginal people, a group of military personnel, seafarers and civilians who suffered greatly during WWII and who have been largely forgotten in the Netherlands and Australia. However, their stories should not be marginal to Dutch and Australian history. Should the Dutch Government apologise to and perhaps compensate these Indonesian victims and their descendants? This is their story I have spent the better part of ten years tracking down.

This thesis is divided into three parts. The first part will examine the histories of the KNIL and the KPM before the outbreak of WWII and the transition into wartime conditions. The accent is on military history, with a component of transnational history. I focus on the Indies Army's composition and development until the start of the war in the Pacific to continue with the transition into a refugee army on Australian soil. Then, I will answer the questions: Were all migrants, military and civilian, from the Indies allowed to enter and on what basis were these decisions made? Did the White Australia policy hamper the admittance of some Dutch East Indies people? If these non-white migrants were admissible, how were they treated by the Australian Government and NEI government officials? Finally, the closing pages of the first part of my thesis examines

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Jupp, "From 'White Australia' to 'Part of Asia': Recent Shifts in Australian Immigration Policy Towards the Region," *International Migration Review* 29, no. 1 (1995): 207–208; A.C. Palfreeman, "Non-White Immigration to Australia," *Pacific Affairs* 47, no. 3 (1974): 344–345.

the White Australia policy and the Australian labour movement from an NEI perspective. This international perspective is often overlooked and has been markedly absent from earlier scholarship on this topic.

The second part re-creates the KNIL, KPM and Indonesian civilian histories after 1941 in Australia until the *Proklamasi* (Indonesian for Proclamation), with a critical focus on the legal aspects of all the NEI parties' stay in their temporary homeland. The research questions that will be examined are: Should the European, Indo-European, and Indonesian 'alien' KNIL soldiers register once they enter the country, and what was their exact legal status in a foreign country? Were they considered part of the Allied forces? And a question related to the KPM: Were these seafarers regarded at some point during the war as semi-military or perhaps even as military personnel? And if so, what legal positions did these commercial KPM seamen hold? This part is a social history of the Indonesians and a legal history, as I will be analysing how specific laws and regulations decided much of the fate of these Indonesians in Australian territory.

The final part, part three, closely examines the post-war period in which many Indonesians ended up behind barbed wire, the negotiations between the Australians, the NEI 'government-in-exile' and the military high command. The main research questions are: Why were there internment camps on Australian soil—still functioning camps—occupied by the NEI's military and government after WWII, and how were these camps described by local Australians and in the press? And why were the NEI soldiers, semi-military personnel and even a few civilians locked up in Australian camps and not repatriated back to their towns and villages in the Indies months after the end of the war, as one might expect? Finally, this part finishes with an analysis of the return journeys of the Indonesians to their homeland. The emphasis will be on how the Indonesians returned to their home country, who would and could leave the Commonwealth, and when and how they were received and perceived by their fellow compatriots.

### **Definitions of names, groups and people**

Before continuing, I will outline the spelling I intend to use for (Indonesian) names and different groups of NEI who came to Australia. While researching Indonesian geographical names and groups and individuals who came from the NEI to Australia, I ran into a spelling problem similar to one described by many scholars, like Benedict

Anderson. As he wrote: ‘In dealing with the perplexing problem of variations in the spelling of Indonesian names, I have found no satisfactory solution. Many Indonesians continue to prefer the Dutch-derived *oe* to the English-derived *u*, and I have spelt many personal names with this *oe*. [...] The only rule followed here is that each name of an individual person is spelt consistently one way throughout the text.’<sup>11</sup> Like Anderson, I have tried to keep my spelling consistent. So, for instance, I spelt the name of a young KNIL soldier as Wawoeroento, although nowadays, many would have replaced the *oe* with a *u*. I have applied the same spelling rules to places and regions, like Boven Digoel, unless I quoted a source that used a different spelling.

I explored the categories used by the Dutch military high command in charge of the KNIL in Australia. After the trials of 1945, the NEI high command locked up many soldiers with (family) names that were incredibly uncommon in the Netherlands, such as ‘Tardjeri’ and ‘Lengkong’, and used KNIL soldiers with fairly Dutch-sounding family names, like ‘Tjerkstra’ and ‘Verwey’, to guard the Dutch–Australian internment camps.<sup>12</sup> So, should these incarcerated individuals be classified as Indonesian? Yes, I believe so, as I have extensively analysed these groups and because the NEI did not comprise a single well-classified homogeneous community. But who can be referred to as Dutch, Indonesian or possibly Dutch-*Indisch*? Or should there be an even more specific separation between the (indigenous) populations, maybe based on geographical location—like Java, Ambon or Bali—or perhaps the socio-economic status within the pre-war NEI society? I certainly realised that a precise definition or classification was complicated and might be slightly arbitrary, primarily if a distinction is purely based on family names. Therefore, I started by researching the pre-war law of the Indies to determine the legal status of the NEI population; afterwards, I identified the names and terminology used in other publications by Dutch and non-Dutch scholars and established if there were any mentioned factors I needed to consider. Finally, I will identify the customary law and terminology used in the NEI before the war.

In a nineteenth-century law article by Van den Berg, the author described two groups within the NEI society: *Inlanders* (Dutch for ‘natives’) and Europeans. Without even explaining this parlance, he assumed the reader understands what these terms

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<sup>11</sup> Benedict R. Anderson, *Java in a time of revolution: occupation and resistance, 1944-1946* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), xiv.

<sup>12</sup> NAN, 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Report by W.J. ‘t Hoen from Victory Camp, Casino, 27 April 1946.

concerning the Indies groups comprise.<sup>13</sup> Racial discrimination and division were common in almost all colonies, not only the Netherlands colonial empire. As Luttikhuis stated: ‘Rather than ‘races’, many colonial actors preferred to speak of the pragmatic term ‘population groups’. And, as he further argued: ‘throughout the colonial world, the concept of the ‘European’ was in wide use, being generally preferred to national ascriptions or the denominator ‘White’.’<sup>14</sup> In this thesis, I am careful to contextualise this colonial language without naturalising or legitimising previously existing colonial structures. I predominantly use this terminology when referring to other sources on this topic that use terms such as ‘white’ and ‘European’.

More contemporary publications than Van den Berg’s article (e.g., *Recht en Rechtspraak in Nederlands-Indië* by Albert Dekker and Hanneke van Katwijk) have given an additional comprehensive representation of the law and communities within the Indies society.<sup>15</sup> In this book on the law and jurisdiction in the Indies, the authors argue that in Articles 6A and 6B of the newly adopted code of 1848, a particular distinction was made between Europeans and *Inlanders*. One might assume that a dichotomy is based here on some ethnic or racial appearance. However, the subsequent law article stated that under this new law, (Christian) Europeans, *Inlandse Christenen* [native Christians] and all other persons from wherever originating who did not fall under the description *Inlanders* were considered equal. Article 8 determined that with *Inlanders*, the following groups of people were equated: the Arabs, the Moors, the Chinese or all other people who are Muslim or heathen. Seven years later, a third group, alongside the Europeans and *Inlanders*, was introduced in the Dutch-Indies administration of justice: the *Vreemde Oosterling* [Foreign Oriental].<sup>16</sup> This classification is repeated in an article published one year later: ‘In 1854 an extensive and long-awaited colonial “constitution” was produced, the *Regeeringsreglement*. It codified the famous legal dualism that divided the population into two (later three) population groups, each having its own legal system’.<sup>17</sup> Within this system, the 109RR deserves mentioning; initially, this clause made a distinction between two groups, Europeans and Natives (*Inlanders*), not further defined in any detail what

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<sup>13</sup> L.W.C. van den Berg, "De afwijkingen van het Mohammedaansche familie- en erfrecht op Java en Madoera," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 41, no. 3 (1892): 454.

<sup>14</sup> Bart Luttikhuis, "Beyond race: constructions of ‘Europeanness’ in latecolonial legal practice in the Dutch East Indies," *European Review of History* 20, no. 4 (2013): 542 and 551.

<sup>15</sup> Albert Dekker and Hanneke van Katwijk, *Recht en rechtspraak in Nederlands-Indië* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Dekker and Katwijk, *Recht en rechtspraak*, 13–14.

<sup>17</sup> Jan Michiel Otto, Albert Dekker, and Cora de Waaij, "Indonesian law and administration as reflected in 150 years of *Bijdragen*," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 150, no. 4 (1994): 731.

this meant, comparable with Van den Berg's law article. In 1906, an adaption of the *Regeeringsreglement's* article 109RR was introduced, and the *Vreemde Oosterling* [Foreign Oriental] became the third official group within the legal structure of the Indies society. The article determined who was subject to the laws for Europeans, Natives or Foreign Orientals; the law article did not define who is a *European*, *Inlander*, or *Vreemde Oosterling*. This distinction remained in force until the very end of the colonial era in 1942, according to Luttikhuis.<sup>18</sup> Dekker and Van Katwijk seemed to disagree with Luttikhuis on this subject partially. They argued that the category of *Inlanders* was clearly defined.

The question remains if this three-part division persisted until the outbreak of the war. According to Luttikhuis that is the case; there was no formal equation by law. All three groups—Europeans, *Inlanders* and *Vreemde Oosterlingen*—had to obey the legal provisions set especially for them, although the groups' compositions changed over time.<sup>19</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, changes in their legal position were introduced for some specific groups, mainly the Chinese and the Japanese. These changes radically improved their status; the Japanese population was formally equated in the 1920s to the Europeans, though the Chinese population was not fully equated to the Europeans' legal status.<sup>20</sup> In the 1930 census, the Chinese population were even considered a specific group, besides the Europeans, *Andere Vreemde Oosterlingen* and *Inlanders*.<sup>21</sup> At first glance, the three-part division made by the NEI Government in the second half of the nineteenth century and the four-part division from the 1930 census did not seem incredibly useful for this research project because the archival sources, such as the official documents produced by that same NEI Government, seemed not to make a distinction between three or four groups within the NEI society; instead, merely two groups were noted. Most official governmental sources just identified 'the Dutch' and

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<sup>18</sup> Luttikhuis, "Beyond race," 542.

<sup>19</sup> I have taken into consideration the local Indonesian 'adatrecht' as well; these are unwritten, flexible laws that differ in every village, comparable to the common law. At this point, there appears to be no need to take these kinds of local, flexible laws into consideration for the purpose of classification of groups within the NEI society. For a short history on adatrecht, see Adriaan Bedner, "Over de grens tussen religie en wet: het Indonesische huwelijksrecht," *Ars Aequi* 56, no. 7 (2007).

<sup>20</sup> Giok Kiauw Nio Liem, "De rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlandsch-Indië 1848-1942" (PhD, Leiden University, 2009): 630; M. Barry Hooker, editor, *Law and the Chinese in South-East Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), 133–34.

<sup>21</sup> 'Andere Vreemde Oosterlingen' are 'Other Foreign Orientals'. See Gijs Beets et al., *De demografische geschiedenis van de Indische Nederlanders* (Den Haag: Nederlands Interdisciplinair Demografisch Instituut, 2002), 25.

‘the Indonesians’. This noticed that I had considered this standardised legal division while analysing the official NEI and Australian sources.

In this search for definition and classification within the Indies context, I also researched useful secondary literature about the Indonesian history of the twentieth century to identify the terminology used by other scholars in the field. As far as I could discern, there were not many recent historical journal articles or other publications on NEI law specifically dedicated to identifying and defining all specific groups in the NEI or their legal position within that society. However, some authors clearly start their publication by identifying the existing groups within Indonesian society. Bernhard Dahm’s book from the 1970s on Indonesian history is one of the older publications I have considered. He wrote that close to 100,000 Europeans lived in the NEI at the turn of the century, a fifth of whom was full-blooded European, and the rest were Euroasians, which included the Japanese at that time. Besides these groups, there was the third group of the *Inlanders*.<sup>22</sup>

In a key study on the subject and a paramount study that has been of tremendous value to my research, Jan Lingard did not differentiate between people from the NEI. In her introduction, she wrote about ‘Indonesians’ without further specifying to whom she referred, although she introduced the terms ‘White Australia policy’ and ‘coloureds’ a few sentences later. I presumed that by ‘Indonesians’, she meant non-white people from the NEI.<sup>23</sup> Many other scholars have not defined specific groups living in the Netherlands Indies either. For instance, in their book introductions, both Margeret George and Frank Bennet Jr did not mention any particular classification or unequal judicial groups.<sup>24</sup>

In the 2003 book *Indonesia: Peoples and Histories*, Jean Gelman Taylor wrote that ‘the term “Indonesian” appears straightforward, but it covers citizens whose ancestors originated in the Indonesian archipelago, China, India, Arabia, and Europe. ... Similarly, the term “Dutch” appears straightforward, meaning a person born in Holland. But in Indonesian histories, Dutch troops generally meant a company composed of a score of European men and hundreds of Balinese, Javanese, Batavians, Timorese, Buginese,

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<sup>22</sup> Bernhard Dahm, *History of Indonesia in the twentieth century* (London: Pall Mall Press Ltd, 1971), 11.

<sup>23</sup> Jan Lingard, *Refugees and rebels: Indonesian exiles in Australia* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), 1.

<sup>24</sup> George, *Australia and the Indonesian revolution*; Frank Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles: Australia's repatriation of the Indonesians, 1945-47* (Clayton, Vic.: Monash Asia Institute, 2003).

and Ambonese soldiers'.<sup>25</sup> After this indication, she continued to write about the history of the people of Indonesia. For instance, when discussing the Dutch fleet's arrival in 1595, she referred to the 'newcomers' as the Dutch and the 'local people' as Indonesians.<sup>26</sup>

In his article 'The Indisch Dutch in Post-War Australia', Joost Coté defined a Dutch person in relation to the NEI as 'Dutch nationals who happened to be in the Dutch East Indies just before the war and were thus caught up in the Japanese occupation with otherwise little identification with the colony'.<sup>27</sup> He described the different groups within the NEI society; he started with defining the Dutch-*Indisch* population. This is a group of Dutch-Indies residents who were born in the NEI and had been living in the area for several generations; they could be Dutch nationals of mixed European and Indonesian heritage or 'white' Dutch. The author, like Lingard, mentioned the White Australia policy in his article: 'continuing colonialist sentiments within Australia that had long supported British and Dutch imperialism in Asia continued to support a vision of a "white Australia" that initially prevented *Indisch* Dutch "of colour" from entering the country'. When Coté wrote about the Dutch, he was referring to white, European-like people; he also noted that the Dutch-*Indisch* group were a diversified group of white Europeans and mixed European-Indonesian people and that Indonesians were 'the rest'—most likely non-white people whose families had been living on the islands of the Indies for centuries.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, Evert van Imhoff and Gijs Beets attempted to define the existing groups from the NEI. Like Coté, they identified an Indo-Dutch group, a migrant group comprising Europeans, Asians and persons of mixed European-Asian blood. According to the authors, 'the first-generation Indo-Dutch population is defined as those who either were Dutch and at some stage left Indonesia, or were non-Dutch Indonesians and at some stage adopted Dutch nationality'.<sup>29</sup> They added that this group of Indo-Dutch people was the leading group leaving for the Netherlands and countries like Australia after the war, but were the 'wartime non-Dutch': 'persons who during or after the war resided in the

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<sup>25</sup> Jean Gelman Taylor, *Indonesia: peoples and histories* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), xviii.

<sup>26</sup> Taylor, *Indonesia: peoples*, 144.

<sup>27</sup> Joost Coté, "The Indisch Dutch in post-war Australia," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 7, no. 2 (2010): 104.

<sup>28</sup> Coté, "The Indisch Dutch," 105.

<sup>29</sup> Evert van Imhoff and Gijs Beets, "A demographic history of the Indo-Dutch population, 1930-2001," *Journal of Population Research* 21, no. 1 (2004): 47–48.



Indies and did not have Dutch legal status yet'.<sup>30</sup> They obtained that official status by settling in the Netherlands after 1945.

Finally, Robert Cribb elucidated when describing the ethnic status of Europeans that one might think that people in this group are only Dutch white people. However, that is not likely to be the case; according to Cribb, the boundaries were blurred: a child automatically acquired its father's status. Thus, if the father was of European background and the mother was indigenous, the child was automatically considered European.<sup>31</sup> And when interracial marriage was legalised after 1838, wives took the ethnic status of their husbands. Further, from the beginning of the twentieth century, Japanese men and women achieved the 'European' status.<sup>32</sup>

To continue in the line of authors like Coté, Van Imhoff and Beets, and Cribb, I will specify the different groups of the Indies as much as possible in my thesis; if the sources allow me to, I will differentiate between Dutch (Europeans), indigenous Indonesians, and Dutch-*Indisch* people. And where possible, I will certainly specify all other differentiated groups within the NEI laws of the 1930s, such as the Chinese Indonesians. However, when the primary and secondary sources do not distinguish between, for instance, Indonesians and Dutch-*Indisch*, I am limited in dividing the NEI society into just two main groups (i.e., Dutch [European] Indonesians and [indigenous] Indonesians), similar to what historians such as Lingard and other contemporary historians use in their books and journal articles.<sup>33</sup> These categories matter because it is essential that we understand who is included or excluded from these categories and why. I want to distinguish between these groups within NEI society because each group was treated differently by the Australian authorities. For example, Indonesians of European parentage received benevolent treatment, only receiving censure when they broke

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<sup>30</sup> Imhoff and Beets, "A demographic history," 51.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Indonesia*. (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), 12.

<sup>32</sup> A. Dirk Moses (ed.), *Empire, Colony, Genocide. Conquest, Occupation and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 427.

<sup>33</sup> As a comparison, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the 1940s Australian governments distinguished two groups of inhabitants: 'Race. — The people of Australia may be classified into two groups with respect to racial characteristics, namely, non-indigenous and indigenous. The former group comprises the European and other races who have migrated to Australia and their descendants born in Australia, while the latter group consists of the full-blood aboriginal natives of Australia whose estimated number at 30th June, 1944, were 47,014, but who are not included in the general population figures of Australia. The non-indigenous population of Australia is fundamentally British in race and nationality': Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Chapter XIV: Population', in *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 36.—1944-45* (Cat. no. 1301.0), 486.  
[https://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/C08D5297FE422166CA257AF30012822C/\\$File/13010\\_1944-45\\_section\\_14.pdf](https://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/C08D5297FE422166CA257AF30012822C/$File/13010_1944-45_section_14.pdf).

Australian local and federal laws. In contrast, Indonesians were treated similar to enemy aliens.

### **Early Dutch East Indies history**

Dutch colonial history stretched over many centuries. It is necessary to provide a brief overview of the political and economic history of the country that we now know as Indonesia up to 1942 to understand the problematic relationships between the NEI, the European and Indonesian population, other Western countries and the Australian people. By having greater insight into the colonial history until the Japanese invasion of the Indies, it is easier to understand why groups of Dutch and Indonesians left the Indies at the start of the Pacific War and why the Dutch were so eager to return to their massive colony after the defeat of Japan. This short overview of the NEI history is written from a Dutch or Eurocentric perspective, in line with the historiographic trend that was in use in the Netherlands (at least until the 1960s).<sup>34</sup> As mentioned earlier, Raben affirmed in his oration speech that ‘The core of the problem is that the colonial history in many ways wrings with the nation’s one. Indonesia and Netherlands have created their own versions of that history’.<sup>35</sup>

The Netherlands ruled the Dutch East Indies colony for over three centuries, except for a few years in the early 1800s. The first centuries were a trade-related informal rule with only formal governance over certain harbour territories. The colonisers reigned over the remaining parts of the islands in the East; they signed treaties with local kings, princes and sovereigns rather than completely colonising the islands. As a result, the Dutch only slowly seized control of the more than 13,000 islands, taking different regions one by one as it suited their strategic and commercial interests.<sup>36</sup>

The Dutch sent their first fleet to the East in 1595. The Dutch East India Company [*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC)*] was established a few years later. This

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<sup>34</sup> G.J. Resink, *Indonesia's history between the myths. Essays in Legal History and Historical Theory* (Den Haag: W. van Hoeve Publishers Ltd, 1968), 16–17.

<sup>35</sup> ‘De kern van het probleem is dat de koloniale geschiedenis in veel opzichten wringt met die van de natie. Indonesië en Nederland hebben hun eigen versies van die geschiedenis gecreëerd’: ‘Wie Spreekt Voor Het Koloniale Verleden?’, *Java Post*, 14 November 2016. <https://javapost.nl/2016/11/14/wie-spreekt-voor-het-koloniale-verleden/#more-11793>.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Cribb and Colin Brown, *Modern Indonesia: a history since 1945* (London; New York: Longman, 1995), 5.

trading company is seen by many as the world's first privately owned multinational trade cooperation. During its heyday, the VOC sent over 86 billion guilders worth of goods from the East to the Netherlands in ten years.<sup>37</sup> The bulk of the money was made by transporting Indonesia's rich spices and other commodities like cinnamon, coffee and rich textiles.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, the VOC went bankrupt within two centuries because of increasing competition, war efforts and a lack of capital. The Dutch republican government took on the VOC's remaining possessions and its debts in 1799.<sup>39</sup>

During the Napoleonic Wars, Great Britain occupied the Dutch colony for a few years in the nineteenth century. The term 'Dutch East Indies' (or 'Netherlands East Indies' [*Nederlands-Indië*]) was introduced around the reobtaining in 1816. By then, the Dutch ruled large parts of the Indies but certainly not the whole of what is now Indonesia. Moreover, this did not mean that the imperial rule was fully established or that the control was never challenged. The Dutch Government still ruled the Indies mainly by negotiating and monitoring the native regents and indigenous leaders, which in turn controlled the local population. That is not surprising if one considers the small numbers of Dutch men residing in the East. The number of Europeans (military men excluded) in 1814 was estimated at roughly 2,000 on the islands of Madura and Java.<sup>40</sup>

After recapturing the islands from the British, the Dutch were more or less continuously involved in military activity in their Indonesian archipelago. The Dutch colonial forces were almost uninterruptedly at war with a range of indigenous enemies and on nearly all of the islands of the empire.<sup>41</sup> The last major colonisation battle lasted for thirty years: in 1873, the Dutch invaded Aceh, a region in the western part of the Indies that was officially named part of the Indies when it was declared pacified in 1903. Six years later (in 1909), the Dutch had established an integrated Indies territory.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> F.S. Gaastra, "De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw: de groei van een bedrijf. Geld tegen goederen. Een structurele verandering in het Nederlands-Aziatisch handelsverkeer," *BMGN* 91, no. 2 (1976): 254.

<sup>38</sup> Geertje Dekkers, "Schatten van de VOC," *Historisch Nieuwsblad* 11 (2015): 11.

<sup>39</sup> Jan M. Pluvier, *Indonesië: kolonialisme, onafhankelijkheid, neo-kolonialisme: een politieke geschiedenis van 1940 tot heden*, vol. 131 (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij Nijmegen, 1978), 14.

<sup>40</sup> Imhoff and Beets, "A demographic history," 48. Even in the 1930s the European population on those two islands was relatively small, estimated to be around 0.5% of the total population. See Liem, "De rechtspositie der Chinezen," 38.

<sup>41</sup> J.A. de Moor, "Afscheid van Indië? Counter-insurgency in Nederlands-Indië, 1816-1949," *Militaire Spectator* 177, no. 3 (2008): 136.

<sup>42</sup> Adrian Vickers, *A History of Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 10–14.

Upon regaining power over their Indonesian possessions in 1816, the Netherlands authorities focused their economic attention on the island of Java, which they saw as the key to obtaining wealth from the NEI. The government chose this particular island in the East because the conditions differed in Java; those in power realised its value as a lucrative area for plantations. Thus, in the nineteenth century, Java became the centre of the colonial empire of the NEI. In Java, the Indonesian independence movement was born, and the foundation of the future country was laid.<sup>43</sup> In 1926 and 1927, branches of the Indonesian Communist Party attempted to throw off Dutch rule. The Dutch suppressed this revolt, and the uprising leaders were sentenced to the Tanah Merah (Indonesian for red earth) prison camp north of Merauke in Dutch West New Guinea (or Irian Jaya as it was known in the latter part of the twentieth century). The communist ringleaders, their wives and families were interned in Tanah Merah until early in WWII. This group of internees was the largest group of Indonesians, comprising around 500 people, whom the NEI Government forcibly moved to Australia in 1943. Upon their arrival, they were re-interned on Australian soil in camps—for example, in Cowra, NSW, and Wacol, Queensland, the latter being the same area as where the NEI government-in-exile/Legation would reside in Australia during most of the war years.<sup>44</sup>

### **Dutch East Indies history in the 1940s**

In late 1941, the NEI Government, through then-Governor-General of the Indies Tjarda van Starkenborgh Stachouwer, declared war on Japan, and a few days later, the war broke out when the Imperial Japanese Army attacked the islands of the NEI. On 8 March 1942, Dutch Commander-in-Chief General Ter Poorten announced the unconditional surrender to the advancing Japanese army.<sup>45</sup> In those early months of 1942, many people from the NEI—European, Dutch-*Indisch* and Indonesian—fled to other countries, like Australia, mostly out of fear. The first group to leave the Indies to arrive in Broome were mainly highly placed KNIL officers, the wives and children of ships' crews and some service crews and pilots.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the people who had fled to Australia after the threat of a

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<sup>43</sup> Dahm, *History of Indonesia*, 8.

<sup>44</sup> Ross Fitzgerald and Graham Irvine, "The Tanah Merah Exiles in Australia," *Quadrant* 53, no. 11 (2009): 42.

<sup>45</sup> Lambert J Giebels, "De Nederlandse oorlogsverklaring aan Japan en het vredesverdrag van San Francisco," *Tijdschrift Voor Geschiedenis*, no. 1 (2004): 50–52.

<sup>46</sup> Nonja Peters, co-ordinating author, *The Dutch down under: 1606-2006* (Sydney: CCH Australia, 2006), 115–116.

Japanese invasion were not a cohesive group: the groups arriving in Australia comprised several groups of people with different professions, ethnic backgrounds and reasons to leave the Indies. However, though not one homogeneous group, those people did have something in common: to some level, they all feared the arrival of the Imperial Japanese Army and the possible effect that could have on their positions and maybe even their freedom. It is quite likely that several of these people had read and observed what happened to, for instance, the Netherlands military personnel after the German invasion, and they would be afraid to live through a similar experience.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to offer an exhaustive account of what happened to the different groups of people that stayed behind in the NEI territory after the surrender to the Japanese army. However, many scholars have written extensively on NEI history during the war years. They have researched the military actions in South-East Asia; everyday life in the NEI after the Japanese invasion; the forced labouring of prisoners of war (POWs), European Indonesians and other specific groups; and internment camps.<sup>47</sup> The war in the Pacific officially ended with the surrender of the Imperial Japanese Army on 15 August 1945. Only two days later, Sukarno, who would become the first president of the Republic of Indonesia, and Mohammad Hatta proclaimed the independence of Indonesia.

At the war's closing, the Dutch military high command and the government tried to re-establish Dutch colonial rule over the Indies, as will be further highlighted and analysed in Chapter 5. The Dutch Government thought the recapturing of the Indies would be essential for the reconstruction of the Netherlands; however, the Dutch needed the support of other countries like Great Britain and Australia to reinstate their military and administrative colonial power because the Dutch did not have sufficient manpower and combat power to do so in August 1945. In the early days after the surrender of the Japanese army, the British assumed responsibility for most of the NEI.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, the NEI Government needed the help of their allies to prosecute the Japanese

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<sup>47</sup> To name a few: L. de Jong, *The Collapse of a Colonial Society: The Dutch in Indonesia during the Second World War* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002); Remco Raben (ed.), *Representing the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia: Personal Testimonies and Public Images in Indonesia, Japan and the Netherlands* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1999); Henk Maier, Don van Minde and Harry Poeze, *Wisseling Van De Wacht: Indonesiërs Over De Japanse Bezetting, 1942-1945* (Leiden: KITLV, 1995); I. J. Brugmans, *Nederlandsch-Indië Onder Japanse Bezetting: Gegevens En Documenten Over De Jaren 1942-1945* (Franeker: Wever, 1982).

<sup>48</sup> Doug Hurst, *The fourth ally. The Dutch forces in Australia in WW2* (Canberra: Chapman, 2001), 132.

soldiers, merchant seamen and civilians for war crimes they had committed in the NEI during the Pacific War.<sup>49</sup>

The Indonesian Republic supporters tried to achieve their independence by battling with the British Army in cities like Soerabaja and afterwards with the returning Dutch and NEI colonial army.<sup>50</sup> With the help of predominantly Australian troops, the Dutch military managed to reoccupy many islands of the Indonesian archipelago (called the Outer Islands), some with and some without extensive fighting by the KNIL and other Netherlands armed forces. Nonetheless, the war was not continuous, and some rural populations were relatively sheltered from the battles, and local participation was sporadic.<sup>51</sup>

However, having mentioned this, between 1945 and 1949, a continuous campaign of military actions took place in many parts of the former Empire, in which the Netherlands Army launched two lengthy major military interventions, and enormous atrocities were committed by Dutch soldiers against Indonesians. These two critical and violent conflicts aimed to re-assert pre-war colonial structures, which were euphemistically termed *de Eerste en Tweede Politionele Actie* [‘the First and Second Police Action’] by the Dutch. According to Peter Romijn, the name in itself ‘Police Action’ suggests an obfuscation of the historical truth, as he documented that these atrocities transgressed limited warfare.<sup>52</sup> Thijs Brocades Zaalberg documented similar Dutch attitudes. According to this author, Dutch politicians and military high command had a tendency to frame this war in euphemistic and almost charitable terms—the two major military offensives were called *Politionele Acties* [‘Police Actions’] and the expression for the occupation of the regions that the Indonesians previously controlled was ‘bringing justice and security’.<sup>53</sup> So, the Dutch government called these war activities ‘police actions’ for political reasons, thus minimising their culpability. They claimed that ‘the military police was charged with merely police duties’.<sup>54</sup> As I have mentioned before, these were far more than simply two violent battles between the KNIL and the Dutch

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<sup>49</sup> Fred L. Borch, "In the Name of the Queen: Military Trials of Japanese War Criminals in the Netherlands East Indies (1946-1949)," *The Journal of Military History* 79 (2015): 93.

<sup>50</sup> Cribb and Brown, *Modern Indonesia*, 21.

<sup>51</sup> Mary Margaret Steedly, *Rifle Reports: A Story of Indonesian Independence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 8.

<sup>52</sup> Peter Romijn, "Learning on 'the job': Dutch war volunteers entering the Indonesian war of independence, 1945–46," *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, no. 3-4 (2012): 319.

<sup>53</sup> Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, "The Use and Abuse of the 'Dutch Approach' to Counter-Insurgency," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 6 (2013): 874.

<sup>54</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 254.

armies on one side and the independent Indonesians or Republican nationalists on the other. Scholars have recognised this elision. In contemporary scholarship, these wars are recognised for what they were; full-scale reoccupation warfare instigated by the Dutch military, the Dutch government, and KNIL troops. The term ‘Indonesian War of Independence’ is also used, to emphasise the continuous nature of these Dutch military attacks. In Indonesian historical articles on this period, the term most commonly used is ‘military aggressions’.<sup>55</sup> Some historians still refer to the ‘police actions’ in their work; for instance, Lingard referred to the first and the second police action a few times in her publication.<sup>56</sup>

During the late 1940s, several agreements were signed between the Dutch and the Indonesian independence supporters. The first major agreement was the Linggadjati Agreement in 1947, followed by the Renville Agreement in 1948.<sup>57</sup> During this period of protractive negotiations between the Dutch and the Indonesian Republic over the possible transfer of autonomy to the Indonesians, there was a large group of Indonesians, of whom many Indonesians were incarcerated in internment camps, still residing in Australia.

It took the Indonesian Republic over four years before the Dutch at last recognised its autonomy. Finally, in December 1949, the Netherlands Government signed the final covenant with the Indonesian Republic in The Hague, the Netherlands, although no agreement was reached over Dutch New Guinea (nowadays Irian Jaya).<sup>58</sup> The negotiations and the influence that this colonial war had on the relationship between the Netherlands and Australia will be extensively discussed in the final chapters.

### **Historiographical shifts on the Netherlands East Indies history in the 1940s by Dutch authors**

In July 2017, Christiaan Harinck, Nico van Horn and Bart Lutikhuis published a rather controversial journal article in *De Groene Amsterdammer*, ‘Our Forgotten Victims: Who

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<sup>55</sup> Susie Protschky, “Burdens of Proof. Photography and Evidence of Atrocity during the Dutch Military Actions in Indonesia (1945–1950),” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 176, no. 2-3 (2020): 241.

<sup>56</sup> See, for instance, Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 259 and 267.

<sup>57</sup> The Linggadjati Agreement (also known as the Cheribon Agreement) was discussed in 1946 and signed in 1947. Under this agreement, the Dutch recognised the Indonesian Republic as the de facto authority on three Indonesian islands in the west. The Renville Agreement was signed in January 1948 between the Dutch and the Indonesian Republic and is named after the US warship on which the negotiations were held.

<sup>58</sup> Dahm, *History of Indonesia*, 142–143.

Counts the Indonesian Dead?'<sup>59</sup> The authors argued that the war in Indonesia from 1945 to 1949 still played only a limited role in the Dutch historical consciousness. According to the authors, the crimes committed in the former colonies during the decolonisation period mainly were seen as 'our crimes, our blame and what to do with it', so very much from a colonial history from a Netherlands' perspective. The other participants in the decolonisation process, the Indonesians, remained underexposed and faceless in the Dutch story; without a true role in Dutch history, they are 'figurants', or unnamed participants, in the story.<sup>60</sup> The authors calculated the number of Indonesian victims or unidentified figurants during the '*Politioenele Acties*'; they estimated that 100,000 victims were the bottom limit, so these people were very much a part of the decolonisation, and they did not need to remain faceless. This analysis shows a shifting approach to this historical event; Harinck, Van Horn and Lutikhuis examined this historical event from a multiperspective or the perspective of the oppressed people and not much from a (Western) colonisers' viewpoint.

This journal article and other recent publications illustrate a gradual shift in the dominant intellectual tradition of the history of Dutch writing about the war. Until the turn of the century, most Dutch historical debates and publications about WWII have mainly concerned the European war. As a result, many scholars are most preoccupied with writing about either the Nazi Germany atrocities on the Dutch Jewish population and other minority groups within Dutch society or the conduct of Dutch politicians and administrators during the Netherlands' occupation and the liberation of the Netherlands. For Dutch historians, it is relatively easy to describe who could be considered 'good' or 'bad' in the occupied Netherlands, and it is easier to disclose the violence committed by others (i.e., the German enemy) than that by your own people. Willem Frijhoff described this limited, Eurocentric historical approach as the heroic self-image of the Dutch in WWII. He emphasised the Dutch historical view as one of resistance to Nazi domination and to the Dutch's role in the Holocaust. It is only relatively recently that these positive self-images have been challenged. Careful historiography contributed to changing the

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<sup>59</sup> Christiaan Harinck, Nico van Horn, and Bart Lutikhuis, "Onze vergeten slachtoffers. Wie telt de Indonesische doden?," *De Groene Amsterdammer*, no. 30 (2017).

<https://www.groene.nl/artikel/wie-telt-de-indonesische-doden>

<sup>60</sup> *In Dutch: De rol die de oorlog in Indonesië van 1945 tot 1949 speelt in het Nederlandse publieke historische bewustzijn blijft beperkt. ... Het gaat om onze misdaden in de voormalige koloniën, om onze schuld en wat daar nu mee te doen. De ander, de Indonesiër, blijft intussen zonder gezicht, zonder eigen rol in de geschiedenis, een figurant in het Nederlandse verhaal.*



collective memory in the Netherlands.<sup>61</sup> The Dutch University of Groningen's website describes the ongoing historiographic shift in the following way: the Dutch pride themselves on the commercial mentality and their Golden Age; they prefer not to talk about slavery and other downsides of the colonial period. But a decade ago, the university's website argues, this all changed. Perhaps this shift is partly generational. Ageing Dutch colonists have been passing away—their population is dwindling—leaving room for a more objective discussion.<sup>62</sup>

When Dutch historians in the twentieth century focussed on the Indies during the war years, they emphasised predominantly the Japanese brutalities. Their primary research angle has been on the histories of the many Dutch residents who were interned in camps all across the Indies and the liberation of the NEI. Moreover, if scholars wrote about the '*Politioenele Acties*', for example, this was all positioned as a part of a linear narrative explaining the end of the empire. Prior to the 2000s, prominent Dutch scholars largely ignored Indonesian politics and perspectives, such as the history of republicanism.<sup>63</sup> Currently, there seems to be a shift to a far more critical, objective and multifaceted approach in which the KNIL atrocities and the imperfections of the Dutch Government are manifested. Historian Gert Oostindie noted that this shift is due to the fact that the previous generation of colonial historians found the violence in the Indies to be a demonstrable risk, and Jan Bank thought a significant reason was that the Indies' violence was a very controversial subject, which affected the scientific debate.<sup>64</sup>

To put the size of the Netherlands forces in Indonesia into a broader historical perspective, historian Rémy Limpach compared the number of military personnel detached from Indonesia with the dimensions of other big armies in well-known post-war conflicts. In his article on extreme Dutch military violence during the Indonesian independence war, he stated that the *Netherlands Army* in Indonesia comprised about 200,000 men, which was quite impressive on its own. However, the author compared this

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<sup>61</sup> Willem Frijhoff, "The Relevance of Dutch History, or: Much in Little? Reflections on the Practice of History in the Netherlands," *BMGN* 125, no. 2-3 (2010): 21.

<sup>62</sup> Website Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, assessed 11 September 2018.

<https://www.rug.nl/education/scholierenacademie/studieondersteuning/profielwerkstuk/alfasteunpunt/subj/ects/onderwerpen/geschiedenis/nederlandse-koloniale-geschiedenis-en-geschiedschrijving>.

<sup>63</sup> Publications like Petra M.H. Groen, "Militant response: The Dutch use of military force and the decolonization of the Dutch East Indies, 1945–50," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 21, no. 3 (1993); J.J.P. de Jong, *De waaier van het fortuin. De Nederlanders in Azië en de Indonesische archipel* (Den Haag: SDU, 1998).

<sup>64</sup> nrc.nl, '*Iedereen Wist Het, Maar Niemand Kon Het Zeggen*', 16 September 2016.

<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/09/16/iedereen-wist-het-maar-niemand-kon-het-zeggen-4264914-a1521914>.

with both the armed forces in the French–Algerian independence war (1954–1962) and the US presence in the Vietnam War. He elucidated that this Dutch army in Indonesia was, in percentage, far more comprehensive than the French and US forces were in their wars.<sup>65</sup>

Despite a lack of public historical consciousness, there has been an enormous growth in the number of Dutch publications (books, journal articles and historical newspaper articles). On the topic of the history of the NEI, especially on the Indies during the war years until the signing of the Indonesian Declaration of Independence in December 1949, more publications appeared. Nearly all of these recent historical publications show a more or less general overview of the NEI in the 1940s, or they concentrate on a particular subject matter of the country, the occupiers and period.

### **The Netherlands, Netherlands East Indies and Australian literature on the Netherlands East Indies people in Australia, 1942–1949**

Many books and journal articles have recently been published about the NEI during and after WWII, with a few focusing on the Indonesian side of the decolonisation story. And many historians have written about the first-generation migrants and Australian-born citizens of German, Italian or Japanese descent (also known as the ‘dangerous’ populations) and their experiences during WWII in the Commonwealth. This section will highlight some valuable secondary sources concerning Australia’s relationship with the NEI between 1942 and 1949 and sources related to the internment of foreigners in Australia in the same period. I will analyse recent publications written by Dutch scholars, and I will end with publications written by English-speaking authors on this topic.

On the part of the Dutch scholars, the number of publications on the NEI in Australia is minimal. As far as I could ascertain, no Dutch scholar has recently published any books that specifically have Indonesians in the Commonwealth during and just after the war’s conclusion as their main subject. Australia’s relationship with the NEI, the NEI representatives in Australia, and the European and Indonesian residents are sometimes mentioned in publications but never as the book’s primary subject. Additionally, very few

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<sup>65</sup> Rémy Limpach, "Extreem Nederlands militair geweld tijdens de Indonesische onafhankelijkheidsoorlog 1945-1949, 'Brengeun erover en zo gauw mogelijk naar Holland'," *Militaire Spectator* 185, no. 10 (2016): 416.

Dutch scholars recently published any journal articles closely related to my research subject.<sup>66</sup>

A couple of recent books have been published on the decolonisation period and the '*Politionele Acties*'. These publications are well researched and essential to my research and offer insights into the position of the Netherlands and the NEI after WWII, the considerations by young Dutch men to join the military or to decline to fight in the Indies, and the NEI decolonisation concerning the war's aftermath and world politics. An example of a recent publication on NEI colonial history is *Trials for International Crimes in Asia*. In this publication, the author, Lisette Schouten, demonstrated that there were close to 450 war trials in the NEI between August 1946 and early 1949.<sup>67</sup> In the first few months after the *Proklamasi*, the NEI administration was keen to try those Indonesians, Europeans and Chinese who might have collaborated with the Japanese occupiers. Additionally, Schouten found that investigations were conducted and evidence collected. The first cases to be brought before the temporary courts-martial [*Temporaire Krijgsraden*] were those suspected of collaboration with the Japanese occupiers. The *Temporaire Krijgsraden* and the jurisdiction of these courts is one of my major research topics.

*De Indië-Weigeraars. Vergeten Slachtoffers Van Een Koloniale Oorlog*, published in 2015, is a book on the history of the young Dutchmen who declined to fight in the NEI colony after the defeat of the Imperial Japanese Army in August 1945.<sup>68</sup> In this book, Weijzen explored the personal reasons why Dutch men refused service, their treatment as duty deniers, the responses by the Netherlands Government and the public's perception of these conscientious objectors. He also critically analysed the existing secondary literature on Dutch objectors, almost all of which was written with some political perspective, according to Weijzen. This publication provides a glimpse into the ideas of the Dutch-Indies refusers, an ideal group to compare with the Indonesian soldiers abiding in Australia who refused to fight further in the KNIL. The book is also useful for a comparison between the Dutch reactions to refusers and the reactions of the NEI military high command in Australia. Further, the author is unsympathetic to the archival

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<sup>66</sup> A few articles in Dutch have recently been published on the topic, for example, Esther Zwinkels, "Gevoelige relatie: Indonesië," *Boemerang* 15 (2016).

<sup>67</sup> Lisette Schouten, "Colonial Justice in the Netherlands Indies War Crimes Trials," in *Trials for International Crimes in Asia*, ed. Kirsten Sellars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 76.

<sup>68</sup> Antoine Weijzen, *De Indië-weigeraars. Vergeten slachtoffers van een koloniale oorlog* (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Omniboek, 2015).

methods used by those responsible in the armed forces. He stated that ‘archiving at the armed forces did not have a high priority’.<sup>69</sup> His remarks regarding the archiving methods of the armed forces suggest how difficult it is to retrieve all essential transcripts of the Australian court-martial cases.<sup>70</sup>

Another book has recently emerged, a part of which is dedicated to my historical research area: *Driemaal Oost, François Van Aerssen Beijeren Van Voshol (1883–1968). Marineofficier, Koopman En Diplomaat*, written by his son, Marnix van Aerssen.<sup>71</sup> In this book, Van Aerssen’s life was reviewed; when François van Aerssen worked as a diplomat, he worked in Australia as the Netherlands Minister to Australia from 1942 to 1947 before becoming the Netherlands Minister in China. Although a large part of this book is about his time working and living in Australia, the (indigenous) Indonesians are unfortunately barely mentioned; the NEI and its people are mainly described in the context of, for example, post-war reoccupation and discussions on the black ban with the Australian authorities. Based on this book, one cannot develop great insight into the Indonesians’ lives, treatment and experiences on Australian soil. This publication comprised many notes, and it appeared to be well researched. Though looking more closely at the sources used, one should realise that it seems that the author only used newspaper articles and Australian secondary sources but no primary archival sources from the NAA or any smaller local Australian archives for his book.

Dutch historians researching Australia’s involvement in the independence of Indonesia have generally ignored archival materials in Australian archives; hardly any Australian archives are mentioned in their works. In contrast, while the Indonesian experience in Australia during WWII has provoked minor academic interest in the Netherlands, the subject received attention from English-speaking scholars (Australian and those from the US), like George, Lockwood, Lingard, Bennett Jr and Goodall.<sup>72</sup> All these scholars have published books on the NEI Government, the Indonesian merchant seamen, and the KNIL in Australia and the post-war decolonisation period in the Indies

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<sup>69</sup> Weijzen, *De Indië-weigeraars*, 17.

<sup>70</sup> Weijzen, *De Indië-weigeraars*, 17-18.

<sup>71</sup> Marnix van Aerssen, *Driemaal Oost. Francois van Aerssen Beijeren van Voshol (1883-1968). Marineofficier, koopman en diplomaat* (Rotterdam: Karwansaray Publishers, 2016).

<sup>72</sup> George, *Australia and the Indonesian revolution*; Rupert Lockwood, *Black armada: Australia and the struggle for Indonesian independence, 1942-49* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982); Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*; Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*; Goodall, *Beyond borders*.

in relation to the Commonwealth and I am building on the work of these prominent scholars.

George's primary focus was on the international developments and Australian (political) relationship with the Dutch East Indies after the war. In contrast, Lockwood's publication focused mainly on the developing relationship between the Indonesians—the seafarers—and the Australian unions and the black ban (the boycott) of Dutch vessels after WWII. Lingard's painstaking research has allowed us to see the extraordinary relationships between Indonesian refugees, seamen and Indonesians already residing in Australia before WWII, as her book concentrates on the whole group of Indonesians and the help they received from individual Australians and Australian organisations. At the same time, Bennet's work *The Return of the Exiles: Australia's Repatriation of the Indonesians, 1945–47* emphasised, as the title suggests, the post-war journey of Indonesians from Australia back to their home country on ships like *Esperance Bay*. And Goodall's publication focussed on the underexposed role of the Indian seafarers and other Indians, mainly living in Australia, who were heavily involved in the post-war Indonesian struggle.

These secondary sources have been, as mentioned, of much value to my research. However, these historians have not extensively used the National Archives of the Netherlands (NAN) in The Hague, any other Dutch archives or many additional valuable secondary sources in the Dutch language. None of these researchers seemed to have included the earlier mentioned De Vries archive on WWII military correspondence, or the valuable NAN's collections, such as on Australia's and the NEI negotiations on the camps in Casino and Lytton, or Hubertus van Mook's negotiations and correspondence with the Australian state and government officials.<sup>73</sup> The scholars consulted very few Dutch archival records and hardly any Dutch language newspapers were used as additional sources. These authors mainly utilised available Dutch sources when they appeared in the NAA and local Australian archives.

Dutch scholars have not yet published any substantial publications on this historical Dutch–Australian subject; in contrast to Dutch historiography, there has been

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<sup>73</sup> NAN, 2.10.17 Inventaris van het archief van de Procureur-Generaal bij het Hooggerechtshof van Nederlands Indië, (1936) 1945-1949 (1969), inv nr 1334, 'Stukken betreffende de massale dienstweigering van KNIL-militairen in Australië en incidenten in de kampen Casino en Lytton'; 2.10.45 Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Koloniën te Londen, 1940-1946 (1948) inv nr 530, 'Stukken betreffende de steunverlening aan Nederlandse onderdanen in het buitenland, Australië, 1942 – 1944'.

more interest in Australian–Indonesian history by Australian historians. The most recent publications in the English language relating to the indigenous Indonesians in Australia between 1942 and 1949 are predominantly journal articles. Some articles portray a select few Indonesians in great detail; in a limited number of publications, the Indonesians in the Commonwealth are the main research topic, though often the Indonesians are just mentioned in a paragraph as part of a broader historical research theme.<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, there exist some well-research publications on this topic in English. However, little, if any, recently published research exists on these Indonesian migrants to Australia and, in particular, when conditions became more favourable, their struggles to return to their home country. And, contrary to the authors mentioned earlier, like Bennett, Goodall and Lingard, most contemporary non-Dutch authors have demonstrated their use of some primary and extensive utilisation of the secondary sources in the Dutch language. In my opinion, this is a much-needed addition to the scholarly research on this underexamined topic. My research, however, goes further than that of these contemporary Australian researchers. I have relied heavily on Australian, Dutch and Indonesian primary source materials, such as intelligence reports, newspaper articles and, most importantly, correspondence by NEI, Australian politicians and high-ranking governmental officials, such as immigration officers, and a few letters written by Indonesians, living and working in Australia. The study ultimately intends to demonstrate, for the first time, the connection between the relevant Dutch archival materials—mainly written in Dutch and English, though also in other languages—and the existing sources in the NAA and other Australian archives to provide new insight into the extraordinary history of the European, but mainly Indonesians in Australia between 1942 and 1949.

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<sup>74</sup> See, for example, Sean Brawley, "The 'Spirit of Berrington House': the future of Indonesia in wartime Australia, 1943-1945," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 40, no. 117 (2012); Harry A. Poeze, "From Foe to Partner to Foe Again: The Strange Alliance of the Dutch Authorities and Digoel Exiles in Australia, 1943-1945" *Indonesia* 94, no. October (2012); Graham Irvine, "Legality and freedom: Indonesian internees in the Victory Camp, Casino, New South Wales," *Australia & New Zealand Law and History eJournal* (2011); Rosalind Hewett, "(Re)-migration: Indonesians of mixed descent and the journey 'home'," *Social Identities* 25, no. 3 (2019).

## Chapter 1: The Royal Dutch East Indies Army before 1942

The cut in personnel under the latest economic proposals amounts to about eighty-seven officers and over two thousand and six hundred non-commissioned officers and men, including three hundred European soldiers. These numbers are perhaps not important in themselves, but they increase in significance when it is borne in mind that they represent almost a tenth both of the whole Netherlands-Indian Army and of the European troops in the colony.<sup>1</sup>

The above quotation is part of a five-page letter written by the United Kingdom's (UK) Consulate-General Henry Fitzmaurice in Batavia in late 1932. This letter indicated the size of the KNIL army in the early 1930s and the army's ethnic composition. If one would extrapolate this letter's figures, it is reasonable to assess that the KNIL army comprised around 30,000 NEI men, Dutch, Indo-European, and Indonesians, in total. These estimated figures are supported by a KNIL's memorial volume published in the early 1960s; according to this publication, the colonial army comprised about 10,000 Europeans out of just over 30,000 professional soldiers in the 1930s.<sup>2</sup> So, the colonial military contained professional soldiers but also a large number of draftees.

The extrapolated figures may not sound especially impressive. However, we need to consider the relative size of the Netherlands. Here was a small country managing a massive empire: in 1930, the Netherlands only had 7.8 million inhabitants compared to the NEI, which had around 52 million. In that same year, only approximately 243,000 Europeans were living in the Indies.<sup>3</sup> These numbers and this comparison are essential to emphasise, as they partly explain why the NEI military high command in the 1930s, and even more so in the 1940s, was so hesitant to allow more 'native' soldiers into the KNIL. The racially motivated fear of the colonial-ruling Dutch can be explained by the fact that

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<sup>1</sup> NAA, A981, NETHE 18, Quote from a letter from the UK Consulate-General H. Fitzmaurice in Batavia to the Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office in London, 28 November 1932.

<sup>2</sup> F. Witkamp, (red), *Gedenkboek van het K.N.I.L. 1911-1961* (Amersfoort: N.V. Drukkerij G.J. van Amerongen & Co, 1961), 104.

<sup>3</sup> Imhoff and Beets, "A demographic history," 52; Evert van Imhoff, Gijs Beets, and Corina Huisman, "Indische Nederlanders 1930-2001: een demografische reconstructie," *Bevolking en Gezin* 32 (2003): 92–94.

StatLine, 'Bevolking, Huishoudens en Bevolkingsontwikkeling; Vanaf 1899', assessed 9 April 2021.

<https://opendata.cbs.nl/statline/#/CBS/nl/dataset/37556/table?ts=1528691272180>;

The group 'Europeans' consisted of Dutch and other Europeans (such as people from Belgium and Germany), but also Americans, Australians, Japanese and Egyptians, as they were all equated to the same legal group. See the Introduction chapter of this thesis.

at any point, the military-trained indigenous Indonesians, especially the Javanese, could try to overturn the NEI Government and colonial rule.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the Indies Army struggled to attract enough young men. The pool of potential recruits in Europe dried up, and conscription in the Netherlands made recruiting volunteers even more challenging. Years after military conscription became compulsory for all Dutch men in the Netherlands, compulsory enlistment was also introduced in the NEI. Article 2 of the Royal Decree of 1923 regulating military service in the NEI stated that ‘within the age ... all male inhabitants of the Netherlands East Indies who are Netherlanders shall be liable to military service’.<sup>4</sup>

But how did the army define the category ‘Dutch or Netherlands’? Were all men, Dutch *and* indigenous, considered equal in the colonial army? The NEI army was bilingual from its foundation. The indigenous recruits mainly spoke Malay, whereas most officers’ first language was Dutch, resulting in some communication problems.<sup>5</sup> Did any other major problems exist in the *Indisch* colonial army until WWII? To answer these questions, I will look into the earlier history of the army—later called the ‘KNIL’—and its origin. This chapter will be mainly confined to the land soldiers and their army superiors, although we acknowledge the existence of the marine forces [*Koninklijke Marine*] and later the air forces as well.

In this chapter, I will further explore the size and development of the colonial army to understand the reluctance of the Dutch to increase the numbers of indigenous soldiers, even though there existed a genuine threat of an invasion by the Imperial Japanese Army. As Bosma showed, ‘White European colonial soldiers cannot be considered of marginal numerical importance, even if, in some cases, colonial armies overwhelmingly consisted of indigenous troops’.<sup>6</sup> The growth of the NEI colonial army was substantial, both in the metropole and in the Indies. The reasons behind this expansion tell us much about the nature of Dutch colonial rule on the eve of WWII. Next, I will briefly compare this NEI army with other colonial troops and their problems, as it

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<sup>4</sup> NAN, 2.02.14, inv. nr. 7357, Inventaris van het archief van het Kabinet der Koningin, (1814) 1898-1945 (1988), 1932 mei 25-31; NAA, A981, NETHE 18, Translation of the first paragraph of the Royal Decree of 28 May 1923, from the Hague Despatch No. 27 of the 20<sup>th</sup> January 1932.

<sup>5</sup> Eric Storm and Ali Al Tuma (eds.), *Colonial Soldiers in Europe, 1914-1945: "Aliens in Uniform" in Wartime Societies* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 233.

<sup>6</sup> Ulbe Bosma, "European colonial soldiers in the nineteenth century: their role in white global migration and patterns of colonial settlement," *Journal of Global History* 4 (2009): 321.



might give insight into and an explanation for the Dutch struggles with their indigenous servicemen and the continuous debate regarding the conscription of Indonesians.

In the final section of this chapter, I will analyse the army's composition in the 1930s. This exposition is essential if we are to contextualise the problems that arose at the start of WWII. When the war broke out, the army had to transition from a 'fighting' army to a 'refugee' army residing in Australia. This KNIL refugee army, composed of European, Indo-Dutch, but mainly Indonesian soldiers, found a temporary base in the Commonwealth of Australia, a country historically not so enthusiastic about accepting non-white newcomers. The composition of the Royal East Indies Army in the pre-war years is crucial to examine, as it influenced the decision-making of the Army's high command after WWII. This chapter does not suggest that it was a fear of Indonesian troops outnumbering European soldiers in the KNIL that led directly to Indonesian internment in Australia. Rather, I argue that a new atmosphere of open revolt in Indonesia after 1945 scared the Dutch leadership, ultimately leading to the internment of Indonesians in Australia, the issue of political consciousness and willingness to revolt.

### **1.1 The colonial army recruitment in the nineteenth century**

Like their Netherlands counterpart, the KNIL standing army was established in the first few years after the Napoleonic Wars, although in the beginning, it was still part of the Netherlands Army, and at this point, it was not considered 'royal' yet. After signing the Anglo–Dutch Treaty of 1814, the British left most parts of the Indies, and the NEI needed armed forces to maintain order in the colony and to control and oppress the local inhabitants. This did not mean that the Netherlands wanted complete authority and direct rule over the whole of their colony; they still governed much of the archipelago by indirect rule. This 'rule of absence' was only abandoned in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

In 1818, the Indies Army comprised close to 10,000 men—with no army reserves—of which about half were locally recruited indigenous men. Only a year later,

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<sup>7</sup> Petra M.H. Groen, "Geweld en geweten. Koloniale oorlogvoering en militaire ethiek in Nederlands-Indië, 1816-1941," *Militaire Spectator* 182, no. 5 (2013): 253.

the army had grown to just over 13,000 men.<sup>8</sup> In the early days of the Indies Army, the ratio of Dutch to Indonesian regular soldiers was 1:1. With a clear intent for a racial segregation strategy, the NEI colonial army tried to keep the Dutch element dominant. They probably introduced this strategy because of a fear that indigenous soldiers might revolt. These military commanders were not convinced that local soldiers were loyal to the Dutch cause; they were less trusted and valued than their European counterparts. The military leaders had no desire to let the ratio of European to Indonesian soldiers deteriorate, although it was challenging to recruit enough Dutch European volunteers.<sup>9</sup>

When the Indies Army was first established, it only accepted long-term volunteers, and these had to sign up for a minimum of six years. The Dutch European recruits who signed up for the voluntary military service were almost exclusively unmarried men. It remains unclear if the military at that point comprised only European and *Inlanders* or also Dutch-*Indisch* men. One thing is certain: the number of Dutch-*Indisch* offspring grew substantially shortly after the arrival of large groups of European military personnel, partly because of the lack of European women in the colony. As the number of European women in the territory rose, European soldiers having Asian wives became socially unacceptable. Mixing with other races (i.e., non-white) became less accepted, especially for high-ranking Christian militaries, as it was considered not in accordance with Christian morality. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, racial discrimination grew substantially in the Dutch colonial world with the arrival of more white women. Eventually, it became illegal for a European military man to move openly with his *Inlandse* concubine in a public place.<sup>10</sup>

However, the military command in the Indies allowed the lower ranked European soldiers to openly live with an indigenous woman within the barrack walls.<sup>11</sup> The Dutch colonial minister Levinus Keuchenius even wrote a letter to the army commander in which the minister urgently invited the commander to make arrangements against the concubinage and the advancement of church attendance. On the other hand, some people within the NEI society thought that even living together with a 'native' wife was part of the way of life within the colonial world. The Batavia newspaper *Java-bode* articulated

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<sup>8</sup> Wim Willems (ed.), *Sporen van een Indisch verleden, 1600-1942* (Leiden: Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, 1992), 24.

<sup>9</sup> Gerke Teitler, "The mixed company: fighting power and ethnic relations in the Dutch Colonial Army, 1890–1920," *South East Asia Research* 10, no. 3 (2002): 2.

<sup>10</sup> 'Zedelijkheids-Gehuichel', *De Express*, 12 August 1912, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Willems, *Sporen*, 25; Ulbe Bosma, "European colonial soldiers," 333; Petra Groen, "Aan de rand van de tangsi. Het kazerneconcubinaat in het KNIL," *Militaire Spectator* 178, no. 3 (2009): 124.

this view: 'the concubinage if one would consider it an evil, necessarily follows from life in the colony'.<sup>12</sup>

In 1830, after the ending of the Java War (1825–1830), the Indies military apparatus shifted; the Indies Army had been granted an autonomous status and was no longer organised as part of the Dutch national military forces.<sup>13</sup> The army's recruitment problems remained, although the shortage of men was not problematic in the early years of the new colonial army. Recruitment though did not meet the military's needs. The Netherlands expanded their direct and indirect rule over the Indonesian archipelago to uphold their newly gained territory and execute the primary assignment of ensuring domestic security and order; the colonial army constantly needed more soldiers and officers, both native Indonesians and Dutch. Even as early as 1845, the Netherlands Government investigated possible solutions to the shortage of Indies Army personnel. The Indies Army needed between 1,000 and 1,200 recruits from the mother country each year just to maintain its strength. One of the introduced Dutch policies was higher pay to encourage the Dutch recruits to sign for the Indies Army.<sup>14</sup> Besides the constant expansion of their direct and indirect rule over Indies territory, the NEI government had other reasons for maintaining such a relatively large professional army to manage and dominate the indigenous Indonesians; the army was constantly battling local wars. Significant internal threats existed in numerous regional areas; for instance, in the 1870s, the army was desperate for new recruits because of its colonial war in Aceh.<sup>15</sup>

A factor increasingly hindering colonial recruitment during the nineteenth century was the growing social resistance in the Netherlands to the army service. While the Dutch national troops had a dishonest reputation, it was nothing compared to that of the colonial army, which regularly received public condemnation.<sup>16</sup> In the late nineteenth century, even a small movement in the Netherlands insisted on removing the appraising sentences on the contributions and achievements of the *Indisch* army from the Queen's yearly

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<sup>12</sup> 'Een Poging Tot Verbetering Van Den Zedelijken En Godsdienstigen Toestand Der Militairen in N.-Indië', *Sumatra-Courant: Nieuws-, Handels- En Advertentieblad*, 9 October 1888, 1; 'Nederlandsch-Indië', *Java-Bode: Nieuws, Handels- En Advertentieblad Voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 8 November 1894, 2.

<sup>13</sup> S.J. de Groot, "Gidsen, berichtbrengers, spionnen en krijgsgevangenen. Optreden in voormalig Nederlands-Indië, 1900-1949," *Militaire Spectator* 178, no. 1 (2009): 44.

<sup>14</sup> 'Nederlanden', *Provinciaal Dagblad van Noord-Brabant en 's Hertogenbossche Stads-Courant*, 7 February 1845, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Ulbe Bosma and Thomas Kolnberger, "Military Migrants: Luxembourgers in the Colonial Army of the Dutch East Indies," *Itinerario* 41, no. 3 (2017): 557.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Bossenbroek, "The living tools of empire: The recruitment of European soldiers for the Dutch colonial army, 1814–1909," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 23, no. 1 (1995): 38.

parliamentary opening speech.<sup>17</sup> The soldiers' reputation was described by NEI Commander-in-Chief Duke Bernhard van Saxe-Weimar Eisenach as follows: 'soldiers with a criminal record, deserters from the Dutch national army, drunkards, deserters from the Belgian and French armies and Germans, most of whom are rascals and tramps, and for whom the service in this colony is a last refuge'.<sup>18</sup> Kees van Dijk has shown that the number of foreign European soldiers in the NEI military force had been vast. According to the author, in 1900, almost one-fifth of all Europeans serving in the army of the NEI, some 3,000 soldiers, were foreigners. And their motivations for signing up for this foreign army had likely been the bounty they received on enlisting, similar to many Dutch young men. These soldiers wanted to escape the poverty in their home countries. Other European recruits might have been motivated by the chance to run away from the law.<sup>19</sup> The reputation of NEI soldiers, both from the Netherlands as well as from other European countries, was not dissimilar to that of other European soldiers in the East. According to author Victor Kiernan, when describing English soldiers in India just before the Great Mutiny (or Indian Rebellion) of 1857, the 'heavy drinking of crude spirits was the most common refuge from their hard lot. Under stress of crisis it worsened'.<sup>20</sup>

In the second half of the nineteenth century, solutions to the shortage of qualified Dutch personnel were diverse. The NEI military high command allowed young men from other European countries—preferably Belgian, German and Scandinavian youngsters—to register as well. Apparently, they were considered trustworthy enough.<sup>21</sup> As a result, about 20,000 non-Dutch Europeans and some US citizens signed up for the Dutch colonial army. Their reasons for signing up with this foreign army were likely to have been the payment received, the adventure of living and fighting in the East or maybe even to leave a desperate life or troubled past behind, as accentuated by the Commander-in-

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<sup>17</sup> 'Ons Indisch Leger en Indië in het Parlement', *De Locomotief: Samarangsch Handels- en Advertentie-Blad*, 30 October 1899, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Ineke van Kessel, "West African soldiers in the Dutch East Indies: from Donkos to Black Dutchmen," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 9 (2005): 55.

<sup>19</sup> Kees van Dijk, "The Fears of a Small Country with a Big Colony: The Netherlands Indies in the First Decades of the Twentieth Century." In *Armies and Societies in Southeast Asia*, ed. Volker Grabowsky and Frederik Rettig (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2019), 89-90.

<sup>20</sup> Victor Gordon Kiernan, *Colonial Empires and Armies, 1815-1960* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 24.

The Indian Mutiny was the first widespread, though unsuccessful rebellion or uprising against British rule in India from 1857–1859: The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Indian Mutiny', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, assessed 3 May 2021.

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Indian-Mutiny>.

<sup>21</sup> Bosma, "European colonial soldiers," 331.

Chief Van Saxe-Weimar Eisenach.<sup>22</sup> Other far-reaching measures were taken as well: to attract more Dutch volunteers, the colonial army raised payments in advance, shortened contract durations, broadened educational opportunities for the volunteers and improved their housing conditions. Additionally, the military generally lowered the criteria to sign up, and the ratio of Dutch to Indonesian soldiers drastically changed; at the establishment of the NEI army, it had been one European soldier for every Indonesian soldier.

After 1895, indigenous soldiers constituted the majority of the colonial army. However, in the early twentieth century, the official view of the army's high command became that a large proportion of native soldiers in the Indies army would weaken the colonial army. Van Dijk has noted from the 1913 '*Rapport van de staatscommissie voor de verdediging van Nederlandsch-Indie*', that 'for fighting a foreign enemy or for action in regions in the archipelago with a belligerent population, military experts had decided that no more than half of the troops should consist of native soldiers. It was also argued in the Dutch Senate that the colonial army could not be expanded by simply recruiting more soldiers from among the Indonesian population, as that would be detrimental to its fighting capability.'<sup>23</sup> Around 1930, this ratio of European soldiers to local soldiers changed again; it has been estimated that it was roughly 1:3. This ratio is very similar to other colonial armies; for instance, after the Great Mutiny, the British colonial troops in India comprised one-third European and two-thirds Indian.<sup>24</sup> The NEI officers' ratio, and probably that of the British officers in the Indian army too, was and remained unequal; it has been estimated that until the outbreak of the Pacific War, only twenty officers in the armed forces were considered Indonesian.<sup>25</sup>

The culture of the KNIL army was not simply defined by these numbers and ratios but also by evidence of a new mindset amongst indigenous soldiers, a new political consciousness and a willingness to revolt. The fear of a revolt was not based on any actual previous event; no KNIL uprising was recorded, as will be discussed in 1.4. Though, as an example of this altered mindset, the changing dynamics in the political arena in the country in the 1920s and 30s might be the reason for the baseless fear amongst Dutch and NEI political leaders. As Marieke Bloembergen clearly stated, when describing the NEI colonial problems, was the weakness of its legitimacy. As she analysed: 'This problem

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<sup>22</sup> H.L. Zwitzer and C.A. Heshusius, *Het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger 1830-1950: een terugblik* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1977), 12.

<sup>23</sup> Van Dijk, "The Fears of a Small Country," 91-92.

<sup>24</sup> Bosma, "European colonial soldiers," 321.

<sup>25</sup> Zwitzer and Heshusius, *Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger*, 11.

became even more salient in the 1920s and 1930s, when the colonial government faced growing opposition from nationalist organisations and, in the wake of the suppression of the communist revolts in Java and Sumatra in 1926 and 1927.<sup>26</sup> The nationalist organisations Bloembergen refers to were groups that participated in a Communist uprising, which led to the incarceration of many leaders in internment camps in Boven Digoel. Even though no direct relation between this uprising and the KNIL military could be established, the political elite could have imagined a connection.

Historians disagree over the precise number of Dutch Europeans who left for the Indies to serve in the colonial army. In total, in the nineteenth century, about 84,000 Dutch men and almost 5,000 officers left the Netherlands for the army in the NEI, according to Ulbe Bosma and Kees Mandemakers.<sup>27</sup> Bosma calculated that of those Dutch who survived their army years, nearly 20% stayed behind in the colony after completing their service; many of them easily found other types of employment.<sup>28</sup> In another article by Bosma, he estimated that around 154,000 colonial soldiers and non-commissioned officers served in the NEI between 1815 and 1909.<sup>29</sup> This number of recruits is similar to the estimations made by other historians. Gert Oostindie and Jeannette Schoorl assessed that between 1815 and 1914, approximately 160,000 young Dutch men (around 1.5% of the Dutch male population) left the Netherlands to take up military service in the Indies.<sup>30</sup> Martin Bossenbroek estimated roughly the same regarding the total number of recruits from all European backgrounds between 1815 and 1909: 176,250 European young men were recruited, of which almost 106,000 were considered Dutch.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Marieke Bloembergen, "Vol, meurtre et action policière dans les villages javanais. Les dynamiques locales de la sécurité aux Indes néerlandaises orientales dans les années 1930," *Genesis* 1, no. 86 (2012), 10.

