

Title: Australia, Indonesia the Netherlands: Media coverage and personal experiences during the ‘Bersiap Period’ (stand prepared) of the Indonesian Revolution August 1945 to mid-1946.

Introduction: Australia 1942 and 1945

On 8 March 1942, about three weeks after the fall of Singapore, the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) capitulated and the Japanese Occupation of the Indonesian archipelago began. In an overview of the World War II period, the Australian War Memorial (AWM) notes:

...at a time when few of the NEI armed forces were strong enough or well enough equipped to carry the war to the enemy, it is no exaggeration to say that the greatest Dutch contribution to the final Allied victory was made by the men of its merchant fleet.¹

During 1942–45, the vast majority of all supplies reaching Allied troops in New Guinea were carried by the 30 Dutch freighters of the *Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij* (or KPM) that had managed to survive the Japanese invasion of the Netherlands East Indies (NEI). In Australia these had been converted, under the auspices of the US army, via the Allied Consultative Shipping Council (ACSC) to become “Defensively Armed Merchant Ships”. Transport vessels were at a premium and the ‘DEMS’, as they were familiarly known, carried Australian gun crews on board. These Dutch vessels – included the Bantam, Bontekoe, VanHeemskirk, VanHeutz, Karsik, Swartenhondt, Tasman, Japara and s’Jacob to name but a few – became an essential part of the Allies offensive operations from Australia.²

On 24 September 1945, just 40 days after Japan capitulated (on 15 August 1945) the Australian Waterside Workers Federation lead by General Secretary James Healy offered unstinted support to the Indonesian Republic (its Independence from Dutch Colonial rule had been proclaimed by Sukarno in Java on 17 August 1945³) by locking-in a boycott of Dutch ships preparing to take supplies and the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) personnel back to their homes in the NEI. Thirty Australian unions were to join the boycott to stop the reinstatement of Dutch rule and it eventually also acquired some international union reach.⁴ Dutch troops from the Netherlands did not arrive in the NEI until early in 1946.

What prompted the union’s action?

Australia, as part of the American, British, Dutch, Australian (ABDA) Alliance, accepted an estimated 10,000, selected NICA personnel – military and bureaucratic personnel – into Australia to continue the war effort on Australian soil.⁵ Navy personnel were sent to Fremantle

¹<http://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/alliesinadversity/seafaring/shipping.asp>

² *ibid*; In addition to the valuable role played by Dutch merchant seamen in maintaining supply lines to and from Australia during the war, the modern liner *Oranje* was offered by the Dutch government to the Australian and New Zealand governments in 1941. Refitted as 1st Netherlands Military Hospital Ship, *Oranje* eventually carried more than 32,000 sick and wounded Allied patients on over 40 voyages.

³ The history of the Dutch connection with Indonesia began in 1602 with the VOC (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) the Dutch East India trading company that operated in the South-east Asian region from 1602-1795. The largest and most impressive of the early modern European trading companies, a treaty authorized by the authority of the States-General of the Republic of the Netherlands gave it a trade monopoly in the zone between South Africa and Japan that included the authority to erect fortifications, appoint governors, keep a standing army, and conclude treaties in its name. The archipelago did not become an official Dutch colony until 1816. Moreover, Dutch dominance did not actually extend across the territory of modern-day Indonesia until the 20th century. During colonial times the social order was based on rigid racial and social structures. The ‘Dutch elite’ who headed the list also included individuals of mixed Dutch and Indonesian origins (*Indos*) who had Dutch citizenship. This was a direct outcome of their Dutch progenitor having acknowledged them socially as ‘family’.³ Although the ‘elite’ lived separately from their indigenous servants, the two remained closely linked. Compared to the Dutch and Indonesian Regents who were wealthy, the masses were oppressed and impoverished by both forms of governance. Their situation worsened during the 1930s worldwide Depression.³ WWII followed on its heels and modern-day Indonesia arose from the ruins.

⁴ Rupert Lockwood, *Black Armada: Australia and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence 1942-1949*, Marrickville NSW, Hale and Iremonger, 1982; Jan Lingard, *Refugees and Rebels: Indonesian exiles in wartime Australia*, Australian Scholarly Publishing 2008.

⁵ The evacuees, who all arrived on military transport ships or aircraft, were billeted around Australia.

to be near their submarines and battleships. NICA was located first in Melbourne and Sydney, and later moved to Camp Columbia, Wacol, Queensland after it was vacated by the USA Military. NEI evacuees comprised Dutch – mixed race (Dutch with ethnic Indonesians or Chinese) commonly known as *Indos* – and ethnic Indonesian bureaucrats, merchant seamen and military personnel, including Ambonese and Mendonese, employed by the colonial army – the *Koninklijk Nederlandsch Indisch Leger* (KNIL).⁶ Around 3,000 of the evacuees were ethnic Indonesians and ethnic Chinese. They joined another 2,000 ethnic Indonesian merchant navy seamen stranded in Australian ports by the outbreak of war. The Dutch Consul General's Office organized their accommodation and healthcare.⁷

Around April 1942, a large contingent of the Indonesian seamen refused to work KPM ships, given the dangers involved, unless conditions on board were upgraded to reflect those enjoyed by Australian seamen. This action had the Dutch render them 'mutineers' and the Australians 'illegal immigrants'. Despite offers of increased pay and a war bonus, many seamen continued the strike claiming their demand for improved 'living conditions on the ship had not been met. Following a stint in Long Bay jail as 'illegal immigrants', they were all eventually employed elsewhere in the Australian system, albeit never at the rate they had lobbied for.⁸

On 8 March 1942, the Dutch capitulated and the Japanese Occupation of the NEI began. The following year, in June 1943, NICA brought in 500 radical nationalist communist political agitators from *Tanah Merah*, their political prison camp at *Boven Digul*, New Guinea. Many were highly educated having studied abroad, including in the Netherlands, USA and Russia. On arrival the prisoners managed to alert Australian unions to their impending imprisonment at Cowra in NSW. They were released following the unions' protest about Australia's right to imprison them. A staggering contradiction, among many others, in this saga is that Cowra camp (near Casino in NSW), where the Digulists were initially imprisoned, had been established by the Australia Government, to actively intern its Italians, Germans and Japanese citizens, who since war broke out in 1939, were designated 'Enemy Aliens' (even those with citizenship). However, their plight had not elicited a protest from Australian unions. Nor was their relationship with Australian unions able to stop the Commonwealth Government from sending them home under the White Australia Policy at war's end. It would be almost 30 years before this discriminatory policy was abandoned.

Freed, the Digulists, as they came to be known, set about establishing Indonesian Independence committees (KIM) in the towns and cities where they were employed, a Central Committee (CENKIM) in Brisbane, plus the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PARKI).⁹ A less influential committee was the New Indonesia Association (SIBAR). However Digulist objected to SIBAR's policy of cooperation with the Dutch – at Russia's behest since the Nazi invasion of the USSR, even though Muslim activists and orthodox communist among SIBAR's members were supported to attend communist conferences.¹⁰ Until Digulists appreciated that the USSA Allies cooperation would enable them to perpetrate a major nationalist influence into the rank and file of NICA in Australia.

By 1944, the ex-Digulists had also urged the Indonesian merchant seamen to form a union - *Sjarikat Pelajar Indonesia* (SARPELINDO).¹¹ Although its main stated aims were the

⁶ Nationaal Archief. Digitale Collection. Access 2.05.50.02 Item 43 'Inventaris van het archief van het Gezantschap /Ambassade in Australië (Canberra) 1942-1954 Gezantschap Australie : Stukken betreffende Nederlands Oost Indies evacuees in Australie; Nationaal Archief. Digitale Collection. Access 2.05.50.02 Item 38 Inventaris van het archief van het Gezantschap /Ambassade in Australië (Canberra), (1940) 1942-1954 Gezantschap Australie : Stukken betreffende de sociale voorzieningen voor Nederlandse zeelieden in Australische havens; called an army the KNIL had until WWII operated more like a police force.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Lingard, 22.

⁹ Lingard, 2008.

¹⁰ Lingard, 104, 105.

¹¹ Lingard, 281.

seamen's welfare and acquiring Australian seamen's working standards, Jan Lingard, claims nationalism was [became] for them an underlying agenda.¹² This union officially affiliated itself with Australian Seamen's Union and formed branches in Melbourne and Brisbane.

In addition, throughout their Australian sojourn these Indonesian nationalist activists were in 'direct and frequent contact' with the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), officials, Government Ministers, and even the Prime Minister.¹³ Consequently, the petitions from the political internees, the constant flow of information, propaganda, requests, advice and expressions of thanks from and other Independence committees meant that it would have been difficult to ignore them.¹⁴

By 1945, these Australian-Indonesians relationships were strong enough to enable the Digulists to convince Australian unions and the CPA to boycott the Dutch ships, they 'claimed' were carrying arms to suppress the newly proclaimed Indonesian Republican Government. Earlier, in 1944, after release from Cowra, two ex-Digulists joined the administration team at the Belvedere Hotel where most Indonesian seamen were accommodated where they also disseminated nationalist propaganda.¹⁵

At the time Japan capitulated, the Netherlands was convinced life would return to its pre-war reality in both the Netherlands and the NEI. The lack of Intelligence out of Japanese Occupied NEI had rendered it possible to hold onto this uncorroborated 'expectation'.¹⁶

The interpretation of the 'situation developing in the NEI', after Japan capitulates in the six weeks before South East Asia Command (SEAC) arrive to accept Japan's surrender, which the Indonesians convey to the Australian Unions and Trades and Labour Councils is later reproduced in flyers and booklets the TLC subsequently publishes.

Aims and Objectives

In this chapter, I familiarise Australians with the *excesses*, that characterise the first months of the Indonesian Revolution in Java, from August 1945 until mid 1946, that the Dutch who experienced them collectively refer to as the 'Bersiap (stand prepared) Period. My aim is to extend Australians' understandings of this little-known period with reference to three bodies of evidence:

- 1) Eye-witness reports from Dutch and Eurasians (Dutch/Indonesian or Dutch Chinese) survivors of Japanese internment camps 1942-1945 and the first months of the Indonesian revolution 1945-1946 in its wake;
- 2) Articles in Australian newspapers at that time that describe this period in NEI history accessed through TROVE, the National Library of Australia (NLA) digitized newspapers search engine; and
- 3) Archival sources and secondary sources from Australian, Dutch and American scholars of the *Bersiap*tiid.

The research therefore presents an additional perspective – the experience of the Dutch in the NEI of the first turbulent months of the Indonesian Revolution – to that contained in the two major Australian works on this topic: Rupert Lockwood's (1982) *Black Armada*. His focus is

¹² Lingard, 279.

¹³ Lingard, 279

¹⁴ Lingard, 279.

¹⁵ Lingard, 108.

¹⁶ Richard McMillan, *British Military Intelligence in Java and Sumatra, 1945-1946*, in *Indonesia and the Malay World*, Routledge, published online 16 March 2009: <http://www.tandonline.com/loi/cimw20>.

the boycott (black ban) of Dutch ships told from the perspective of relevant Australian unions; and Jan Lingard's *Refugees and Rebels*, (2008). She concentrates on the sojourn of the indigenous Indonesians stranded in 'white Australia between 1942 and 1947, and offers their perspective on the developing Indonesian Revolution for Independence.

Historical revisionism is an inevitable by-product of a study such as this, that examines new empirical evidence and re-examines existing evidence (secondary sources). Especially as the new evidence in this instance predictably raises questions about 'denial' by Australian unions and Australian Government, of the 'excesses' it exposes. Historical documents and interviews show extreme violence as routinely perpetrated on defenceless Dutch in Japanese POW and internment camps by *Pemuda* – by young extremist Indonesians freedom fighters. Moreover, that this is happening while the shipping bans are playing-out on the Australian waterfront. In concluding, the chapter leaves the reader to ponder the disquieting question, whether the gruesome violence it exposes is 'justifiable' and its perpetrators 'heroes' or brutal killers?

Union Flyers and Booklets

In a flyer authorised by the Trades and Labour Council (TLC) in Brisbane: *What is Behind the Wharf Holdup?* Unionists scoff at the very idea that the vessels they have 'black banned' are in any way 'mercy ships'. They justify this with claims to have found Tommy Guns and phosphorous bombs in boxes labelled 'Comforts'. I have not found evidence for or against to render or dispute this – a 'fact'. An additional union's claim is that the Dutch are collaborating with the Japanese. Lockwood's interpretation is representative:

The absence of sufficient British troops and the union blockade on Dutch military movements out of Australian bases led SEAC and the Dutch into improvisations and excesses that engendered deeper Indonesian hostility.... [That] they [British and Dutch] threw into battle against the Republic – Japanese troops – detested for their anti-Indonesian atrocities, and Dutch ex-internees, many of them 'warped psychologically' [my emphasis] by concentration camp existence.¹⁷

The TLC flyers and booklets maintain further that the violence in Indonesia is being perpetrated by 'Dutch, British and Japanese working in collaboration' to oppress the newly declared Indonesian Republic.¹⁸ In reality, when the 'black ban' commences on 24 September, SEAC has not yet landed troops in Indonesia, apart a few Repatriation of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees (RAPWI) teams parachuted in to gather intelligence about the location of Civil Internment and Prisoner of War (POW) camps in Java and Sumatra. Information they needed to begin to plan the process of repatriation of internees and the Japanese military. Contingents of Dutch troops from the Netherlands don't arrive in the NEI until early in 1946.

