

# THE INDONESIAN PROBLEM: FACTS AND FACTORS

WHAT HAPPENED  
SINCE THE END OF  
THE PACIFIC WAR

SECOND PRINTING

Netherlands Indies Government Information Service  
Batavia — September 1947

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中国文学

THE NETHERLANDS-INDIES GOVERNMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

*E*vents in Indonesia have, especially during the last few months, been very much in the public eye; not in the least owing to the recent discussions in the Security Council.

*The increased interest, gratifying in itself, has stimulated discussion of the problems existing in this corner of the world, and also a demand for facts and the wish to understand the motivating factors behind these events. This publication aims at meeting this demand.*

*Experience teaches that it is exceedingly hard to grasp correctly the situation in a foreign country without instructive illustrations. For that reason a pictorial summary has been added.*

*Batavia, September 15th, 1947*

*A political unity which rests on this foundation moves far towards a realization of the purpose for which the United Nations are fighting, as it has been embodied, for instance, in the Atlantic Charter, and with which we could instantly agree, because it contains our own conception of freedom and justice for which we have sacrificed blood and possessions in the course of our history.*

*I visualize, without anticipating the recommendations of the future conference, that they will be directed towards a commonwealth in which the Netherlands, Indonesia, Surinam and Curaçao will participate, with complete self-reliance and freedom of conduct for each part regarding its internal affairs, but with the readiness to render mutual assistance.*

*It is my opinion that such a combination of independence and collaboration can give the Kingdom and its parts the strength to carry fully their responsibility, both internally and externally. This would leave no room for discrimination according to race or nationality; only the ability of the individual citizens and the needs of the various groups of the population will determine the policy of the government.*

(Text of H.M. Queen Wilhelmina's radio address of December 6th, 1942, outlining plans for the creation of a Commonwealth of the Netherlands, Indonesia, Surinam and Curacao)

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## CHAPTER I

# GENERAL DELINEATION OF THE REPUBLIC INDONESIA

The question whether the revolution in Indonesia should be seen principally as a Japanese machination, or whether there was something much more profound and consequently much more real at the back of it, was often discussed, especially during the initial post-war developments.

The answer to this question cannot be conclusive. It is indisputable, however, that this problem is not solved by simply qualifying the revolution as „made in Japan”.

### Pre-war nationalism

Long before the war an unmistakably genuine nationalist movement existed in these islands which it was impossible to deny. It was only lack of able leaders and of a strong organisation, which prevented it from becoming an essential factor in the internal affairs of Indonesia. There were still too many different parties with different aims and views. However, it was clear to everyone that some day or other this movement would play its part in the rising tide of Asiatic nationalism. Then war came and Japan started to promote things for its own purpose.

Incidentally it may be said that every true nationalist movement in pre-war days was recognised as such and welcomed by the Government provided legal means were used for the realisation of the nationalist ideals. The Government indeed sought for the co-operation of the nationalist leaders. Only when they illegally tried to obtain their ends, measures were taken. The Government's ultimate aim however being the preparation of the Indies for self-government and independence, it was glad to accept suggestions and it gave the Indonesians every chance to show their abilities. Long before the Japanese invasion quite a few held high offices.

The available tendencies towards nationalism and independence were exploited cleverly and thoroughly, by the Japs it might be asserted, who distorted them to fit in with their plans, at first to provide a slavish puppet in the hands of Japanese demagogy and towards the end of the war to frustrate and thwart the Allies as much as possible. The retarded Allied occupation of Indonesia surely opened up an unforeseen opportunity for the Japs to perfect their machinations; that a future return to these islands was at the back of their minds is equally sure.

Nationalism in Java and Sumatra (the area where the Japanese military machine remained intact until after MacArthur's entry into Tokyo and where nationalist movements always had been strongest) still shows traces of this Japanese inheritance, it being, practically everywhere, unable to free itself from this parasitic growth. The Japanese system of administration, cha-

racterized by ruthlessness, corruption and, in some respects, in efficiency, was adopted. Japanese militarism, developed by Nippon to an astonishing degree, even when compared with Nazi Europe, was largely maintained. Youth, worked up to a pitch of the highest excitement by Sukarno and their former Japanese masters, could go on living in this atmosphere without anybody trying to change their outlook. Propaganda against the enemy (Britain and the U.S.) continued now under the guise of propaganda against „Netherlands imperialism”.