<sup>27</sup> Ulbe Bosma and Kees Mandemakers, "Indiëgangsters: sociale herkomst en migratiemotieven (1830-1950). Een onderzoek op basis van de Historische Steekproef Nederlandse bevolking (HSN)," *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 123, no. 2 (2008): 165.

<sup>28</sup> Bosma, "European colonial soldiers," 325 and 331.

<sup>29</sup> Bosma and Kolnberger, "Military Migrants," 561.

<sup>30</sup> Gert Oostindie and Jeannette Schoorl, "Migratie tussen Indonesië en Nederland" *Demos* 26, no. 9 (2010): 12.

<sup>31</sup> Bossenbroek, "The living tools," 46.

**Table 1.1: Size colonial army/KNIL—estimated number of men<sup>32</sup>**

Year	Number	Year	Number
1819	13,000	1927	35,000
1860	26,500	1929	37,000
1873	28,000	1933	31,000
1898	38,000	1937	33,500
1900	42,000	1938	34,000
1918	37,000	1941	41,000

Nevertheless, all the far-reaching measures, such as improving the living conditions, changing the background ratio and accepting non-Dutch European personnel, did not achieve the outcome hoped for by the Dutch Government and military high command, the army remained relatively small (see Table 1.1). The army grew slowly in numbers and at the turn of the century, the NEI army consisted of just 42,000 soldiers. According to military historian Gerke Teitler, ‘By the end of the nineteenth century, the outcome of these efforts had turned out to be rather disappointing’.<sup>33</sup> As we will see, it was not only the composition of the KNIL army that changed in the twentieth century but also the political sensibility of the soldiers themselves.

## 1.2 The changing army in the early decades of the twentieth century

At the start of the twentieth century, the Netherlands’ position in the world was quite different from that of other European colonial powers. While Britain and France were still politically influential in Europe, holding stable and extensive colonial territories, the Netherlands’ economic and political power in Europe had faded.<sup>34</sup> Britain still ruled ‘half

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<sup>32</sup> Based on De Groot, "Gidsen, berichtbrengers," 44; C.A. Heshusius, *Soldaten van de kompanie KNIL 1830-1950. Een fotodocumentaire over het dagelijks leven van het koloniale leger in Nederlands-Indie* (Houten: De Haan/Unieboek b.v., 1986), 8; C.A. Heshusius, *Het KNIL van Tempo Doeloe* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1988), 20; R. L. Blom and T. Stelling, *Niet voor God en niet voor het Vaderland. Linkse soldaten, matrozen en hun organisaties tijdens de mobilisatie van '14-'18* (Soesterberg: Uitgeverij Aspekt, 2004), 736; Bossenbroek, "The living tools," 32–33; Groen, "Geweld en geweten," 255; NAA, A981, NETHE 18, page 125, Letter from the UK Consulate-General H. Fitzmaurice in Batavia to the Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office in London, 28 November 1932; Hurst, *The fourth ally*, 15; ‘Militaire Kolonisatie: Interview with Commander in Chief H.L. Lalau’, *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 16 February 1931, 2; ‘Defending Dutch Indies. 10,000 More Soldiers’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 June 1938, 11.

<sup>33</sup> Teitler, "The mixed company," 361.

<sup>34</sup> Gerke Teitler, *The Dutch colonial army in transition: the militia debate, 1900-1921*, Occasional paper, No 12, (Townsville: James Cook University of North Queensland, 1981), 1.

the world', and France administered countless Caribbean islands in the West to French Indochina in the East. While the Netherlands was still considered a colonial power—as they controlled Surinam, islands in the Caribbean and large parts of present-day Indonesia—their status as an imperial power had diminished.

According to a local NEI newspaper, on 1 January 1900, the Dutch colonial army comprised just over 15,000 Europeans below the rank of officer, of whom 3,100 were considered 'foreigners'.<sup>35</sup> During the first two decades of the twentieth century, several changes transpired in the NEI colonial army. First, the army's authorities realised that structural adjustments were needed because the group of potential soldiers from European countries for the standing army became ever smaller—partly because of the precursor and the outbreak of World War I (WWI)—even though the selection criteria remained quite strict. Another key reason for the shortage of Dutch volunteers was compulsory military service, which was introduced in the Netherlands at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>36</sup>

The Dutch Government tried to tempt recruits with higher pay as part of a subsidised volunteer program. Volunteers received a substantial sign-up fee of around 225 guilders, and they had to stay in the Indies for a four-year period. Some Dutch draftees, especially the unemployed ones, found this an attractive employment opportunity. Once onboard, many quickly regretted their decision, partly because the conditions under which the recruits were transported were deplorable: the soldiers' comfort was not the army's priority.<sup>37</sup> Once they arrived in the colony, many complained of health problems caused by the hot climate.

Numerous additional plans were proposed: establishing a European militia in the Indies (already in use on Java and some other islands), compulsory military service in the Indies for Europeans with Dutch nationality and expanding the veterans' reserve. However, in those early years of the twentieth century, mandatory conscription was determined not practically achievable, and the NEI Governor-General Willem Rooseboom even wanted to abolish the militias, regarding them as useless imitation armies.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> 'Indisch Leger', *De Preanger-bode*, 18 December 1900, 5–6. Dutch term for 'foreigners' used in the newspaper was 'vreemdelingen'.

<sup>36</sup> Blom and Stelling, *Niet voor God*, 734.

<sup>37</sup> Blom and Stelling, *Niet voor God*, 727–728.

<sup>38</sup> Teitler, *The Dutch colonial*, 13–15.



Other experimental ideas were launched to overcome the personnel shortage and raise the level of the standing NEI army generally. Until the start of the century, the NEI colonial army was strictly segregated: the European and indigenous soldiers had been concentrated in separate units. This was common practice in other colonial armies too. For instance, the French had large colonial armies from North African colonised countries and protectorates like Tunisia and Morocco (the *Armée d'Afrique*). These French troops had separate European and indigenous garrisons; many of these men were recruited locally, some of the soldiers were assigned to the colony.<sup>39</sup> The same applies to the British Indian Army: this colonial army was organised in different indigenous regiments. In the NEI army, the Dutch were kept apart from the soldiers from Ambon, and they, in turn, were kept apart from the Javanese soldiers. The idea was introduced to mix the different entities; the aim was to raise the army's overall quality and lower the European soldiers' casualty numbers. However, the Dutch mixing experiment failed; the authorities considered it not of practical use because of changed military circumstances, and in 1918 this plan was mostly abandoned.<sup>40</sup>

The Dutch Government did go through with introducing conscription in the NEI. It was first introduced on Java and Madura islands for 'male Dutch residents, not belonging to *Inlandse* or other groups equated with them'.<sup>41</sup> From 1918, all male inhabitants of the NEI who were Netherlanders were liable to military service: compulsory service was introduced for Europeans of Dutch nationality aged between 19 and 32 years and in the *Landsturm* for those aged between 31 and 45.<sup>42</sup> However, many groups within the NEI society, such as Chinese residents, were not liable for conscription in the NEI army.

Besides Dutch European men, Dutch-*Indisch* men could likely enlist in the military service too because *Indisch* could mean white Europeans and mixed European-Indonesian people. The Dutch East Indies' family law was divergent compared with that of many other European countries: children born out of a relationship between a Dutch man and indigenous woman (whether or not legitimised by marriage) were accepted as Dutch or as Dutch-*Indisch* (but not as *Inlands*), and these young men could conscript in

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<sup>39</sup> William T. Dean III, "The French Colonial Army and the Great War," *The Historian* 74, no. 3 (2014): 479 and 497.

<sup>40</sup> Teitler, "The mixed company," 366–367, 374.

<sup>41</sup> 'De Militie', *Het Nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 21 March 1918, 1.

<sup>42</sup> NAA, A981, NETHE 18, Netherlands East Indies Army: Military Service, page 99. 'Landsturm' is a Germanic term for a reserve force or militia.

the Dutch-Indies service.<sup>43</sup> However, these Dutch-*Indisch* young men were not trusted and appreciated by everybody in the mother country. Only a few years before the introduction of conscription in the NEI, the members of the Dutch Parliament discussed the *Indisch* budget. One of their speakers, the Social Democrat Henri van Kol, made it clear that trust was an issue. He said that when he was travelling through the Indies, he learned that the Indo-European race hated ‘us’, so in case of a foreign war, this *Indisch*-European element would become very dangerous.<sup>44</sup> No objection to this comment was recorded, according to the article in the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, one of the leading progressive newspapers in the Dutch East Indies at that time. Although other newspaper articles do not directly support van Kol’s comment with similar statements, van Kol’s opinion was likely shared by at least some others in the Netherlands Parliament. According to politicians like van Kol, trust in indigenous troops and *Indisch*-European soldiers and the fear of their lack of loyalty remained issues in the NEI army.

The question remains whether this was an idea held by a few Dutch politicians in the Netherlands Parliament or a widely accepted view. The mistrust of indigenous, *Inlandse* and, to a much lesser degree, *Indisch*-European military personnel was a recurring issue. The introduction of conscription for Indo-European and Indonesian young men remained a point of discussion spoken about countless times in the Dutch Parliament and by the NEI colonial rulers. The fear of an uprising or mutiny, similar to the Indian Mutiny, remained in the heads of many colonial rulers. Therefore, the complete mistrust of indigenous Indonesians—inside and out of the army—by the racist colonial powers at the turn of the nineteenth century until WWII was a reoccurring event. I am not arguing that a drop in the ratio of Dutch European soldiers in the army directly led to Indonesian KNIL incarceration in Australia. Instead, I suggest that the Dutch leadership was aware of a new political consciousness and political emancipation and read these ratios as proof that the Indonesians were becoming harder to rule and control. Adding to these tensions were the sensibilities of the soldiers themselves, who were more willing to revolt and resist, but did not do so directly until the outbreak of WWII, as we will see.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Willems, *Sporen*, 23.

<sup>44</sup> ‘De Indische Begroting in de Tweede Kamer’, *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 24 December 1902, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Frans Glissenaar, *Indië verloren, ramspoed geboren* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2003), 27.

### 1.3 The army's composition: Dutch, Ambonese, Menadonese, Javanese and other soldiers

From its foundation, soldiers in the Indies Army were recruited from all islands of the archipelago. The largest groups of local lower ranked soldiers were the Javanese, the Menadonese (from Menado in north-eastern Sulawesi) and the Ambonese (also known as Amboynese).<sup>46</sup> During the Aceh wars or expeditions (1873–1914) of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, for instance, the army's casualties were categorised partially by geographical or racial background, partially by rank. In a Red Cross document detailing the treatment of the war's victims, of the 471 military people mentioned, thirty-two were described as officers, 207 as Europeans, ninety-two as Ambonese and 141 as *Inlanders*.<sup>47</sup> Many other records from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries indicate a recorded distinction between ethnic groups within the NEI society by all constituents: the local administration and military staff differentiate between Dutch, Indonesians or Dutch-*Indisch* military people, as stated in the previously mentioned letter from the Consulate-General Fitzmaurice. The politicians in the state committee [*Staatscommissie*] in the Netherlands just before WWI discussed 'the expansion of the native element in the Indies army' and the Europeans in the army reserve.<sup>48</sup> In all social and political establishments of Dutch and NEI society, it appeared to be the norm to distinguish between Europeans and indigenous people and make a clear distinction between people from different islands of the archipelago.

Other military sources portray a very similar image of inequality and racial distinction. On the cover of one of their hand-written registration books on personnel who received military decorations, the colonial army visibly made a distinction: the book is called *Honour Decorations Inlanders (Natives)*. In this book, the army's administrators wrote down the soldiers' names, dates of births and military status and sometimes included their regional background, and this was explicitly mentioned if the soldier was from a Javanese, Menadonese or Ambonese background. For instance, in this registration book, we find many *Inlanders* with no specific regional specification. One of them is Wopodrono, a fusilier, generally described as *Inlands*, who received an EM (*Eervolle Melding*, Dutch for an honorary reference). Others, like Sergeant First Class Samin, were

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<sup>46</sup> Zwitter and Heshusius, *Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger*, 10.

<sup>47</sup> I realise that the total number should be 472 injured people, not 471, though I am referring to the original document that states that 471 militaries were injured. Hans den Hartog, "De militair-geneeskundige verzorging in Atjeh, 1873-1904," (PhD, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, 1991): 126.

<sup>48</sup> 'Verdediging van Indië', *Bataviaasche Nieuwsblad*, 31 July 1913, 2.

identified as Javanese in this army registration book; Sergeant Samin received an ONB (Orange Nassau Bronze medal). Then there are chronicled soldiers, such as J. P. Mampuk, who is described as a Menadonese sergeant second class who received an ONB as well. However, Menadonese soldiers are only mentioned a few times in this particular registration book. Finally, one other specific group of soldiers is mentioned in this handwritten volume: military personnel from the small island of Ambon. At the start of the twentieth century, the Ambonese community was relatively insignificant, but they were overrepresented in the NEI colonial army. One of them was Makylor, an Ambonese corporal, who, like Wopodrono, received an EM.<sup>49</sup>

Why were there so many young Ambonese men enlisted in the army? One reason may be that on Ambon—a part of the Moluccan islands—the vast majority of the population at the start of the century considered themselves Christian, which is in contrast to the many religions that were dominant on other larger islands. The Netherlands was from time immemorial predominantly Protestant and Catholic. As a result, Ambonese people may have felt more affinity with the Dutch administrative rule.<sup>50</sup> The military high command relied heavily on this spiritual connection, evidenced by a letter from 1931: ‘in the event of any serious trouble like a native rising, the Government counted especially upon the faithfulness of the Amboinese and Menadonese troops, who had been Christians for generations, as a set-off against possible disloyalty on the part of Javanese companies, which were composed of Mahomadans’.<sup>51</sup> So, the KNIL high command and the Dutch colonial rulers discriminated based on not only skin colour but also religion.

There are other identifiable factors that explain the overrepresentation of Ambonese and Menadonese recruits in the NEI army. On Ambon, education was widely available. The island had one of the highest literacy levels for both women and men in the archipelago: over 35% in 1920 compared with less than 10% on islands such as Celebes, Bali and Java.<sup>52</sup> Because of these high literacy levels, many inhabitants held government jobs in the colonial army and outside the military. The Ambonese and the Menadonese were, on average, paid better than other local soldiers, although not as much

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<sup>49</sup> NAN, 2.10.50, inv. nr. 831, Eerbelooningen Inlanders (Niet-Europeanen), Ministerie van Koloniën: Stamboeken en pensioenregisters Militairen KNIL Oost-Indië en West-Indië, pages 18 (Makylor), 19 (Mampuk), 32 (Samin), 38 (Wopodrono).

<sup>50</sup> Beets et al., *De demografische geschiedenis*, 7.

The soldiers from the (South) Moluccan islands were generally known as Ambonese/Amboinese.

<sup>51</sup> NAA, A981, NETHE 18, Letter from the British Consul-General J. Crosby in Batavia to A. Henderson, MP, no date.

<sup>52</sup> Cribb, *Historical Atlas*, 40.

as their Dutch or European colleagues. The Amboinese soldiers earned twelve cents a day more than Javanese colleagues.<sup>53</sup> The European soldiers kept their financial distance from their native counterparts; the reason for this discrepancy was that Europeans had to live up to different social standards, according to the military high command.<sup>54</sup> The reason for the distinctive difference in payment, and treatment, between the native groups was that the Ambonese and Menadonese held a privileged position as well, which was associated with the military qualities attributed to them.<sup>55</sup> This unequal payment seemed to disappear once the KNIL military personnel moved to Australia in 1942.

These military qualities and their association with particular ethnic groups appeared not to be an NEI-specific phenomenon—a similarity to the British Indian Army exists. The Martial Race theory dominated the recruitment in the colonial Indian army, at least until WWI. The theory holds that some Indian ‘races’ made better soldiers than others; in general, the lighter-skinned warriors from the mountainous areas in the colony were considered better soldiers than the darker-skinned inhabitants of the flat plains of the country. In addition, many army officers in both India and the metropole, as well as British politicians, believed that some provinces, such as the mountainous regions of Nepal and Simla, generated better warriors.<sup>56</sup>

The number of Ambonese men who signed up for the NEI army was considerable compared with that of other ethnic groups, such as the Javanese. The NEI army became an attractive career opportunity for numerous young male Ambonese, and many considered it an honour to become a soldier and serve in the colonial army. Other ethnic groups in the NEI had other reasons for signing up. Many young Javanese men registered to escape poverty; most of the Javanese recruits were landless peasants for whom the military was a source of income. In 1905, the Ambonese made up over 20% of the indigenous people of the NEI’s army, although the island’s population was only half a million compared with the approximately 30 million inhabitants living on the islands of Java and Madura.<sup>57</sup> Their share had dropped to approximately 12% in 1929. In that year,

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<sup>53</sup> Van Dijk, "The Fears of a Small Country," 117.

<sup>54</sup> Teitler, "The mixed company," 374.

<sup>55</sup> Hartog, "De militair-geneeskundige verzorging," 36; Van Dijk, "The Fears of a Small Country," 91.

<sup>56</sup> Kaushik Roy, "Race and Recruitment in the Indian Army: 1880-1918," *Modern Asian Studies* 47, no. 4 (2013): 1311–1314, 1329; Omar Khalidi, "Ethnic Group Recruitment in the Indian Army: The Contrasting Cases of Sikhs, Muslims, Gurkhas and Others," *Pacific Affairs* 74, no. 4 (2001): 521–522.

<sup>57</sup> Jeroen Touwen, *Extremes in the archipelago. Trade and economic development in the Outer Islands of Indonesia 1900-1942* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2001), 97; Hans Gooszen, *A Demographic History of the Indonesian Archipelago 1880-1942* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1999), 43.

around 18% of the colonial army was Europeans, but by far the largest ethnic group in the colonial army was the Javanese—nearly 45%, but they made up nearly 45% of the NEI population as well—the ethnic group that the Dutch were always most suspicious of partly because the majority of the Javanese were non-Christian, partly because of the sheer numbers.<sup>58</sup>

In the first part of the twentieth century, the Dutch colonial army was divided into three racial groups: the military personnel from the Netherlands, Europe and the Dutch-*Indisch* had the most prestige; in the middle stood the Ambonese and Menadonese soldiers; and the group with the lowest respect in the army was the *Inlandse*, mainly Javanese, soldiers. This racial and unequal division remained intact until the outbreak of WWII. However, at the end of WWI, discussions were held to abolish the treatment differences between Amboinese and Menadonese soldiers and their European counterparts.<sup>59</sup>

Deeply rooted fears of an uprising by the Indonesian soldiers were mentioned frequently by the military high command as a crucial reason not to attract more indigenous soldiers, especially Javanese soldiers. But was this fear based on historical precedent? As Jenkins has explained: ‘In the official and unofficial histories of the KNIL, five words appear repeatedly as shorthand explanations for the despatch of these troops: *onlusten* (unrest), *opstand* (uprising), *verzet* (resistance), *ongeregeldheden* (disturbances) and *moeilijkheden* (problems). In many cases, the words used fall well short of the mark. For much of the nineteenth century the KNIL was not simply suppressing unrest but engaged in open warfare against those sultans, rajas and minor princes (and their people) who refused to accept Dutch sovereignty.’<sup>60</sup> So, the KNIL was ordered to suppress these uprisings, described by the Dutch in at least five different understating ways, all over the Indies. The known stories related to *verzet* and *moeilijkheden* were all about the local Indonesians -and their local rulers- fighting the colonial army and the NEI government, such as the peasant rebellion of Ceribon in the 1880s.<sup>61</sup> No major mutinies within the KNIL army, revolts against inequality, underpayment, and discrimination have been mentioned in the nineteenth-century sources. So fears over an uprising *within* the army

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<sup>58</sup> Heshusius, *Het KNIL*, 20–22; Martin Thiry, "Colonial Police in the Dutch East Indies. The case of the Ambonese Armed Police (1897-1942)," (PhD, University of Hawaii, 2013): 74.

<sup>59</sup> Van Dijk, "The Fears of a Small Country," 117.

<sup>60</sup> David Jenkins, *Young Soeharto: the making of a soldier, 1921-1945* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusuf Ishak Institute, 2021), 127.

<sup>61</sup> M.R. Fernando, "Famine in a land of plenty: Plight of a rice-growing community in Java, 1883-84," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 41, no. 2 (2010), 307-308.

did not draw on clear historical precedent; these fears reflected a shift in the readiness of indigenous soldiers to resist and rebel.

No major insurrections by indigenous troops were recorded within the army in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; I have not discovered any official government statements in the archives or scholarly publications on significant rebellions within the KNIL before the turn of the century. Perhaps they took place in the twentieth century when the ratio of European vs Indonesian changed slowly from 1:1 to 1:3? A potential opportunity arose with the outbreak of WWI, as military and civilian anxiety rose, both in the mother country and in the NEI. Though the Netherlands and its colonies remained neutral and were not invaded by the Central Powers, it could have been an opportunity for dissatisfied soldiers to revolt against the white colonial rulers, as they might have been occupied with other pressing issues. Nonetheless, it appeared that the *onlusten* and *ongeregelheden* in pre-WWII NEI were predominantly people's revolts against the colonial empire, not so much revolting of low-ranked Indonesian soldiers within the KNIL. During the Great War, the uprising in Jambi and Palembang was a well-known domestic insurrection against the Dutch rule.<sup>62</sup> And one of the most famous rebellions after WWI was the Boerenopstand in Bantam (West Java) of 1926, where many insurgents ended up in a prison camp in Boven Digoel.<sup>63</sup> This group of revolters, and their Australian experience, will be further analysed in section 4.6. Known Dutch and NEI sources, such as the Dutch language newspapers, did not publish any stories on Indonesian uprisings within the army before WWII. But as mentioned before, a shift in attitude from the soldiers (and civilians), not so much the number of soldiers themselves, led to internment in Australia after WWII.

When the Imperial Japanese Army invaded the archipelago islands and defeated the KNIL, many European and Dutch-*Indisch* professional soldiers and even some Ambonese and Menadonese recruits wanted to flee the colony, but not all 41,000 members of the KNIL were able to do so. A small group of mainly European soldiers found refuge in Australia. Even when the NEI military high command had fled to Australia in 1942, they were still very conscious about the racial backgrounds of the professional and voluntary military personnel who had escaped with them. The KNIL high command and the Dutch colonial rulers kept the racial (and religious) distinction, and more or less the racial separation, very much alive in the Commonwealth.

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<sup>62</sup> Kees van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007), 453-454.

<sup>63</sup> Glissenaar, *Indië verloren*, 27.

Consequently, this racial division would become even more apparent after WWII had ended, as will be further analysed in later chapters.

#### **1.4 The army in the 1930s until the onset of the Pacific war: the growth of the Indies Army**

In Section 1.3, I discussed the unique composition of the KNIL army. In this section, the aim is to examine the growth of the nature of the KNIL army in the 1930s: growth in both armaments and actual men. Why did the Royal East Indian Army grow so rapidly? Why did so many join? How did the Indies high command manage to attract these recruits from both Europe and the Indonesian archipelago?

In the early 1930s, the Great Depression affected army finances, both in the Netherlands and in the NEI. The army budget reduction was noticeable. The NEI army had to deal with other problems too, including the continuing difficulty in attracting enough Dutch men to enlist. In 1931, the ratio of Dutch to Indonesian men had dropped to 1:3.2, according to General Hermanus Lalau. The same general pleaded for ‘military colonisation by Dutch recruited military personnel, preferably by married men with a farmer’s background’, although generally, it is very likely that local Dutch people in the Indies did not fully embrace the general’s idea.<sup>64</sup>

Though the Netherlands had traditionally been a country of neutrality and the Dutch colonial government remained persistently neutral during the interwar years, this did not mean that the Dutch and NEI army commanders closed their eyes to the economic changes and political shifts of the 1930s. In late 1931, Captain Feuilletau de Bruijn addressed the Society for the Study of Military Science on the subject of the maintenance of Dutch neutrality. He stated that maintaining neutrality in the NEI was so crucial because the significant problems of world politics lay unmistakably in the Far East. He made an important point when he argued that ‘Any proposal relating to the defence which took no account of the political constellation in the Far East and the geographical, economic and maritime situation of the Netherlands East Indies, would rest on an unreal foundation’.<sup>65</sup> The captain concluded his speech by stating that the Dutch safeguarded an

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<sup>64</sup> ‘Militaire Kolonisatie: Interview with Commander in Chief H.L. Lalau’, *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 16 February 1931, 2.

<sup>65</sup> NAA, A981, NETHE 18, Netherlands East Indies Army: Military Service, 14 November 1931.



immense territory with the aid of so modest a force. The main tasks of this modest force were more or less a police task and a military one: the colonial army in the 1920s and 1930s had to stay on stand-by to repel the first signs of aggression against the colony.

In the years after an official name change—the Indies Army changed to the Royal East Indies Army in 1933—the Dutch and NEI economies were slowly recovering from the global economic crisis. These financial difficulties affected military expenditure.<sup>66</sup> The recovery provides us with one reason for the extension of the army's expenditure; likely with Captain Feuilletau de Bruijn's endorsement, the army's budget was raised from 5% of the total national budget in 1935 to just over 7% of the same in 1939.<sup>67</sup> This signified that between 1934 and 1939, the Dutch Government had raised the army's annual budget from 120 million to 360 million guilders, 60% of which was allocated for the Royal East Indies Army.<sup>68</sup>

Besides the reason for slight economic recovery, the political parties in the Netherlands decided to amplify the military budget because of the threat of National Socialism in Europe and Japanese imperialism in the East. Several large Dutch military orders were placed in political friendly nations to update and enlarge the number of tanks, ammunition and military planes; however, many of these orders were never delivered, with one of the reasons for this being the outbreak of the war.<sup>69</sup> Although there were some deleted military equipment orders and late arrivals of several other military orders, the KNIL still quickly modernised in the second half of the 1930s. The army acquired thirty-nine modern US bombers and extra equipment for the increase in troops. The KNIL was relatively better equipped than was the Dutch military in 1940: the Indies Army had superior modern firepower (purchased mainly from Australia) and it possessed tanks and mechanised army units.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> The designation 'Royal' was issued almost from the foundation of the Indies Army; from 1836 the army was considered 'Royal', though in practice the army's name was only changed to the KNIL (Royal East Indies Army) in 1933, almost one hundred years later. The then-prime minister and former military officer Hendrik Colijn was the initiator for this official name change. Until 1933, the Dutch newspapers, when writing on a related topic, referred to the KNIL simply as *het Oost-Indisch Leger* (the East-Indies Army) or *Indisch Leger* (Indies Army), and Australian Government officials referred to the Dutch colonial army either as The Netherland Indian Army or The Netherland East Indian Army.

<sup>67</sup> Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek; rijksfinanciën 1935 and 1939, assessed 17 April 2019.

<http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication>

<sup>68</sup> H.T. Bussemaker, "De geloofwaardigheid van de Indische defensie, 1935-1941," *Militaire Spectator* 154, no. 4 (1985): 174.

<sup>69</sup> Zwitter and Heshusius, *Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger*, 9.

<sup>70</sup> NAA, A601, 402/24/31, Letter from the British Consul-General in Batavia H.C. Walsh, 16 November 1940.

The ethnic background of the recruits did not change substantially in the 1930s. As mentioned earlier, according to a KNIL's memorial volume, the colonial army in the 1930s comprised about 10,000 European recruits of just over 30,000 professional soldiers.<sup>71</sup> And the KNIL in the 1930s remained an army of very mixed composition: the soldiers originated from the Aceh in the West to Ambon, Dutch New Guinea in the East, and the NEI army had some African military groups as well. Further, the European-Dutch professional officers were mainly trained in their motherland at the Royal Military Academy, while the volunteer recruits received basic training, mainly on Java.<sup>72</sup> Thus, the precise compilation of the army in the 1930s and early 1940s appears unclear, although according to Loe de Jong, in 1937, the KNIL comprised almost 13,000 Javanese troops and close to 2,000 Sundanese soldiers, among other groups.<sup>73</sup> De Groot explained that the troops in 1937 comprised around 33,500 men, of which more than a third was from Java, a sixth from Menado and an eighth from Ambon. The remaining indigenous soldiers were from Sundanese, Timorese, Madurese, Boeginese, Aceh and Malay backgrounds.<sup>74</sup> In conclusion, one could say that it appears that the largest group of young soldiers in the KNIL was still from a Javanese background.

It was quite challenging to get out once in the army. The army needed as many men as possible, especially after the mobilisation. Although the total mobilisation of the Indies, for the first time in its history, was only completed in December of 1941, the country's lawmakers had anticipated the possibility of a mobilisation years earlier, and the NEI Government and army had developed strict discharge policies.<sup>75</sup> Reasons for discharge for military personnel under the rank of sub-lieutenant, according to General Order 1935 No. 11, were outlined as follows: 'during the time of the army's mobilisation, there will be no discharge granted for other reasons than mental or physical impairment, misconduct, the accomplishment of the age of 45 or other reasons that are for the Army commander to judge'.<sup>76</sup>

So, the army did not just need steel and armaments but also troops. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, when on tour in the Indies in 1938, Commander-in-Chief

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<sup>71</sup> Witkamp, *Gedenkboek*, 104.

<sup>72</sup> Marc Lohstein, *Royal Netherlands Indies Army 1936-42* (Bronbeek: KTOMM, 2018), 5.

<sup>73</sup> L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Nederlands-Indië I, vol. 11a, tweede helft* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsdrukkerij, 1984), 605.

Sundanese is a western part of the island of Java, with Batavia in the north: Cribb, *Historical Atlas*, 52.

<sup>74</sup> De Groot, "Gidsen, berichtbrengers," 44.

<sup>75</sup> 'Nieuws uit Indië', *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 13 December 1941, 3.

<sup>76</sup> NAN, 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Excerpt of General Order 1935, No. 11 by A.J.H. van Raaij, no date.

Lieutenant-General Murk Boerstra pleaded for ‘ten thousand native troops are to be added, as soon as possible, to the Netherlands Indies army’.<sup>77</sup> The commander was touring the Indies because he wanted to discuss the enlistment of indigenous troops on a larger scale in the Indies. Boerstra added that ‘this strengthening of the Netherlands Indies army closely follows a French decision ... to raise additional 20,000 native troops in French Indo-China’.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps Boerstra was looking at the French colonial army as an example of how to raise the number of recruits. As mentioned before, France had a long history of recruiting indigenous troops, such as the *Armée d’Afrique* and from French Indochina in Asia. In the 1930s, most French foreign colonial armies comprised French volunteers, French conscripts opting for colonial service and conscripted indigenous men.<sup>79</sup> Thus, Boerstra succeeded in his quest for more indigenous and Dutch military personnel in the KNIL, though the commander’s wish for a more significant potential of Indonesian troops was only partially granted. The Commander-in-Chief was very much interested in extending the army as fast as possible because of the imminent threat of the Imperial Japanese Army. Boerstra, like many of his fellow military leaders, were afraid of an invasion of the Indies.

In early 1941, a plan was introduced to have some limited indigenous conscription; the local men who might be eligible for conscription had to undergo a physical and medical examination, needed to already have an education and an occupation, and they received a family and a religious (Christian) background check.<sup>80</sup> Uji Nugroho Winardi argued that though the NEI Government had received a proposal from some Indonesian nationalists urging indigenous conscription, the colonial government had not shown a serious attempt to materialise conscription.<sup>81</sup> As a result, full indigenous conscription was not introduced, which many in the NEI Government considered a bridge too far; some politicians were afraid that indigenous conscripts might interlink mandatory military service to extend their political and civil rights. From the quite influential People’s Council came the continued cry for ‘the abolishment of the

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<sup>77</sup> ‘Defending Dutch Indies. 10,000 More Soldiers’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 June 1938, 11.

<sup>78</sup> ‘Defending Dutch Indies. 10,000 More Soldiers’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 June 1938, 11.

<sup>79</sup> The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The French Colonial Empire. Information Department Papers* (Welwyn: The Broadwater Press, 1940), 10–11.

<sup>80</sup> Uji Nugroho Winardi, "Siding with the Enemy: Reluctant Mobilization and the Colonial Anxiety, the Netherlands Indies in the Brink of the Japanese Invasion," *Lembaran Sejarah* 9, no. 2 (2012): 42.

<sup>81</sup> Winardi, "Siding with the Enemy," 69.

dualism in all services of the country, where it still existed, such as the government, the police and the army'.<sup>82</sup>

The quest for additional forces remained. One of the leading solutions was found in the expansion of the number of local guards, such as town guards [*stadswacht*] and country guards [*landwacht*], and the militia of volunteers. The total number of militiamen with basic training in the Indies rose dramatically in the 1920s and 1930s: from around 4,400 in 1922 to approximately 30,000 in 1938.<sup>83</sup> According to some Dutch political groups, these militiamen were not necessarily supported and appreciated by everybody in Indies society and the Netherlands. The illegal communist newspaper *De Waarheid* published in the occupied Netherlands stated in an article on the Indonesian militia and their treatment by the NEI Government: 'The Communists demanded that the Indonesian militia be formed, their own armed forces to defend the beautiful country against the Japanese devils. Though the gentlemen, who were in charge, refused'.<sup>84</sup> These indigenous volunteers would later become more or less the backbone of the voluntary army of the independence movement after WWII: the Indonesian independence movement that declared an independent Republic after the war's end.

On the eve of the outbreak of the Pacific War, the KNIL comprised over 121,000 men, if one would include local volunteer militia and other guards in this figure. In many parts of the NEI, groups of volunteer guards, named town guards [*stadswacht*] and country guards [*landwacht*], were established: around 25,000 men in total. The tasks of the *stadswacht* were, according to the authorities 'to take over defence duties in the large towns that would be otherwise absorb units of the regular forces'.<sup>85</sup> The duties of the *landwacht*, first established in Java, were 'to provide on each estate a small force of trained men to guard against surprise attacks by a foreign enemy, as by parachute troops'.<sup>86</sup> These guards had minimal equipment, especially in the beginning, and they had

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<sup>82</sup> 'Pleidooi voor een Zelfstandig Indie, Staatkundige Verlangens van den Volksraad', *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 28 October 1940, 1.

The People's Council (de Volksraad, 1916–1942) was an advisory council to the NEI Government consisting of indigenous people, *Vreemde Oosterlingen* and European members. The council was consulted on major NEI political and social issues.

<sup>83</sup> Willems, *Sporen*, 33.

<sup>84</sup> 'Indonesië in den Greep van Japan', *De Waarheid*, 16 March 1942, 2.

<sup>85</sup> NAA, A816, 19/305/101, Letter from the British Consular-General H.C. Walsh to the Netherlands East Indies Government, 14 April 1941.

<sup>86</sup> NAA, A816, 19/305/101, Written reply to British Consular-General H.C. Walsh by the Netherlands East Indies Government, 3 July 1941.

training ‘in accordance with their limited functions’.<sup>87</sup> The news regarding this defence of the NEI even made it to the occupied mother country. As can be read in an illegal publication from the Netherlands in 1941, the *landwacht* should have the same tasks as its city’s counterparts, the *stadswacht*. Every European member of the *landwacht* should have a member of the native population on his side. The article also mentioned that the army would soon provide weapons and training instructors for the *landwacht*.<sup>88</sup> Though the *stadswacht* and *landwacht* were (partially) trained by the KNIL just before the invasion by the Imperial Japanese Army, only approximately 41,000 men of the total 121,000 could be considered fully trained and equipped soldiers.<sup>89</sup>

The Royal East Indian Army proliferated in one decade, both in actual men and military weaponry. The politicians decided to spend more on the Dutch and Dutch Indies Army because of the political threats from countries such as Japan and the relative economic recovery in the mid-1930s. The Indies military high command managed to attract enough young men by further extending the compulsory conscription for some local men and diversifying the army’s roles.

## 1.5 Conclusion

From its inception, the colonial army in the NEI was a blended but separated mix of soldiers. The NEI army had great difficulty encouraging enough young Dutch men to register for the standing army in the East. The military high command wanted to keep the ratio of Dutch soldiers to indigenous soldiers 1:1. From the outset, politicians and other authority figures realised that this ratio was almost impossible to maintain. This was partly because of the army’s poor reputation and low status and partly because of the lack of potential volunteers in both the mother country and the overseas territories; in 1815, the northern part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands had a population hardly exceeding 2.1 million, and in 1900, its population comprised only 5.1 million residents.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> NAA, A816, 19/305/101, Written reply to British Consular-General H.C. Walsh by the Netherlands East Indies Government, 3 July 1941.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Stille Kerstmis in Indië’, *Vrij Nederland*, jrg 1, no. 23 (1941): 541.

<sup>89</sup> Hurst, *The fourth ally*, 15.

<sup>90</sup> In 1815, present-day Belgium was still part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; the residents from the southern Netherlands are not included in the number of residents. ‘5,4 miljoen Zuid- en Noord-Nederlanders in 1815’, CBS, 16 March 2015.

<https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2015/12/5-4-miljoen-zuid-en-noord-nederlanders-in-1815>; Statline, ‘Bevolking, Huishoudens en Bevolkingsontwikkeling; Vanaf 1899’, 9 April 2021.

Several policies in the Netherlands and the Indies were introduced to attract more volunteers: financial encouragement to become a long-term volunteer, better housing conditions in the Indies, more educational perspectives, shorter terms (terms dropped from being a minimum of six years to a minimum of four) and the signing up of volunteers from other European countries. The government and the military high command decided to adjust the ratio of 1:1; the demand to recruit more volunteers for a larger standing army was too great, and at the end of the nineteenth century, more indigenous soldiers were employed in the Indies Army than were Dutch and Dutch-*Indisch*. The largest groups of indigenous soldiers came from the islands of Java and Madura. Some other regions' islands were significant contributors as well, such as Menado and Ambon, where many saw their military service as a point of entry to a colonial career. These two Indies groups had military qualities attributed to them, such as their being 'elite' *warlike races*, although these qualities were not always factual.<sup>91</sup> The Ambonese soldiers were appreciated as a counterweight to the large groups of Javanese soldiers in the army mainly because of their religious connection with the mother country, as can be read in an 1886 newspaper article by army Captain-Instructor Munniks de Jong: 'together the Europeans, Ambonese, etc. counterbalance the Javanese element that is so abundantly represented in our army'.<sup>92</sup>

In the first part of the twentieth century, new changes were introduced to resolve the Indies Army's shortage: from 1918, all Netherlands men were liable to military service, and the ratio of Dutch to Indonesian men was anew adjusted. Further, other kinds of military service were expanded: more and more local men signed up for volunteer militias, and just before the outbreak of the war, the armed *stadswacht* and the *landwacht* were implemented on a larger scale. Nevertheless, the military high command and the Dutch Government always remained conscious of the ethnic backgrounds of these soldiers. Through every new policy, Dutch and NEI decision-makers feared an overrepresentation of non-Christian indigenous soldiers in the KNIL and the possible future consequences of that sizeable local Indonesian and perhaps also an Indo-European presence. The Dutch military high command read these ratios as evidence for potential insurrection. Adding to these tensions were the sensibilities of the indigenous soldiers

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<https://opendata.cbs.nl/statline/#/CBS/nl/dataset/37556/table?ts=1528691272180>.

<sup>91</sup> Teitler, "The mixed company," 363.

<sup>92</sup> 'De heer Munniks de Jong, Kapitein-Instructeur van de Barisans te Bankallen Schrijft in de Loc', *Bataviaasch Handelsblad*, 13 October 1886, 6.

themselves, who were more willing to revolt and resist, but did not do so before the outbreak of WWII.

After the declaration of war by the NEI and the invasion of the Imperial Japanese Army, many high-ranking officers from the Royal East Indian Army fled the country; some ended up on Australian shores, and relatively many white and European-Indies soldiers left the NEI. Once the army arrived in the Commonwealth, the racial distinction between European and Indonesian soldiers was kept alive, mainly because the KNIL high command made the ethnic distinction. However, the religious discrepancy or connection appeared to be less of a factor for the military once they left the Indies. Maybe this was partly due to the Commonwealth's White Australia policy that existed in the KNIL's new temporary country; this immigration restriction policy emphasised the difference in skin colour, although religion was a factor too, as can be read in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 2: Who is arriving in Australia? Temporary residents from the 1920s

Since then the Japanese Minister in the Hague has assured the Netherlands Government that, in case the Netherlands might become involved in war in Europe, Japan would respect our integrity, expecting other powers to adopt a similar attitude. This latter statement is considered in the Hague as being of a reassuring character.<sup>1</sup>

Tom Elink Schuurman, the Netherlands Consul General in Australia, relayed this statement made by Itaro Ishii, the Japanese envoy in the Netherlands, in April 1940. A month later, Nazi Germany occupied the Netherlands, and the Netherlands Government went into exile in England. Following these events, the Japanese authorities became convinced that their country had an equal right to profit from resources in the NEI, as did the defeated Dutch colonisers.<sup>2</sup>

At the outbreak of the Pacific War, events occurred according to Ishii's predictions. The Imperial Japanese Army did not attack the Indies. The Dutch themselves declared war on Japan directly after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. At that point, neither the Netherlands nor its colonies had been under direct attack by the Imperial Japanese Army or Navy. Moreover, not even the NEI's most prominent allies—Great Britain and the United States—had guaranteed its security.<sup>3</sup> However, according to Christopher Thorne, US President Roosevelt had already given a 'vital commitment' a week earlier; he had allegedly said 'that in the case of a direct attack on ourselves or the Dutch, we should obviously all be together'.<sup>4</sup> The Japanese empire invaded the Indonesian archipelago a few weeks after the NEI declaration of war on 8 December 1941.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Historical Documents 108, Letter from Mr T. Elink Schuurman, Netherlands Consul General in Australia, to Lt Col W. R. Hodgson, Secretary of Department of External Affairs, 22 April 1940.

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/historical-documents/Pages/volume-03/108-mr-t-elink-schuurman-netherlands-consulgeneral-in-australia-to-lt-col-w-r-hodgson-secretary-of-department-of-external-a>.

<sup>2</sup> Giebels, "De Nederlandse oorlogsverklaring," 48.

<sup>3</sup> Herman Theodore Bussemaker, "Paradise in Peril: The Netherlands, Great Britain and the Defence of the Netherlands East Indies, 1940-41," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (2000): 116.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher G. Thorne, *Allies of a kind: the United States, Britain, and the war against Japan, 1941-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 77.



One of the highest placed military commanders, KNIL Lieutenant-General Ludolph van Oyen, escaped the Indies three days before the capitulation. He fled with civil servants and government officials, such as Hubertus van Mook, who would announce the establishment of the NEI Commission—the new administrative body of the government-in-exile—and who would become the acting Governor-General of the NEI in Australia.<sup>5</sup> The NEI was forced to sign the capitulation on 8 March 1942, though some fighting continued on Sumatra until 28 March.<sup>6</sup>

I start this chapter with an overview of Australian migration policies in the decades before the outbreak of the Pacific War. This chapter will further investigate who arrived and how the newcomers were received. Was there Dutch and NEI migration to the Commonwealth in the 1920s and 1930s? And did a racial classification by the Australians exist, similar to that of the NEI military classes? In the first half of the twentieth century, the Australian Government was not well known for its tolerance of non-British subjects. However, it had a policy that was even less tolerant of non-white people, or as *The West Wyalong Advocate* in 1938 described it, ‘the Government’s general white alien migration policy’.<sup>7</sup> Did Australia’s pre-war immigration policies influence the arrival of newcomers, such as economic migrants and political and religious refugees? And did the GOC adjust its migration policies based on the changing world politics?

This chapter traces the early months of the Pacific War when numerous Dutch people, Dutch-*Indisch* and Indonesian citizens fled their home country and when many tried to find refuge in Australia. I focus on the following questions: Were all migrants from the NEI allowed entry, and on what basis were these decisions made? Did the White Australia policy hamper the admittance of some people from the NEI? If these non-white migrants were admissible, how were they treated by the Australian Government and by other NEI people? Finally, the closing pages of this chapter examine the White Australia policy, and the Australian labour movement will be examined from a NEI perspective. This international perspective is often overlooked and has been markedly absent from earlier scholarship on this topic.

Finally, I will explore the groups of indigenous Indonesians who were already living and working in the Commonwealth at the outbreak of WWII. First, I will

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<sup>5</sup> Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 11–13.

<sup>6</sup> Lohstein, *Royal Netherlands Indies Army*, 39.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Refugee Migrants’, *The West Wyalong Advocate*, 16 December 1938, 2.

reconstruct their reasons for living and working in another country and analyse not only the treatment they received from the Australian state but also their living conditions. Then I will determine what happened to them in the early months of 1942 and investigate if their lives changed under the new wartime circumstances.

## 2.1 Migration to Australia in the 1920s and 1930s

In the decades before WWII, Australia had been a country that attracted many migrants—mainly residents from the British Isles and other European countries. In 1933, only close to 85% of the Australian population was born on Australian soil.<sup>8</sup> The vast majority of these newly arrived residents were British subjects. However, due to the White Australia policy, not all new immigrants would become Australian citizens.<sup>9</sup> The (political) reasons for the introduction and development of the White Australia policy by the Deakin Government have been extensively researched by many scholars. It is outside of the scope of my research to comprehensively analyse the reasons for the introduction and conservation of this policy.<sup>10</sup> One of the consequences of the White Australia policy was that naturalisation was denied on the basis of ethnicity. The policy primarily affected Asian residents—such as Japanese and Chinese residents—even though members of this community had migrated to Australia around the time of the Federation.<sup>11</sup> Such a policy of exclusion was far from unique in this period: for instance, the US excluded Asians from entering their border.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> April 1921, Part III – Nationality’, in *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1921* (Cat. no. 2111.0), 209, assessed 6 October 2020.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/2111.0>.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘30<sup>th</sup> June 1933, Part XI - Nationality’, in *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1921* (Cat. no. 2111.0), 843, assessed 6 October 2020.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/2111.0>.

According to the 1933 census, 4,581,663 people were born in the country, 805,542 persons were born outside of Australia, and 11,507 persons did not register their country of birth.

<sup>9</sup> Australian citizenship did not exist for Australians until the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948* (Act No. 83 of 1948), and all Australians were considered British subjects.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Tony Ohlsson, "Myra Willard and the ghost of white Australia," *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 100, no. 1 (2014): 29–32; Jupp, "From White Australia," 207–208; Kate Laing, "The White Australia Nettle": women’s internationalism, peace, and the White Australia Policy in the interwar years," *History Australia* 14, no. 2 (2017): 222–223.

<sup>11</sup> Ilma Martinuzzi O’Brien, "Citizenship, Rights and Emergency Powers in Second World War Australia," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 53, no. 2 (2007): 209.

<sup>12</sup> Ann Bernstein and Myron Weiner (ed.), *Migration and Refugee Policies: An overview* (London: Continuum, 1999), 10.

Migration from the Netherlands and the Indies to Australia was limited across the 1920 and 1930s. In 1921, merely 1,617 Dutch people were living in the Commonwealth. This number dropped in 1933 to 915, of which 227 were considered Indonesian born.<sup>13</sup> By comparison, in 1933, over 17,000 Italians, just over 2,000 Japanese and close to 8,000 Chinese people were recorded as living in Australia. In that year, the Australian society comprised just over 6.6 million people and had increased by 23,314 residents from 1932.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, less than 1,000 Dutch people cannot be considered substantial. After 1933, the number of Dutch people did not grow massively either. A letter by Minister for the Interior John McEwen stated that in 1935, thirty-eight Dutch residents arrived in Australia; the following year, this grew to fifty-nine, and in 1937, seventy-nine Dutch people had arrived in the Commonwealth.<sup>15</sup> In comparison, the NEI's total 'European' population was about 245,000 in 1930 and grew to roughly 300,000 by 1940, both by natural birth and immigration.<sup>16</sup>

Distinguishing human beings based on race or religion was not only the business of Australia's migration policies but had been foundational to the NEI society as a whole and in the KNIL army as well (see Introduction and Chapter 1). These prejudicial categories persisted into the late 1930s and the early 1940s. For example, in a newly discovered and analysed letter, the Netherlands Consul General Elink Schuurman described a proposed visit to Australia by a NEI army horse transport detachment. According to Schuurman's letter, that group of men would first arrive on 6 July 1940 in Brisbane, continue their journey to Sydney and return to Brisbane in early August. On the role added to the letter, the arriving military personnel from the Indies were listed in the following way: Captain Parrée, Sergeant van Vulpen, Corporal Puijmbroek, Native Cavalryman Pandej, Native Corporal Wirjo alias Rampas and Native Gundriver Maran.<sup>17</sup> The family names, such as 'van Vulpen', suggested a white/Dutch European or perhaps

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<sup>13</sup> Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 58–59.

<sup>14</sup> Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 33.—1940* (Canberra), 534, 553, assessed 6 October 2020. The census did not explain if these 227 individuals were considered European, Indies (mixed race) or indigenous Indonesians. In the same census it was recorded that 99.2% of the population of Australia was of European race and just 0.8% of non-European (p. 554). According to the 1940 census, full-blood Aboriginal natives of Australia were estimated to number 51,557 as at 30 June 1939 but were not included in the general population figures of the Commonwealth (p. 553).  
[http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/612826AFFE127379CA257AF300119014/\\$File/13010\\_1940\\_bk33.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/612826AFFE127379CA257AF300119014/$File/13010_1940_bk33.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> NAA, A2694-380, Letter from J. McEwen to the Cabinet, 8 March 1938.

<sup>16</sup> Luttikhuis, "Beyond race," 547.

<sup>17</sup> NAA, A981, NETHE 18, Letter from Consul General of the Netherlands T. Elink Schuurman to the Minister of External Affairs, 21 June 1940.

Dutch-*Indisch* background. It could be that Australia's Government demanded this precise distinction by racial background, but the NEI army was at least more than willing and prepared to divide and label their (native) servicemen.

In the two decades before the war, the first signs of labour shortages in Australia surfaced. For instance, there was a shortage of domestic servants in Australia, especially in the warmer areas around Darwin.<sup>18</sup> The Commonwealth Government discussed the problems but was quite reluctant to increase assistance to non-British or European immigrants—mainly Jewish—domestic servants. Instead, they would try to encourage domestic servants to come to Australia if they had already worked in the UK. Some politicians recommended specific recruitment among the desirable 'white aliens', girls from countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands.<sup>19</sup>

In the 1930s, the Australian Government was slightly more concerned than they had been previously that the population needed additional skilled workers. In his letter to the Cabinet, Country Party deputy leader John McEwen maintained that the Dutch Consul General Elink Schuurman argued that the Netherlands migrants, particularly of the agricultural class, were a desirable type whose admission should be encouraged. The Consul General, who would later become the first Netherlands Minister to Australia, explained why he thought immigration should be stimulated. It was to offset, to some extent, the increase in the number of Southern Europeans settled in Australia. At the end of the letter, McEwen recommended that Dutch migration should indeed be encouraged, but 'that it is to be understood that the concessions referred to would only apply to skilled artisans or agricultural labourers; also, that they would not apply to persons of Jewish race'.<sup>20</sup> In Dutch newspapers and magazines from the 1930s, immigration to Australia, especially for people with agricultural backgrounds, was discussed regularly. The options and advantages of working in Australia were analysed and discussed. In an article in *De Boerderij*, the author especially praised the region north of Sydney and Queensland for good livestock farming opportunities. He had based his recommendation on a newly released Australian report.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> 'Domestic Help. Problem in Darwin', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 March 1938, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Eric Richards, *Destination Australia: Migration to Australia Since 1901* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008), 136.

<sup>20</sup> NAA, A2694-380, Letter from J. McEwen to the Cabinet, 8 March 1938.

<sup>21</sup> 'Australië', *De Boerderij*, jrg 24, Paaschnummer, no. 27 (1939), n.p.

Some Australian newspapers from that period, such as *The Sun*, seemed to generally agree with McEwen's racial motivation not to allow too many Jewish refugees onto the Australian shores. According to one of *The Sun*'s articles, most Jewish immigrants would not have any money, and most of them would have vocations that would bring them into competition with Australians in commercial employment. The newspaper ended this article by stating that the organised migration of these refugees in large numbers appeared to be impracticable and undesirable.<sup>22</sup> In general, there existed a genuine fear among many Australian labourers of economic competition from the refugees, Jews and non-Jews, in the aftermath of the worldwide Depression. The effects of the financial hardship resulted in a sentiment that the admission of refugees would result in an expansion of unemployment.<sup>23</sup>

In another statement by Minister McEwen, the need for skilled workers of the correct religious background and colour was emphasised. He once again underlined permits would be granted strictly in accordance with the Government's general white alien migration policy and that the welfare of Christian refugees after their arrival in Australia would be the objective of a government organisation that would assist them. He continued by stating that Australia's need was for people who would absorb its democratic system of government. The decline of the birth rate had intensified the urgency of the problem.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the minister would consider the application of skilled Christian refugees favourably and look after the welfare of refugees whom he thought had the right religion.

In the late 1930s, Australia had to deal with large groups of refugees knocking on its doorstep for the first time in its history. McEwen had received a letter from the High Commissioner regarding the US Government's request for cooperation to set up a committee to facilitate the migration of political refugees from Austria. McEwen had also received a request from the Australian Jewish Welfare Society to admit 500 Jewish migrants from Germany each year. The minister would approve the admission of 500 Jews from Germany to include those from Austria as well, but this admission was subject to policy and regulations of present migration to Australia.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, at the end of 1938, the minister McEwen seemed to favour admitting some Czechoslovakian refugees.

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<sup>22</sup> 'Refugee Migration', *The Sun*, 12 July 1938, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Suzanne D. Rutland, "Australian responses to Jewish refugee migration before and after World War II," *The Australian journal of politics and history* 31, no. 1 (1985): 40.

<sup>24</sup> 'Refugee Migrants', *The West Wyalong Advocate*, 16 December 1938, 2.

<sup>25</sup> NAA, A2694-380, Minutes from Cabinet Meeting held at Canberra on 8 April 1938.

Though as before, religion was a primary issue: the minister would consider new applicants from Czechoslovakia, but only ‘German Sudeten non-Jewish refugees’.<sup>26</sup>

In July 1938, Australian Government representatives attended the Evian Conference in France. This international conference was convened by US President Roosevelt to find a solution to the Jewish refugee problem in Europe and would lead to the establishment of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees.<sup>27</sup> Many countries in attendance saw Australia as a natural destination for these refugees; Australia was considered an under-populated country.<sup>28</sup> United Australia Minister Thomas White was one of the representatives, and he pointed out to the attending conference members that ‘a large inflow of migrants not of British stock would not accord with Australia’s policy’, though he concluded that he hoped the conference would find a solution to the tragic world problem.<sup>29</sup> In the end, the Australian Government accepted into the country just over 6,000 stateless refugees from Nazi oppression, although after the conference, the government had granted entry to 15,000 refugees. As Bartrop so evidently noted in his article on the Evian Conference, ‘The Evian Conference clearly demonstrated that the nations of the world, including Australia, did not yet fully understand the implications of what was happening in Germany in any terms other than their own’.<sup>30</sup> According to the papers, the Jewish refugees were selected based on their qualifications, profession, capital and health, and they were, most of the time, considered ‘enemy aliens’.<sup>31</sup> The massive consequences of this enemy status will be further analysed in Chapter 4.

Not all temporary residents received a negative response: some groups of migrants, soldiers and refugees were welcomed by the Australian people at the beginning of the war. For instance, Isabel Waller, a reader from *The Age*, wrote an open letter to the newspaper in which she stated that Australia should welcome the little orphans and poor mothers from the motherland with open arms; they would appreciate the kindness and grow up to be good Australian citizens.<sup>32</sup> A group of evacuated British children did arrive

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<sup>26</sup> Anna Rosenbaum, *The Safe House Down Under: Jewish Refugees from Czechoslovakia in Australia 1938–1944* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2017), 154.

<sup>27</sup> Shoah Resource Center, ‘Evian Conference’ (The International School for Holocaust Studies), assessed 5 October 2020.

[https://www.yadvashem.org/odot\\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206305.pdf](https://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206305.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> ‘The Evian Conference’, *The West Australian*, 11 July 1938, 18.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Havens for Refugees. The Evian Conference. Australia’s Attitude’, *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 11 July 1938, 5.

<sup>30</sup> P.R. Bartrop, ‘Australia’s participation and performance at the Evian Conference: integrity or shame?’, *ВЕСТНИК МГИМО-УНИВЕРСИТЕТА* 4, no. 61 (2018): 164.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Refugees - A Survey of Anomalies and Necessary Readjustment’, *The Sydney Jewish News*, 28 August 1942, 4.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Refugee Children’, *The Age*, 8 June 1940, 24.

at Brisbane Station in October 1940. The youngsters were welcomed by women and children waving flags and crowds cheering 'We're glad you are here'.<sup>33</sup> Fewer than two months later, a ship berthed in Brisbane carrying 175 British subjects and 150 Baltic refugees. This time, there appeared to be no large cheering crowd to welcome these newcomers, but a representative of the state government welcomed this group from Europe.

US soldiers had been arriving in Sydney and Brisbane since early 1941. They received a jubilant reception. The Parliament in Canberra adjourned earlier that day so that ministers, members of parliament, government officials and other civilians could take a special train to Sydney to welcome the US troops.<sup>34</sup> This warm reception made headlines in Australian and NEI newspapers.

Not all newcomers stayed in Australia after their arrival: a minority arrived in the Commonwealth and then continued their journey to other countries. For example, in the winter of 1940, the English vessel *Perak* docked, and forty-three Dutch refugees came onshore. However, only four people stayed in Australia; four others continued their journey to the US, and the other thirty-five sailed to Soerabaja in the NEI, where they disembarked on 27 August.<sup>35</sup> Some KNIL military personnel, who had arrived just before the outbreak of the Pacific War, continued their journey to other territories as well. For example, on 21 July 1941, the Department of the Interior received a memorandum stating that eight KNIL officers would arrive the next day in Darwin but would transit the following day to England and the US.<sup>36</sup>

These small groups of refugees and NEI military personnel seemed to be an exception for continuing a journey to another country. However, it appeared that the vast majority of the newcomers (military personnel, economic immigrants and refugees) stayed in Australia for at least a year. What happened to the NEI aliens, those European/*Indisch* and Indonesian temporary visitors to Australia during and just after WWII will be further examined in the subsequent chapters.

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<sup>33</sup> 'Brisbane Cheers Its Welcome to British Children', *The Courier-Mail*, 18 October 1940, 1.

<sup>34</sup> 'Amerika's Opvallend Vlagvertoon. Ontvangst in Australische Havens', *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 9 April 1941, 1.

<sup>35</sup> 'Vluchtelingen naar Indië', *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 28 August 1940, 2.

<sup>36</sup> NAA, A981, NETHE 18, a memorandum signed by W. Anstley Wynes, 21 July 1941.

## 2.2 The 1942 Netherlands East Indies newcomers in Australia: their reception and treatment

The number of evacuees that arrived in Australia from the NEI has been estimated to be around 7,000 to 8,000. This group of evacuees comprised approximately 3,000 to 5,000 Javanese, Ambonese and other indigenous Indonesian refugees.<sup>37</sup> Of all those NEI refugees, about 2,000 arrived in the early months of the war, and nearly half were KNIL personnel.<sup>38</sup> The majority of those early war evacuees were airlifted to Broome, Western Australia, and afterwards to other parts of Australia. Broome was chosen because of its relative proximity to the large Central Javanese naval base Tjilatjap, which was only about 900 kilometres away. Additionally, airlifting became the primary mode of transport because the Japanese navy had quite quickly cordoned off all vital sea routes from this area.<sup>39</sup>

During the heavy fighting, especially on Java, many highly placed NEI Government and military personnel saw no other choice than to leave the Indies for Australia. Fortunately for all these escaping NEI residents, the financial requirement known as ‘landing money’ was no longer required to enter. Until March 1941, all Dutch army officers and other officials visiting Australia had to be in possession of at least 50 Australian pounds. In earlier years, there had been an extensive discussion regarding the amount of landing money required. In 1938, *The Central Queensland Herald* mentioned that requirements might be submitted to the federal Cabinet to necessitate that landing money comprised 200 pounds for non-guaranteed aliens entering Australia to tighten up immigration regulations.<sup>40</sup> Almost a year later, the *Daily Mercury* even suggested that the Department of the Interior required most European refugees seeking to enter Australia to have landing money of at least 500 pounds.<sup>41</sup> Around the same time, in Dutch media outlets, such as *Zaans Volksblad*, the amount of 1,800 guilders landing money was mentioned, which was converted to about the 500 pounds revealed in the *Daily Mercury*.<sup>42</sup> In March 1941, though, the War Office suggested that this financial requirement should be waved in future because military personnel and other government

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<sup>37</sup> Glenn Nicholls, *Deported: a history of forced departures from Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd, 2007), 82; Peters, *The Dutch down under*, 117.

<sup>38</sup> NIMH, 237 De Vries, Disposition No. 3 by L.H. van Oyen, 23 March 1942.

<sup>39</sup> Peters, *The Dutch down under*, 115–116.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Landing Money?’, *The Central Queensland Herald*, 4 August 1938, 63.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Landing Money. £500 Now Required’, *Daily Mercury*, 8 February 1939, 7.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Een nieuwe toekomst in Australië? Jong land met grote toekomst’, *Zaans Volksblad*, 28 February 1939, 17.



officials could be in a situation in which they had to leave the NEI urgently. The War Office's recommendation was put into operation only a few days later.<sup>43</sup>

At first glance, it appeared that Australia's harsh migration policies of the 1930s were softened in early 1942: besides not having to pay landing money, the many groups of people from the NEI received a friendly, warm welcome from the Australian Government, according to official government sources and some researchers. Goodall has documented that Indonesians formed an unprecedented Asian presence in Australia from the start of the Pacific war from the moment when the Japanese Imperial Army invaded the Indies, and many Dutch and Indonesians were evacuated to Australian territory. These refugees were generally received with sympathy and understanding as they were considered victims of the war.<sup>44</sup>

One of the chief NEI Government officials who had arrived in early March 1942 was Hubertus (Huib) van Mook. Prime Minister John Curtin personally welcomed Van Mook and the other NEI leaders in March 1942. In a statement, Curtin praised the courage of the people of the NEI and their leaders, and he assured them generous sympathy and cooperation because they were allies.<sup>45</sup> Van Mook is an intriguing figure in the NEI-Australia newcomer's debate. One of the primary reasons I highlight him here is because he wrote a valuable eyewitness account of the arrival and treatment of the people of the NEI in the Commonwealth.

Hubertus Johannes van Mook was part of the NEI political establishment before the war. He was born and raised in Central Java in a Dutch European family; he went to secondary school in the city of Soerabaja and later studied at three different universities in the Netherlands. Van Mook returned to the Indies in 1918, where he became a civil servant like many of his Dutch peers. In his early thirties, he became Head of the Land Office in the Sultanate of Djogjakarta, and after this job, he became Deputy Commissioner of Police in the NEI capital Batavia.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, although he was part of the colonial political elite, his vision of the future of the NEI was not considered

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<sup>43</sup> NAA, A981, NETHE 49, Cablegram from the Department of External Affairs to the Australian Government Commissioner in Batavia, 10 March 1941; NAA, A433, 1941/2/1024, Memorandum to The Secretary of the Department of External Affairs from T.H. Garrett, 11 March 1941.

<sup>44</sup> Goodall, *Beyond borders*, 182.

<sup>45</sup> 'Guests from The Indies', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 1942, 8.

<sup>46</sup> Yong Mun Cheong, *H.J. van Mook and Indonesian Independence: A Study of His Role in Dutch-Indonesian Relations, 1945-48* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 8-13.

mainstream. Nevertheless, Van Mook advocated the view of independent development for the Indies.<sup>47</sup>

Van Mook became Director of Economic Affairs in the Netherlands Indies, and he became head of the Dutch delegation that carried negotiations with Japan in the months before the Japanese invasion. After the failed negotiations and the invasion by the Imperial Army, the defeat of the KNIL became unavoidable. Van Mook described the actions that were taken in the days before the capitulation in his own book as follows: ‘when defeat became inevitable, what remained to be done was the destruction of everything that could be of material assistance to the enemy, and the provisions of safeguards for the non-combatant population in case of enemy occupation. ... And when the last battles had been fought—the evacuation of everything that could sail or fly, and of most of the naval and air personnel’.<sup>48</sup>

Along with many other highly placed civil servants and the NEI political elite, Van Mook fled the Indies in 1942 and found refuge in Australia. In his temporary homeland, Van Mook established the NEI Commission, and he became the acting Governor-General of the NEI in Australia. Pat Noonan has argued that Dr van Mook headed the newly created Netherlands Indies Commission with Charles van der Plas as the Chief Commissioner for Australia and New Zealand and that the Commission was a de facto government-in-exile.<sup>49</sup> Lockwood described the NEI representatives in a similar way as he wrote: ‘The Netherlands Indies Commission, serving as the government-in-exile in Australia’.<sup>50</sup> Yong Cheong has demonstrated that the commission was not considered the same as an official government-in-exile by the London-based Netherlands Government.<sup>51</sup> Cheong’s delineation appeared to be more accurate, as the main discrepancy was that significant decisions made by the commission needed the approval of the Dutch Government in London. The NEI Commission was established in Melbourne with the primary purpose of looking after the interests of Dutch and NEI subjects. The

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<sup>47</sup> Albert E. Kersten, *Buitenlandse zaken in ballingschap 1940-1945: institutionele aspecten van het buitenlands beleid in een stroomversnelling* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Sijthoff, 1981), 307.

<sup>48</sup> H.J. van Mook, *The Netherlands Indies and Japan: Their Relations 1940-1941* (Aberdeen: The University Press Aberdeen, 1944), 113.

<sup>49</sup> Pat Noonan, "Merdeka in Mackay: the Indonesian evacuees and internees in Mackay, June 1943-February 1946," *Kabar Seberang* 24-25 (1995): 240.

<sup>50</sup> Lockwood, *Black armada*, 25.

<sup>51</sup> Cheong, *H.J. van Mook*, 26.

commission was eventually replaced in 1944 by the Executive Council for the Administration of the Netherlands East Indies, now located in Brisbane.<sup>52</sup>

In late May 1942, Van Mook was ordered to return to London, where he became the new Dutch Minister for the Colonies, a reconstituted ministry after the beginning of the war in Europe, and he remained in this position until February 1945. However, Van Mook returned to Australia before the end of his colonial ministry duties—when he was still in his capacity as colonial minister—to become the Lieutenant Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies in October 1944.<sup>53</sup>

After arriving in Australia in 1942, Van Mook wrote a lengthy document about the arrival and the treatment of other Dutch people and Dutch nationals in Australia.<sup>54</sup> This is a valuable document because it gives a significant insight into the migration of NEI civilians and military personnel in the last days before the capitulation from the inside perspective of a high-ranking political figure—a perspective that has mainly been underexamined until now. Like the official government documentation and Curtin's account, Van Mook explained that all people arriving from the Indies were admitted without formalities by the Australian Government. He did not once mention the restrictive immigration policies in his comprehensive document.

In his remarkable record, he described the composition of the arriving NEI people as follows: mainly marine and KNIL personnel and their families, civil servants, citizens from various countries, and government officials and their families. The NEI armed forces that made it onto Australian shores were placed under the Dutch army commander in Australia, who directly reported to Commander-in-Chief for the East.<sup>55</sup> Though Van Mook emphasised that families of the military personnel were evacuated as well, *The Newcastle Sun* reported on the many soldiers and government personnel who had to leave their loved ones behind: 'All have relatives in Holland or the Indies or both. Of the relative

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<sup>52</sup> Jan Lingard, "The Beginnings of a Relationship: Indonesians in Australia 1942-47," *Maenjin* 57, no. 3 (1998): 543.

<sup>53</sup> NIMH, 237 De Vries, 3 November 1944, Letter from Van Aerssen Beyeren to Prime Minister John Curtin.

<sup>54</sup> NAN, 2.10.45, inv. nr. 530, writing by H. van Mook to the Netherlands Prime Minister in London, 31 March 1942.