Events in Australia remain the total focus of both Lingard and Lockwood's books. However, while inextricably linked, as they should be, to occurrences in the NEI their vision relies entirely on the interpretation of these offered by the Indonesians stranded in Australia, the voices of the Dutch in the NEI, who term this period the *Bersiaptijd* are never mentioned, let alone interrogated. This chapter addresses this imbalance. Dutch Australian historian Joost Côte claims the name *Bersiap* was popularised by the Scout movement, and adopted by radical guerrilla groups' commonly referred to as *Pemuda*. Côte, reflecting on its greater significance to Dutch nationals also notes that it is 'rarely found in English language histories. He believes

¹⁷ Lockwood, 282.

¹⁸ Noel Butlin Union Archives, N114/190, Union flyer: *What is Behind the Wharf Holdup?* Authorised by the Trades and Labour Council in Brisbane.

this to be indicative of the greater Anglo-American interest in the ‘origins’ of the Indonesian Republic rather than the fate of the former ‘colonialists’.¹⁹

What does *Bersiaptijd* mean?

Beekhuis et al., associate the numerous deaths of victims during the *Bersiap* Period to the decisions made by the British Occupation Forces and by inference, the Australian union’s boycotts of Dutch ships.²⁰ Côte further asserts that ‘Dutch anger at the time of the Bersiap was about much more than Australia’s support for Indonesian Independence – it was because the boycott (and the Australian Government’s unwillingness to suppress it) threatened the lives of thousands of defenceless Dutch women and children.’²¹

American historian, published his take on the *Bersiaptijd* in the 2012 *Journal of Genocide Research*. He notes:

‘In the histories of decolonization after World War II, the targeting of European and, particularly, mixed-blood populations by indigenous peoples has been neglected or avoided altogether. A case in point is Indonesia’s struggle for independence from Dutch rule (1945-1949). Fredericks believes we should extend Robert Cribb’s description of the killing of the Dutch and Eurasians during this period by young extremist freedom fighters’ a ‘brief genocide’, given they totalled up to 35,000 and lasted beyond 1947.²² However, he notes the significance of that term being used for the first time with reference to what Dutch sources spoke of as the *bersiaptijd* (loosely, a time of danger or ‘be prepared’) and Indonesian sources rarely mentioned at all.²³

The examples of violence presented in this chapter, are extracted from oral history interviews, life stories, diaries, newspapers and from reports cited by William Frederick. It is the aggression it portrays that Indonesia celebrates as ‘heroic’ and its perpetrator ‘heroes’.

British military historian, Richard McMillan refers to the *Bersiaptijd* in the NEI as one of wanton killing.²⁴ Photographer and author, Jan Banning describes East Asia as one of the most brutal killing-grounds of World War II and its aftermath. He further contends that the Dutch survivors of prison camps - administered by the Japanese military in the territories it conquered as part of its ‘Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’ – and the Bersiap Period – as among the least-heard voices from that era. In giving ‘voice’ to the Dutch and Eurasian women and children who endured the Japanese Occupation followed by the Bersiap period, I show their experiences to be inextricably linked to events that evolved in Australia and south east Asia that began with the outbreak of WWII.²⁵

WWII - the Japanese incursion into south-east Asia

¹⁹ Joost Côte, The Indisch Dutch in Australia in M. Schrovner and M van Faassen (eds) *The Dutch Diaspora, Journal of Economic and Social History* Number 2, 82-102, 116.

²⁰ Beekhuis et al., *Geïllustreerde atlas*, 22, relate the numerous deaths of victims of the Bersiap to the decisions of the British occupation forces and by implication, Australian boycotts.

²¹ Côte, 116.

²² Frederick, 1.

²³ William Frederick, The killing of Dutch and Eurasians in Indonesia’s Revolution (1945-1949): A ‘brief genocide’ reconsidered, in the *Journal of Genocide Research* 14 (3-4), September-November, 2012, 359-380, (359).

²⁴ Richard McMillan, *The British Occupation of Indonesia 1945-1946: Britain, the Netherlands and the Indonesian Revolution*, London: Routledge, 2005, 27.

²⁵ Jan Banning, *Traces of war: Dutch and Indonesian survivors*, exhibition from 15 August – 11 September, 2005, Trolley Gallery, 73a Red Church Street, London. http://www.opendemocracy.net/arts-photography/war_2764.jsp.

During the period 1941-1942, the Japanese conquest of South-east Asia and the Pacific was rapid.²⁶ The Philippines, Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies, Hong Kong and most of Burma were taken, and Australian Ports including Darwin and Broome were attacked. In December 1941, an alliance was formed, between the Americans, British, Dutch and Australian (ABDA). However they were, no match for the battle-hardened Japanese armies in air, on land and at sea.²⁷ On 15 February 1942 even though perceived 'impregnable' the British base of Singapore fell.²⁸ The next target for Japan was the resource rich Netherlands East Indies. The huge military losses inflicted by the rapidly oncoming Japanese army motivated Hubertus van Mook, head of the government of the Netherlands East Indies, to leave the Indies for Australia on February 18 to plead for Allied forces to organise an offensive in defense of the NEI.²⁹ However, since the fall of Singapore and imprisonment of the vast majority of the British, Indian and Australian Forces, the fall of the inadequately armed Netherlands East Indies became a forgone conclusion.³⁰

Dutch and Eurasians under the Japanese Occupation

The three-and-a-half-year Occupation of the NEI by Japan changed the lives of everyone in the archipelago. Unlike the Occupation of the Netherlands by Germany, where life went on as before but under the Occupation Forces, in the NEI, former Dutch military and bureaucratic personnel, including ethnic Ambonese and Mendonese were interned at once as Prisoners-Of-War (POWs). In the following six months, throughout the region an estimated 100,000 Western civilians, including children (4,700 in Sumatra and 29,000 in Java), were placed into Japanese civilian internment camps. Dutch civilians, including women and children, were herded into 300 separate civilian internment camps where they were starved and ill-treated. Some young Dutch females were taken to separate houses to serve as 'comfort women' for the Japanese military.³¹ Males from as young as 10 years of age, were taken from their mothers and placed in men's camps and treated like men. Ultimately around 30,000 Europeans died in these camps as a consequence of forced labour, malnutrition, and disease.

In the period 8 March 1942 to 15 August 1945 it is estimated that the Japanese also incarcerated, separately, around 42,000 Netherlands East Indies Dutch adult males and 22,000 Australians as prisoners of war (POWs).³² These two ethnic groups were inevitably thrown together, particularly as working parties on the infamous Burma–Thailand and the Sumatra railways. By the end of the war, some 8,000 Dutch and just over 8,000 Australians had died of either ill-treatment or starvation or diseases such as yellow fever, malaria and cholera.³³

²⁶ http://books.google.com.au/books?id=9u8w10uVYyIC&pg=PR1&lpg=PR1&dq=Richard+McMillan&source=web&ots=thZi7IQEZ1&sig=qPQ_h77hJuvK4zvqjp6zFPVXq4&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=8&ct=result#PPA24, M1 viewed 11 August, 2012.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ <http://www.w2australia.gov.au/japadvance/singapore.html>

²⁹ <http://users.bart.nl/users/arcengel/Indonesia/1940.htm> viewed 13 November 2008; Hubertus Van Mook was to be the last Dutch head of government for the Netherlands Indies. In the 1930s, he was an official with liberal, reformist views. In the early 1940s, he was a tireless advocate for the Netherlands Indies, frustrating Japan in negotiations while quietly pleading with Britain and the USA for defense supplies. After the war, in turn he both battled against and negotiate with the new Republic of Indonesia, until he resigned in October 1948.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ J.O'H, interview 2006.

³² John Downer, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, New York, Pantheon, 1986:

The bulk of the Dutch colonial forces, comprising around 32,000 men, like their British and Australian counterparts, ended up as Japanese POWs. Another estimated 100,000 Western civilians, including children (4,700 in Sumatra and 29,000 in Java), were placed into Japanese civilian internment camps. Ultimately around 30,000 Europeans died in these camps as a consequence of forced labour, untreated illnesses, beatings, starvation, malnutrition and other forms of violence perpetrated on them. They included members of the *Koninklijk Nederlandsch Indisch Leger* (KNIL), the colonial army. The KNIL numbered close to 42,000 men at that time, of whom around 10,000 were Europeans and the remainder indigenous troops comprised approximately 13,000 Javanese, 2000 Sundanese, 5,000 Menadonese, 4,000 Ambonese and 1,000 Timorese.

³³ www.awm.gov.au/alliesinadversity/prisoners/captivity.asp; Penders, 11: The KNIL essentially a police force was trained and equipped mainly to put down internal disturbance. Consequently it had only limited resources to handle an external enemy.

The Japanese, catered for the large numbers of Dutch they interned by transforming whole residential districts of the city of Batavia and other metropolitan and regional centres into vast camps by encircling selected areas with bamboo cladding topped with barbed wire. Inside there was little food on offer, sanitation was poor, overcrowding and acts of violence by the oppressors were the order of the day. They [Japanese] set out to specifically humiliate Europeans in full view of the indigenous peoples of the region – to make it very clear that the days of European domination were over.-At the same time an estimated 172,000 Eurasian inhabitants of the NEI, retained their freedom, although little else, including enough food to eat.³⁴ The Japanese closed all bank accounts, including those of Eurasians not interned. The latter survived by selling their furniture, clothes and jewellery to pay for food.³⁵ Throughout the Occupation the Japanese actively tried to integrate the Eurasian into being loyal to Indonesian society without much success. Relevant Dutch were kept in their jobs until they had trained an Indigenous Indonesian to fill the position, then they too were interned.

Vera Rado's who was 16 years old at the time and whose father was kept out of interment for some months, recalls:

It was a black day, 8 March 1942, in more than one sense. The oil tanks on the south-western edge of the city were blown up by the Dutch to prevent the precious fuel from falling into the hands of the enemy. From early morning there was a huge pall of black smoke hanging over the city, and against this ominous backdrop we watched the occupying army's progress through our streets. First the tanks with their red and white flags then armoured carrier, trucks, then masses of soldiers on foot, and on bicycles. They looked triumphant, but we were trembling with apprehension peeking through the louvres of our front door and windows. What would happen to us? We were totally at their mercy – no laws no constitution, no army or police to protect us. Immediately the Occupation began we had to register at the Town Hall and obtain an identity card, which we had to carry on us at all times. Cars were confiscated, radios had to be handed in to be sealed so that only local stations could be received, and very soon all public servants from the Governor General down to the most junior clerk were rounded up and imprisoned.

Now a Dutch Australian, Vera, her mother and brother were eventually [when their father was no longer required in his job] interned in the infamous Tjideng camp – under the command of the 'lunatic' Captain Kenichi Sonei who was later executed for the war crimes he committed on internees – where they stayed until the war ended.³⁶

Thus the population soon discovered that the Japanese were far stricter, more ruthless and much more cruel masters than the Dutch had ever been. In fact, rather than bringing the freedom the Indonesians craved, the energies of these Japanese were deployed to turning the Indies into a Japanese colony. This they achieved with the help of the notorious secret military police the *Kenpeitai*.³⁷

The NEI during the Japanese Occupation

As the Dutch disappeared, Japanese and Indonesians took over their positions in public life. Lesser bureaucrats suddenly found themselves promoted immediately to positions three or four ranks higher that had formerly been reserved for the Dutch. From its onset intense Japanisation of the population was in force. This included the local population being forced to adopt *Bahasa Indonesia* as the *lingua franca* instead of Dutch, few Indonesians being able to speak Japanese.

³⁴ Amigoe Di Curacao Dagblad, Monday 11 March 1946, 2. Alle Nederlandse troepen naar Australië.

³⁵ Frances Larder, interview, 2006.

³⁶ Vera Rado, life story, 2008.