So it may surely be said that the revolution, as it has manifested itself thus far, bears the imprint of Japanese misgovernment. And this explains why the present Republican government has not been able to build up anything reliable. Efforts were made to imitate a given model, but not grasping the bearing of a good many things, and neither realizing the limitations nor the consequences of possibilities that suddenly cropped up, mostly the bad sides of the model were imitated; the good sides of the model, if at all present, were not developed, either through lack of ability or unwillingness to do so.

Of course, all this was accentuated because the revolution had to face the task to take over the government of a vast area and lacked officials, sufficiently capable to carry through their jobs. A riot of amateurism started. It was upheld and varnished over for reasons of prestige, understandable, but nevertheless wrong. The factual appearance of the apparatus was of greater importance than the responsibility actually incumbent on it.

The majority of republicans abruptly promoted into leading functions being amateurs, deriving their authority from armed power, though intellectually but little superior to the masses suddenly placed under their care, it was a case of "much wealth makes wit waver". The possibilities for corruption were legion and were eagerly entered into. Co-operation between the various public services was little thought of so that the administration was soon muddled up, causing still greater misgovernment. Society finding itself without a government in charge, disorganized rapidly, the scum saw their chance clear, murdered and looted, attracting followers and increased in power by camouflaging their crimes under the banner of patriotism.

Thus a Republic came into being, based on perverted nationalism which could only keep going by talking itself and others into believing that everything was running splendidly after all. Actually things were in a pretty bad shape and the country was sliding further and further down towards a precipice.

Youth out of control and brought to excesses; artificially cultivated feelings of hatred; the example of a corrupt, unbusiness-like inefficient government; the revolutionary spirit interpreted as a permit to every form of licentiousness; all these things worked together to bring to the forefront the destructive and disorganizing forces alive in all revolutions, the constructive elements seldom getting a chance to come to the front. This is all the more tragic since the possibilities for a different development were actually present.

### **An enthusiastic start**

In the beginning, one may say, practically no politically conscious Indonesian could back out of the current of nationalism as it was taking shape. The Netherlands Indies Government faced a serried complex of people clearly not willing to accept Netherlands authority and who acted accordingly. The politically little conscious or unconscious masses that only want authority to allow them to live peacefully, may be left out of account here, because in the political organisation they cannot form a decisive factor. The demands of reality were, in most cases unconsciously, put aside and people held themselves at the service of the Republic. The road chosen by the republicans and their leaders, was fairly well beaten at first and thus easy to follow. All parts of the existing government machinery had first of all to be definitely taken over before they could be gathered into one central authority.

Matters were taken in hand with unmistakable success and with great enthusiasm. Moreover continuity played an important part in the beginning. The greater number of Government servants and departmental chiefs stuck to their post. Thus the Republic of Indonesia actually took on the appearance of a state, not yet fully built up, it is true, but clearly on the way towards a well-organized final structure.

Externally 100 percent independence was generally upheld as an indisputable demand. Internally there was hopeful and enthusiastic activity to „make something of it“, to create a state capable of beating the Netherlands set-up previous to 1942 by functioning properly.

### **Characteristic changes**

In the course of the following few months a few highly characteristic changes became noticeable. Enthusiasm was not yet decreasing but the fact of being their own master and the initial successes bred an unripe atmosphere of contentment and certainty, with all the consequences thereof. The unexpected initial successes led the republicans to believe that playing at govern-

ment was pleasant and not too hard a game.

The worst outcome of this new tendency was that a great number of officials dating from earlier periods were removed. The government apparatus lost a good deal of its backbone that way.

The obligations attached to authority were not clearly realized. Little impression was created by the great number of failures, especially upon those who had not to bear the consequences. Constructive work continued, but requirements were formulated differently. The revolutionary idea became more and more an official institution. This was dragging the Trojan horse within the walls. It may be said that within the first six months of its existence the development of the Republic Indonesia towards a reliable political unit came to a standstill. Since then the disintegrating elements have played an ever increasing part.

### **Disintegrating elements taking the upper-hand**

Especially during the second half of 1946 the disintegrating element grew and usurped the leading part, although, externally, it looked as if consolidation in the Republic was making headway, especially in Java.

Disintegration, however, had implanted its germs in vital spots. Symptoms of paralysis became apparent. Restoration of law and order, extension of the republican services, improvement in the activity of political organs, slowed up and gradually came to a standstill. While in the beginning the construction of a local government apparatus and the organization of central ministries had been worked at enthusiastically, the pace gradually slackened. Disappointing set-backs and the lack of successful results were endured. Inward and outward the republicans struck a pose of preparedness and infallibility.