<sup>55</sup> NAN, 2.13.93, inv. nr. 19, Ministerie van Defensie: Legercommandant Australië, later Commandant der Nederlands-Indische Strijdkrachten, Inventaris van de archivalia, 26 May 1961.

handful of Servicemen and officials who escaped, few were able to bring their womenfolk'.<sup>56</sup>

The financial situation and compensation of some of the military personnel were described in Van Mook's writing as well. He indicated some new financial arrangements for the specific groups of newcomers. For instance, he discussed a solution in the compensation discrepancy between the Indonesian and European KNIL soldiers: a temporary financial arrangement had been planned so that the earnings for Indonesian and European KNIL military personnel were made even because the costs of living in Australia were higher than those of living in the Indies. However, the new wages were the same as those of their Australian counterparts. This is a remarkable inconsistency because before the war in the Dutch East Indies, the military high command had indicated that the European soldiers should earn more than indigenous soldiers. After all, Europeans had to live up to different social standards.<sup>57</sup> Apparently, this difference in social standards between European and other soldiers disappeared once they arrived in Australia.

According to Van Mook, the federal government would allow entry during the remainder of the war, and where necessary, employment opportunities would be opened up for non-whites as well.<sup>58</sup> According to an article in *The Age*, Van Mook extensively thanked the Australian public: he 'expressed gratitude and astonishment at the extraordinary manner in which the Australian people had responded to the appeal for help for destitute evacuees from N.E.I.'<sup>59</sup> As he described, this welcome seemed to be the Australian standard, as the newspapers wrote about similar treatments, at least for women and children arriving in Australia.

In January 1942, the War Cabinet decided to grant temporary admission into Australia to several alien European, Eurasian and Chinese women and children from territories who were subject to intense war activity.<sup>60</sup> In a memorandum to Australian customs officers, it can be read that specifically Chinese women and children arriving from the NEI under the authority of the British Consul General in Batavia might be

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<sup>56</sup> 'Dutch Allies Building New Strength in Australia', *The Newcastle Sun*, 9 June 1942, 2.

<sup>57</sup> Teitler, "The mixed company," 374.

<sup>58</sup> NAN, 2.10.45, inv. nr. 530, Minister van Koloniën 1940-1945, 31 March 1942.

<sup>59</sup> 'Aid for N.E.I. Evacuees. Dr. Van Mook's Thanks', *The Age*, 29 March 1942, 2.

<sup>60</sup> 'Chinese Evacuees Coming to Australia', *Macleay Argus*, 16 January 1942, 4.

admitted for the duration of the war if applicants had sufficient funds. Therefore, there was no need to issue certificates of exemption for these aliens.<sup>61</sup>

During the first months of the war in the Pacific, groups of Chinese evacuees did arrive; they had predominantly fled via and from New Guinea. After they reached their new temporary homeland, they spread out mainly to the state capital cities. For instance, one large group of women and children were moved to Burwood, NSW. In this Sydney suburb, the newly formed NSW Chinese Evacuee Committee assisted them.<sup>62</sup>

This racial and religious discrimination was, unfortunately, not new to Australia and would continue into the war years and long after: the Chinese and other Asian refugees, such as non-white residents from the NEI, were given a temporary place to live, though with the understanding that once the war was over, they would return to their own countries.<sup>63</sup> Labor Minister for the Interior Senator Joe Collings emphasised in early 1942 that the decision to admit ‘colored and Chinese women and children did not menace the White Australia policy. Those admitted would be of good character and must show that they would not become a charge on the State’.<sup>64</sup> The federal government also stated that they would give special consideration to the question of whether restrictions should be placed on the marriage of any of these refugees to Australians. It was considered undesirable that any ‘colour problem’ should be created by the refugees.<sup>65</sup> If these were Senator Colling’s exact words, it is fascinating to notice that according to *The Canberra Times*, a fellow party member of the minister, Senator John Armstrong, emphasised less than two decades later that ‘there is no such thing as a White Australia Policy. It is merely an immigration and economic policy which every country has’.<sup>66</sup> Even if one did not

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<sup>61</sup> NAA, A433, 1949/2/8516, Chinese Evacuees from the Dutch East Indies, Circular by the Department of Immigration, 5 February 1942.

Certificates of exemption gave permission to non-Europeans to reside in Australia temporarily for periods of up to seven years, for specific purposes such as study, business such as pearl fishing and family reasons. See Palfreeman, "Non-White Immigration.", 345–346.

<sup>62</sup> ‘House for Chinese Evacuees’, *The Sun*, 19 February 1942, 8.

<sup>63</sup> H.I. London, *Non-White Immigration and the "White Australia" Policy* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1970), 15.

As specifically stated in the *Immigration Act 1940*: ‘Conditions of Immigration into Australia. —(i) Immigration of Non-European or Coloured Persons. In pursuance of the established policy, the general practice is not to permit Asiatics or other coloured immigrants to enter Australia for the purpose of settling permanently’: Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘Chapter XVI: Population’, in *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 37.—1946-47* (Cat. no. 1301.0), 736.

[https://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/048881415E33DE60CA257AF30012E73C/\\$File/13010\\_1946-47%20section%2016.pdf](https://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/048881415E33DE60CA257AF30012E73C/$File/13010_1946-47%20section%2016.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> ‘Refugees from Indies Admitted to Australia’, *Army News*, 15 January 1942, 2.

<sup>65</sup> ‘White Australia Policy Stands’, *The Courier-Mail*, 15 January 1942, 4.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Denial of Australian Racial Bar’, *The Canberra Times*, 9 October 1961, 3.

consider this as a White Australia policy, the laws itself had a major influence on the Indonesians and other Asians who were temporarily residing in the Commonwealth and for those already living and working in the country before the start of WWII.

### **2.3 The Netherlands East Indies people already living and working in Australia: seamen and pearl fishers**

Indigenous seamen from the Indies had been disembarking in Australia for decades, mainly working as crews on KPM vessels. After the Imperial Japanese Army occupied the Indies, just over 20 KPM ships managed to reach Australian waters and berthed in harbour cities such as Sydney, where the company had its Australian headquarters, and Adelaide. At the time of the capitulation of the NEI army, the harbour of Fremantle was so full of NEI evacuation vessels that the Australian wharfies disdainfully called them 'The Flying Dutchmen'.<sup>67</sup> In historical sources, such as letters to and from NEI Rear-Admiral Fredrick Coster and by former KPM head agent in Singapore BS van Deirse, the groups of indigenous Indonesians working on those vessels were commonly described as Javanese, though it is unclear if these arriving KPM seamen were all from the island of Java.

In his statement in March 1942, acting Governor-General Van Mook wrote of a positive welcome from the Australian authorities. Did Van Mook maybe emphasise the welcoming treatment on purpose? Was this strategic? His lengthy document appears to be intended for internal purposes only; the acting Governor-General did not publish the paper, nor did he send the document to the Commonwealth Government. Nonetheless, in daily life, not all people from the Indies were desirable foreigners and not all fit into Australian society. At least as early as April 1942, some Indonesian seamen were prosecuted and sent to camps in Australia, such as in Cowra, NSW, for divergent offences. The seamen's convictions were related mainly to disobeying orders onboard commercial ships or being prohibited immigrants.

Australian newspapers wrote extensively about the Javanese seamen's convictions in the early days of the Pacific War. According to one of *The Argus's* articles, 146 Javanese seamen and stewards were sentenced to six months' imprisonment for being

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<sup>67</sup> Ford, "The Floating Dutchmen," 81.

prohibited immigrants because they had deserted their ships. The crew members would be incarcerated until the Dutch and Australian governments had decided what should be done with them.<sup>68</sup> A few days later, the editor of *The Argus* received a letter from Fredrick Baker, a Melbourne company owner and likely a reader of the newspaper, who responded to the published article. He was surprised about the reaction of the Australian court to Allied countries' subjects, and Baker wrote that he wondered whether the NEI Government was consulted before the charges were laid down against these men. Further, Baker did not seem to understand that these men could not be employed in some useful capacity in the time of a severe labour shortage. Unfortunately, it remains unclear what the response of *The Argus's* editor was to this letter.<sup>69</sup> However, Baker was not unique in his comments on imprisonment and labour shortage; some other newspapers and Dutch high officials expressed a similar incomprehension to this exceptional situation.

Two weeks later, *The Queensland Times* and several other newspapers reported that another group of sixty Javanese crew members who refused to work were sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labour pending deportation. This group was charged with being prohibited immigrants.<sup>70</sup> Just one day later, *The West Australian* published an article that a further 206 Javanese seamen were taken to the Water Police Court in Sydney, where some were charged as being prohibited immigrants and others with having disobeyed the commands of their officers. According to the newspaper article, although a small group had returned to their ships, others pleaded guilty and were sentenced to imprisonment.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, three months later, yet another group of Javanese seamen were charged with wilfully disobeying a lawful command of their captain, according to *The Cairns Post*. The article summarised the events as follows: 'The men had been ordered twice by the captain and when they disobeyed the third time the captain had sought authority to institute proceedings against them'.<sup>72</sup> The group was sentenced to one month in a Townsville jail.

The NEI Legation and highly placed military personnel responded that putting the crews in jail would not be an appropriate response. In May 1942, a meeting occurred with the Netherlands Minister Tom Elink Schuurman, Senior Officer Rear-Admiral Frederick

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<sup>68</sup> 'Javanese Seamen in Court', *The Argus*, 2 April 1942, 8.

<sup>69</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 45, Letter from Frederick R. Baker to the editor of the Argus, 17 April 1942.

<sup>70</sup> 'Javanese Seamen Sentenced', *Queensland Times*, 15 April 1942, 6.

<sup>71</sup> 'Javanese Seamen. Further 206 Charged', *The West Australian*, 16 April 1942, 4.

<sup>72</sup> 'Javanese Seamen Refused to Work Ship', *Cairns Post*, 18 July 1942, 4.

Coster, General Simon Spoor, van Deinse and others.<sup>73</sup> Their main conclusion was that locking up a group of seamen in a concentration camp would mete out what they deserve, but then no use would be made of the substantial number of men and their potential labour capacity, which was a similar response to that of Frederick Baker a month earlier. As an alternative, the NEI leadership suggested that the seamen should either be put under the command of Dutch officers or that these seamen should be sent to a New Guinea port where they would be useful as workers in the construction of aerodromes, providing highly valuable war work. Elink Schuurman and the other men concluded that to put the Javanese seamen under the command of the NEI military high command in Australia in order to militarise them, a Royal Decree from London—where the Dutch government-in-exile resided—was needed.<sup>74</sup> A third option was mentioned during the 1942 meeting as well: the Australian authorities could appoint every alien to any civilian duty desirable in the prosecution of the war. According to attending General Simon Spoor, this option was disregarded by these NEI officials because this would not lead to the militarisation of the crews.

The group decided on specific action points. First, the managing director of KPM in Sydney, Rinse Pronk, should be informed, and so he was. According to an addition to the minutes of the meeting on 12 May 1942 with the Netherlands minister, Pronk agreed with this decision to transport the crews back to New Guinea. The KPM would provide a short list of all names of those persons who had to be considered ringleaders or agitators, and this group should be repatriated first, according to Pronk. Within three weeks, the five most notorious ringleaders were shipped off to New Guinea.<sup>75</sup> Further, according to these minutes, contact should be established between the NEI Legation and the Australian Government or between Australian military authorities and the US Army to explain the situation and ask if the Australian Government could assist with the drafted plans. The consequences of the negotiations between all parties involved and the militarising vessels and crews will be further examined and analysed in Chapter 3.

Not only NEI senior officials but also Australian civil servants and politicians discussed what should happen to the Javanese seamen. Just a month after the meeting of

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<sup>73</sup> NAN, 2.10.45, inv. nr. 530, Minister van Koloniën 1940-1945, Minutes of meeting on May 12th with the Netherlands Minister, 12 May 1942.

<sup>74</sup> The militarisation of Indonesian crews would eventually occur, after a Royal Decree was issued in August 1943 stating that all Indonesian KPM crew members in Australian waters would be called into service as native sailors or stokers. See Chapter 3 of this thesis; NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 47, Proposal by Van Foreest, Van Boven, Kiès and Van Hoogstraten, no date.

<sup>75</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 45, Inter-Office memo by B.S. van Deinse, 28 May 1942.



the NEI officials, Edward Theodore, the Director-General of Allied Works, wrote a letter to Prime Minister John Curtin. In this letter, Theodore described meetings that had occurred between the KPM, the Director of Personnel, and the Water and Sewerage Board. Theodore received advice that arrangements had been made regarding some imprisoned Javanese seamen. According to Theodore, about 200 Javanese would be working for the board. They would do this work as a trial while living in a camp under the supervision of the Dutch authorities.<sup>76</sup> Rear-Admiral Coster agreed with these arrangements a few days later, accepting the camp's main guarding should be entrusted to the Australian army and not so much to the Netherlands Armed Forces.<sup>77</sup>

These groups of NEI seamen, predominantly KPM personnel, were the largest group of Indonesians in Australia, but they were not the only group of Dutch or NEI subjects who were already working in Australia at the outbreak of the Pacific War. For instance, there were NEI pearl fishers and labourers who were working in the pearling industry, mainly in the northern territories. Although this group comprised skilled Timorese divers, some divers came from other NEI regions like Netherlands New Guinea, and other countries, such as Japan and the Philippines.

The Australian Government prohibited the seamen's dangerous work once the government declared these northern fishing waters as militarised zones. Substantial numbers of the pearl fishermen were transported to cities such as Perth, Sydney and Melbourne to ascertain whether they were suitable and willing to work for KPM.<sup>78</sup> Consequently, though everyone in Australia might not regard the pearl fishermen as desirable foreigners, their reassignments were motivated by the war's course and not so much by their own actions. Therefore, these Timorese and pearl fishers from other archipelago islands did not make many headlines in Australian or NEI newspapers in the early 1940s.

Besides the pearl fishers and seamen, there were other tiny groups of Indonesians already living and working here and there in Australia, mainly in Queensland and Western Australia, before the war broke out. For example, at the start of the century, a substantial number of Javanese men were recruited as cane cutters for Far North Queensland's sugar cane industry. One of these men was a Javanese man called Assmah who had been living

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<sup>76</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 45, Letter from E.G. Theodore to J. Curtin, 12 June 1942.

<sup>77</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 45, Letter from F.W. Coster to E.G. Theodore, 18 June 1942.

<sup>78</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 45, Letter from F.W. Coster to the Board of KPM Sydney, 19 May 1942 and Inter-Office memo by B.S. van Deinse, 28 May 1942.

in Australia for forty-nine years, mainly in Liverpool Creek in Queensland, when WWII was about to break out in the NEI. Even though he had an exemption, he had to go to court to get his work permit approved. According to the newspaper *Johnstone River Advocate and Innisfail News*, the Australian Worker's Union opposed the proposal to extend him a work permit, but the Industrial Magistrate granted it.<sup>79</sup> The Australian Government has estimated that most of these Javanese men—about 90%—had returned after a few years working in the sugar cane industry, but a few stayed until the outbreak of WWII.<sup>80</sup> To conclude in Jan Lingard's distinctive words, 'this was likely the full extent of an Indonesian presence in Australia at different times prior to 1942'.<sup>81</sup>

Of all newcomers, such as the agricultural labourers and Indonesian veterans like the pearl fishers, the seamen who went on strike in early 1942 would be of the most concern to the Netherlands Legation. At the beginning of the Pacific War, the Australian Government and judicial system did not know what to do with all these foreign strikers. And they did not know where to imprison them. The strikers were first incarcerated in local jails. However, starting in July 1942, the first sizeable groups of indigenous Indonesian seamen were sent to a camp in Cowra in Western NSW because the local jails were overflowing with striking KPM seamen.<sup>82</sup> In the following chapters, I will further explore and analyse what happened to the incarcerated *Indisch* and Indonesian strikers, the seamen and military personnel after the hectic start of the Pacific War. I will also trace the lives of ordinary NEI civilians on Australian soil. I will examine how each group of newcomers were treated by Australian officials, review their legal rights in wartime Commonwealth and evaluate the collaboration between the Australian and NEI civil and military officials.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Before the war, less than 1% of Australian residents were considered from non-European background, although more than one in every seven Australians was not born in the

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<sup>79</sup> 'Javanese Granted Permit for Sugar Work', *Johnstone River Advocate and Innisfail News*, 7 January 1941, 4.

<sup>80</sup> Australian Department of Social Services, 'The Indonesia-Born Community', assessed 7 October 2020, <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-services/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries/the-indonesia-born-community>.

<sup>81</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 3.

<sup>82</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 23.

country. The principal restricting factor was of course the White Australia policy, or the *Immigration Restriction Act*. This Act that protected Australia's racial exclusivity affected many people arriving in Australia until the outbreak of the Pacific War. A substantial group of non-white migrants were denied entry; others had to apply for a special certificate of exemption. After obtaining a certificate, an alien was not expected to stay indefinite, and the foreigner could not become an Australian citizen like many other British subjects could. Similar racial and religious restricting laws and regulations prevented Jewish refugees from entering Australia in the late 1930s. This became very clear when the country attended the Evian Conference. However, Australia was not the only country hesitant to accept Jewish refugees: other countries used their unemployment rates and the world's economic situation as excuses for not accepting (more) refugees.

In the two decades before the Pacific War broke out, permanent migration from the Netherlands and the Indies was very minimal, maybe even negligible: only a handful of residents knocked on Australia's doorstep each year. Almost all those who entered Australia wanted to settle, and only a tiny minority used Australia as a stopover. This all changed when in December 1941, the colonial Governor-General Alidius Tjarda van Starkenborgh Stachouwer, on behalf of the NEI Government, declared war on Japan. In the first few months of 1942, thousands—including European, and Dutch-*Indisch* and indigenous Indonesian migrants—tried to find refuge. According to Van Mook, who became the Governor-General after the Imperial Japanese Army captured Tjarda van Starkenborgh Stachouwer, the reception was welcome and friendly, and no distinction in the treatment of ethnic groups was emphasised.

Finally, the groups of indigenous Indonesians who were already living and working in Australia at the outbreak of WWII, especially the Indonesian crews working on the commercial vessels, were of the most concern to the Netherlands Legation. Right from the start of the Pacific War, these Indonesians demanded the same treatment and payment as their European colleagues. At first, local courts in harbour cities and towns tried to cope with these crowds who refused to perform their work. In the second half of 1942, new strategies and laws were adopted that tried to force the disobeying Indonesian crews back to work. These crews would become a fundamental problem and liability for both the NEI and the Australian War Cabinets for the remainder of the war years. The Javanese and other Asian seamen who crewed the KPM vessels made up the majority of the NEI refugee subjects within Australia's borders. The presence of these seafarers within Australia's harbour cities would prove fairly decisive in gaining Indonesian

independence in the aftermath of the war.<sup>83</sup> As will be further examined in the following chapters, after the surrender of the Imperial Japanese Army, almost all Indonesian seafarers went on strike again with the help of many Australian unions.

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<sup>83</sup> Drew Cottle and Angela Keys, "Transnational struggle: Asian seafarers and the struggle for Indonesian independence in Australia" (17th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, Melbourne, 2008), 3.

### **Chapter 3: Jurisdiction over Netherlands East Indies military personnel, semi-military personnel and civilians**

2nd March members Netherlands Forces held in custody STOP Would appreciate urgent advice re suggested extension of order ... Dunstan Premier<sup>1</sup>

The Victorian Premier Albert Dunstan sent the above telegram to Australian Prime Minister John Curtin in April 1943. The date referred to by the Victorian premier is the date of an earlier telegram sent to the prime minister about the same group of soldiers. In this order, Dunstan is most likely referring to one of the Allied Force (Penal Arrangements) Orders. These orders were regulations on the treatment and the legal rights of Allied forces soldiers in Australia. This chapter will examine the legal rights of many of the Allied troops in Australia during the Pacific War, the distinctive legal status of US soldiers who arrived in large numbers in the early years of the war, and the complicated legal status of the NEI soldiers who found refuge on Australian territory and their judicial position within the existing Australian legal system. As discussed in the previous chapters, many NEI soldiers arrived on Australian shores just before and directly after the NEI capitulation. Similar to the discussion regarding the legal status of the KPM seamen, the legal position of newly arrived NEI servicemen had to be discussed. Should these alien soldiers register once they entered the country, and what was their exact legal status in a foreign country? Were they considered part of the Allied forces?

This chapter commences with a review of the international laws, regulations, and bilateral and multilateral agreements between Australia and its allies that existed at the outbreak of the Pacific War, such as the Allied Force (Penal Arrangements) Orders and the 1933 *Visiting Forces Act*. I do not provide an exhaustive account of all Australian and international criminal laws, but I have selectively focused on the laws I feel are most relevant to this thesis. One of the Australian Acts that will be briefly mentioned but not extensively explained is the *National Security Act (1939–1940)* and its Regulations: the

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<sup>1</sup> NAA, A1608, E45/1/11, Telegram from Victorian Premier A. Dunstan to the Australian PM J. Curtin, 6 April 1943.

Act that allowed the government to bypass normal parliamentary and legislative processes.<sup>2</sup> It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explain the full effect of this Act.

This chapter further clarifies the legal status of Dutch East Indies military personnel while in Australia: the status of those who did not break the country's criminal laws, as well as the changing legal status of those soldiers who committed crimes. I ask: in which cases and on what grounds were these refugee soldiers from the NEI bound by Australian civil and military laws? I also explain the changing legal agreements and strained relationships between the Australian authorities on the one hand and the NEI military high command and the Netherlands Legation on the other hand. This new NEI Government, first situated in Melbourne and later in Brisbane, was not a government-in-exile in the sense of international law and was not recognised as such. At the outset, it was created as a symbol, proof that the administering Dutch power regarded the defeat of its NEI territory only as a short-term loss. In no way were the authorities to suggest a permanent change of status of the Indies territories.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter also charts the changing legal status of alien merchant seamen: before the war, the sailors were part of civilian crews who navigated commercial ships for large companies such as the KPM; however, their 'job description' drastically changed in 1942. Finally, I interpret the international laws, negotiations and agreements regarding merchant seamen during wartime. Could these seafarers be regarded as semi-military or perhaps even as military personnel at some point during the war against the Axis powers? And, if so, what legal positions did these commercial seamen hold? As already examined in Chapter 2, many Indonesian and some *Indisch* merchant seamen went on strike in the early days of the war. Chapter 3 does not demonstrate their reasons for refusing to work on the vessels, as this will be explained in Chapter 4; however, Chapter 3 does indicate their changing legal status and their frequently poor treatment onshore and offshore.

The reviewed laws and agreements are essential for this thesis because they will, first of all, allow me to contextualise wartime Australia within an international legal structure, laws and policies that were ratified and would not have existed outside wartime. To what extent was Australia bound to the UK when it came to external affairs, and did

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<sup>2</sup> Liam Kane, Policing, Ill-Discipline, and Crime in the American–Australian Alliance, 1942–1945, *War in History* 28, no. 3 (2021): 4.

<sup>3</sup> Stefan Talmon, "Who is a legitimate government in exile? Towards normative criteria for governmental legitimacy in international law," in *The Reality of International Law. Essays in Honour of Ian Brownlie*, ed. Guy Goodwin-Gill and Stefan Talmon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

Australia develop international agreements and adopt conventions independently? Second, I will discuss the unique legal position of the Australian Commonwealth because this legal position is essential in understanding the extraordinary negotiations between the Australian Government and the NEI army and government officials in Australia. Such an unusual legal situation raises the question of whether Australia was entitled to negotiate the extraterritorial rights with a ‘refugee’ army in the first place. Were the NEI and its army even allowed to be on Australian soil?

Additionally, this chapter will review the legal positions, living circumstances, and working rights and conditions of newly arrived ‘aliens’. My emphasis will be on the Dutch East Indies merchant seamen and military personnel during the war, though the consequences for civilians will also be shown. This chapter demonstrates the development of the new laws and regulations for them, how these developments affected their existence and if other newcomers to the Commonwealth were also affected. Finally, these laws and regulations were the legal underpinnings on which the NEI ‘government-in-exile’ and military high command negotiated the incarceration of many compatriots after WWII had ended. Thus, this chapter will, at its core, be a chapter on international and law history without losing sight of the social consequences for various groups from the Indies.

I want to explain why the relationship between the NEI and the Australian Government shifted so profoundly during WWII. At the commencement of the Pacific War, Australia welcomed its NEI allies (including those of indigenous descent), as I discussed in Chapter 2. However, during the war, Australia incarcerated some NEI merchant seamen, and then at the war’s end, Indonesian military personnel were interned on Australian territory after negotiations with NEI representatives. How can these worrying events be explained? Within less than a decade after WWII first began, Australia shifted its position again, becoming the Indonesian Republic’s biggest ally in trying to obtain independence from the Netherlands. This post-war period and these significant shifts will be further examined mainly in Chapters 5 and 6.

I will show that until early in the war, Australia was still so dependent on the British for its foreign affairs as well as its internal affairs because of this unique status. In this chapter, I will argue that the Australian Government reluctantly yielded: the government gave up certain legal rights to prosecute aliens, similar to what happened in British law. The GOC relinquished some of its prosecutorial rights on their own soil to a

military high command that had neither the official status nor the actual numbers to be called a full, independent army: an army that might even be called an alien refugee army. The question of jurisdiction was negotiated extensively during the first years of WWII, not only on land but also at sea, and again Australia adjusted and accommodated the Allied partners and the NEI. Finally, I will show that even after the judicial negotiations were finalised and the vacuum in the international legal structure appeared to be filled, it was not always clear who was responsible for the NEI militaries, the KPM seamen and even the NEI civilians in the Commonwealth.

### **3.1 Australia and its Allies: international laws, regulations and agreements (1930s–1940s)**

When WWII broke out, the international criminal courts and laws protecting victims of war (including civilians and military personnel) did not exist. The United Nations (UN) and its International Court of Justice—the principal judicial organ of the UN seated in the Peace Palace in The Hague—were established because of the war’s atrocities in 1945. And the Geneva Convention—on humanitarian treatment in war—was held and ratified by many countries, such as Australia, in 1949.<sup>4</sup> Other renowned courts—such as the European Court of Human Rights, which was established in 1959—did not exist until at least one decade later.

This is not to say that there were no international agreements protecting wounded or captured soldiers or that no rules existed regarding the treatment or protection of civilians during wartime at the outset of the war. Although the 1949 Geneva Convention was ratified after WWII, it had its predecessors; as early as 1864, a Geneva Convention occurred. At this conference, a treaty was drawn up and signed by the attending countries’ representatives: ‘The Treaty provides for neutrality of all sanitary supplies, ambulances, surgeons, nurses, attendants, and sick or wounded men, and their safe conduct, when they bear the sign of the organisation, viz: the Red Cross’.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, after WWI, the International Covenant of the League of Nations was signed in 1920, and its adjoining Permanent Court of International Justice—the first permanent international tribunal—

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<sup>4</sup> When referring to ‘the’ Geneva Convention, I am referring to all four conventions held in 1949, at the conference in Geneva, Switzerland.

<sup>5</sup> Clara Barton, *The Red Cross of the Geneva Convention. What it is* (Washington D.C.: Rufus H. Darby Steam Power Book and Job Printer, 1878), 9–10.



was established two years later. Regrettably, the Covenant and the International Tribunal were never ratified by the Australian Parliament, as will be discussed later. In the 1930s, two more Geneva Conventions were organised, and treaties signed. The first dealt with the prevention and punishment of terrorism, and the second one focused on the creation of an international criminal court that would try these terrorism offences. Unfortunately, neither one of these covenants ever came into force.<sup>6</sup>

Not many additional ground-breaking agreements were negotiated and signed regarding the rules of war and human rights laws after the evils of WWI. As Mahmoud Cherif Bassiouni wrote in his study of crimes against humanity, ‘the period between World War I and World War II witnessed a lull in the development of international regulation concerning the laws of war because of the belief that the so-called “Great War” was indeed going to “end all wars”, as the saying went at the time. Further, most people believed that the newly founded League of Nations would usher in a new period of world peace based on a new world order’.<sup>7</sup> This new world peace did not last long; the rise of totalitarian regimes was fairly clear, especially from the early 1930s onwards, and the League of Nations could not adequately stop the rise.

During the interwar years, Australia did not ratify any treaties because until 1942, Australia had a distinctive legal position within the British Commonwealth; the country had a very dependent legal relation with the mother country. Then, in 1931, the UK Parliament passed the Statute of Westminster: this imperial measure provided the jurisdictional independence of self-governing dominions such as Australia, Canada and the Irish Free State. Thus, under the Statute, Britain and Australia would be defined as ‘autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any respect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations’.<sup>8</sup> However, once the Statute would come into effect in Australia, Britain’s Imperial Parliament could no longer impose judicial dominance

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Penberthy Fry, "The international and national competence of Australian Parliaments to legislate in respect of extra-territorial crime (including war crimes)," *University of Queensland Papers* 1, no. 2 (1947): 45.

<sup>7</sup> Mahmoud Cherif Bassiouni, *Crimes against humanity in international criminal law*, 2nd revised ed. (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1999), 524–525.

<sup>8</sup> Chris Clark, "The Statute of Westminster and the murder in HMAS Australia, 1942," *Australian Defence Force Journal* 179 (2009): 22.

over the Commonwealth; from that moment onwards, the Australian Parliament was legislatively autonomous of the Parliament in Great Britain.<sup>9</sup>

It took the Australian Parliament over ten years to ratify and implement these legislative rights; at the outbreak of the Pacific War, Australia still had not adopted the Statute of Westminster. So, until then, the country was utterly dependent on the UK for its international, external affairs. Some early scholars do not seem to agree entirely with this opinion. J. C. Beaglehole has stated that 'The Dominions were separate members of the League of Nations, were negotiating commercial treaties, and were taking independent lines in international affairs long before 1931 when the Statute of Westminster was passed by the British Parliament'.<sup>10</sup> This account is correct regarding non-political agreements but not in relation to international agreements concerning military alliances and operations on the world stage.

In 1938, Robert Menzies, who was Australia's Attorney-General at the time, wrote an article on the topic of the Statute of Westminster and its various sections. He stated that one of the reasons why Australia was still discussing the Statute was that political history indicated a chronic reluctance on the part of the Australian voter to grant extra power to his representatives in the Australian Parliament.<sup>11</sup> Menzies, who favoured adopting the Statute of Westminster, concluded in his article that Section 3 on extraterritorial operation added nothing to Australia's absolute power and should be regarded merely as determining any vague doubts that might exist.<sup>12</sup>

In 1942, the Statute was, after considerable parliamentary deliberation, adopted in the *Statute of Westminster Adoption Act, 1942*.<sup>13</sup> According to John Burton from the Department of Defence, the 'adoption of the Statute of Westminster has become desirable from a point of view of convenience and practical convenience. ... It is the point of practical convenience which the outbreak of the war occasioned an urgent amendment to the judiciary act in order to remove doubts as to the admiralty jurisdiction of the Supreme Courts of several states'.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> David Clark, "Cautious Constitutionalism: Commonwealth Legislative Independence and the Statute of Westminster 1931-1942," *Macquarie Law Journal* 16 (2016): 44.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Littlejohn, "New Zealand and the Statute of Westminster," Book review, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 240 (1945): 160.

<sup>11</sup> R.G. Menzies, "The Statute of Westminster," *The Australian Law Journal* 11 (1938): 368.

<sup>12</sup> Menzies, "The Statute," 372.

<sup>13</sup> Fry, "The international and national competence," 84.

<sup>14</sup> NAA, A6006, 1942/09/22, Letter from J.W. Burton to G. Knowles, 7 August 1942.

There has been much historical debate over why it took the GOC so long to adopt this crucial piece of legislation. Some scholars emphasised there was no imminent need for major constitutional amendments, and there existed a lack of pressure by the electors as a vital reason for not adopting the act.<sup>15</sup> Recently, David Lee has argued that the ‘adoption of the law became a casualty of federal-state rivalry for more than a decade. Party politics was a secondary issue in the delay and the Statute of Westminster’.<sup>16</sup> John Edwards seemed to agree with Lee; he has observed that the debate regarding the proposed legislation exposed the depth of the division within Australia, as some states opposed it. Several individual conservative members opposed the Act because these members were fearful that the country’s bond with Britain was being diminished.<sup>17</sup> David Clark wrote that there were various reasons why the Statute was not adopted in the years just after 1931, with one of them being that there were no apparent or urgent practical reasons to do so. He also stated that the most important reason not to adopt the Statute was that states’ powers would be weakened by the Statute, according to those states, in favour of the expansion of Commonwealth powers; a similar argument as made by Lee and Edwards.<sup>18</sup> In my opinion, there is not one single reason to indicate why Australia adopted the Statute of Westminster much later than did other dominions, such as Canada or South Africa. However, regional or state differences or the fear of weakening state independence appeared to be very significant.

The late ratification of the Statute by the Australian Parliament is not the only Act that was adopted years after Federation. For instance, Australian citizenship did not exist for Australians until the *Australian Citizenship Act 1948*, which is the Act that was implemented a year later: Australians were officially British subjects with British nationality.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Australia did not achieve complete constitutional independence from the UK, not even after they ratified the Statute of Westminster under Prime Minister

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<sup>15</sup> W. J. Hudson and Martin Philip Sharp, *Australian independence: colony to reluctant kingdom* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), 128.

<sup>16</sup> David Lee, "States rights and Australia’s adoption of the statute of Westminster, 1931–1942," *History Australia* 13, no. 2 (2016): 259.

<sup>17</sup> John Edwards, *John Curtin's War. Triumph and Decline, vol. II* (Melbourne: Penguin Random House Australia, 2018), 119.

<sup>18</sup> Clark, "Cautious Constitutionalism," 56.

<sup>19</sup> Martinuzzi O’Brien, "Citizenship, Rights," 208.

According to Fry: ‘The international concept of nationality creates difficulties when the people of several states share a common nationality, as is so the case of British nationals. Although the self-governing Dominions are autonomous nations of the British Commonwealth and possess the international status of national states, the status of “British national” is possessed by citizens of each Dominion as well as by those of the United Kingdom. ... There is therefore no way of distinguishing a British national of Australia from a British national of the United Kingdom, except by resorting to tests of “domicile” or of “residence”, which are questions of fact rather than law’. Fry, "The international and national competence," 20.

John Curtin. Only in 1986 did a royal proclamation abolish the remaining possibilities for the mother country to legislate with effect in Australia, ending all the UK's governmental and legislative powers over Australia; one of the results of this was that the Commonwealth of Australia could make their own extraterritorial laws.<sup>20</sup> Australia's complete dependence on the mother country became evident in the negotiations between the GOC, US Army and NEI military high command. Australian lawmakers constantly asked what the British Government had negotiated previously, and several times they requested legal advice from the UK on international laws and agreements.

These extraterritorial laws, specifically mentioned in Section 3 of the Statute, would become necessary during WWII for countries like the US and the NEI.<sup>21</sup> The US was the first country to obtain these extraterritorial rights; they negotiated them primarily during WWI. The US and Great Britain exhibited working arrangements for reserving jurisdiction over their own forces—those who were sent into France during WWI to assist in preventing a German invasion.<sup>22</sup> The main objective of these arrangements—negotiations that the British Commonwealth Government started not the US—was to amend UK law so that the authorities and courts of the US Army would be enabled to exercise all the jurisdictional control that had been vested in them by US law.<sup>23</sup> So, when the US troops fought in northern France's war zones, both the US Armed Forces and British Armed Forces (of which the Australian army was part) had been allowed to exercise exclusive jurisdiction over the misbehaviour of their own military.<sup>24</sup>

The interwar period produced some significant developments on extraterritorial legislation: in 1933, the British Parliament adopted the *Visiting Forces (British*

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<sup>20</sup> Ireland-Piper, *Accountability in extraterritoriality*, 73–76; Hilary Charlesworth and Deborah Senz, "Building blocks: Australia's response to foreign extraterritorial legislation," *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 2, no. 1 (2001): 29, 37–38.

<sup>21</sup> Section 3 gives power to the Parliament of a Dominion to legislate extraterritorially: 'Statute of Westminster', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 17 November 1942, 2.

Zachary Clopton defines extraterritoriality as 'the application of the laws of one country to persons, conduct or relationships outside of that country'. In this definition, Clopton does not specify the US or NEI jurisdiction during WWII, only the general definition of the term. Ireland-Piper more recently defined the term 'extraterritorial jurisdiction' as an exercise by a state of prescriptive, adjudicative or enforcement authority over conduct outside that state's physical territory. See Zachary D. Clopton, "Extraterritoriality and extranationality: a comparative study," *Duke Journal of Comparative & International Law* 23, no. 2 (2013): 218; Ireland-Piper, *Accountability in extraterritoriality*, 2.

<sup>22</sup> John H. Wigmore, "The extraterritoriality of the United States Armed Forces abroad," *American Bar Association Journal* 29, no. 3 (1943): 122.

<sup>23</sup> G.P. Barton, "Foreign Armed Forces: Qualified Jurisdictional Immunity," *British Year Book of International Law* 31 (1954): 343.

<sup>24</sup> John McKerrow, *The American occupation of Australia. A marriage of necessity* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 15–16.

*Commonwealth) Act*.<sup>25</sup> Under this Act, visiting forces from the Commonwealth—subsequently not from the US—were subject to the concurrent jurisdiction of their own sending states.<sup>26</sup> Australia adopted a quite similar Act that authorised other British Empire forces visiting Australia to establish military courts to exercise jurisdiction over its members.<sup>27</sup> Finally, the British Government adopted a comparable Act in 1942, the *United States of America Visiting Forces Act 1942*, for US forces visiting the UK.

The United States of America (Visiting Forces) Bill exempted US military personnel from criminal actions in the British courts unless the US authorities consented to that on a case-by-case basis. Further, the Act gave effect to a treaty between the UK and the US governments; it explicated once more that the US Armed Forces had jurisdiction over members of its own military and naval forces.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the US military—which landed on Australian territory in 1942—had full legal jurisdiction over its own soldiers, mainly because of this historical precedent set during WWI and arrangements made between the US and UK in the early 1940s, as well as Australia's dependent relationship with the UK regarding international matters.

However, in late 1941, just prior to any US forces being sent to Australia, the Australian Government issued a statutory rule, Rule No. 241, which generally restricted the authority of overseas countries' courts-martial in Australia to matters concerning discipline and internal administration. Rule No. 241 also considered the concurrent jurisdiction of local courts over such personnel. However, this rule was amended in early May 1942 after objections by Lieutenant General George Brett—who was then the commander of the US forces in Australia—and others, giving the Americans exclusive jurisdiction whenever they requested it.<sup>29</sup> Brett brought the question to the attention of Prime Minister John Curtin. Although some of Curtin's War Cabinet members intended to grant complete extraterritorial jurisdiction to the US forces, some departments were

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<sup>25</sup> According to G. P. Barton, 'The term "visiting" when used to describe an armed force implies that this force has come to and sojourns on the territory of the local state with its consent and at its invitation. It is not unknown for such consent to be given reluctantly. But we are here concerned only with the position of a foreign force which visits the local state with its full and free consent and pursuant to its unsolicited invitation': G.P. Barton, "Foreign Armed Forces: Immunity from Supervisory Jurisdiction," *British Year Book of International Law* 26 (1949): 382.

<sup>26</sup> Aurel Sari, "The Immunities of Visiting Forces," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Immunities and International Law*, ed. Nicolas Angelet and Luca Ferro Tom Ruys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 9.

<sup>27</sup> 'Australian Discipline for Visiting Forces', *The Courier-Mail*, 20 December 1941, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Sari, "The Immunities of Visiting Forces," 11; NAA, A989 1943/480/1, United States of America (Visiting Forces) Bill, 28 July 1942 (printed).

<sup>29</sup> Irvine, "Legality and freedom," 5.

more hesitant, notably the Department of the Army. However, despite some voiced objections by departments, the National Security (Allied Forces) Regulations were revised and implemented.<sup>30</sup>

These exclusive rights granted to the US Army became more and more crucial, as in the weeks after Brett's first complaints, the total number of US military personnel on Australian soil increased rapidly; by June of that year, there were already 88,000 US troops in the country, most of them located in Victoria and Queensland.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, with the arrival of so many US soldiers, the chance of altercations between the soldiers themselves and between soldiers and locals became more than reasonable to expect.

Regulation 6 of the National Security Regulations, adopted on 20 October 1942, precisely defined and granted US soldiers exclusive extraterritorial rights in Australian courts. This Regulation might be considered the most important rule for the US GIs and other military personnel stationed in Australia and would also become the starting point for the Dutch negotiators.<sup>32</sup> This amendment of the National Security (Allied Forces) Regulations spelled out jurisdictional boundaries but still occasionally led to disputes between the US forces and the local authorities.

### **3.2 The daily juridical consequences for Netherlands East Indies people onshore and offshore**

Even before the war, all aliens who entered Australia had to register once they entered the country; the *Australian Immigration Act 1901* was clear on that point. From 1939 onwards, large groups of migrants living in Australia came under even more governmental scrutiny. They became subject to the National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations 1939, an integral part of the *National Security Act*. This meant that all 'non-British' persons living in Australia were required to register as aliens.<sup>33</sup> The essential

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<sup>30</sup> McKerrow, *The American occupation*, 17–18.

<sup>31</sup> Paul Hasluck, *The government and the people, 1942-1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1970), 224.

<sup>32</sup> NAA, A1608, E45/1/11, Regulations under the National Security Act 1939-1940, 20 October 1942.

<sup>33</sup> Maria Glaros, "'Sometimes a little injustice must be suffered for the public good': how the National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations 1939 (Cth) affected the lives of German, Italian, Japanese and Australian born women living in Australia during the Second World War" (PhD, University of Western Sydney, 2012): viii.

phrase is 'non-British'. As previously mentioned, Australian citizenship did not yet exist; all Australians were British subjects.

Non-British persons were frequently prosecuted under the 1939 Regulations, as can be read in a newspaper article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* from 1940. The article mentioned that 'Leonardus Hubertus Ryekogel, a Dutch alien of Cathedral Street, East Sydney, and Androniki Arvanitaki, a Greek woman, of Flinders Street, Darlinghurst, were each sentenced to 14 days imprisonment, at the Central Summons Court yesterday, for breaches of the aliens' control sections of the National Security Act. The magistrate, Mr. Sherdan, Sm.M., recommended that they be interned at the completion of their sentences'.<sup>34</sup> Besides the obligation to register oneself, many other less intruding regulations were implemented under the National Security Regulations, especially targeting non-British people. For example, it was obligatory for all aliens to hand over their firearms, ammunition and explosives to local police.<sup>35</sup>

Allied countries and organisations, such as the Netherlands Legation, received letters from the Commonwealth regarding the necessity for persons arriving in Australia to register. In 1944, a memorandum was sent to WP Montijn, Counsellor of the Royal Netherlands Legation, that persons of the Netherlands nationality arriving in Australia had to comply with the provisions of the National Security (Alien Control) Regulations. According to this writing, newcomers should present themselves at the Netherlands Consulate (in this case, the one in Melbourne) and that the consulate officers and the Netherlands Commission in Australia would reach the Netherlands subjects and register them.<sup>36</sup>

Aliens not only on land but also at sea and in the harbours were also under the enquiry of Australian Government officials. In early 1941, the Department of the Interior sent out a letter to the masters of ships as a reminder to be read to their ship's crews. In the letter, white seamen were told that if any of them were caught deserting the ship or if he missed his boat, he would be dealt with as a prohibited migrant. He would then face imprisonment for six months or even deportation under an order signed by the minister. In this letter, non-white crews were simply not mentioned.<sup>37</sup> The same department

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<sup>34</sup> 'National Security Act Breaches', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 June 1940, 11.

<sup>35</sup> 'National Security Regulation', *The Central Queensland Herald*, 1 July 1940, 28.

<sup>36</sup> NAA, A373, 9971, Memorandum of the Department of External Affairs, 2 February 1944.

<sup>37</sup> NAA, BP234/1, SB1942/2037, Circular from the Department of Interior, signed by A.R. Peters, 9 January 1941.

reported a reply to a previous communication by one of the consuls a few months later regarding under which circumstances an alien seaman may be permitted into Australia for temporary or permanent admission. Such a decision was to be made in the future by the military authorities. At this point already during the war—April 1941—the Australian military authorities—and not, as one might expect, only the immigration authorities—were involved in the admission of alien seamen. The military authorities had to not object to the admission of the alien seafarer.<sup>38</sup> Whether an alien merchant seaman could be considered a military member will be analysed and discussed later.

One of the primary reasons for the militaries' involvement was a lack of clarity and widespread confusion: who had to register and who did not have to register under Alien Registration Controls? For example, alien crews on US Government supply ships and transport vessels were exempt, though if these crews would return on vessels not under the control of the US Army or Navy, they had to register.<sup>39</sup> In mid-1942, Director-General of Security MacKay wrote that in the future, exemptions could only be granted to members of the Army Transport Service and that all other alien crew (from the US, but Norwegian and Dutch as well) under charter to the US Government had to register in the usual manner.<sup>40</sup> This confusion over registration continued. One of the specific problems was a lack of uniformity between Australian states: a US crew member arriving in Queensland from overseas could be considered by local immigration officers an exemption from registration. However, if the same crew member had arrived in an NSW port, he could be summoned to register as an alien.<sup>41</sup>

The question of registration of crew members and the question of jurisdiction over militarised vessels was one crucial point of discussion from the commencement of the Allied war activities in the Pacific, as there appeared to be a judicial vacuum.<sup>42</sup> As early

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The word 'white' was replaced by 'any' in the Amendment of the National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations, published on 9 August 1942. See NAA, BP234/1, SB1942/2037, Statutory Rules 1942, No. 360.

<sup>38</sup> NAA, BP234/1, SB1942/2037, Letter from J.A. Carrodus to a Consul, 30 April 1941.

<sup>39</sup> NAA, A373, 5793, Letter from R.H. Weddell, O.I.C. State Branch to Security Service in Canberra, 25 February 1942.

<sup>40</sup> NAA, A373, 5793, Letter from J. MacKay to the Deputy Director of Security in Sydney, 10 June 1942.

<sup>41</sup> NAA, A373, 5793, Letter from the Deputy Director of Security for NSW S. Jackson to the Director-General of Security in Canberra, 29 September 1943.

<sup>42</sup> According to Piper-Ireland, 'in international law, the term 'jurisdiction' describes the rights of states to regulate conduct, and the limit on those rights. Domestic law prescribes the extent to which states make use of those rights. Under customary international law, states exercise jurisdiction on three main bases: nationality, territoriality, and universality'. Colangelo translates the word 'jurisdiction' as 'the power to "speak" [ ] the law' and clarifies, similarly to Piper-Ireland, the three layers of jurisdiction. See Danielle Ireland-Piper, "Prosecutions of extraterritorial criminal conduct and the abuse of rights doctrine," *Utrecht Law Review* 9, no. 4 (2013): 68; Colangelo Anthony, "What is extraterritorial jurisdiction?," 1310.



as January 1943, the US Navy circulated a document called Memorandum of Information to be given to the Masters of Ships. In this instruction to the ships' captains, the US stated that all vessels involved in military operations or carrying military materials were located in a setting in which military operations occurred that fell under US jurisdiction. The Netherlands delegation in Australia strongly disagreed with the US standpoint; they thought this viewpoint regarding KPM vessels was highly unacceptable.<sup>43</sup> However, from the start of this discussion, the Australian Government made it clear that they wanted to keep aloof from this legal debate.<sup>44</sup> In June, the Netherlands Consul for New Zealand Vigeveno, residing in Wellington, affirmed the US Navy's opinion. According to the consul, the US Marine Corps had jurisdiction over the crews of merchant seamen vessels that were militarised by the US, as the civilian crews at that point were considered auxiliary military personnel.<sup>45</sup>

One of the principal reasons the jurisdiction debate became important was that other countries started chartering twenty-seven KPM ships. For instance, the vessel the *SS Swartenhondt* belonged to the KPM but was taken over by the Dutch government-in-exile in London, then chartered to the British Ministry of Shipping, and afterwards chartered to the US Army from May 1942 for the country's war effort.<sup>46</sup> In case disorder broke out on one of the NEI vessels and the vessel was offshore, the question of who could charge the troublemakers became necessary. Should a disposition be conducted by NEI officials or by the country that chartered that particular vessel? The legal ownership and jurisdiction of the boats and legal positions of these NEI merchant seamen needed to be clarified and registered.

On the *SS Swartenhondt*, trouble broke out at high sea. An Indonesian seaman named Haroena was charged with assaulting a fellow seaman. US personnel had chartered the vessel, and they wanted to arrest him for the offence and prosecute him in a US court. The jurisdictional discord was discussed by the highest military generals, such as General MacArthur.<sup>47</sup> After months of heated discussions between all parties involved, Haroena was eventually handed over to the NEI authorities in Australia.

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<sup>43</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 48, Letter from the Gazant to A. Loudon in Washington, 1 May 1943.

<sup>44</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 48, Letter from the Gazant to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in London, 1 May 1943.

<sup>45</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02 inv. nr. 48, Letter from M. Vigeveno to the Gazant in Melbourne, 3 June 1943.

<sup>46</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 48, Statement by Captain of the Dutch Merchant Navy J.K.F. Keuker, 5 March 1943.

<sup>47</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 48, Telegram from D. MacArthur to F.C. van Aerssen Voshol, 14 July 1943.

Around the time of the heavily debated Haroena case, the US Staff Judge Advocate George Welch explained to the Netherlands Minister to Australia Baron François van Aerssen Beijeren van Voshol why he thought, at least at that time during the war, that the USA had jurisdiction and that the US should perform the prosecution. Welch wrote that it was understood that the Netherlands Government was not in a position at that time to effectively exercise complete jurisdiction in Australia over crews of Netherlands vessels operating in the areas where essential and major derelictions might occur. Nevertheless, he wrote, the Americans had every desire to reach an understanding with the NEI covering jurisdiction when derelictions occur on Dutch vessels. He even mentioned that this was not only on the part of the personnel of full Dutch nationality but also on the part of Indonesians serving upon Dutch ships. This was to the end that such matters might be turned over to the Netherlands authorities for appropriate action.<sup>48</sup> At least according to the US, jurisdiction over NEI offenders was not automatically granted to the NEI representatives in Australia.

It appeared that the NEI officials were able to regularly act in cases of misconduct committed by NEI sailors, just like in Haroena's case. A reason could be that the Netherlands' lawmakers, from the onset of the Pacific War, wanted to extend the provisions of their *Native Militia Act, 1941*—the Act that made 'native' men eligible for conscription into the NEI army—to apply to Indonesians outside the NEI territory, enabling the militarisation of Indonesians serving onboard Dutch and NEI vessels.<sup>49</sup> As a result, the Dutch tended to set up tribunals in Australia via a Royal Decree signed in London so that Indonesians could be tried before Dutch military and naval courts.<sup>50</sup> Pending the final decision, the Dutch handed over their Indonesian offenders in many cases.

On 1 December 1943, Donaldson, the Netherlands Vice-Consul in Brisbane, wrote a letter to Pennink, the Netherlands Consul in Sydney, outlining a conversation he had recently had with the local naval authorities. According to these local authorities, Donaldson stated that misbehaving or unwilling Indonesian seafarers could be interned by Australian authorities, although these Indonesians were likely to be eligible for Indonesian military service. In this case, Donaldson was probably referring to the *Native*

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<sup>48</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 48, Letter from G.M. Welch to Baron van Aerssen Beyeren in Melbourne, 5 May 1943.

<sup>49</sup> Thiry, "Colonial Police," 214.

<sup>50</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 48, Letter from Baron van Aerssen Beyeren to American Colonel George M. Welch, 18 June 1943.

*Militia Act*. Donaldson continued that this Australian law was against the Netherlands' policy: the Netherlands Indies Commission had laid down their policy that no seamen should be interned or imprisoned anymore: a sailor could be called up by the consular authorities for military services with the NEI army after attempts to make the sailor listen to reason had failed. The vice-consul described the changed sections of laws that made it possible to intern unwilling seafarers. Donaldson had temporarily convinced the local naval and customs authorities to follow the Dutch procedures, but customs would be taking up the matter with Canberra. He terminated his letter with the recommendation to look at how the Americans had organised their misbehaving sailors: they had the right to deal with their own seamen. The Maritime Hearing Section, a special board that dealt with offences and their decisions, was recognised by the Australian authorities.<sup>51</sup>

In a letter later in December 1943, Pennink quoted his Brisbane counterpart when he referred to the same potential problem that might occur due to an interpretation of Article 51A of the National Security Regulations. Pennink tried to outline the reasons for the change by the Australian lawmakers as well as the complexity of the situation because of several amendments in the extensive National Security Regulations that had transpired. He explained that Article 51A was introduced as a replacement article for Article 14A because, under the latter article, Malay and British Indian seafarers could not be tried for their misconduct. Although this changed under the new Article 51A, the article now applied to 'seamen not born in Australia'. However, Article 51A was part of the National Security (General) Regulations, and Article 14A was part of the National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations. He did not try to explain why this was an issue, just that the discrepancy existed. Pennink suggested in his letter that under the law outlined in the old Article 14A, an unwilling Indonesian sailor could not be tried by local authorities unless the consul on behalf of the ship's captain signed off for this and that under the new law, it appeared that the local authorities could.

Pennink concluded his communication with the same prominent recommendation as did his Brisbane counterpart. Although for Dutch prestige it was necessary to look into the arrangements made by the American authorities, they did have the right to prosecute their own sailors (through their Maritime Hearing Section), which was something the Dutch should have been aiming for.<sup>52</sup> Pennink's remarks regarding jurisdiction were

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<sup>51</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 48, Letter from the Vice Consul to the Consul J. Pennink, 1 December 1943.

<sup>52</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 48, Letter from J. Pennink to the Gazant in Melbourne, 20 December 1943.

clearly not new; these observations were comparable to Vigeveno's point of discussion months earlier.

The question of jurisdiction over militarised vessels was negotiated extensively during the first years of WWII. One question that remains partly unanswered is: were these merchant seamen, the sailors from the NEI and the US, considered military personnel in active military service, semi-military personnel or civilian crews? A few indicators to answer this question have already been mentioned: quite early in the war, the Australian military authorities became involved in the admittance of alien merchant seamen, and the attempt by the Netherlands representatives to change the *Native Militia Act* to make NEI seafarers eligible for military service has also been discussed.

Further, in the early years after the war, the Netherlands Government instated a new state pension law, with a specific part of this law dedicated to the Netherlands' merchant seamen who were injured during the war years and to the surviving relatives of these seamen. This indicates that in 1947, the Dutch Government considered these merchant seamen a specific group, though not part of the existing regular military (pension) system.<sup>53</sup> Further, Garssen and Harts stated that according to the Dutch National Bureau of Statistics, in 1948, the Dutch Government made a distinction between war casualties who were part of the Royal Marines and the merchant seamen.<sup>54</sup> Thus, both post-war sources (the *Wet Buitengewoon Pensioen Zeelieden-Oorlogsslachtoffers* and the *Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek* reference) indicated that Netherlands merchant seamen were not considered militarised personnel, though these sources do not specifically mention NEI merchant seamen. On the other hand, it is unlikely to assume that this group comprising mainly *Indisch* sailors was deemed military personnel while their Dutch counterparts were not.

The US had their Maritime Hearing Section: this board, as discussed in the letters by Donaldson and Pennink, indicated the special status of US merchant seamen in the US judicial system. According to the letters' authors, the US could prosecute their own personnel, and more importantly, the US judicial system's decisions were recognised by

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<sup>53</sup> *In Dutch*: Wet buitengewoon pensioen 1940-1945 and Wet buitengewoon pensioen zeelieden-oorlogsslachtoffers: *Wet Buitengewoon Pensioen Zeelieden-Oorlogsslachtoffers* (11 December 1947), assessed 21 October 2020.  
<https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0002035/2019-01-01>.

<sup>54</sup> Dutch National Bureau of Statistics is Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS). Joop Garssen and Jan Jaap Harts, "Reconstructie oorlogsterfte. Andere kijk, zelfde cijfers," *Demos* 24, no. 1 (2008): 7.

the Australian authorities. Another Dutch consul, Vigeveno, even went so far as to call the US merchant seamen 'auxiliary military personnel'.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, a few post-war US court cases in the late 1980s suggested a similar special status of the crews within the US war effort. Some former crew members went to court, and in their petitions, they were asking to be granted the status of war veterans. The plaintiffs wanted to be considered official veterans of WWII because they would be eligible for government benefits from the Veterans Administration if they were.<sup>56</sup> If these former US crew members considered themselves regular civilians, it is doubtful that they would have gone to trial trying to obtain a veteran status. These examples imply that the US recognised that their merchant seamen were more than regular civilian crews.

Some scholars do not agree with this conclusion. Carl Marcoux argued that the US seamen were not considered navy personnel. He stated that the crews served in the role of civilians throughout the war.<sup>57</sup> Liam Kane has supported Marcoux's argument; Kane showed that John Curtin and General MacArthur agreed that US merchant seamen would be tried in Australian criminal courts.<sup>58</sup> This clearly means that the US negotiated extraterritorial laws that did not apply to those seafarers. This argument on status was important, as who was responsible for particular aliens on Australian soil during WWII mattered. If one of these (US) seafarers committed a crime, either at sea or on land, who could and should try them before a court? Did the US or the Australian law apply to this particular seafarer? As I will show, this discussion regarding the status of foreign merchant seamen, especially the sailors from the NEI, became more prominent during the war years.

In conclusion, though the vessels these men served on were militarised and guns were installed on many of these ships, there is some clear indication that at least these Netherlands and US merchant crews were not considered full military personnel. However, they were likely more than just regular civilian seafarers. In my opinion, one could classify the crews of the merchant ships as semi-military personnel, a distinct group of people actively involved in the war activities and who worked alongside or as a supplement to the regular armed forces.

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<sup>55</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 48, Letter from M. Vigeveno to the Gazant in Melbourne, 3 June 1943.

<sup>56</sup> William P. Coughlin, 'Merchant Seamen Move Closer to getting WWII Veteran Status', *Boston Globe*, 23 July 1987.

<sup>57</sup> Carl Henry Marcoux, "Merchant Marine at War," *World War II* 15, no. 1 (2000): 43.

<sup>58</sup> Kane, "Policing, Ill-Discipline," 8.

### 3.3 Negotiations for extraterritorial rights by the Netherlands East Indies military high command

According to the newspaper *Western Argus*, the government in Canberra decided in May 1938 that armed forces from any part of the British Empire who visited Australia would be under the control of the empire's own authorities. With that Visiting Forces Bill, Australia would be falling into line with the rest of the dominions.<sup>59</sup> Further, at the outbreak of the war, all Australian servicemen were subject to British military law.<sup>60</sup> But what specific arrangements were made for the NEI servicemen who found refuge in Australia?

Unlike the US, the Netherlands had never received nor requested extraterritorial jurisdictional rights, probably because the Netherlands—a neutral country during the war—was not directly involved in WWI. The only somewhat similar agreement—comparable to the US rights—that existed was an agreement between the Netherlands Government and the Government of the UK, and it concerned the organisation, employment and some jurisdictional policies of the Netherlands Armed Forces in the UK. This agreement provided that acts or omissions constituting offences against the law of the UK, other than murder, manslaughter and rape, would be liable to be tried by the civil courts of the UK.<sup>61</sup>

Until mid-1942, the amendment of the previously mentioned Statutory Rule No. 241 of the National Security (Allied Forces) Regulations did not seem to be urgent for the Royal Netherlands Forces. However, in late 1942, several NEI officials started to write telegrams and letters to their Australian counterparts on this subject. Moreover, as a legal entity, the NEI and their representatives, separate from the Netherlands government-in-exile in London, appeared to have the juridical right to negotiate these urgent matters with their Australian colleagues.<sup>62</sup> Further, the NEI spokespersons even initiated negotiations to get this rule adapted. This initiation was because in 1942, at a Victorian police station, five members of the Netherlands Army/KNIL military were

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<sup>59</sup> 'Extra-Territorial Rights for Visiting Armed Forces', *Western Argus*, 24 May 1938, 8.

<sup>60</sup> Clark, "The Statute of Westminster," 22.

<sup>61</sup> NAA, A989, 1943/480/1, Letter from Attorney-General G. Knowles to Prime Minister's Department, 28 January 1943.

<sup>62</sup> Erades, "Legal Position of the Former Netherlands East Indies Succession of States," *Nederlands Tijdschrift Voor Internationaal Recht* 3, no. 4 (1956): 405.

detained.<sup>63</sup> These were the members Albert Dunstan was referring to in his telegram that was quoted at the start of this chapter. Early in 1943, there was an official request by Baron van Aerssen Beijeren van Voshol to transfer these five servicemen to Pentridge Prison in Victoria because the police stations and their holding cells were unsuitable, according to this high-ranking Dutch official.<sup>64</sup> In his telegram, Van Aerssen connected the pending recognition by the Australian Government of the status of the Dutch court-martial request to the holding of the five Dutch soldiers.

Several other references from November 1942 and April 1943 establish a clear connection between the request to change the Allied Forces Order and the pending case in Melbourne as well. One of the most prominent NEI military representatives was Rear-Admiral Frederik W Coster, who at that time was the Senior Officer of the Royal Netherlands Forces in Australia. Coster made his first remarks on the matter in a letter to Australian Prime Minister Curtin in November 1942. He emphasised that to comply with Dutch regulations, he soon intended to appoint a Netherlands court-martial who could try members of the Netherlands forces for military offences.<sup>65</sup> In a minute paper several months later, the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department wrote that the draft amending orders had been prepared and that these orders were to meet the position that recently arose in Victoria regarding the detention of certain members of the Netherlands forces.<sup>66</sup>

The NEI and Australian negotiators took various steps in their negotiations about extraterritoriality and unprecedented extraterritorial jurisdiction. On 13 November 1942, as previously mentioned, Coster wrote a letter on this subject to the prime minister. The Rear-Admiral requested an early accomplishment of the arrangement that throughout the Commonwealth of Australia, offences committed by members of the KNIL shall be brought to the notice of the appropriate officer of the NEI forces and, if he requests so, the case be turned over to him to be tried by the Netherlands court-martial. Additionally, he wrote that this was according to the Kingdom of the Netherlands' military laws.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> NAA, A989, 1943/480/1, Copy of telegram by the Netherlands Minister Baron Van Aerssen, to the Prime Minister, 27 January 1943.

<sup>64</sup> NAA, A1608, E45/1/11, Telegram from the Netherlands Minister Van Aerssen to Prime Minister's Department, 27 January 1943.

<sup>65</sup> NAA, A1608, E45/1/11, Letter from Rear Admiral F.W. Coster to Prime Minister John A. Curtin, 13 November 1942.

<sup>66</sup> NAA, npsA2B5, Minute Paper W.11647 by the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department, 14 April 1943.

<sup>67</sup> NAA, A1608, E45/1/11, Letter from Rear Admiral F.W. Coster to Prime Minister John A. Curtin, 13 November 1942.

However, almost all high-ranking officials in the Australian Government were unsure what the adequate Australian response to the Dutch request for extraterritorial jurisdiction should be. Therefore, at the time, they were not in favour of granting these extraterritorial rights to the Dutch/NEI representatives.

As far as can be ascertained, the Department of the Army was the only exception. This department appeared to have been in favour of court-martial rights for the NEI from the beginning. Interestingly, in March 1942, that same department was hesitant to grant US Lieutenant General Brett and the US Army full extraterritorial rights. This is a remarkable observation: the US had an entire army stationed in the Commonwealth as part of the larger army to fight the Imperial Japanese Army. In contrast, the NEI army comprised just a few soldiers who were lucky enough to have reached the Australian shores; about sixty officers, approximately 1,000 under officers and lower ranked KNIL military personnel were stationed or residing in Australia.<sup>68</sup> However, in late 1942, Frank Sinclair, Department of the Army Secretary, thought these numbers were substantial enough. He wrote that the number of Netherlands forces in Australia increased considerably and warranted no grounds for discrimination between US and Dutch forces. He also recommended that the provisions of Regulation 6 of the National Security Regulations should be amended to confer the same powers upon the Royal Netherlands Forces in Australia that had been conferred upon the US forces.<sup>69</sup> Several months later, senior Australian official EG Williams restated the army's view that the powers sought by the KNIL should be granted.<sup>70</sup>

Just one week after the memorandum from Sinclair to Curtin, the Ministry of Defence appeared less optimistic than Williams about granting judiciary rights to the NEI forces. In his message to the prime minister, Secretary of Defence Shedden wrote that his department considered that the present view in the UK concerning the provisions of the National Security (Allied Forces) Regulations to the Royal Netherlands Forces in Australia should first be ascertained. One can clearly see the strong connection between the Australian Commonwealth and the UK regarding judicial decision-making. He also said that after such information was obtained, the matter was for consideration primarily

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<sup>68</sup> Van Aerssen, *Driemaal Oost*, 304.

<sup>69</sup> NAA, A1608, E45/1/11, Memorandum from F.R. Sinclair, Department of Army, to The Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, 11 December 1942.

<sup>70</sup> NAA, A989, 1943/480/1, Memorandum from E.G. Williams to the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, 22 April 1943.



by the Attorney-General's Department and determination by the Attorney-General or the War Cabinet.<sup>71</sup>

Just after the Christmas of 1942, Coster wrote another letter to Curtin. This second letter attempted to draw the prime minister's attention to Statutory Rule No. 241 and Article 6—a favourable clause for the US Army. Coster explained that if there were to be other significant changes in the regulations for the US forces, the rules could also be amended in favour of the Netherlands' forces in Australia.<sup>72</sup> In early 1943, Australian Attorney-General George Knowles wrote a comprehensive response, in which he provided Curtin with his views on the Dutch requests to amend the National Security Regulations. Knowles specified his arguments on the comparison between the NEI legal situation and the rights granted to the US forces. He explained that he did not know any amendments to the UK *Allied Forces Act 1941* to make special provisions concerning the NEI armed forces. His reply showed again the powerful connection and the dependency on the British regarding international law and regulations. Knowles stated that the general trend of these regulations was not in agreement with the rules laid down in the contract between Britain and the Netherlands Government. He viewed the legal position in Australia as substantially the same as that in the UK because, following the UK *Allied Forces Act*, the superior jurisdiction of the British civil courts was preserved. The Attorney-General ended his memorandum with the conclusion that the final decision was a matter for determination by the Commonwealth Government.<sup>73</sup>

Only a few days after the extensive explanation by Knowles, the High Commissioner in London, Stanley Bruce, confirmed that only the US forces had been granted exclusive jurisdiction in the case of all criminal offences. In the case of other Allies, the UK courts had jurisdiction.<sup>74</sup> These statements made by Knowles and Bruce are exciting because of the recently adopted Statute of Westminster. The Statute was adopted in Australia in October 1942, and these discussions were held in January 1943.<sup>75</sup> Evidently, the GOC still depended heavily on the UK's negotiations with other countries

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<sup>71</sup> NAA, A6388, 391C, Memorandum from F. G. Shedden, Secretary (Ministry of Defence) to The Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, Canberra, 19 December 1942.

<sup>72</sup> NAA, A1608, E45/1/11, Letter from Rear-Admiral F.W. Coster to Prime Minister Curtin, 27 December 1942.

<sup>73</sup> NAA, A6388, 391C, Memorandum from G.S. Knowles, Attorney-General's Department to The Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, 11 January 1943.

<sup>74</sup> NAA, A6388, 391C, Cablegram from High Commissioner's Office, London to Prime Minister's Department, 16 January 1943.

<sup>75</sup> *The Statute of Westminster Adoption Act 1942* (No. 56 of 1942), assessed 21 October 2020.

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C1942A00056>

and the jurisdiction over international forces stationed in Australia, although the Attorney-General believed that the Australian federal government had the final decision.

After reviewing advice from all legal and defence departments, Curtin wrote a reply to Coster in February 1943. He began by discussing the international legal status of foreign entities: any court-martial set up by one government in the territory of another government must find its basis in an agreement between the governments concerned. Curtin showed once again Australia's dependency on the UK by stating that there had been an arrangement between the UK and the Netherlands. After this acknowledgement, the prime minister drew one of his primary conclusions—he detailed that not under any circumstances could the Commonwealth War Cabinet comply with the NEI's request.<sup>76</sup> This letter meant that at the beginning of 1943, it was far from certain that the National Security (Allied Forces) Regulations would be changed in favour of the Netherlands navy and military forces in the Commonwealth. But as will be shown, this was far from the end of the story. Negotiations between the NEI Legation and its Australian counterparts did not stop with this prime minister's recommendation.