³⁷ McMillan

Japanisation was especially strong in schools, where pupils were duty-bound to be loyal to Japanese symbols and ideology. Currency and the annual calendar years also changed to Japanese.³⁸

In addition, the Japanese, dissolved all overtly political organizations and immediately released the most prominent pre-war nationalists leaders from captivity to incorporate them into their administrative structure with promises of Independence. In these positions nationalists were used as propaganda tools to spread the gospel of the Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and Greater East Asia slogans of 'Asia for the Asians', and directed to carry out various Japanese projects. As an interim concession they were allowed greater input at a local government level. For example, Sukarno³⁹ was directed to organise the compulsory requisitioning of rice and the recruitment of (labourers) *Romusha* for forced labour.⁴⁰ In 1943, the Japanese' Emperor awarded Sukarno a medal for these activities. After the war, the same activities had him labelled a 'collaborator' and 'quisling' by the Dutch government who were, as a consequence, unwilling to negotiate with him around issues pertaining to Indonesian Independence. In the Netherlands any countrymen who had similarly collaborated with the German Occupation Forces were tried for treason.

Growing poverty and repression of the archipelago characterised the Japanese Occupation. This situation was largely attributable to the Japanese disrupting of the canal system constructed by the Dutch, upon which agriculture depended, and by their requisitioning and stockpiling of growers' rice and other food products. The Japanese commandeering of trains for military purposes added to the dilemma of the rural peasant as it stopped Javanese from traveling to markets to sell their produce, which in turn severely restricted their everyday economies.⁴¹

By the end of 1944, Japanese brutality and appalling administration of the region had led to a failure of the food supply causing widespread famine, malnutrition and disease. Medicines, clothing and footwear were unobtainable and many people were clad only in gunnysacks, burlap or thin sheets of rubber. The *History of Modern Indonesia* cites the renowned Indonesian writer *Pramoedya Ananta Toer*, who recalls the sartorial inelegance with clarity and remembers with sadness seeing people who had starved to death by the side of the road.⁴² This was a poignant image, given that like many people at the time, he too had to survive on only one bowl of rice per day. It is estimated that as many as **2.4 million Javanese died of starvation** in these years.

³⁸ In fact tens of thousands of Indonesians were to starve, work as slave labourers (*romuscha*), be forced from their homes, and die in brutal hand-to-hand conflict before Indonesian sovereignty would be achieved.

³⁹ Lingard, 63: notes that in 1929, the Indonesia Nationalist party (PNI) was established with Sukarno as first President and leader. The PNI comprised a membership who sought Indonesia's Independence via non-cooperation with the Dutch.. Other parties sought to achieve it via cooperation. Throughout 1930s, socialist, Islamic and secular nationalist parties were also established all calling for a free Indonesia.

⁴⁰ Richard McMillan, *The British Occupation of Indonesia: 1945-1946: The Netherlands and the Indonesian Revolution* (London Routledge, 2005) 27; The U.S. Library of Congress estimates that between four and 10 million indigenous Indonesians (*Romusha*) were forced to work by the Japanese military. About 270,000 of these Javanese labourers were sent to other Japanese-held areas in South East Asia. Only 52,000 were repatriated to Java after the war, indicating that there was a death rate of 80 per cent.

⁴¹ J.D. Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1972, 175.

⁴² Adrian Vickers, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005; Northern Star newspaper (Lismore, NSW : 1876 - 1954) p.1 Monday 22 October, 1945: According to the Netherlands Indies Government Director of Economic Affairs Dr. J. Van Hoogstraten, at least four million Indigenous Javanese also died from famine and disease during-the Japanese occupation.

After the Japanese had gained control of the country, it became obvious to the radical nationalist and Muslim leaders that instead of the 'self government' with which the Japanese propaganda machine had secured their support, the Japanese' mission was to obliterate all vestiges of the former Dutch colonial regime and to command the Indonesian people to support Japan's war aims. To this end they mobilised Indonesians for their war effort via a myriad fascist-like and Muslim front youth organisations; Seinenden, Heiho, PETA (auxillary troops), Hizbullah – to mention but a few – and a centrally controlled radio service.⁴³

By 1945, they had imparted Japanese ideology and philosophy and trained hundreds of thousands of the Indonesian youth they mobilised in serious guerrilla warfare tactics including suicide squads in readiness to help them fight the Allies. A consequence of this was the emergence of a strong highly politicised revolutionary ethos, along Japanese lines, among the young Indonesians to whom they had given the combat training. As the Japan war machine lost ground it increased the suffering caused by hunger, malnutrition, social and economic despair. The Japanese encouraged Sukarno to assist them to pitch the growing hatred of the Indonesians for the Japanese onto the former Dutch regime.⁴⁴ This made the Indonesian youth want to prevent the Dutch implementing their plans for the modernisation and gradual democratisation of Indonesia as proposed in a London radio address by the Dutch Queen in exile on 7 December 1942.⁴⁵ Suriname, another Dutch colony, did proceed to Independence in that way.⁴⁶

Japan surrenders Indonesians declare Independence

On 15 August 1945 Japan capitulated. The catalyst prompting this was the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 followed by that of Nagasaki three days later on 9 August. Two days later on 17 August, on hearing of Japan's unconditional surrender, and after having been coerced by radical *Pemuda*, Sukarno declared Indonesian Independence.⁴⁷

Almost immediately, Sukarno formed the first government of the Republic of Indonesia with himself as President, Mohammad Hatta as his deputy and Sutan Sjahrir as Premier. They organized much of the infrastructure during the almost six weeks of 'power,' before the caretaker military forces - South East Asian Command (SEAC) arrived to accept Japan's surrender. Sukarno had nothing to lose and all to gain. If Dutch colonial rule were reinstated, then he and Hatta would be imprisoned for treason. In contrast, if they achieved Indonesia's independence, he would become the country's first President. However, the more radical elements of the Nationalist movement that included such personalities as Bung Sutomo preferred to achieve independence via bloodshed. Radical *Pemuda* engaged in the first of such activities in the month before SEAC's arrival, they would increase markedly in ferocity after British troops landed. Initially, both the Dutch and British thought the declaration the work of a few extremely radical individuals, driven by the outgoing Japanese and need not be taken seriously, they had not received Intelligence to the contrary.

South East Asia Command: The British Caretaker Forces

⁴³ C. L. M. Penders, 'The West New Guinea Debauch: Dutch Decolonisation and Indonesia', *The Mercury* newspaper (Hobart, Tas) Wednesday 26 December 1945, 2; De Jonge, 125.

⁴⁴ Sutan Sjahrir, *Onze Strijd*, Perhimpunan Indonesia door Uitgeverij 'Vrij Nederland: Amsterdam, October 1945, 3.

⁴⁵ H. de Graaf, 'The Indonesian Declaration of Independence, 17th August 1945', in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 115 (1959) No: 4, Leiden, 305-327; A. Lucas, 'Revolutionary Youth' in Colin Wild and Peter Carey, (eds) *Born in Fire: The Indonesian Struggle for Independence*, Athens, USA, Ohio University Press, 1986, 152-160.

⁴⁶ In 1954, Suriname opted to transition to a system of limited self-governance with the Netherlands in control of defense and foreign affairs. In 1973, the NPK, a leading government party, opened negotiations that culminated with full independence for Suriname in November 25, 1975.

⁴⁷ H. de Graaf, 'The Indonesian declaration of independence. 17th August 1945, in: *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 115 (1959), no: 4, Leiden, 305-327; A. Lucas, 'Revolutionary Youth' in Colin Wild and Peter Carey, (eds) *Born in Fire: The Indonesian Struggle for Independence*, Athens, USA, Ohio University Press, 1986, 152-160.

At war's end the Indonesian archipelago came unexpectedly under the jurisdiction of South East Asia Command (SEAC) headed by its Supreme Allied Commander in South East Asia – Admiral Earl Louis Mountbatten. However, not only did they lack resources, the territory under command was adjusted on the day of capitulation to include Indochina, the entire Dutch East Indies, Burma, Siam and Malacca. The unexpected end to the war had created a predicament for Mountbatten. SEAC already poorly equipped to carry out its new responsibilities now had an area larger than Europe, in which an estimated 120,000 Allied prisoners of war and internees were in desperate need of transport to rehabilitation centres, and approximately 730,000 Japanese soldiers were waiting to be disarmed and repatriated. Mountbatten had just 350,000 men, 120 transport ships and 50 RAF squadrons at his disposal to accomplish this mission. SEAC encountered, further delays occurred, when on 19 August, General Douglas MacArthur gave orders that no Allied forces were to execute new landings until after the official surrender ceremony on 2 September 1945. Indonesia's distance from the 'main theatres of war' meant it would be almost six weeks before British troops arrived there to accept the surrender.⁴⁸

Military directives, lack of resources and the tardy arrival of the SEAC troops was fertile ground for the subversive activities to progress during the 'power gap' that ensued. In a bid to minimise the dangers associated with such a phenomenon Mountbatten reflects:

I therefore had no alternative but to instruct the Japanese through their Supreme Commander, to maintain order in the areas for which they had been responsible up to the termination of hostilities. (...) Even if the political and military situation had been appreciated at the beginning, it would not have been physically possible (with our limited shipping lift and the delay imposed by General MacArthur's order) to bring in troops earlier than we have done, or in larger numbers.⁴⁹

As feared, the resultant situation facilitated the emergence of a 'culture of violence' with impunity. This is a view shared by Nelson Mandela, who also observes how violence frequently takes root in the absence of democracy, respect for human rights and good governance. The history in this chapter certainly proves the point he is making.⁵⁰ Most affected by these developments were the civilians in Japanese internment camps. Dutch wartime historian Louis de Jonge cites the following internee experience of war' end:

... a meeting of all the camp officials was convened where the Camp Commander conveyed this news to barrack heads....The head of our barrack then came running and puffing into the barrack screaming 'freedom, freedom, freedom'. At first dead silence hung there like a strange threat in the barrack. Then all hell let loose and above the immense uproar a chant became audible and we recognized it as the Wilhelmus (Dutch national anthem). When the barrack next to us had sung the last line we took it up. It was as if it had been agreed.... And finally I could not sing anymore, because my throat was closing up and the tears ran down my face. I felt overcome and ran outside into the rain crying. Then the barrack on the other side of us took up the song. And then the next and the next...And when it was sung by everyone, everyone came out, nearly intoxicated by emotion. Men hugged each other and walked aimlessly from one barrack to another...Everyone seemed to think the same: we must have a flag.... And yes please note an Indo-European had preserved one in the mud in the field in front of the barracks. It was hurriedly put on a flagpole.⁵¹

⁴⁸ McMillan 2005: <http://countrystudies.us/indonesia/16.htm>

⁴⁹ <http://beeldbank.nationaalarchief.nl/viewer/schaduwarchief/2.22.21/119/>; Mountbatten War Diary 14-19 August 1945.

⁵⁰ World report on violence and health 2002, Foreword by Nelson Mandela.

http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/index.html

⁵¹ De Jonge, 532.

However, it was the dropping of relief supplies for camp inmates by the American Air Force that was the first indication that the war had ended for the internees I interviewed, most of whom were primary school aged children at the time. For Els Duyser, the red, white and blue painted airplanes flying over her camp was the first concrete evidence the war was over.⁵² When the same planes flew over the camp where Adri Geerlig's family was interned, her mother turned to her and cried: "*Don't forget it Adri. Don't forget it. Never. Ever. Never*". "However," Adri notes, "we were still not free."⁵³ The American planes had also dropped flyers strongly urging internees to stay put in the camps; first, for the own safety, and second, to assist RAPWI teams to organize their medical care and repatriation.⁵⁴ Most, but not all, internees complied with this request.

When the news broke at Ambarawa camp, where Winnie de Vries and her mother were interned, people started laughing, crying, unbelieving but also feeling nervous and confused. Since most internees had been transported many hundreds of miles from their homes, and had been shifted from camp to camp, few knew if family were alive or dead or where to start looking for them or how to get back 'home'.⁵⁵ Desperate to reunite with family, Donald Schotel, who was around 12 years of age at the time, stole out of Bangkok boys camp with his friend Eduard Lumpken in tow. They wanted to go 'home' and the last place they had been with members of their families was Halmaheira internment camp. Donald recalls:

We were advised not to leave Bangkok. To stay behind the closed gates because outside the first riots had started and the first killings were a fact. We travelled by night and tried to stay out of sight by walking close to hedges and shrubbery."⁵⁶ When Donald and Eduard finally reached Halmaheira camp they found it was filthy and overcrowded. Moreover, the women and children there looked like ghosts. Donald recalls, "People did not walk briskly anymore they just moved very very slowly. On their arms and legs there was no longer any flesh, just skin over bone. They all looked so breakable. These first impressions of the Halmaheira camp in September 1945 are carved in my memory and will never leave me. People were staring at me as if I just come from the moon, but nobody spoke to me. I had shoes on, old shoes, which were too big for me, which I had taken from the belongings of a man after he died in Bangkok. Nobody had shoes anymore at that time. People looked at my shoes in disbelief, but they said nothing, apathetic they uttered hardly a word. On the narrow dusty road was a woman, no, a skeleton, standing and dressed in rags, barefooted, I went on walked past her and then somebody called my name. I turned around – it was my mother. I had not recognized my own mother. She recognized me. Yet it was not more than one year ago that I had last seen her."⁵⁷

Mary Briggs-Koning, a Netherlands East Indies Dutch Australian, then an internee notes: 'While people around the world celebrated the end of the war we, who had survived Japanese concentration camps, were thrust into a life threatening civil war, the Indonesian Revolution.'⁵⁸ Consequently, instead of the freedom they longed for, the Dutch were confronted with extreme unrest and guerrilla warfare and the supreme irony of their Japanese oppressors becoming their 'protectors'. In some instances an even more bizarre situation emerged.