Actually this meant treason to the State, the abandoning of what should have been insisted on, and normally would have been asked for as the regular requirements for a well organized and efficient system of government. Nor could this be done without supporting or creating impossible conditions for large strata of the population and causing serious discontent. This discontent—not at first noticeable—took root and flourished, though it was checked in the beginning, as far as the better educated republicans were concerned, either by fear of the growth of a Netherlands stronghold or by fear of the republican authorities. Many loyal to their country's cause retired and abstained from all activity; others stuck to the republic, even though they were convinced that things were going the wrong way.

## Manifestation of discontent

The external manifestation of this discontent was a gradually increasing desire for contact with Netherlands, especially with those, who in the frame of the Netherlands Indies Government or elsewhere had previously worked with the Netherlands. Naturally this group consisted mainly of people who had experienced difficulties during the republican period. It should be taken into consideration that anybody showing feelings of sympathy for the Dutch during that period exposed himself to all kinds of danger. No matter how apparent the failure of the Republic in respect of the requirements of reality, there were but few among the republican leaders who dared to acknowledge this. The masses in the Sundanese interior and in Madura necessarily lacked good leaders to the detriment of all parties concerned.

This discontent further created opportunities for purely destructive activities of

republican Indonesians, who, in their own opinion, had not been allotted a sufficiently important post in the republican organisation. It was especially this group of discontented republican Indonesians who were eager to use for their own ends the inefficiencies so richly offered by the Republic, lack of proper organisation and government care.

The welding together of a real opposition—no matter in what form—proved extremely difficult. Threats and fear played a large part, as much as political inexperience and lack of prospect of new possibilities.

The outward appearance of all this was, as a matter of course, draped with curtains of varying degrees of transparency. The recent Netherlands police action has produced a great deal of revelatory material, but nevertheless it is as yet impossible to overlook the whole field. We may find occasion in the continuation of this paper to complete the above general delineation.

## CHAPTER II

# NETHERLANDS POLICY

Netherlands policy has aimed right through at giving constructive elements, and groups such support as would enable them to defeat the destructive elements. Not until that point was reached could Java and Sumatra be made into a state. This policy, offering the most reasonable chances of success and best calculated to serve the common good, had, however, to be abandoned, but not until after every imaginable effort had been made. However, constructive tendencies weakened and finally disappeared altogether.

Many of those who at the start thought constructively and who regretfully saw the true nationalist ideal trodden upon by their own people, were nevertheless dragged along in the foreway of the destructive elements.

We will endeavour now to outline how Netherlands policy manifested itself in regard of what happened in this country. In this outline we shall also touch upon the areas outside Java and Sumatra which also were exposed to Japanese influences and Japanese propaganda methods, but which managed to shake them off. In honesty it must be granted that circumstances favoured this development (a few areas were actually reconquered by the Allies and the number of inhabitants is smaller). A discussion of these points is, however, outside the scope of this outline.

### **Pre-war progressive policy**

It is necessary to go back to conditions previous to the Japanese invasion, which will illustrate that the idea to do away with "colonial relations" is no innovation but originated during a period long before the second world war.

We will not go into this. It may, however, be underlined that as early as 1922 the word "colonies" was deleted from the Netherlands constitution while thenceforward, actually from the commencement of the twentieth century the Netherlands Government actively carried through such changes as might provide more room for the Indonesian element in the government of their own country. The institution of the People's Council (in which the Indonesian element held a majority) is one example, another is the institution in 1940 of a mixed commission for studying political reforms which concluded its proceedings by presenting an extensive report, known as the Visman-report. It is a pity that war intervened, for had not that been the case the Government would undoubtedly have proceeded to carry through further radical political changes.

### **Measures during the war for carrying out this policy**

When during the second world war humanity started once again to reflect on themes like democracy and human dignity and these

old familiar ideas got a new lease of life, exactly because of the struggle for life and death against the powers that trampled down democracy and human dignity, the Netherlands wholeheartedly came into line.

As a matter of course, these principles were brought to bear by the Netherlands more especially on the relationship between herself and her overseas territories. The Royal address of December 6, 1942 left no doubt about the Netherlands' ultimate aims.

In London as well as in Brisbane the Netherlands Government of that day considered its future policy and the manner of carrying through, the proposed reforms. H. M. the Queen personally summoned her people over the BBC, impressing upon them to study these problems so as to be ready for discussion immediately upon liberation. Also Dr. van Mook, Minister for Overseas Territories in those days delivered his contribution towards the clarification of the same problems in half a dozen radio speeches.