The Netherlands government-in-exile in London reviewed the existing military penal code in mid-1943, around the time when Netherlands consuls Vigeveno and Pennink issued notices regarding the National Security Regulations and when further dialogues and revisions continued into 1943.<sup>77</sup> The consuls tried to revise the code because of the changed circumstances of the Netherlands Armed Forces. One of the issues to be resolved was to adapt the code regarding the jurisdictions and relocation of some military courts. The lawmakers stationed in London had to keep in mind that this revised code had to apply to parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands that were occupied—such as the NEI—and some parts that were not—such as the Netherlands colony Suriname in South America. Further, the amended code had to not conflict with local or international acts, such as the *Allied Forces Act*.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> NAA, A1608, E45/1/11, Letter from Australian Prime Minister J. Curtin to Dutch Rear-Admiral F.W. Coster, 2 February 1943.

<sup>77</sup> *In Dutch*: Wetboek van Militair Strafrecht. The Military Penal Code contains provisions laying down crimes and misdemeanours and also provides for the applicability of general criminal law provisions to military personnel. See *Wetboek van Militair Strafrecht* (17 April 1903), assessed 21 October 2020. <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0001869/2017-01-01>.

<sup>78</sup> NAN, 2.10.45, inv. nr. 94, Letter from the Netherlands Ministry of Justice to the Minister for the Colonies, 28 April 1942.

After much deliberation, the final changed military penal code was published in the national gazette, *Het Staatsblad van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*. A few noticeable changes were introduced, such as in Article 1, the pronounced military verdicts were to be executed in a penal facility in a country that was an ally of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.<sup>79</sup> The amendment of the code, especially the first article, would become crucial in the incarceration of NEI military personnel in Australia after WWII, a topic that will be further analysed and discussed in the following chapters. The publication of the revised military penal code in the national gazette was not the end of a lengthy discussion about the shifted military situation in the Netherlands and the Indies and the changed circumstances for military personnel in exile. The debates regarding the need to establish the extraordinary military courts—military courts that could prosecute Dutch and *Indies* military offenders outside of the Kingdom of the Netherlands—continued.<sup>80</sup>

These discussions in London—between the Netherlands government-in-exile’s lawmakers, the military high command and the UK lawmakers—continued in Australia. In March 1943, Coster communicated to Curtin that he had reconsidered all provided information and that he acknowledged the scope of the Netherlands courts-martial to be limited to matters of discipline and internal administration. However, according to the Netherlands military law and the military penal code and for the good functioning of the Netherlands court-martial, the cases should be investigated only by a specially appointed Dutch officer.<sup>81</sup> According to Coster, this officer had all the powers necessary under Netherlands law to procure all the available evidence upon which the court would subsequently base its decision. He repeated his earlier appeal for a similar treatment of NEI and US military personnel.<sup>82</sup> A fortnight later, Secretary of Defence Frederick Sheddon pointed out to the Australian Attorney-General that his department had no objection to the terms of the proposed amendments to the 1939 Allied Forces (Civilian Witnesses) Order and Allied Force (Penal Arrangements) Order.<sup>83</sup>

In July 1943, Secretary Harding of the Department of Army approved the request for an extension of the National Security (Allied Forces) Regulations to enable the Netherlands officer to summon witnesses, administer oaths and delegate authority to take

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<sup>79</sup> NAN, 2.10.45, inv. nr. 94, publication of *Staatsblad van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, 7 June 1943.

<sup>80</sup> *In Dutch*: Bijzondere Militaire Gerechtshoven.

<sup>81</sup> *In Dutch*: Officier-Commissaris.

<sup>82</sup> NAA, A6388, 391C, Letter from F.W. Coster to Prime Minister John Curtin, 17 March 1943.

<sup>83</sup> NAA, A6388, 391C, Memorandum from F.G. Sheddon, Secretary Department of Defence to The Secretary Attorney-General’s Department, Canberra, 31 March 1943.

evidence.<sup>84</sup> Within a few days after Harding's communication, several other inquiries were made regarding a War Cabinet's decision on the requested amendments by various high-ranking Dutch officials, such as Baron van Aerssen and Netherlands Legation official Craandijk. Acting Australian Attorney-General John GB Castieau stated some ground-breaking changes could be implemented: he referred to Sections 94 and 95 of the *Defence Act 1933–1941*. The *Defence Act* sections might be modified to give effect to the request of the senior officer and the army recommendation.<sup>85</sup> A week later, the Department of Defence advised no objections to the drafted Allied Forces Order that had accompanied Castieau's memorandum.<sup>86</sup> The revised order was officially announced at the end of July 1943: Sections 94 and 95 of the *Visiting Forces Act 1939* would be modified.<sup>87</sup> One of the critical changes in the Act was that an 'investigating officer of the Netherlands Forces would be appointed to a court-martial and that this foreign investigating officer could summon witnesses to attend before a Netherlands Defence court or Netherlands Court-martial'.<sup>88</sup>

This unprecedented new Act had significant consequences for NEI soldiers residing in Australia. At least until the end of the war—and, as it would turn out, even years after the war's closing—an NEI soldier suspected of committing a crime under the Dutch military penal code could be arrested and jailed in an Australian facility but under Dutch martial law. An NEI soldier could be officially held in custody or detained by the KNIL military, though not necessarily have to be tried before a Netherlands service court. The NEI authorities, if they wished, could request the return of such an accused or convicted NEI soldier.<sup>89</sup> These revised orders meant that NEI soldiers could be punished in line with other visiting Allied service members—as published in the Allied Forces

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<sup>84</sup> NAA, A6388, 391C, Memorandum from E.C. Harding to The Prime Minister, Melbourne, 15 July 1943.

<sup>85</sup> NAA, A6388, 391C, Proposed order to make provisions for reception of civilian's evidence by Netherlands Courts-Martial, W.11647, by the acting Australian Attorney-General G.B. Castieau, 16 July 1943.

<sup>86</sup> NAA, A6388, 391C, Teleprinter message from Secretary, Department of Defence to Secretary, Attorney-General's Department, 23 July 1943.

<sup>87</sup> NAA, A6388, 391C, All the Acts and Orders appeared to have been part of one another, as can be read in an Order by the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia from 1943: 'In pursuance of subsection (5.) of section 7 of the Defence (Visiting Forces) Act, 1939, as applied by the Allied Forces (Application of the Defence (Visiting Forces) Act 1939 Order (No. 5), I, Alexander Gore Arkwright, (...) do hereby order as follows: 1. This Order may be cited as the Allied Forces (Civilian Witnesses) Order'.

<sup>88</sup> NAA, A6388, 391C, Extract from *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No. 164, dated 28 July 1943.

<sup>89</sup> NAA, A472, W1164, Commonwealth of Australia Allied Forces (Penal Arrangements) Order (No. 4.) Application to Royal Netherlands personnel, signed by Francis Michael Forde, 24 November 1943; *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, issue 259, 9 December 1943, 2694.

(Penal Arrangements) Order No. 2—although NEI soldiers happened to be in an army that was technically an alien refugee army in Australian territory.<sup>90</sup>

These exceptional and unparalleled extraterritorial rights were not kept from the Australian public. They were published, like all new Commonwealth laws, in the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*. However, no resistance to these new powers—or disquiet over their reach—could be uncovered. For instance, I uncovered no newspaper commentary regarding whether an alien officer should be allowed to summon local witnesses before a foreign court. Even after the war, there appeared to be an acceptance of these Dutch special extraterritorial rights. For example, in a letter sent by the Committee of Indonesian Independence to the prime minister in October 1945, one can read that although the committee had severe problems with the imprisonment of Indonesians, it did not debate whether the GOC should have authorised extraterritorial rights. Further, the committee did not argue if the NEI military high command had the jurisdictional right to intern. The author of the letter merely mentioned that the NEI authorities had these unprecedented rights over Indonesian internees and the detention camps.<sup>91</sup> This is an exciting conclusion, as the committee was very much an advocate for Indonesian rights and freedoms. And these negotiated extraterritorial rights meant that the Dutch/NEI military high command could confine Indonesians on Australian soil and that these unique rights meant a lack of representation for mainly Indonesian soldiers and semi-militarised indigenous seafarers. Even an Indonesian advocacy group, such as the Committee of Indonesian Independence, seemed to have been quick in excepting these rights that violated human rights. The topic of the detention camps, the imprisonment of soldiers by the NEI army and the destiny of the NEI army detainees will be further evaluated and discussed in Chapter 5.

### 3.4 Conclusion

At the outbreak of WWII, Australia's position in the international landscape was far from prominent. Australia was not in the legal position to ratify international agreements or

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<sup>90</sup> 'Allied Servicemen. Rules Covering Detention', *The West Australian*, 23 January 1943, 4.

This does not refer to the soldiers from the NEI who were serving in the American–British–Dutch–Australian (ABDA) alliance and were officially part of the Allied Forces.

<sup>91</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/2 part 1, Letter from Secretary Bondan of the Committee of Indonesian Independence to Prime Minister Chifley, 29 October 1945.

negotiate multilateral arrangements. Australia only ratified the Statute of Westminster in 1942, and even after this adoption, Australia remained a semi-independent dominion; the country remained reliant on Britain for foreign policy decisions and directives. Finally, in 1986, the Australia Acts came into force: these Acts dealt with several matters while terminating the remaining colonial links between Australia and the mother country.<sup>92</sup>

Although Australia continued to be very reliant on the UK, especially in the international spectrum, the country set its own rules regarding what visiting forces in Australia could do and what they were limited to do. When the US forces set foot on Australian soil, the Commonwealth Parliament in Canberra had just issued Statutory Rule No. 241, which restricted the authorities of Allied countries in their ability to discipline their misbehaving soldiers. The US high command was not pleased with these revised rules and requested an amendment so that the US Army could retain complete extraterritorial jurisdiction. Within a few months, the GOC granted the US forces their request.

Australia set its own rules regarding other aliens entering the country as well. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, the country was not overwhelmingly enthusiastic about accepting non-British refugees. In the early years of WWII, the acceptance of refugees from Allied European occupied and Asian countries was modest, although the NEI refugees, military, semi-military and civilians were accepted after the Japanese invasion. These non-British newcomers had to register upon arrival, and they were much more limited in their opportunities than were British subjects. Aliens seemed not overly eager to register, as can be read in a local newspaper. *The Scone Advocate* wrote, 'Commenting on the statement that most aliens in Australia have not registered under the national security aliens' regulations, an Army spokesman said yesterday the regulations would require every male alien aged 18 or over to register by Tuesday next, and they would be rigidly enforced'.<sup>93</sup>

The NEI military and political elite representing the NEI in Australia were active in their attempts to acquire exclusive legal rights for their military and non-military subjects. They negotiated with the US Army, the Allied high command in the Pacific and the Australian Government to try to achieve the opportunity to remain a semi-independent

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<sup>92</sup> Christopher D. Gilbert, "Extraterritorial State Laws and the Australia Acts," *Federal Law Review* 17, no. 25 (1987): 29.

<sup>93</sup> 'Alien Registration', *The Scone Advocate*, 17 February 1942, 5.

juridical country, at least for their military personnel and merchant seamen. The negotiated laws and regulations had to apply to specific alien groups such as the NEI merchant seamen, as they could not be considered regular civilians nor full members of the NEI armed forces, and a validated legal infrastructure did not exist for them. The representatives examined the mutual agreements between the US, UK and Australia. They took these as a foundation for their extensive negotiations with the several parties involved, from negotiations with the US Army regarding misbehaving NEI merchant seamen to discussions regarding the extraterritorial military legislature with the Australian Government.

Curtin's Cabinet sought advice from several of its own departments and Britain's Cabinet in London regarding granting the requested judicial amendments. However, especially at the commencement of the negotiations with the NEI, many departments were not eager to grant these far-reaching legal modifications, as these took away many opportunities for Australian courts to try misbehaving (military) aliens. Nevertheless, at the end of 1943, the most important treaties with the Allied partners were signed, and some arrangements were made into a new or revised legislature. An example was the Allied Forces (Penal Arrangements) Order No. 4, the arrangements in this order technically allowed the NEI military high command to exercise their right to detain and prosecute an NEI soldier suspected of committing a crime under the revised Dutch military penal code.

During the early war years, there appeared to have been some kind of vacuum in the international legal structure. In this context, negotiations were conducted, and laws and policies were ratified that would not have existed outside wartime. These laws and regulations would have unforeseen consequences for all non-British people in Australia, though primarily for the indigenous NEI soldiers and seamen who had neither a say in the matter nor any form of official representation in the NEI 'government-in-exile'/Legation or their country's military high command. The Curtin Government was allowed to negotiate these exceptional laws with the US and NEI militaries, but before every new step, the UK government seemed to be consulted or perhaps sometimes it even orchestrated some negotiations. The following chapters will describe the appalling consequences of the negotiated far-reaching extraterritorial rights and the lack of representation for these soldiers and seafarers.

## Chapter 4: People from the Indies and other newcomers in Australia: the war years

Had a look at a vast p.o.w. encampment the other day — a few hours after it had received another batch of prisoners, numbering 1000. The place is like a town, with its numerous huts, its own water supply, its own gardens, firewood mill, etc., with look-out towers for guards, and so forth. The floral display was a credit to the camp gardeners. At one end of this section there are internees, Indonesians, I believe, with their wives and families.<sup>1</sup>

This is a quotation from a regional newspaper article about the Cowra internment camp in NSW, which was part of the military camp established in 1940. The author is H. A. McC. In his article, he described his visit to the town of Cowra in October 1943. The quotation emphasises the fact that in 1943, it was known to the Australian public that not only enemy aliens but also Indonesians—subjects from a country considered an ally—were held in camps in their country.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Alfred Deakin stated that the prohibition of all non-white alien immigration and the deportation or reduction of the number of these aliens was reasonable and would be ongoing and foundational to Australia's future.<sup>2</sup> But was this 'White Australia' still sustainable, forty years later, after the Imperial Japanese Army invaded large parts of Asia? A White Australia policy that did not exist, according to Labor Party Senator John Armstrong.<sup>3</sup> This chapter begins with a concise introduction of all newcomers welcomed to Australia in the intervening war years up to 1944, a brief overview of these civilian migrants and military personnel who entered the Commonwealth and a review of their treatment by the Australian Government and the Australian population more broadly. I discuss these newcomers because I want to contrast the difference in treatment of immigrants from befriended countries and those who were considered enemies of the Commonwealth—civilian internees and military personnel from Germany (and Austria), Italy and Japan.<sup>4</sup> In the last

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<sup>1</sup> 'Notes from the City', *The Wingham Chronical and Manning River Observer*, 15 October 1943, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Deakin, 'Immigration Restriction Bill', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 12 September 1901, 4805–4806.

<sup>3</sup> 'Denial of Australian Racial Bar', *The Canberra Times*, 9 October 1961, 3.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Commonwealth 1939 Statutory Rules, No. 76 of The Defence (National Security - Aliens Control) Regulations, "enemy alien" means a person who, not being either a British subject or a person specified in paragraph [3.1] (b) of the definition of "alien", or a person enjoying His Majesty's protection, possesses the nationality of a State at war with His Majesty;'. Section 3.1 (b): 'is, by reason of a declaration made under section 18A of that Act, entitled, while in Australia or any Territory of the Commonwealth, to



part of this chapter, I will compare the treatment of friendly aliens, the indigenous Indonesians, with other newcomers and temporary Australian residents. In this chapter, I will argue that, although some within the Labor Party and GOC insisted that a White Australia policy did not exist, Australian authorities did not welcome all Allied refugees equally; for instance, the Europeans were less affected by the Aliens Control Regulations than Indonesians. Additionally, indigenous Indonesians were to a certain level treated as ‘enemies of the Commonwealth’, equal to Japanese, Italian and German pre-war immigrants and war refugees.

The distinction between befriended temporary residents and enemy aliens was codified in law in the early 1920s. The notion of the ‘friendly alien’ had been classified in immigration law to define migrants from pro-Allied ‘successor states’, like the Netherlands. However, according to David Leach, this definition resulted primarily from a prohibition on the migration of former ‘enemy aliens’ between 1920 and 1925.<sup>5</sup> As early as 1940, approximately 45,000 people living in Australia became surveillance targets solely because they were born in territories that had become the Commonwealth’s war enemies.<sup>6</sup> Many civilians from these enemy countries—together with many indigenous Indonesians—were interned for at least a moment during WWII. This is despite Prime Minister Robert Menzies’ assurances to Parliament at the onset of the war that his Cabinet had no intention of pursuing a strategy of general confinement of all enemy foreigners; rather, the country would only intern people who were explicitly ‘engaging in subversive activity’.<sup>7</sup> While it is beyond the scope of my research to comprehensively explore internment practices in Australia in WWII, I do explore a number of case studies across the eighteen enemy internment camps around Australia in this period.

The fascinating and quite often tragic stories of peoples of the NEI who arrived in Australia sometime before the start of the Pacific War and about the Indonesians who fled the NEI due to the invasion and occupation by the Imperial Japanese Army is one of

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all political and other rights, powers and privileges to which a natural-born British subject is entitled’: Defence (National Security - Aliens Control) Regulations (25 August 1991), assessed 5 February 2021. <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C1939L00076>.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Leach, “‘This Way of Treating Friendly Aliens Seems Strange to Me’: Australian Security Services, Allied Governments-in-Exile, and the Surveillance and Internment of ‘Friendly Aliens’ from Occupied Europe, 1939–45,” *The International History Review* 37, no. 4 (2015): 843.

<sup>6</sup> Minna Muhlen-Schulte, “In Defence of Liberty? An Atlas of Incarceration,” *Public History Review* 26 (2019): 66.

<sup>7</sup> Kay Saunders, “Discovering” the Subversive and the Saboteur: The Disjuncture between official records of internment policy and practice and the remembered experiences of internees in Australia in the Second World War,” *The Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 13 (1991): 4.

my key narratives of the previous chapter. As examined in Chapter 2 and 3, most European/*Indisch* NEI evacuees and some non-white Indonesians lived in relative freedom in Australia, mainly in the bigger towns and cities. In this chapter, the apparent inequality, based on racial difference and made into law by the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, between the treatment of white people from the NEI and the indigenous Indonesians, will be further explored and emphasised. This distinction between the peoples of the Dutch East Indies and the Indonesians who fled the NEI was not based on any claim of racial superiority, according to the Labor Minister of Transport and External Territory Eddie Ward in early 1944.<sup>8</sup> So I will discuss what happened to the majority of non-white peoples from the NEI during their stay in Australia after the commencement of the Pacific War. The primary focus will be on their lives as aliens in the Australian internment camps and the extraordinary history of their release and post-camp life. As early as 1942, many semi-military personnel and indigenous civilians from the NEI ended up in internment camps initially established as centres for enemy aliens.

Many historians have written about the first-generation migrants and Australian-born citizens of German (and Austrian), Italian or Japanese descent, also known as the ‘dangerous’ populations, but also about the smaller groups of residents from Albania, Hungary, Finland, Korea and Formosa and the POWs from the Axis powers.<sup>9</sup> The scholars discussed predominantly why these civilians were interned—although almost none of them had criminal records or were considered criminals—and released, who decided they could be released and where these former camp residents ended up after their discharges. Few of the scholars who published on the internment camps, except for authors like Anoma Pieris and Jan Lingard, mentioned the existence of the Indonesian population, which included the Indonesian sailors, merchant seamen, political prisoners from Boven Digoel and many other NEI refugees. All of these people came from a country that was officially an ally of Australia. And yet their rights were ignored, and

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<sup>8</sup> ‘Labor Stand on White Australia’, *The Herald*, 5 January 1944, 5.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Lois Foster and Anne Seitz, "German internees in Australia 1939/1947: women's perspectives: a research note," *Australian and New Zealand journal of sociology* 25, no. 3 (1989); Panikos Panayi, *Minorities in Wartime: National and Racial Groupings in Europe, North America and Australia During the Two World Wars* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1993); Kay Saunders, "Down on the farm: Italian POWs in Australia 1941–47," *Journal of Australian Studies* 19, no. 46 (1995); Yuriko Nagata, *Unwanted Aliens. Japanese Internment in Australia* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996); Christine Winter, *National socialism in internment camps during WWII: a transnational history* (Armidale: University of New England, 2004); Klaus Neumann, *In the interest of national security: civilian internment in Australia during World War II* (Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 2006); Peter Monteath, *Captured Lives: Australia's Wartime Internment Camps* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2018); Garardo Papalia, "The Italian ‘Fifth Column’ in Australia: Fascist Propaganda, Italian-Australians and Internment," *The Australian journal of politics and history* 66, no. 2 (2020).

they were interned against their will in places such as the Cowra internment camp.<sup>10</sup> This group has not left its mark on the Australian or Dutch scholarship; no one has taken responsibility for their story or acknowledged their experiences. I will argue that these groups made up a significant group of prisoners in the camps, and they deserve a place in the discussions regarding the classification and treatment of civilian refugees and military internees on Australian soil.

#### **4.1 Australia's migrants and aliens in 1943 and 1944**

All civilian newcomers to Australia had to register by filling out a Form of Application for Registration upon arrival in the city where they embarked their ship or aerodrome where they first landed. As early as 1939, the Menzies Government had introduced the Aliens Control Regulations as part of the National Security Regulations, as highlighted in Chapter 3 when briefly discussing the modifications of the National Security Regulations. This set of regulations was very clear and enshrined in law: 'Every alien resident in Australia at the commencement of these Regulations shall, unless he is exempted or deemed to be exempted by or under these Regulations, register himself as an alien in accordance with these Regulations'.<sup>11</sup> However, some small groups were exempted from registration, such as diplomatic and consular representatives and the master and crews of public vessels—vessels that carried people not goods—or aircrafts of a government at peace with His Majesty.<sup>12</sup>

Aliens who did not register or failed to produce their certificate of registration could receive fines. Fines were also imposed on unlisted foreigners or non-citizens who did not, for example, report their occupation or place of employment. Some aliens were penalised by local Police Courts and had to pay a £1 fine; others a £3 fine at the Court of Petty Sessions. The Supreme Court could impose as much as a hefty £5 penalty, not uncommon, for failing to produce a certificate of registration.<sup>13</sup> This was a substantial

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<sup>10</sup> Anoma Pieris, "Cowra, NSW: Architectures of Internment," *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand* 31 (2014): 791; Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*.

<sup>11</sup> National Security (Aliens Control) Regulations, Statutory Rules, 1939, No. 88, assessed 12 February 2020.

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C1939L00088>.

<sup>12</sup> NAA, A373, 5793, Letter from the Director General of Security to the Deputy Director of Security, 2 August 1943.

<sup>13</sup> 'Alien Fine £1', *Mirror*, 6 January 1945, 14; 'Alien Fined', *Cairns Post*, 30 October 1943, 4; 'Law Courts', *The Advertiser*, 21 January 1944, 3.

amount of money for a temporary resident, as the Australian average weekly male wage in 1943–1944 was £6/12.<sup>14</sup>

During the Pacific War, newcomers were still arriving onto Australian shores, and civilians regularly left the Commonwealth. Nevertheless, in 1943, just over 7.2 million people called Australia home, and close to 10,000 immigrants were admitted to the Commonwealth.<sup>15</sup> The 1943 new entrants were citizens from about thirty countries; the most extensive group were Britons from the mother country and the Dominion of New Zealand. Notably, the following most prominent groups were ‘friendly aliens’ from the NEI, closely followed by around 1,500 US citizens, though it remained unclear if these Americans were all civilians. The following year, in 1944, for the first time in a decade, more people left Australia than arrived.<sup>16</sup> Still, some interest groups were outspoken about the newly arriving aliens. For instance, at the annual State congress of the Returned Soldiers’ League in Perth, the league’s members decided to urge the federal government that as a new condition to admittance, all aliens, at the end of a two-year period, should pass a simple English test, or if the alien had not behaved well enough to become a citizen, the alien should be deported at their own expense.<sup>17</sup>

Towards the end of 1943, the War Cabinet and several interest groups started debating how to tackle the post-war immigration problems. The government commenced consulting with experts advising the federal government and the Department of Postwar Reconstruction. It was suggested that Australia needed a constructive immigration policy, and the Britons, who would probably provide the primary source of migrants similar to the years before the war, should receive assisted passages.<sup>18</sup> In an interview with the US press, Curtin stated he would like to see 200,000 Americans and many other migrants from Britain and Allied countries settle in Australia after the war.<sup>19</sup> The prime minister

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<sup>14</sup> ‘Average Weekly Wage Below 1943-4’, *The Canberra Times*, 13 November 1946, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘Chapter XIV: Population’, in *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 36.—1944-45* (Cat. no. 1301.0), 461, assessed 13 February 2020. [https://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/C08D5297FE422166CA257AF30012822C/\\$File/13010\\_1944-45\\_section\\_14.pdf](https://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/C08D5297FE422166CA257AF30012822C/$File/13010_1944-45_section_14.pdf).

Please note, the record itself states that there was an uncertainty of war-time records, and Aboriginal populations were excluded from these records. According to the census records of 1944: ‘the full-blood aboriginal natives of Australia whose estimated number on 30th June 1944, were 47,014, but who are not included in the general population figures of Australia’ (p. 486).

<sup>16</sup> Troop movements were not included in these figures. See: Janet Phillips and Michael Klapdor, *Migration to Australia since federation: a guide to the statistics* (Canberra: Parliament of Australia, 2010), 15.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Aliens Control. Ex-Servicemen’s Opinion. Greater Stringency Urged’, *The West Australian*, 2 October 1944, 3.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Wants Migrants for Security’, *The Daily News*, 5 May 1944, 2; ‘Immigration Bureau Plan being Examined’, *Tweed Daily*, 28 April 1944, 1.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Curtin would like 200,000 Post-War Migrants from US’, *Guinea Gold*, 26 April 1944, 4.

repeated his ideas on another occasion when he announced that both British and US ex-servicemen would be welcomed as new migrants.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, a US Reverent visiting the Commonwealth in early 1944 had a similar scheme in mind; Dr Lincoln Wirt suggested that married young couples of British stock might be invited after the war to settle on land in Australia.<sup>21</sup>

As a result of the consulting process, the Australian Government installed an Inter-departmental Committee on Migration. This committee studied the post-war immigration policies and investigated the potential groups of suitable people. In 1944, the committee recommended that ‘it should be made clear that the Commonwealth immigration policy is based on social, economic and cultural grounds and not on any assumption of racial superiority’.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Arthur Calwell, in his role as Minister for Information, commented on the published reports of the committee a few months later; he stated that the Australian War Cabinet should deal with the admission of non-British white persons generally, and not merely Europeans. This also applied to US citizens and other persons of European race or descent.<sup>23</sup>

A number of newspaper articles about this influx of immigrants were published in 1943 and 1944. For example, an article appeared in *The West Australian* analysing 1943 immigration numbers. According to this newspaper, not one of these immigrants had to take the dictation test, none were refused entry, and close to 3,000 people of colour departed Australia, most of whom were Indonesians and indigenous Indians and people from Ceylon.<sup>24</sup> Remarkably, the article detailed that those leaving the country were categorised by their indigenous or non-white background. This racial categorisation is striking. According to a Gallup Poll conducted in 1943, nearly half of all Australians held negative views of non-European migrants.<sup>25</sup> Though one has to keep in mind, Gallup Polls were a new phenomenon and as Sobocinska showed, ‘Although they made claims to a representative sample, Australian polling organisations privileged some sectors of

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<sup>20</sup> ‘American Migrants will be Welcome after the War’, *The Canberra Times*, 21 September 1944, 2.

<sup>21</sup> ‘US Couples as Migrants’, *The Courier-Mail*, 7 February 1944, 3.

<sup>22</sup> NAA, A436, 1947/5/16, Report of recommendations by the Inter-departmental Committee on Migration, 5 October 1944.

<sup>23</sup> NAA, A436, 1947/5/16, Notes on points raised by Hon. A.A. Calwell. White Alien Migration, 4 May 1945.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Migration Entries to Australia. Last Year’s Total 9,743’, *The West Australian*, 21 September 1944, 4.

<sup>25</sup> London, *Non-White Immigration*, 150.

society, and some views, over others'.<sup>26</sup> Not one of the articles I reviewed on this topic mentioned how many white immigrants left the Commonwealth in 1943.

#### **4.2 The treatment of Australia's befriended foreign residents, aliens and military personnel**

Migration discussions were continuous in Australia during the war years. Allied immigrants, refugee aliens and British newcomers were often welcomed but also critically looked upon. The federal government and local governments foresaw that workforce shortages might occur after the war's closure. The War Cabinet was already looking at Australia's future.<sup>27</sup> Would the Dutch or European NEI people residing in the Commonwealth be eligible to stay? Or maybe the government had to set up a scheme to keep those skilled migrants, those already in the country or nearby, like veterans from Allied armies?

The GOC and governmental organisations held several discussions about post-war migration schemes during the war years. For example, the Inter-departmental Committee on Migration recommended in one of its reports the potential of Dutch servicemen, who might find themselves in or near Australia when the war with Japan was finalised, as a possible group of desirable newcomers.<sup>28</sup> Although many officials in Europe mitigated the idea of potential Dutch emigration to Australia in the first few years after the war. One of these officials was Teixeira de Mattos, and in his role as ambassador at the Netherlands Embassy in London, he predicted that there would not be a great urge to emigrate in three or four years after the war.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Agnieszka Sobocinska, "Measuring or Creating Attitudes? Seventy Years of Australian Public Opinion Polling about Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 41, no. 3 (2017): 374.

<sup>27</sup> According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the War Cabinet's estimated decline of the migration numbers after WWII turned out to be accurate. Overseas net migration to the Commonwealth declined in 1945 and 1946; a net loss by migration was recorded in 1945 of 2,629 people and of 15,148 in 1946: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Chapter XVI: Population', in *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 37.—1946-47* (Cat. no. 1301.0), 731, assessed 13 February 2020. [https://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/048881415E33DE60CA257AF30012E73C/\\$File/13010\\_1946-47%20section%2016.pdf](https://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/048881415E33DE60CA257AF30012E73C/$File/13010_1946-47%20section%2016.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> NAA, A436, 1947/5/16, Report of recommendations by the Inter-departmental Committee on Migration, 5 October 1944.

<sup>29</sup> NAA, A436, 1947/5/16, Letter from E. Teixeira de Mattos to Chief Migration Officer Major Wheeler, 2 February 1944.

The number of migrants still arriving was limited; approximately 10,000 entered the country in 1943. Civilian aliens from befriended nations such as the US, the NEI and the Netherlands were generally welcomed, as covered in previous chapters. The landing money that had been crucial in pre-war years was no longer a requirement, making it relatively easy for (Caucasian) aliens to enter the country. And, according to one of the Australian representatives in the UK, Alfred Sterling, these white immigrants, like Netherlands's nationals, obtained the necessary Australian visas fairly quickly and were often screened in London by the UK's Security Services—so, likely, these civilians were already residing in the UK.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, in 1943 and 1944, a few Dutch citizens managed to escape from Japanese occupied territory. For example, in September 1944, Alexander van Heerde, his wife Wilhelmina and their two children were able to leave the occupied NEI via Merauke (Netherlands New Guinea) to Brisbane.<sup>31</sup>

Once these migrants arrived in Australian territory, their Allied nationality did not guarantee immunity from government suspicion, and the authorities could detain anyone deemed a threat to national security.<sup>32</sup> In daily life, even white nationals, like seamen from allied countries, could sporadically end up in local internment camps. For example, in April 1942, a Dutch seafarer named John Sarsen was interned in Liverpool camp (NSW). It was unclear why he was interned in the first place. We know of his exceptional internment because he asked for release at the meeting of the Advisory Committee and to join a Norwegian ship.<sup>33</sup> One year later, a group of Norwegian marine seamen were detained and interned in South Australia for being prohibited immigrants before being shipped back to occupied Norway.<sup>34</sup> Even early in the war, the federal government interned two groups of right-wing nationalists. Most members of these nationalists' groups were British subjects, and both groups had the same name; they called themselves the Australia First Movement. These Australians were incarcerated on weak grounds, such as an alleged alliance with the Japanese.<sup>35</sup> As then-Federal Attorney-General Dr Herbert Evatt said, according to the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 'When internments of members of the Australia First movement took place ... the action

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<sup>30</sup> NAA, A989, 1944/554/2/18, Letter by A. Sterling from the Australian Legation to the Netherlands in London to the Department of External Affairs in Canberra, 10 October 1944.

<sup>31</sup> NAA, A373, 9971, Telegram from RAAF Security Section Garbutt QLD, 27 September 1944.

<sup>32</sup> Leach, "This Way of Treating Friendly Aliens," 844.

<sup>33</sup> NAA, MP508/1, 255/714/281, Report by Justice Davidson on the Internment Camp at Liverpool, 17 April 1942.

<sup>34</sup> 'Norwegian Seamen Interned in S.A.', *The Advertiser*, 2 April 1943, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Kate Darian-Smith, "World War 2 and post-war reconstruction, 1939-49," in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 97.

was justified as a precautionary measure in the interest of Australia'.<sup>36</sup> In all these cases, the interest and safety of Australia was the most critical factor. National security, wartime-specific laws—laws that would not exist in a society in peacetime—and containment of personal freedoms and limiting civil liberties were more important and leading in Australian authorities' decision-making, not so much the basic human rights and nationality of the incarcerated people.

These examples appear to be more of an exception than the rule, as the records of many of the internment camps show hardly any registrations of (white) British nationals or Allied countries' non-indigenous seamen. White (often called 'European' in official documents) friendly aliens, British subjects from the mother country and New Zealand and those already living in the country before the commencement of the war, continued living their lives more or less in the same way as before.

Another large group of European newcomers was the European-Dutch military personnel from the Netherlands but predominantly from the NEI. As I will show, their treatment was considerably different from Indonesians' treatment in the Royal East Indies Army. These Dutch soldiers mainly were left alone by the Australian Government, as they were still officially under the command of the Royal Armed Forces. Nonetheless, a few individual members of the Netherlands and NEI forces ended up in local prisons. In addition, a few units of Netherlands Armed Forces had managed to leave the Netherlands for the US, and these small groups arrived with their commanding officers in Australia.<sup>37</sup> Other Dutch and NEI members of the armed forces were enlisted and incorporated in Canberra's relatively newly created joined command ABDA, the American–British–Dutch–Australian Command. ABDA was established in late 1941 to protect strategic interests in the Pacific, including the Dutch East Indies. ABDA was under the authority of General Sir Archibald Wavell with the Commander-in-Chief, Netherlands Naval Forces in the East, Admiral Conrad Helfrich at his side.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, several army personnel were attached to existing Australian squadrons; the most well-known is the 18th Squadron, based in Canberra. This squadron was expanded to Dutch allies and NEI

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<sup>36</sup> 'Review "Australia First" Detentions', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 3 May 1944, 3.

<sup>37</sup> NAA, A433, 1944/2/5507, Cablegram from Interior (Adv.) E.A. Security Service, 30 October 1944.

<sup>38</sup> Frances Gouda and Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia - US Foreign Policy and Indonesian Nationalism, 1920-1949* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002), 117; Spencer Tucker, *World War II at sea an encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 1–2.



personnel, as the Dutch did not have enough qualified personnel stationed in Australia for a full functioning squadron, and there was a shortage of Dutch ground crews.<sup>39</sup>

KNIL military personnel occasionally violated KNIL military and Commonwealth laws, and some ended up in Australian penitentiary facilities after conviction by the KNIL *Krijgsraad*. Only a small number of case files on the internment of NEI military personnel in Australian gaols survive in the Netherlands and Australian archives. Therefore, an accurate estimate of how many soldiers were court-martialled during the war years is challenging. In my research, I collected the only three surviving and nearly complete case files of KNIL soldiers from both European and indigenous backgrounds. All of them were court-martialled and sentenced before the Dutch military court in Australia in 1943, as the NEI military high command could do since they had just acquired extraterritorial rights.<sup>40</sup> The three cases involving only KNIL military personnel were noteworthy as two cases involved Menadonese soldiers, and the other case involved the association and conviction of a European adjutant underofficer. In the first case, the two indigenous fusiliers went absent without leave for more than four days from Victoria's Darley Camp. Both were convicted for desertion in time of war and received fifteen months' imprisonment. In the second case, the 34-year-old Dutchman working with the 18th Squadron was convicted of culpable death of a fellow serviceman while cleaning his service weapon and received a three-month conditional sentence.<sup>41</sup>

We cannot conclude that indigenous military personnel were disciplined more harshly than their European counterparts based on just these two cases. However, it *does* appear that the Menadonese soldiers had been punished disproportionately. Though, if one compared these sentences with the common Netherlands military law, they do not seem too inconsistent. Soldiers convicted of desertion for more than four days were punishable by military law for up to eighteen months in gaol.<sup>42</sup> Further, according to the same Dutch

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<sup>39</sup> Marianne van Velzen, *Bomber Boys: The Extraordinary Adventures of a Group of Airmen Who Escaped the Japanese and Became the RAAF's Celebrated 18th Squadron* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2017), 78–79.

<sup>40</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv nr. 147, Dutch military court in Australia is called De Krijgsraad ter Velde.

<sup>41</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.07, inv nr. 147, Case no 10908, Petrus Rotikan and case no 10910, Jacob Mawikere Tuela, case no 10911 Johannes Smit.

<sup>42</sup> Article 97.4 of the Netherlands Military Law states, 'Met gevangenisstraf van ten hoogste een jaar en zes maanden of geldboete van de vierde categorie wordt gestraft de militair wiens ongeoorloofde afwezigheid in tijd van oorlog aan zijn schuld is te wijten: indien de afwezigheid langer dan vier dagen duurt': *Wetboek van Militair Strafrecht* (27 April 1903), assessed 21 October 2020. <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0001869/2020-01-01>.

military law, soldiers punished for a culpable death of a fellow serviceman could receive up to one year imprisonment.<sup>43</sup>

The third and final case is that of Jacob Pattiranie. His crime was committed in the NEI, so outside of the Commonwealth, but he was tried in Australian territory. He was a KNIL soldier born in Amoerang, North Celebes, in 1920, and described in his case file as a non-European cannoneer second class.<sup>44</sup> On his Service and Casualty Form of the Australian Military Forces, Pattiranie has been described as a Menadonese prisoner of war and, therefore, obtained a POW registration number.<sup>45</sup> The description of POW is extraordinary, though not entirely unique; an Allied soldier—a (former) soldier from the NEI—interned in Australia was almost exclusively registered as an internee, not as a POW.<sup>46</sup>

Jacob Pattiranie was charged with serious crimes. His court files showed he was accused of two counts of rape—although these grim crimes were hardly mentioned in the remaining court case files—and high treason. His high treason allegations were described more extensively. In August 1942, the KNIL cannoneer was alleged to have betrayed two Royal Marines in occupied Soerabaja. The marines were hiding from the Kempeitai (or Kempei), the military police arm of the Japanese army. It was even mentioned that the Menadonese soldier wanted to become a member of the Kempei.<sup>47</sup> Pattiranie confessed to all these crimes and was found guilty by the court-martial in Brisbane in October 1944. He received the maximum sentence for his crimes: death by bullet. As a result, the soldier was first transported back to the Gaythorne jail, then to Camp Colombia—the military

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<sup>43</sup> Article 137.3 of the Netherlands Military Law states, ‘De militair aan wiens schuld het is te wijten, dat hij een dienstvoorschrift niet opvolgt, wordt gestraft: met gevangenisstraf of hechtenis van ten hoogste een jaar of geldboete van de derde categorie, indien het feit iemands dood ten gevolge heeft’: *Wetboek van Militair Strafrecht* (27 April 1903), assessed 21 October 2020. <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0001869/2020-01-01>.

<sup>44</sup> NAN, 2.09.19, inv. nr. 70, Case number 10931, vonnis Jacob Pattiranie, NEI Courts-Martial, 3 October 1944.

<sup>45</sup> NAA, MP1103/1, Service and Casualty Form - Pattiranie, Jacobus, 1944, PWJA100095 (registration number).

<sup>46</sup> According to Service and Casualty Forms (SCFs) and Reports on Prisoners of War (RPW), some Indonesian (Dutch)/Javanese aliens received a registration number starting with ‘PWJ’ or ‘PWI’. Although, after analysing numerous SCFs and RPWs, it remains partly unclear why some aliens who were not registered as soldiers were identified as POWs. A few specific groups could be identified, as these prisoners had a few communal identifiable markers. For instance, there was a ‘Karako’ group; as far as can be ascertained, this group were all captured on 22 April 1944 in Karako. See: NAA, MP1103/1, PWJA147414, Kastamon (PWJA147414), was a laundry servant, born in Remokeningo in 1924; NAA, MP1103/1, PWJA147372, Taman (PWJA147372), was a farmer, born in Kesiman Bangil in 1928; NAA, MP1103/1, PWJM130048, Mahomet Halil Al Wongsosiwojo (PWJM130048), was a schoolteacher, born in Lembong in 1920.

<sup>47</sup> NIMH, 168 De Vries, Letter from J.P.K. van Eechoud to Conica I/Maj. Schermers, 19 June 1944. In this letter, the soldier’s name is spelled as ‘Pattirane’.

NEI headquarters at that time—and later to Merauke in New Guinea, where he was executed on 24 January 1945.<sup>48</sup>

These cases of KNIL soldiers who committed a crime—the Rotikan and Tuela case, the Smit case and the Pattirianie case—explained how the KNIL military high command and *Krijgsraad* operated during the war years. These fascinating cases show us that the NEI ‘refugee’ army had complete control over their militaries, the European soldiers and the indigenous Indonesian ones, and that the Australian judicial system was not involved in the cases because of the acquired NEI extraterritorial rights. These court cases emphasise the existence of Dutch military courts in Australia. Additionally, they provide us with a unique insight into the workings of the courts. More importantly, they show that the *Krijgsraad* during WWII was able to preserve the transcripts of their court cases. These trials of KNIL soldiers and their transcripts survived WWII and were archived correctly in the Netherlands National Archives, in contrast to the mass trials of over 500 Indonesian soldiers after the war’s ending. Their trials, if they ever took place, are extensively analysed in the next chapter.

As part of the ABDA forces, a large number of US military personnel, merchant seamen and a few civilians entered the country from 1942. US military troops were mostly stationed in Queensland, many in Brisbane and the surrounding areas. Daily life for these (white) US troops and civilians was very similar to their European counterparts, and they integrated pretty quickly into the local communities; as one resident from Adelaide said in mid-1942, ‘today nobody takes notice of the Americans, they have come part of our daily life’.<sup>49</sup> Some Australian girls did take notice, though, as new relationships were built between them and US personnel. Many Australians came in daily contact with these US temporary residents through various social gatherings. Regularly, sports matches were played, such as between baseball teams of US servicemen and local Australian teams. In addition, they could watch tennis games and soccer matches between their fellow compatriots and US personnel. Simultaneously, US musicians played all around the country, and mutual fundraisers were held for good causes.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> NIMH, 168 De Vries, Letter from J.P.K. van Eechoud to Conica I/Maj. Schermers, 19 June 1944.

<sup>49</sup> Eli Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Yanks down under, 1941-45: the American impact on Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1984), 238.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, ‘Servicemen’s Sport’, *The Telegraph*, 30 August 1943, 4; ‘Opinion - Now Swing’, *The Daily News*, 27 March 1944, 2; ‘Roaming Around with Athena - Negro Spirituals’, *Western Mail*, 15 June 1944, 20; ‘The American Ball...’, *The Age*, 5 July 1944, 4.

The treatment of non-white US military personnel was substantially different from that of their fellow white US GIs, though it was also different from their treatment back home in many cases. In WWII, the US Army was still highly segregated; black soldiers and white soldiers did not form military units. Though the US military embraced a 'separate but equal policy', African American soldiers were, on average, (more) poorly equipped, and only three combat divisions existed. Most African Americans were confined to facilitating the rest of the US Armed Forces in service and supply battalions.<sup>51</sup>

African American troops were not welcomed in the same way. Initially, the Australian federal government expressed grave concerns at the deployment of non-white service members. It appeared that black GIs were not positively received and appreciated by the public and the authorities. According to John McKerrow, that was not precisely the situation; he argued that racial discrimination and tension existed but most of the problems arose between black and white US soldiers, not so much between Australians and African American soldiers. McKerrow claimed that Australian civilians welcomed black military personnel.<sup>52</sup> Further, according to Sean Brawley and Chris Dixon, African American soldiers' voices 'suggest that some—perhaps many—black servicemen felt less discriminated against in Australia than in their homeland'.<sup>53</sup>

Next to non-white military personnel, there were non-white civilian newcomers and residents—a very diverse group of immigrants and peoples of Asian descent from allied countries such as China and the NEI. Not only were Asian newcomers residing temporarily in the Commonwealth, but many foreigners were also already living and working in Australia at the start of the war. Some Chinese, Indonesian and other Asians had been residents for many years, though many could not become citizens because of the White Australia policy. These befriended Asian civilians were employed in various jobs all around Australia. Some jobs were prohibited though, because of their Asian heritage.

One substantial group was employed in the pearl fishing industries in the northern parts of Australia.<sup>54</sup> Aliens from Asian regions had been working in this industry since

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<sup>51</sup> Sean Brawley and Chris Dixon, "Jim Crow Downunder? African American Encounters with White Australia, 1942–1945," *Pacific Historical Review* 71, no. 4 (2002): 609.

<sup>52</sup> McKerrow, *The American occupation*, 163–167.

<sup>53</sup> Brawley and Dixon, "Jim Crow Downunder?," 615.

<sup>54</sup> Julia Martinez and Adrian Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier. Indonesian Labor and Indigenous Encounters in Australia's Northern Trading Network* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015).

the 1860s. When that industry in Broome and other regions such as the Darwin area were completely shut down by May 1942, many Asian pearling workers, including the Indonesian workers, were moved to Melbourne.<sup>55</sup> These NEI labourers from the pearl fishing industry met up with other Indonesian refugees in the capital of Victoria. A small contingent of thirty-three Indonesians had ended up in the state's capital after their ship was diverted from Sumatra to Australia early in the war. The Indonesians found work in an aircraft factory.<sup>56</sup> Small groups of Asian workers, mainly former pearl fishers, including a few Indonesians, found other employment in primary industries, where they ended up working alongside indigenous Australians. Then, due to the rural manpower shortage, they moved to Queensland to work in agriculture, where they acquired jobs like picking peanuts and cotton.<sup>57</sup> This temporary rural work was again showing Australia's racial discrimination, as the Minister for Health and Home Affairs Ned Hanlon said in April 1942, 'Coloured labour was being used only where white labour was not available'.<sup>58</sup> Other befriended Asians worked in trade-related jobs, at the vast harbours in Sydney and Brisbane, and in the shipping industry.

Most Asian workers were excluded from specific jobs, especially jobs related to the country's war effort and security, though the government decided that recruitment of some British subjects of Chinese descent could be permitted for military positions such as ground crews. Chinese 'friendly aliens' who were primarily labourers evacuated from Ocean Island and the island of Nauru, or merchant crewmembers without jobs on vessels, found work in the AMF, the Australian Military Forces, military units limited to non-combatant duties.<sup>59</sup> These non-white alien residents, not from Japan, were allowed to stay and work in Australia, even in these war effort-related jobs, as long as they had registered as aliens and had their exemption papers and providing they would leave the county, no later than six months after the ending of the war.<sup>60</sup>

Further, groups of Chinese or Chinese-Indonesian aliens, some of whom had been living in the NEI, were trying to enter the country, fleeing the Japanese occupation. It was much harder for these groups to come into Australia than for their white equals. The Department of the Interior stated to the High Commissioner for Australia in Canada that

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<sup>55</sup> Martinez and Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier*, 119.

<sup>56</sup> 'War Work by Indonesians', *The Herald*, 25 November 1943, 9.

<sup>57</sup> 'Malays to Harvest Peanut Crop', *The Courier-Mail*, 14 April 1942, 1.

<sup>58</sup> 'Black Labour to Pick Cotton Crop', *The Courier-Mail*, 16 April 1942, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Daniel Leach, "The Other Allies: Military Security, National Allegiance, and the Enlistment of 'Friendly Aliens' in the Australian Armed Forces, 1939-45," *War & Society* 32, no. 1 (2013): 45.

<sup>60</sup> Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 22.

it was incorrect that the Chinese were entirely excluded from Australia but that the Chinese required special permission to enter the country. Hence, the potential immigrant needed their admission to be authorised by that department.<sup>61</sup> This did not mean that no Chinese citizens could enter Australia in the early war years. The War Cabinet granted some visas for Eurasian and Chinese women and children and Chinese men of non-military age who would join their wives and children.<sup>62</sup>

Many temporary residents from Europe, the US and Allied Asian countries often filled vacant jobs in factories and agriculture, positions left open by Australian men serving in the Australian army. Problems frequently arose for these temporary employees, as these alien employees, at least in the early war years, were paid meagre wages, especially compared to Australian employees and the Australian standard of living. The National Security Regulations created this financial discrepancy; the regulations stated that aliens should work for soldiers' pay and any excess sum be confiscated. The problem was that service members received extra privileges, such as food and clothing; this was not discounted when the government hastily introduced those wage regulations for non-British citizens.<sup>63</sup>

One of the side effects of low wages could have been that temporary residents committed more crimes to compensate for their limited wages. A few Asian workers made it into the papers for crimes they committed. One of them was Chinese seaman Kwok Fong, a 35-year-old, who was fined at an Australian court for having opium at his rental premises. Another known case was that of a 38-year-old bricklayer, Chick Yau, who was fined for having opium in his possession.<sup>64</sup> However, these crimes seemed unrelated to wage problems and low wages. In general, it appears that these aliens did not contribute to an exponential growth of interwar crime rates across most Australian states and territories. The state of Queensland was the only exception; there was a substantial increase in convictions in this state. Queensland hosted a relatively large number of foreigners in temporary residence, for instance, the white and African American US GIs.

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<sup>61</sup> NAA, A989, 1944/43/554/2/1 PART 2, Circular Dispatch No. 10 by the Department of External Affairs, 15 August 1944.

<sup>62</sup> 'From Various Sources', *The Albany Advertiser*, 19 January 1942, 3.

<sup>63</sup> 'Pay of Aliens. Matter for Union Action', *Recorder*, 28 October 1942, 2.

<sup>64</sup> 'News in Brief', *The Courier-Mail*, 22 August 1944, 5.

Some of these GIs and other Allied forces committed offences. The most common crimes were: absent without leave, theft and black-market activities, and drunkenness.<sup>65</sup>

The total number of incarcerated men in Queensland almost doubled between 1940 and 1944. The analysed census data shows that incarceration numbers grew from 283 to nearly 500 men. The 1945 Queensland census stated clearly that service personnel confined in civil prisons were included in the total 489 men imprisoned in the year before, in 1944.<sup>66</sup> One may conclude that this growth in the crime rate coincided with the temporary residence of those young soldiers. However, this conclusion cannot be drawn so easily. Unfortunately, in the 1940s census, no distinction was made between foreigners and Australian citizen service personnel or between foreign (US) and Australian military personnel. Moreover, the extraterritorial rights acquired by the US military high command and the existence of US military police made it unlikely that many soldiers ended up in Australian gaols. However, we know that Australian civil police arrested some of these soldiers. The crime rate went up due to the disturbances caused by Queensland's temporary military residents, possibly foreign. However, it is likely that mainly service personnel from Australian backgrounds ended up in local civil prisons, and not so many Allied alien military personnel.

Aliens from all over the globe arrived on Australian shores between 1942 and 1945. Most of these newcomers stayed within the Commonwealth laws; a few violated the federal or local laws and regulations. Though, as can be concluded from the surviving archival sources, the newspaper articles of the days and some other sources, the number of offenders appeared to be limited. Nevertheless, some of those temporary residents from Europe, the US and Allied Asian countries did break the law and ended up before a court—either a military court, such as the NEI and US ones, or local civil courts. After being convicted, these Allied aliens and sometimes even British citizens were incarcerated by the Australian Government, which treated not all friendly aliens and temporary residents the same; racial discrimination very clearly existed.

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<sup>65</sup> Kane, "Policing, III-Discipline," 12–14.

<sup>66</sup> Australian Bureau Statistics, *Year Book Queensland, 1945* (Cat. no. 1301.3), 68, assessed 1 March 2020. <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/1301.31945?OpenDocument>.

### 4.3 The treatment of alien enemies: who should be interned?

Migrants from Germany, Italy, Japan, Finland and Hungary faced substantial difficulties in wartime Australia. Their ties to enemy countries made them targets for internment. On his first visit to internment camp Tatura in Victoria, Senator Major-General Brand proclaimed that since the war started, an internment camp was housing many aliens who were trying to stab the British Empire in the back. He continued stating that now that the war situation was severe, it was up to all Australians to stand up firmly and unanimously for the empire.<sup>67</sup>

The internment of alien residents in detention camps—British subjects with backgrounds from enemy countries, or POWs in Australia—was not a new phenomenon; there are many similarities between WWI and WWII regarding the terminology, the camps themselves and Australia's internment laws. As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, laws regarding who could be considered enemy aliens and internment already existed long before WWII. The laws date back to 1915, when the Commonwealth had just entered WWI and the federal government introduced the Aliens Instructions as part of the War Precautions Regulations.<sup>68</sup>

Firsthand accounts of these WWI camps reveal that the Australian local and federal authorities often used the term 'concentration camps' to refer to the centres situated all over Australia, as did the Commissioner of Police in a letter to the Commandant of the First Military District regarding the camp in Liverpool, NSW.<sup>69</sup> This term continued to be used by other Australian officials even into WWII. The terminology and treatment of those interned appeared similar during the wars: POWs and civilians were interned in camps in often deplorable circumstances. These sites were referred to as concentration camps even at the closing of WWII. One major difference between the internment camps of WWI and WWII was that in WWII, the GOC interned not only British subjects with backgrounds from enemy countries and POWs but also large groups of Allied refugees.

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<sup>67</sup> 'Major-General Brand at Tatura Tells of the Struggle which Lies Ahead', *Shepparton Advertiser*, 12 July 1940, 5.

<sup>68</sup> NAA, BP4/1, 66/4/542, Note from Brigadier-General, commandant, 1<sup>st</sup> Military District to the Secretary of Defence in Melbourne, 21 July 1919.

<sup>69</sup> NAA, BP4/1, 66/4/58, Letter from the Commissioner of Police to the Commandant of the First Military District in Brisbane, 29 August 1919.



During WWI, many enemy subjects and POWs were involuntarily moved to camps, for instance, on Nauru, Rottneest Island, in the Goldfields—in the Boulder and Kalgoorlie (WA) areas—and Enoggera (QLD).<sup>70</sup> These internees took over the jobs of the Australian men who fought at the fronts in Europe and the Middle East, as they, for example, worked in the mines of Western Australia. At first glance, the largest groups of prisoners appeared to have been POWs from Germany and Austria-Hungary, though many of the primary sources regarding the internees were relatively unclear; in some letters, the detainees were referred to as ‘both military and prisoners’, which indicated that the prisoners, in this case, might have been enemy civilians.<sup>71</sup>

Other sources clearly indicated that, during WWI, alien civilians from Germany and of ‘Slav’ background, together with their Australian wives and children, were interned in concentration camps on Australian soil.<sup>72</sup> One of these interned civilians was a German seaman named Paul Bunge, born in 1891 in Promoiszel, Germany. According to his records, he volunteered to be interned in Australia for a short while, though compulsory detainment might be a better description, before being released on parole after spending six months in an internment camp. He settled in Bundaberg (QLD) but was deported or repatriated after the war, a fate he shared with many others who—like Bunge—had no ties to Australia.<sup>73</sup> But not only enemy subjects were deported after the ceasefire. As mentioned by Panayi in the introduction of *Minorities in Wartime*, ‘In Australia during the First World War, all naturalised deportees lost their British Citizenship to make sure that there was no possibility of the person ever returning’.<sup>74</sup> Australia was not the first or only country to intern POWs and (alien) subjects with backgrounds from enemy countries.

At the commencement of WWII, the Australian War Cabinet introduced the National Security (Internment Camps) Regulations. These regulations defined an ‘internee’ as ‘a person detained in pursuance of any instrument made or issued under any

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<sup>70</sup> NAA, A11803, 1914/89/173, cablegram from the High Commissioner Western Pacific, 22 January 1916; NAA, A2, 1915/4050, Letter from the Prime Minister Andrew Fisher to Premier of Western Australia, 23 October 1915; NAA, PP14/2, PF/668, Letter from Colonel a/Commandant 5<sup>th</sup> Military District to the Secretary of Defence in Melbourne, 26 July 1916; NAA, BP4/1, 66/4/542, Note by Brigadier-General, Commandant, 1<sup>st</sup> Military District, to the Secretary of the Department of Defence in Melbourne, 18 August 1919.

<sup>71</sup> NAA, A2, 1915/4050, Letter from the Attorney General H.G. Hampton to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, 10 August 1915.

<sup>72</sup> NAA, PP14/2, PF/668, Letter from a Captain to the Intelligence Staff General Staff in Perth, 2 June 1916.

<sup>73</sup> NAA, BP4/1, 66/4/542, Memorandum to the Secretary, Department of Defence, Melbourne, 27 November 1918.

<sup>74</sup> Panayi, *Minorities in Wartime*, 13.

regulation made in the pursuance of the Act but does not include a prisoner of war'.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, the GOC also created specific laws to regulate the confinement of enemy aliens; the National Security (Internment) Regulation empowered the Commonwealth to intern 'enemy aliens' in the interests of 'public safety'.<sup>76</sup> Even before the start of the war in the Pacific, enemy aliens who were interned could lodge appeals against their confinement with the newly created Aliens' Tribunal. After the tribunal had cleared the internees, they were 'released' and sent to work in remote regions, though not on direct defence work.<sup>77</sup> So, 'released' in this context did not mean giving back someone's freedom to decide where to go and live. These enemy aliens were forced to remote areas, a severe containment of that alien's personal liberties. Some Commonwealth interest groups appeared to be less concerned about the civil liberties of enemy aliens. For instance, at their annual congress in Mackay, the Returned Sailor's Soldier's Airmen's Imperial League (RSSAILA) passed a resolution stating that all civilian enemy aliens interned during the war should be deported after the cessation of hostilities to the land from which they originated.<sup>78</sup> This resolution did not become the War Cabinet's official opinion and did not make it into official Commonwealth law.

Much historical research conducted on internment has focused on the various groups of internees from the Axis powers or the enemies of the Commonwealth. This research has focused on internment and the political motivations for internment. According to Klaus Neumann, the majority of the detainees in these camps were men, and only a minority were committed Nazis or fascists.<sup>79</sup> S. P. Koehne did not seem to fully agree with Neumann's statement, as he argued that parts of camp Tatura were running along National Socialists lines, internees could regularly be seen exchanging the Nazi salute and they could hear Nazi or fascist songs in particular parts of the camp. The author did not directly suggest that the majority of German internees were Nazi sympathisers or persons who agreed with the ideology, only that these public displays were happening and were clearly noted by the Australian army, which was running the camp but did not react.<sup>80</sup> Kay Saunders argued along the line of Koehne when he quoted an internee from Tatura camp: 'Every German-born prisoner in the camp was a declared

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<sup>75</sup> Irvine, "Legality and freedom," 8.

<sup>76</sup> Leach, "This Way of Treating Friendly Aliens," 844.

<sup>77</sup> Saunders, "Discovering the Subversive," 22.

<sup>78</sup> 'Deport Interned Enemy Aliens after War', *Tweed Daily*, 12 June 1943, 1.

<sup>79</sup> Neumann, *In the interest of national security*, 5.

<sup>80</sup> S.P. Koehne, "'Disturbance in D Compound': the question of control in Australian Internment Camps during World War II," *Melbourne Historical Journal* 34 (2006): 75.

Nazi sympathiser. He had to be—or pretend to be—or live in hell'.<sup>81</sup> Neumann's opinion that only a tiny minority sympathised with the Nazi or fascist regimes was substantiated by some government records. For example, in a report regarding a visit to Loveday camp in South Australia, Noel Lamidey and Claude Philcox, the two recorders, concluded that the Italian internees were not fascists. The internees simply expressed those sympathies as they were convinced that the Australians would hold them in internment for the duration of the war instead of releasing them and putting them to mandatory work.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, according to the federal government, these internees were not eligible for any payment, so a financial incentive to work for Australian farmers might not have existed.<sup>83</sup>

Japanese residents were in a particular unpleasant position; many of them were already used to the fact that they were often not regarded as full or desirable citizens, even though some had been naturalised citizens before Federation. According to an Australian intelligence report of September 1941, just over 850 Japanese, forty of them children, were living in Australasia.<sup>84</sup> It has been estimated that when hostilities broke out in the Pacific region, approximately one hundred Australian-born Japanese citizens were interned immediately. Many of these aliens and residents were arrested and gaoled in local internment camps by the end of 1941.<sup>85</sup> Not all citizens of Japanese descent were automatically interned; some were exempted, for instance, based on having an excellent reputation.<sup>86</sup> According to Yuriko Nagata, this was only a minority, though how many Australian-born people of Japanese descent were not detained remains unknown. She estimated that 97% of the registered aliens who were Japanese or of Japanese descent were imprisoned at some point during the conflict.<sup>87</sup> Those Japanese residents detained in camps were treated more harshly than other internees, like German and Italian men and women. After the Pacific War ended, many of these Japanese residents were deported back to Japan, undoubtedly much to the appreciation of the RSSAILA.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Saunders, "Discovering" the Subversive," 6.

<sup>82</sup> NAA, A373, 9787, Report by N. Lamidey and C. Philcox to the Director General of Security, December 1944.

<sup>83</sup> On Workers' Compensation, 'the Commonwealth Compensation Act of 1930 applies, inter alia, to any person who has entered into or works under, contract or service with the Commonwealth. An enemy alien who is interned cannot make a contract and is not covered by the Act': NAA, MP508/1, 255/714/281, Letter from Colonel i/c Administration for GOC NSW of C. Area to Justice Davidson, 20 June 1942.

<sup>84</sup> NAA, BP242/1, Q30581 PART 1, Extract from intelligence report No. 98 dated 12 Sept 41.

These numbers include Japanese living in Fiji, Tonga and New Guinea, according to the report.

<sup>85</sup> For further information on the internment of Japanese civilians (names and dates), see NAA, BP242/1, Q39362.

<sup>86</sup> Nagata, *Unwanted Aliens*, 55–57.

<sup>87</sup> Nagata, *Unwanted Aliens*, 59–60.

<sup>88</sup> Joan Beaumont, *Australia's War, 1939-1945* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1996), 57.

Government officials continuously debated Japanese residents' status, especially when the war dragged on and anti-Japanese feeling became more persistent. One of the often reappearing questions was whether the War Office should change the status of Japanese interned residents, for instance, merchant seamen who used to work in the pearling industry, from regular internees to POW, as the UK had done in early 1942.<sup>89</sup> It appeared that the War Office changed the status of many of these Japanese internees, as they did for other merchant seamen from enemy countries like Finland and Hungary, into POWs, in imitation of their British counterparts. Thus, from mid-1942, these Japanese internees were referred to as enemy merchant seamen officers, POWs, in various primary sources.<sup>90</sup> This is a critical status change as POWs fell under other international war laws than civilian internees; for instance, POWs could not lodge appeals at the Aliens' Tribunal as civilian enemy aliens could.

At the beginning of the war, all aliens from enemy countries (individuals who were legally British subjects by birth or naturalisation, displaced refugees) were considered one homogeneous group. As Alison Bashford and Carolyn Strange argued, 'wartime internments blurred the distinctions between enemies and refugees in the reconstitution of foreign nationals as enemy aliens'.<sup>91</sup> Anna Rosenbaum explained in her work that even many Jewish people from Germany and Austria, who were technically stateless citizens, were still classified as enemy aliens and detained in internment camps in the early war years.<sup>92</sup> Not many Australian residents seemed to care about the country's approach towards Jewish internees; even the attitude by the Jewish community in Australia itself could be characterised by reserve and ignorance.<sup>93</sup> Various official letters and reports by Australian Government officials underline Rosenbaum's statement; in a document regarding alien immigration by the Department of the Interior, it clearly stated that 'No authority is being granted for the admission of persons of enemy alien nationality (including refugees). The term "enemy alien" applies to Germans, or Stateless persons of

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<sup>89</sup> NAA, A1608, L20/1/1 PART 2, Cablegram from the Prime Minister's Department to the High Commissioner's Office in London, 15 January 1943; NAA, A1608 L20/1/1 PART 2, Cablegram from the High Commissioner's Office in London to the Prime Minister's Department, 03 January 1943.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, NAA, A1608, L20/1/1 PART 2, Cablegram from the Prime Minister's Department to the High Commissioner's Office in London, 30 October 1942; NAA, A1608, L20/1/1 PART 2, Letter from F.R. Sinclair, the department of Army, to the Prime Minister's Department, 8 July 1942.

<sup>91</sup> Alison Bashford and Carolyn Strange, "Asylum-Seekers and National Histories of Detention," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 48, no. 4 (2002): 517.

<sup>92</sup> Rosenbaum, *The Safe House*, 263.

Koehne wrote extensively about German Jewish internment in Tatura (VIC). See Koehne, "Disturbance in D Compound."

<sup>93</sup> Konrad Kwiet, "'Be patient and reasonable!' The internment of German-Jewish refugees in Australia," *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 31, no. 1 (1985): 65.

former German or Austrian nationality, as well as Italians'.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, other reports from 1942 also supported her research statement, such as the inspection reports created at various camps around Australia. One of the regular reports from Victoria's internment camp in Tatura from late 1942 is an excellent example of this. In this report, the groups in the camp were discussed and 'the internees of several of the nationalities are further sub-divided in accordance with their country of origin, whether Jewish or not and their trend of political sympathies'.<sup>95</sup>

This disputed status changed slightly in October 1943; refugee aliens were placed in a separate category under the amended National Security Regulations. This newly created group of exiled aliens were defined as aliens driven from their homes in their own country by Nazi religious or political persecution.<sup>96</sup> The narrow classification of this group of refugees is remarkable; apparently, the Australian lawmakers did not consider the small groups of Japanese or other Asian refugees part of this newly defined refugee group, as the lawmakers specifically defined Nazi prosecution as the leading form of prosecution.

At the beginning of 1942, Secretary Frank Sinclair led internment policy, interning persons whom he (and others in the War Cabinet) considered enemy aliens. One of the reasons for this zealous push for internment could be that the Japanese threat severely affected the internal security environment in large sections of Australia. Sinclair, directed by the Minister for the Army, demanded that in Queensland, lists be created with the names of all enemy aliens with past anti-British history, and detention orders be created for enemy aliens whose internment the GOC considered necessary in the event of hostilities in Australia. This was not the first time that lists were created in Queensland regarding potential sympathisers of the Nazi or fascist regimes. As early as late 1941, the Australian Military Forces had created a list with people's names, all residents in Queensland, thought to relate to the Russian fascist movement, either as members or supporters.<sup>97</sup> Sinclair, in his letter, continued by instructing that additional list should be created with the names of other persons, not enemy aliens, who, in the opinion of the War Cabinet, should be interned at once or in the event of hostilities in Australia. He did not

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<sup>94</sup> NAA, A981, MIG38, Letter from the Department to the Interior tot the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, 20 August 1941.

<sup>95</sup> NAA, A981, MIG38, Letter from the Department to the Interior tot the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, 20 August 1941.

<sup>96</sup> 'Control of Aliens. New Regulations', *The West Australian*, 19 October 1943, 4.

<sup>97</sup> NAA, BP242/1, Q30579, List titled Russian Fascism, by the Australian Military Forces - Northern Command, 18 November 1941.

explain what the exact criteria were for a person to be added to this list. According to the same letter, on 5 February, close to 550 residents of Queensland were already in internment, of which approximately 150 were British subjects.<sup>98</sup> As a response to this letter, the Major-General for Queensland wrote that he did not believe the internment policy and measures suggested by Secretary Sinclair were necessary at that moment.<sup>99</sup> Sinclair remained very perseverant in his quest to gaol enemy aliens, as he wrote a letter just a few months after his request of lists in Queensland. He disclosed that he believed that all unnaturalised enemy aliens should be interned and vigorous action taken against naturalised aliens and persons guilty of disloyalty.<sup>100</sup> According to Leach, residents of 'enemy' origin—especially in north Queensland—were detained in much larger numbers than had been previously (i.e., before mid-1942).<sup>101</sup>

Scholars disagree on the number of internees in the Commonwealth concentration camps. These different numbers are partly due to other or unequal measurement parameters, for instance, a single year versus the entirety of the war. Some scholars do not make a clear distinction in their research between civilian internees and POWs. The federal government did not make that clear distinction either, as some Japanese merchant seamen, Indonesian political prisoners from Boven Digoel and Indonesian merchant seamen were interned and classified as POWs. Bashford and Strange have noted that in 1942, the total number of people in Australian internment camps topped 10,000.<sup>102</sup> Minna Muhlen-Schulte described that in that year, 12,000 people were interned, and Konrad Kwiet estimated that the total number of civilians interned during the war was that exact number: 'However, of an estimate of the approximately 10,000 civilians interned in this country during World War II, however briefly, somewhat more than 2,000 would have been of German-Jewish origin'.<sup>103</sup> In her research, Pieris argued that 12,000 individuals were interned in Australia in 1942, including 7,000 residents and 1,500 British nationals.<sup>104</sup> Eric Richards stated that 'eventually 4727 Italians, 1115 Germans, 587 Japanese and some 550 others were interned even though Arthur Calwell intervened in 1943, protesting that there had been "too much racial and other prejudice" against "many

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<sup>98</sup> NAA, MP508/1, 255/702/1620, Letter from Secretary F.R. Sinclair to The Secretary of the Department of Defence Co-ordination, 5 February 1942.

