

## PROLOGUE

This study is concerned with the final and traumatic years of the Dutch colonial presence in Indonesia. After the official transfer of sovereignty by the Netherlands to the federal states of Indonesia in December 1949, Dutch policies and actions were still able to exert a significant impact on its former colony both politically and economically. The modern economic sector in Indonesia in particular remained Dutch dominated. The Indonesian nationalist dream of establishing a free nation from Sabang to Merauke also had not yet been fully achieved owing to the Dutch refusal to hand over West New Guinea.

The story focuses on the Dutch decolonisation process from 1950 onwards, including the West New Guinea debacle. The Indonesian Revolution period of 1945 to 1949 is treated only summarily, concentrating chiefly on Dutch policies and perspectives, which so far have been scantily treated in the existing English language literature on the subject. The history, however, of the genesis of the West New Guinea question, beginning in the 1920s, is looked at in more detail. Secondly, an attempt is made to describe and analyse the emergence of a Papuan national consciousness and the fight for Papuan freedom. In this context also the policies of the United States and Australia are examined.

### **The basis of Dutch colonial power**

Dutch power in the Indonesian archipelago dated backed to the arrival of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), at the begin-

ning of the 17th century. Superior Dutch naval power, and commercial wealth in Europe, was also quickly felt by other European contenders in Asia. In the Indonesian area the existing Portuguese prominence was annihilated and other competitors, namely the Spanish, British, and the Danes, were pushed out by force of arms. But also in other parts of Asia, the Dutch, as worthy disciples of Calvin, manifested an inordinate zeal in their quest to add to the glory of God and their own pockets, taking control of the Cape of Good Hope and Ceylon, and establishing fortified trading posts in Japan, China, Formosa, Thailand, India and the Persian Gulf.

In the East Indies the company's fortified headquarters were located at Jacatra at the mouth of the Ciliwung River in west Java. Renamed Batavia it grew into a large trade emporium and government administrative centre. The other centre of the VOC power was in the Moluccas – the Spice Islands – in eastern Indonesia. It was their precious spices like nutmeg and cloves that had been the main attraction luring the Dutch to the Indies in the first place. Essentially a trading body, the company showed little inclination to establish itself as a land-based power and its servants were instructed to avoid, as much as possible, involvement in indigenous affairs. The maximising of profits was the motto. Unlike the Portuguese, who were fired with a burning zeal for saving souls and waging a holy war against Islam, as well as amassing filthy lucre, the company forbade its religious ministers to proselytise in Muslim areas out of fear of causing political repercussions, which in turn were bound to lower profitability. In the rest of the archipelago the company tried to enforce a monopoly by tapping the trade from the interior at the mouth of major rivers. Local princes were cajoled into signing contracts, granting the Dutch overlordship, sole trading rights, regular delivery of produce like timber, rice or forest produce at fixed prices. The company's power normally extended no further than the reach of the guns of their fortified trading posts and the local rulers were left to their own devices in internal matters.

Continued political unrest in Java adversely affected profits, causing the company to meddle ever deeper into Javanese affairs and eventually to become a territorial power itself. As a result, by the middle of the 18th century, most of Java had been brought under Dutch political control with the previously powerful kingdom of Mataram divided into two principalities: Surakarta and Yogyakarta, both having been reduced to fiefs of the company represented at the courts by powerful Dutch residents. Javanese independence and power had been severely weakened, showing only a bleak image of its earlier glory.

Also, by the middle of 18th century, the VOC itself was showing signs of decay. Still generally a viable commercial venture, corruption among its personnel, from high to low, caused most of its profits to end up in private coffers. But also in the international Asian context the company was losing ground, suffering from increased competition from the British East India Company, which was also attempting to increase its direct influence in the East Indies. Similarly, in Europe the power of the Dutch republic was declining being surpassed commercially and in military terms by Britain.

In 1795 Holland was occupied by a French revolutionary army, and the Prince of Orange, the head of state of the Dutch republic, and his entourage were forced to flee to England. This allowed Britain under the terms of the 1788 defence treaty to occupy the Dutch colonies in order to stop French overseas expansion.