### **Progressive evolution frustrated by post-war happenings**

However, events took a different turn. The Indonesian people (and among them more especially the intelligentsia) that were found in 1942, were different from the people that in result of an unequal struggle, forcibly had to be left to the Japanese. Something has already been said about the influences which tainted the revolution from the very start. To this might be added that the excesses of the population under the revolutionary Government, expressing itself in cruelty, murder, looting and arson, created a chaos, in which law and order could only be restored with the greatest difficulty.

Should the republic have succeeded in canalizing this chaos into something carrying the germs of law and order, the present forms of conflict might perhaps have been prevented. What matters now is that the Netherlands Government was faced after the capitulation by a people that had passed through a kind of crisis, still in the aftermath thereof and unwilling to accept Netherlands authority.

This mental revolution (coupled with lack of material and personnel) rendered the Netherlands plans for reform useless at one stroke, because infeasible.

This was totally unexpected and the problem as it presented itself could not be coped with out of hand.

### **The British Interregnum**

A dominating part was played by the following set of circumstances. The struggle with Japan was ended and the war was to be liquidated. The Netherlands had contributed their share in the struggle but there were as yet no troops available to take an active part in the task of liquidation. So the Allied Supreme Command had allotted to Great Britain the task of officially effectuating



the surrender of the Japanese in the Netherlands Indies, disarm the Japanese forces, release prisoners of war and internees and establish a provisional military administration.

Of course the Sovereignty of Netherlands Government in Indonesia was never questioned. On the contrary it was completely acknowledged by the British and United States Governments. The above circumstances, however, prevented prompt manifestation. The Netherlands Indies Government could proceed to Batavia but actual authority was exercised by the British Commander in Chief for Java and Sumatra, General Christison.

His instructions of course were exclusively military. He did not wish to take side with either the Netherlands or the Indonesians and did not give purport to the formally recognized sovereignty of the Netherlands Indies Government. It may be true that initially the revolution also had anti-Allied tendencies (Japanese propaganda, beside Sukarno, had rubbed it into the people that the U.S. should be "ironed out" and the British be laboured with a crowbar), but actually the revolution very soon proved itself clearly anti-Dutch, as the Netherlands were seen in the first instance as representatives of what was feared as "colonial" authority. General Christison considered the matter as an internal question between the Netherlands Indies Government and the Indonesian people. It was known to General Christison and his Government that the Netherlands were planning to carry through certain political reforms in these territories, but method and circumstances lay beyond his competency.

This neutral attitude, however, caused the formally acknowledged sovereignty of the Netherlands Indies Government to remain an empty sound at least for the time being. The Indonesians interpreted this position as a sort of acknowledgement on the side of the British. This enabled them to get over the first difficult days of their movement and to consolidate, cleverly exploiting the British attitude in their propaganda and thus deriving the greatest authority among their own people from this attitude.

Of course there were clashes between the British forces and the Republic. This, however, emanated chiefly from the task circumscribed by the Allied Supreme Command. Principally when British troops were hindered in their task of disarming and removing Japanese forces or when protecting the lives of ex P.O.W.'s and ex-internees. The Netherlands and Indonesia may feel grateful to Great Britain for the work done in this field and for the sacrifices made, even a long time after the war was finished. Many British soldiers are buried in these territories, killed at a time, when everybody expected to be able to live in peace at last.

The British retreated to a few enclaves; Batavia, Bandung, Samarang and Surabaya,

whence efforts were made to keep in contact with the remainder of Java, which, though not officially, had fallen into the hands of the Republic. The situation in Sumatra was similar. There the enclaves were: Medan, Palembang and Padang. In the remainder of the Archipelago the situation was different. Allied Military administration was there too, but without the revolutionary republican movement causing much trouble.

It might be objected that Netherlands Civil authority, wherever possible, was fairly soon re-established. Civil authority, however, could assert itself only in those places where it was under protection of military authority, viz. the British High Command. So civil authority, too, was limited to the above-mentioned areas and enclaves.

### **Transfer of authority in Borneo and the Great East**

This was the situation when the British in July 1946 transferred authority in Borneo and the Great East to the N.E.I. government.

It was soon demonstrated that no time had been wasted awaiting this moment. That very month a conference was held at Malino with delegates from Borneo and Celebes to discuss political reforms. There for the first time the N.E.I. government officially contacted the people of Indonesia and the first thing to be discussed was reform in the political field.

A few days later:

### **First conference about political reforms—Malino**

Of course this conference did not drop out of the skies. It was closely connected with the developments in Java and Sumatra. The N.E.I. government had accepted the consequences emanating from her conviction that there was no denying a genuine background to the striving for freedom in Java and Sumatra.