Under the terms of surrender, the Japanese were directed to take scrupulous care of the safety of the Internees and POWs still in Japanese internment camps.⁵⁹ This included

⁵² Els Duyser, pers.com.2008

⁵³ Adri Geerlig, interview, 2007.

⁵⁴ De Jonge, 540.

⁵⁵ Winnie de Vries, interview 2006.

⁵⁶ Donald Schotel, interview 2007.

⁵⁷ Donald Schotel, interview 2006.

⁵⁸ Mary Briggs-Koning, *Footsteps in Memories*, self-published (Hobart, Marken Pty Ltd., 2001).

⁵⁹ <http://beeldbank.nationaalarchief.nl/viewer/schaduwarchief/2.22.21/119/>; Mountbatten War Diary August 14-19, 1945.

putting an immediate stop to enforced labour, distributing medicaments and available clothing and building up a three-month supply of food stocks, plus organising lists of survivors and casualties....⁶⁰

Ernst Kollmann, who was nine at the time and in Halmaheira camp with his family, comments: “So we found ourselves in the odd situation that we were protected by Japanese units under Allied Command but also attacked by Japanese units under Indonesian Command”.⁶¹ The excesses of the Indonesian Freedom Fighters now made it highly unsafe for Dutch to leave either civilian internment or POW camps. The Dutch found themselves caught between the bullets of the Japanese who were defending them and the *Pemudas* trying to massacre them.

An estimated, twenty two thousand men, twenty three thousand women and twenty two thousand children (precise figures are not available) had survived interment. Many were seriously ill and death rates skyrocketed. News of loved ones in other camps was slow to arrive. The waiting had people’s nerves on end because it could be bad news that would leave them bereft, having to contemplate a life without father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister, partner or children. It was for many also the loss of hope for the future that could no longer be, because as many articulated even 60 years later: “When you have grown up in the NEI it is an essential part of who you are....”⁶²

Dutch war historian, Louis De Jonge, notes how in some camps internees hotly debated the declaration of freedom issue. Some Dutch were in total disbelief, others supportive, while yet others scoffed at the very thought.⁶³ At the Baros III internment camp in *Tjimahi*, where the most prominent NEI Government Officials were housed, the news prompted them to action. Having anticipated a capitulation, these men had conceptualized a formula that would ensure 400 of the inmates were in a position to take over leadership roles in government immediately Japan surrendered including re-establishing the police force and maintaining law and order. Also in the absence of a Governor-General or a Lieutenant-Governor General, the law permitted the highest official of the land, in this instance Vice-President of the Board of the Dutch East Indies - Mr H.J. Spit (an inmate of Baros III) – to have the authority transferred from the Japanese to him.⁶⁴ However, when on 21 August, Mr Spit requested a meeting with the Japanese General in Batavia, it was denied. He was told it would have to be authorised by SEAC. When he was finally granted a meeting with the head of the Japanese mission, General Nanganos, he was told that there was no chance such a transfer of authority could take place. SEAC’s instructions were that the Japanese would undertake law and order until they arrived. De Jonge claims that in reality the Japanese were giving as much leeway to the new Republic as possible. Consequently, when Spit composed a telegram to Mountbatten suggesting the Republican activities be curbed in the name of law and order, General Nanganos refused to send it.⁶⁵

Information from diverse sources suggest that the immediate weeks that followed Japan’s capitulation in Java before SEAC arrived, were ‘fairly’ quiet. It appears that at this time it was not uncommon to see Javanese – previous employees of the Dutch internees – come into internment camps with food and to return any material goods that they had taken care of for their former employers. During mid-August

⁶⁰ Han Bing Siong, *The Secret of Major Kido*, The Battle of Semarang 15-19 October, 1945, quoting (Dennis 1987:2, 59, 172, 226), In: *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 152 (1996), no: 3, Leiden, 382.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 255: cited by Ernst Kohlman, rehabilitated at Fairbridge Farm School 1945-1946.

⁶² Margaret Loderichs, Margaret Leidelmeijer, Johan van Langen and Jan Kompagnie, *Verhalen in Documenten: Over het afscheid van Indië*, Amersfoort, Uitgeverij Moesson, 1940-1950, 23; ‘Als je opgroeit in Indië is dat heel essentieel voor wie je bent. De ervaring van je jeugd in Indië laat je niet meer los’.

⁶³ De Jonge, 552.

⁶⁴ de Jonge, 552.

⁶⁵ de Jonge, 552.

and the end of the first week in September 1945, Sutan Sjahrir [recently appointed Premier of the Republic of Indonesia] observed in the rail cars he travelled with groups of Indonesians and Dutch, that the attitude toward the Dutch POWs and Eurasians who had ventured out of the camps to look for their families, was definitely neutral if not friendly”.⁶⁶ Simultaneously, however, away from the public eye, Indonesian independence leaders were taking over key positions from the Japanese. On the positive side, this meant that at least trains and other essential services were still running. However, the first violent acts had also taken place in more remote areas of Java.

By the end of the first week in September, the first small teams of Repatriation of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees (RAPWI) had also been parachuted into Sumatra and Java, mainly to gather intelligence about the situation there. Their discovery of thousands of internees in the interior of Central Java, came as a shock and was one of the main reasons for the significant change in SEAC’s strategy from occupying a few city bridgeheads to caring for internees in Central Java, by now in mortal danger from marauding *Pemuda* gangs.

The Bersiaptijd Unfolds

The few Dutch internees from the Batavia area prepared to take the risk had also begun to leave the internment camps to look for family members who had survived in other camps. Others went looking to move back into their homes. Vickers notes that by late September, after a series of incidents involving pro-Dutch Eurasians in which atrocities were committed against Dutch prisoners, the spirit of revolution arose in all its passionate ugliness.⁶⁷ “Courage rose like a snake in the grass. Self-confidence and nationalism welled up like froth in beer”. Indonesian writer Idrus described it as the moment the revolutionary hero, a young man with long hair, dressed in coolie trousers made of sacking, bandana on his head, samurai sword at his waist, was born.⁶⁸ Like cowboys[standing] in the middle of the road with revolvers on their hips and knives in their belts, most were aged from 15-25 years. Both males and females **had been** intimidated into joining the movement. By the second half of September 1945, thus before SEAC arrived, trains full of bandana wearing *Pemuda* yelling *Merdeka* were seen to pass through station after station heading towards central Java. It would be difficult to determine to what extent *Pemuda* violence – terrorised other Indonesians into, if not overtly supporting them, then at least not obstructing them. They were a formidable combat force on murderous rampages.

From mid-September *Pemuda* attitudes toward Dutch and Eurasian civilians became increasingly hostile. Indonesian propaganda became more aggressive, and Japanese soldiers were assaulted for refusing to hand over weapons. The first atrocities committed by *Pemuda* were against Indo-Europeans. Graffiti also started to appear on the walls in Batavia carrying explicit slogans such as: ‘*Death to the Ambonese and Indos!*’ *Death to the NICA dogs*, and aggressive but less threatening: ‘*Indonesia for the Indonesians*’.⁶⁹ By the end of September, *Pemudas* had begun to take over government buildings and utilities in cities as far apart as Yogyakarta, Solo, Malang, Bandung, Surabaya and Batavia.

The increasing intensity of fighting and violence over the months of October and November 1945 became known as the *Bersiapt* period, from the warning cry

⁶⁶ Sutan Sjahrir, *Out of Exile*, Editor, Maria Duchâteau Sjahrir. Translated by, Charles Wolf. Publisher, J. Day Co., 1949, 260.

⁶⁷ Vickers, *History of Modern Indonesia*, 1-28.

⁶⁸ Idrus Nasir Djajadiningrat. *The Beginnings of the Indonesian-Dutch Negotiations and the Hoge Veluwe Talks*, (New York: Monograph Series Modern

Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Department of Far Eastern Studies, Cornell University Ithaca 1958).

⁶⁹ *Western Mail*, 18 October, 1945, 21.

“*Bersiap!*” (Stand prepared) with which the young nationalists would summon their members to do battle. This was followed by the nationalist salute “*Merdeka*” (*freedom*) – their ferocious war cry. This they would shout as their fighters entered a street, accompanied by noisy beating of iron stakes against fences and light poles before surrounding the houses of their victims who they would then torture and murder.

Internment camps in isolated areas were among the first to experience violent *Pemuda* attacks. Mrs W. Krijgsveld, who compiled a compendium of *Bersiap* events at Ambarawa Camp, in Central Java, from the diaries of seven women and the notebooks of another five, sums up the situation there on 21 August 1945, which was just hours just after they had been informed of the Japanese surrender:

Heavy artillery fire from Freedom Fighters flattened half the hospital and was especially heavy near barrack ten. People from this barrack subsequently sought shelter in the already overly crowded Barrack Nine where they slept on the floor for two nights. The following night Indonesian freedom fighters again entered the unprotected camp and this time herded the inmates onto a grass field where they proceeded to throw live hand grenades into the crowd. Even so and despite a number of children and adults having thrown some grenades back at the extremists before they exploded, 13 Dutch died and 125 were injured. A number of the injured also died later. On other nights *Pemudas* threw hand grenades into crowded barracks, killing more inmates.⁷⁰

Where were the liberators? A month after ‘liberation’ there was still no sign of the British troops. In fact for most internees, apart from increased food rations, the condition of their daily lives had hardly changed. At Kampong Makassar (internment camp), between Batavia en Buitenzorg, every day life was still plagued by the millions of bed bugs that lived in the bamboo of the walls and window frames, and super-sized cockroaches, rats as big as cats with long thin tails, and some as emaciated as the internees. To make matters worse they could not wash the floors. In the rain the floor would get wet and turn to mud or form a creek inside the huts. The toilets were small huts hanging over an open drain that had become increasingly difficult to use for inmates who, due to the paralysis that accompanied severe Beri Beri, could no longer squat. As for the bathroom, in reality it was just four streams of water. To ‘shower’, inmates had to catch water in small containers and throw it over each other.⁷¹ The story was the same for all the interned. Even so the fittest among them set about establishing a Red Cross organization to help fellow internees find family members.

Dutch women and children who experienced the revolution say it was more frightening even than their internment under the Japanese, as the atrocities with which they were now confronted were worse even than those inflicted by the Japanese.⁷² Eduard Lumkeman will never forget the horror he felt when his parents told him about the murder by *Pemuda* of two children of friends of theirs, both around Eduard’s age of 14 at the time: the girl was doused in petrol and set alight, the boy *getjintjangd* (hacked to pieces).

⁷⁰ Chronology of events in Ambarawa: Camp 6, compiled by: W.Krijgsveld (Postbus 165, 9750 A D, Haren); from the diaries of: Miep v/d Kroogt, Mrs. Krijgsveld, Mrs. Ouwejan, Mrs. Tjakkes, Atie te Velde, Ike te Velde, Mrs. Wijna, and notebooks of Mrs. Burgerhoudt and Mrs. van Voorenveld; also from reports of Dr. E.Krijgsveld and from the later (1948) notes by Mrs. Wielenga (fuku-kaitjo), and the books: *A Valley in Ambarawa*, and *Patience and Bluff* by Mrs. Petra Groen.

⁷¹ De Jonge, 552.

⁷² J. Krijgsveld, 2002.