The restoration to the Dutch of their former colonial possessions in South-East Asia after the Napoleonic era was far more the product of Britain's continental European concerns than of Holland's own military strength at the time. As such the Dutch empire that gradually emerged in the East Indies archipelago during the 19th century was positioned right in the centre of the British imperial arc extending from the Middle East to New Zealand and remained largely dependent for its external protection on British power.

## **Dutch policy of non-alignment**

In Europe the Netherlands had been reduced to small nation status after the secession of Belgium from the kingdom in 1830. This caused The Hague to base its foreign policy on the principle of non-alignment on the realisation that this was the only way for a small nation to maintain its independence. But there were also other factors leading to this decision. During Holland's long mercantile history national politics had always contained a strong pacifist element to allow international trade to proceed safely and without interruption. In this connection the work of Grotius – Hugo de Groot – provides a splendid example. The fascination and insistence of the Dutch on the rule of law in the international sphere must also be partly attributed to the impact of Calvinism in moulding the national character. Calvinism emphasised the importance of action, but in accordance with rules, which also helped to instill the other annoying Dutch trait of moralism, both in home and in international politics. There is, of course, also the proverbial frugality of the Dutch, who, during most of their history as a nation, were loath to spend money on large armed forces. Even at the zenith of its naval power during the 17th century the Dutch republic kept the number of warships to a minimum, preferring to augment firepower with hastily armed merchantmen.

The distinct anti-militarist strain that runs through Dutch history flows from the staunch anti-feudalism, fierce individualism, and strong attachment to personal freedom and particularism in religion and politics underlying the national character. Furthermore, pacifism was especially germane to the Low Countries with its long humanist and internationally oriented tradition, exemplified by the celebrated figure of Erasmus. The pacifist movement was further reinforced at the end of last century by the rise of socialism, which started to exert a strong impact on Dutch national politics.

The Netherlands in fact played a prominent role in the peace

movement that gained momentum during the detente in the European international scene after the Franco-German war of 1870 to 1871. Holland was in the forefront of those pushing the ideal that international arbitration rather than war should become the norm in settling disputes between nations, and it envisaged the establishment of a world government and an international police force. The Hague hosted the peace conferences of 1899 and 1907 and was chosen to house the Permanent Court of Arbitration, now the International Court of Justice.<sup>1</sup>

The policy of neutrality and the peace movement, however, also had their critics in the Dutch parliament and the press where a minority, including Kuyper, the leader of the Anti-Revolutionaire Partij (ARP), a neo-Calvinist faction, and some business leaders, advocated a treaty with Germany, the main trading partner of the Netherlands on the continent. Moreover, Britain was very much out of favour in Holland because of its imperialist war with the Boers, the Dutch Calvinist settlers in South Africa. All this was grist to the mill of Germans such as Admiral von Tirpitz, and other army, business and academic spokesmen, who for some time had been pressing The Hague for a customs union and close political and military cooperation against England, both in Europe and in the colonies.<sup>2</sup>

Still, the attachment to the traditional policy of neutrality prevailed, because the majority of Dutch politicians remained acutely aware that British and Dutch national interests were closely intertwined. Britain's balance of power policy demanded an independent Holland unbound to one or a combination of continental great powers. In the case of foreign invasion the Netherlands could certainly count on British help. Moreover, the Dutch were always forced to dampen down any anti-British feelings and actions out of fear of losing their colonial empire, which in the last analysis was held under British auspices.<sup>3</sup>

### **Dutch-Indies defence policy**

By 1900 Britain no longer ruled the seas singlehandedly and had

been forced to abandon its two-ocean naval policy. In 1902 it concluded a defence treaty with Japan. As a result during World War I the protection of Britain's Asian colonies to a large extent was left to the naval forces of Japan.

Japan as a modern, industrialised great power, suffering from a shortage of *Lebensraum* and primary economic resources, tried like its Western precursors to take recourse to imperial expansion, firstly in China and Manchuria, and later in 1942 also in South-East Asia.