<sup>99</sup> NAA, MP508/1, 255/702/1620, Letter from Major-General, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, to the Secretary of the Department of Army, 23 February 1942.

<sup>100</sup> NAA, MP508/1, 115/703/553, Letter from Secretary F.R. Sinclair to W.R. Musk, 5 May 1942.

<sup>101</sup> Leach, "This Way of Treating Friendly Aliens," 850.

<sup>102</sup> Bashford and Strange, "Asylum-Seekers," 521.

<sup>103</sup> Kwiet, "Be patient and reasonable," 61; Muhlen-Schulte, "In Defence of Liberty," 66.

<sup>104</sup> Pieris, "Cowra, NSW," 788.

naturalised British Subjects living in Queensland”’.<sup>105</sup> According to Ilma Martinuzzi O’Brien, who examined internment through the entirety of WWII, a total of 6,000 immigrants were interned and close to 1,200 British subjects who had been granted citizenship by naturalisation. However, she did not discuss the total number of internees. Additionally, Panikos Panayi estimated that ‘7,780 enemy aliens, naturalised British subjects of enemy alien origin or parentage and Australian citizens comprising some twenty-seven different nationalities or ethnic categories (including those of neutral status)’ were incarcerated.<sup>106</sup> Finally, Neumann estimated that more than 15,000 civilians were interned in Australia during the war years, so about 5,000 more than Kwiet’s approximation.<sup>107</sup>

The scholars disagree on the number of internees during the war; though, as I argued, it has been challenging to compare the numbers. Nevertheless, I conclude from Neumann’s assessment of this situation that his number of over 15,000 internees appears close to the real numbers of internees. I base this conclusion on my faith in Neumann’s meticulous research of the national archives, combined with what I know regarding the fate of Indonesian internees. I believe this discussion on the number of detainees matters because it provides great insight into the lack of uniformity and consistency in the Australian registration of incoming aliens, and the unreliable registration of the internment of dangerous foreigners and British citizens. It emphasises the problems of getting a clear idea of precisely how many Indonesians were incarcerated. Moreover, even though not all scholars agree on the final numbers, it still shows the enormous operation, the (mis)use of human capital and the breaching of civil liberties of so many people. Finally, it indicates that even after extensive research by scholars, it remained unclear how many people in total were interned on Australian soil in internment camps during WWII.

#### **4.4 Daily life of alien enemies in internment camps**

New internment camps were erected all over Australia for the enemies of the Commonwealth, though many concentration camps, as one could describe these camps, already existed at the start of the Pacific War. Governmental organisations widely used

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<sup>105</sup> Richards, *Destination Australia*, 143.

<sup>106</sup> Panayi, *Minorities in Wartime*, 289.

<sup>107</sup> Martinuzzi O’Brien, "Citizenship, Rights," 208; Neumann, *In the interest of national security*, 2.

the term ‘concentration camp’ to describe the camps because, from WWI until the early days of WWII, the term did not have the same negative connotation as it did at the end or nowadays.<sup>108</sup> Civilians from enemy countries, even Jewish people (as researched by Rosenbaum), and POWs were interned in extensive camps, such as the previously mentioned camps Loveday (SA) and Tatura (VIC), as well as smaller ones in Liverpool (NSW) and other towns across Australia, and on Thursday Island (QLD) and Rottnest Island (WA). Many POWs arrived from the Middle East, where the Allied powers captured them; since there were no facilities to intern them over there, Australia agreed to accept military prisoners from Germany and Italy.<sup>109</sup> On a regular basis, enemy internees were first gathered in smaller transit or temporary detention camps, such as Liverpool camp, before often secretly being transferred to larger centres, mainly further south in the country. For instance, in October 1942, around 500 Italian internees were transported by train from Parkeston ‘emergency’ camp near Kalgoorlie (WA) to Loveday Camp.<sup>110</sup> Even later in the war, some POWs and civilian internees were still moved from one camp to another, like Hisao Kiba, a Japanese officer who arrived from Gaythorne (QLD) at Cowra in May 1944.<sup>111</sup>

At the start of WWII, these camps were run by the Ministry for the Army, but relatively early in the war these camps came under the supervision of the Attorney-General.<sup>112</sup> The camps were guarded and run by members of the Australian military, but additionally assisted by civilian employees and headed by the Adjutant-General, who was entitled to make the Internment Camp Orders, specific rules and regulations to manage that particular camp in an orderly fashion.<sup>113</sup> The camp regulations dictated a meticulous regime and daily schedule that all internees had to observe, from the time the civilian internees and POWs had to get up, to what time breakfast was served, to headcounts, to what time lights were turned off.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> A concentration camp is defined as an ‘internment centre for political prisoners and members of national or minority groups who are confined for reasons of state security, exploitation, or punishment, usually by executive decree or military order’: Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘concentration camp’, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed 17 January 2021.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/concentration-camp>.

<sup>109</sup> ‘Internment Camps for Prisoners’, *The Age*, 21 May 1941, 7.

<sup>110</sup> NAA, MP508/1, 255/717/65, Letter to Allied Land Forces Headquarters in Melbourne, 16 October 1942.

<sup>111</sup> NAA, SP1714/1, N45633 PART 2, Extract from Intelligence Report No. 87, 22/5/44 to 28/5/44.

<sup>112</sup> Martinuzzi O’Brien, “Citizenship, Rights.”, 219.

<sup>113</sup> NAA, A472, W1729, Order Under National Security (Internment Camps) Regulations, 25 January 1942.

<sup>114</sup> NAA, A663, 03/2/782, Internment Camp Orders ‘Discipline of Internees’, 26 November 1941.



The larger camps were little (military-run) villages on their own, and many camps were divided into different compounds or communities for designated groups; the overall conditions in each compound were, on average, quite deplorable. For instance, at Tatura, there were separate parts of the camp for POWs (Camp No. 1), German and Italian families (Camp No. 3) and Japanese families (Camp No. 4).<sup>115</sup> The concentration camp section for POWs was closed off from other compounds for civilian or semi-military personnel by barbed wire, like in almost all internment camps. The majority of all the sizeable camps were close to a railway station, and these camps contained buildings such as sleeping quarters, workshops, laundry areas, a medical hospital, a mental hospital and a chapel. Moreover, there were designated areas to drink coffee, play sports and grow vegetables, as also analysed by the journalist in his Cowra account in the introduction of this chapter.<sup>116</sup> Regular activities such as movie nights, concerts and sports games (like cricket matches between civilian internees and local teams) were organised.<sup>117</sup> The children in the civilian internee compounds could attend kindergarten and school in educational facilities as more or less regular students.<sup>118</sup> In most of these camps, all internees, both civilians and POWs, could send and receive mail, though the Camp Commandant and Intelligence Staff censored outward and inward correspondence. In addition, these internees could receive parcels from relatives back home; many of them complained that their packages were damaged by the time they arrived at the correct camp.<sup>119</sup>

Military-related or war activities happened next to the regular village activities in many of the camps. The European POWs in these camps were forced to do manual labour jobs. For instance, there was a group known as the Italian farming soldiers; a large group of about 17,000 Italian POWs, primarily captured in North Africa, who were forced to work on Australian farms.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, these camps themselves contained military

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<sup>115</sup> NAA, MP508/1, 255/721/466, Letter from Major-General to Base H.Q. Southern Command, 9 February 1942.

<sup>116</sup> NAA, AP613/1, 90/1/70, Memorandum for Headquarters South Australia Loveday Internment Group Camp, 8 October 1942; NAA, AP613/1, 90/1/70, Letter from the Secretary to the Military Board to the Headquarters South Australia, 24 June 1942; NAA, MP742/1, 255/10/5, Report from Justice Davidson, visitor to Liverpool Internment Camp, 11 December 1942.

<sup>117</sup> 'Cricket. Glossop v. Internment Camp', *Murray Pioneer and Australian River Record*, 25 September 1941, 15.

<sup>118</sup> NAA, MP508/1, 255/715/240, Official visitors' report internment camp No. 2 Tatura, 2 June 1941; NAA, MP508/1, 255/721/466, Letter from Major-General to Base H.Q. Southern Command, 27 March 1942.

<sup>119</sup> Barbara Winter, *Stalag Australia. German Prisoners of War in Australia* (London: Angus & Robertson Publishers, 1986), 158.

<sup>120</sup> Beaumont, *Australia's War*, 58.

buildings like guard rooms and detention buildings or huts for internees who did not obey the strict rules and needed to be punished, and as mentioned, the compounds were often partly or entirely separate from the civilian parts. All centres were redesigned continuously and adapted to new circumstances. At the Liverpool and Cowra camps, the guarding personnel needed more cells to lock up unwilling POWs and civilian internees, so, for instance, several new detention huts were built at Liverpool camp in March 1943.<sup>121</sup> One of those internees who needed to be disciplined was POW Carmelo Catenesse, who was interned in Cowra and, according to an intelligence report, reported for being a troublemaker, untrustworthy, always complaining, an admitted Blackshirt and a fascist agitator, for which he was given 28 days' detention.<sup>122</sup> Although many of the camps looked like little villages, it was evident to the Australian public that these were detention camps; high barbed wire fences or barricades surrounded the camps, the conditions inside the barbed wire grounds were appalling and escaping the camps was almost impossible.

Few Australians knew that Indonesians were held in camps. Details of detainee numbers and camp locations were withheld for national security reasons, according to Lynne Horiuchi. Only the neighbouring townspeople were aware of their existence. Horiuchi stated that, for example, at Cowra, the weekly movement of unfree Italian farm labourers made their presence known to the locals in town.<sup>123</sup> Horiuchi argued that not many people knew about the existence of the camps and their internees. This might be true for the presence of the Japanese prisoners, as they were locked away from the Australian public, in sharp contrast to the Italian farming soldiers.<sup>124</sup> Though if one examines the regional newspapers, one can find meetings where people were organising fundraisers to help the internees, like the Australian Jewish Welfare Society and the National Council of Jewish Women, who held meetings to appeal for clothing and books for internees in Tatura Internment Camp. There were also meetings held, such as the one organised by the Brisbane branch of the International Peace Campaign and attended by approximately 1,800 people. At this meeting, the Australian Government was urged to free refugees in camps like Tatura and Hay (NSW) immediately. In Sydney, members of Catholic and Jewish organisations held protests against refugee aliens, mainly Jewish

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<sup>121</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 255/10/5, Letter from the Lt.-Col. in Paddington, NSW, to L.H.Q NSW, 18 March 1943.

<sup>122</sup> NAA, SP1714/1, N45633 PART 2, Extract from Intelligence report No. 83, 23/4/44 to 30/4/44.

<sup>123</sup> Lynne Horiuchi and Anoma Pieris, "Temporal Cities: Commemoration at Manzanar, California and Cowra, Australia," *Asian diasporic visual cultures and the Americas* 3 (2017): 306.

<sup>124</sup> Beaumont, *Australia's War*, 58.

refugees who fled Nazi oppression, being called up to work alongside German enemy aliens.<sup>125</sup> It seems unlikely that details about the sites and these internees were withheld deliberately by local, state and federal governments for reasons such as national security if those voluntary organisations held publicised meetings, which were often covered in well-known newspapers such as the *Argus* and *Courier-Mail*.

#### **4.5 Indies people: the Australian registration during the war years**

All aliens, both friendly and enemy, who arrived in Australia had to register upon arrival at the local Aliens Registration Office at the first port of entry or the aerodrome where their plane landed. Most temporary residents from the NEI, who fled their homeland after the Japanese occupation, or those who continued working in the transnational shipping industry, arrived on merchant vessels. By far the largest company operating in this industry was the KPM, and many seamen registered in Sydney or other major Australian harbours. As examined previously, how many exactly Dutch and Indonesian merchant seamen arrived during the war years remained unclear. I tried to analyse their composition and numbers based on the available archival materials.

We know that by mid-1944, 1,656 Dutch nationals had registered in NSW, according to the Aliens' Registration Records. Of the registered aliens, the vast majority were male (1,439) and just a small group (217) was female. The numbers demonstrated an unequal ratio male to female newcomers to Australia. As the source revealed, 'this number includes, of course, coloured people from the Netherlands East Indies'.<sup>126</sup> Another source from a few days earlier revealed that 640 Dutch nationals had, at some point, registered themselves in Victoria; this letter did not give any further details regarding if these aliens were from the NEI or elsewhere.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> 'Help the Internees', *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 26 June 1941, 7; 'Action for Universal Peace Urged', *The Courier-Mail*, 26 July 1941, 5; 'Refugee and Enemy Aliens', *The Argus*, 6 July 1943, 3.

<sup>126</sup> NAA, A373, 10311, Letter from Deputy Director of Security for NSW, H. Nortlock to Lieut. F.J. Whittaker in Brisbane, 29 July 1944.

<sup>127</sup> NAA, A373, 10311, Letter from Deputy Director of Security for Victoria P.H. Carney to Lieut. F.J. Whittaker in Brisbane, 26 July 1944.

**Table 4.1: FARs A2 from Cowra camp**

FAR A2	Indonesians <i>n</i> = 262	Javanese <i>n</i> = 40
Man	165	39
Woman <sup>128</sup>	31	
Child <sup>129</sup>	66	1

Note. FARs A2 = Forms of Application for Registration.

If one examines the archives of internment camps, such as Cowra, the ratio is still considered unequal, though far more equal than based on the Sydney Forms of Application for Registration (FARs A2); of the 302 analysed internees, at least close to 10% could be identified as adult females (see Table 4.1). Finally, if one compares these numbers to the discovered Red Cross reports from 1943 and 1944, one can conclude that the ratio of Indonesian males and females is more equal than the previous mentioned nominal rolls. According to the 1943 report, on 29 July of that year, there were 291 adult males and seventy-five adult females (plus another twenty Indonesian adults who were not further specified by gender) residing in the camp. On 20 March 1944, the Red Cross counted 103 Indonesian males and sixty-eight females in Cowra camp.<sup>130</sup>

To analyse who arrived in Australia from the NEI and what happened to the indigenous Indonesians, I researched several other sources related to the Indies' newcomers. During my research, I collected and selected close to 450 FARs A2; all forms were from Indonesians who were, according to their registration papers, at some point registered in Sydney (see Table 4.1).<sup>131</sup> Additionally, I analysed the nominal rolls of Cowra's Indonesian seamen; these rolls were created as, upon arrival, the Cowra camp administrators registered all crewmembers. All indigenous Indonesian seafarers were reported on these rolls as 'Javanese', and all but two had an NXJ registration number. These Cowra rolls contained their names, occupation and age; unfortunately, their places

<sup>128</sup> Counted as females were internees who either had 'housewife' or 'wife' mentioned as their occupation or were specifically mentioned as 'wife' in the section 'relatives in camp'. I acknowledge that many more are likely to be women, though based on the data set they could not be positively identified as such.

<sup>129</sup> Counted as children are all internees who were identified as children, and I added to this count internees born in the year 1930 or later who were not specifically identified as a child. I removed two from the final children count as they were identified as children but had a date of birth before 1900.

<sup>130</sup> NAN, 2.10.45, inv. nr. 290, Report by delegates of the Red Cross 'Groupe de Camps de COWRA, Nouvelle-Galles du Sud', 29-31 July 1943 and Report by delegates of the Red Cross 'Groupe de Camps de COWRA, Visités par le Dr. G. Morel', 22-24 March 1944.

<sup>131</sup> Four hundred and thirty-nine Forms of Application were collected and held at the Sydney branch of the Australian National Archives (NAA), SP11/2/0 box 55 to 72, between 7 August 2017 and 28 November 2017 (selection criteria: nationality Indonesian or Javanese and Sydney).

of birth were not added to these lists, which make these lists not ideal for comparison with other primary sources such as the FARs A2.<sup>132</sup> I also analysed two reports by the Red Cross from July 1943 and March 1944; these reports were a valuable source of independent information gathered by some members of the organisation on their visits to the Cowra camp. Not only did the reports describe the Indonesian internees' living circumstances but they also estimated the number of Indies internees on two separate occasions.<sup>133</sup> Further, I examined the registration lists of all POWs and other internees interned in the Cowra internment camp.<sup>134</sup> After clearing the lists of minor irregularities, I identified that Indonesian internees were categorised into three different groups. First, only five Indonesians or Javanese were registered as POWs; their internment number started with the letter 'P'. One cluster of Javanese could be identified with an internment camp number beginning with 'N' (or 'Q'); these were the registration numbers of the Indies semi-military personnel. Finally, the majority of the civilian internees could be identified by their number starting with a letter 'D', classified on the lists as Indonesians.<sup>135</sup>

In further analysing the selected forms and rolls, some general conclusions could be drawn regarding the people who arrived and were interned in Australia and how the Australian Government mismanaged the registration of aliens from the NEI. It highlighted how inconsistent the Australian authorities were when registering NEI civilians and semi-military personnel. This is the same GOC that was tremendously keen on all aliens registering themselves upon arrival. My first research conclusion is that the exact number of Indonesian internees, and thus civilians and semi-military personnel, was unclear, though their number at least exceeds 700. Moreover, what actual percentage of these internees were Indonesian men, women and children is imprecise. Based on only

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<sup>132</sup> NAN, 2.05.48.14, inv. nr. 70, Nominal rolls Javanese seamen in Cowra NSW, no date.

<sup>133</sup> NAN, 2.10.45, inv. nr. 290, Report by delegates of the Red Cross 'Groupe de Camps de COWRA, Nouvelle-Galles du Sud', 29-31 July 1943 and Report by delegates of the Red Cross 'Groupe de Camps de COWRA, Visités par le Dr. G. Morel', 22-24 March 1944.

<sup>134</sup> Lists were created by the Cowra Family History Group in 2014. This historical society was very generous in sharing their acquired data collection with me, for which I owe them many thanks. They have put in so many hours and so much hard work in creating this incredible and valuable data collection.

<sup>135</sup> After an initial analysis of the provided lists, I removed all non-Indonesian and non-Javanese internees from the list, such as Japanese and Korean POWs, as they were not essential for my research questions. I continued to delete all internees' names with either no registration number, as they are not identifiable enough, or 'doubles' (people who were on the lists twice, had the same name, or had very similar spelling of names, or had the same internment camp registration number). I then selected the names on the list of people who were identified as not at Cowra camp and removed them from the lists. Finally, I checked registration numbers, as almost all Javanese internees' registration number started with the letter 'N', just two started with the letter 'Q' (merchant seaman/POW related), and almost all Indonesians started with the letter 'D', except for three POWs. As a result of this preliminary analysis, I moved one Javanese female to the list of Indonesian internees, as her registration number started with the letter 'D'.

the FARs A2, less than 3% of the newly arrived Indies people were female, and none of the registered Indies aliens were minors. This sounds obvious, as almost all arriving newcomers were ships' crews, mainly KPM, and hardly any were passengers on boats or aeroplanes. Additionally, according to the *Alien Registration Act 1939*, many female aliens arriving in Australia were exempt from filling out an alien registration statement. According to the Act, the wife (or dependent relative) was exempt if the husband was not prohibited from entering the country.<sup>136</sup>

Another conclusion is that the Australian registration officers were hugely inconsistent in registering the NEI people born on one of the Indonesian islands, as they listed almost all individuals from the NEI as being 'Javanese'. In the FARs A2, approximately 16% were non-Javanese people—only seventy-one of the 439 registrations. Some people were registered by the Australian authorities as being from the islands of Timor or Celebes.<sup>137</sup> Though if one looks at their places of birth, the authorities did not seem to make a logical or consequent distinction. For example, seamen Efenesy, born in 1900 in Timor, and Roebin Radja, born in Koepang in 1921, were identified by the registrars as Javanese, while others born on Java, such as fireman Ibriam, born in Grisse in 1896, and Ngaiban, a trimmer born in Sourabaya in 1918, were identified as Indonesian.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, if one analyses the places of births mentioned in the FARs A2, close to 19% were not born on the island of Java.<sup>139</sup>

In the 1940s, it was still expected that wives take the nationality of their foreign husbands. According to the *Australian Nationality Act 1937*, (most) women lost their British nationality on marriage and became subject to the country of which their husbands were nationals.<sup>140</sup> Lingard has clearly shown that the group of Australian women who married an Indonesian had to surrender their British passports and register as 'Aliens by

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<sup>136</sup> NAA, BP9/3, AMERICAN BONYNGE S S, Personal Statement by Alien Passenger, Form A, No. 42., 7 May 1944; *Alien Registration Act 1939* (No. 12 of 1939).  
<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C1939A00012>.

<sup>137</sup> These 71 non-Javanese newcomers were mainly identified as Indonesian, but also, for instance, as Dutch, Ambo(i)nese and Macassarese.

<sup>138</sup> NAA, SP11/2/0, Efenesy SP11/2/0 no box #, Roebin Radja, SP11/2/0 box 66, Ibriam SP11/2/0 no box #, and Ngaiban SP11/2/0 box 65.

<sup>139</sup> In total, 411 of the 439 places of birth (p.o.b.) could be identified, a few town names/p.o.b. were untraceable, most likely due to erroneous spelling or these villages no longer existing under this particular name. Of these, 334 (81.3%) were born on Java.

<sup>140</sup> NAA, A989, 1944/535/2, Letter from A.R. Peters to the Department of External Affairs, 1 December 1944.

This did not apply to marriage between a US national and an Australian female. According to a letter by A. R. Peters to Mrs M. B. MacRae, she would not acquire the nationality of her husband merely by reason of marriage to a US citizen and, consequently, she would not lose her British nationality: NAA, A989, 1944/535/2, Letter from A.R. Peters to Mrs. M.B. MacRae, 25 October 1944.

Marriage'. The author emphasised the difficult circumstances for this group of women, some who married merchant seaman, others former Digoelists. She studied this group of Australian-Indonesians and Lingard's meticulous research has allowed us to see that the exact number of Indonesian Australian wives is unclear. However, according to the author, in 1947, about 50 of the Indonesians who had refused to work for the Dutch had either 'white' or 'coloured Australian wives'.<sup>141</sup> As a result of this 1937 Act, many Australian, New Zealand or European wives of Indonesians had to register as aliens, and they were sometimes identified as Javanese.<sup>142</sup> For instance, Irene Swadie, born in Rockdale (NSW), and Margaret Millicent Moesama, born in Carlton (VIC), were registered as Javanese.<sup>143</sup> Even more intriguing is a young couple, who were both registered by the Sydney authorities. The husband was Robert Pelenkanu, born in Menado, on the north-eastern tip of Celebes, and he was listed as Dutch. His Australian-born wife, Sylvia Pelenkanu, born in Young (NSW), was registered as being Menadonese.<sup>144</sup> These inconsistencies made it difficult to make conclusive statements regarding the backgrounds of the interned aliens in camps like Cowra.

#### **4.6 Indies peoples: civilian and semi-military internment around Australia**

As I documented in the previous chapters, close to 1,000 Indonesian merchant seamen went on strike very early in the Pacific War. These seafarers protested against the fact that they were paid far less, sometimes only one-tenth the salary of their Australian (and European) counterparts, even though their living expenses were similar to that of the white shipping crews. Around April 1942, the indigenous crews also demanded warmer clothing as winter was arriving in Australia. The local authorities arrested the Indonesian strikers quite quickly, based on breaking the immigration laws and disrupting the Allied war effort. These former Indies crews, who used to work at Sydney harbour, were transported first to gaols such as Long Bay jail, from where they were transported to Liverpool camp, some to Loveday and later transferred to Cowra.<sup>145</sup> Once interned, the NEI 'government-in-exile' was financially responsible for their own internees, as 'all cost

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<sup>141</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 237.

<sup>142</sup> The consequences of their newly acquired nationality is further analysed in Chapter 6.

<sup>143</sup> NAA, SP11/2/0, Irene Swadie (nee Joland), d.o.b. 23-Nov-1923, NAA, SP11/2/0 box 70 and Margaret Millicent Moesama, d.o.b. 15-Dec-1926, SP11/2/0 box 65.

<sup>144</sup> NAA, SP11/2/0, box 66: Pelenkanu.

<sup>145</sup> 'Committee of Indonesian Independence', *The Maritime Worker*, 1 November 1945, 2.

of erecting necessary accommodation, maintenance of guards, transportation and all incidental expenditure at the discretion of the Commonwealth Government'.<sup>146</sup>

This NEI 'government-in-exile' was not an official government-in-exile, like their Netherlands' counterparts in London, as argued in the previous chapter, hence why it was first named the Netherlands Indies Commission, the Commission being similar to a Cabinet or Legation. Around the same time as the indigenous crews demanded their winter clothing, this commission was inaugurated and settled in Melbourne, with Huib (Hubertus) van Mook as its Head. It consisted of five other members, including Charles van der Plas (its most influential member) and only one Indonesian member, Loekman Djajadiningrat.<sup>147</sup> A few years later, this commission was dissolved when the Netherlands Indies Government or Legation partly moved to Camp Columbia in Brisbane (QLD); one of the reasons for this move was that the location was more practical, being closer to the Netherlands Indies and closer to the Allied Head Quarters.<sup>148</sup> Van Mook stayed on as Head, as Lieutenant-Governor-General or Chief Commissioner; Van der Plas became Director of Economic Affairs and acting General Secretary of the Government; and Lieutenant-General Ludolph van Oyen became Commander-in-Chief, Netherlands Indies Army and Head of the Department of War. Van Mook retained his portfolio as Minister of the Colonies for the Netherlands Government as well.<sup>149</sup>

The Netherlands Indies Commission was financially responsible for the internment of the Indonesians, but the daily surveillance and care for the Indies internees was done by the Australian Military Forces, assisted by local civilians. Everyday life for these men, women and children in camps such as the one in Cowra was harsh and challenging. None of them knew when they would be released, adding to their psychological torment. We must keep in mind that these internees were citizens from a friendly ally. In a report from mid-September 1942, H. B. Barends, Secretary of the Netherlands Commission for Australia and New Zealand—the Commission headed by Van der Plas—described what he witnessed when visiting Cowra camp. He was told in advance that the incarcerated indigenous shipping crews would have to do 'hard labour'. Upon arriving and interviewing witnesses, he concluded that there was no such thing as

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<sup>146</sup> NAA, A989, 1943/40/35, Secret cablegram from the High Commissioner's Office in London, 6 September 1943.

<sup>147</sup> Poeze, "From Foe to Partner," 57.

<sup>148</sup> 'Netherlands Indies Government', *The Age*, 7 June 1944, 4; 'Netherlands Indies Government. Organisation in Australia', *Cairns Post*, 23 June 1944, 2.

<sup>149</sup> NIMH, 237 De Vries, Letter from F.C. van Aerssen Beyeren to Prime Minister J. Curtin, 3 November 1944.



hard labour, only regular work activities for six hours per day. He continued explaining that he had tried to convince crew members to return to work but had only found three members prepared to go back to work in the harbours.<sup>150</sup> Barends could have been biased as he was working for the Netherlands Government. Moreover, the internees could have been prompted what to tell the Secretary of the Commission. Though from the Red Cross reports, it could also be concluded that hard labour was not the benchmark for the Indies detainees at Cowra camp. None of the representatives reported anything that suggested forced or hard labour. An early Red Cross report on these internees mentioned that their treatment was 'excellent' and revealed the Indonesian internees' daily schedule. This schedule was very similar to the one mentioned in the Internment Camp Orders 'Discipline of Internees'; the daily timetable was meticulous, including what time the Indonesians had to get up, what time supper was served and what times the Indies people had to attend roll calls.<sup>151</sup>

Indonesian internees were not a homogeneous group, as the men, women and children came from different backgrounds, various parts of the NEI and were incarcerated for diverse reasons. The largest group of internees had a maritime background, and many of the men had an internment number starting with the letter 'N'. Many of the women and children in the camps were related to these KPM merchant seamen, as can be concluded from the registration lists of the internees incarcerated in Cowra camp. Next to the internees with a sea and trade background was a unique group of about 500 political prisoners from Boven Digoel, a part of Dutch New Guinea.

In the late 1920s, after a short revolt on the island of Java, where a small group of Indonesian rebels attempted a communist revolution, the NEI colonial government established a concentration camp in Boven Digoel. This detention camp comprised two settlements (Tanah Merah and Tanah Tinggi) hidden in New Guinea's hostile jungle. The Governor-General of the Indies could use his discretionary powers to send an individual considered a menace to the colonial order to this selected settlement, from which the prisoner was not allowed to leave. Though due to its remote and severely hostile location, it was almost impossible to leave at all. As a result, thousands of people were driven away to Boven Digoel into banishment of unknown duration, and only the NEI Governor-

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<sup>150</sup> NAN, 2.05.48.14, inv. nr. 70, Letter from H.B. Barends to H.S. Deirse, 16 September 1942.

<sup>151</sup> NAN, 2.10.45, inv. nr. 290, Report by delegates of the Red Cross 'Groupe de Camps de COWRA, Nouvelle-Galles du Sud', 29-31 July 1943, page 2. The Red Cross report is in French; the words used when referring to the treatment were 'Le traitement général est excellent'.

NAA, A663, 03/2/782, Internment Camp Orders 'Discipline of Internees', 26 November 1941.

General could lift this incarceration.<sup>152</sup> According to a letter written by a few internees once they were detained in Cowra camp, Boven Digoel served as a place of isolation for people considered dangerous by the authorities in Indonesia and as a clear warning to the country's people against political disturbances. As a result, people were banished there for belonging to the Indonesian Communist Party and for any revolutionary beliefs and teachings.<sup>153</sup> This account, by the Cowra internees, corresponds with the known delineations by Van der Plas. As Noonan has documented, some of the group members were considered by Van der Plas as 'extremely dangerous psychopaths', while others were just '*less dangerous psychopaths*'.<sup>154</sup>

In early 1943, the Allies feared a further push of the Imperial Japanese Army towards northern Australia, which was led by military activities to seize Dutch New Guinea. Consequently, the jungle around Boven Digoel might develop into a war zone. On 8 February, Van der Plas submitted a formal proposal to vacate the camps and evacuate the Digoelists as a matter of 'urgent military necessity'. The NEI representatives succeeded in convincing the relevant Australian officials that even the Boven Digoel's women and children were enemies of the Allies, so they were classified as enemy POWs and not as the political prisoners of the NEI regime that they actually were.<sup>155</sup> The Boven Digoel internees were first taken to one of the Torres Strait islands, where they boarded a ship, the S.S. *Both*. In accordance with Regulation 26 of National Security [General] Regulations, each detainee, including all the children, received individual detention orders upon arrival.<sup>156</sup> A few days later, the Digoelists disembarked in Brisbane from where they had a long and very unpleasant train trip to Sydney. A few stayed in Sydney and were deported to Liverpool camp; most continued to the centre in Cowra. After they arrived in the camp, 'the Javas', as they were subsequently referred to by Cowra camp personnel, were once again interned for an unknown period.<sup>157</sup>

In the end, they were incarcerated in Compound D at Cowra camp for several months before some were released by the Australians, while others were re-employed in Queensland. The release of most Tanah Merah prisoners was accomplished due to various civic organisations, and Australian trade unions pressured the Curtin Government on this

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<sup>152</sup> Poeze, "From Foe to Partner," 58.

<sup>153</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 255/2/298, Translated letter to the International Red Cross from the Cowra internees (Boven Digoel), 29 July 1943 - 19 October 1943.

<sup>154</sup> Noonan, "Merdeka in Mackay," 242.

<sup>155</sup> Poeze, "From Foe to Partner," 61–64.

<sup>156</sup> Noonan, "Merdeka in Mackay," 242.

<sup>157</sup> Lingard, "The Beginnings of a Relationship," 545–550.

matter. Director-General of Security Simpson wrote in late August 1944 that he had managed to have all but eighteen of the 500 Dutch New Guinea evacuees released. According to Simpson, it became soon apparent that they, the men, women and children from Tanah Merah, did not represent any severe security risk, that they were not the enemies of the Allies, as strongly suggested by the Netherlands Indies Legation.<sup>158</sup>

Camp life for these Indonesians from Boven Digoel was equally horrific. Their treatment had also been atrocious in New Guinea; though Rudolf Mrázek argued that Boven Digoel was considered civilised and enlightened, the people in the camp were more or less adapted and used to the specific harsh conditions in this hell-camp.<sup>159</sup> Weather conditions in the NSW camps were very different from the tropical climate in Boven Digoel. As one of the visitors appointed by the state's government to the Cowra camp concluded, 'the winter weather at Cowra is much too cold for the Indonesians, and the fact that they are interned in such a climate is in some cases responsible for their deaths'.<sup>160</sup>

Near the end of their stay in Cowra, many of the Indies internees were officially drafted into the NEI forces by the Netherlands Indies authorities and, as a result of an earlier adopted Dutch Royal Decree, they were under Dutch-Indies military law. On 10 November 1942, a royal directive stated that the seamen who refused to rejoin the KPM ships would be required to work in camps as militarised civilian labourers. This meant that the incarcerated seamen would be subject to 'military provisions for punishment, discipline and military law, as laid down for the Royal Netherlands Indies Army'. The Australian War Cabinet supported this decree to apply NEI military law to its (indigenous) civilians, who formally recognised it later that month.<sup>161</sup> The content of this new decree was announced to the Indonesians while they were still incarcerated at Cowra camp in late 1942 by a reserve captain of the KNIL in the Malay language; this was probably done to encourage the remaining KPM crews to resume their work in the harbours and on their ships.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> NAA, A989, 1943/40/13, Letter from W.B. Simpson to the Attorney General in Canberra, 30 August 1944.

<sup>159</sup> Rudolf Mrázek, "Healing in Digoel," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 95 (2013): 54.

<sup>160</sup> Fitzgerald and Irvine, "The Tanah Merah," 42.

<sup>161</sup> NAA, A472, W11647, Royal Decree number 74, Royal Netherlands Indies Army Headquarters, 10 November 1942; Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 26.

<sup>162</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 147, Judgement/Sentencing record (vonnis) of Wagimin NXJ23383, 30 November 1943.

Cowra was not the only camp where Indonesians were detained during the war. Many internees residing in Sydney were first incarcerated at Liverpool or Long Bay before being transferred or in one of the other smaller camps such as the one in Gaythorne (QLD).<sup>163</sup> The latter camp was initially created as a reception camp for internees from the NEI and China, as they were awaiting an appeal at the Aliens' Tribunal. It also served to process Italian POWs who were transferred from NSW to Queensland to work on local farms and as a staging camp for Japanese and Italian POWs before they could be transported to other larger camps, mainly to Cowra camp. Gaythorne camp was therefore often referred to as an 'Internee Staging Camp' by the Australian authorities.<sup>164</sup> A small group of Indonesian seafarers were interned at Gaythorne at least as early as March 1943.<sup>165</sup>

The NEI Commission kept on pushing for repatriation to the Netherlands for as many Indonesians as possible. According to Lieutenant Plump, in a letter he wrote to Simpson in November 1944, the Dutch, in the person of General Spoor, were most anxious to send all Indonesians, other than those who had to remain in Australia for military training or similar reasons, to Dutch New Guinea. Spoor explained that it was necessary because he and his colleagues felt that contact with Australians, particularly communists, had a detrimental effect on the Indonesians. Therefore, he only wanted to keep Indonesians interned if they had very bad records.<sup>166</sup> One of the underlying reasons for a push for swift return could be that the NEI administration had to pay for all interned Indonesians in Australia, though this was not mentioned in this specific letter.<sup>167</sup>

At the request of the NEI authorities, some Indonesians were re-interned at Gaythorne camp after their ordeal in camps such as Cowra and Liverpool.<sup>168</sup> In early 1945, the NEI Commission requested that fifty-five Indonesians be re-interned at this

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<sup>163</sup> See, for example, Muhlen-Schulte, "In Defence of Liberty?"; Matt Young and Charis Chan, 'The Forgotten History of Australia's Prisoner of War Camps', *Herald Sun*, 25 April 2014. <https://www.heraldsun.com.au/anzac-centenary/the-forgotten-history-of-australias-prisoner-of-war-camps/news-story/252928e826bd5d02743ab0defe10c242>.

<sup>164</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 96/1/1921, Minute Paper by Lt-Col D.P.W. & I., 5 September 1944; Letter re. Inspection Report, from Lieutenant-Colonel to the Adjutant-General Allied Land Forces Headquarter, Melbourne, 29 March 1943; NAA, MP508/1, 96/707/1137, Minute Paper, Internment Camp, Gaythorne from Lt.-Col D.P.W. & I., 25 September 1942.

<sup>165</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 255/9/111, Prisoners of War and Internment Camps. Inspection report by Captain J.W. Hinchin, 1 July 1943.

<sup>166</sup> NAA, A373, 10311, Letter from Secret Service Lt. Plump to the Director General of Security W.B. Simpson, 2 November 1944.

<sup>167</sup> NAA, A989, 1943/40/35, Secret cablegram from the High Commissioner's Office in London, 6 September 1943.

<sup>168</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 92/1/256, Minute Paper from Major-General, Quartermaster-General, 18 December 1944.

Internee Staging Camp, and the Australian authorities complied with this request.<sup>169</sup> This group of fifty-five internees was a group that General Spoor would refer to as ‘having very bad records’. NEI Commissioner Van der Plas went as far as describing these indigenous Indonesians as ‘violently anti-allied and pro-Japan and are desperados who were even plotting the assassination of Australian officers and N.C.O.’s in Wallangarra’, and he explained that these internees came to these ideas by way of Japanese internees drilling them in camp Loveday.<sup>170</sup>

Approval by the GOC was also given for the transfer to escort to Gaythorne thirteen Indonesian internees held at Liverpool, pending embarkation back to Tanah Merah and Tanah Tinggi by the rotor ship *The dens*. The original group was the slightly larger group mentioned by Simpson in his letter to the Attorney-General in August 1944; the group consisted of eighteen former New Guinea inhabitants, but four internees were released due to their appeal at the Justice Committee in NSW. Pending embarkation, the former Digoelists were segregated from all other POWs and internees, especially from any contact with other Indonesians, at the request of the NEI Commission. The Australian Advisory Commission could not establish any actual evidence against the internees from a security point of view but recommended that these Indonesians be held at the facility in Gaythorne anyway until they could be deported back to the NEI.<sup>171</sup>

Concluding, a few days after the Pacific War had officially ended, the NEI Government reopened the camp in Boven Digoel, or the hell-camp of Tanah Merah or the ‘Dutch Siberia’, as the newspaper *Tribune* described the settlement, even though in Boven Digoel a more tropical climate existed.<sup>172</sup> These Digoelists had once more not seen the inside of a courtroom, not an Australian or NEI one. Their civil liberties were breached again, first by the Dutch, then by the Australians who did not consider them a severe security risk, and for a second time by the colonisers. The NEI assumed the small

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<sup>169</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 92/1/256, Minute Paper by Major-General., Quartermaster-General, 18 December 1944; Letter from the Major General, Adjutant General to the Secretary of the Netherlands Indies Commission in Melbourne, 3 January 1945.

<sup>170</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 255/2/676, Letter from Ch.O. van der Plas to Brigadier W.B. Simpson, 20 March 1945. Wallangarra was a large camp, on the border of Queensland and NSW, where a substantial group of Indonesian former seafarers and some Digoelists ended up after their ‘release’ from Cowra. The Indies people were transported to the camp to be employed for the Australian army and the Allied war effort.

<sup>171</sup> NAA, A989, 1943/40/13, Letter from the Department of External Affairs, 26 September 1944 to Baron F.C. van Aerssen Beyeren van Voshol, 26 September 1944; NAA, MP742/1, 255/2/676, Secret memo from Major-General, Adjutant-General, 3 April 1945.

<sup>172</sup> ‘I Say a Last Good-Bye’, *Tribune*, 20 March 1945, 1; ‘Dutch “Burra-Sahibs” Re-Open Hell Camp’, *Tribune*, 23 August 1945, 4.

group of predominantly men as violently anti-allied and pro-Japan, though they were more likely simply anti-Dutch colonisation and pro-Republic.

#### 4.7 'Free' Indonesians: working in Australia

Not all Indonesians arriving in Australia were interned at some point; a significant group of NEI individuals residing in Australia were never interned, as they did not go on strike in the first year of the Pacific War. Therefore, they were never really targeted by Australian immigration officers because they were not breaking the country's immigration laws. One of these groups was a group of about 1,500 seamen who remained at work in the large Australian harbours; as mentioned, not all KPM seamen went on strike in April 1942.<sup>173</sup> Another considerable group of Indonesian workers found seasonal jobs in the large agricultural areas, on the cotton, peanut and sugar cane plantations in Queensland. Additionally, the large group of military personnel was more or less left alone by the Australian authorities, as they were still on active duty in the army and navy under either NEI or ABDA command.

Small groups of indigenous Indonesians were working in Australia's largest cities. Some found jobs at facilities such as shops and hospitals; many of these amenities were erected, especially for and targeted at the Indonesians. For instance, in Sydney and its surroundings, three medical centres were established by the KPM at the request of the NEI administration: a clinic on Sussex street, the Queen Wilhelmina Hospital in Centennial Park and the Princess Juliana Sanatorium in Turramurra. Although predominantly white European/*Indisch* men ran these facilities, some staff were Indonesians, though mainly assisting jobs such as cooks, translators and cleaners.<sup>174</sup> A few Indonesians also found employment working for and with their former coloniser in organisations such as NIGIS, the NEI Government Information Service, operating from Australia from 1942 until October 1945.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Poeze, "From Foe to Partner," 65.

<sup>174</sup> 'Dutch Hospital Set in Australian Bushland', *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 August 1944, 14; 'Medical Care for Dutch in Sydney. Clinic and Hospitals', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 August 1944, 6.

<sup>175</sup> Netherlands Indies Government Information Service (NIGIS) was given the task of informing the public and the press on political, economic and cultural matters in writing and through the media of radio and film. P.J. Drooglever, M.J.B. Schouten, and Mona Lohanda, *Guide to the archives on relations between the Netherlands and Indonesia 1945-1963* (The Hague: The Institute of Netherlands History, 1996), 54.

Further to the not specifically targeted but always observed Indies people—like the 507 Boven Digoel Indonesians, the political refugee group that had arrived in Australia in June 1943—was the large group of mainly Indonesians and perhaps a few Indo-Europeans, who were released from camps, such as Cowra, Loveday and Liverpool, relatively early in the war. The majority of these former internees returned to their jobs in the big harbours and factories. They resumed work after the ending of the strike in August 1942 and the agreement between the KPM (and another smaller shipping company) and the interned striking mercantile seamen. The KPM granted the indigenous strikers their pay claim plus an eight-hour workday, and the crews returned to their vessels.<sup>176</sup> The Australian unions were active in attempting to improve the living and working conditions for both skilled and unskilled Indonesian workers. After the strike of 1942, the wages of KPM personnel were almost matched to that of local seamen due to the intervention of the Australian Seamen's Union. By this time, the Indonesians established their own union as well, a union called the Indonesian Seamen's Union.

Like the Indonesian 'wharfies', other NEI unskilled workers—some who had been interned, some who had stayed out of the internment camps—worked on infrastructural projects and in industries such as the local weapons production and saw their income more aligned with Australian wages.<sup>177</sup> At least these aliens, primarily working in big cities like Sydney and Melbourne, obtained much more equal payment than in the early war years as their wages were no longer regulated through the National Security Regulations. At the beginning of the war, the aliens earned the equivalent soldier's wage of the men who had left their jobs, without compensation for the soldiers' food and clothing. This changed somewhat due to the considerable union pressure, the same Australian trade unions that had pressured the Curtin Government on the topic of the release of the Tanah Merah prisoners.<sup>178</sup>

A select group of Indonesians were dispatched to work at yet another camp, camp Casino, also known as Victory Camp, in the northern part of NSW. This group of Indies people who started their employment there became known as the Technical or Oil Battalion.<sup>179</sup> The camp, situated on Kyogle Road, was initially established by the

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<sup>176</sup> Ford, "The Floating Dutchmen," 84.

<sup>177</sup> Martin O'Hare and Anthony Reid, *Australia dan perjuangan kemerdekaan Indonesia* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1995), 9.

<sup>178</sup> 'Pay of Aliens. Matter for Union Action', *Recorder*, 28 October 1942, 2.

<sup>179</sup> Indonesia was (and still is) rich in oil, and the Dutch needed the Indonesians to undergo training so they could repair or rehabilitate oil installations after the Pacific War was over.

Commonwealth to receive the 6th and 7th Divisions returning from the Middle East and would later become one of the most infamous camps for NEI prisoners.<sup>180</sup> Though when the Dutch moved their first group of around one hundred Indonesians—some former KPM seamen from Cowra and some from Melbourne—into this by now abandoned camp in December 1943, it was not yet an infamous, brutal camp.<sup>181</sup> This first group of Indonesians were relatively regular employees and not imprisoned in Camp Victory; they could walk in and out of the centre without any restrictions, and the conditions appeared to be relatively relaxed. The Indonesians also became more or less part of the daily life in Casino, were regularly seen in the town to buy goods, and as members of sports teams and they formed their own teams, for instance, they established a local hockey team to play in the revived local competition.<sup>182</sup> This tranquil situation lasted for some time but would eventually change dramatically. According to Lingard, the peaceful coexistence between the Dutch, Indonesians and town of Casino was shattered around the end of the Pacific War.<sup>183</sup>

Finally, a substantial group of now free Indonesians, former Cowra internees, were transferred to Mackay (QLD) in April 1944. As Noonan has documented, ‘On arrival the newly liberated ex-internees quickly established themselves in their new, more climatically agreeable, northern home. All of the houses vacated by the returning Amboinese civilians were reoccupied by this group as well as some additional accommodation hastily acquired’.<sup>184</sup> The group mainly consisted of families and some single older men. In this country town, they lived closely together with the local townspeople; the children attended the community schools, and many special events were organised by and for this group of refugees, like football matches between Mackay teams and a team of Indonesian players.<sup>185</sup> The NEI Legation paid for the costs of lodging, schooling and other expenses like medical costs for these indigenous Indies people.<sup>186</sup> Next to the paid medical bills and school money, each former Cowra-internee from the

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<sup>180</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/4, Copy of a letter to or from the Director General, Commonwealth Investigation Branch about the Dutch Detention Centre in Casino, 22 February 1946.

<sup>181</sup> The harsh and shattered relationships between camp Casino, the Indonesians, the Australian Government, local people and the Dutch authorities are studied in depth in subsequent chapters.

<sup>182</sup> ‘Men’s Comp. may be Revived’, *Northern Star*, 15 April 1944, 5.

<sup>183</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 123.

<sup>184</sup> Noonan, “Merdeka in Mackay,” 249.

<sup>185</sup> ‘Soccer. Javanese v Mackay’, *Daily Mercury*, 20 May 1944, 3.

<sup>186</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 97.



age of nine received a weekly allowance, a bit of pocket money, from the NEI authorities.<sup>187</sup>

At the end of the war, most Indonesians were classified as ‘free’ individuals, under the condition that they had acquired an exemption paper, had registered as an alien—unless they were the wives of registered—and would leave the country within six months after the war had ended to return to their mother country, in accordance with the country’s *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*. In his function as Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell was especially eager to make sure that all indigenous Indonesians were repatriated as soon as possible.<sup>188</sup> Although Calwell pushed for a quick return of the Indonesians, it still took a substantial time to repatriate all Indonesians; for instance, the Mackay group stayed in Queensland until their repatriation to the East Indies territory in late February 1946.<sup>189</sup> A few other groups remained in Australia for an even more extended time, due to several reasons. A primary reason was that it was at the request of the NEI authorities and owing to the circumstances regarding the independence movement in Indonesia, as well as the black ban of Dutch ships in the larger harbours of Australia. The considerable group of Indonesian civilians, semi-military and military internees who ended up in Casino and their repatriation are discussed in subsequent chapters.

#### **4.8 The 36th Australian Employment Company: the case of Asmawie**

During the war years, the Australian army established thirty-nine Employment Companies, employing an estimated 15,000 men by the end of WWII.<sup>190</sup> Eleven of these thirty-nine companies consisted of non-British citizens, and one company, the 8th, consisted exclusively of non-Australian Jewish men.<sup>191</sup> These companies were stationed all over Australia, for example, in Albury in NSW and Wallangarra and Helidon in Queensland. They were established early in the war to guarantee that the Australian

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<sup>187</sup> Noonan, "Merdeka in Mackay," 249.

<sup>188</sup> Lingard, "The Beginnings of a Relationship," 151.

<sup>189</sup> 'Indonesians Leave Mackay', *Daily Mercury*, 23 February 1946, 2.

<sup>190</sup> Australian War Memorial, 'Works/Labour/Employment/"Alien" Companies', accessed 14 July 2020. <https://vwma.org.au/explore/units/3437>.

<sup>191</sup> Douglas E. Delaney, Mark Frost, and Andrew L. Brown (eds.), *Manpower and the Armies of the British Empire in the Two World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021), 142.

Defence Force had a large group of men dedicated to continuing the essential war effort and supporting the Commonwealth fighting troops.

After their suffering in the NSW camps, an extensive group of Indonesians from Cowra and smaller camps were transferred to the 36th Australian Employment Company (36AEC), based all over Queensland, though the largest part of the Indonesians ended up in Wallangarra camp, on the border with NSW.<sup>192</sup> The Australians selected the nonhomogeneous group of people from the Indies based on, for instance, their backgrounds, their behaviour within the various concentration camps and gaols, and the pressing advice of and the arrangements with the Netherlands Legation and other Dutch stakeholders in Australia.

A group of about 160 Indonesian ex-internees, according to Chief Commissioner Van der Plas, ended up working at the 36AEC. These Indonesians—former KPM seafarers and Digoelists—or Javanese as the Australians continued to refer to them, were selected for heavy labour from the side of the Australian army.<sup>193</sup> According to Lingard, the group of Indonesians employed at the 36AEC was much larger than the 160 mentioned by Van der Plas. She described a group of 692 seamen who were all transported further north to serve in the Queensland-based Company; of this large group, just over 350 were dispatched to Wallangarra.<sup>194</sup> Lingard's research and analysis appears to be more accurate; according to a Minute Paper by the Department of the Army, 693 Javanese seamen were released from Cowra, and all were enlisted in the 36AEC.<sup>195</sup> This discrepancy in numbers might be because Van der Plas did not specifically identify the Indonesians as from Boven Digoel, just as Javanese workers. According to Lingard, the group of almost 700 Wallangarra men contained 150 single men from Boven Digoel. Afterwards, the author mentioned that on 7 December 1943, 160 single men from Boven Digoel were sent to Toowoomba to work as militarised labourers for the 36AEC.<sup>196</sup> So, it could be that Van der Plas was actually describing this specific group of ex-Dutch New Guinea internees. Additionally, the 36AEC group size fluctuated; many Indonesians were released after a while. For example, by late 1944, far from all the original Indies men still

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<sup>192</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 27.

<sup>193</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 92/1/256, Letter from Ch. O. van der Plas, Netherlands Indies Commission for Australia and New Zealand to F.M. Forde, Minister for the Army, 22 December 1943.

<sup>194</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 35.

<sup>195</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 92/1/256, Minute Paper by Lt-Col. D.P.W. & I., 5 April 1943.

<sup>196</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 93.

working at the company, there were only thirty-two Indonesians in Helidon near Toowoomba (QLD), and seventy-two were working in Wallangarra.<sup>197</sup>

Some Indonesians from the 36AEC were married, and their wives, together with their children, accompanied them to the Wallangarra camp in Queensland.<sup>198</sup> These men, women and children were all released from their NSW camp on the same date, 15 January 1943, and transported together to their new camp, where they arrived eleven days later and where the 'Javanese' men started working soon after. At the request of the NEI authorities, a few men were later transferred to other facilities within the 36AEC, to the complex in Helidon, to start working in the munition factory so that they would be segregated from the larger group in Wallangarra. The NEI Commission made this request because a few of the militarised civilian Indonesians held 'divergent political views'. Eventually, in April 1944, some older single men and some married Indonesian men and their families were released and sent to live in Mackay, where they remained until repatriated in early 1946.<sup>199</sup>

The groups of Indonesian men did not consider the work arrangements at the 36AEC regular jobs; many of them believed this was another forced internment, though the Australian authorities no longer referred to them as 'internees', just as 'personnel'. Lingard's analysis of their living conditions and circumstances did indicate that it was forced internment. The author noted that 'they were housed first in tenets, arousing local sympathy because of the freezing winter temperatures in the district, then later in fibro or plywood huts, with the camp surrounded by a high wire fence.' She continued to explain that after a while, the Indonesians were allowed to leave the camp on the weekends, but for instance, they were not permitted to go near the two local pubs or visit the local movie theatre.<sup>200</sup> These descriptions of camp life and restrictions can hardly be considered standard employment and living conditions for regular personnel.

A few Indonesians at Wallangarra made their displeasure with their situation very clear. One small group within the extensive group of Indonesians of the 36AEC stood out, as this group of seven Indies men were convicted of serious crimes while at the

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<sup>197</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 92/1/256, Minute Paper by Major-General, Quartermaster-General, 18 December 1944.

<sup>198</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 92/1/256, Letter from Ch. O. van der Plas, Netherlands Indies Commission for Australia and New Zealand to F.M. Forde, Minister for the Army, 22 December 1943.

Later, a few men were transferred to Risdon camp, near Warwick, but this camp was disbanded and vacated in November 1944. See: NAA, MP742/1, 92/1/256, Australian Military Forces memo, 8 December 1944.

<sup>199</sup> Lingard, "The Beginnings of a Relationship," 550.

<sup>200</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 38.

camp.<sup>201</sup> These men seemed not to have had similar backgrounds or a long collective history, though all of them had entered the concentration camp in Cowra before 1 December 1942, the day the Royal Degree was announced, and they all arrived at the same day, on 26 January 1943, in Queensland after their combined internment in NSW.<sup>202</sup>

These Indies men worked at the railway yards in Wallangarra, where they were deployed to load and offload arriving trains with military equipment. In the autumn of 1943, they were working at the yard and illegally acquired some hand grenades and later a tin of detonators. During their NEI court-martial, they explained their reasons for taking this equipment. One of the accused, Ankara, a 26-year-old former Boy on the *M.S. Ruys*, stated he wanted to acquire a souvenir, an explanation that did not convince the court.<sup>203</sup> In contrast, the main suspect, Asmawie—also about 26 years old according to the Dutch authorities, but only 22 years old according to the Australians—stated during his trial that he had taken these devices to ‘do something drastic’. Asmawie’s objective was to terrify the Australians and escape because he very much disliked the Wallangarra camp, as mentioned in the court transcripts.<sup>204</sup>

After the seven accused had individually smuggled the hand grenades into Wallangarra camp, the weapons were buried and re-buried at the campsite. After one of the other defendants, Ali Oesman (a former trimmer on the *Bontekoe*), told Asmawie he needed a detonator too if he wanted to ignite a grenade, a tin with twelve detonators was taken away from the railway yard as well. Oesman later declared he knew about using these detonators because Japanese POWs told him in Loveday camp, where he was interned for a while. Van der Plas was probably referring to internees like Oesman and Asmawie in his earlier mentioned letter when he was describing a group of Indonesians as ‘violently anti-allied and pro-Japan and desperados who were even plotting the

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<sup>201</sup> NAA, MP1103/1 and MP1103/2, The Service and Casualty forms and Reports on Internee of Angkarah/Ankara(h) NXJ23067, Asmawi(e) NXJ23046, Asrikan NXJ23199, Ali Oesman NXJ23063, Pake NXJ23394, Salie NXJ23186, Wagimin NXJ23383.

<sup>202</sup> According to their records (NAA, MP1103/1 and MP1103/2), these seven men were originally from different areas in the NEI, except for Asmawie, Asrikan and Wagimin (all three were from Grisse, Java); arrived in Australia on different dates; arrived on different ships like the *M.S. Van der Lijn*, *Bantan* and *Swartenhondt*; and were captured on different dates. Some were incarcerated for only one day at Liverpool camp and directly transferred to Cowra, a few stayed there for much longer and some were also transferred to Loveday camp, before arriving in Cowra camp.

<sup>203</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 147, Casefile 10912, Sentencing records (vonnissen) of all seven defendants, NEI Courts-Martial, 30 November 1943. In combination with NAA, MP1103/1 and MP1103/2, the Service and Casualty forms and Reports on Internee.

<sup>204</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 147, Casefile 10912, Transcript of Sentencing record, NEI Courts-Martial, 30 November 1943.

assassination of Australian officers and N.C.O.'s in Wallangarra' and that these internees came to their ideas through Japanese internees who had drilled them in camp Loveday.<sup>205</sup>

In the early evening of 4 July 1943, Asmawie told one of his fellow internees Salie—born in 1910 and an ex-seaman on *Swartenhondt*—about his plan to kill someone or more than one person by blowing up one of the camp buildings. Salie advised him several times not to execute this plan but did not report the forthcoming plan to his superiors. Salie was later sentenced to three years' imprisonment, mainly because he had not reported the planned attack and it could have been prevented. That night, Asmawie threw a hand grenade in the tent of Australian sailmakers. The attack did not kill or wounded any local sailmakers, and Asmawie and his Indonesian accomplices were arrested. A few weeks later, the NEI military court tried the seven because of the royal directive that stated that incarcerated NEI seamen would be subject to military provisions for punishment, discipline and military law.<sup>206</sup>

At the sentencing hearing, Asmawie only received a sentence of five years' imprisonment for his attempted homicide and thefts. The reason for this relatively short sentence was the fact that the court took into consideration the circumstances in which Asmawie committed his offences. The NEI military court described the mitigating circumstances: the fact that Indonesian seamen were forced out of their country, the way KPM merchant seamen were treated in Australia, that they were even considered enemies of the Allied forces at some point during the war. However, this changed when they became civilian personnel for the Australian army and the fact that the Australian military made it too easy for the NEI civilians to steal weapons, as the supervision was not enough and the fact that the theft was only discovered by the local authorities a month after it occurred. Therefore, the NEI military court partly blamed the Australian authorities for what happened at Wallangarra camp. In addition, the court considered the treatment of the peoples from the Indies, allies of the Australians, in Australian territory.<sup>207</sup>

The 36AEC camps all over Queensland were slowly closing down when the Pacific War was coming to an end. According to Lingard, the camps were phased out as

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<sup>205</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 255/2/676, Letter from Ch.O. van der Plas to Brigadier W.B. Simpson, 20 March 1945.

<sup>206</sup> NAA, A472, W11647, Royal Decree number 74, Royal Netherlands Indies Army Headquarters, 10 November 1942.

<sup>207</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 147, Casefile 10912, Sentencing record of Asmawie, NXJ23046, NEI Courts-Martial, 30 November 1943.

much of the danger to Australia had passed, though her timeline seemed a bit narrow.<sup>208</sup> She stated that this phasing out started after about a year, but the Wallangarra and Helidon camps were still in operation, and Indonesian workers were still head counted, as late as December 1944.<sup>209</sup> Further, in March 1945, the Queensland military mentioned that the Indonesians in the 36AEC were transferred to the NEI authorities. This meant that at least until early 1945, the camp was still occupied and some of the 'Javanese' workers were still employed.<sup>210</sup> Wallangarra camp and the munitions depot remained open until after the war had ended.

#### 4.9 Conclusion

During the war years, Australia welcomed all kinds of newcomers to its shores: military personnel, white and non-white civilian aliens, and refugees from all around the world. This influx of human beings caused problems for the administrators of 'White Australia'. In 1943 and 1944, over 10,000 non-permanent residents entered the country each year without too many issues at the borders; the War Cabinet temporarily abandoned the exclusionary policies. Large groups of military personnel, both army and navy, from countries such as the US but also the NEI and the Netherlands, were included in Australian society. New relationships were formed on various levels, between local girls and US GIs, and on a governmental level, between the NEI Commission and the GOC. New military alliances were formed too, as within the ABDA and military units like the 18th Squadron. Many temporary residents, though mainly Caucasian aliens, could live, work and spend their leisure time in relative freedom if they did not cross Australian boundaries of the law, although some did. Moreover, if foreign military personnel crossed the judicial lines, they primarily ended up before their own country's court-martial because of negotiated extraterritorial rights.

As Muhlen-Schulte has argued, 'Interning individuals without trial because of their ethnicity or categorising them as "internee" instead of refugee to remove legislative burdens opens up questionable moral terrain'.<sup>211</sup> During the war years, the GOC changed

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<sup>208</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 94.

<sup>209</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 92/1/256, Minute Paper by Major-General., Quartermaster-General, 18 December 1944.

<sup>210</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 92/1/256, Telegram from Milbase Brisbane to Landforces, 19 March 1945.

<sup>211</sup> Muhlen-Schulte, "In Defence of Liberty," 77.

the status of many refugees into internees, such as German Jewish refugees, and from civilian internees into POWs, like several Indonesian internees from Boven Digoel. However, there appeared not to be a valid legal reason to do so; the reason for this status change was to follow the mother country in their legal battles with aliens. Because of this status change, these refugees and internees became part of another set of international laws and regulations—a set of legislative agreements forced upon them but never created for them. The deprivation of civil liberties, civilians being locked up in camps without any form of a legal process, without trial and without the clear perspective of a release date, was one of the most significant breaches of civil liberties on Australian soil during the Pacific War.<sup>212</sup>

At the commencement of WWII, almost every country had specific rules and regulations regarding aliens who could enter the country and who could not. In many countries around the world, newcomers had to register upon arrival. Australia was no exception in that perspective, though on average, it was simply more manageable for a white person to enter the country than a non-white person. Aliens who did not register or failed to produce their certificate of registration could receive severe fines. These fines appeared not to have been uniquely Australian, nor did these fines specifically target non-white temporary residents. There is no concrete evidence that non-white aliens were fined more often or more harshly than white aliens.

Scholars have acknowledged the internment as a human rights violation. Researchers have focused on specific groups, such as Jewish or Japanese internees in the Commonwealth.<sup>213</sup> Some research has been conducted on specific internment camps. Pieris, for example, focused on the long history of the Cowra camp.<sup>214</sup> And as Christine Piper showed, ‘The Australian internment experience was unique in many ways. Australia agreed to house enemy aliens from other Allied nations if costs were borne by those governments. As a result, internee camp populations were truly diverse and rife with friction’.<sup>215</sup> To date, however, no research has documented the unique Indonesian internment in Australia. I do not think I have done so comprehensively here. My goal is

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<sup>212</sup> NAA, MP508/1, 255/715/747, Report of Tatura Internment Camp by Lieutenant-Colonel Inspector P.W. & Internment Camps, 2 October 1942.

<sup>213</sup> Nagata, *Unwanted Aliens*.

<sup>214</sup> Pieris, "Cowra, NSW".

<sup>215</sup> Christine Piper, ‘Japanese Internment a Dark Chapter of Australian History’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 August 2014.  
<https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/japanese-internment-a-dark-chapter-of-australian-history-20140813-1031dy.html>.

to highlight the mistreatment of Indies peoples, residents from a country considered an Australian ally, in Australian camps.

Many of the thousands of Indonesians who entered Australia between 1942 and the Indonesian *Proklamasi* were incarcerated on flimsy evidence and due to discrimination. The civil liberties of the striking merchant seamen were undermined; many of these Indonesians were not willing to take enormous risks for a meagre one-tenth of the salary of their Australian counterparts. These indigenous seafarers found help from an unlikely ally: the Australian unions. The worst human rights abuses were reserved for the group of 507 Digoelists. In their own country they had already been incarcerated for their part in the late 1920s uprising, before being deported to the Commonwealth against their will. In Australia, they once again ended up in camps as enemies of the state and because they were a severe security risk, without ever having seen the inside of a courtroom. The National Security (Internment) Regulation empowered the Commonwealth to intern ‘enemy aliens’ in the interests of ‘public safety’. The question was, could these men, women and children from Boven Digoel be considered enemy aliens who threatened public safety?

After their release, many of the 1942 strikers returned to their ships in the larger harbours, where they found employment until the war’s closing, when the unions and these Indonesians went on a second, even bigger strike, the black ban of Dutch ships. A large group of Cowra internees and a few from other camps—officially befriended temporary residents—ended up in new camps. Although, according to the Curtin and later Chifley governments, these camps could not be classified as internment camps, and the residents were mere employees of particular companies or the federal government. This might be a correct classification for the first hundred Indonesians in the Technical Battalion in Casino, but, in my opinion, Wallangarra camp and some other camps in Queensland could once again be classified as internment camps, where the breach of fundamental civil liberties was the basic norm.

According to Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, ‘White men’s countries felt increasing pressure from the 1940s onwards to repeal the array of discriminatory legislation and particularly their immigration restriction laws, which had been built up over the past one hundred years’.<sup>216</sup> This account might be valid for countries such as the

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<sup>216</sup> Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line. White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 352.



UK and maybe to a lesser degree the US, but in my opinion, not for Australia in the 1940s. The White Australia policy flourished in the mid-1940s—government committees, various Australian war cabinets and several interest groups started deliberating on tackling the post-war immigration problems, advocating migration clearly not for all but almost exclusively for ‘people from British stock’.

## Chapter 5: Internment camps on Australian soil: Casino and Lytton

In the main street, between Kearney's hotel and the Royal, a large white sign reads: 'Down with Dutch murderers. Get rid of hell-camp. People of Casino, our town is known Australia-wide as "Little Belsen"'. Swastika signs accompanying the slogans indicate Australian residents' opinion of the Dutch thugs who have intimidated Australians as well as Indonesian internees.<sup>1</sup>

This quotation is from the official newspaper of the Australian Communist Party *Tribune*, also known as *The People's Paper*.<sup>2</sup> Although its language reflects the political division of the day, this quotation also provides a window into what was known then as 'The Casino camp'. The quotation also implies the notoriety of this camp in Australia in the early post-war years. It was published in late April 1946, more than half a year after the Imperial Japanese Army surrendered; the camp was active long after the war ended. In this chapter, I pose the following question about the Casino camp: why was this camp on Australian soil, still a functioning camp, occupied by the Dutch East Indies' military and government, and described as a hell-camp? Why were NEI soldiers, semi-military personnel and even a few civilians locked up in an Australian camp and not repatriated back to their towns and villages in the Indies as one might expect, months after the end of WWII?

As discussed in the previous chapter, the town of Casino, NSW, was used to seeing people from NEI background roaming around in their streets. From early in the war, the open camp—Camp Victory—just outside of this border town, was occupied by a few Dutch, perhaps some Dutch-Indies, but mainly Indonesians, who worked there as members of the Oil Battalion. As I have argued in the previous chapter of this thesis, most of these Indonesians lived on Kyogle Road in Casino more or less by their own free will. They were trained in this camp; the Indonesians underwent specialised training to repair or rehabilitate NEI oil installations after the war. I will be further analysing this group of Indonesians living in Australia, the group's composition—the Casino group consisted of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Casino Expresses Views on Dutch Hell-Camp', *Tribune*, 30 April 1946, 3.

<sup>2</sup> The *Tribune* is the Communist Party of Australia's (CPA) weekly newspaper. The Menzies Government dissolved the CPA on 15 June 1940, but Attorney-General H. V. Evatt lifted the ban on the party and its publications on 18 December 1942: Michael Sloane, '100th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of Australia', Parliament of Australia, 3 November 2020. [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/FlagPost/2020/October/100th\\_Anniversary\\_Communist\\_Party\\_of\\_Australia](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2020/October/100th_Anniversary_Communist_Party_of_Australia).

about 400 civilian Indonesians and merchant seamen in late 1945—its status and its treatment, and I will show how this group became unwanted aliens despite being residents of an Allied country.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, I will explore why these Indonesians remained interned after WWII had ended.