During the *Bersiap*, Winnie de Vries, her mother and brother were interned for their protection in a high school building in Semarang, she recalls:

... one day a little pickup car came up and in the back were many dead (Indonesian, Japanese and Dutch). Then we heard we were to be protected against *Pemuda* by our former [Japanese] Tormentors! Following this going down to our meals there was a lot of shooting going on. [So we thought] no. Better we stay hungry than dead!⁷³

Eduard, his mother and sister were also relocated to the high school building from Halmaheira camp, where Eduard had found them after leaving Bangkok:

The high school building at Semarang was situated in a rather isolated spot on a slope....one early morning, we woke to yelling and singing (*merdeka* and *pottong lèhèr* meaning to cut your throat) of a crowd of Indonesian people, approaching to slaughter us. The Japanese guards, who had to protect us, were disarmed and arrested some days earlier by the Indonesians,...they had also [taken] Dutch boys of 14 years and older. They took my friend but not me because they thought me too small, I felt offended! So only women and children were left in the building. We didn't know that the Japanese in the prison in their cell next to the Dutch boys had been machine gunned down. Somehow other Japanese were informed and they managed to conquer the machine gun and released the Dutch boys. These and other incidences engendered a revenge mentality in many of the Japanese who then started fighting the *Pemuda*. Just when the crowd approached one side of the premise the Japanese arrived at the opposite side and our building became the battlefield. The Japanese won and so we are still alive. After that the Gurkhas came.⁷⁴

The escalating situation was most desperate in Central Java. SEAC found removing internees from those camps to safety extremely dangerous. October became a bloodbath. Frederick notes that tensions rapidly rose as news spread of the impending landing of Allied forces, widely thought to include Dutch military and civilians poised to establish control under a NICA. Another issue that added fuel to the fire the large numbers of Japanese firearms and other weaponry seized by *Pemuda* in Surabaya in the last days of September and beginning of October.⁷⁵ Frederick holds a combination of the tentative military known then as the *Badan Keamanan Indonesia* (BKR, People's Security Force), and the local and regional police forces, plus the PRI, Youth of the Indonesian Republic founded on 21 September 1945 by young mostly under 30, urban, intellectual, politically leftist, and vaguely populist political activists which saw itself as both support and driver for the (in their view) still weak and insufficiently dynamic Republican government responsible for the violence in Surabaya. By the end of September, 1945 the PRI was equal if not better in strength (arms and membership) as the BKR.⁷⁶

Extremist *Pemuda* groups also arrested numerous Dutch and Eurasian men: 42 of the latter were killed in the basement of the 'Simpang Club' – where many had their

⁷³ Winnie de Vries, pers. Com., 2008

⁷⁴ Eduard Lumkeman, pers. com. 2007: At last they could seek greater assistance for Eduard's sister Nora who was very ill at that time from the Djarak seeds, that are poisonous. She had eaten them to diminish her excruciating hunger. She was just skin and bone and had nearly died. Nora, per. Com. 2007 remembers as most impactful after arrival for rehabilitation in Western Australia for rehabilitation sitting in the hospital grounds with a friend both pinching themselves hardly daring to believe that they were now safe.

⁷⁵ Frederick, 362.

⁷⁶ Frederick, 362.

eyes gouged out first.⁷⁷ Several hundred were also tortured in the ‘Kalisosok Prison’. All over town truckloads of white males had been driven to the prison told that they were being taken in for protection – however, in reality they were being imprisoned. Awaiting them was an ‘enflamed’ kampung population. Aroused crowds streamed from the central city kampung, shouting “kill the NICA dogs” and ‘Filthy Dutch!’ as they followed the vehicles to their destinations. At the prison, the men and boys were ordered to run the ‘gauntlet’, that is run towards the entryway of the prison while an angry mob hacked at them with spears and axes.⁷⁸ Frederick notes how:

...the very limited literature available on the Simpang affair and the accompanying events at Kalisosok prison [makes them] appear [as if they stand] alone, without direct or indirect connections to other events of extreme violence...that this view is misleading. In Surabaya itself there were several other locations where group torture and murder of Europeans, Eurasian and others is known to have taken place between mid-October and early November 1945. He also questions the involvement of *Pemuda Republik Indonesia* (PKI).

However, who should be held responsible local or central authorities? Frederick cites Robert Cribb who holds the *rakyat* (a faceless aimless mobism or masses) responsible.⁷⁹ Frederick agrees that while this may have been the case in some instances that in others ‘careful examination, shows instead complex relations between mobs and their individual leaders or groups from specific organisations. Frederick notes further how...“in many cases fairly obvious patterns of leadership and manipulation can be made out...that in others its perpetrators were educated, urban, politically conscious and active *Pemuda* – young men who, as members of unofficial militia such as the PRI, or of the Republican military (BKR, TKR, and TNI and military police) have been held up in the national memory as heroes of resistance and freedom fighting – that are deeply implicated in these killings. He notes although, “their precise role surely varied according to individual, group, circumstance, and perhaps other variables...[that] both the level and types of [their] involvement go far beyond what either history or memory now reflect”.⁸⁰ Frederick holds that many of the Bersiap killings in East Java were related to detention of Dutch and Eurasians by pro-Republican forces official and otherwise.⁸¹ Jan Wagtendonk estimates that around 3,500 Europeans died at the hands of *Pemuda* during the Bersiap period and that another 16,000 went missing, presumably having met the same fate.⁸² Frederick claims the number was between 25,000-30,000, Dutch and Eurasians which represented around 10 percent of the NEI Dutch population.⁸³

British military historian, Richard McMillan, contends that the British sought every means to remain neutral by requesting the Republican leadership cooperate with them to achieve their aims to keep internees safe and repatriate Japanese troops. The Japanese military response was varied. Internees note that not all Japanese supported the Independence movement many fulfilled the ‘terms of surrender’ to the

⁷⁷ Jan A. Krancher, *The Defining Years of the Dutch East Indies, 1942-1949; Survivors' Accounts of Japanese Invasion and Enslavement of Europeans and the Revolution that Created Free Indonesia*, Portland USA: Book News Inc., 2003.

⁷⁸ William H. Frederick, *Visions and Heat: The Making of the Indonesian Revolution*, Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1989.

⁷⁹ Frederick, 367; Robert Cribb, *Gangsters and Revolutionaries: The Jakarta People's Militia and the Indonesian Revolution 1945-1949* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 1991).

⁸⁰ Frederick, 369-370.

⁸¹ Frederick, 361.

⁸² Dr L.De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereld oorlog 1939-1945: Deel IIa eerste helft, Nederlands-Indië I* (S'Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij 1984) 524.

⁸³

letter of the law.⁸⁴ The protection of the internees in their care in the face of extreme danger caused many internees to reverse the negative views they held of the Japanese.⁸⁵ Other Japanese, however, gave radical *Pemuda* ready access to weapons in defiance of the Allies.⁸⁶ Still others would only react when really provoked. Eventually neither the Japanese in Semarang, nor the British in Surabaya could avoid involvement, either to protect internees, or members of their own troops or in retaliation for unbidden attacks and murders on their ranks. Although the British (Indian) troops had control of the key areas in Surabaya, threats, murders and hostage taking by *Pemuda* were rife.

By mid October 1945, Indonesian nationalists guerrillas had also declared a general food boycott against the Europeans. They followed up this action by cutting off supplies of water and electricity to the internment camps where most Europeans still resided. During the months of October, November and December 1945, major Javanese cities became the scene of continuous kidnappings, disappearances, shootings, thefts and murders. The main victims of the early violence seemed to be Indo-European (Eurasians, Chinese and Moluccan families).⁸⁷ They were specifically targeted because they were 'considered pro-Dutch', also as most were unarmed and living outside of internment camps they were easy targets.

Remco Rabin reports an incident in which *Pemuda* took three Eurasian women from an office: stripped them naked, handed them around to be raped by countless men then tortured them with burning iron rods before having their throats cut and their bodies dumped in a hole in the ground. *Pemuda* are also known to have commissioned executioners to undertake killings the list is endless. Frederick notes that sexual mutilation of Dutch and Eurasian women appears to have been more common than of men but that British and British-Indian troops were also mutilated in the most grisly fashion.⁸⁸

In Surabaya, on 28 October 1945, *Pemuda* attacked a convoy of European and Indo-European women and children who were being transported from Gubeng neighbourhood to the protection of camp Darmo. Some of my informants, who were among those transported from this camp remain forever thankful they were in the second transport. They recall that the last five hundred women and children to leave the camp for the city after them, were assaulted by *Pemuda* who threw hand grenades into the crowded trucks, and when internees tried to jump out the *Pemuda* impaled them on bamboo spears.⁸⁹ Frederick adds that in the case of the Gubeng transport that all the victims were women and children. In addition that there is 'much that is uncertain about the precise roles of the TKR and PRI troops in the event but that the last convoy was attacked by well-armed, uniformed Indonesian forces, and then also by armed ordinary Indonesians from a nearby kampong (urban off-street neighbourhood) who he believes were armed by the PRI and that at some point during the fighting over the convoy and its human prize, TKR troops ended up battling against their own countrymen: PRI Youth and local residents whom they had helped to organize. Moreover that the accounting of victims shows 304 transportees and 39 military guards were killed. Frederick notes that according to Indonesian eyewitness reports, that many of the victims were killed not as a result of

⁸⁴ Lumkeman, 2007.

⁸⁵ Han Bing Siong, The Secret of Major Kido, The Battle of Semarang 15-19 October, 1945, quoting (Dennis 1987:2, 59, 172, 226), In: *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 152 (1996), no: 3, Leiden, 382.

⁸⁶ Merle C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c.1300* (Second ed.) MacMillan, 1993) 27.

⁸⁷ Vickers, 2005; Benedict Anderson, *Java in the time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance 1944-1946*, Jakarta, Indonesia: Equinox Publishing, 2006.

⁸⁸ Frederick, 8.

⁸⁹ Winnie de Vries, pers. Com., 2007.

the general fighting but later in scenes of grisly torture in which the mouths of surviving women were reportedly cut open and stuffed with the severed genitals of British-Indian soldiers, and more than a dozen youths paraded through the street with the heads of Dutch or Eurasian women and British-Indian soldiers impaled on bamboo spears. Two days later, on 30 October Brigadier Mallaby was also killed in Surabaya.⁹⁰

General Christianson's reaction to the attack resulted in a general directive to Indonesians. On one November 1945, in a memo from SACSEA to Cabinet Offices Christensen articulates the general warning sent to *Pemuda* following the unprovoked attack on the Gubeng transport. It also broke the truce that had been agreed on in the presence of Sukarno and Hatta. The directive noted:

Those direct and unprovoked attacks upon British forces cannot in any circumstances be permitted and unless the INDONESIANS who have committed those acts surrender to my forces I intend to bring the whole weight of my sea land and air forces and all the weapons of modern war against them until they are crushed. If in the process innocent INDONESIANS should be killed the sole responsibility will rest with those INDONESIANS who have committed the crime I have named. I warn all INDONESIANS throughout Java that they should have nothing to do with the extremist element and they should co-operate with my forces and live in peace and harmony with them. For if force is used against my troops it will be met with force. I am determined to maintain law and order and I look to all good INDONESIANS to support me in this task.⁹¹

A full-scale battle developed between the *Gurkhas* and Indonesian extremists, the bloodiest of the revolution. Ferocious fighting erupted when 6,000 Indian troops landed in the city to evacuate European internees. Indonesian extremists were led into battle by a defiant and revered revolutionary leader, Bung Sutomo, who urged his troops to fight to the death, to let their blood spill until all foreign troops had been expelled.⁹²

On 10 November, after issuing the above warning to no avail, the British retaliated with a punitive sweep from air, sea and land. The Indonesians held on for three weeks. Estimates of Indonesian deaths range from between 6,300 and 15,000, and perhaps 200,000 fled the devastated city. British and Indian casualties totalled approximately 600.⁹³

McMillan notes an important point – that the Dutch had nothing to do with the battle at Surabaya. Surabaya commemorates Heroes day each year in honour of the Indonesian deaths. Yet this battle was instigated by the Indonesians and apparently against the wishes of Sukarno and Hatta. The killings by extremist of *Ghurkas* just described and of the Japanese in the prison cell beforehand brought on Japanese and British wrath against *Pemuda*. McMillan notes the level of summary justice utilised

⁹⁰ Frederick, 366-367, quotes the following references: Koninklijke Olie in Indië Bergen:Bonnevillie, 1997), pp. 211-213, drawing on H.Itzig heine, 'Een rapport van het Gubeng Transport' (1992), Nedelandse Instituut Oorlog's Documentatie NIOD, IC, 1132. See also NL-HaNA, PG, 1134, Ondervragings rapport AA27/VDK 20 March 1946; CAD-MvD, VALI,GG41, 105, 'regionaa; verslag van Oost Java tot April 1946', 7; NIOD, IC, 032368, 032385, and 068665; Public records Office, Kew [now National Archives; henceforth PRO], WO203, 2650d.

⁹¹ Nationaal Archief. Digital collective. Toegang 2.22.21, inv.nr.167. National Archives, War Office 203, inv.nr.2455, out of the dossier 'Death of Brig. Mallaby (detail); Mark Loderichs,Margaret Leidelmeijer, Johan van Langen and Jan Kompagnie, Verhalen in Documenten: Over het afscheid van Indië, Amersvoort, Uitgeverij Moesson,1940-1950, 23; Inez Hollander. *Silenced Voices, Uncovering a Family's Colonial History* (Athens: Phio University Press, Ohio University Research in International Studies, South East Asia Series No.119, 2008).

⁹² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96bvaapA7O4>.

⁹³ London HMSO, 1965) S Woodburn, *The War Against Japan*

by British troops as a way to maintain law and order to enable them to carry out their duties. However, a common theme *Pemuda Pemuda* violence releases in Japanese and British troops is reprisals - revenge for the inhumane grisly killings of Europeans and all groups including their own countrymen whom *Pemuda* considered pro-Dutch. There are endless gruesome examples too many to cite.