The American occupation of the Philippines at the beginning of the 20th century was seen as a boon, allowing Britain to leave the defence and the security of South-East Asia for the main part to the USA's Pacific fleet. The British defence was to be concentrated in Singapore, which was to be developed into a large naval base and an invincible fortress. In the case of war, British naval power could be augmented with the dispatch of a rapid deployment force of dreadnoughts from the home fleet. But as Australian scholar Don Dignan put rather tersely, the 1942 disaster of the *Repulse* and the *Prince of Wales*, and the collapse of the supposedly impregnable Singapore, showed that: '... A single-ocean navy could not protect a three-ocean empire'.<sup>4</sup>

In Holland and also in the dominions of New Zealand and Australia the British-Japanese treaty had been received with much misgiving. The treaty was condemned by the Dutch government and the parliament as foolish and very dangerous to the security of the Netherlands Indies. Abraham Kuyper (ARP) went as far as to call it an unholy alliance with a pagan country, alienating England from all other Christian nations, and perhaps leading to the demise of the British empire.<sup>5</sup>

In 1914 the Netherlands declared its neutrality and mobilised its armed forces. The country was fortunate to remain out of the war, partly because both Germany and England considered that this served their interests best, and partly because of deft and careful Dutch diplomatic manoeuvring. In fact the South-East Asian region was largely left untouched by war, although Japan's

involvement as an ally of Britain caused the authorities in Batavia great misgivings about future Japanese expansionist intentions.

The fact that the USA did not enter the war until 1917 and the British were forced to maintain only a skeleton force in South-East Asia, at least until after the battle of Jutland in 1916 when German naval power was contained, meant that the Allied presence in Asian waters was almost solely Japanese. Ships of the Japanese Imperial Navy were patrolling as far south as Singapore. On the request of the British government in 1916 Japanese cruisers were sent to help patrol the Indian Ocean and in 1917 Japanese destroyers entered the Mediterranean for anti-submarine duty. The precarious military situation of Britain during the war in India and South-East Asia was compounded by the radicalisation of the Indian nationalist movement presenting a fertile ground for German agents to ply their trade. This impasse is forcefully brought home by the Foreign Office's suggestion in 1915 to use Japanese forces to protect the north-west frontier against a possible Russian attack, a proposal indignantly dismissed by the India Office in London as hugely damaging to British prestige in indigenous society. Such a loss of prestige was indeed suffered when, in February 1915, Japanese marines had to be used to quell a mutiny of the Indian garrison of Singapore.<sup>6</sup>

These obvious signs of Britain's military weakness could only have heightened the security concerns of the Dutch in the Indies and their southern neighbour, Australia. Batavia and The Hague were certainly worried about the possibility that a British vote of thanks to Tokyo might occur at the expense of Dutch territory. In fact such a scenario had been depicted by the British Consul General in Batavia, Becket, who argued that the reality of Japanese military dominance would have to be recognised and suggested the partitioning of the Netherlands Indies between Britain and Japan, leaving the Dutch only Java. He also stressed that the Dutch both in Europe and in the Indies were too pro-German. The British government, however, was unwilling to exchange the harmless Dutch, even though they were somewhat

unfriendly, for a powerful, and potentially dangerous rival and made it clear that the traditional status quo in the East Indian archipelago and the informal alliance with Holland was to be maintained.<sup>7</sup>

On the eve of World War I the Dutch government, unconvinced about the effectiveness of Britain's one-ocean naval policy, had come to the conclusion that to ensure the security of the Indies it was necessary for Holland itself to build a large modern navy, powerful enough to keep the Japanese at bay. A government commission of 1913 proposed the construction of an imposing new naval force consisting of nine battleships, six cruisers, eight destroyers, and twenty-two submarines. This submission had not yet been passed by parliament when the war broke out and in fact very little of this grandiose plan was put into effect. In 1916 the keels were laid for two new cruisers, the *Java* and the *Sumatra*, which in 1925 and 1926 finally joined the fleet. The proverbial national stinginess in defence matters finally won out again, as another government commission in 1922 scrapped the projected battleships for the reason that the country lacked the capacity to pay for such capital ships. The principle of self-sufficiency in the defence of the Indies adopted in 1913 was again dropped and the colony's ultimate security was made dependent on Britain and the USA. The prime task entrusted to the Dutch navy was to retard the advance of the enemy. Eighteen new submarines were to be added to the core of the naval defence, protected by the two new cruisers, six destroyers and ninety-eight seaplanes. These proposals caused a pacifist furore, orchestrated by the Socialist Party (SDAP) and the leftist union movement (NVV). A petition signed by 1.3 million people condemning the Navy Bill, was presented to the government. In parliament the Bill was defeated by the narrowest possible margin of one vote after ten members of the Catholic Party had crossed the floor to vote with the opposition.<sup>8</sup>