Most Indonesians living in Australia after the capitulation of Japan were living in tragic circumstances, and many of them wanted to return to their home country but were not allowed to. On average, the Dutch did not ask these Indonesians why they were eager to return to their home soil. The NEI Government representatives suggested that these civilians—men, women and children—wanted to return because they wanted to support the independence movement. Many Indonesians were interned in Australia against their will in camps to prevent this from happening. This group of non-military personnel will be further examined, and I will explain what happened to them in the second half of the 1940s. I will commence this chapter by analysing this group of civilian and semi-military indigenous Indonesians as a continuation of the previous chapter. In the next chapter, I will further explore their journeys back to their home countries. In this, as well as in the next chapter, I will document the injustice done to these allied civilians based on the available Dutch, Australian and Indonesian sources. I will show how these Indonesians were deprived of their fundamental civil liberties.

Another group of Indonesian men, members of the Royal Netherlands Forces, were incarcerated by the NEI military representatives in northern NSW and Queensland, with permission from the Australian federal government. I will show that this group of over 500 Indonesians were gaoled after what I argue was a ‘show trial’ (or possibly in the absence of any trial at all), exploring the imposition of Dutch fear for a group of Indonesian soldiers and marines whom the Dutch themselves trained. This group of (former) servicemen were mainly young, low-ranked KNIL soldiers; a group that was discussed extensively in the NEI military and Legation circles, and as the months went by, a group that was analysed and argued over by various Australian authorities, at the state and federal level. I will extensively analyse this group of 500+ men whose lives remain primarily unexamined by Dutch or Australian historians. Thus, this fifth chapter will be essentially a chapter on transnational and law history, similar to Chapter 3, without

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Indonesians on Strike at Casino’, *National Advocate*, 23 October 1945, 2.

losing sight of the social significance these international aspects had on various groups from the NEI.

Indonesia (or the Dutch East Indies) became a divided country after the war in the Pacific ceased; to the west was the Republic of Indonesia, consisting mainly of the islands of Java and Sumatra, while the eastern part or ‘outer NEI islands’—islands such as Timor, Celebes and New Guinea—remained part of the NEI, although colonial rule could not be restored immediately by the Dutch.<sup>4</sup> The NEI Legation expected to return to their colony, and reoccupation became their main priority. However, according to Groen, ‘The Netherlands, ... had only a handful of servicemen, the re-occupation had to be entrusted to its allied agents. The Australians did indeed occupy eastern Indonesia in September 1945 without too much difficulty. In Java and Sumatra, the birthplace of the Indonesian Republic, the British encountered more opposition from an improvised Republican army’.<sup>5</sup> The KNIL played a limited role in the liberation of the Indies just after the Japanese surrender, as it was relatively small in numbers and equipment.

NEI officials and literary leaders in Australia assumed the Indonesian population in the old colony was still sympathetic to their colonial rule, believing that, as Groen detailed, ‘ninety per cent of the population of the archipelago was pro-Dutch and would not resist’.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, Dutch civilians in the Netherlands read in their press that the Australians were very much on the side of the NEI former colonial rulers and afraid of the Indonesian Republic. As *Vrij Nederland* wrote in November 1945, ‘The Australian Government prefers a powerful Netherlands East Indies, rather than an anarchy called the “Indonesian Republic”’.<sup>7</sup> Many Australian soldiers, who were mainly in the Eastern part of the NEI at the end of WWII, also expected that indigenous peoples in Indonesia would welcome the return of white colonisers. All of them had received a booklet, published in 1944, called *Malay made easy* (a booklet on elementary Malay). In its introduction was written: ‘Since British and Dutch governments had done so much to improve their welfare, ‘there is no doubt that the great majority of the Malays will welcome the return of the white man.’<sup>8</sup> Soon after WWII, the Australian government and the Australian people supported a NEW re-occupation. In a national opinion poll in December of 1945,

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<sup>4</sup> These were outlying NEI islands, in *Dutch*: ‘buitengewesten’ (‘outer regions’).

<sup>5</sup> Groen, “Militant response,” 31.

<sup>6</sup> Groen, *Marsroutes en Dwaalsporen*, 30–31.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Hoogspanning’, *Vrij Nederland*, jrg 6, no. 16 (10 November 1945): 483.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Reid, “The Australian discovery of Indonesia”, *Journal of the Australian War Memorial* 17, (1990): 33.

only 29% of the Australian respondents favoured Indonesian self-government.<sup>9</sup> I will analyse the reasons behind these attitudes later in this chapter and show how quickly public opinion shifted towards potential post-colonial Indonesian independence.

## **5.1 National and international events influencing the lives of Indonesians in Australia**

After their release from camps such as Cowra, many of the 1942 Indonesian strikers, mainly KPM personnel, returned to their ships in the larger harbours, where they found employment until very late in the war. The previous chapter showed that the Indonesian wharfies received help from an unexpected ally—the Australian unions. During the war years, the union movement in Australia advocated for better living and working conditions for both skilled and unskilled Indonesian workers and indigenous seafarers.

After the war, they united again; the unions and these Indonesians went on a second, even bigger strike: the black ban of Dutch ships. Goodall identified in her publication: ‘The response was a tactic well known among seamen and dock-workers, and commonly used in Australia: the boycott of shipping in port. This meant that no ships under the ban could be loaded, repaired, refuelled, or crewed to leave. This strategy had been used by Chinese, Indian, and Indonesian seamen between 1937 to 1942 as they tried to achieve safer wartime conditions and equal pay with Australian crews.’<sup>10</sup> In chapter four, I already mentioned some of the equal pay issues. Many Indonesians were unwilling to take enormous risks for a meagre one-tenth of the salary of their Australian or European counterparts, especially because the living expenses of Indonesians were similar to that of white shipping crews. This connection between the Indonesians and the ACTU (Australian Central Trade Union) was acknowledged in Dutch left-wing news journals and papers, as *De Vlam* wrote, ‘Already during the war, they [ACTU] took action in benefit of the to Australia deported Indonesian Nationalists, whom the Dutch-Indien Government incarcerated. ... The insistence of ACTU after the war on the Australian government to intervene in favour of the interned has eventually let that they could return to Republic controlled areas’.<sup>11</sup> Not only the unionists and Indonesians played an essential role in the post-war black ban. As Goodall demonstrated conclusively, other Asian

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<sup>9</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 200.

<sup>10</sup> Goodall, *Beyond borders*, 155.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Australië en Indonesië’, *De Vlam: Weekblad voor vrijheid en cultuur*, jrg 3, no. 29 (1947): 10.

harbour workers, like Indian and Chinese seamen, in collaboration with the Indonesians and the Australian union members, played an essential part in ensuring the ban would withstand. The other Asian groups were hardly ever discussed in the Australian history of the black ban, even though they deserve special mention for their unique roles.<sup>12</sup>

Other Indonesians were living in or near the big cities, such as Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne, but were not working in the docks. Some were working for the Dutch and were relatively free workers. Others were working in shops, the hospitality industry or the medical facilities around the country. A few weeks after the end of the war, it was estimated that around 600 Indonesians had received permits to stay and work for the Dutch, such as at NIGIS. According to Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell, they were permitted as long as the Dutch Government needed their services.<sup>13</sup> However, the same minister announced around the same time that just over 200 Indonesian seafarers would be arrested and removed from the country because they were considered unwanted aliens.<sup>14</sup>

Calwell announced that the 200 Indonesians were unwanted aliens because these men went on strike, which started in Brisbane's harbour involving the Dutch ship the *Bontekoe*. Per George, 'Indonesian members of the Netherlands Indies Armed Forces in Australia, merchant seamen and civilians employed by the provisional government in Australia mutinied or went on strike. ... The situation culminated in the weekend of 22-23 September when Indonesian merchant seamen in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne "walked off" Dutch ships which were being loaded with supplies for the Dutch re-occupation of the N.E.I'.<sup>15</sup> According to Lingard, the strike in Brisbane started one day earlier, but this walk-off mentioned by George and Lingard was the start of the black ban. Goodall noted that by 24 September, Indonesian seamen in Brisbane had refused work and were charged with desertion.<sup>16</sup> The Waterside Workers' Federation proclaimed that the Dutch ships were to carry supplies, including arms, to the Indies; that was why these ships were declared 'black'. Several unions, such as The Seamen's Union in Sydney, were also getting involved in the ban imposed by the Waterside Workers' Federation; in total, thirty trade unions were called on to take action against the NEI ships in Australian

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<sup>12</sup> Goodall, *Beyond borders*, 155.

<sup>13</sup> '600 Javanese in Australia', *The Courier-Mail*, 18 October 1945, 1.

<sup>14</sup> 'Ongewenste Immigranten', *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 6 October 1945, 3.

<sup>15</sup> George, *Australia and the Indonesian revolution*, 36.

<sup>16</sup> Goodall, *Beyond borders*, 180.

waters, including the Indonesian Seamen's Union.<sup>17</sup> The Seamen's Union supported the Indonesian seamen who refused to carry material to the NEI for use against the Indonesian Republic. This meant that no Sydney branch members would work on Dutch ships where Indonesian seamen were on strike, and no Dutch vessels would be loaded with materials that could be used against the Indonesians.<sup>18</sup> The strike continued into October 1945, and that was when Calwell announced that 204 Brisbane-based men were qualified as unwanted aliens. The Indonesians were taken into custody by Commonwealth Immigration authorities and placed in a camp at Gaythorne.<sup>19</sup>

This walk-off of the KPM ship *Bontekoe* in Brisbane was not the end of the black ban of the Dutch ships. It was just the start. The walk-off would actually become the incentive for a prohibition against Dutch and NEI shipping interests for the next four years by waterside workers all over the country, a ban strongly denounced by the Opposition in the Australian Parliament.<sup>20</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Michael Bruxner of the Country Party stated that Mr Turner, from the Queensland Labor Party, was trying to get the support of the Queensland Labor premier in an endeavour to have the boycott on Dutch shipping removed. He continued by saying that it was gratifying to see that at last someone in the Labor Party was alive to the stupidity and disgrace of what was being done in Australia's name. Bruxner, allegedly quoting Mr Turner, further mentioned, 'only 15 per cent of the Indonesians are supporting the republican movement, the remaining 85 per cent are loyal to the Dutch'.<sup>21</sup> The Australian Liaison in the Netherlands, Keith Officer, had mentioned something similar. He had told the Dutch Government that just a small minority within the unions was anti-Netherlands. He had apparently told the Cabinet in The Hague too that practically the whole of Australia supported the Dutch.<sup>22</sup>

The black ban spread to the Netherlands' docks as well, although not as extensive as in the Australian harbours. By mid-1947, some Dutch dockers, led by communist-affiliated unions, boycotted Dutch ships bound for Indonesia.<sup>23</sup> A similar ban erupted in Batavia and other Indonesian/NEI ports; in October 1945, about 7,000 Indonesian

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<sup>17</sup> Lockwood, *Black armada*, 114.

<sup>18</sup> 'Ship Ban Likely to Spread', *The Argus*, 26 September 1945, 20; 'Ban on Working of Dutch Ships', *Examiner*, 26 September 1945, 1.

<sup>19</sup> 'No Dutch Ships for Javanese', *The Courier-Mail*, 11 October 1945, 1.

<sup>20</sup> George, *Australia and the Indonesian revolution*, 37; Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 143.

<sup>21</sup> 'Boycott of Dutch Ships. Labour Member Supports Col. Bruxner', *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 23 February 1946, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Van Aerssen, *Driemaal Oost*, 374.

<sup>23</sup> 'Dutch Dockers Put Boycott on Ships for Indonesia', *The Telegraph*, 23 July 1947, 1.

dockworkers refused to unload Dutch and British ships. The strikers did not want to offload these vessels because they would not contain only foodstuff but also essential stores for the army.<sup>24</sup>

The Indonesian Republic and NEI developments between 1945 and 1949 had a major influence on the opposite standpoints between the NEI Legation and the Commonwealth Government. Before the war, Australia was not well known for its interference in international and predominantly Asian politics, let alone siding with the Asian nations; the British were leading in any global conversations. As I analysed in Chapter 3, the UK Parliament passed the Statute of Westminster (jurisdictional independence of self-governing dominions) in the 1930s, but it took the Australian Parliament over ten years to ratify and implement these legislative rights. At the outbreak of the Pacific War, Australia still had not adopted the Statute of Westminster. Besides, the Australian nationality, as we know it now, was not established until late in the 1940s; the people of Australia still held their British nationality.<sup>25</sup> During WWII, the Australians fought on the side of the British, and it appeared the British, together with the US and other Allied powers, were leading in determining the course. Moreover, after the Japanese surrender, the Australians helped the Dutch in the eastern part of the NEI—the Australian army occupied eastern Indonesia in September 1945—trying to re-establish a (colonial) foothold in the area. This attitude towards Asian countries changed in the early years after the war; Australia would no longer help the NEI Legation in trying to regain influence in Indonesia, and the Commonwealth became, quite rapidly, an ally of the Indonesians and the Indonesian Republic.

The reasons for this immense international shift and the deteriorating relationship between Australia and the NEI Legation and military high command were multiple and very complex. Both internal Australian events and developments on a more global stage influenced Australians' and their political leaders' changing attitudes. Nationally, various internal problems arose for the GOC. Just after the proclamation of the Indonesian

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<sup>24</sup> 'Situation in Java. Dock Workers Strike. Refusal to Unload Dutch Ships', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 8 October 1945, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Under the Statute of Westminster, Britain and Australia were defined as 'autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any respect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations'. Once the Statute came into effect in Australia, Britain's imperial parliament could no longer impose judicial dominance over the Commonwealth of Australia, at which point the Australian Parliament would be legislatively autonomous of the parliament in Great Britain. See: C. Clark, "The Statute of Westminster," 22; D. Clark, "Cautious Constitutionalism," 44.



Republic, as outlined above, the black ban of Dutch ships commenced in Australian harbours, supported by several influential Australian unions, like the Waterside Workers' Federation. As Lockwood so clearly stated in relation to the black ban and the trade union involvement: 'the Prime Minister Chifley was in no mood to attempt to reflesh the skeleton of the Dutch Empire at the price of internal disorder.'<sup>26</sup> The PM and Netherlands Minister van Aerssen had such a fallout over the black ban and, more precisely, because of one incident (the *Piet-Hein* incident) that Van Aerssen was no longer on speaking terms with the Australian Prime Minister or his Cabinet members. He did not have any personal contact with the prime minister for four months.<sup>27</sup>

The Chifley Labor Government of the 1940s, like the Communist Party of Australia, was in a close relationship with many of these trade unions; many of their party followers were working-class people and members of these unions.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, as will be more closely examined, this government received letters from the unions and several civil organisations. In these letters, the organisations expressed their disgust at the almost colonial attitude of the government towards the Indonesians and their lack of action. Furthermore, in Australian newspapers in the second half of the 1940s, not only in the Communist Party of Australia's *Tribune*, articles were published on many Indonesians' appalling living and working conditions and the lack of free choice to return to their native country.<sup>29</sup> These articles kept the topic in the minds of many Australian voters, Labor Party associates and union members.

Internationally, many events occurred during the Chifley Government era that changed Australia's attitude towards the Indonesian Republic and its former colonisers. By early 1947, leading Australian maritime unions strengthened their black bans on servicing KPM and other company's ships. They did this because there had been international anger at the '*Politionele Acties*' as well as the collapse of the Linggatjati Agreement. Therefore, there was a clear connection between national and international developments.<sup>30</sup> Although many events are outside the scope of my research, I will

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<sup>26</sup> Lockwood, *Black armada*, 197.

<sup>27</sup> Van Aerssen, *Driemaal Oost*, 373.

The *Piet Hein* incident was the refusal by Waterside Workers to repair the Dutch navy destroyer *Piet Hein*. The Netherlands Legation requested the Australian Government to interfere, but it refused to do so.

<sup>28</sup> In the early 1950s, according to the ACTU (Australian Council of Trade Unions), 63% of the workforce held a union membership card: ACTU, 'History of Australian Unions', assessed 26 November 2021. <https://www.actu.org.au/about-the-actu/history-of-australian-unions>

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, 'Treatment of Indonesians at Casino', *Tweed Daily*, 12 October 1945, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Goodall, *Beyond borders*, 323.

selectively analyse key moments in international affairs that affected Australia's approach after 1945, especially its approach to the Netherlands' extraterritorial rights and mistreatment by the Dutch of their own civilians and KNIL personnel. As highlighted in the introduction of this chapter and mentioned in Chapter 1, the Netherlands were not capable of the reoccupation of the NEI after the proclamation, and so this had to be entrusted to its allied agents. The NEI Legation in Australia only heard the Indonesian proclamation of independence about two days after the actual announcement on 17 August 1945, but the NEI Legation did not appear to have been too concerned.

The Dutch received help in their attempt to reoccupy the NEI from Australia, Britain and (to a lesser degree) the US, as already highlighted in the Introduction chapter. The NEI Legation considered the British very much on their side, assuming the British, as an important colonial power themselves, to be positive about colonial empires. The Australians might be a different story; the NEI Legation considered that they might be more anti-colonialists. However, the NEI military high command was, in general, not overly enthusiastic about the British help. The military situation in the NEI and the little support the British seemed to offer concerned the Dutch high command in Australia. Moreover, the Dutch themselves appeared to be unprepared after the Japanese surrender to re-establish their colonial power. As it turned out, the British Government and military command did not wish to engage extensively in the NEI recolonisation—they had neither the ambitions nor sufficient militarised forces to do so.<sup>31</sup>

A reoccupation war in the Indies broke out as the Dutch attempted to restore their pre-war power in Indonesia fully—a war that lasted almost continuously until 1949, though not in all of the archipelago. More than 120,000 troops from the mother country were deployed, both conscripts and Dutch volunteers, plus approximately 80,000 KNIL soldiers.<sup>32</sup> The first Dutch volunteers were deployed in the Dutch East Indies in early 1946. As Romijn identified, upon arrival in the Indies, these volunteers expected to be greeted as liberators, but the local NEI population remained reserved at best.<sup>33</sup> This expectation is not surprising. If we examine Dutch government publications from the time, it's clear that soldiers were fed misinformation, with many believing the majority of people in the NEI were still sympathetic to colonial rule. In early 1946, not only Dutch

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<sup>31</sup> Maaïke van der Kloet, "Mismanaging expectations. Dutch plans for re-establishment of the KNIL, 1942-1946," (MA, Leiden University, 2016): 19.

<sup>32</sup> Romijn, "Learning on the job," 320.

<sup>33</sup> Romijn, "Learning on the job," 326.

publications, but also some Australian politicians were proclaiming that the great majority of the people of Indonesia were on the side of the former colonisers, politicians like Labor Party member Turner and Country Party member Bruxner.<sup>34</sup> Though, as discussed, this tepid reception of the Dutch volunteers by locals was far from a new Indonesian post-war phenomenon. The British and Indian troops under British command, and the Australian troops, who had arrived before the Dutch volunteers to restore Netherlands colonial rule, were greeted with a very similar cold welcome by local Indonesians and Republican government officials.<sup>35</sup>

When these volunteers left the Netherlands, the war of Independence had been going on for a while, with mainly British and Indian troops fighting in those early days. A lack of enthusiasm amongst local people for any kind of Dutch reoccupation would have been clear. If the local population was so overwhelmingly pro-Dutch, why was an armed revolution in process? How much did these Dutch volunteers know of Indonesian anti-colonial sentiment? A search of Dutch newspapers in late 1945 reveals various viewpoints on this matter. Young Dutch conscripts and other volunteer soldiers could have availed themselves of Indonesian attitudes; they could easily have read about negative Indonesian reactions to British and Indian troops. For example, in late 1945, in the Dutch newspaper *De Waarheid*, a communist and former underground paper, an article stated that in East Java, a meeting of Indonesian residents and authorities took place. The attendees proclaimed that ‘the whole population is against the arrival of the British in East-Java, even as observers.’ On the other hand, only a few days later, in *De Volkskrant*, a nationwide Catholic-orientated newspaper, the Dutch volunteers could have read in an article that the Republicans were described as ‘disorderly Indonesian gangs’ and ‘the so-called Indonesian army’. The descriptions might indicate an unorganised Javanese military minority group.<sup>36</sup> We know that some segments of the Dutch population interpreted the statements of high-placed commanders, like Lord Mountbatten. This supreme Allied commander mentioned at a press conference in Canberra that there was no reason to be afraid of a disaster when the British withdrew, as it would coincide with the establishment of good relationships between the Dutch and the Indonesians.<sup>37</sup> Could Dutch recruits have found reliable information on these incidents and Indonesian

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<sup>34</sup> ‘Boycott of Dutch Ships. Labour Member Supports Col. Bruxner’, *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 23 February 1946, 5; ‘Boycott of Dutch ships’, *Goulburn Evening Post*, 13 February 1946, 5.

<sup>35</sup> Goodall, *Beyond borders*, 210.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Ontwapening eerste noodzaak op Java. Krachtige Britse houding verlicht spanning,’ *De Volkskrant*, 27 November 1945, 3.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Mountbatten optimist,’ *De Stem van Nederland*, jrg 6, no 37 (6 April 1946): 305.

attitudes, like the statement in *De Waarheid*, if these did not appear regularly in most national and local papers or (state-run) radio news bulletins? It is hard to establish whether or not the average young Dutch serviceman could read in his '*verzuilde*' newspaper about the Indonesian sentiments, and what he could have been expecting.<sup>38</sup> One can at least argue that the 'Police Actions' of 1947 and 1949 happened after the arrival of the first group of Dutch volunteers, so their knowledge of the average Indonesian attitude towards Dutch reoccupation might have been limited.

The Netherlands did not call this an official or actual war and 'downgraded' this colonial war, as argued in the Introduction of this thesis. This reoccupation war, with its global peace negotiations, was a critical turning point in Australian–Dutch relations. The Netherlands Legation was right to assume that the Australians might be more sceptical and maybe even more anti-colonialist than the British. A year after the end of the Pacific War, Chifley wrote to the High Commissioner's Office in London his personal thoughts regarding the 'Indonesian problem'. He emphasised that he thought the Dutch were not making a real effort to negotiate but appeared to instead be playing a waiting game. Chifley thought that was because the Dutch hoped that the Indonesian nationalists' movement would disintegrate into different factions and that the Dutch force could be built up to a strength sufficient to deal alone with Indonesian forces after British forces had withdrawn.<sup>39</sup> So, Chifley was not admiring the Dutch effort, other parties involved were not overly enthusiastic and pleased with the Australian government's effort. Bennett made an important point, when he noted that many British civilian and military staff's hostility rose, because the Australians attempted to find a middle-way between the NEI and the Republic. Moreover, the British were not enthusiastic with the failure by the Australian Government to resolve the black ban.<sup>40</sup>

During the four years of war, numerous negotiations were organised between the Netherlands and the Indonesian Republic. From 1946, several conferences were held. On behalf of the Netherlands, Hubertus van Mook led the first series of arduous negotiation

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<sup>38</sup> 'Verzuilde' newspaper, comes from the Dutch word Verzuiling, a phenomenon that divided the whole Dutch society in four pillars, or 'zuilen'. As Staf Helleman described this: 'Catholic, Socialist, and Liberal pillars – plus a Protestant pillar in the Netherlands – divided society and determined political and social life from the late nineteenth century up to the late twentieth century.' Staf Helleman, "Pillarization ('Verzuiling'). On Organized 'Self-Contained Worlds' in the Modern World," *The American Sociologist* 51, no. 2 (2020), 124.

<sup>39</sup> NAA, A1838, TS401/4/3/4, Letter from PM J.B. Chifley to Mighell of the High Commissioner's Office in London, 22 August 1946.

<sup>40</sup> Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 181.

talks. The Dutch aimed for creating some sort of centralised unitary—a Republic of the United States of Indonesia and a Netherlands–Indonesia Union.<sup>41</sup> At first, a settlement seemed to have been reached: the Linggajati Agreement, a resolution in which the Dutch recognised the Republic’s authority in the islands of Java and Sumatra and both sides approved to the Republic as being an integral part of the new United States of Indonesia, similar to what Van Mook had proposed.<sup>42</sup> However, this first diplomatic agreement between the parties involved was short-lived and unsuccessful; one of the main reasons was that in early 1947 the Dutch parliament in The Hague approved only a confined version of the original agreement. As a result, the Republic’s leaders rejected this settlement.<sup>43</sup>

One of the following steps was that, from 1947, the situation in Indonesia/the NEI was discussed on a more worldwide level (after the first ‘*Politioenele Actie*’) when the UN got involved. On the one hand, Australia’s representatives, backed by US officials, proposed that the UN Security Council demand a ceasefire in the Republic and resolve the NEI dispute by UN arbitration. On the other hand, the Netherlands and Van Mook argued that this was no matter for the Security Council and that the UN had no jurisdiction over the issue, as the previous Police Action and other disagreements were simply a domestic affair. A UN resolution on the matter passed in August 1947, but hostilities between the Republic and the Dutch continued.<sup>44</sup> The US wanted a solution as soon as possible and highlighted to the Dutch, behind the scenes, that the European Recovery Program’s financial aid (‘the Marshall Plan’) to the Netherlands might be compromised if Dutch policymakers did not try to resolve the problems. The Netherlands relied heavily on the financial aid from the Marshall Plan for its own post-war recovery, and the US used this as leverage to encourage a swift agreement.<sup>45</sup> New proposals were drawn up in late 1947 and early 1948, with Australia more and more on the side of the Republic. Negotiations were undertaken, agreements were signed and agreements were violated. Eventually, after the second ‘Police Action’ in late 1948, a final settlement was reached between the Netherlands and the Republic. After the Round Table Conference, held in

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<sup>41</sup> Romijn, "Learning on the job," 324; Ooi Kaet Gin, *Post-war Borneo, 1945–1950. Nationalism, empire and, state-building* (London: Routledge, 2013), 120.

<sup>42</sup> Steven Farram, "Australia and the 1947 United Nations Consular Commission to Indonesia," *The European Legacy* 25, no. 5 (2020): 537.

<sup>43</sup> Goodall, *Beyond borders*, 313.

<sup>44</sup> Farram, "Australia and the 1947 United Nations," 537–538.

<sup>45</sup> Irene Vrinte Lessmeister, "Between Colonialism and Cold War: The Indonesian War of Independence in World Politics, 1945-1949," (PhD, Cornell University, 2012): 291.

The Hague, a political agreement on Indonesia's independence was finally reached and signed on 27 December 1949.

These national and international events influenced how Australians viewed their close neighbour and how the Indonesians were treated by the NEI (colonial) rulers. According to Sobocinska, Australian opinions were mixed; in 1945, the majority of respondents in a Gallup Poll supported a return to Dutch colonialism. Australians' support of the Dutch was 41%, while only 29% preferred an independent Republic of Indonesia. In succeeding polls, this percentage changed; support for the former coloniser fell in the following years, though Australian public opinion never completely supported Indonesian independence.<sup>46</sup> Influential organisations in Australia were often mixed in their views regarding the Indonesians too. One such organisation was the Aborigines Welfare Board of NSW. The board was not only worried about the living conditions of the temporary Indonesian residents in Casino but, according to Acting Premier of NSW Jack Baddeley, was also concerned about local events and their consequences. Baddeley wrote in a letter to the prime minister, 'the presence of these coloured troops in the vicinity of Casino had attracted a considerable number of young aboriginal women to the town, resulting in immoral behaviour, drinking and gambling. The matter was first brought to notice in November of last year, and the Aborigines Welfare Board decided that representations should be made to have the camp moved to some locality inaccessible to the aboriginal population'.<sup>47</sup>

The legal status of those interned by the Dutch colonisers during the war and the effects these internment camps had on the local townspeople had not led to too much debate in Canberra during WWII. However, the discussion became more prominent when, on 15 August 1945, the Japanese occupiers capitulated, and two days later, Soekarno and Hatta proclaimed the independent Republic of Indonesia. In late September 1945, around the time of the letter by the Aborigines Welfare Board of NSW, about 1,200 Indonesians were interned in the NEI camp in Casino. Some were KNIL military personnel, mainly incarcerated in the closed compound, but most were civilians who resided in a more open part of the camp. The number of detainees varied in the early months after the war. Several Indonesians arrived from other camps, a few managed to get (temporary) visas to work and stay in Australia, so they were able to leave the camps,

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<sup>46</sup> Sobocinska, "Measuring or Creating Attitudes," 375.

<sup>47</sup> NAA, A1066, IC45/54/5/1, Letter from Acting Premier J.M. Baddeley to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, 5 September 1945.

and a handful of Indonesians managed to return to parts of the NEI/Indonesian Republic. For example, 130 Indonesians from the Technical Battalion were repatriated from Casino to Brisbane and afterwards returned to the NEI reasonably soon after the war had ended.<sup>48</sup>

An additional 2,000 Indonesians would soon join the internees at Camp Victory, according to a local newspaper.<sup>49</sup> Other newspapers also mentioned the upcoming arrival of other Indonesians, but they noted that this new group consisted of Javanese and European evacuees from the NEI who needed to recuperate from the war.<sup>50</sup> So, this group of about 2,000 was not a group already stationed in Australia at the end of the war. The state and federal governments were not overly enthusiastic about accepting such a large group of refugees from the Indies but agreed to help some NEI refugees recuperate from their war experience. In an extract from a letter dated 4 October, the Australian Government representatives described their intention to further utilise the camp's facilities at Colombia (QLD) and Casino. Once again, the government showed their intentions and racist views, as they bluntly wrote, 'The Commonwealth Government has agreed to a request from the Netherlands Indies Government to accommodate a specified number of Dutch residents (excluding Indonesians) from Java. ... The proposal is being financed entirely by the Netherlands Indies Government'.<sup>51</sup>

Some Dutch representatives were unwilling to accommodate such a large group either. The NEI military and NEI Legation had to pay for all the Indonesians—civilians, semi-military and military personnel—residing in these camps, as mentioned in this letter by the Department of Social Services. As I have argued in previous chapters, the NEI was financially responsible for their own internees, as 'all cost of erecting necessary accommodation, maintenance of guards, transportation and all incidental expenditure at the discretion of the Commonwealth Government'. This was agreed between the two countries during the war years but continued after.<sup>52</sup> According to Lockwood, who interviewed former Minister Calwell in the 1970s, the Dutch did not want to pay for anything. According to the scholar, Calwell had mentioned to him that the Australian

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<sup>48</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/4 PART 1, Letter to the Director General of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch, 22 February 1946.

<sup>49</sup> '2000 more Indonesians for Casino Camp', *Northern Star*, 22 September 1945, 4.

<sup>50</sup> 'Java Evacuees Not Welcome at Casino', *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 September 1945, 4.

<sup>51</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 43, Extract from letter dated 4 October 1945 from Department of Social Services, Melbourne.

<sup>52</sup> NAA, A989, 1943/40/35, Secret cablegram from the High Commissioner's Office in London, 6 September 1943; NAN, 2.10.45, inv. nr. 289, Letter from N.S. Blom to Zijne Excellentie den Gazant der Nederlanden te Melbourne, 25 January 1945.

Government cared for the refugees from the NEI and the Dutch servicemen and civilians. Calwell said that the Australians helped them in many ways; they fed and sheltered them and trained and armed Indies military personnel. However, the Dutch wanted to avoid compensating the Australians, and they were successful in that too.<sup>53</sup>

The Australian Government, especially Minister Calwell, quickly decided that most Indonesians, both seafarers and civilians, needed to leave the country as soon as possible because they were now considered unwanted immigrants. The GOC came to this standpoint because of their known political views (i.e., the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, better known as the White Australia policy); increasing pressure from some influential organisations, like the Aborigines Welfare Board of NSW; and events, such as the black ban of Dutch ships, that happened in the early days after the war. According to *Dagblad Amigoe di Curaçao*, Chifley, like Calwell, believed that these Indonesians needed to leave the country at the earliest moment possible, not because of the disagreements between the Dutch and the Indonesians but because the immigration regulations determined the government's attitude.<sup>54</sup>

Goodall has demonstrated that a significant culture change occurred during the war years and early years after WWII in Australia. As she argues: 'the country was nevertheless far more cosmopolitan, diverse, and open to cultural differences than it had been for many decades. The war-imposed disruption of the White Australia Policy allowed new relationships to flourish and new perspectives on the region to emerge'.<sup>55</sup> Goodall is in agreement with Lake and Reynolds here regarding the 'white men's countries' and changing attitudes towards discriminatory regulations based on racial categories in the aftermath of WWII.<sup>56</sup> My work builds on the arguments of these scholars. New relationships and cross-cultural dynamics certainly emerged in Australia at this time; I have found evidence of these new dynamics in Mackay between some locals and the Indonesians, in harbour cities such as Sydney between Australian union leaders and Asian seafarers, or perhaps in some rare cases, even between Japanese POWs and local Australian women. These new relationships between Asian men and women and local Australians only occurred because of a loosening immigration regime brought about by war-time conditions and necessities.

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<sup>53</sup> Lockwood, *Black armada*, 148.

<sup>54</sup> 'Nederland. Verklaring van Chifley', *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 6 October 1945, 3.

<sup>55</sup> Goodall, *Beyond borders*, 336.

<sup>56</sup> Lake and Reynolds, "Drawing the Global Colour Line," 352.



However, I also suggest that many of these new dynamics were based on historical precedents; these communities were already ethnically diverse before the war. Asian seafarers, pearl divers and sugar cane workers were already living and working in Australia, as I detailed in section (4.2). My analysis suggests that shifts in cultural attitudes regarding race were limited. For instance, the opinion poll of December 1945 (which I analysed above) demonstrated that Australian voters did not overwhelmingly support the Republic. Furthermore, the White Australia policy was still accepted government policy. Many Australians evidently agreed with the unmoving views of well-known politicians such as Calwell, Chifley, and Dr Herbert Evatt who advocated race-based exclusion. According to External Affairs Minister Evatt, the White Australia Policy was foundational to the Australian economy, and vital to the survival of Australian political institutions.<sup>57</sup>

The Australian Government, Labor Prime Minister Chifley and other ministers, like Minister for Transport and External Territories E. J. Ward received numerous letters from civil organisations requesting the closure of Casino camp as soon as possible. Organisations from all over the country appealed to the government to shut down the camp because the internees should be given their freedom. These letters seemed to endorse the previously mentioned argument by Goodall. The University of Sydney's Union chairman wrote, 'a motion was passed by 230 people with 5 people against at a lunch meeting. The motion stated to ask the Government to close all Dutch internment camps on Australian soil and repatriate the internees to Republican Indonesian territory'.<sup>58</sup> Many organisations, such as The Amalgamated Hospitals, Homes and Laboratories Employees' Association of NSW, gave additional reasons why they thought Casino camp should be closed. According to this organisation, the treatment by the Dutch authorities had progressively worsened and the existing conditions were a slur on the democratic traditions of Australia.<sup>59</sup> The Fire Brigades' Association of NSW argued that Australia should not allow a foreign country to use an internment camp in peacetime in this country.<sup>60</sup> Some of these groups, according to their letters, like The Boilermakers' Society of Australia, went as far as calling Casino a concentration camp and giving their support for the fight for Indonesian independence. The Australian Communist Party

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<sup>57</sup> 'White Australia Policy', *Morning Bulletin*, 14 March 1947, 7.

<sup>58</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/4 PART 2, Letter from. Jeff Way to E.J. Ward, 15 October 1946.

<sup>59</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/4 PART 1, Letter from The Amalgamated Hospitals, Homes and Laboratories Employees' Association of NSW, I.D. McPhee to Prime Minister J.B. Chifley, 2 August 1946.

<sup>60</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/4 PART 1, Letter from The Fire Brigades' Association of NSW, J.W. Lambert to J.B. Chifley, 31 July 1946.

(North Coast & Tablelands District) used their well-known rhetoric in a letter stating that over 400 North Coast residents had signed a petition that opposed ‘the continued existence of the Dutch hellcamp at Casino’.<sup>61</sup> As far as I can ascertain, most of these arguments were anti-colonial in nature, anti-Dutch, maybe even anti-establishment. Concerned Australians and their organisations discussed issues such as a slur on Australia’s democratic traditions and the unpleasant idea that a foreign country could run internment camps on Australian soil. It is important to clarify that these arguments, did not call on Australians to fight for equality for the non-white/Asian majority in the Republic/NEI, nor did they directly challenge the White Australia policy. Rather their key critiques focused on democratic principles and human rights issues, irrespective of race. The question of whether or not these prisoners were white, Indo-European, or indigenous Indonesians, or if they came from Ambon or Java was not a focus of discussion.

The Communist Party of Australia critiqued the prime minister often in their newspaper *Tribune* too, which will be elaborated on in this chapter. In another newspaper, the *Border Morning Mail*, Mick Healy, the secretary of the Queensland Trades and Labour Council, described Casino in a similar fashion as the Communist Party by saying that the camp was ‘a horror that surpassed only by that of German and Japanese prison camps in a quiet democratic Australian town and the conditions are truly appalling’.<sup>62</sup> Max Julius, a well-known Australian barrister and communist, similarly described Casino to Healy. According to the *Macleay Argus*, the barrister had said in a Brisbane court, ‘Some Indonesians imprisoned at Casino had suffered severely, and one man has died because of the conditions in “this miniature Belsen concentration camp”’.<sup>63</sup> The previously mentioned Dutch publication *De Vlam* was also quite critical of the conditions in Casino camp, and the Dutch journalist Wim Klinkenberg specifically noted the dreadful treatment of the Indonesians in Casino.<sup>64</sup> Not all journalists agreed with Healy’s, Julius’ or Klinkenberg’s descriptions of Casino. In an article published in October, a *Northern Star* journalist stated, ‘To describe the Indonesian Camp at Casino as “a miniature Belsen” is completely absurd’.<sup>65</sup> The same newspaper had published a few

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<sup>61</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/4 PART 1, Letter from The Boilermakers’ Society of Australia to Prime Minister J.B. Chifley, 28 August 1946; Letter from the Australian Communist Party, North Coast & Tablelands District, Ken O’Hara to Prime Minister J.B. Chifley, 22 July 1946.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Alleges Conditions in Compound Appalling. Dutch Camp for Indonesian at Casino’, *Border Morning Mail*, 10 October 1945, 3.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Casino Camp Linked to Belsen’, *Macleay Argus*, 12 October 1945, 7.

<sup>64</sup> ‘Australië en Indonesië’, *De Vlam; Weekblad voor vrijheid en cultuur*, jrg 3, no. 29 (1947): 10.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Casino Camp is No “Belsen”’, *Northern Star*, 22 October 1945, 4.

weeks earlier that a large group of Indonesians were arrested at the local picture theatre because they had created a disturbance.<sup>66</sup> This description of activities in the lives of the internees in Casino did not match the horrific conditions highlighted in other publications, and it did not resemble anything like the horrors of Bergen Belsen. Although this newspaper and these reporters might not have agreed with certain organisations and other people closely involved, the criticisms from associations, societies and unions continued in the second half of the 1940s. Many Labor legislators became aware of the negative association with the NEI internment camp on Australian soil.

In the last months of 1946, a substantial group of Indonesians left Casino and were transferred to Chermside camp in Brisbane. These 227 indigenous Indonesians (probably civilians and semi-military personnel) were brought to Ellison Road, about six kilometres outside of Brisbane, where they ended up in a camp known as an Australian Military Camp. This camp was a more open camp, as the Indonesians were allowed to walk in and out of the camp and play games such as card games, cricket, football or 'ju-justu'.<sup>67</sup> Chermside was an improvement on Camp Victory; the conditions were much better, as Chermside contained basic facilities such as a barbershop and a First Aid Post. According to Mr Draper, an Australian investigator, Migration Officer Bird even allowed visitors into this camp, such as the chairman of the Australian-Indonesian Independence Committee, for 'political reasons'.<sup>68</sup> In the next chapter, I will further analyse the Australian Government's adjusting repatriation strategy of the 1940s, partly a consequence of changing national but mainly international developments, and how they shipped the Casino internees, the Chermside camp residents and the other free Indonesians living in the big cities and towns across Australia back to the NEI and the Indonesian Republic.

## **5.2 Casino and Lytton: camps and numbers of imprisoned people**

After the Pacific War's conclusion, about sixty officers, approximately 1,000 under officers and lower ranked KNIL military personnel were stationed or residing in

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<sup>66</sup> 'Disturbances at Picture Theatre. Coloured Personnel from Casino Camp', *Northern Star*, 24 September 1945, 4.

<sup>67</sup> 'ju-justu' (instead of 'ju-jitsu') is the original spelling in the letter from investigator F. M. Draper.

<sup>68</sup> NAA, A9108, ROLL 20/39, Letter from investigator F.M. Draper to the Deputy Director in Brisbane, 6 November 1946.

Australia.<sup>69</sup> When the war finally ended, daily life for Europeans and Netherlands-*Indien* military personnel did not seem too harsh and challenging in towns such as Casino. For example, Jan Roberti, a Dutchman in some form of military service, arrived in Perth in 1942. He wrote about his military experiences in Australia. Roberti had spent time at Camp Darley in Victoria, and afterwards, in October 1945, he was transferred to Casino for a short while. He emphasised that Casino was a small town, where the only thing one could do was go to the movie theatre every night. He mentioned that otherwise one would really get bored.<sup>70</sup>

Life for 'native' Indonesians in the KNIL military was utterly different from their European counterparts. Substantial groups of Indonesians were, at some point after WWII, incarcerated by the Dutch. Large groups of Indonesians remained in internment camps until the end of 1946 when the subject of the Indonesians' status was again brought into question by the approaching expiring of the National Security Act at the end of 1946. As Irvine argued, 'by this time the Dutch had court-martialled many of the Indonesians and had sentenced them to periods of detention of up to five years'.<sup>71</sup> In my research, I have found only one Indonesian military member sentenced to up to four years' incarceration (see Table 5.3). It remained unclear from Irvine's research which group or person he was discussing when he mentioned the five years' detention. One relatively large group of about one hundred Indonesian men were imprisoned in Geelong. This was a group of former NEI marines who had mutinied from the naval depot in St Kilda.<sup>72</sup> Irvine was possibly referring to one of these men when discussing a five-year sentence. The only other case with a sentence of five years that I have uncovered was the case of Asmawie and the 36AED. Though, analysing Irvine's article, it did not appear he was referring to this explosion case from July 1943.

The Dutch military high command in Australia prosecuted and incarcerated two other substantial groups of indigenous KNIL military personnel in the early months after WWII: one group in Lytton (Brisbane, Queensland) and one in Victory Camp (Casino, NSW), the same camp in which many civilians were confined. Scholars who have researched the Indonesians in Australia after the war's closing have not paid much attention to Lytton, even though this internment camp detained large numbers of

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<sup>69</sup> Van Aerssen, *Driemaal Oost*, 304; NIMH, 97 De Vries, Stipulation from L.H. van Oyen, 23 March 1942.

<sup>70</sup> 'Nederlandse troepen naar Indië', *Het Oosten; wekelijksch orgaan der Weesinrichting te Neerbosch*, jrg. 74, no. 5446 (9 January 1946): n.p.

<sup>71</sup> Irvine, "Legality and freedom," 13.

<sup>72</sup> Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 178.

Indonesian servicemen and perhaps also semi-military personnel. Therefore, these Dutch sources are essential to this study. Bennett mentioned the camp a few times; first time the camp was mentioned by the scholar was regarding the boarding of the vessel *Esperance Bay* (see section 6.3), one more time that in early February 1946, groups of Indonesians were held in camps, one group in Lytton. He further explained where Lytton is located. And he briefly brought up the camp as he quoted a letter by Mohammad Bondan.<sup>73</sup> And Lingard mentioned the camp near Brisbane in a few words. The only time she referred to the Queensland camp was when the group of detained Indonesian servicemen were transported to the camp in Casino in May 1946.<sup>74</sup> This amalgamation of the two camps, Casino and Lytton, actually happened slightly earlier than Lingard described. According to a letter by the President of the Dutch Court-Martial in Australia La Riviere, this occurred sometime in April.<sup>75</sup> The Dutch sources on this concentration camp gave a great understanding into the reasons for incarcerating the Indonesians in Australia by the NEI. The sources also provided new insight into how the NEI military high command saw the Indonesian servicemen, the problems relating to the prosecution of the group, and a new angle on the discussion about the use of NEI extra-territorial rights.

The Indonesian soldiers, in both Casino and Lytton, were allegedly (as will be argued later) prosecuted at a temporary NEI military court before the camps were merged in April 1946. However, not much is known about the groups' composition, why these soldiers and marines specifically were locked up, the course of their military trials—if they ever occurred—or their personnel stories. The following paragraphs will clarify what is known about these Indonesians and what can reasonably be concluded based on the available Dutch, Australian, and Indonesian sources.

A high-ranking Dutch military member wrote a letter in early 1946 in which he mentioned the existence of a group of 221 Indonesian 'conscientious objectors' in Lytton.<sup>76</sup> I kept the description of conscientious objectors -those who object against their

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<sup>73</sup> Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 90, 178 and 213.

<sup>74</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 131.

<sup>75</sup> NAN, 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Letter from Major J. La Riviera to the Attorney-General, Justice Department in Batavia, 26 April 1946.

<sup>76</sup> Conscientious objectors were also called 'total objectors' (*in Dutch*: 'totaalweigeraars'), men who refused any cooperation with the armed forces and, therefore, did not wish to cooperate in proceedings with a view to having their conscientious objections recognised: Leonard F. M. Besselink, "Military Law in the Netherlands," ed. George Nolte, *European Military Law Systems* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 633. Conscientious objections are defined as 'those objections against legal obligations raised by a person following his moral or religious sense of right or wrong': E.A. Alkema, "Conscientious Objections in the Netherlands" (Netherlands Reports of the Eleventh International Congress of Comparative Law, Caracas, Springer, 1982), 345.

military service- in context to this group, as that is how the letter writer referred to these servicemen.<sup>77</sup> The name of this military member is unknown, though based on the letter's signature, it was highly likely to be Hendrik W. Felderhof, the Attorney General at the Supreme Court of the Dutch East Indies in the 1940s. The letter writer provided an insight into the composition and situation of this gaoled group. This so-called Lytton group consisted of two previous groups—forty-four prisoners originally from a camp in Bundaberg and another 177 Indonesians already detained in the Brisbane camp.

The forty-four prisoners from Bundaberg, mentioned by Felderhof, were Indonesians transported from their RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) camp in Queensland in late 1945. The Indonesians had been working alongside the European NEI servicemen and local RAAF personnel at the aerodrome. Over time, the Bundaberg group of Indonesian military personnel received substantial media attention. According to a few local newspapers, a small group of about ten Indonesians refused to work for and take orders from their European NEI counterparts. They had refused duty, requested the Dutch to be demobilised and demanded to be returned to Java. For that reason, they were arrested and mishandled onto a plane. To force the Indonesians on this plane, shots were supposedly fired at this small group of duty deniers.<sup>78</sup>

A few days later, another newspaper called *Army News* reported that the Indonesians were flown to Casino but were transported back to Bundaberg aerodrome because there was no space available for these Indonesian soldiers at Camp Victory. This article specifically mentioned that according to the local RAAF personnel, no shots were fired and that these accusations were likely to have come 'from Communist elements at the station'.<sup>79</sup> Other newspapers, such as the *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, reported a similar story to the *Army News* account. The *Townsville Daily Bulletin* published that everyone at the station, even the Javanese, admitted the reports circulated were grossly exaggerated by communists. The article quoted a Javanese non-commissioned officer, whose sympathies were communistic according to the local reporter, and he had stated that the communist circular was 'a misstatement of fact and made us look ridiculous'. This article explained that around the same time, forty Javanese were held behind barbed wire by Australian army guards and that that group was put on a train for the south, also guarded

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<sup>77</sup> Conscientious objection was introduced into military law in 1922 in the Netherlands for those conscripts objecting against their military service. Alkema, "Short Conscientious Objections," 346.

<sup>78</sup> 'RAAF Men Ignore Dutch Officers. Treatment of Indonesians at Bundaberg Resented', *The Sun*, 28 October 1945, 1; 'Striking Javanese in Clash', *The Courier-Mail*, 27 October 1945, 3.

<sup>79</sup> 'Dutch Official Denies Bundaberg Story', *Army News*, 30 October 1945, 1.

by Australians, a few days later. In late October, the Dutch-language newspaper *Amigoe di Curaçao* reported that a small group of ten KNIL members were first sent to Casino but then returned to Bundaberg to appear before the court-martial. Similar to the story in the *Army News*, the *Amigoe* wrote that another group of forty Indonesians in Bundaberg would be transported to Brisbane by train and transferred to camp Lytton.<sup>80</sup> The *Queensland Times* also mentioned on the same date as the *Amigoe* that a group of forty Indonesians would be transported to the camp in Lytton. Therefore, it was highly likely that this group of transported Indonesians was the same group mentioned in the letter by Felderhof in early 1946.<sup>81</sup>

The letter writer Felderhof explained why the prosecution and detention of these 221 conscientious objectors—the 177 Indonesians already at Lytton camp and the recently arrived group of forty-four from Bundaberg RAAF camp—at the centre in Queensland was considered problematic by the NEI military. The NEI (or Dutch) author wrote clearly, ‘These people are not regarded as detainees; as a result, they sabotage the litigation process completely, which is why it is made impossible to prosecute them by the court-martial. A discussion has been held with the Australians about this problem, and an agreement was reached ... that after the submission of their written claims for arbitration a transfer to a detention camp will follow in accordance with the agreement of November 24, 1943’.<sup>82</sup> The mentioned 1943 agreement was the Allied Forces Penal Agreement Order, signed by the Minister of State for the Army Frank Ford. According to this agreement, as extensively argued in Chapter 2, the Dutch/NEI could arrest Royal Netherlands Forces members and detain soldiers in any prison or any military detention barrack.<sup>83</sup>

A different faction of Indonesian military detainees was imprisoned in Casino. Based on archival sources, it could be determined that this group of about 340 Indonesian

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<sup>80</sup> ‘10 Indonesiërs voor de Krijgsraad’, *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 30 October 1945, 1.

<sup>81</sup> ‘R.A.A.F. Bundaberg Strike Denied’, *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 29 October 1945, 1; ‘Air Force at Bundaberg Resent Dutch’, *The Courier-Mail*, 30 October 1945, 1; ‘Communist Lost No Time’, *Queensland Times*, 30 October 1945, 1.

<sup>82</sup> NAN, 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Memorandum from H.W. F.... (*unreadable*) to Colonel Warners, 18 January 1946.

The author’s signature very much resembled that of H. W. Felderhof, though he did not write his full name elsewhere in the letter. The author seemed to be highly involved in the whole legal process and appeared to have excellent legal knowledge. Consequently, I presumed the letter was written by Hendrik W. Felderhof, the Attorney General at the Supreme Court of the Netherlands East Indies.

<sup>83</sup> NAA, A6388, 391C, Commonwealth of Australia Allied Forces (Penal Arrangements) Order (No. 4) Application to Royal Netherlands Personnel, sgd. F.M. Forde, Minister of State for the Army, 24 November 1943, Canberra.

army personnel were already detained in Camp Victory before the amalgamation with the Lytton group. The number of Casino military prisoners in late 1945, those who appeared before a military court, as established through government sources, was less than the number mentioned in articles in *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Telegraph*. In the first newspaper, the reporter noted that ‘More than 400 Indonesian servicemen at the Dutch camp at Casino refused duty last Thursday, Queensland union officials alleged today. The Indonesians claimed that their period of service with the Dutch Army had expired’.<sup>84</sup> In an article in the latter paper from late November 1945, the number of 470 Indonesians was mentioned. According to this newspaper, the 470 would refuse to attend the court-martial, which could only mean that these detainees were military personnel; it is improbable that civilians would be court-martialled.<sup>85</sup> The explanation for this discrepancy in the number of military prisoners could mean that not all of these 400 or more Indonesians would eventually appear in front of a judge in the temporary military courts in the field, or that the Indonesians mentioned in the two newspaper articles were military and semi-military personnel, similar to the group’s composition described in the introduction of this chapter. In an article in *Examiner*, such a distinction was made between military and semi-military personnel in Casino.<sup>86</sup> According to this newspaper, more than 400 Indonesians, wholly comprised of army personnel, and a smaller number belonging to the technical units, were confined in the Dutch camp in Casino.<sup>87</sup> Lingard appeared to agree with the *Examiner* article. She showed that with the arrival of just over fifty Indonesian servicemen from the NEI army from Melbourne, the number of prisoners in the compound was brought to about 400.<sup>88</sup> Finally, it could be that the numbers mentioned in the newspaper articles in *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Telegraph* were just a guesstimate, not based on the actual numbers of imprisoned military personnel from the archipelago in Camp Victory.

Dutch Lieutenant Colonel Moquette was very involved in the European, Indo-European, and Indonesian soldiers residing in Casino and Bundaberg. He mentioned visiting Casino, speaking to some soldiers in the camp and listening to their complaints. He even advised that some minor disciplinary cases should not be transferred to the court-martial because of the circumstances, as he described it. However, although Moquette did

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<sup>84</sup> ‘Indonesian Troops Refuse Duty’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 October 1945, 1.

<sup>85</sup> ‘Indonesians at Casino Allege Ill-Treatment’, *The Telegraph*, 24 November 1945, 3.

<sup>86</sup> *In Dutch: Temporaire Krijgsraden*. This is also mentioned in the Introduction chapter.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Indonesians in Compound’, *Examiner*, 23 October 1945, 1.

<sup>88</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 126.



not explicitly mention only talking to a few European soldiers, it appeared that Moquette was just referring to them. Partly because he stated that some, especially those residing in Bundaberg, wanted to do their flight training in the Netherlands, and partially because he described the men in the camps as ‘almost all of the group consist of excellent types’.<sup>89</sup> Besides, the letter was written after the group of Indonesians who had been working alongside the local RAAF personnel and European NEI military personnel at the aerodrome were transported to Lytton camp. Finally, analysing other letters produced by Moquette, he did not seem the person to describe, in general, indigenous Indonesian military personnel confined in Casino as excellent types.

### **5.3 Trials, sentencing and treatment of Netherlands East Indies military personnel**

According to the President of the Dutch Court-Martial Major La Riviere, Lytton detainees were transported from Lytton in Queensland to Camp Victory (in Casino, NSW) sometime in April 1946. He stated that the internees were guarded in their new detention camp by thirty Australian military police, led by two officers.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, after the amalgamation, this new group, now all abiding in camp Casino, consisted of 564 Indonesians. Analyses of both the Casino and Lytton groups indicated that all indigenous Indonesians received a sentence, and if a soldier received a prison sentence for how many months or years, he was gaoled. Further, available records showed that the military rank of all but four Indonesians was recorded by the temporary military court and high command.<sup>91</sup>

It remains uncertain if all accused KNIL militaries received adequate legal representation. It appears that—at least in the case of the 340 men from the Casino group—they had some access to legal representation by Second Lieutenant Raden Mas Soedibio Loman. However, what constituted legal representation in these cases remained unclear in the archives. My information only came from one Dutch source, and I did not retrieve any other independent sources to corroborate this information.<sup>92</sup> The Casino Indonesian Defence Committee (CIDC), the committee that sided with the interned

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<sup>89</sup> NAN, 2.13.132, inv. nr. 4094, Letter from H.E. Moquette, 6 June 1946.

<sup>90</sup> NAN, 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Letter from Major J. La Riviera to the Attorney-General, Justice Department in Batavia, 26 April 1946.

<sup>91</sup> NAN, 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Lists of sentenced Casino-group and Lytton-group military personnel by the Courts-Martial in Australia, 4 January 1946.

<sup>92</sup> NAN, 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Memorandum from H.W. Felderhof to Colonel Warners, 18 January 1946.

indigenous Indonesians, recorded that the legal representation received by the Casino internees was below par. They stated in a letter to Labor politician Edward Ward, ‘Why were they not allowed independent defence? The worst type of criminal is allowed such. Even the war criminals at the Nuremberg Trials were allowed such. Then why not those men?’<sup>93</sup> Besides this accusation of poor legal representation by the CIDC, it was also mentioned in the Council of the Australia-Indonesia Association meeting papers. The association discussed that the Casino group consisted of regular army or militiamen whose terms of enlistment had primarily expired, they were to be court-martialled in the field and no provisions were allowed by NEI authorities for independent defence to be granted to them. This association expressed a similar concern that independent legal advice was even given to war criminals such as Hermann Göring but not the Indonesians.<sup>94</sup> Finally, the newspaper *Tribune* wrote a comparable story on the indigenous Indonesians. In this article, the newspaper also mentioned that the ‘Fate of Indonesian soldiers at Casino Camp who are being court-martialled by the Dutch authorities and who have been refused independent legal representation will be the subject of a deputation to Prime Minister Chifley from the Australia-Indonesia Association’. *Tribune* continued and quoted Ms Warner.<sup>95</sup> The association’s secretary had said, ‘Even Goering, world number one criminal, was allowed independent defence. Many of these Indonesians have served their full time in the army, and from a legal point of view should not come under Dutch army jurisdiction’.<sup>96</sup> At least questions had been raised by several Australian organisations regarding the adequacy of the legal representation received by the Indonesian detainees.

Besides ranks, registration numbers and the offered legal representation, not much more can be irrefutably determined regarding the actual group’s composition. The crucial archival source ‘Lists of sentenced Casino-group and Lytton-group military personnel by the Courts-Martial in Australia’ provided not much other identifiable information on this group of interned NEI soldiers and marines. The question remained, could this group be considered solely Indonesians, or might there have been a mix of Indonesian, Dutch-

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<sup>93</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/4 part 1, Letter from the Casino Indonesian Defence Committee to E.J. Ward, 21 January 1946.

<sup>94</sup> ANRI, Mohammad Bondan Archive 198, Minutes of Meeting of the Council of the Australia-Indoenais Association held in The Office of the Civil Rights Defence League, Sydney, 19 January 1946.

<sup>95</sup> Ms Warner is Molly Warner, an Australian who would later marry one of the well-known Indonesian activists Mohammad Bondan. For more on the life and works of Molly Bondan (nee Warner), see, for instance, Joan Hardjono and Charles Warner (eds.), *In Love with a Nation: Molly Bondan and Indonesia, Her Own Story in Her Own Words*, (Picton, NSW: Southwood Press, 1995).

<sup>96</sup> ‘Deputation to PM on Indonesians’, *Tribune*, 11 December 1945, 3.

Indien and European soldiers? I extensively searched the three national archive repositories (the Australian National Archives in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne; the Netherlands National Archives in The Hague; and the Indonesian National Archives [ARSIP/ANRI] in Jakarta); The Netherlands Archives for Military History in The Hague; and a few smaller, local archives in Australia for supplementary information on this imprisoned group. However, no other additional sources or verifiable archival information were discovered on the incarcerated.

Based on this single document, it is difficult to substantiate the composition of this group precisely. For instance, were some of the men from a European background or only from an Indonesian background? Based on the ratio of Indonesian to European low-ranked soldiers in the KNIL, as analysed in Chapter 1, one can argue that most, and likely all, of the incarcerated soldiers were from an indigenous background. Moreover, it was presumed by the military high command and the NEI Legation residing in Australia that many of these soldiers wanted to return to their home country, to fight on the side of the independence movement, as based on the letters written by high-ranked Dutch military personnel and other NEI authorities, an argument that I will further analyse. This strengthens my argument that the vast majority of the Casino and Lytton soldiers were from an indigenous background. Additionally, in local newspaper articles and letters by Australian interest groups and organisations of local supporters closely associated with the group, like the CIDC, the gaoled people were referred to as 'Indonesians'.<sup>97</sup> Finally, based on the first names and family names of the incarcerated military personnel, it is more than reasonable to presume that (almost) all of the accused were solely from Indonesian backgrounds. Many soldiers had only one name or were registered by only one Indonesian/Malay name, a common practice on Java and a few other NEI islands. A very small minority of the group (13 of 564 soldiers) were registered by two names, such as Abdoel Rachman and Moehamat Basir, which suggested they were likely to be indigenous Indonesians from somewhere in the multi-ethnic archipelago. Based on previous arguments, I concluded that the incarcerated groups could be identified as soldiers and marines from Indonesian backgrounds and that it was highly improbable that one or more soldiers were from a European or Dutch-*Indisch* background.

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<sup>97</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/4 part 1, Letter from the Casino Indonesian Defence Committee to E.J. Ward, 21 January 1946.

The NEI authorities were not very precise in describing the different ranks of the various Indonesian soldiers and marines—all the classes and military positions were labelled differently. For example, in this group, the Dutch classified military soldiers, foot soldiers and cannoneers. However, after consultation with Colonel Harold Jacobs,<sup>98</sup> most of the dissimilar appellations can be considered as belonging to an identical level, rank, or employment. Therefore, for statistical analysis purposes, the ranks have been divided into three major groups: ‘lower ranked’ (soldiers second class), ‘middle ranked’ (soldiers first class) and ‘higher ranked’ (corporals and sergeants). In this particular source, no servicemen had a rank higher than sergeant. In the entire group of 560 Indonesians whose military ranks could be retrieved, the sentences of all but four could be established. Table 5.1 identifies the three different classes in the two main researched prison camps, Casino and Lytton.

**Table 5.1: Distribution of the ranks of sentenced indigenous Indonesians**

	<b>Total group</b> (N = 560) <sup>99</sup>	<b>Casino</b> (N = 340)	<b>Lytton</b> (N = 220)
<b>Lower ranked</b>			
N	433	283	150
%	77.3	83.2	68.2
<b>Middle ranked</b>			
N	50	27	23
%	8.9	7.9	10.5
<b>Higher ranked</b>			
N	77	30	47
%	13.8	8.8	21.4

After analysing the data in Table 5.1, a few notable conclusions can be drawn. First, the spreading of different ranks over the two camps seems to be unequal, which means a much higher percentage of lower ranked Indonesian KNIL military personnel was incarcerated in Casino camp compared to Lytton (83.2% vs 68.2%).<sup>100</sup> This group size difference was important to note, as I will further analyse and explain the three groups’ dissimilar treatments. Additionally, as can be read, the distribution of the middle-ranked groups was nearly equal; almost as many middle-ranked indigenous Indonesian

<sup>98</sup> Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Canberra’s former Defence Attaché for Australia and New Zealand.

<sup>99</sup> ‘N’ is the number of Indonesian prisoners; the total group consisted of 564 internees in total, but of four of the detainees the rank could not be identified.

<sup>100</sup> The distribution of the two major camps was significantly different. In camp Lytton, there were many higher ranked indigenous Indonesians present—21.4% of the 220 Indonesians in this camp, compared to only 8.8% in camp Casino.

soldiers were in captivity in Casino as there were in the camp in Queensland, although the total group sizes reasonably differed.

During sentencing, the entire group of middle-ranked and higher ranked Indonesians were all lowered substantially in rank; from sergeant to marine first class, all were downgraded to soldier/marine second class. This was a considerable downgrade, both in prestige and payment, as it was and still is the second-lowest paygrade in an army's ranking hierarchy. It was established at the KNIL Headquarters in Melbourne that corporals—not specified if this was for both European/*Indisch* and Indonesian military personnel—residing in Australia would earn 10 guilders per day and a soldier second class just 6 guilders per day. In addition to the base salary, a corporal first class earned an extra 1,50 per day in Australia (*'duurtetoeslag'*), a soldier just an extra 0.30 cents per day.<sup>101</sup> This downgrade addition to their sentences could not be inserted in Table 5.1. After completing all analyses, the absolute numbers' significance and relative percentages will be further reviewed in this chapter.

**Table 5.2: Average sentences in months per rank and camp**

	<b>Total group</b> (N = 556)	<b>Casino</b> (N = 337)	<b>Lytton</b> (N = 219)
Lower ranked	N = 432	N = 282	N = 150
Mean <sup>102</sup>	13.4	13.7	12.8
SD	3.1	2.7	3.6
min.–max. <sup>103</sup>	6–48	6–18	12–48
Middle ranked	N = 48	N = 25	N = 23
Mean	12.6	13.2	12.0
SD	1.9	2.4	0.0
min.–max.	12–18	12–18	12–12
Higher ranked	N = 76	N = 30	N = 46
Mean	14.9	16.2	14.1
SD	3.3	4.4	2.1
min.–max.	0–24	0–24	12–21

Table 5.2 presented information on the number of months sentence an average Indonesian detainee received. Once again, this group of convicted Indonesian KNIL soldiers was divided by camp and rank. I conclude that, on average, the lower ranked and

<sup>101</sup> NIMH, 159 De Vries, Memorandum GS-NI-N-959, dated 6 July 1944; Letter from Kolonel N.L.W. van Straten to Alle Militaire Gezaghebbenden, 13 September 1943.

Extra *'duurtetoeslag'* was an additional/supplementary salary for the increase in the cost of living.

<sup>102</sup> 'Mean' is the average number of months an Indonesian prisoner received.

<sup>103</sup> 'Min-max' refers to the minimal (min) and maximum (max) sentences in the number of months received by an Indonesian detainee of this rank.

middle-ranked Lytton groups received a substantially shorter prison sentence than their Casino counterparts. This is even more shocking, as in Camp Victory no detainee received a sentence longer than twenty-four months, whereas in Lytton, one individual soldier (or marine) obtained a substantial four-year sentence. This was case number twenty-three: the sole case of Wawoeroento, a lower ranked private, who had been accused of, among other things, being a Japanese agent.<sup>104</sup>

Thus, on average, indigenous Indonesian convicts were sentenced to 13.9 months of imprisonment. Only one out of the entire group of over 500 accused militaries, Sergeant Amat, was acquitted. A maximum of forty-eight months of incarceration was also pronounced once (the previously mentioned soldier Wawoeroento). One explanation for the difference in sentencing between the Casino and the Lytton Indonesians could be that most of the lower ranked and maybe even all of the middle-ranked prisoners in the camp in Lytton (as  $SD = 0.0$ ) received some kind of regular twelve-month sentence, a standard judgement as will be further discussed. On the other hand, as discussed earlier, the middle-ranked and higher ranked Indonesian soldiers were subject to additional punishment of rank and pay reduction. Further, it can be concluded that in Camp Victory, the middle and higher ranked soldiers received on average noticeably longer sentences than those comparable groups in Lytton; the sergeants and corporals in Lytton, for instance, received on average close to two months less time in prison than their Casino counterparts. The main reason for this substantial variation in sentencing remained unclear and could not be explained based on the available sources. The interesting question is why a *Temporaire Krijgsraad* would sentence some KNIL personnel in one court much more harshly than in another field military court for the same or very similar offence, with no indication of different circumstances. None of the additionally researched sources presented any valuable explanation for this dramatic difference, and no significant and satisfactory justification could be found in any of the researched archives.

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<sup>104</sup> NAA, A433, 1949/2/8186, Letter from Minister in The Hague to The Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, no date.

**Table 5.3: Frequency of sentences in camps Lytton and Casino**

Months	Casino		Lytton	
	N	%	N	%
6	1	0.3	0	
12	223	65.2	181	81.5
15	17	5.0	26	11.7
18	87	25.4	10	4.5
21	7	2.0	2	0.9
24	1	0.3	0	
30	0		1	0.5
48	0		1	0.5
Acquittal	1		0	

From Table 5.3, the essential conclusion should be that the soldiers in the Lytton camp received a twelve-month sentence significantly more often than the average soldier in Casino. In Lytton camp, over 80% of the indigenous prisoners received this sentence; in Casino, it was just over 65%. One explanation for this discrepancy may be that the lower ranked and possibly all middle-ranked Lytton ‘conscientious objectors’, as the Dutch Attorney-General Henrik Felderhof referred to them, received a ‘standard sentence’ of one-year incarceration, possibly without a real trial or mass court appearance at a *Temporaire Krijgsraad*. Lingard has documented that the local supports of the CIDC claimed that the sentences were ranging from one year (which is corresponding with the archival sources) to five years, a sentence I was not able to find in the lists.<sup>105</sup> The numbers of incarcerated Indonesians and length of the sentences for the Casino and Lytton internees, as documented in ‘Lists of sentenced Casino-group and Lytton-group military personnel by the Courts-Martial in Australia’ were roughly backed up by a letter from Secretary of the Netherlands Legation De Ranitz to Acting Minister for External Affairs Makin in mid-1946.<sup>106</sup> De Ranitz noted approximately the same numbers of convicted KNIL military personnel, 552 sentences in total. Further, de Ranitz described that for nine personnel, their sentences would expire in 1948, and one convicted Indonesian’s sentence would expire in 1949.<sup>107</sup> Bennett, in his publication, also mentioned this letter; although he did not compare the number of internees with the other discovered sources, he merely

<sup>105</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 127.

<sup>106</sup> NAN, 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Lists of sentenced Casino-group and Lytton-group military personnel by the Courts-Martial in Australia, 4 January 1946.