The initial restraint had disappeared. Sjahrir had become Prime-Minister on condition that his cabinet should be constitutional. His hands were unstained and no blame of collaboration blurred his name. Besides the Republic had consolidated so effectively that it would have been impractical to ignore her.

Moreover having attuned itself before and during the war to the idea of political reform, the road of negotiation was chosen.

Sukarno, in the eyes of many, was and remained a collaborator and a war criminal, but the Netherlands government refrained from a factual judgment, leaving it to the Indonesian people to judge. The right of self-determination had long since been acknowledged and though it would have been more elegant if this could have been realised without a revolution (after all, what did the Indonesians know of the Netherlands plans), this realization had to be translated into



practice. Why not try this out in a straight talk with a delegation of this movement, now that Sjahrir had taken over and his policy was known even though the movement itself might be considered illegal. So by negotiation it was tried to come to an understanding with the Republic about a realization of their self-determination which eventually led to the signing of the Linggadjati-agreement on March 25, 1947, about which more is to follow further on. At the same time, opening discussions with the Republic about self-determination and its realization implied that similar discussions would have to take place with the remainder of Indonesia, and this as soon as opportunity offered.

This being a moral principle, interpreted by the Netherlands in an idealistic spirit, there was no reason whatever to give the Republic preference. That is why, even before the transfer in July 1946 endeavours were made in the outer territories to constitute a body able to formulate the will of the people. The first contact between the government and the people would be informative in character so as to get to know and appreciate each other's point of view. So it was tried to convene without delay a meeting, approaching a parliament in its constitution.

### The Federative Idea

Direct elections were impossible, the population lacking both in literacy and organisation. A method was looked for which would nevertheless enable the people to express their desires in their various shades. Netherlands and Indonesian civil servants travelled upcountry and convened meetings in campongs and villages explaining to the people what the Government had in mind, leaving it to the population to elect their confidants. So by way of graduated elections a body of representatives was constituted. Wherever political parties existed, especially in the coastal regions, their organisation was made use of. The minorities and some social categories were represented by the Government nominating a few individuals. However, more than 75% of the representatives were elected by the people themselves.

### MALINO

Thus constituted the conference met at Malino, where for the first time the idea was broached to transform the Netherlands Indies into a federation, Borneo, East-Indonesia and the Republic being the constituents. The meeting unanimously approved the proposal, because under this system the varying tempers of the different groups of the population would tell to full advantage, while maintaining the Unity of Indonesia.

The old Netherlands-Indies were a geographical concept, a geographic Unity, welded together by what sometimes was called the

"Pax Neerlandica". The archipelago consists of numbers of different peoples, each with its own customs, habits and religious opinions. The Netherlands civil administration has always watched that one group or one people should not prevail over the other, but this has not everywhere taken away the latent fear for such domination. Outside Java, for instance, there is a decided fear for a so-called Javanocracy. The Malay element has settled in the course of time along the coasts of Borneo and also in Celebes and has partly pushed back into the interior the original inhabitants. It was rightly feared that a withdrawal of Netherlands authority would call to the fore domination in oppressive form.

Self-determination is supposed to benefit all and does not mean that certain groups are brought into a dominating position. The excesses this may lead to and the dangers implied therein are demonstrated for instance just now in the conflict between Hindoos and Mohammedans in India.

So a federation was preferred. The three proposed participating states, each within its own, now more circumscribed territory, would, it was supposed, form a sound organisation. By welding the 3 participants together in a federative organisation, it was hoped to establish a strong government, which, joined with the Netherlands and the rest of the overseas territories into one Union, would constitute a strong structure, offering good prospects for the future.

Dr. van Mook later on formulated this as follows: "Anybody looking about and knowing conditions in this country and its population, and estimating these at their proper value, must come to the conclusion that the unity of Indonesia and its domestic harmony, will be developed most efficiently in a federative system, which, while joining the forces that will decide the position of the federation in the world, will give free play to the forces each in its own manner" (Den Passar: December 18th 1946).

### Conference of minorities at Pangkal Pinang

These discussions only touched the fringes of the problem. In the federative system the Indonesian people would handle the right of self-determination, which implied that various other groups, occupying prominent positions in Indonesia so far, Netherlands, Chinese and Arabs would be brought into the position of minority groups in the new organisation. These extremely important groups, it is obvious, could not simply be left out when constructing a new body politic; it was necessary that they should be consulted and given the opportunity to express their desires. This consultation took place in October 1946 in the isle of Banka and is known as the Pangkal Pinang conference.

Pangkal Pinang profited by the Malino conference held 3 months previously. A con-