The situation became so dangerous that before long Dutch internees were joined in their already overcrowded camps by thousands of *Eurasian* Dutch. Considered pro-Dutch, by extremist *Pemuda* these Eurasians had every reason to fear for their lives. Dutch historian Wim Willems, observed the deterioration of the situation, to the point where by 1 November 1945, SEAC were responsible for 231,750 *Indos* and Europeans interned for their safety against attacks by *Pemuda* mobs.⁹⁴ Depending on the camp's location, their guards could be either British, Japanese or Republican Indonesians. Not all camps operated under the auspices of SEAC, by 1946, the Republican Army [TRI] also had camps in which they had interned Dutch and Eurasian prisoners. Researchers claim these were more brutal than those run by the Japanese.⁹⁵ Moreover, they were to keep people imprisoned there well into 1947, when they were freed by the Linggarjati Cirebon agreement.⁹⁶

Over the next weeks *Pemuda* actions become increasingly more violent and far-reaching.⁹⁷ Large numbers of the youthful members of Indonesian society now comprised lawless gangs. And, as Remco Rabin and Robert Cribb have both explained, these murderous gangs often comprised radical *Pemuda* as well as Indonesian Republican army recruits, village heads and hired executioners.⁹⁸

During the weeks before the Allied troops arrival it was never clear to the internees what would happen next or who should be held responsible. "Consequently," as Mary Briggs-Koning, rightly points out, "the banning of Dutch ships in Australian ports by the Australian wharf labourers greatly diminished assistance to provide us with much needed supplies of food, medicines and a means of leaving the country."⁹⁹ It is necessary now to shift focus back to Australia.

The situation in Australia

On 21 August 1945, the day internees in the NEI were told the war had ended, thus five days after the Declaration of Independence, the CPA newspaper *Tribune* commented under its section policy direction:

Australia must raise the strongest voice to see that her 70 million Indonesian neighbours win their freedom. A fettered Indonesia in the near north carries a constant threat of political and economic instability to Australian trade and foreign policy.¹⁰⁰

Described as a journalist/publicist, and one of Australia's best-known Cold War Communists¹⁰¹ Lockwood (1908-1997), noted that the CPA's appeal to public

⁹⁴ Wim Willems, *Uittocht uit Indië 1945-1949* (Amsterdam, Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2001); Peters, *From Tyranny to Freedom*, Perth: Black Swan Press, 2009.

⁹⁵ Mary C. van Delden, *De Republikeinse Kampen in Nederlands Indië, Oktober 1945 – Mei 1947*, (thesis 2007).
www.japanseburgerkampen.nl; www.japansekrijgsgevangenkampen.nl

⁹⁶ Jan van Wagendonk, *Testimonies of the Japanese Occupation of the Dutch East Indies*, Foundation for the Japanese Honorary Debts, 2007, 95; see also their website website: www.jesinfo.org.

⁹⁷ De Jonge, 556.

⁹⁸ Sutan Sjahrir, *Our struggle*. Ithaca, N.Y : Modern Indonesia Project, southeast Asia Program, Dept. of Asian studies, Cornell University, 1968

⁹⁹ Mary Briggs-Koning, *Footsteps in Memories*, self-published (Hobart, Marken Pty Ltd., 2001).

¹⁰⁰ R. Lockwood, *Tribune*, 21 August 1945.

¹⁰¹ Rowan Cahill, *Geo-politics of a Soul* Rupert Lockwood 1908-1997, *Labour History*, No.72, May 1997, pp. 248-251.

support, while ‘angled to national interest’ was concurrently also couched in ‘wage claim terms’ as this would have greater appeal to the broader union movement than would Indonesian Independence. The first ships to be affected by the Black Bans were two ex-DEMS VanHeutz and Karsik.¹⁰²

Despite impassioned pleas from NICA, Lord Louis Mountbatten, Dutch troops who had arrived for training in Australia a few weeks earlier who were unable to assist in the NEI because of the boycott,¹⁰³ the NEI Dutch whose lives were endangered, even Trades and Labour organisations in the Netherlands, and RAPWI teams living in mortal fear in Java and many teams were slaughtered, the ‘Black Ban’ on Dutch military and merchant ships was to last – though not entirely effectively – until 1947.¹⁰⁴

This also regardless of confirmation that the ‘Mercy Ships’ were to protect and transport Dutch internees to safe zones away from extremist gangs on killing rampages, and transport desperately needed medicines, foodstuff and the building materials required to repair both the infrastructure and seriously depleted agricultural sector.

Robert Menzies, the Leader of the Opposition, denounced the shipping ban and claimed the unions were running foreign affairs. Questions in Parliament were directed at the Acting Minister of External Affairs by M. Byrne, Press Secretary to the Leader of the Australian Country Party, concerning the impact on Dutch Australian relationships of the shipping ban. He:

Demand(ed) that the Government order... an immediate investigation as to whether indictments could be presented under the section of the Act against the communists who are [were] virtually accessories before the fact in the Indonesian trouble. The position regarding communists behind the industrial dislocation should also be investigated in relation to this same section.¹⁰⁵

This was also the opinion of the mainstream press who were simultaneously printing articles about the revolution and its impact on innocent Netherlands East Indies Dutch civilian internees and POWs. In contrast, the Australian Labor Government supported the Indonesian Republic, at least at the United Nations level, set up after the war; here the personal ambitions of Chifley¹⁰⁶ and Evatt played a key role, because they were keen to be seen supporting the rights of newly emerging nations. Bill Guy in his biography of Clyde Cameron, claims Evatt set about promoting Indonesian Independence at the United Nations level where he had an influential voice as a result of his contribution to the creation of this international organisation.¹⁰⁷

At home, Evatt and Chifley supported it in a practical way. They had to tread carefully because of Australia’s wartime agreement with its allies, including the Netherlands, carried over to an extent into peacetime. Australia had become host to NICA in exile in March 1942, following the occupation of the Dutch colony. Dutch warships, merchant ships and planes that had escaped from the Japanese were based

¹⁰² Lockwood, 93-94.

¹⁰³ Karla Weller, *The ‘Casino Boys’, Dutch Air Force volunteers in Australia 1945-1946*, Sydney NSW, 2007; compilation of many stories that all mention they were unable to go to the NEI because of the shipping bans.

¹⁰⁴ While the Dutch were able to load with the help of Dutch troops and volunteers, and shift the ships by innovative means, the large quantity of supplies held in warehouses proved more difficult.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from the Press Secretary of the leader of the Country party.

¹⁰⁶ J. Côte

¹⁰⁷ Bill Guy, *A life on the left: a biography of Clyde Cameron*, ARTSA, 1999, p.115.

in Australia working on the war effort and to keep Australia safe for the entire war. Despite the Allegiance, the Australian Government adopted a passive strategy of support for the boycott campaign – doing little to encourage it but nothing to discourage it either. Bill Guy claims their actions greatly accelerated Indonesia Independence and brought Evatt a great deal of prestige internationally.¹⁰⁸ Guy also claims some of the boycotts infringed the ‘emergency and security laws’ that Evatt as Attorney General administered, so he could have intervened to order a lifting of the bans. Chifley as Prime Minister could have invoked emergency powers to the same end. They were under considerable pressure from Menzies, other Opposition front-benchers and the mainstream press to take action to prevent the unions dictating foreign policy.

Australian mainstream press reporting during the Bersiap tijd in Java

Trawling through TROVE the NLA search engine for digitised newspapers from around Australia from 1945-1946, I uncovered a plethora of articles devoted to the black ban on Dutch ships – mostly in favour of stopping the ban. There is also a myriad articles devoted to describing the intolerable situation in Java confronting Dutch, Eurasians and anyone considered remotely loyal to the Dutch. There are too many to list here so I have selected a few that will give readers a comprehensive insight into the most representative content. I also include relevant input from Dutch papers at the time to explain some themes. Few people including some Republican leaders could make sense of the ‘excesses’ of *Pemuda* violence. Reporters believed *Pemuda* statements needed analysing. The *Advertiser* (Adelaide, SA) 10 October 1945, quote ‘The Times’ special correspondent in Batavia, Ian Morrison. In his opinion, *Pemuda* expressions such as... "We fight for 10 million people" and "We Indonesians demand freedom" were wildly overstated given that no more than 5 per cent of the NEI's 70 million had a real political national consciousness and that a further 10 per cent were young men getting a tremendous kick out of driving cars which do not belong to them, erecting barricades, stopping European officers in cars, marching at night with spears and knives, and beating up and occasionally, carving up Japanese and Eurasians If they were sufficiently defenceless.¹⁰⁹ Observations by the headman of a kampong, and quoted by a correspondent in *The Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton, Queensland) on Monday 22 October 1945, offer a similar vision, but in this instance directed at officers of the Indonesian Peace Preservation Corps (BKR) whom he describes as “immature youths wearing bright green uniforms carrying swords as big as themselves... like boy scouts, but such scouts are dangerous...”¹¹⁰

It appeared unclear as to whether perpetrators were extremist *Pemuda* or members of BKR! As Remco Rabin and Robert Cribb have both explained, these murderous gangs often comprised radical *Pemuda* as well as Indonesian Republican army recruits, village heads and hired executioners.¹¹¹ Then there is the question of intimidation. The *Herald* 11 October 1945, reports Chinese were flying the Indonesian flag outside their property as a safety measure after being violently coerced into swearing allegiance to the independence movement by extremist *Pemuda*.¹¹²

Many newspaper reporters insisted that *Pemuda* violence threatened and terrorised many Indonesians into, if not overtly supporting them, then at least not obstructing them. A reporter attached to *Het Dagblad*, a Netherlands paper, in an article dated 8 February 1946, described the rapid gain in public momentum for freedom as follows: After the Japanese capitulated and the republican government had proclaimed Independence, the police in the kampongs

¹⁰⁸ Bill Guy, *A life on the left: a biography of Clyde Cameron*, ARTSA, 1999, p.115.

¹⁰⁹ The *Advertiser* (Adelaide, SA) Wednesday 10 October 1945, 1.

¹¹⁰ The *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton, Queensland), Monday 22 October 1945, 8.

¹¹¹ Sjahrir

¹¹² <http://beeldbank.nationaalarchief.nl/viewer/schaduwarchief/2.22.21/787/0158> Herald 11 October – coercion by *Pemuda*

remained, and the *Kei Bo Dan* and *Seinendan* organisations created by the Japanese continued their watch. The only changes were amalgamations of *Pemuda* organisations that were also significantly increased by home-coming young men when the Japanese disbanded the *PETA* and *Heiho*. These organisations were subsequently able to form powerful combat groups from unemployed PETA and Heiho leaders who were among groups that received serious combat training Japanese style. The training had imbued many with a “we live and die together” mentality. The correspondent noted the development had commenced from the first day of capitulation (long before the Allies arrived), and across the length and breadth of cities as well as in the countryside. In many places the public were subjected to daily renditions of ‘Bersiap behaviours’.

Although *Pemuda* are generally described as young, lower class boys some were girls *pemudi*. Remco Rabin notes that they were not all that young, but however that most were from the lower classes from Kampongs. After the miserable time they had during the Japanese Occupation the power vacuum sent many into a state of excitement, of unprecedented freedom and opportunities. In the months after the proclamation of independence before a regular Indonesian army was constituted, a myriad battle groups each with their own leader and own agenda emerged over whom the recently established Republican Government found they could not assert authority. The sense of crisis and political urgency and the prospect of plundering were, according to Rabin, what encouraged many young people to join these combat groups. It may also have been the need to find a sense of self and belonging after the sudden capitulation of the Japanese had the organisations that made sense of their every day life world suddenly disband and leave them at loose ends in terms of employment and the identity it had given them albeit Japanese driven.

Most of the violence at that time was committed by radical nationalists: Islamist armed groups such as Hezbollah and Sabillilah, and groups with more criminal backgrounds who rejected the authority of the fledgling army of the Republic of Indonesia and drew their own plan instead. Consequently it was difficult for outsiders to differentiate between the spectator, political fighter and felon - and in many instances they were one and the same.¹¹³

However, violence there was some retaliation from the Dutch side. Clashes then also broke out between *Pemuda* and the only pro-Dutch armed forces that existed on Java at that time, small re-grouped South Maluku KNIL (Royal Netherlands Indonesian Army) units. *Pemuda* mobs lynched a Eurasian youth who confronted them about his display of the Dutch flag. The KNIL groups subsequently retaliated against any attacks by *Pemuda* on their perceived enemies, namely Dutch prisoners, Chinese, Eurasians and Japanese who would not hand over weapons.¹¹⁴ Although their numbers were small their autonomous contra-terror operations escalated to the point that the British military leadership wanted to de-mobilise them from the city.¹¹⁵ The action of these Eurasian groups gave Sukarno an excuse to seek international attention. The *Canberra Times* on Monday 22 October 1945 noted that the radiogram he sent to President Truman contained an appeal in the name of America’s neutrality to stop allowing ‘Dutch forces’ in Indonesia, seeking to quell the independence movement, whom he claimed were using American equipment and uniforms.¹¹⁶

News correspondents saw these behaviours as whipped up by the extreme privations imposed during the Japanese Occupation and inflamed by the arrival of the British with a few Dutch in

¹¹³ <http://www.historischnieuwsblad.nl/nl/artikel/27900/het-geweld-van-de-bersiap.html>

¹¹⁴ Christopher Harper, Tim Bayly *Forgotten Wars, Freedom and revolution in Southeast Asia* (Publisher: Harvard University Press, 2006) 181-182.