<sup>107</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/4 PART 1, Letter from J.A. De Ranitz to N.J.O. Makin, 20 July 1946.

described this source's content.<sup>108</sup> These numbers mentioned in the letter by De Ranitz appear to be consistent with the data in Table 5.3.

If a standard sentence without an actual court appearance was actually the case, one could substantially accuse the NEI military high command of misusing their acquired extraterritorial rights to imprison their Indonesian soldiers and marines and that the liberties of those in both camps were more than seriously harmed. First, as explained in earlier chapters, according to the laws of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, every member of the Royal Netherlands Forces who committed an offence against the Netherlands Naval or Military Laws would be tried before a Netherlands court-martial/*Krijgsraad*.<sup>109</sup> Second, all Indonesian internees appeared to be grouped, on average, thirty-five to forty persons per case group. In the court proceedings, each group of defendants was referred to as Case 1, Case 2, etc., plus the camp in which the internees were incarcerated; this suggested more or less the actuality of genuine mass court cases. However, Felderhof, in his letter to Colonel Warners, clearly stated that it was unachievable to prosecute the Lytton group by court-martial in the field without further explaining why the issue had arisen. In the final paragraph of his letter, one probable explanation can be discovered. Although he did not openly refer to the Lytton prisoners and their military trials, he concluded his communication with the statement, 'This case, although the punishable facts are clear-cut, interrelates to the political developments on Java. Does this mean prosecution is desired? In my opinion, because of our prestige: yes'.<sup>110</sup> Felderhof, in these last three sentences, was most probably referring to those military inmates in camp Lytton. The essential words in this letter to the colonel are 'because of our prestige'. This highlights the outrageous attitude towards the KNIL forces. Prestige seemed to be more essential than actual (military) justice. Therefore, one could conclude that those Indonesian men were incarcerated on Australian soil for no reason other than to keep them out of the Indonesian Republic. Moreover, based on the letter, it is reasonable to suggest that no actual court appearances ever occurred for some KNIL personnel in Lytton or that some of the internees never saw the inside of an actual military court in the field, most likely the lower and middle-ranked internees.

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<sup>108</sup> Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 219.

<sup>109</sup> NAA, A1608, E45/1/11, Letter from Rear Admiral F.W. Coster to PM J. Curtin, 13 November 1942.

<sup>110</sup> NAN, 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Memorandum from H.W. Felderhof to Colonel Warners, 18 January 1946.



The Dutch military wanted to keep lower-ranked soldiers in Australia; Indonesian soldiers had received at least basic military training, mainly on the island of Java.<sup>111</sup> One of the primary reasons for their internment was a fear of the NEI military high-command and NEI Legation that these forces outside of Indonesia would, upon their return to Java, Sumatra and other islands in the archipelago, fight against the Dutch. They had no historical precedent for this fear. As discussed in section 1.3, no significant uprisings had been recorded in the existence of the KNIL before WWII. The changed circumstances in the Indonesian Republic/the NEI would have been the prime reason for the high military command incarcerating them. By locking them up, they would not have had the opportunity to revolt against Dutch reoccupation or fight in Indonesia against their former employer, the KNIL.

My argument was not that there had never been any military court cases by *Temporaire Krijgsraden* on Australian soil. On the contrary, as argued in the previous chapters, it very much appeared that NEI military court cases proceeded against KNIL military personnel abiding in Australia at some point during the Pacific War. One of the cases I have extensively analysed and described in this thesis is the case of Jacob Pattiranie (see Chapter 4).<sup>112</sup> Another prominent case I have discussed was that involving Asmawie and his fellow Indonesians, the seven who were in the Wallangarra camp. The archival sources from 1943 indicate actual court appearances, and sentences were pronounced as the actual trial transcripts were preserved in the Netherlands archives.<sup>113</sup>

Another discrepancy in applying extraterritorial laws to genuine court cases was the absence of a special investigative officer appointment to each of the cases as required by Dutch (military) law. If this had been the case, this would have been in sharp contrast to Rear-Admiral Frederick Coster's 1943 negotiations, achievements and views earlier in the war (see Chapter 3). He had negotiated that a special officer could be appointed, someone who would thoroughly examine and prepare cases as was laid down in the Netherlands military law: an investigative officer who could summon witnesses, administer oaths and delegate authority to take evidence.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, there was no

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<sup>111</sup> Lohstein, *Royal Netherlands Indies Army*, 5.

<sup>112</sup> NAN, 2.09.19, inv. nr. 70, case number 10931, vonnis Jacob Pattiranie, NEI Courts-Martial, 3 October 1944.

<sup>113</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 147, casefile 10912, Sentencing record of Asmawie, NXJ23046, NEI Courts-Martial, 30 November 1943.

<sup>114</sup> NAA, A6388, 391C, Letter from Dutch Rear-Admiral F.W. Coster to Australian PM John Curtin, 17 March 1943; NAA, A1608, E45/1/11, Letter from The Secretary of the Department of External Affairs to The Department of the Army, 15 July 1943.

mention of a special investigative officer or a specific Netherlands courthouse in the rare original NEI sources recovered, except in just one other newly discovered and analysed letter. In this letter, the Casino court cases were briefly mentioned. Felderhof was once again the author of this source. In his letter from December 1945, he wrote that nobody showed up in the Casino court session and he had to postpone the cases. In the remainder of this letter, no mention was made by Felderhof of new or additional court cases or where this (temporary) courthouse was.<sup>115</sup> The only other source mentioning this no-show at the NEI military courts that I could retrieve was a newspaper article in the *Telegraph*. In this article, it was briefly mentioned that 470 Indonesians had refused to attend court that day.<sup>116</sup> Other scholars, like Bennett, did not indicate a courthouse, courthouse appearances, or a refusal by the Indonesians to attend at the *Krijgsraad* either. Meanwhile, Lingard did mention a courthouse appearance of a group of Indonesians in her publication, but the details of this appearance were unclear.<sup>117</sup>

The absence of an actual Dutch courthouse would explain why no military court documents or records could be retrieved (no official court transcripts, no sources on the pronouncing of a verdict and no paperwork on Indonesians appealing their received sentences) in the national archives of the Netherlands, Australia or Indonesia, or any local archive. After researching this specific topic for many years, I am convinced that these documents, if they ever existed, were disposed of by the NEI military high command. This was done either accidentally, because of the shifted military focus on reoccupying the NEI, or on purpose, to limit the damaging of their prestige in the years to come. Or perhaps, as Antoine Weijzen stated, archiving at *de krijgsmacht* was simply not a high priority.<sup>118</sup>

In previous chapters, I outlined how the Allied Forces Order paved the way for Dutch exploitation of Royal Netherlands military personnel on Australian soil. According to extraterritorial rules and regulations that were negotiated at length with the War Cabinet, the Dutch/NEI military high command could confine their own military personnel as stated explicitly in the order: a member of the Royal Netherlands Forces could be imprisoned if arrested or held under the law of the Netherlands in Australia on reasonable suspicion of having committed an offence triable under that law and sentenced

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<sup>115</sup> NAN, 2.10.45, inv. nr. 292, Letter from H.W. Felderhof to Jonkers, 2 December 1945.

<sup>116</sup> 'Indonesians at Casino Allege Ill-Treatment', *The Telegraph*, 24 November 1945, 3.

<sup>117</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 127.

<sup>118</sup> Weijzen, *De Indië-weigeraars*, 17.

by a service court, the *Temporaire Krijgsraad*, of the NEI forces. It is questionable whether the jurisdictional description ‘reasonable suspicion of having committed an offence’ or ‘sentenced by a service court’ applied to any or all internees in Casino and Lytton, although it appears to be more likely that the Casino internees might have seen some kind of service court. And, as argued before, there was more than reasonable doubt that the Lytton Indonesian soldiers—particularly the lower and middle-ranked ones—were never sentenced by an actual Dutch/NEI service court, even though their cases were referred to, on paper, as Case 1 to Case 23. Unfortunately, more specific and reliable evidence did not appear to exist to either irrefutably backup or dismiss this assumption of a ‘standard sentence’ of twelve months without a trial in front of an NEI judge in the temporary military courts in the field for those indigenous prisoners in the Lytton camp. Moreover, regrettably, as mentioned before, no scholars who researched the topic of the lives of the Indonesians in Australia identified any useful sources on this topic and I have not been able to retrieve other documents from the archives on this topic to date.

#### **5.4 Indonesian prisoners’ personal experiences: conscientious objectors?**

In 1946, Major La Riviera described the group of 122 KNIL military personnel in Lytton as conscientious objectors, as analysed in the previous section.<sup>119</sup> Conscientious objectors, if one can call the former KNIL military personnel in Lytton this, were found in Australia and the Netherlands. In the years 1946–1949, a total of 111,653 Dutch conscripts were shipped to Indonesia.<sup>120</sup> The national constitution had—at first—forbade the Dutch Government to deploy Netherlands’ conscript soldiers overseas against their will, but because of the lack of enthusiasm by many Dutch conscripts to fight in the Indies, this article was legally withdrawn only in early 1946.<sup>121</sup> It has been estimated that in those four years, about 1,900 Dutch conscripts claimed to be conscientious objectors and about one out of every six refusers in the mother country did not report for service when their claim was denied.<sup>122</sup> One could question whether the Indonesian ‘conscientious

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<sup>119</sup> NAN, 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Letter from Major J. La Riviera to the Attorney-General, Justice Department in Batavia, 26 April 1946, Procureur-Generaal bij het Hoogerechtshof Ned. Indië, 1945-1950.

<sup>120</sup> ‘HR, 25-06-2013, nr. 13/00067 H’, Navigator.  
<https://www.navigator.nl/document/id9e33b4c29ab848588d180d1412008988/hr-25-06-2013-nr-1300067-h>.

<sup>121</sup> Romijn, "Learning on the job," 321.

<sup>122</sup> Heike Niebergall-Lackner, *Status and Treatment of Deserters in International Armed Conflicts*, vol. 47, International Humanitarian Law Series, (Leiden: Brill Nijhoff, 2016), 59.

objectors' or mutineers were punished harshly and unfairly, or possibly very similarly to their Dutch counterparts, or if the Indonesians were punished more lightly for their unwillingness to (further) fight on the side of the former colonisers. Comparable material exists on *Indien* refusers from the Netherlands, which Weijzen showed in his publication *De Indië-Weigeraars. Vergeten Slachtoffers Van Een Koloniale Oorlog*.<sup>123</sup> He analysed about 345 verdicts of refusers from the mother country, all imprisoned at *Fort Spijkerboor*, a Dutch camp or prison near Amsterdam, a place commonly referred to in Dutch newspapers as a penitentiary, a camp for political prisoners, or an internment camp for conscientious objectors.<sup>124</sup>

According to Weijzen's research, of those imprisoned in the Netherlands, 141 of these *Spijkerboor* men were unwilling to fight in the Indonesian Republic/NEI, and they received a prison term of up to one year. The author showed that more than one-third of the entire group (124 convicted men) received a sentence of two years or more. In comparison, the average prison sentence of an Indonesian lower-ranked soldier in Australia was just 13.4 months' imprisonment (see Table 5.2). Weijzen demonstrated that a larger group of 1,771 verdicts were all pronounced in the late 1940s. However, he was rather clear that the sources he used for his data collection were unreliable. Keeping that in mind, 17.5% of the convicted draftees still received a sentence of three years or more, and fewer than 1% of the duty deniers were acquitted.<sup>125</sup> Compared to the detainees abiding in the Commonwealth, only three of the 556 identified Indonesian soldiers and marines received a sentence of two years or more—one soldier in Victory Camp and two in camp Lytton—and merely one soldier was cleared (see Table 5.3).

In the mother country, Johannes van Luyn and Jan Maassen were two of those conscientious objectors; two men of roughly 1,900 who refused to fight in the Indies. Both men did not want to fight in the NEI because, as they explained, they did not want to participate in shooting innocent people. And as historical research showed, Van Luyn and Maassen could easily have been involved in shooting innocent Indonesians if they had been deployed to the NEI/Indonesian Republic. A 2017 journal article calculated that during the two 'Police Actions', the number of Indonesian victims was at least 100,000.<sup>126</sup> Van Luyn received a prison sentence of two years and Maassen a prison sentence of three

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<sup>123</sup> Weijzen, *De Indië-weigeraars*.

<sup>124</sup> See: 'Zuivering', *Nederlandse Staatscourant*, 5 September 1945, 1; 'Kampcommandant stal van Gedetineerden', *Leeuwarder Koerier*, 14 June 1946, 2.

<sup>125</sup> Weijzen, *De Indië-weigeraars*, 148–149.

<sup>126</sup> Harinck, Horn, and Luttikhuis, "Onze vergeten slachtoffers."

years, plus Maassen was not allowed to vote for five years.<sup>127</sup> So these two refusers were part of the extensive group described by Weijzen as receiving a sentence of two years or more. These two conscientious objectors were more well-known than others in the Netherlands because, years after their convictions, in 2012, both went to the Dutch High Court to have their convictions overturned. Less than one year later, the High Court made the binding legal decision not to overturn the convictions.<sup>128</sup>

At first glance, these Dutch sentences of their conscripts appeared to be significantly harsher than the average punishment of an Indonesian KNIL servicemen, whose contract had been expired or would soon expire, on Australian soil. However, the prisoners in Casino were locked up in horrible conditions, as previously illustrated—a camp many Australian media outlets often compared to Bergen Belsen. According to Weijzen, the Dutch imprisoned the Netherlands conscientious objectors in *Fort Spijkerboor*, where the conditions were much more tolerable compared to the situations portrayed in various Australian camps. Weijzen wrote that the Netherlands regime was reasonably benevolent, and requests for special leave by duty deniers were approved plentifully.<sup>129</sup> Additionally, according to Dutch law, every prisoner had the right to be released under probation after serving two-thirds of their sentence if they had correctly behaved and obeyed the prison's rules.<sup>130</sup> This was a Netherlands law that clearly only applied to detainees in the mother country and not Indonesian political detainees. Further, after examining Weijzen's publication, one can conclude that a 'standard sentence' similar to the one that might have existed for some Indonesian lower and middle ranked soldiers in Lytton camp did not exist in the Netherlands. Additionally, all Dutch draftees were tried individually in the mother country and not in groups of thirty-five to forty, as was clearly the case in the two Australian towns. Finally, it appeared that each of the Dutch conscientious objectors could get independent legal advice. Although it was mentioned that legal representation by Second Lieutenant Raden Mas Soedibio Loman was provided to the group mutineers in Casino, it seems unlikely that this legal advice was adequate or sufficient. Possibly, no legal representation occurred at all.

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<sup>127</sup> 'Indië-deserteurs naar Hoge Raad', *Java Post*, 15 December 2012.

<https://javapost.nl/2012/12/15/indie-deserteurs-naar-hoge-raad/>.

<sup>128</sup> 'Geen herziening celstraf dienstweigeraars Nederlands-Indië', *Historiek*, 25 June 2013.

<https://historiek.net/geen-herziening-celstraf-dienstweigeraars-nederlands-indie/23062/>.

<sup>129</sup> Weijzen, *De Indië-weigeraars*, 155–156.

<sup>130</sup> Weijzen, *De Indië-weigeraars*, 149–150.

I have argued that conscientious objectors drafted in the Netherlands were punished harshly in Dutch courts. These young men did not want to participate in a war they did not believe in. Indonesians in Australia, who, in my opinion, could not be called conscientious objectors, received even harsher treatment despite not having committed any military crime at all. In most cases their contracts had simply expired. They were incarcerated anyway by the NEI military high command and the *Krijgsraad*.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The KNIL played a limited role in the liberation of the Indies after the Imperial Japanese Army surrendered. The NEI officials and some NEI military leaders in Australia, and also many Dutch people back in the mother country, were under the impression that most of the Indonesian population in the old colony was still sympathetic to their colonial rulers, especially after almost four years of war. It has been mentioned by those in charge and in the newspapers in the Netherlands that 90% of the population of the Indies were still pro-Dutch and would not resist reoccupation or a regaining colonial foothold. Those in charge, in Australia and the Netherlands, were likely biased and misinformed, to say the least.<sup>131</sup> As a result, in the early post-war years, the relationship between Australia and the NEI Legation and military high command deteriorated. The reasons were very complex; both internal Australian events, such as the black ban of Dutch shipping, and developments on a more global stage, like the ‘Police Actions’ and not-so-smooth negotiations between the Indonesian Republic and the Netherlands, influenced the attitudes of many Australians and their political leaders, especially those within the Chifley Government.

All kinds of Indonesian groups residing in Australia were discussed at length by the NEI Legation and the Australian Government. More prominent groups like the KNIL military personnel and minor groups, such as civilian groups like the former internees of Tanah Merah and the semi-military seafarers. However, in my opinion, the NEI authorities, civilian and military, although in a difficult position and possibly

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<sup>131</sup> Misinformation or lack of accurate information appeared to be a continuous problem. As Stevens argued, ‘The division of the Dutch government and the military stalemate in Indonesia gave space to active government officials who could change the course of the tried to influence government policy, such as, for example, general Spoor’. R.J.J. Stevens, "Manipulatie van informatie? De rol van de Nederlandse militaire inlichtingendienst in Indonesië ten tijde van het Nederlands-Indisch conflict 1945-1949," *Politiek(E) Opstellen* 11-12 (1992): 168.

misinformed, did so much injustice to these allied Indonesian civilians, seafarers and army personnel. They incarcerated many of them, ill-treated large groups of Indonesians and, with the help of the acquired extraterritorial rights, managed to delay the repatriation of many who wanted to return to their regions and their families without asking them why they wanted to go back so badly. Much blame can also be laid at the feet of the Australian authorities, especially in the early months after the war had ended. Just after the surrender of Japan, they (mis)informed the Australian people that the vast majority of Indonesians would prefer the Dutch to return. The War Cabinet did not do enough to help the ill-treated Indonesians on their own soil, for instance, they did not renegotiate or revoke the extraterritorial rights, and the Commonwealth lent concentration camps to the NEI.

If we look back through the archival record, we see that the worst injustice perpetrated by the NEI in the 1940s in Australia were the show trials of indigenous (lower ranked) military personnel. These were show trials in all but name. Some (former) servicemen might have ended up at the *Temporaire Krijgsraden* (the temporary military courts in the field), while others might not ever have seen the inside of an actual court. The sources I have uncovered from the Dutch army archive mention these trials in vague terms, perhaps keeping up an appearance of due process. But I found no concrete evidence that these trials ever took place, no official court transcripts and no paperwork on Indonesians appealing their received sentences. Nor did I uncover in any other scholars' publications, like those of Lingard and Bennet, evidence of court appearances. Nevertheless, the outcomes of these so-called trials were evident. First, all the accused, except for one soldier, were sentenced to a minimum of twelve months' imprisonment, and all were locked up in camps. Second, the entire group of middle-ranked and higher ranked 'native' Indonesians were all lowered considerably in rank. This downgrade had two significant consequences: loss of prestige and, maybe more importantly, an income reduction.<sup>132</sup> The outcomes of the trials -if they actually ever took place- were documented by other scholars.

Newspapers—relying on information from local and federal governments but also on the information from interest groups like the CIDC—all mentioned upcoming trials and the aftermath (the internment of the indigenous Indonesians), but none reported on the trials themselves. They referred to the lack of adequate legal assistance, as one

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<sup>132</sup> NIMH, 159 De Vries, Memorandum GS-NI-N-959, dated 6 July 1944; Letter from Kolonel N.L.W. van Straten to Alle Militaire Gezaghebbenden, 13 September 1943.

journalist wrote, ‘even the war criminals at the Nuremberg Trials were allowed such’, but no mention of the actual court appearances appeared in Australian or Dutch papers. The only counterargument could be that if some of the Lytton prisoners never saw the inside of a court, these interest groups might have publicly aired this information.

After the end of the Pacific War, many went on strike again, as they did not want to help the Dutch transporting essential stores for the army to the Indies. As a result of their strike, they breached their visa conditions, and the Australian authorities revoked their rights to live and work in the country—they were declared unwanted aliens or prohibited migrants. As a result of this, the striking seafarers were incarcerated in camps like Casino and Chermside. The main reasons for incarcerating many Indonesians in Australia were a mistrust of the NEI Legation and military leaders and the Australian immigration laws of the 1940s. The semi-military personnel, the seafarers, who first went on strike during WWII were incarcerated in camps like Cowra. After their release, many of them returned to their vessels, mostly KPM ships, and worked on the vessels during the remaining war years.

After the incarceration of KNIL and semi-military personnel and ordinary civilians during and just after WWII, the Australian authorities slowly started to put pressure on the NEI authorities to return their residents to NEI or Indonesian Republic soil. The Australian Government and the NEI Legation developed opposite views on the treatment and status of these different groups of Indonesians. The gradually shifting Australian attitudes towards the Indonesians were partially motivated by pressure from potential voters, unions and other stakeholders, partially because it might have had an inhibitory effect on post-war economic recovery. Other reasons for the changing attitude could be that the international conflict in the Indies went on and no agreement seemed to hold, or maybe because some politicians were slightly convinced that the White Australia policy should no longer be leading. Although others, like Arthur Calwell and his political associates, made it very clear that Australia was not about to change its racial policies soon. In 1949, at a meeting in Melbourne, the Federal Campaign Committee unanimously passed a resolution supporting Calwell in his stand in the White Australia policy; the resolution praised his consistent attitude in upholding the policy and carrying out the existing immigration laws.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> ‘Mr Calwell Defends Our White-Australia Policy’, *The Age*, 21 February 1949, 3.



## Chapter 6: Return to the Indies?

Mrs. Batjo has now written the Minister and requests assistance in the endeavour to join her husband in Indonesia. She desires her son to accompany her. Mr. Batjo has many times made representations on behalf of a number of wives of Indonesians' and it is felt that any decision given this case will have to apply to all the wives of Indonesian repatriates who desire to join their husbands.<sup>1</sup>

The above quotation is part of a memorandum written by the Department of Immigration. By the late 1940s, this department was responsible for the repatriation of Indonesians to their home country. The 'Australian' wives of the Indonesians had, as can be read, an opportunity to join their husbands in their new home country, and many did, as they were no longer considered Australian due to the *Australian Nationality Act 1937*. Their lives and experiences were unique. Once defined as 'British subjects' they became 'Indonesian Aliens.' This chapter will analyse their lives as part of a larger exploration of the concept of 'return' and what it might have meant to Indonesian internees, merchant seamen, and refugees.

The war in the Pacific was over, and after the British and Australian armies had tried to re-establish Dutch rules in the Indies, the Netherlands took over this task. To complete this task, the Dutch needed as many military personnel as possible. As I have shown in this thesis, there was a substantial group of objectors in the mother country, drafted men who refused to fight in the Indies. The KNIL military high command in Australia was convinced that the (convicted) detainees wanted to return to their home country to fight on the side of the independence movement. But did interned Indonesians really want to return and fight? Some sources, mainly Australian ones, seemed to collaborate this argument partially. But the source of this information—who provided the information and was the information-giver objective or biased—remained unclear. So, the Royal Dutch East Indies high command, residing in the Commonwealth at WWII's closure, had a group of over 500 NEI soldiers at its disposal but refused to make use of these servicemen, as high command was afraid what would happen once these soldiers returned to the old colony. This research angle is one that has been overlooked by some

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<sup>1</sup> NAA, A29998, 1951/963, Memorandum by the Department of Immigration, 16 May 1949.

researchers on this topic.<sup>2</sup> It is vital that we follow the ‘return’ journeys of this group because only in this way can we truly see the long-term impact of war-time Dutch and Australian policies on some Indonesian servicemen, semi-military personnel and civilians.

This chapter will examine Indonesian attitudes to repatriation. I have tried to contextualise their ideas and reasons by using as many different archives and other available sources, such as the secondary sources analysed in the Introduction of this thesis, as possible. However, like Lockwood, Lingard and Bennett, I realised that it was impossible to tell all of the Indonesians' stories, and it was practically impossible to outline the reception of all the different smaller and larger groups once they returned to their mother country. This is because there was such a diverse group of indigenous Indonesians residing in Australia: KNIL military personnel, merchant seamen, men and women working with but mainly for the NEI authorities (such as in organisations like NIGIS), former Boven Digoel prisoners, Australian wives and children of Indonesians, former pearl fishers and other (unwanted) aliens. Their immense diversity was the primary reason I analysed only a few groups and a small number of key stories.

In this chapter, I return to the battle between the Australian authorities and the NEI Legation and military high command after the war's closure. In this section of my thesis, my analysis combines Dutch (language) sources from the Netherlands National Archives and the NIMH, with documents detailing Australian cabinet debate, predominantly discovered in the NAA. While the deteriorating relationship between Dutch and Australian authorities in this period has been well documented and we know much about the impact of this deterioration on Indonesians in Australia, I provide a new, more complete discussion by bringing a fresh source base into view. So, I trace the fading relationship between the host nation and its temporary Dutch/Indonesian residents. The NEI authorities and their Australian counterparts disagreed on many aspects; over how to treat the indigenous Indonesians they had imprisoned in a series of internment camps; should these Indonesians be considered free Indonesian men, or should they be regarded as punished military personnel? This schism between the NEI Legation and KNIL military and Australian authorities would severely affect the fate of interned Indonesians in Australia and their repatriation, including when and if ships could berth in Australia.

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<sup>2</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*; Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*.

The journeys of these Indonesians were described in the papers of the days, and this publicity shaped the views of the Australian authorities and the Australian public more generally. On the one hand, the GOC did not want to appear too soft on and lenient towards prohibited Asian immigrants. But, on the other hand, some repatriates were clearly apolitical, living everyday lives in Australia's towns and cities. Or they were women and children who could lay claim to British citizenship, having only forgone this citizenship because of marriage to a NEI citizen. There was publicity in the Dutch press as well that may have influenced Dutch politicians as they struggled to rebuild their colony.

### **6.1 Reasons for returning: the Indonesian side of the story**

Although WWII had ended several months earlier, in early 1946 large groups of NEI army personnel remained imprisoned in Dutch detention centres in several Australian states. Most of these Indonesians wanted to return to their homeland but were not allowed to do so. Dutch military high command claimed their prison sentences had not expired. But why had these men been imprisoned in the first place? Were they conscientious objectors, as Felderhof referred to them?<sup>3</sup> Were they taking the side of the Indonesian Republic and independence movement? Or were these fears simply the unfounded projections of a weakened colonial power?

Accessing the point of view of incarcerated deserting or revolting Indonesians in Australian internment camps was challenging. It was also hard to determine if these men just wanted to return to their towns and families or whether they were eager to fight for the Indonesian independence movement, as the NEI implied in their communications. Further, it was difficult to establish why some of them, at some point after WWII, deserted from the Dutch army and camps. Unfortunately, the absence of many archival records made it tremendously problematic to reconstruct a broad Indonesian perspective and it has been problematic to voice their reasons.

There are numerous reasons why little material written by middle and lower-ranked soldiers from the KNIL and semi-military personnel was traced, collected, and preserved. One of the primary reasons why there is so little written material could be that

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<sup>3</sup> NAN, 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Memorandum from H.W. Felderhof to Colonel Warners, 18 January 1946.

so many KNIL servicemen who came to Australia appeared unable to read and write. The lower ranked soldiers were especially likely to not have sufficient education to write down their grievances and political views; the only exception to this was the, on average, more educated soldiers from the islands of Ambon. Based on the census of 1930, it has been estimated that 93% of the Indonesians living in the NEI over the age of fourteen were illiterate.<sup>4</sup> According to J.G. Legge, only 240 Indonesian students graduated from high school in 1940.<sup>5</sup>

I am not arguing that all internees in Cowra or Casino were illiterate. We know there was considerable traffic in letters and other writings during and after the war. For instance, one of the more renowned of the incarcerated Indonesians, Mohammed Bondan, former Digoelist, was well educated and wrote many letters and statements on the situation of interned Indonesians in Australia.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, I have not been able to retrieve any specific writings by lower-ranked militaries whom the NEI held in camps such as Casino.

Besides potential illiteracy, it was likely that the authorities were not interested in preserving the 'Indonesian side of the story', as there was no direct benefit for these authorities to write down the stories of these unwanted aliens, mutineers, and deserters. It could even be used against the former colonial rulers if they were to preserve the perspectives of interned Indonesians. The misleading statement they made to justify their choices regarding internees might be contradicted by the stories of Indonesian servicemen. On the other hand, the NEI authorities did not seem to prohibit materials from leaving Australia, on repatriation voyages like the *Esperance Bay* and *Manoora*. As Lingard has shown, the Dutch inspected the vessels and passengers' belongings before sailing, but they 'only' confiscated arms, and not the discovered Communist literature on board.<sup>7</sup> Bennett has described many talks about luggage searches on all the repatriation journeys. He did not mention the confiscation of any written or printed materials.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Rupert Emerson, "Education in the Netherlands East Indies," *The Journal of Negro Education* 15, no. 3 (1946): 499.

<sup>5</sup> J.D. Legge, *Indonesia* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 105.

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, ANRI, Mohammad Bondan Archive 31, Letter from Bondan to Saudara Najooan in Singapore, 2 October 1946; Mohammad Bondan Archive 46, Letter from Bondan to the Indonesian Association for Independence in Saudi Arabia, 24 November 1946; or Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 213.

<sup>7</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 207.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 87-88 and 194.

Additionally, some Indonesian archives might hold some exciting writings by Indonesians. But, and as Hans Hägerdal has clearly argued, ‘the National Archives (ANRI) in Jakarta houses ten kilometers of colonial source materials, much more than the correspondent National Archives in The Hague but is largely inaccessible [...] due to bureaucratic restraints emanating from the pre-Reformasi era.’<sup>9</sup> Finally, if we suppose written sources did still exist (created by former KNIL military personnel, especially those written by lower-ranked soldiers, in Indonesian or perhaps even in Dutch) in many cases these stories might be still in private collections, in the possession of relatives in Indonesia – letters, diaries, or other writings which never made it into more prominent local or national archives.

Next to written sources in various languages, I have also tried to identify oral history material. In the years after WWII, beginning in 1973, the Indonesian government tried to collect many war stories in their *Koleksi Sejarah Lisan* (Oral History Collection). ARSIP recorded about 800 stories, and some were transcribed. This extensive collection of personal war histories was on the experiences in the NEI under Japanese occupation and the period leading up to the independence. This is the main reason why these interviews were not tremendously useful for my research; the interviews detailed experiences in Indonesia rather than Australia. None of the interviewees had been in the KNIL and detained in Australia. In addition, there were other methodological challenges when it came to using this oral history collection, these interviews skew towards elites. As Ethan Mark has argued: ‘the narratives in the Arsip collection can hardly be said to be representative of the experience and concerns of Indonesian society as a whole. (...) The voices of the Indonesian working class -still the vast majority of Indonesia’s population- are absent’.<sup>10</sup> So there were a number of obstacles when it came to using this material. However, I did stumble across one intriguing anecdote. One interview was valuable because it gave insight into the mind of one veteran, a man called Kemal Idris. He had said: ‘we had to accept all the training the Japanese could offer [...] and that when Japan lost, the Dutch would return, and we would use this military training to resist [them].’<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, it was possible to discern some of the ideas of the Indonesian detainees in the correspondence of Australian and Dutch officials and through

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<sup>9</sup> Hans Hägerdal, “Eastern Indonesia and the Writing of History”, *Archipel. Études interdisciplinaires sur le monde insulindien*, no. 90 (2015): 76.

<sup>10</sup> Ethan Mark, "Suharto's New Order Remembers Japan's New Order: Oral Accounts From Indonesia," in *Representing the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia*, ed. Remco Raben (Zwolle: Waanders, 1999), 73.

<sup>11</sup> Mark, "Suharto's New Order," 77.

information published in local Australian newspapers. However, it remained unclear how these authors and journalists came to their conclusions or if the writers were biased; it was pretty apparent they were not the views of the overwhelming majority of the imprisoned Indonesians, as no evidence has been found that these Indonesians were adequately interviewed by Dutch or Australian authors while in the camps. That said, the correspondence did provide certain clues as to how a minority of the indigenous KNIL military personnel and some semi-military personnel viewed the Indonesian independence movement, especially through the written characterisations by non-Dutch officials.

Press and government sources documented Indonesian motivations for repatriation. In a newspaper article from October 1945, some Indonesian seafarers, who were told by the Australian authorities that they were to be transported back to the NEI, had allegedly requested that space on Australian or British ships should be set aside for Indonesian soldiers. According to the paper, the seafarers had mentioned this so soldiers could return to Indonesia if they wished to join the independence movement in Java. The federal government rejected this request, as the Indonesians were seen as Dutch soldiers under Dutch military control.<sup>12</sup> Inquiry officer Barnwell concluded in one of his essays that the Indonesians, while serving a sentence for mutiny, were political prisoners, as they were supporters of the Indonesian Republic. According to this specific inquiry officer, the Dutch Commandant considered that about 200 of them would obey certain orders of the Dutch if they were not under the influence of the more fanatical supporters of the Indonesian Republic. However, little was known regarding their political feelings other than that they were supporters of the Indonesian Republic.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the Chermside camp, as previously mentioned, was an open camp run by the Australian army. Just over 200 Indonesians were accommodated in this Queensland camp in the second half of 1946. According to visiting Australian investigator Mr F. Draper, some Indonesians wanted to learn ju-jitsu in that camp. He mentioned why: ‘they were practising fighting to fight the Dutch when they joined The Republican Army on their return home’.<sup>14</sup> These (mainly Australian) sources provide insight into the thinking of the incarcerated Indonesians.

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Javanese to be Arrested To-day’, *The Courier-Mail*, 5 October 1945, 1.

<sup>13</sup> NAA, A433, 1949/2/518, Essay from W.H. Barnwell, Inquiry Officer of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch, 18 September 1946.

<sup>14</sup> NAA, A9108, ROLL 20/39, Letter from investigator F.M. Draper to the Deputy Director in Brisbane, 6 November 1946.

The investigator’s full name remained unclear, as in all discovered sources he signed, and he was referred to as ‘F. Draper’ or ‘F.M. Draper’.

Based on these sources, the indigenous Indonesians could not be identified as ‘conscientious objectors’; most of these sources indicated some level of support for the Indonesian independence movement.

One valuable court-martial transcript survived in the archives and contains Indonesian testimony.<sup>15</sup> While the transcript documents the voices of deserting indigenous Indonesians in Makassar (i.e., not from the Indonesians residing in Australia) and was recorded at a much later date (1948), I argue that it still provides a unique insight into Indonesian responses to the Allied and NEI powers in WWII.<sup>16</sup> The transcript concerns the case of military prosecutor Soedibjo Loman, the same second lieutenant appointed by the *Temporaire Krijgsraden*, the temporary military courts in the field, to provide legal representation to the Casino group of approximately 340 Indonesian military personnel in the first few months after WWII. This Soedibjo Loman case was the case of five fusiliers arrested on 24 October 1947. All were Javanese soldiers in their late twenties. According to their court records, they were charged with desertion from the KNIL, and all five pleaded guilty. These testimonies of active KNIL militaries supplied me with valuable insight into the frame of mind of combatting Indonesian soldiers in a divided country, partly a colonial archipelago and partly an independent republic. This inside testimony was one of the most useful Dutch sources when it came to identifying an Indonesian point-of-view and has – to my knowledge - not been utilised by other researchers in the field. Moreover, it provided information on the essential reasons for deserting this colonial army, which would otherwise be impossible to determine due to a lack of independently written sources on Indonesian servicemen.

Lieutenant Colonel Van den Berg, the president of the court-martial, questioned the group as to why they had deserted from the army. The Javanese all gave comparable justifications: every one of them wanted to leave the KNIL but did not get the authorisation from their superiors to leave. One of the accused, called Soehardi, told the court president that he was imprisoned in a Japanese camp and forced to fight with the Japanese, and this imprisonment had made him a very sick man. He further explained that, after the Japanese capitulation, he did not receive consent to leave to see his wife and two children, whom he had not seen for a few years, and his family was the main thing he thought of. So, he simply left the army to see his family. This inside testimony

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<sup>15</sup> NAN, 2.09.19, inv. nr. 67, Krijgsraden te Velde te Australië, case number k.v.7/1948.

<sup>16</sup> The city is presently known as Ujung Padang, on the Indonesian South Sulawesi Island.

was one of the most useful Dutch sources when it came to identifying an Indonesian point-of-view and has – to my knowledge - not been utilised by other researchers in the field.<sup>17</sup>

Twenty-eight-year-old fellow accused KNIL soldier Gimán offered another explanation for his desertion. Worried about his wife and parents, he had been forced into the Imperial Japanese Army, and his health had deteriorated substantially in response. Therefore, he just wanted to be demobilised and thought he would be discharged from the KNIL at the war's closure. So, according to his court case records, he primarily deserted because of his ill health. Additionally, he stated he was not permitted to leave and did not receive the requested financial advances. This made him angry, he told Van den Berg, and gave him another critical reason for deserting.

None of these explanations appeared especially political or controversial. Lieutenant Colonel Van den Berg specifically asked all five accused if they had any alternative or intrinsic motives for leaving the military without the appropriate permission. All five fusiliers answered that they did not have any familiarity with the current politics in the Indonesian Republic. The fact that each one mentioned their lack of political awareness was striking. It seems to me that their responses imply they had been directed or pushed towards declaring a political motivation. The suspects concluded their testimonies that after they were liberated from a Japanese internment camp sometime in 1945, they had just been patrolling in the Koepang area until sometime in mid-1946.<sup>18</sup>

This small group of Javanese soldiers interviewed in the NEI a few years after the Pacific War ended cannot represent all imprisoned Indonesians, inside or outside Australia. However, they may provide a little insight into the motives of at least some of the KNIL military personnel. It can be concluded that the NEI military high command was not wholly correct in their assumption that all Indonesian prisoners needed to be incarcerated, on Australian soil or in camps in the eastern part of the NEI. Some suggestions were made, especially in Australian newspapers, that a minority of the incarcerated Indonesians were positive about the Indonesian Republic and Indonesian independence. The assumptions made by the NEI authorities that a substantial group or

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<sup>17</sup> Mark, "Suharto's New Order," 77.

<sup>18</sup> NAN, 2.09.19, inv. nr. 67, case number k.v.7/1948, Krijgsraden ter Velde te Australië. Koepang is the capital of the Indonesian province of East Nusa Tenggara, on the island of Timor.



possibly the entire group of Indonesians wanted to go back to the western (Republic-controlled) part of Indonesia, join the side of the independence movement and fight against the former colonisers was not substantiated by all existing sources. These uncollaborated assumptions and the inability of the military high command and to a lesser degree the NEI Legation to adjust their preoccupied views were the most prominent reasons for keeping the indigenous KNIL militaries locked up in camps for months or years after the closing of the Pacific War on Australian shores.

## **6.2 Australian Government and the Netherlands East Indies Legation: opposite views**

The national and international developments explained above provide the primary explanation for the Australian Government's rejection of the Dutch position on the status of Indonesian prisoners and the NEI authorities' assumption that these Indonesians needed to be incarcerated. The GOC became more and more aware of the negative connotation of the KNIL military and other Indonesians being locked up. Many, mainly Labor politicians received letters from their party members and followers regarding the disgraceful situation. Labor Minister for the Army Frank Forde received one such letter from the Metal Trades Federation. In this letter, the federation wrote that they protested the conditions prevalent in Casino camp and requested the federal government close the centre and repatriate the Indonesians.<sup>19</sup> The NEI military high command and Netherlands Legation analysed the situation of incarcerated Indonesians and recognised the Australian dilemma. In a lengthy correspondence in early 1946 between the Dutch Director of Justice and the Lieutenant Governor-General in Australia, potential objections by the Australian authorities were recognised; the GOC might consider the Indonesians political prisoners rather than the military personnel convicted of military offences, which they were in the eyes of the Director of Justice. The Director of Justice suggested a solution for this potentially awkward problem: transfer these Indonesian prisoners and incarcerate them in Netherlands Indies territory, as in non-Republic territory. He suggested the island of

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<sup>19</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/4 PART 1, Letter from D. McLelland from the Metal Trades Federation to F.M. Forde, 30 April 1946.

Ambon as the most suitable location for relocating because pensioned KNIL combatants could easily serve there as compound guards.<sup>20</sup>

The NEI authorities and their Australian counterparts disagreed on how to approach the problem of indigenous Indonesians. This divergence of views was made clear by the Director of Justice in his memorandum.<sup>21</sup> However, at least one group of Australians agreed with him. In a letter from January 1946, the CIDC stated that the Dutch ‘court-martialled’ those whom they were forcibly detaining in the camps and that the Indonesians’ only crime appeared to be wanting their freedom.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, at least some of the high-ranking Dutch officials (partially) supported this CIDC perception. That letter was penned around the same time Felderhof indicated that the case was related to political developments in Java (see Chapter 5); specifically, he remarked that prosecution was desired because of Dutch prestige.<sup>23</sup> Thus, one can confidently conclude that—as the Australians suggested—the Dutch military high command used the justice system to advance their awful cause, in which they deprived many of their fundamental civil liberties. To do so, they engaged in the form of political repression that has yet to be recognised in any historiography, in the Netherlands, or elsewhere.

For the Australian authorities, the problem of the Indonesians needed to be resolved quickly, and a few slightly ambivalent reasons can be detected. First, there was little room in the country for non-white temporary residents or for those Asiatics who desired to remain in Australia, as Arthur Calwell mentioned a few years later.<sup>24</sup> In the 1940s, the White Australia policy was still very leading in the minds and motives of many Australian politicians across the political spectrum. Second, potential pressure from voters and civil organisations was tangible, and the dubious legal status of those interned by the Dutch colonisers was becoming more of a problem. Australian Government support faded for the NEI army and their incarceration of ‘sentenced KNIL military personnel’ on Australian soil. Lockwood made an important point, when he wrote that in 1946 Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell made it clear was he was trying to free the Casino Indonesians and he wanted to end the embarrassing overstretch of the

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<sup>20</sup> NAN, nr. 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Memorandum from the Director of Justice to the Lieutenant Governor-General, 15 January 1946.

<sup>21</sup> NAN, nr. 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Memorandum from the Director of Justice to the Lieutenant Governor-General, 15 January 1946.

<sup>22</sup> NAA, A1838 401/3/6/1/4 part 1, Letter from the Casino Indonesian Defence Committee to E.J. Ward, 21 January 1946.

<sup>23</sup> NAN, 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Memorandum from H.W. Felderhof to Colonel Warners, 18 January 1946.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Mr. Calwell’s Stand’, *The West Australia*, 1 February 1949, 2.

extraterritorial powers his colleagues had granted the NEI Legation.<sup>25</sup> Alternatively, as the Dutch Director of Justice described, the Australian Government might consider the Indonesians political prisoners rather than military personnel convicted of military offences.<sup>26</sup> Finally, slowly, the GOC was siding with the Indonesian Republic; not so much in the early days after WWII, but during 1946 one can detect the gradual change in Australia's attitude towards the newly formed government in the Indonesian Republic. The Commonwealth Government was less likely to support a recolonisation by the Dutch, and any official government support for this would disappear in less than two years.

The Commonwealth authorities explained in late 1946 that Australian should repatriate KNIL internees to Indonesia, either the Republic or the eastern part of the NEI, just as the Metal Trades Federation and other organisations had requested and suggested. Accordingly, the Department of External Affairs sent a message to the Australian Legation in The Hague and the Australian Political Liaison Representative in Batavia explaining their desire to repatriate the detained to specific parts of the archipelago. Additionally, this communication highlighted the ambivalence of the Dutch attitude towards the remaining Indonesians and their (dubious) legal status. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the group of Indonesians concerned fell into two categories. The first group consisted of approximately 570 free, no longer officially incarcerated Indonesians. Of those ready to be transported back to Indonesia, 200 were discharged from the NEI army, possibly the mentioned 200 residing in Chermside. It can be presumed that the remaining 370 were former KPM merchant seamen. The cablegram clearly recorded no objection by the NEI authorities to repatriate this group of 570.<sup>27</sup>

The second group consisted of around 300 Indonesians who were still detained in Camp Victory. These remaining detainees received a fair amount of attention in the press. Dutch newspapers in 1946 estimated though that the group was smaller; in May of that year and around the time of the cablegram by the Department of External Affairs, it was mentioned in the papers that only about 200 Dutch military personnel still resided in Casino.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, the Australian internment camp and its prisoners were getting more and more coverage in the Dutch press; by now, Casino was even described in certain

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<sup>25</sup> Lockwood, *Black armada*, 91.

<sup>26</sup> NAN, 2.10.17, inv. nr. 1334, Memorandum from the Director of Justice to the Lieutenant Governor-General, 15 January 1946.

<sup>27</sup> NAA, A433, 1949/2/518, Cablegram from the Department of External Affairs to The Australian Legation in The Hague as well as to the Australian Political Liaison Representative in Batavia, 4 November 1946.

<sup>28</sup> 'Kruimeltjes', *Zeeuwisch Dagblad*, 23 July 1946, 2; 'Ongeluk Bij Nederl. Kamp in Australië', *Arnhemse Courant*, 23 October 1946, 4.

Dutch newspapers as a prison located about 160 kilometres south of Brisbane, as *De Vlam* had done previously. This was the same Dutch publication that had written about the post-war pressure of the ACTU on the Australian Government to intervene in favour of the interned, so they could eventually be returned to Republic-controlled areas.<sup>29</sup> So, even in the Netherlands the incarceration became a known fact and this scheme was debated, mainly in left-wing circles, by concerned citizens in the mother country. At the same time, in local NSW newspapers, the camp was described as a concentration camp for political opponents, at least by some of their readers who sent in letters to these papers.<sup>30</sup>

NEI Minister in Australia François van Aerssen Beijeren van Voshol disagreed with this press depiction. He declared that these remaining prisoners were serving sentences imposed by NEI court-martial for refusing to obey military orders, so the words ‘political opponents’ were utterly incorrect. As a result, he argued the convicted militaries should be transported to Morota on Maluku (the Maluku’s were part of the Outer Islands, which were still part of the NEI).<sup>31</sup> This suggestion was reminiscent of the January 1946 memorandum from the Director of Justice a few months earlier, in which he similarly recommended transporting Indonesian prisoners to NEI territory.

The Australian authorities declined this Netherlands proposal. They stated that a foreign ‘closed’ camp in Australia with what appeared to be political prisoners was no longer tolerable so long after the cessation of hostilities. As mentioned, legislators were becoming increasingly aware of the negative association of detainee camps, as raised in newspaper articles from the *Tribune* and letters from organisations such as the Metal Trades Federation. For the NEI authorities, particularly François van Aerssen, detention in an open camp was considered entirely unacceptable. Van Aerssen still regarded the detained Indonesians as refusing to serve and whose sentences had not yet expired, so they were still part of the military. By now, Van Aerssen seemed to clash with just about every idea and view of anyone within the Australian Government. As mentioned in the previous chapter, he and Chifley had fallen out and, by this point, there had been no communication on a personal level between the Netherlands minister and the Australian prime minister and his Cabinet for four months. In sharp contrast to the Netherlands minister’s view was the Australian Department of External Affairs’ position: they ruled

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<sup>29</sup> ‘Australië en Indonesië’, *De Vlam: Weekblad voor vrijheid en cultuur*, jrg 3, no. 29 (1947): 10.

<sup>30</sup> ‘In ‘t Kort’, *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 14 September 1946, 2; ‘Dutch Camp at Casino’, *Northern Star*, 17 September 1946, 6.

<sup>31</sup> NAA, A433, 1949/2/518, Letter from F.C. van Aerssen Beyereren to the Department of Immigration, 10 September 1946.

that the Indonesians in Casino were free men. This position was shared with the Department of Immigration, and migration officer E. A. Bird referred to the indigenous Indonesians as 'Indonesian civilians'. He addressed them as people who were interned in a camp at Casino by the Dutch, handed over to the Commonwealth Government, were now in Chermiside camp and needed to be repatriated.<sup>32</sup>

The Australian authorities wanted to close Casino camp as soon as possible. In a cablegram, the Department of External Affairs argued that the Indonesians were detained for insubordination prompted by political considerations, not for simple disobedience of military orders. It was considered that the NEI military high command had used their obtained judicial rights and justice system to advance their own cause and as a means for political oppression. Besides this distinct statement, the department mentioned that the National Security Regulations or Act was due to be determined on 31 December 1946. So, in less than two months, the acquired extraterritorial rights by the Dutch would cease too.<sup>33</sup>

Judicial organisations were aware of the Dutch rights in the post-war era; in relation to Casino camp, these extraterritorial rights were known and questioned in political circles. A few weeks before the cablegram by the Department of External Affairs, Prime Minister Chifley received a letter from the Australian Council for Civil Liberties. The council wrote to the prime minister that they would appreciate being informed whether it was proposed to permit the Netherlands or NEI governments to exercise what amounted to an extraterritorial right in Australia. They further asked, 'whether any arrangement is practicable by which persons interned at Casino who acknowledge the authority of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, and do not acknowledge the authority of the Dutch Government at Batavia, may be returned to Republican territory'.<sup>34</sup> In acknowledging the letter, the prime minister's secretary replied and used the interesting phrase 'the Dutch Military Concentration Camp at Casino'. As argued in previous chapters, the term 'concentration camp' had a different association or feel to it than nowadays. Though this negative association had been established in newspaper articles published just after WWII, the comparison between Bergen Belsen

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<sup>32</sup> NAA, A433, 1949/2/8186, Letter from Commonwealth Migration Officer E.A. Bird to the Department of Immigration, 14 July 1947.

<sup>33</sup> NAA, A433, 1949/2/518, Cablegram from the Department of External Affairs to The Australian Legation in The Hague as well as to the Australian Political Liaison Representative in Batavia, 4 November 1946.

<sup>34</sup> NAA, A461, M350/1/9 PART 2, Letter from the Australian Council for Civil Liberties, B. Fitzpatrick, to Prime Minister J.B. Chifley, 20 October 1946.

and Casino camp had already been made. It could be that this quotation expressed the prime minister's (or perhaps his secretary's) personal feelings regarding the camp and Dutch extraterritorial rights.<sup>35</sup>

The remaining servicemen were officially discharged from service in late 1946. From his office in Melbourne, NEI Lieutenant Colonel Moquette wrote, in mid-December 1946, a letter of collective dismissal to 319 KNIL soldiers. It is logical to assume that these Indonesian soldiers were 'the second group of approximately 300 Indonesians detained in Casino', as previously communicated by the Department of External Affairs. Bennett, in his book, suggested that there were 322 prisoners still detained in Casino. Though later, while still referring to the same group, he documented that in December 'the 319 ex-inmates of its stockade were transferred into Australian care'. He did not explain the 'loss' of three Indonesian detainees.<sup>36</sup> This collective dismissal notice was sent to the NEI military headquarters in Batavia and the Head Bureau of the Army Registration Numbers. It stated that these 319 people were no longer considered worthy of being in the military due to their misconduct.<sup>37</sup> The words 'no longer worthy of being in the military' emphasised at so many levels the persistent stubbornness of all high-placed NEI militaries and also summarised the views of the NEI Legation. In my opinion, it clearly showed Moquette's and other armies' inability to adjust views to changing and new circumstances. A few days later, the Department of External Affairs communicated that on 14 December, the Dutch had handed over documents purporting to the discharge from the NEI army of the detained Indonesians and withdrawal of their guards at Casino camp. Thus, the 319 inmates were transferred as civilians to Chermside camp, Brisbane.<sup>38</sup> In this Brisbane camp, the Department of Immigration cared for them, pending their return to Java.<sup>39</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, Casino camp was closed just before the expiring Dutch extraterritorial rights, and these former KNIL militaries were transferred to Chermside by Australia as civilians.

Moquette wrote another communication only a few weeks later in which he mentioned the dismissal and desertion of KNIL military personnel in Australia. This memo referred to his earlier letter, repeating that he indeed dismissed all remaining

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<sup>35</sup> NAA, A461, M350/1/9 PART 2, Letter from PM J.B. Chifley/Secretary Straham to the Australian Council for Civil Liberties, 4 November 1946.

<sup>36</sup> Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 223 and 224.

<sup>37</sup> NAN, 2.50.50.05, inv. nr. 148/VLA.511, Letter from H.E. Moquette, 14 December 1946.

<sup>38</sup> Bennet referred, throughout his publication, to this camp as Chermside. See, for instance, Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 224.

<sup>39</sup> NAA, A1066, IC45/54/5/1, Cablegram by Department of External Affairs, 19 December 1946.

punished soldiers on Australian soil and further affirming that each of the military personnel received a copy of their notice of dismissal. Further, Moquette described the desertion of seven indigenous Indonesians from camps in Australia. He was angered by the lack of Australian response to these incidents. One of these deserting soldiers, Corporal Oesman Troenosastro, had a typed comment next to his name. This comment indicated that he went missing from a group when, in June 1946, a group of Indonesians was transferred from Lytton camp to Casino. Moquette stated that he had circulated the names of these seven Indies deserters but that the Australian officials would not take any steps to arrest these deserters because of the political situation and their own objections (neither were elaborated on in this particular letter).<sup>40</sup> These objections more than likely had to do with the aforementioned political situation in the Republic/NEI and the fact that Australia was more on the side of the independence movement. We can also indirectly access the Indonesian voice here—their actions tell us much about what they thought about this situation and how they tried to resist it, as desertion is a form of resistance. These Indonesian soldiers left their army illegally to move around in a country that was unlikely to accept them. Still, this appeared to be a more favourable option in the lives of the seven than staying in the KNIL to fulfil the task they had signed up for.

Desertion was a considerable problem for the KNIL in Australia, discussed extensively between NEI and Australian officials. One of the problems identified by the Netherlands Legation was that some of these deserters (most deserted in 1946) wanted to establish themselves in Australia after the war more enduringly. Long after WWII had ceased, it was still considered an issue, as can be read in a letter to the Department of External Affairs. In this letter, the Royal Netherlands Legation noted that pending negotiations regarding the status of the NEI army deserters, it would be much appreciated if the Department of External Affairs would take steps to prevent KNIL army deserters from establishing themselves permanently in Australia.<sup>41</sup> Other sources around that time identified the same problem, and the Legation insisted in these letters that Australia deport the (former) servicemen back to the Indies once they were captured.<sup>42</sup> We can surmise that these letters were not referring to Indonesians. First, based on the lists sent to the local authorities, the deserters were referred to as Dutch military personnel belonging to

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<sup>40</sup> NAN, 2.50.50.05, inv. nr. 148/VLA.556, Letter from H.E. Moquette, 6 January 1947.

<sup>41</sup> NAA, A1068/7, IC47/93/4, Letter from the Royal Netherlands Legation to the Department of External Affairs, 23 May 1947.

<sup>42</sup> NAA, A1068/7, IC47/93/4, Letter from the Royal Netherlands Legation to the Department of External Affairs, 3 May 1948.

the Royal Netherlands Indies Army.<sup>43</sup> Second, as the White Australia policy prohibited the establishment of non-white Indonesians in Australia permanently, only deserting soldiers from European backgrounds would need to be raised as a settlement issue. Frequent discussions and deliberations were held between the authorities of both countries, but in the end the Australians were unwilling to resolve the problem of deserting Dutch or European Indonesian soldiers.

Differing attitudes remained noticeable regarding Australian and Dutch officials' view of the Indonesians. In the second half of 1946, the Australian authorities, the Australian Government and Immigration Department were planning to transport the punished Indonesians to the open camp near Brisbane (Chermside) and later repatriate them to the Indies.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the Australians considered these individuals as Indonesians who needed to be housed in a temporary but open facility and ultimately returned to their homeland. In contrast, the Dutch still regarded them as punished deserters, Indonesian (former) military personnel who were no longer worthy of being called KNIL soldiers. A similarly strict approach was taken towards European KNIL deserters even though the war had ended almost 1.5 years earlier.

Australian concerns regarding the interned Indonesians continued until the camp was finally closed. Less than two weeks before its final closure, Australian Immigration Department Secretary Tasman Heyes had written to the Attorney-General that he knew there were still approximately 320 Indonesians in the army prison camp at Casino and that the sentences of these detainees would expire during 1947 to 1949. The Dutch military high command did not want to discharge these men so that these former KNIL militaries could be repatriated to Java. The Dutch were given notice that they had to withdraw as guards from the camp on 15 December. Heyes proposed in his letter not to take action against the men under the *Australian Immigration Act 1901* at this stage but place them in an open camp, as was done recently with 228 Indonesians who had been released by the Dutch authorities from Casino camp two months earlier.<sup>45</sup>

Casino camp was eventually closed at the end of 1946. The Dutch withdrew the NEI military guards from the camp on 15 December 1946. On that day, they handed the

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<sup>43</sup> NAA, A1068/7, IC47/93/4, Letter from J.A. de Ranitz, the Royal Netherlands Legation to H.V. Evatt, the Department of External Affairs, 23 February 1947.

<sup>44</sup> NAN, 2.50.50.05, inv. nr. 148/VLA.556, Letter from H.E. Moquette, 6 January 1947.

<sup>45</sup> NAA, A433, 1949/2/8186, Letter from T.H.E. Heyes to the Attorney-General's Department, 6 December 1946.



centre over to the Department of the Army. According to the Department of External Affairs, echoing Heyes' proposal, 'the 320 Indonesians detained therein were discharged from the Netherlands East Indies Army and transferred as civilians by the Department of Immigration to the Chermside camp, Brisbane, where they are being cared for by the Department. The Department of Immigration is also making arrangements for H.M.A.S. "*Manoora*" to transport the liberated Indonesians to their own country at an early date'.<sup>46</sup> By then, the Australians no longer had to deal with (the views of) François van Aerssen. The Dutch minister left his Australian job in February 1947 to start a similar appointment in China.<sup>47</sup> The Australians would eventually return these Casino prisoners and other Indonesians to their homeland. Lockwood outlined one of the main issues faced by the Dutch when it came to returning servicemen: the NEI had invested millions of guilders in training and equipping the Indonesians in Australia, and the Australians would repatriate them into the Indonesian Republic's hands.<sup>48</sup> The return or repatriation on vessels such as the *Manoora* is analysed in the next section.

### 6.3 Repatriation and return to the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia

After the Indonesian independence proclamation in August 1945, thousands of European and Indonesians were residing in Australia. Many of these people from the NEI wanted to stay on a more permanent basis in the country, but only a modest group were allowed to. In 1946, for instance, only five newly arrived Javanese were allowed to stay permanently in Australia.<sup>49</sup> The Dutch/NEI authorities decided to try to return specific groups of Indonesians to the NEI as soon as possible. Their first aim was to repatriate the civilians by boat, Indonesians who were in Australia more or less as refugees. Others, mainly European Indonesians, were often transported back to the mother country by air. These passengers were both civilian evacuees and military personnel, like members of the 19th Squadron.<sup>50</sup>

The repatriation of NEI migrants, Indonesian civilians and semi-military personnel required coordination from the Dutch in Australia. In September 1945, the

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<sup>46</sup> NAA, A9108, ROLL 20/39, Letter from the Department of External Affairs, to the Prime Minister's Department, 25 March 1947.

<sup>47</sup> Van Aerssen, *Driemaal Oost*, 379.

<sup>48</sup> Lockwood, *Black armada*, 88.

<sup>49</sup> 'From Alien Lands. Arrivals Last Year Total 4,048', *The Western Australian*, 15 March 1947, 18.

<sup>50</sup> NAA, J25, 1946/4481, Catalina Flying Boat, nominal passenger roll, 30 September 1945.

KRIA (*Kantoor Repatriering Indonesiers in Australië*) was established by the Department of Economic Affairs, with Captain De Bruyn as Head and Raden Mamoen Arrashid Koesoemadilaga as head of the actual local office.<sup>51</sup> De Bruyn was working for NIGIS at the same time. Surprisingly, this organisation and its members have not yet been extensively examined. I could not trace any references to this organisation in other research materials on the topic of Indonesians in Australia and their repatriation to their home countries. The organisation, although short-lived and a minor one in the context of the whole repatriation history of people from the NEI after WWII, was fairly influential in the early months after the war's closure. According to KRIA, the Dutch wanted to repatriate civilian Indonesians residing in Australia but not ships' crews in Australian harbours or those on the payroll of 'one of the Departments'. About six months later, all non-military Dutch people in Australia received a message from the KNIL high command that they had to leave Australia and return either to the NEI or the Netherlands. All financial support would be terminated at the latest on 31 May 1946.<sup>52</sup> KRIA did not exist for a substantial time; it was dissolved on 1 May 1946, though after this date De Bruyn stayed involved in working on the repatriation of the Indonesians in Australia.<sup>53</sup> The remaining work regarding repatriating all Indonesians left in Australia was to be done mainly by the Netherlands Consulate in Sydney.<sup>54</sup> The consulate was not entirely enthusiastic about this task ahead and the lack of cooperation from many Indonesians. The Consul General stated that on several occasions Indonesian seamen had been offered repatriation to Java but had refused on each occasion. The Consul General claimed that his government now declined to accept responsibility for these Indonesians until such time as the local immigration authorities ordered their deportation.<sup>55</sup>

By the time the Netherlands Consulate in Sydney got involved in repatriation, a substantial group of Indonesians had already left the country. They were moved on the British ship the *SS Esperance Bay*. This British vessel had transported many refugees and migrants from the mother country to Fremantle, Melbourne and other Australian cities in the years before WWII and would remain to do so in the early post-war years. The first

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<sup>51</sup> NIMH, 45 De Vries, Uittreksel uit het Register Der Besluiten van den Luitenant-Gouverneur-Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indie, J.G. Kist, 22 September 1945.

<sup>52</sup> 'Nederlanders moeten Australië verlaten', *De Vrije Zeeuw*, 16 April 1946, 3.

<sup>53</sup> NAN, 2.10.14, inv. nr. 3813, Letter from H. van der Wal, Director of the Department of Home Affairs, to the Lt. Governor-General in Batavia, 1 August 1946.

<sup>54</sup> NAN, 2.10.14, inv. nr. 3813, Letter from Gezantschap der Nederlanden to Den Luitenant Gouverneur-Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indië, 4 June 1946.

<sup>55</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/2 PART 2, Letter from N.G. Roskruge, Deputy Director of Navigation and Light-House, NSW, to the Department of Supply and Shipping in Melbourne, 16 September 1946.

extensive post-war repatriation journey was not without difficulties. It was problematic to transport all people to the harbours on time for return to the Indies, and it was challenging to find a suitable vessel to transport the Indonesians as the black ban was by then in full swing. The continuing black ban was one of the primary reasons why the authorities chose a British ship over a Dutch vessel for transportation.

In early November 1945, with the help of KRIA, the first large group of Indonesians to be repatriated on the *Esperance Bay* was a mixed group; part of this group of over 1,400 who boarded was living in Melbourne or Sydney, and some civilians came from Casino camp. In Queensland, civilians boarded from Wacol camp, Woolloongabba and New Farm, according to the newspapers.<sup>56</sup> All these civilians no longer held a certificate of exemption and thus needed to return to Indonesia. In addition, 206 of the repatriated were Indonesian seamen who had refused to work on Dutch ships as part of the black ban. As a result, they were declared unwanted aliens; these were the Indonesians who were placed in a camp at Gaythorne.<sup>57</sup> According to *The Courier-Mail*, only a few days later, the group consisted of 207 seamen who had been charged as prohibited immigrants. In this article, the Trades and Labour Council Secretary Mick Healy was quoted. He claimed, 'that 972 members of the Indonesian Seaman's Union were owed £104,000 by the Dutch KPM Shipping Company in wages bonuses deferred pay and dependants' allowances'.<sup>58</sup> These comments and newspaper articles might have slightly influenced the politicians of the days in their decision-making, and many of them replied to such union accusations and the success of the *Esperance Bay* repatriation journey.

This first significant repatriation voyage received substantial media and political attention because of the black ban. According to Leader of the Country Party Arthur Fadden, the Brisbane Custom authorities had not done their job properly. He said that the luggage of only 216 of the 1,415 Indonesians on board the *Esperance Bay* was checked and that revolvers and knives were smuggled on board and seen in the possession of the repatriated.<sup>59</sup> Related to the Fadden accusations was the headline story that officers on the boat had been in danger of being murdered by the Indonesians on their way to Java and that the captain called for an armed escort.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Fadden claimed that some

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<sup>56</sup> 'Indonesians to be Deported Monday', *The Telegraph*, 13 October 1945, 1; 'Javanese want to Return Home', *Daily Mercure*, 15 October 1945, 1.

<sup>57</sup> 'No Dutch Ships for Javanese', *The Courier-Mail*, 11 October 1945, 1.

<sup>58</sup> '1400 Javanese will Leave for Home To-day', *The Courier-Mail*, 16 October 1945, 3.

<sup>59</sup> 'Concerned for Esperance Bay', *Examiner*, 20 October 1945, 1.

<sup>60</sup> 'Esperance Bay Story Denied', *The Evening Advocate*, 6 November 1945, 1.

persons had left Australia involuntarily. Calwell denied Fadden's claims and the allegations of the ship's officers being in danger. According to the Minister for Information, it was true that 206 persons had been convicted as prohibited immigrants, but no deportation order had been signed against any of them.

The story of *Esperance Bay* also made it into Dutch-language newspapers just after the war. According to *De Volkskrant*, a former underground paper, the vessel had left Brisbane on 13 November with a high-ranked Australian official onboard. When a Dutch officer tried to board the boat, Indonesians on board had shouted, 'Away with the Dutch' and 'Free Indonesia'.<sup>61</sup> Another Dutch-language newspaper, one from Batavia, wrote that the 1,400 Indonesians on the *Esperance Bay* were all strikers. In the same article, it is mentioned that Australian soldiers had to board the ship to keep the Indonesians on board calm, while other articles just indicated there were 1,400 Indonesians with threatening attitudes on board the vessel.<sup>62</sup> It is interesting to notice the difference in emphasis of the Dutch versus the Australian news articles. Almost all Dutch articles mentioned the contention and discords on board, and almost none revealed the ship being a British vessel or the prohibited status of many onboard the ship. Australian newspapers focused more on the backgrounds and migration status of the Indonesians on board as a result of the black ban.

The ship that had embarked Indonesians in Sydney, Brisbane and Darwin's harbours landed 1,400 Indonesians at Batavia. The landing place of the boat in Indonesia was secretly discussed by many involved, up to the level of Lord Mountbatten. Questions had arisen if the vessel should sail to Republic-occupied territory or the eastern part of the NEI. In their statement regarding this first repatriation voyage, the Commonwealth Government and Prime Minister Chifley did not mention the discord on board the boat. According to Australian representatives, these men were taken from Australia to Java without incident and the repatriation on the *Esperance Bay* had been a great success. A small group did not leave the ship in the capital under British supervision but returned to Dutch Timor, under Australian control.<sup>63</sup> The story told by the PM did not wholly match the research done by scholars like Pat Noonan. According to this scholar, Immigration minister Calwell was angry and embarrassed about the incidents on *Esperance Bay*. And,

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<sup>61</sup> 'Stakende Indonesiërs naar huis', *De Volkskrant*, 16 October 1945, 1.

<sup>62</sup> 'Oproerige Indonesiërs', *Het Dagblad: uitgave van de Nederlandsche Dagbladpers te Batavia*, 5 November 1945, 1; 'Ons Koninkrijk. Op Java', *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 6 November 1945, 4.

<sup>63</sup> Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 159–161.

‘On route, 40 of the most active nationalist leaders were seized at Koepang in Dutch Timor causing a furore of protests and rallies from Indonesian sympathisers.’<sup>64</sup> Chifley’s version of events did not match the research done by Noonan and other scholars, which more lined up with the stories published by the Dutch and Australian media outlets.

After the *Esperance Bay* voyage to the Indonesian Republic in November 1945, several other repatriation journeys took place in the late 1940s. In early 1946, a relatively large but mixed group of Indonesians still resided all over Australia, though mainly in the eastern states. A large group of KNIL military personnel and some striking seamen were still locked up in Casino, a group of ex-Tanah Merah and their families (the former Indonesian Digoelists as discussed in the previous chapter) were living in Mackay in Queensland, and free Indonesians were living in the bigger towns and cities along the east coast. Plans were drawn up by Dutch officials to repatriate a large group of civilians on the Dutch ship the *Tasman*, but this could not occur due to the black ban. So, the Dutch ship was out and the repatriation would continue on another vessel, the HMAS *Manoora*, with no objection by Dutch officials.