¹¹⁵ Christopher Harper, Tim Bayly *Forgotten Wars, Freedom and revolution in Southeast Asia* (Publisher: Harvard University Press, 2006) 181-182.

¹¹⁶ The *Canberra Times*, Monday 22 October 1945, Page 1.

tow but under their command.¹¹⁷ The author of *Het Dagblad* article also asserts that, the ‘Bersiap’ would not have been as successful [as it was] if seditious *Pemuda* had not been able to artificially instil a state of fear, suspicion and anxiety into the ‘wretched innocent masses’, who actually understood very little about the underlying politics. They are warned that any presence of the British and Dutch is a new menace of foreign domination. The reporter of the *Dagblad* claims *Pemuda* used ‘Japanese cunning’ to frightened the masses into fearing what the forthcoming Allies might do. Moreover, when they had managed to change the masses anxiety and fear into hatred and anger, they empowered ‘mobs’ by putting weapons into their hands.¹¹⁸ A reporter from the *West Australian* makes comparable observations:

The most striking manifestation of Java’s new spirit is that it has dazed most of the population. It is so vicious in its intensity that it is at first incomprehensible. It has touched the tattered peasant in countless villages and paddy fields. It is the passion of every youth. It is symbolised in the savage Nationalist salute that is part of every greeting and is always accompanied by the ferocious yell ‘*merdeka*’ [independence] — their cry for freedom.... It is certain death to dissent.¹¹⁹

To the world it may have seemed like the whole nation was supportive but that is far from the case. The *Western Australian* newspaper correspondent notes:

A reporter attached to the *West Australian* designates the TKR (Peace Preservation Corp) the most dangerous power in Java and the youth (*Pemuda*) movement second. He claims, “It has reached the stage where practically every youth is forced to join. It is led by a group of fanatics who talk only fight to the masses. In its ranks lurk extremists causing atrocities....” Whether attached to the extremist *Pemuda* mobs or the Republican established security force the youth have all been imbued with suspicious Europeans and this does not bode well for RAPWI teams.¹²⁰

With the deployment of the RAPWI teams in early September and their discovery of thousands of internees in Semarang in the interior of Central Java, it became clear that a force would have to be dispatched to protect them and gather them in. It had not originally been the British intention to go to Central Java, but military reports confirmed that the severity and volatility of the situation there required their immediate attention. The protection of the internees in Central Java came to assume great importance when it was also discovered that Indonesian extremists were surrounding the camps and refusing to let food in.¹²¹ *Pemuda* were becoming more powerful by the day.

The *West Australian* newspaper (Perth, WA) Thursday 11 October 1945 p.7 notes: Java Disorder, RAPWI hold-up. Urgent work blocked. Nationalists Out of Hand. (From Our Special Representative.) BATAVIA, Oct 8 The RAPWI hold-up is serious. The oragnisation had completed the first part of its task. It had air-dropped, railed or trucked urgent supplies, medical stores and comforts to outlying camps and evacuated 2,400 prisoners of war and internees from Java, and moved to hospitals the worst sickness cases. Every internee in Batavia is now getting a daily ration of butter, eggs, milk and fruit. Those outside Batavia get the same ration every second day. The death-rate has been brought down from 30 daily to three. There are still in RAPWI's hands 55,000 people, about half of whom are outside Batavia, many in crowded camps in unhealthy parts of central Java. Unless these are removed before the onset of the rains there is a probability of many dying from dysentery when the wet season starts. The policy is to

¹¹⁷ *West Australian* 26 December, 1945, 5. ‘National Movement Strong: Teeming Millions Enthralled’.

¹¹⁸ *Het Dagblad*, 8 February 1946, 1.

¹¹⁹ See *Herald* 11 October 1945.

¹²⁰ *West Australian Newspapers*, 26 December 1945, 5.

¹²¹ William H. Frederick, *Visions and Heat: The Making of the Indonesian Revolution*, Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1989.

thin-out all camps and unite families in healthy, comfortable hill stations such as Malang and Ambarawa. RAPWI officials say that all this work is now at a standstill. In the main centre of Bandoeng, Semarang and Surabaya the Nationalists have disarmed the Japanese and seized their weapons and armoured cars and are preventing movement of R.A.P.WI. transport. In Surabaya stakes have been driven into the aerodrome to prevent aircraft taking off with supplies, doctors and nurses, and in Jogjakarta useful Japanese transport planes were burnt on the airfield.

The *Advocate* (Burnie, Tasmania) notes on Friday 19 October 1945:

...apart from the fact that a number of strictly neutral contacts has been arranged between the British and Nationalist leaders it is now an accepted thing that the Indonesians are running trams, trains, the water supply, the electric light and the police. Although no one quite knows under what law they are operating there are clear signs of a tendency to treat the Sukarno Cabinet as having a sort of unofficial status.¹²²

The role of Japanese in the early stages of the Republican Revolution was ambiguous: on the one hand, they sometimes cooperated with the Allies and attempted to curb republican activities; on the other hand, Japanese commanders, though usually under duress, turned over arms to the Republicans. De Jonge points out that many Japanese, particularly those that had married Indonesian women were also joining the revolutionaries¹²³ The *Examiner* claimed Japanese were also organizing *Pemuda* activities.¹²⁴ Given the volatility of the situation, Gurkha Command felt it was better for ex-POWs and ex-internees to return to or remain in concentration camps, as it would be more convenient for food distribution and protection.

Throughout, Australian media coverage of the first months of the revolution in the NEI called the Bersiap Period was comprehensive. Journalists reported on especially the bleakness of the situation for former Dutch ex-civilian internees; they noted the lack of law and order, and how the volatility of the situation was intensified by the desperate food situation in Java. They also reported that the most critical food shortages were within the Allied perimeter near Surabaya where some 400,000 civilians, including peaceful Indonesians, Chinese and Arabs resided. Australian media continually highlighted the critical effect, on the wellbeing of all the population, the black ban on Dutch ships and also the fact that these ships were a potential source for Dutch evacuations away from the perilous situation.¹²⁵

Despite the vast newspaper coverage about the intolerable conditions for Indonesians and Dutch in the NEI - derived from witnessed accounts of reliable people such as Macmahon Ball, Mountbatten – nothing changed. In a press release dated 15 January 1946, Australian journalist Mr Plumridge, writes that the unions holdup of Dutch ships had become an embarrassment for Australians living in Indonesia given the desperate food situation.¹²⁶

¹²² *Advocate* Newspaper, Burnie Tasmania, Friday 19 October 1945, 5.

¹²³ De Jonge, 607.

¹²⁴ *The Examiner* (Launceston Tasmania) 29 March 1946, 5: It quotes Mr Lawson the War Minister (British Communist MP) in a letter to Mr Gallahar of the *Daily Worker*. He also notes that at no time had British in the Dutch East Indies, supplied Japanese troops weapons or tanks.

¹²⁵ For example: *Melbourne Herald* and *Argus* newspapers 29 and 30 November 1945; *The West Australian*, 10 December 1945, 10: In an article, "Control of Netherlands East Indies: Stronger British Policy" published on December 10 1945, *The West Australian* newspaper reported that at the Singapore conference of British army commanders and Dutch and French political leaders, the agreement was that pacification of the Netherlands East Indies was to be pursued by the British with greater vigour military force than they were currently using. But also that Britain did not stand pledged to restore Dutch sovereignty in the East Indies. The article also noted that the only issue on which present British military policy remained unchanged was the use of Dutch troops. Dutch troops would not be employed in the actual restoration of law and order, partly with the object of not unnecessarily provoking the Indonesians and partly because the Dutch were insufficiently prepared. But it was clear that the Dutch were expected to come in later to enable the British to leave the country; in Willems, *Uittocht uit Indië 1945-1949* (Amsterdam, Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2001).

¹²⁶ N14/190 Noel Butlin Archives: Press release by Unions to Mr Plumridge's appeal.

The Trades and Labour Council had by this time also received an appeal from Dutch Trade Unions to ‘please’ send food to the NEI.¹²⁷ Despite these appeals, Australian Unions continued the ban. In part this is a response to the perceived collaboration between the British and Japanese. In reality under the ‘Terms of Surrender’, as noted above, SEAC could and had no option but to direct the Japanese troops to assist RAPWI to protect internees and to protect RAPWI teams.¹²⁸

RAPWI, had recognised that there was a great difference in the level of danger in various parts of Java, began to prioritise evacuation of those Netherlands East Indies Dutch most at risk. For example, while conditions in West Java were dangerous, in Central Java the danger for European and *Indisch* Dutch was extreme, and worst near Semarang. It had not originally been the British intention to go to Central Java, until military reports realised that the severity and volatility of the situation there required immediate attention. The protection of the internees in Central Java came to assume great importance when it was discovered that Indonesian extremists were surrounding the camps and refusing to let food in. The British, because of their minimal deployment in the region, came to rely on Japanese assistance in this matter to an embarrassing extent.

Digulists do not appear to have enlighten the Australian Unions about the actual chaos taking place in the NEI as described above, that was being perpetrated by combinations of Republican Government troops, mobism from the kampongs, fanatical youth driven by ‘revolutionary zeal’ and ‘opportunistic gangland players’.¹²⁹

On 29 November 1945, the *Melbourne Herald* quotes Australian government representative in the NEI, Mr McMahon Ball’s¹³⁰ prediction of widespread starvation throughout the NEI by February 1946, and worsening disorder in Java and Batavia (Djakarta) created by the lack of efficient local administration. He also described the violence and sickening atrocities being perpetrated by *Pemuda* that were making it necessary to find asylum for 190,000 Dutch whose condition was already pitiful due to their prolonged internment in Japanese concentration camps. McMahon Ball urged Australia to send all the food ships it could get to the NEI, noting, ‘theirs [Dutch internees] is a humanitarian appeal of the most urgent and genuine kind’. In addition he urged Australia to provide a temporary home and recuperative care for at least 50,000 of them and ships to remove another 10,000 Ambonese, who had incurred the hostility of *Pemuda*, from Batavia to the outer Indies islands. His words went largely unheeded. Australia finally rehabilitated around 6,000 Dutch refugee internees.

Many *Pemuda* atrocities were not uncovered until the following years. On Wednesday 24 April 1946, Graham Jenkins, correspondent with the *Argus* (Melbourne) under the heading ‘Devilish Crimes by Javanese *Pemuda*’, described some of their impact as:

A grim chapter of the early months of the Indonesian revolution is being uncovered here by the Dutch civil police, who are daily exhuming the bodies of men, women, and children, victims of Indonesian atrocities, which, for stark horror, rival the worst crimes of

¹²⁷ Noel Butlin Union Archives, N114/190, Letter from Mr Monk, Australasian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) addressed Dear Comrade, dated 15 January 1946, Indonesian Blockade correspondence 1945-1949 it presents the request from Amsterdam unions to load supplies urgently needed in NEI.

¹²⁸ Colin Wild and Peter Carey, (eds) *Born in Fire: The Indonesian Struggle for Independence*, Athens, USA, Ohio University Press, 1986, 152-160.

¹²⁹ Anton Lucas, in Wild and Carey, pp. 156-57. Robert Cribb, *Gangsters and Revolutionaries: The Jakarta People’s Militia and the Indonesian Revolution 1945-1949* (Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 1991).

¹³⁰ William Macmahon Ball. *The Japan and Batavia Diaries of W. Macmahon Ball*, edited by Alan Rix (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988);

Alan Rix (ed). *Intermittent Diplomat: The Japan and Batavia Diaries of W. Macmahon Ball* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988); W. Macmahon Ball and H. Wolfsohn, C.P. Fitzgerald, Gordon Greenwood, R.H. Greenwood, N.D. Harper, R.F. Holder and R.G. Neale under the general editorship of Professor Gordon Greenwood, (University of Queensland, Australian Policy Toward Asia, Australian Papers, Institute of Pacific Relations Conference, 1954).

the Japanese. During the first few months of its Allied occupation the small British garrison insecurely held Bandung against increasing extremist hostility. Camps housing 60,000 Dutch and Eurasian internees were constantly attacked. Many internees were murdered, and about 860 were kidnapped. What became of the missing people was only assumed, though escapees told of brutal murders, and the check now being made confirms the worst fears. Dismembered and mutilated bodies have proved that 860 people, including many little girls and boys, have been murdered, often in the most revolting and perverted ways imaginable. *Pemuda* are blamed for the crimes. They are the "werewolves" of Java, who, caught at an impressionable age by the Japanese, swallowed a creed of Asiatic naked hatred? of the Westerner, and now imagine it is their holy duty to "tjintjang" (dismember) every European they can capture. These youths owe allegiance to the Japanese-promoted Indonesian National Youth Movement, and are trained as suicide squads. The *Pemuda* are an embarrassment to the Sjahrir Government, which has called on the Republican forces to put an end to the crimes, but the Indonesian Army is powerless....¹³¹

Hans Meijer has noted the extent to which the ferocious mix of social revolution, xenophobia, opportunistic crime and feral populism that resulted in the *Bersiap* atrocities surprised and horrified not only the British commanders, but also moderate Indonesian leaders.¹³² On reflection the Islamicist leader Abu Hanifah, who later became minister of education and ambassador admitted: "The Indonesian revolution was not totally pure." But while western-educated Indonesian leaders were deeply shaken by what they witnessed, many Indonesian accounts of the time considered the violence inevitable, and even morally neutral!¹³³ By this logic women could feel 'justified' in taking up arms and shooting indiscriminately at males – just because they are males and consequently the source of centuries of women's oppression? I leave the reader to ponder if or under what circumstances violence could be considered 'justifiable'?

Sutan Sjahrir on Pemuda violence

In the brochure 'Our Struggle', Sutan Sjahrir, notes the lack of expertise among Indonesians to take on the governance of the country and chronicles the consequences of Japanese indoctrination of *Pemuda*. He writes:

For three and a half years, our country has been cut off from abroad so that we knew nothing about conditions abroad, and they [Japanese] had a free hand in selling their lies, which formed the foundation of their propaganda. When the hate of our people for the Japanese became universal and here and there a revolt broke out, our national feeling was used to quell the hate against them. A youth movement was established, by the Japanese to encourage nationalism so as to avert the social dangers that threatened them. This nationalism indeed satisfied the feeling of our younger intellectuals, who were restless and uncertain. In general the secret Japanese societies, Black Dragon, Black Fan and others, originating from the Japanese fifth column, *Kempai Tai*, *Kaigun* and others, strongly tuned to the spirit of our youth and they have influenced their spirit to a certain extent though in many cases our youth also maintained their hate of the Japanese.¹³⁴

The behaviours Sjahrir describes have an uncanny resemble to those of the Nazi indoctrinated *Hitler Jugend* (HJ), especially their "abhorrence of foreign races... the allied peoples, Netherlanders, Indo-Europeans (our own race), Amboinese, the people of

¹³¹ Argus Newspaper, Wednesday 24 April 1946, 3.

¹³² Hans, Meijer, *In Indie geworteld, de Geschiedenis van Indische Nederlanders, de twintigste eeuw* (Publisher Bert Bakker, Amsterdam, 2004) 249-250.

¹³³ <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/the-act-of-killing-reenacting-war-crimes-with-indonesian-gangsters-a-882970.html>

¹³⁴ Inv.nr 85: Algemeen RijksArchief, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Inventaris van het Archief van het Consulaat generaal te Sydney (Australië), (1927), 1930-1954. Translation of the pamphlet 'Our Struggle' by Sutan Sjahrir, 5 November 1945) 1,4.

Minahassa, both their own race, Chinese, the internal government.”¹³⁵ Thus, like HJ, *Pemuda* were indoctrinated with racial hatred (for HJ it was anti-semitic and anti-Romany); like HJ, *Pemuda* were instilled with the motivation and given the combat training to enable them as soldiers, to fight faithfully for Dai Nippon (for HJ it was the Third Reich); and like HJ their learning encompassed physical and military training to help the Japanese combat the Allies rather than being taught to think rationally (HJ as young as 12 fought on the Russian front more ferociously than their military counterparts). Indonesian Independence was the inducement the Japanese used to capture and retain *Pemuda*'s interest. *Pemuda* violent mobism is also redolent of Crowd psychology. An example is Bung Sutomo urging his followers to fight while Indonesian blood flows... This comes from the Japanese combat training that included the resolve to ‘fight to the death’ given these youth to help with Japan’s defence. They were also taught how to mobilise nationally. In addition, Sjahrir observed, when the Free State of Indonesia was proclaimed, that the ‘Governors’ were mostly previous civil servants or helpers of ‘the Japanese’ and that this was an additional obstruction to freeing the Indonesian community of Japanese influence, post- Japanese Occupation, which he saw as dangerous to the mentality of ‘Indonesian youth’.

Most interpretation of the behaviours of *Pemuda* has a contextual bias. Hume and Gibbon’s model of revolutionaries is relevant to extremist *Pemuda* behaviours. Both philosophers declare fanatical zeal frequently the moving force in history. “For all its terrors, the monomaniac passion of a true believer has the explosive energy to revolutionise the world when men of more sanguine tempers prefer to sleep in peace!”¹³⁶ However, as Ben Wilson notes, “hotheads, such as the *Pemuda* (and this best describes their brutal killing rampages) – pull down but do not reconstruct, they leave that to other people – !”¹³⁷ Then again perhaps they more readily fit the behaviours described by Jean Paul Sartre in ‘Materialism and revolution’ where he contends that ‘true revolutionaries’ do not demand rights for themselves. They set out to destroy the idea of rights, which they understand as a hoax of the privileged class’. To claim ones’ rights as an individual is not to be revolutionary, but to seek to join the privileged class. One cannot claim these rights for a whole class. This is because the rights derive from the ‘oppression’ the revolutionary wants to destroy. One cannot destroy the oppression without destroying the rights.¹³⁸ The reality ultimately is that the Independence Revolution hardly changed the simple hopes of the masses for a ‘better future’ although it did free them of Dutch Rule!

Conclusion

In Australia, the role Australia played in helping Indonesia’ gain its Independence is ‘legend’. Lingard attributes the shipping bans, their international public reach and the momentous change to Australia’s foreign policy they engendered, to the actions and presence of the Indonesians in Australia. She notes that when the Australian government took the Indonesians’ case to the United Nation it was the first time in history that Australia had formulated its own foreign policy without seeking approval from the UK government...”Having identified an opportunity the Labor Party set about creating policy by merging its humanitarian anti-colonialism perspective with Australia’s security to establish and develop ‘good relations’ with the ‘newest political power in the region’.¹³⁹ Her view is supported by Australian historian Margaret George, who defined the dilemma facing the Australian Labour Government, as having to decide whether continued Dutch Colonial authority or Indonesian republican Government – best met their long-term security

¹³⁵ Sjahrir brochure

¹³⁶ Ben Wilson, *What Price Liberty* (London: faber and faber, 2010) 35; Wilson quotes Hume and Gibbon.

¹³⁷ Ben Wilson, *What Price Liberty* (London: faber and faber, 2010) 35.

¹³⁸ John Paul Sartre, “Materialisme et revolution,” *Situations III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976, p.186; trans. Annette Michelson, *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, (New York: Criterion, 1955), p.215.

¹³⁹ Lingard, 2008, 280-281.

interests.¹⁴⁰ However, none mention the ‘human rights abuses’ and war crimes taking place in the NEI while they are thus deliberating.

Lingard claims that the level of support Australia extended the Republic has over the years become greatly ‘exaggerated,’ to the point where it is now an ‘integrated part of the formulaic niceties that prelude diplomatic and political speeches on certain occasions’.¹⁴¹ Lingard also notes how, from a functional perspective, this ritual ‘gives some hope of better outcomes whenever the contemporary relationship between Australia and Indonesia is under strain’.¹⁴² Australians’ support for Indonesian Independence is also overstated in Dutch histories, principally because wartime historian, L. de Jong relied exclusively on Lockwood’s book to describe the situation in Australia. Newspapers from the era tell a different story.

More generally, despite the significant number of deaths, William Frederick claims, the Indonesian Independence Revolution has been widely romanticized and portrayed as considerably less violent than was actually the case, he notes:

Today’s standard view of the Indonesian revolution in both history and memory has crystallized around the ideas of a determined struggle against colonial rule, the development of a strong sense of national unity, and heroic efforts in both endeavours of young, idealistic patriots known as *Pemuda*. Violence is not entirely absent, but it is generally depicted as combat violence, limited in scope and implicitly justified as last resort defensive action against the threat of the reestablishment of Dutch colonial rule. And it is particularly noticeable that in Indonesian as well as most Western works little is said about ethnic violence, particularly violence against people of mixed descent. But the revolution was indeed violent, and a prominent feature of this violence was the fact that it was frequently aimed at not only ‘pure’ Dutch but also Eurasians and other minority groups.¹⁴³

It is difficult to find any evidence of ‘lessons learnt’ from Indonesia’s struggle for Independence. For example, when on May 1, 1963, at the behest of the USA and without reference to the Papuans, Indonesia became the ‘new colonial power’ in West Papua New Guinea. They disbanded the elected West Papuan Council, burnt West Papuan flags, banned the singing of the West Papuan national anthem, destroyed anything else to do with West Papuan independence and changed its name to Irian Jaya.¹⁴⁴ The Indonesian military invasion of East Timor that began on 7 December 1975, under the pretext of anti-colonialism, generated 25 years of violence leading to the death by murder or starvation of approximately 100–180,000 soldiers and civilians. This would tend to suggest that not being held responsible for earlier violence as in 1945-46, had somehow rendered it endemic.

In the final analysis, I argue that, as it stands, the historical facts show, on balance, that all stakeholders in the Indonesian Independence equation – Dutch, Indonesians, Japanese, British and Australians (by tacit acceptance) – were at times perpetrators (heroes?) and at

¹⁴⁰ M. George, *Australia and the Indonesian Revolution*, Melbourne 1980.

¹⁴¹ Lingard

¹⁴² Lingard, 282; Drew Cottle and Angela Keys, ‘Transnational Struggle, Asian Seafarers and the fight for Indonesian Independence in Australia’, Asian Studies Association Conference Melbourne 1-3 July 2008.

¹⁴³ De Jong, IIC, 636; Drew Cottle and Angela Keys, start their article by reiterating the ‘legendary’ role of the union boycott on Indonesian independence as follows: “The involvement of Australians in the Indonesian campaign has been interpreted as important in diplomatic terms, and [how] the struggle...exercise[d] pressure on the Chifley Labour Government to eventually ‘sponsor the Indonesian republic to nationhood and membership of the newly founded United Nations’. It is interesting to note that Cottle & Keys are advisors Australian film maker John Hughes on Joris Ivens documentary ‘Indonesia Calling’. Hence the story yet again fails the victims of the Indonesian revolution.

¹⁴⁴ Frederick, 3.

¹⁴⁴ <http://www.vanderheijden.org/ng/history.html#4>

other times victims of violence and brutality from one or other or all of the others. Consequently, and contrary to myth, there is not much for any side to be proud of. Across the NEI, there were many many gruesome, grisly atrocious, unnecessary incidents of violence against Europeans and Dutch and their sympathizers, as well as atrocious, unnecessary violence against supporters of the Republic. I would emphasise that we should avoid rationalising on the grounds that there were crimes on all sides and look at the facts so that each side acknowledges its own violence.

There is a postscript to this story.

The boycott was not wholly effective. Dutch maritime prowess and the labour of military personnel in Australia were used to break the blockade. This enabled some goods to reach Indonesia after innovative ways had been devised to refuel the ships at sea. Even so, Macintyre claims despite these issues that the campaign was effective enough to be a major factor in the survival of the Indonesian republic.¹⁴⁵

In 1960 the Dutch Government embarked on a final stand to defend its bases in West Irian. The aircraft carrier *Karl Doorman* and two destroyer escorts were sent out from the Netherlands to the Indian Ocean and Menzies offered them hospitality at Fremantle. Fremantle Dockies and seamen led by Paddy Troy re-imposed their ban on the warships, which, they said, could only endanger peace in south east Asia. So the carrier had to be brought in without tugs or pilot on a windswept day. However the Dutch Captain was a man of resource. He lashed four of his aircraft to the carrier deck and used the backdraft from their screw propellers to bring the carrier alongside the wharf, pennants flying, a feat of seamanship that won Paddy's admiration. Paddy was standing behind a group of men on the wharf to watch the ship's progress. One said to another,

'You were in the navy during the war, George?'

"Yes."

'You were in the Signals, weren't you?'

"Yes".

'Well, what do those flags read?'

'It reads, "Fuck Paddy Troy."'

¹⁴⁵ Sturart Macintyre, *Militant, The Life and Times of Paddy Troy*, Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1984.