Three repatriation voyages using the *Manoora* would occur in the following years. The first one was in February 1946, with 234 Indonesians embarking in Sydney and another 377 in Brisbane, mainly former internees from this city, Casino and Gaythorne.<sup>65</sup> The *Manoora* was not the Australian Government’s first choice of a vessel. Initially, the *Westralia* was designated; however, Calwell and the Department of External Affairs recommended that the *Manoora* be used due to the extreme difficulty in securing suitable vessels, the ongoing issues associated with the black ban and the perceived urgency of repatriation.<sup>66</sup> This cablegram highlighted the authorities’ problem in repatriating the Indonesians in the early months after WWII due to the ship shortages caused by the black ban. So, not only did the ban influence the Dutch and their repatriation and reoccupation plans but it also severely harmed the economy of the Commonwealth.

The first *Manoora* repatriation voyage transported over 700 Indonesian passengers. *The Herald* published that 700 Indonesians would return home on the *Manoora*, comprising Indonesians who had left their employment on Dutch ships and offices in Australia in sympathy with the Indonesian independence movement. The

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<sup>64</sup> Noonan, "Merdeka in Mackay," 253.

<sup>65</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 203–207.

<sup>66</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/5, Cablegram from the Department of External Affairs, 6 February 1946.

newspaper gave, by mentioning this, a minor inside reason why some Indonesians were eager to be repatriated. The article also specifically stated that several hundred other Indonesians, who were members of the Dutch militia and were in camp Casino and Lytton, would not be affected as the Commonwealth Government regarded it as the responsibility of the Dutch army.<sup>67</sup> This was the perception of the government in the first few months after WWII. Though, as I have argued before, this changed dramatically over the next few months. By late 1946, Australian representatives, like the Minister of External Affairs, called the Indonesians free and took the position that they should be returned to the Indonesian Republic.<sup>68</sup> E. A. Bird, Senior Boarding Officer in Brisbane, mentioned that 379 boarded the vessel in that city, and only one person did not leave the country as he was hospitalised, so in total one person more than Lingard mentioned in her publication. The ship continued its journey and sailed on to Mackay, where another 210 Indonesians embarked. In total, 821 Indonesians left Australia on the HMAS *Manoora*, according to Bird's accounts of the events.<sup>69</sup> The shipping lists for this voyage showed a similar group composition as described by Bird. On this journey, eighty-four ex-*'Bontekoe'* seamen were transported, the ship that was more or less the starting point of the black ban in Brisbane. Also, the repatriation lists from Brisbane mentioned fifty-five Indonesian internees from Gaythorne, fifty-seven Indonesians at Camp Columbia, Wacol, eighteen Indonesians who were identified as ex-British Army, and many other small groups of 'native' Indonesian. Finally, 131 Indonesians who boarded on this part of the voyage were classified as ex-Casino Dutch Camp.

The first voyage of the *Manoora* attracted substantial attention from all parties involved—Australian, Dutch and Indonesian. According to a cablegram from the Department of External Affairs, the sailing and repatriation of the group appeared to be encouraged by the Netherlands Legation. The department stated that 'The decision to return these persons was made with the full agreement and actually at the strong desire of the Netherlands Minister, here who, we felt entitled to assume, reflected the attitude of Dr van Mook'.<sup>70</sup> Accordingly, in Mackay, a large contingent of men, women and children boarded, including Balirituet, a baby born just days before the ship sailed. In total, 210 Indonesians boarded in Mackay on 23 February according to the ship's list, not including

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<sup>67</sup> '700 Indonesians to go Home', *The Herald*, 8 February 1946, 6.

<sup>68</sup> NAA, A433, 1949/2/518, Cablegram from the Department of External Affairs to The Australian Legation in The Hague as well as to the Australian Political Liaison Representative in Batavia, 4 November 1946.

<sup>69</sup> NAA, A2998, 1951/952, Letter from E.A. Bird to the Collector, 27 February 1946.

<sup>70</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/5, Cablegram from the Prime Minister, Department of External Affairs, 18 February 1946.

Mohammad Bondan, former Digoelist from the Central Committee of Indonesian Independence.<sup>71</sup> Bondan was initially imprisoned at Cowra camp but was transferred to work for the Netherlands Legation while still operating in Melbourne.<sup>72</sup> He would be flown via Soerabaja to Djokjakarta on a RAAF plane, almost two years later, on 23 November 1947.<sup>73</sup> After the vessel had left Mackay though, Bondan wrote a letter to Chifley and one to the Department of Trade and Customs thanking them for the Australian hospitality, stating ‘We are most sincerely appreciative particularly of the way in which the two past repatriations have been arranged’.<sup>74</sup>

Bennet mentioned in his publication that these journeys on the *Manoora* attracted little attention in the local press compared to the sailing of the *Esperance Bay*. That is partially true; many local and regional papers did mention the sailing of the *Manoora* in February 1946, though most papers only published minor articles on the event. The Dutch national and local papers of the day also described the first post-war journey of this vessel to the NEI. It did not produce large articles on the front page of the Australian or Dutch press, but the Dutch were informed about the sailing of this second repatriation voyages.<sup>75</sup> Bennett gave a possible reason for less media attention, when he documented that the first repatriation on the *Manoora* went easily, and all Indonesians on board were securely delivered into the hands of the Republic.<sup>76</sup> Another reason could be that this simply was not the first boat to leave with unwanted Indonesian aliens, and a first of something tends to attract some press interest. Another reason for less attention could have been the changing circumstances; the Australians were less involved in reoccupying the Indies and more in dealing with their own post-war issues. Or perhaps, as Bennet himself argued, press interests had shifted slightly to the black ban at that point, and some lessons were

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<sup>71</sup> NAA, A2998, 1951/962, contains many passenger lists, such as ‘Indonesians leaving Brisbane by S.S. “Manoora” repatriation to Java’, no date and ‘List of Indonesians leaving by S.S. “Manoora” at Mackay’, no date. There is no specific date on other lists such as ‘131 Indonesians Ex Casino Dutch Camp’, but, on the last page, there is a handwritten addition stating, ‘loaded 18.2.46 245, 19.2.46 131 and 20.2.46 3, total 379’. The number of people is the same as mentioned by Bird in his letter to the Collector, dated 27 February 1946.

<sup>72</sup> Goodall, *Beyond borders*, 149.

<sup>73</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/5, Cablegrams to the Department of External Affairs, 20 November 1947, and 28 November 1947.

<sup>74</sup> NAA, A2998, 1951/1952, Letters from M. Bondan to J.B. Chifley, 26 February 1946, and to The Officer-in-Charge, Department of trade and Customs, 26 February 1946.

<sup>75</sup> See, for instance, ‘Indonesiërs terug naar Java’, *Het Parool*, 18 February 1946, 1; ‘Nederlandsche evacuë’s verlaten Australië. Ook Indonesiërs repatriëeren’, *Leeuwarder Koerier*, 21 February 1946, 2.

<sup>76</sup> Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 199.

learned from the *Esperance Bay* voyage like thorough baggage inspections and troops on board to keep order.<sup>77</sup> So, for the local press, there appeared to be less to report about.

In mid-1946, the Dutch estimated there were in total 375 Indonesians still on repatriation lists. It is likely that these numbers referred to civilian Indonesians only, or possibly to semi-military personnel. This number included the twenty-two Australian wives of Indonesians who, as discussed previously, according to the *Australian Nationality Act 1937*, had lost their British nationality on marriage and become subject to the country of which their husbands were nationals.<sup>78</sup> Of the 375 identified Indonesians, 205 refused to be sailed back to the home country.<sup>79</sup> Of those who refused to be repatriated were, for instance, the group of former pearl fishers from the Broome area, who were moved to Melbourne early in the war.<sup>80</sup>

In late September 1946, the *Manoora* had its next journey. Onboard this second voyage was a group of Indonesians from a very mixed background.<sup>81</sup> About 200 Dutch militaries embarked on the ship, along with (former) Australian war brides married to men from the NEI, Dutch civilian evacuees and KNIL airborne personnel. The Indonesians who would board this vessel were explicitly mentioned by the Department of External Affairs as '80 Indonesian pro-Dutch civilians who had volunteered to be repatriated'.<sup>82</sup> It could be that this was explicitly mentioned because of earlier negative comments from the Opposition, like the remarks made by Arthur Fadden.

According to the independent NEI press agency Aneta, of the 200 Dutch militaries, roughly one hundred were Indonesians who were stationed at Casino. The Indonesian press agency mentioned that the Australian Government had not allowed forty other Indonesian Casino inmates to embark on this ship. They would be repatriated to the

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<sup>77</sup> Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 161.

<sup>78</sup> NAA, A989, 1944/535/2, Letter from A.R. Peters to the Department of External Affairs, 1 December 1944; NAA, A1838/278, 401/3/6/1/2 PART 2, List of Civilian Indonesians received 16/9/46.

<sup>79</sup> NAN, 2.05.50.02, inv. nr. 56, Letter from KRIA and Bureau Indonesian Affairs to Consul General in Sydney, 12 September 1946.

<sup>80</sup> NAA, A1838/278, 401/3/6/1/2 PART 2, List of Civilian Indonesians received 16/9/46.

<sup>81</sup> Aneta: Het Algemeen Nieuws- en Telegraaf-Agentschap was the first independent Dutch East Indies press agency, established in 1917.

<sup>82</sup> NAA, A1838, TS401/4/3/4, Cablegram by the Department of External Affairs to the Australian Political Representative in Batavia, 27 August 1946.

Around the same time as the *Manoora*'s second journey, the Australian vessel HMAS *Kanimbla* also set sail to Biak, NEI, mainly carrying heavy equipment supplies such as spare aircraft parts; it appears that no Indonesians were transported on this troopship. The Dutch operated a military base in Biak and some personnel were transported to this base after serving in Australia.

NAA, A1838, TS401/4/3/4, Teleprinter Message by the Department of Defence, 20 August 1946; NAA, A1838, TS/401/4/3/4, Draft Cable to the Australian Commissioner in Singapore, no date.



NEI on a later date on a Dutch ship.<sup>83</sup> In a short telegram from the prime minister to the acting secretary of the Queensland Trades and Labour Council, it was suggested why the group of forty were not allowed on this ship: ‘all Indonesians leaving on *Manoora* are volunteers and no guard is being provided by either Army or Navy Departments’.<sup>84</sup> At this point, Casino camp still interned groups of Indonesians who were unwilling to return to the Indies or were not allowed by the Dutch to return. As the Netherlands Minister François van Aerssen mentioned, these Indonesians were still in the KNIL, and their sentences had not yet expired. The camp was still open and functioning, as it only closed in late 1946, several months after this second HMAS *Manoora* voyage.

The group of civilian Indonesians who were waiting to be transported back to their home country grew after the closure of camp Casino. In August 1946, according to the Royal Netherlands Legation in Melbourne, roughly 150 civilian Indonesians were still residing in Australia after the second voyage of the *Manoora*. These civilians would be the responsibility of the Minister for Immigration. Since their certificate of exemption had expired or been revoked by immigration authorities, the civilians needed to return to their mother country as they no longer held a valid visa, similar to the civilians on the *Esperance Bay* journey. The Legation made it clear that the remaining Indonesian military men under detention in camp Casino were not the responsibility of the Australian immigration minister.<sup>85</sup>

A few months later, the group that was the responsibility of the immigration minister grew significantly. This group of Indonesians in Chermside amounted to 341 after the Dutch authorities handed over 319 at the Casino camp on 14 December (the day Camp Victory closed), added to the twenty-two men who were already awaiting deportation.<sup>86</sup> According to a minute paper by the Department of Treasury, the Minister for Immigration was responsible for these 341 civilian Indonesians. The March 1947 paper provided an apparent change of attitude visible in some of the Australian Government circles, in this case, Treasurer Ben Chifley. These Indonesians were, for instance, no longer mentioned explicitly as prohibited immigrants but as, ‘The men are

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<sup>83</sup> “‘Manoora’ vertrokken’, *Het Dagblad: uitgave van de Nederlandsche Dagbladpers te Batavia*, 1 October 1946, 3.

<sup>84</sup> NAA, A2998, 1951/963, Telegram from Prime Minister to Brown, Acting Secretary, Queensland Trades & Labour Council, 25 September 1946.

<sup>85</sup> NAA, A1838, TS401/4/3/4, Letter from the Royal Netherlands Legation in Melbourne to the Department of External Affairs, 21 Augustus 1946.

<sup>86</sup> NAA, J25, 1949/4103, Letter from the office of the Minister of Immigration to the Prime Minister, 13 February 1947.

principally those who were transferred to Australia by Dutch authorities for political reasons and who were subsequently granted an amnesty permitting their return to Java'.<sup>87</sup> Contrary to the slightly changing attitude of the Treasurer stood the Minister for Immigration (and also Minister for Information) Calwell, a well-known supporter of the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*. He was eager to complete repatriation of the remaining civilian Indonesians. He had already indicated his intention to permit no exceptions to White Australia, intending to deport 'all Asiatics' who remained in Australia.<sup>88</sup>

In April 1947, the last of the three *Manoora* voyages, and the last of the prominent Australian repatriation journeys, was planned to leave the Commonwealth. Though the Australian authorities were not entirely sure how many Indonesians were still awaiting repatriation, and they appeared discontent with the Dutch approach. The Department of Immigration discovered many discrepancies in lists of potential repatriates. This department concluded that the Dutch authorities had brought many Indonesians into Australia by Dutch Service Transport and only some were registered. The Dutch authorities had repatriated most of the persons they brought in, but in some cases where these men registered, no notification had been received of their departure in the repatriation undertaken by Dutch Service Transport.<sup>89</sup> The annoyed conclusion by the department is interesting considering, for instance, the problems that had arisen with the Alien Regulations Control, as argued earlier.<sup>90</sup> Before the military authorities took over the Alien Regulations Control, it was the job of the many local immigration authorities to enforce these regulations. However, it remained fairly unclear who under these regulations had to register and who did not, and these regulations differed from state to state. So, if it was pretty unclear to the Australian local authorities, it was not surprisingly vague to the NEI authorities.

On the last of the major *Manoora* journeys, many ex-Casino prisoners were repatriated. According to the ship's lists, 318 repatriates were originally from Casino—most likely the approximately 320 Indonesians mentioned by Australian Immigration Department Secretary Heyes in his 6 December 1946 letter to the Attorney-General. A further nineteen Indonesians were deportees or prohibited immigrants from the vessel

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<sup>87</sup> NAA, J25, 1949/4103, Department of Treasury, Minute Paper, 5 March 1947.

<sup>88</sup> 'Mr. Calwell's Stand', *The West Australia*, 1 February 1949, 2.

<sup>89</sup> NAA, A433, 1949/2/8186, Letter from the Alien Control Officer in Melbourne to the Department of Immigration, 14 March 1947.

<sup>90</sup> NAA, A373, 5793, letter from the Deputy Director of Security for NSW S. Jackson to the Director-General of Security in Canberra, 29 September 1943.

*Tasman*, which was docked in Sydney due to the black ban. Additionally, a couple of deserters from the Dutch army were on the repatriation lists, a few men who used to work in the pearling industry and some Australian-born civilians (wives and children of Indonesians). A total of 372 would board the *Manoora* this time.<sup>91</sup> A memorandum by the Department of Immigration described the group's composition. This writing once again highlighted the well-known racially discriminatory views of so many in government positions in 1940s Australia: 'There are 13 Dutch coloured for Koepang and 12 Portuguese for Timor including three whites. The latter are living in NSW The Commonwealth Migration Office described them as undesirable types. They came here as evacuees'.<sup>92</sup> Bondan, of the Central Committee of Indonesian Independence, wrote a letter to Iskandar Ishaq, a fellow independence activist, in March 1947. In this writing, he mentioned that there still existed problems with the repatriation of the indigenous Indonesians to their home country. Chief among these was the former soldiers stuck in camp Casino. They were awaiting the fourth return ship, which would probably be ready in the middle of the next month. Moreover, the Australian wives had been permitted to go along with their husbands in returning to Indonesia, according to Bondan.<sup>93</sup> So, even in March 1947, it was unclear how many would be boarding, when the next vessel would berth and who would be allowed on it.

The *Manoora* sailed from Sydney's harbour, leaving for Brisbane on 3 May, then sailed to Darwin, from where it left Australia one week later. First, the boat sailed to Portuguese Timor, as the Portuguese needed to be disembarked in Dilli, then on to Dutch Timor's Koepang region, then Cheribon, where the rest of the repatriates would initially be disembarking the boat. At the last moment, Soerabaja appeared to be added as its final destination.<sup>94</sup> When the HMAS *Manoora* arrived in Java on 16 May, almost three years after the Pacific War, the last extensive group of Indonesians was repatriated. The disembarking in Indonesia and this third and final major *Manoora* repatriation journey more or less symbolised the end of a five-year partnership between Indonesian refugees and Australia, who adopted these temporary residents without too much hesitancy. Nevertheless, it was an often inconvenient and arduous relationship between a host

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<sup>91</sup> NAA, A2998, 1951/963, List of Indonesians being repatriated from Brisbane per H.M.A.S. "Manoora", April 1947.

<sup>92</sup> NAA, A2998, 1951/963, Memorandum by the Department of Immigration, 23 April 1947.

<sup>93</sup> ANRI, Mohammad Bondan Archive 68, Letter from M. Bondan to Mohammed Iskandar Ishaq, 26 March 1947.

<sup>94</sup> NAA, A2998, 1951/963, Teleprinter message from the Department of the Navy to the Department of Immigration, 2 May 1947; Cablegram from the Department of External Affairs, 2 May 1947; Cablegram from the Department of External Affairs, 24 April 1947.

country very anxious to stay white and temporary, mostly Indonesian and perhaps a few Indo-European residents, for whom resettlement was always out of reach and who were very poorly treated by Australians and NEI authorities alike.

#### **6.4 Back in the mother country**

After WWII, almost all Indonesian and a substantial group of Europeans returned to the mother country. Many of them had left the NEI in quite a hurry when the Imperial Japanese Army invaded their country. Some left voluntarily, while others, like the ex-Digoelists, were forcibly moved to Australia by the Dutch. After residing in another country, the questions remain as to how these Indonesian refugees were seen back in their home country, did they all return to their own preferred regions, and what was life like after so many years away from home. Unfortunately, it is outside the scope of my research to explore what happened to all the returning Indonesians. Most of these men, women and children probably returned to their old villages, and no sources could be retrieved.

At the start of this chapter, I described why it was tremendously challenging to discover and analyse sources on the Indonesian reasons for wanting to return. The same arguments can be suggested for the minimal number of sources found on the experiences of returning Indonesians. Many of the Indonesians who came to Australia appeared unable to read and write; most were considered illiterate. For example, if one looks at the FARs A2, the registration form for alien residents in Australia, many merchant seamen signed on the dotted line with an 'X' or the Aliens Registration Officer wrote or typed 'cannot write'.<sup>95</sup> This is one of the main reasons it was so difficult to find written sources on the Indonesian perspective that would tell the story of former refugees. Moreover, the very few stories that survived could have been slightly politically coloured; the independence war was a significant factor, the 'Police Actions' were in full swing and the division between pro-Republic and pro-NEI/Dutch recolonisation was often more important than the true stories about the return to the home villages.

Some Indonesian return and post-repatriation stories were partially retraceable, and some have been traced by a few scholars.<sup>96</sup> Former Australian wives left some

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<sup>95</sup> NAA, SP11/2/0, box 55, Application for Registration forms of Matsaleh (d.o.b. 1902) or Matrawi (d.o.b. 1913).

<sup>96</sup> See, for instance, Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 264-266.

sources explaining what happened to them on their journeys to the mother country and their new lives in the NEI and the Indonesian Republic, though most of the sources only voiced a tiny part of their stories. Only very few traceable primary documents regarding returning NEI civilians, semi-military personnel and military personnel have found their way into archives in Australia, the Netherlands and Indonesia. Therefore, their stories must be reconstructed from mainly gleaned secondary sources on their lives during and after their repatriation. Their stories remained untold in Dutch-language newspapers in the early post-war years.

One of the most well-known Indonesian transported to Australia by the NEI authorities was Sardjono. Born in 1896 in Java, Sardjono was the president of the Communist Party in Indonesia (PKI) before the war until his internment in Tanah Merah camp, Boven Digoel, in 1926.<sup>97</sup> He arrived in Australia on June 22, 1943, and was transported to Cowra a few days later, where he stayed in Compound D.<sup>98</sup> As Lockwood stated, 'The PKI came out of Cowra with a central organisation, headed by Sardjono'.<sup>99</sup> He was released in December 1943, and transported to Wallangarra, where in early 1944, he entered Dutch service, and about half a year later, Sardjono became chairman of a newly founded organisation: Serikat Indonesia Baroe [Association for a New Indonesia (SIBAR)].<sup>100</sup> After returning to his home country, this moderate communist leader would (again) become the powerful Indonesian Communist Party's leader, he became the party's chairman and he took up a positions in support of the Republican government.<sup>101</sup> He was well-received by many within his party. Soebadio Sastrosatomo, a fellow party member, described Sardjono as a nice man, a true nineteenth century Marxist and idealist.<sup>102</sup> At a PKI Conference in April 1946, he was re-elected as party chairman, and he received authorisation to appoint the remaining board members. According to Poeze, Sardjono as a person, would not play an important role after this anymore, perhaps twenty years in Digoel had taken its toll.<sup>103</sup> One of his accomplishments was that he established the PKI's headquarters in Djokjakarta, the newly created Republic's

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<sup>97</sup> "'Staakt het vuren in Indonesië! Herinnert u Rotterdam!'", vermaant Sardjono', *De Waarheid*, 15 November 1945, 1.

<sup>98</sup> NAA, MP1103/2, DGY26168, Prisoner of War/Internee; Sardjono, [No Other Names Given]; Year of birth - 1896; Nationality - Indonesian.

<sup>99</sup> Lockwood, *Black armada*, 32.

<sup>100</sup> Poeze, "From Foe to Partner," 69.

<sup>101</sup> George, *Australia and the Indonesian revolution*, 58.

<sup>102</sup> Harry A. Poeze, *Verguisd en Vergeten. Tan Malaka, de linkse beweging en de Indonesische Revolutie, 1945-1949* (Leiden: KILTV Uitgeverij, 2007), 352.

<sup>103</sup> Poeze, *Verguisd en Vergeten*, 351.

temporary capital since 1946.<sup>104</sup> The PKI gained many parliament seats in the Republic's early years. Just before his death, Sardjono was appointed by the party's new leadership as Secretary for Propaganda too.<sup>105</sup> He was executed in Madiun, in central East Java, in an attack on 30 September 1948.<sup>106</sup>

Many Indonesians were interned during the war in Australia, some because they went on strike, others because of their political views. After their internment, new groups were created, as discussed in previous chapters; they consisted, for instance, of former KPM seafarers and Digoelists. They were employed in the 36AEC, where they did heavy labour for the Australian army.<sup>107</sup> Many of the 36AEC members were repatriated relatively early after the war. These former Wallangarra workers, interned in the same camp as Sardjono, were sent to Merauke in Dutch New Guinea instead of their own regions. According to a letter from one of the workers named Rakoem, the Dutch had promised them that they would be sent to their homeland once the war was over. Rakoem's retrieved Service and Casualty form stated he was born in Java, captured in Dutch New Guinea, afterwards interned in Cowra for several months before becoming part of the 36AEC in December 1943.<sup>108</sup> The writer said they were stuck in Merauke and waiting for the order to go back to the Indonesian Republic, but they only heard a Dutch reply stating, 'as soon as possible should be sent to Java'. He also wrote that the Indonesians no longer believed the promises of the Dutch Government.<sup>109</sup> Evidently, Rakoem was born in Java, and he did not see New Guinea as part of his home region. As a response to the letter, the Department of Army argued that Rakoem was not a member of the Australian Military Forces, something he had mentioned in his letter, and the question of his repatriation to Java was a matter for arrangement by the local Dutch authorities.<sup>110</sup> The Department of Immigration also informed the prime minister that, since Rakoem was at present in Dutch territory, the question of his transport from there to any place in the Indies did not concern the department.<sup>111</sup> So, to the Australians, he

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<sup>104</sup> Antonie C. A. Dake, *In the spirit of the Red Banteng. Indonesian communists between Moscow and Peking, 1959–1965* (Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 1973), 6.

<sup>105</sup> 'Dutch Close Up Tanah Merah. Communist Internees are Free at Last', *Tribune*, 13 May 1947, 7; 'Communisten in Republiek vormen nieuw bestuur', *Het Parool*, 3 September 1948, 1.

<sup>106</sup> Lockwood, *Black armada*, 221.

<sup>107</sup> NAA, MP742/1, 92/1/256, Letter from Ch. O. van der Plas, Netherlands Indies Commission for Australia and New Zealand to F.M. Forde, Minister for the Army, 22 December 1943.

<sup>108</sup> NAA, MP1103/1, DGY26276, Service and Casualty form Rakoem.

<sup>109</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/2 PART 2, (copy of a) Letter from Rakoem, 11 January 1946.

<sup>110</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/2 PART 2, Letter from M. Hehir, Department for the Army to the Prime Minister's Department, 22 January 1946.

<sup>111</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/2 PART 2, Letter from A.R. Peters, Department of Immigration to the Prime Minister's Department, 2 January 1946.

was repatriated and residing in a part of the NEI, and thus no longer an Australian problem. It remained unclear if Rakoem and his former colleagues from the 36AEC were ever returned to Java by the Dutch.

In 1948, all but one Casino prisoner had been returned to the Indonesian Republic. The Australian Minister for External Affairs assured the Dutch that the prisoners were removed in 1946 from camp Casino.<sup>112</sup> Some of the Casino detainees were rearrested once they were back in their home country. The Department of External Affairs mentioned a group of thirteen former incarcerated Indonesians. According to the Australian authorities, this group of Indonesians were secretly removed from Casino camp on the night of 7 November 1946. The Dutch transferred this small group by air to Batavia, where they faced court-martial on the charge of murder (that had occurred in Camp Victory).<sup>113</sup> According to the department, the proceedings against these thirteen were not proceeded with for lack of evidence. One had been released and the other twelve were serving the balance of their previous sentences. The writer added that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs anticipated that an early amnesty would apply to these twelve men.<sup>114</sup>

Charlotte Reid was born in Bronte, NSW, in 1927, and she met Anton Jan Maramis, originally from North Sulawesi (Manado), in Sydney in September 1943.<sup>115</sup> Maramis worked for the KPM during the war as a petty officer on the *Cremer* and was not interned in Cowra in 1942 because he did not join the Indonesian seamen's strike.<sup>116</sup> After the war, Maramis was deported on the first repatriation voyage, on *Esperance Bay*, from Sydney. 'Anton was found, arrested and taken to Long Bay jail, then driven down to the No. 9 wharf in Pyrmont, and ushered up the gangway, along with 531 others, with a further 884 to be embarked in Brisbane'.<sup>117</sup> He was deported to Java. After his return, Anton Maramis spent ten months in gaol in Batavia.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> NAA, A433, 1949/2/8186, Letter from The Australian Minister for External Affairs to the Netherlands, 14 August 1948.

<sup>113</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/6, Letter from the Department of External Affairs to the Australian Representative in Batavia, 4 December 1946.

<sup>114</sup> NAA, A433, 1949/2/8186, Cablegram from the Department of External Affairs to the High Commissioner's Office in London, 27 June 1947.

<sup>115</sup> Charlotte Maramis, *Anton and me. When Merdeka! came to Sydney* (Sydney: Australia Indonesia Association, 2020), 5 and 20.

<sup>116</sup> Maramis, *Anton and me*, 23.

<sup>117</sup> 'How a Sydney girl joined the fight for Indonesian independence', *Financial Review*, 3 July 2020. <https://www.afr.com/world/asia/how-a-sydney-girl-joined-the-fight-for-indonesian-independence-20200630-p5571l>

<sup>118</sup> Maramis, *Anton and me*, 75.

In November 1946, Maramis managed to return to Sydney with an Indonesian trade mission. After marrying Charlotte, he was deported once again. Charlotte Maramis succeeded in moving to the Republic's capital; she flew to Surabaya and then travelled to Batavia/Jakarta on the eve of Indonesian independence.<sup>119</sup> Charlotte Maramis was welcomed into Anton's extended family, and they lived with his family at first. She started working at a newspaper, the Indonesian Observer -the only English paper at that time in Indonesia- and became an author as well, while he worked as an editor at two English-language journals. They lived in Indonesia for several years before moving back to settle in Sydney. They were married for nearly 52 years.<sup>120</sup> This story provides us with a unique point of view, as it was one of the few retraceable life stories of Australian-Indonesian couples who lived in the Republic for a substantial amount of time.

Former Australian war brides received some attention, mainly in Commonwealth newspapers, and some examples are mentioned in the secondary sources. As Lingard has documented: 'some 'coloured' Australian wives had been passengers on the *Manoora* in November 1946 and again in May 1947, but 'white' wives were not permitted to accompany their husbands at that stage.'<sup>121</sup> She has made the critical point of the hardship of the 'white' wives, who had to stay behind in Australia. She has shown how there existed a differentiation between wives of Indonesians still loyal to the Dutch -who were still receiving an income from the KNIL and the NEI government- and those who refused to co-operate with their former colonisers. The wives of the first group could still get the money from their Indonesian husbands, but the second group of Indonesian men became unemployed and had no financial means to support their wives.<sup>122</sup> The suffering of the second group, one of the unemployed partners, must have been great. This distinction between wives of loyalists and refusers was rarely mentioned in newspaper articles in the 1940s.

As can be read in several newspaper articles on their voyage to the Indies, a few Australian women did not make it out of the country by boat. One story made a few headlines; the story of Mrs G. M. Baert, the bride of a Dutch serviceman. She told the reporters that she had left the ship *Tasman* because of the intolerable conditions. She was

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<sup>119</sup> Sastra Wijaya, 'Anton and Me', *Supra*, 2021.

<http://australia-indonesia-association.com/publications/>

<sup>120</sup> Maramis, Anton and me, 145, 151 and 182; Hamish McDonald, 'Love in the face of prejudice', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 April 2010.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/love-in-the-face-of-prejudice-20100423-tj1e.html>

<sup>121</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 237.

<sup>122</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 239.



to have joined her serviceman husband in Soerabaja. According to Mrs Baert, all Australian brides were sleeping in rat-infested holes, and the food was uneatable. Many articles ended with the commentary that she announced she would travel to Soerabaja by air.<sup>123</sup>

There is a lack of historical research on Australian women who married Indonesians and left Australia after WWII. I have only discovered sources, such as newspaper articles and archival sources, from the period itself on this topic. I found no publications where this subject is the primary research topic, in English or Dutch, on the Australian women who left the country on boats like the *Manoora*. Scholars such as Lockwood and Bennett didn't spend much time documenting the Australian war brides and their specific difficulties in their publications.<sup>124</sup> Bennett did trace their repatriation voyages and the prohibition of Australian wives joining their Indonesian husbands to the Republic.<sup>125</sup> Other scholars, such as Lingard, have analysed some life stories of the women who left Australia after the war's closure but not as their primary research topic. While Lingard critically analysed the issues these women encountered while they were still living in Australia, she did not explore the problems once they left the country and their reception in their new home country. She briefly mentioned the stories of a few Australian women in her publication. For example, she documented the lives of Enid Achmad and Sheila Soegito emphasising the ways in which they negotiated their relationships with their Indonesian husbands while still living in their home country. But we know nothing of the lives of these women in Indonesia.<sup>126</sup>

The best source for this topic remains written material relating to the life of the most famous Australian 'Indonesian war bride', Molly Warner. She married Mohammad Bondan, the former Digoelist and Secretary of the Central Committee of Indonesian Independence. Molly's life story and her work activities -such as being the English speechwriter for President Sukarno- and work relationships in Indonesia are often described in scholarly publications.<sup>127</sup> Scholars such as Bennett wrote about Molly

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<sup>123</sup> 'Rat Infested Holes in Beds, Says Bride', *Morning Bulletin*, 30 August 1946, 6.

<sup>124</sup> Lockwood, *Black armada*; Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*.

<sup>125</sup> Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 216-218.

<sup>126</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 237-248.

<sup>127</sup> See, for instance, George McT. Kehin, "Molly Bondan: 1912-1990", *Indonesia* 50 (1990); Hardjono and Warner (eds.), *In Love with a Nation*; Jemma Purdey, "Knowing Indonesia Inside and Out: Herb Feith and the Intellectual Search for Understanding," *Life Writing* 4, no. 2 (2007); Virginia Hooker, "Friendship, Partnership, Action: Women and the Bilateral Relationship," in *Strangers Next Door?: Indonesia and Australia in the Asian Century*, ed. Tim Lindsay and Dave MacRae (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 374-375.

Warner (Bondan) and her work in Australia for the Indonesian independence movement.<sup>128</sup> As she had done with the Achmad and Soegita stories, Lingard documented much of Molly Bondan's life while she was still working in Australia, for instance, the author described her work for the Australia-Indonesia Association.<sup>129</sup> Lingard wrote very little about Bondan's life once she left Australian soil, except for an exciting reference to a letter she wrote to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Dr Burton, on her repatriation and the response to this letter by the NEI authorities. The remainder of Molly Bondan's life story - her forty years in Indonesia - was only summarised briefly.<sup>130</sup>

The only related groups that scholars extensively analysed are the group of Dutch citizens staying in Indonesia who had the option of taking up Indonesian citizenship after 1949 or the small numbers of returning Dutch citizens after the fall of Sukarno in 1965.<sup>131</sup> Or the very intriguing and sad stories regarding interracial marriage between Indonesians and Aboriginal people. The researchers analysed what happened to them after the invasion of the Indies and after the war.<sup>132</sup> The only other related journal articles and books written specifically on war brides seemed to focus on foreign (mainly European) women who married an Australian serviceman and immigrated Down Under after the war. Another group that has been more broadly analysed are the Japanese war brides of WWII, who came to Australia mainly in the 1950s. To conclude, some research has been conducted on the Indonesian wives of Australians currently living in Australia, but the topic has not generated an enormous amount of scholarship.<sup>133</sup>

The situation of Australian war brides was discussed in the Australian Parliament. In April 1947, Calwell stated in the House of Representatives, 'the Australian wives and children of Indonesians are not being permitted to travel with their husbands and fathers on board *Manoora*. ... The Indonesian authorities asked the Government not to permit any Australian woman to go to Indonesia at the present time, and Australian women in

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<sup>128</sup> See, for instance, Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 86-90.

<sup>129</sup> See, for instance, Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 112-113 and 128.

<sup>130</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*, 261-264.

<sup>131</sup> Hewett, "(Re)-migration" 365-366.

<sup>132</sup> Julia T. Martínez, "Indigenous Australian-Indonesian intermarriage: Negotiating citizenship rights in twentieth-century Australia," *Aboriginal History* 35 (2011).

<sup>133</sup> Examples of literature on war brides and Australia are Overseas War Brides Association Staff, *Overseas War Brides: Stories From The Women Who Followed Their Hearts To Australia* (Sydney: Simon & Schuster, 2001); Carol Fallows, *Love & War: Stories of War Brides from the Great War to Vietnam* (Milsons Point: Bantam Books, 2002); Keiko Tamura, *Michi's Memories: The Story Of A Japanese War Bride* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2003); Monika Swasti Winarnita, "The Politics and Poetics of Authenticity Indonesian Migrant Women and Cultural Representation in Perth, Australia," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 171, no. 4 (2015).

Indonesia are seeking financial assistance to return to Australia'.<sup>134</sup> Sheila Latupeirissa was one of the other approximately sixty Indonesian war brides. She had written a letter to her mother, explaining her and her child's situation in Bandoeng. In the letter, she talked about her personal experiences, her abusive and adulterous husband who she still loved, her stay in a military hospital called Tjihami and that she wanted to return home.<sup>135</sup> She would eventually be repatriated home with the help of the Australian Consul General in Batavia. After her return, Sheila Latupeirissa described to reporters her life and living conditions in her new home country. She told the newspapers she was the wife of Jacob Latupeirissa, an Ambonese sergeant in the NEI Air Force and that she had returned to Melbourne after she had been living in Bandoeng. According to an article in the *Sunday Mail*, the 19-year-old was one of the lucky ones who lived in a good home, but she had heard that others, married to Javanese, lived in bamboo huts like natives and did their washing in the rivers. Sheila Latupeirissa was also quoted in another newspaper, in which she stated, 'Australian girls married to Indonesians are treated like dogs ... If you're married to an Ambonese it's not so bad; but if your husband's an Indonesian you live like an animal'.<sup>136</sup> A story in *The Northern Miner* partially contradicted this story about the living conditions, having interviewed an Indonesian man called Tony Maranus: 'Australian brides will find Indonesian conditions well, above native-hut level in most cases. Many brides will go to better class suburbs in Batavia or Sourabaya ... Brides will have electric stoves, radio and live almost a European life'.<sup>137</sup>

These were a handful of stories of Indonesians from various backgrounds who were repatriated to the Indies in the early post-war years. As I mentioned at the start of this section, it was outside the scope of my research to examine the stories of all repatriated. Plus, I explained the intense difficulty of researching all of the thousands of individual stories. I have selectively analysed a few of the stories of returning Indonesians, people from the NEI (and Australia) from wildly divergent upbringings and with different occupations, to emphasise the difficulties many experienced returning to their (new) home country and to show that for many of them the struggles did not finish after their return.

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<sup>134</sup> NAA, A1838, 401/3/6/1/6 PART 1, Extract from House of Representatives debates, 18 April 1947.

<sup>135</sup> NAA, A1068, IC47/20/1/15/2, Letter from S. Latuperissa to her mother, 12 May 1947.

<sup>136</sup> 'Back Home, Says Brides in Java Living like Animals', *Sunday Mail*, 24 August 1947, 3; 'Australian Girl's Story. Java Bride's Misery', *The Sun*, 24 August 1947, 3.

<sup>137</sup> 'Wives of Javanese. 2 Versions of what They can Expect', *The Northern Miner*, 20 January 1947, 2.

## 6.5 Conclusion

The Australian Government's repatriation strategy of the 1940s was a consequence of national and international developments. Clearly, the battle for Indonesian independence was a key factor in shaping this repatriation strategy. Authorities obsessed over the problem of the Casino internees, the Chermside camp residents in Brisbane and the other free Indonesians residing mainly in the eastern part of Australia, worrying over how precisely to return these men, women and children to the NEI/Republic. I have outlined the problems that arose with the repatriation of Europeans and Indonesian groups to the islands of Java and Sumatra and to other parts of the divided country, the effect the black ban had on Dutch ships and the repatriation of the NEI people, and the enormous hesitancy by the NEI military high command and Netherlands Legation. In my research on this subject matter, I have made use of as many different and distinct sources as possible. I combined sources in Dutch, English and Indonesian, to emphasize the uniqueness of the repatriation issues raised by governments and regular people involved. In my opinion, this approach can hardly be found in the recent historiography on this topic.

The opposing views of the Australian authorities and the Netherlands Legation and military high command became more evident with each repatriation journey. Especially by the end of 1946 and early 1947, the definition of those who needed to be brought back was contrasting. The Dutch called the KNIL militaries 'military personnel convicted of a military offence, as they had disobeyed orders'. Alternatively, they wanted to return to the NEI as they were eager to fight for the Indonesian independence movement. The Australians considered them political prisoners or free Indonesians who needed to be returned to their mother country. The large group of indigenous KNIL servicemen wanted to go back to their home country, likely to see their families again after such a long time. The NEI military high command was convinced they would use their knowledge to join the Indonesian Republic. This could have been a critical reason for some, but the evidence suggests that by far most of the incarcerated Indonesians just wanted to return to their old towns and villages.

After the end of the war, the complicated task of returning the Indonesians to their home country was partially taken up by the Dutch and partially by the Australian authorities. The growing friction between the two countries became more evident with each new voyage. The international circumstances and the contrasting views regarding

many of the incarcerated added to the friction. There were seemingly constant debates about who was responsible for repatriation, who should be repatriated and when, and what the repatriated status was. In the first instance, KRIA was mainly responsible for the NEI repatriation, but they were only allowed to repatriate the (free) civilians, not even merchant seamen. The NEI military high command was still the responsible organisation for the soldiers on Australian soil. After the dissolution of KRIA, the Netherlands Consulate in Sydney took over primary responsibility for the civilians. The Australians were not content with how the Dutch organised and communicated their repatriation in the early years. Once the extraterritorial rights had expired and the Department of Immigration took over the bulk of the work, there appeared to be less friction between the nations.

Indonesians' reasons for returning to the NEI Outer Islands or the Indonesian Republic were as diverse as the group itself. And some of the Indonesians on Australian soil did not want to return but had to because their exemption papers had expired or were revoked. The authorities now considered them prohibited aliens. As I wrote at the very start of my thesis, my research did not immediately stop when the Indonesians were gathered on Australian soil to be returned to various parts of Indonesia and the NEI. I have analysed their journeys back to the NEI but found it challenging to track down sources on this subject.

Eventually, many 'unwanted aliens' returned to the Indies. Some made a direct journey to their preferred part of the archipelago, others were first repatriated to parts of the Outer Islands, even if they did not come from that part of the NEI originally. One group of aliens that could specifically benefit from some additional historical research is the Australian war brides. Unfortunately, there appears to be a gap in journal articles and other publications on the fascinating topic of Australian women who left the country with their Indonesian husbands, their journeys to their new home countries, their new lives in Indonesia and the struggles they faced daily in a country that was deeply divided after WWII. Moreover, the struggles for so many civilians, seafarers and soldiers did not end after returning to their home country.

## Conclusion

Dutch historian Remco Raben noted in his oration acceptance speech in 2016, ‘the Indies are *hot* ... Colonial history is confusing, sometimes sweet, sometimes unpleasant, but always confusing’.<sup>1</sup> Raben was right about how controversial the Indies is in contemporary Dutch society. The Dutch history wars have produced a groundswell of new scholarship on the topic. New work focuses on the Indies in the 1940s or the NEI in WWII, or on the ‘*Politioenele Acties*’, such as the Rawagede case for example.<sup>2</sup> On 9 December 1947, a large group of men from the village Rawagede were murdered by Dutch military forces. Conscripted soldiers entered the town in search of Indonesian rebels and weapons. When the conscripts did not find what they were looking for, they killed the male population of the village. According to official Dutch sources, there were around 150 male casualties. According to local sources, there were at least 400 people murdered in this action.<sup>3</sup>

A survey of the recent literature is indicative of just how profound this shift in Dutch historiography really is. Until the turn of the century, scholarship on these topics were thin on the ground. I struggled to find academic work on the ‘*Politioenele Acties*’ written with the Indonesian civilians in mind or centring an Indonesian perspective. In the last few years, a series of articles has emerged that place this perspective at their core: ‘Our Forgotten Victims. Who Counts the Indonesian Dead?’<sup>4</sup>

As far as I could ascertain, few Dutch scholars have written extensively about the people from the Dutch East Indies who fled their home country to Australia after the invasion of the Imperial Japanese Army. If Australia is ever mentioned in these Dutch scholarly publications, this mention is reduced to a few lines on returning KNIL soldiers,

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<sup>1</sup> Remco Raben is a history professor (by special appointment) at the University of Amsterdam and Utrecht University. His main research areas are colonial and post-colonial literature and cultural history. In his professorial acceptance speech, titled ‘*Wie spreekt voor het koloniale verleden?*’ *Een pleidooi voor transkolonialisme*, he stated in Dutch, ‘Indië is *hot*’: Raben, "Short Wie spreekt voor het koloniale verleden? Een Pleidooi voor transkolonialisme.", *Java Post*, 14 November 2016.

<https://javapost.nl/2016/11/14/wie-spreekt-voor-het-koloniale-verleden/#more-11793>.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Wouter Veraart, "Uitzondering of Precedent? De Historische Dubbelzinnigheid Van De Rawagede-Uitspraak," *Ars Aequi*, no. April (2012); Janet van den Bunt, ‘Een Regeling Voor Weduwen Van Slachtoffers Van Nederlands Geweld in Indonesië’, *Nederlands Juristenblad* 2207, no. 43 (2014); Anne-Lot Hoek, "Rengat, 1949 (Part 2)," *Inside Indonesia* 125, no. Jul-Sep (2016).

<sup>3</sup> Bart Luttikhuis, "Juridisch afgedwongen excuses. Rawagedeh, Zuid-Celebes en de Nederlandse terughoudendheid," *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 129, no. 4 (2014): 95; ‘Besprekingen aan boord van de Willem Ruys in de Java Zee’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29 December 1947, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Harinck, Horn, and Luttikhuis, "Onze vergeten slachtoffers." According to these authors, a recent count shows over 97,000 Indonesians died, but this is probably a lower limit.

repatriation to the Commonwealth for recuperation after the war, or the time one of the high-ranking authorities spent Down Under prior to his journey to the NEI.

A few exceptions to this rule exist, such as the biography on François van Aerssen Beijeren van Voshol,<sup>5</sup> in which the time the Netherlands Minister spent in Australia is discussed at length. Indonesian refugees are barely mentioned though; the NEI and its people were mainly described in the context of post-war reoccupation and discussion on the black ban with Commonwealth authorities. Another short work should be mentioned, Zwinkels' article on 'Indonesia Calling', a film made by Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens on the Dutch black ban in the 1940s.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the oldest of the three publications, Poeze's publication on the internees from Boven Digoel.<sup>7</sup> These Dutch publications were and are the exception to the rule.

Alongside this new canon of publications from the Netherlands, non-Dutch authors have also been centring an Indonesian perspective in Dutch colonial history. The Indies are *hot* or controversial in the English-speaking world too. Like their Dutch counterparts, most Australian authors tend to research Australia's changing relationship with the NEI in the 1940s: from war liberators to helpers of the Dutch to siding with the independence movement. That does not mean that the plight of NEI people interned during WWII has been entirely forgotten by Australian (and US) researchers, though the most well-known published books are at least a decade old. One of these publications, written by Lingard, was tremendously important for my research, especially her focus on the relationships between the Australians and Indonesian and Indonesian authorities during WWII, and also in the aftermath.<sup>8</sup> I have built on her seminal work in this thesis. It appeared that her approach and research angle were similar to mine, though some differences existed. For example, I have considered the pre-war KNIL and its compositions as a possible factor in the post-war disagreements between all parties, Dutch, Australian and Indonesian involved. Secondly, and I have focused on court trials and the role of the court system, bringing fresh material to light for the first time. The trials themselves, or the absences of trials, had very significant consequence for the Indonesians temporarily residing in Australia. These trials contributed significantly to what I see as a great injustice. A few other interesting publications on Indonesian

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<sup>5</sup> Van Aerssen, *Driemaal Oost*.

<sup>6</sup> Zwinkels, "Gevoelige relatie."

<sup>7</sup> Poeze, "From Foe to Partner."

<sup>8</sup> Lingard, *Refugees and rebels*.

internment in the Commonwealth, free Indonesian labourers in Australia during the war and other related topics have emerged in the last ten years. For instance, journal articles by authors like Sean Brawley and Graham Irvine, or parts of the book by Martinez and Vickers, or Goodall's recent publication, have highlighted specific groups and Indonesian events in Australia during WWII.<sup>9</sup>

Having spent the better part of ten years researching this topic—and teaching the broader history in Dutch schools—I can attest to Raben's depiction of the historiography. After researching the topic of the Indies concerning international developments, Australia, the (former) coloniser the Netherlands and, more importantly, the people of the Netherlands East Indies themselves for over seven years, I can attest to the complexity of this history, its painful legacies, the entwining of communities, the breaking of bonds, the atrocity, the sadness. This region was a Dutch colony, the only colony they possessed or ruled in this part of the world for over 350 years. These large islands, the smaller islands, their composition has changed drastically over the years, partly due to the Dutch influence, partly due to international migration, and due to local and international wars. But, in my opinion, most of all, the Indies are *hot* because of the atrocious colonial/foreign interventions by the Dutch, then the British, back to the Dutch, the Japanese and finally another (failed) attempt by the Dutch.

My approach to the topic of the people from the NEI in relation to Australia sought to draw three lines of historical inquiry together: transnational histories, histories of migration (social history) and military law histories, without a great emphasis on the actual armed battles of WWII or the Netherlands–Indonesian battles during the decolonisation period—again, the focus is more social history than military history. According to Mae Ngai, 'broadly conceived, transnational history follows the movement or reach of peoples, ideas, and/or things across national (or other defined) borders. In addition, it involves empirical research in more than one nation's archives'.<sup>10</sup> And this definition sums up a lot of the research I have completed over the last few years: the movement of mainly Indonesian people, though other aliens too, to Australia and back to their home country, with research in several countries, primarily the Netherlands and Australia. In addition to this, histories of migration, with all its social effects on the

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<sup>9</sup> Brawley, "The Spirit of Berrington House,"; Irvine, "Legality and freedom,"; Martinez and Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier*; Goodall, *Beyond borders*.

<sup>10</sup> Mae M. Ngai, 'Promises and Perils of Transnational History', *Perspectives on History*, 1 December 2012. <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2012/promises-and-perils-of-transnational-history>.



people, was a major part of this research. And military and law histories too, as the national and international laws regarding warfare, migration and federal security became prominent but not stationary during WWII.

The principal reason for researching these diverse but connected histories was to explore the reception of people from the NEI at the commencement of WWII and their lives and treatments in Australia during and just after the war. This also looked into how the changing relationship between the authorities of the NEI and GOC influenced the lives of the Indonesians Down Under. I mainly focused on indigenous Indonesians, because of their unique or different experience in Australia compared to white or European people from the NEI. One of the primary reasons for analysing their lives in a historical context was to contemplate the extent to which the Australian Government was bound by or guided by the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* or Restrictive Immigration Policy (better known as the White Australia policy), first drafted by Australia's second prime minister, Alfred Deakin.<sup>11</sup> So, I have examined the activities and responsibilities of the NEI 'government-in-exile' and the NEI military high command, thereby not losing or downplaying the critical roles played by the Curtin and Chifley governments and their civil servants, and how this laborious and forced partnership greatly influenced the daily lives of the Indonesians in Australia between 1942 and 1949.

In the first part of this thesis, I focused on the development of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army or *Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger* (KNIL). I started my research on the KNIL decades before WWII. My primary reason for studying this colonial army from its establishment was that the developing composition of this army was essential for their treatment in Australia. When the KNIL was founded, the Dutch or European Indonesians were often afraid 'native' soldiers would become too powerful and start an uprising. Therefore, they decided that the 1:1 (European to Indonesian) ratio was the best for this army.

Years later, the KNIL military high command realised that this ratio was not enforceable—there were not enough white or Dutch-*Indisch* soldiers. But the fact that the

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<sup>11</sup> The White Australia policy (or WAP) is a term for what is officially known as the Restrictive Immigration Policy, which originated with the Australian *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*. The *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* came into force in December 1901 and remained in force until 1959. The Act (and its amending Acts) effectively excluded non-white immigrants from permanently migrating to Australia. The law's unwritten objective was to create an ethnically homogeneous society in Australia by prohibiting undesirable immigrants, without specifying the basis of such undesirability.

Dutch were convinced that the indigenous Indonesians, especially the Javanese, were not trustworthy enough to be the most significant part of the NEI army is telling enough of the deeply rooted Dutch racism in a country where the colonial rulers comprised, most of the time, less than 1% of the total inhabitants. Even when this ratio was partly let go off—at some point, it was just over 1:3—the racist apprehension did not disappear. This fear was not based on historical precedent; no uprisings were recorded by any Javanese or other KNIL military personnel in the nineteenth or twentieth century.

Just before the outbreak of WWII, the KNIL and NEI authorities installed the town guards (*stadswacht*), country guards (*landwacht*) and the militia of volunteers in their quest for additional forces. These town and country guards had minimal equipment, especially in the beginning, and training ‘in accordance with their limited functions’. In my opinion, this sounds like profound racial distrust from the side of European occupiers.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the total number of basic trained militiamen in the NEI rose substantially in the two decades before WWII, from around 4,400 in 1922 to approximately 30,000 in 1938.<sup>13</sup> The Dutch—both military and civil authorities—deeply distrusted the Javanese soldiers; this fear was still leading when the Imperial Japanese Army invaded the NEI after the Dutch declared war on Japan. Their fears turned out to be not completely unsubstantiated; many of these militias would become the backbone of the independence movement, and they were the largest group of fighters for Indonesian independence after WWII.

When the Japanese invaded the NEI, many high-ranking officials and KNIL militaries—some with their families, but many without—fled the country. A large part of these militaries was Indonesian KNIL military personnel. This had simply to do with numbers; there were at least three indigenous soldiers for every white soldier. So even though this refuging group of militaries was not a homogeneous group of soldiers, they probably almost all feared the arrival of the Imperial Japanese Army and the possible effects on their positions and even potentially their freedom. Moreover, these KNIL soldiers had likely observed what happened to other armies, for instance, the Netherlands military personnel after the German invasion. They would be afraid to live through a similar experience of incarceration and involuntary labour.

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<sup>12</sup> NAA, A816, 19/305/101, Letter from the British Consular-General H.C. Walsh, 14 April 1941, and written reply by the Netherlands East Indies Government, 3 July 1941.

<sup>13</sup> Willems, *Sporen*, 33.

These ‘friendly aliens’ were accompanied to the Australian shores by a small group of European, Indo-European, and Indonesian civilians and a substantial group of KPM merchant seamen. According to the NEI ‘government-in-exile’, with Hubertus van Mook as its most prominent figure, all newcomers were treated well and welcomed by local Commonwealth officials.<sup>14</sup> Even the White Australia policy was partially temporarily put on hold for Indonesian people, as long as they would leave the country within six months after the war’s closing. So technically the policy was not delayed as. As was the case prior to WWII, Asians were allowed to enter the country. And – as was also the case before the war - they could not become permanent residents or Australians (British subjects). Australia and its government were still not overly enthusiastic in accepting alien refugees who were non-British. Many Indies exiles arrived in Broome, as this was relatively close to one of the larger NEI ports, while others were lucky enough to fly out of the Indies to find refuge in cities like Brisbane.

As a result of this unexpected and likely unwanted migration—mainly in 1942 and 1943—another topic needed to be researched in more depth: the treatment of Indonesian seamen. Were these immigrants treated fairly and equally by the NEI and Australian authorities in Australia, a country so restricted for non-white migrants? Further, how were those KPM seamen specified in international laws regarding warfare and Australia’s national security laws? Through my research, I concluded that the question of jurisdiction over militarised vessels was essential, and, as a result, KPM seafarers could be best described as semi-military personnel. As I highlighted in Chapter 3, these alien seamen could be considered a distinctive group of men, not civilians, though not military personnel either. Even though the vessels these men served on were militarised (guns were installed on many of these ships), there was some clear indication that these NEI crews could be classified as semi-military personnel, a distinctive group of people actively involved in war activities. They would carry stores and sometimes people, and they worked alongside or as a supplement to the regular armed forces. The status of this group of Indonesian mercantile seamen seemed to be missing in the research I could trace on the Indonesian seamen in Australia. We need to attend to their legal status in Australia; this legal status and accompanying legal rights were essential to their life and work experiences in the harbour cities such as Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne.

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<sup>14</sup> The NEI Legation or Commission was not an official government-in-exile, like the Netherlands Government-in-Exile that resided in London during the war. The most important and strategic decisions had to be made in consultation with London.

This conclusion was necessary, as specific laws applied to this group of NEI seafarers. As I showed, special rules and particular laws applied to KPM personnel while they were on the high sea, for instance, in the case of indigenous seaman Haroena on the vessel *Swartenhondt*. Early in the war, other seamen went on strike because they wanted equal payment. These Indonesians were unwilling to take enormous risks for a meagre one-tenth of the salary of their Australian or European counterparts, especially because their living expenses were almost that of white shipping crews. Moreover, striking was in breach of their temporary visas, which would make them ‘regular’ civilians, though the fact that the NEI authorities—both the commission and even the military high command—were involved in their internment made them ‘not so regular’ civilians. As a result, the striking KPM seamen were gaoled in jails and afterwards transported to internment camps as if they were enemy aliens, to camps like the large one in Cowra, NSW. Finally, after months of detainment and deliberations between all involved, the GOC decided to release a substantial group of the NEI seafarers, and many of them returned to their ships in the large harbours of Australia. The KPM granted the indigenous strikers their pay claim plus an eight-hour workday.<sup>15</sup>

According to David Leach, the internment of ‘friendly aliens’ was but a footnote to the mass detention of ‘enemy’ nationals in Australia.<sup>16</sup> This might have been the case for white or European friendly aliens, who were indeed rarely incarcerated, but this was clearly not the case for indigenous Indonesians, although they should have been considered friendly aliens too. And the numbers might have been not overwhelming compared to enemy nationals, but the effects were severe on the lives of those involved, like the seafarers; the 507 men, women and children from Boven Digoel; and all the other Indonesians. In total, many of the thousands of Indonesians who entered the Commonwealth were incarcerated based on strict migration laws and a few vague political assumptions, which were discriminatory to start with. The civil liberties of these indigenous Indonesians were seriously harmed. The National Security (Internment) Regulation empowered the Commonwealth to intern ‘enemy aliens’ in the interests of ‘public safety’. The question was, could all these Indonesian men, women and children be considered enemy aliens who threatened public safety? I highly doubt this. Besides this internment of Indonesians, other aliens and even British subjects were also interned. Refugees from Germany and Japan; enemy aliens; and even ‘Australian’ citizens of

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<sup>15</sup> Ford, "The Floating Dutchmen," 84.

<sup>16</sup> Leach, "This Way of Treating Friendly Aliens," 858.

German, Japanese or Italian descent were incarcerated on Australian soil. Could one consider all these a threat to society's safety? Their (potential) political views, historical links with enemy countries, or heritage made them targets to be detained by the Australian authorities.

Australians were well aware of Indonesian internment. Residents of towns such as Cowra (NSW), Loveday (SA) and Tatura (VIC), or suburbs like Liverpool (NSW), could observe these camps at close quarters. Although many of the centres may have looked like miniature towns, locals knew they were internment camps; high barbed wire fences or barricades surrounded the sites and military personnel guarded the locations, rendering escape from the camp practically impossible. Besides the camps themselves, these locals could often see the internees in their town when they were on work duty. Outside of these towns, Australians could read about life in the internment camps in the papers. For instance, internment camp escapes were often mentioned in newspapers, such as the escape by German civilian internee Siegfried Karl Kast from Tatura camp or the 1944 escape of several POWs from the Cowra camp.<sup>17</sup> Finally, the GOC and the state governments sometimes mentioned the existence of the concentration camps in their parliamentary discussions, speeches and radio interviews. Like Minister for the Army Frank Ford, when he announced that friendly refugees would be released soon from internment camps. Or during the discussions in Federal Parliament regarding government policy and alien internment, when the following question was posed on a regular basis: Should all aliens, except those of allied and friendly nations, be interned or not?<sup>18</sup> Not too many Australians were opposed to the detainee camps in their country, even though the conditions in these camps were confronting.

After ending their strike in August 1942, most former Cowra internees, both men and women, returned to their old jobs in the big harbours, factories and shops. The largest group resumed work at the harbours after the agreement between the KPM (and another smaller shipping company) and the merchant seamen, who received help from Australian unions. Some Indonesian Cowra internees were re-interned by Australia at the request of the NEI authorities, though the Australians did not call this official internment. From early in the war, Casino camp was occupied by indigenous Indonesians, who worked

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<sup>17</sup> 'Fourth Escape by Internee', *The Courier-Mail*, 14 May 1943, 3; 'Trouble at Internment-camp. Prisoners Recaptured after Escape', *Chronicle*, 10 August 1944, 28.

<sup>18</sup> 'Release of Refugees. Army Minister's Announcement', *The Scone Advocate*, 30 January 1942, 6; 'Federal Parliament. Internment of Aliens. The Government Policy', *National Advocate*, 28 March 1942, 1.

there as members of the Oil Battalion. So, a small group ended up in Camp Victory (the name of the camp in Casino), while others were deployed by the 36AEC and based all over Queensland, though the largest part of the Indonesians ended up in a camp in Wallangarra, on the border with NSW. During the war, these camps' circumstances and living conditions were not utterly appalling, though one could hardly call these conditions welcoming or even acceptable for these friendly, allied aliens. They were more like a Dutch punishment.

The final part of this thesis examined the post-war period, when many Indonesians ended up behind barbed wire (again) amid the almost endless negotiations between the GOC on one side and the NEI Legation and military high command on the other. The primary focus was on the treatment of military, semi-military and civilian Indonesians on Australian soil after the *Proklamasi*. The closing part ended with analysing how the Indonesians were returned to their home country and how they were received and perceived by their fellow compatriots. This final part of the thesis focused more on the social and post-colonial history of the *Indies*.

Negotiations between the Australian Cabinet and the NEI did not end with the conclusion of WWII. As I have shown, the NEI military high command and the Australian Government, led by John Curtin, negotiated the extraterritorial rights for the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army. As a result, a unique legal situation arose, leading to a 'refugee' army (the NEI army) negotiating extraterritorial rights with the War Cabinet, these negotiated rights were very much underexposed in the existing secondary literature. In short, these rights meant that the Dutch/NEI military high command could confine their military personnel. Members of the KNIL could be imprisoned if arrested in Australia on reasonable suspicion of having committed an offence triable under the NEI law and sentenced by a NEI service court. Further, a case-related Dutch investigative officer could summon witnesses, administer oaths and delegate authority to take evidence. More importantly, these extraterritorial rights meant a lack of legal representation for Indonesian soldiers and semi-militarised seafarers. These extraordinary and unparalleled rights—up until that point only granted to the US Army—were not hidden from the Australian public and were published in the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*. My research indicates that Dutch extraterritorial power was widely accepted by most Australians.

After WWII ended, the relationship between the host country and their temporary Dutch and Indonesian residents deteriorated quite quickly. The reasons for souring of relations were multiple—domestic and geopolitical pressures influenced Australian attitudes. Various internal problems arose for the Commonwealth Government. One of the more significant issues for the Labor Chifley Government was the black ban of Dutch ships, a shipping ban that influenced not only the Australians and the Dutch, but also other countries involved, for instance, the British.<sup>19</sup> The ban spread to many Australian harbours, supported by several influential Australian unions, who, on their part, consisted of many voting members. At the same time, on the world stage, the Dutch tried to reoccupy their old colony in Southeast Asia after the Imperial Japanese Army was defeated, with the help of the British and Australians. Although large parts of the Indies were proclaimed Republican country, the eastern part was still part of the Dutch East Indies. After the Allies slowly retreated, the Netherlands became entangled in a war that lasted until late 1949, when the parties involved agreed to Indonesian sovereignty. During this independence war, Australians increasingly sided not with the European former colonial rulers but with the Asian independence fighters.

The Australian War Cabinet and the NEI Legation developed opposite views on the treatment and status of the different groups of Indonesians (military, semi-military and even regular civilians). There were many reasons for the gradually shifting attitude of policymakers towards the Indonesians and their fight for an independent country. As analysed in Chapter 5, the politicians were mainly motivated by pressure from potential voters, unions and other stakeholders. There were fears of a prolonged dispute between the NEI and Indonesian having a depressing effect on post-war economic recovery and international trade, exacerbated by the black ban. Australians were eager for a lasting solution, yet the international conflict in the Indies went on, and no agreements seemed to hold for long. Maybe some policymakers even thought that the White Australia policy should no longer be leading in Australia's decision-making. As Goodall, for example, has identified that the Pacific war had imposed an apparent disruption of the White Australia policy and that this disruption permitted new relationships to grow, relationships between Indonesians and ordinary Australians and between Australians and people from other Asian countries, like India and China. This disruption also provided the opportunity for new viewpoints on the Asian region to emerge.<sup>20</sup> Still, there appeared to be not too many

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<sup>19</sup> Bennett jr., *The return of the exiles*, 181.

<sup>20</sup> Goodall, *Beyond borders*, 335.

leading politicians who felt like this straightaway. As Arthur Calwell stated in the newspaper *The West Australia*, 'it was his attention to pursue a course which would permit of no exceptions in favour of those Asiatics who desire to remain in Australia'.<sup>21</sup>

The Dutch and the NEI military high commands could use as many soldiers as they could find in their struggle against the Indonesian Republic, so even Netherlands draftees were forced to fight in the NEI. The only major group not incorporated in the big reoccupation plan was the Indonesian servicemen who resided in the Commonwealth of Australia. These KNIL soldiers, mainly low-ranked ones, were court-martialled, and all except one were sentenced by *Temporaire Krijgsraden* (temporary military courts in the field) to twelve to forty-eight months' detention, chiefly charged with refusing to serve. The smaller groups of middle-ranked and higher ranked Indonesians were also charged and sentenced, receiving an additional sentence of substantial reduction in rank. Every soldier first class, sergeant and corporal was downgraded to soldier second class. The extraterritoriality rights acquired by the Netherlands Legation and high command during the early war years became very prominent and life-changing for these Indonesians residing in Australia after the war. Even Minister Calwell apparently thought that these powers, granted to the NEI Legation, were an embarrassing overstretch of the extraterritorial rights.<sup>22</sup>

I have searched high and low for years to identify the Indonesians who were tried before a court in Australia and for the trial transcripts of these military trials that occurred in the second half of 1945. To my immense disappointment, I was unable to find the transcripts of those court appearances. I did find some related letters by Dutch officials referring to these post-war trials. Additionally, a few Australian newspapers discussed there would be trials in the near future or there had been military court appearances in the past in their articles, though no Dutch-language papers even mentioned these court events. I did not find any newspaper clippings on the trials themselves, what happened in the courtroom or how the Indonesians were treated. The lack of any military records related to these trials strengthened my opinion that the Dutch did not want those sources to be found. It could have been that the NEI authorities and militaries lost all the related materials accidentally. After all, the military apparatus was understaffed and primarily focused on reoccupation, the *Politioenele Acties* and other related warfare in the Indies. It

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<sup>21</sup> 'Mr. Calwell's Stand', *The West Australia*, 1 February 1949, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Lockwood, *Black armada*, 91.



could also have been that some within the NEI military high command wanted to ‘forget’ about the show trials, as prestige seemed to be almost more essential than actual military justice. At the time of writing, I have not found concrete evidence that these trials ever took place—for instance, official court transcripts or any paperwork on Indonesians appealing their received sentences. Nevertheless, the outcomes of these so-called trials were more than evident: all militaries, except for one, were locked up in camps like Casino after WWII had ended.

After the war’s end, semi-military personnel and even some civilians from the Indies accompanied the Indonesian KNIL military personnel in camps around predominantly east Australia. A few groups had ended up in these camps during the war years, such as the 36AEC members and their families. Others, mainly seafarers, were once again incarcerated after WWII because they went on strike, refusing to work for the Dutch. The incarcerated indigenous Indonesians had no idea if they would ever be released. It appeared that most of them never saw the inside of an Australian or NEI courtroom. They simply had to wait until they would be deported back to the Indies, either to the Republic or the NEI. In my opinion, the deprivation of civil liberties of a group of marginal people, civilians and semi-military personnel of an Allied country, to the point of being locked up in concentration camps without any form of legal process, was one of the most significant breaches of civil rights by Australia during WWII on Australian soil.

I wrote in the Introduction chapter that one of the primary reasons for analysing the roles of the NEI and Australia was the principal question of responsibility, liability and blame. Who could be held responsible for what happened to the Indonesians in Australia between 1942 and 1949? And I continued with the fact that responsibility, liability and blame go slightly further than the underlying feeling of discomfort for the people and countries involved. The research trend regarding the NEI and writing with the Indonesian civilians in mind or even from an Indonesian perspective has leapt over to the responsibility question in the Netherlands. Only in more recent years have discussions appeared in articles, discussion forums, documentaries and even local and national parliaments about who was to blame for the killings in the Indies, who was liable for the atrocities done to the local populations and what can we learn from these disgraceful mistakes in the years after the 1945 Indonesian Proclamation of Independence until December 1949. Very slowly, an apology by the Dutch Government to specific groups can be heard, such as to the survivors of the Rawagede killings and their relatives.

Should the current Dutch or Australian governments apologise to—perhaps even compensate—the victims, survivors, or the relatives of the Indonesians who were temporarily living in Australia? This is a group of people that includes military personnel, seafarers and civilians. They have been neglected in Dutch historiography and suffered profoundly during WWII. The story of these Indonesians who spent the war in Australia but experienced severe deprivation of liberty due to the White Australia policy is a story unknown to most Australians. To be honest, I still do not know how best to deal with their story or its legacies. After years of research, I would support calls for an apology from the Dutch and Australian governments. I understand that official governments' apologies often come with (financial) consequences, and I thus doubt either government will go down this road. I do hope that more research can be conducted, and I hope that the lives of repatriated Indonesians can be traced—what happened to these men and women? Maybe after they have been found, discussions can be taken up again: Who is responsible for this injustice? Who is liable? Who should apologise and who should compensate these Indonesians?

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