In 1917 it had been agreed amongst the Allies that Japan was to keep the German Pacific possessions north of the Equator and



those to the south would remain under Australian control. The other Japanese demands for territorial expansion were denied by the Western powers, most strongly by the Americans, who had also become extremely worried about the vast Japanese naval expansion program. Washington also had long been critical of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, charging the British with thereby unwittingly having helped to strengthen Japanese imperial ambitions.

In order to settle the international power configuration in the east Asian and Pacific areas a conference was held in Washington in November 1921, which resulted in three important treaties. Firstly, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was replaced by the Four-Power Agreement in which the USA, Britain, Japan and France undertook to respect their mutual possessions in the Far East, in the Pacific, and China. Secondly, in an obvious rebuff to Japan a Nine-Power Treaty protected the political integrity of China and reaffirmed the 'open door' policy in trade. Finally a naval treaty was signed in which the USA, Britain and Japan undertook to reduce the total tonnage of capital ships in the ratio of 5:5:3 respectively. In addition the three powers agreed to refrain from building naval bases in newly acquired areas. This assured Japan naval superiority in the north-west Pacific and restricted British and American naval concentration to Singapore and Hawaii.<sup>9</sup>

Neutral Holland, although not having been directly involved in the Washington negotiations, was nevertheless highly satisfied with the public pledges by the signatories to respect the political status quo of the Netherlands Indies.<sup>10</sup> This probably encouraged the Dutch to continue in their neutralist and pacifist dreams. Similarly, in 1941, America was caught napping and the British in Singapore were rudely awakened from their colonial slumber by having their rock-solid belief in the white man's superiority smashed on the first day of the war by Japanese bombs.

It was not until the late 1930s, when Japanese aggressive in-

tentions towards the Indies had become clearer, that belated attempts were undertaken to build up the Dutch armed strength so as to hold a Japanese attack in check. Between 1938 and 1940 the cabinet, parliament, and the Dutch nation at large were involved again in a controversy about plans to augment the navy's firepower with a number of heavy cruisers modelled on the German pocket battleship *Gneisenau*. Finally, at the end of April 1940, the Dutch cabinet approved a plan to build three heavy cruisers, six destroyers, a number of motor torpedo boats, a tanker, and to increase the number of flying boats to ninety-six. The parliamentary debate started in the evening of 9 May, just a few hours before the German invasion of the country, rendering the whole exercise futile.<sup>11</sup>

In 1941 the actual Dutch naval strength in the Indies consisted of the outmoded cruiser *Java*, the new cruiser *De Ruyter*, the modern light cruiser *Tromp*, seven destroyers, seven outmoded and eight modern submarines, one gunboat, six mine-layers, and eight minesweepers. In addition there were twelve MTBs, twenty-three patrol boats, two supply ships, two tankers and four flying boat tenders.

The Naval Air Service had ten old and thirty modern Dornier flying boats, twenty-five newly delivered American Catalinas and forty-eight Ryan trainers. There were still ten antiquated Fokker seaplanes in service. A number of modern Fokker torpedo planes had been prevented from leaving the Netherlands by the German invasion. The thirty-six Douglas torpedo planes bought in the USA had also not arrived.

The air force had a sizeable number of new American fighters, comprising twenty-four Curtiss Interceptors and seventy-one Brewster Buffaloes which, however, were no match for the much faster Japanese Zeros. Even less effective were the twenty older Curtiss Hawks and thirty Curtiss Falcons. Finally, there were eighty outmoded Glenn Martin bombers and twenty new Lockheed transport planes. The 162 Brewster dive bombers and an equal number of B-25 bombers ordered in the USA could not

be delivered in time. To make matters worse a lack of trained personnel resulted in only forty-five fighters and sixty-six bombers being used at the outset of the war.

The colonial army, the KNIL, was essentially a police force, trained and equipped to put down internal rebellions and disturbances. Its defensive capacity to expel an external enemy was very limited. A program started in 1937 to modernise and mould the KNIL into an effective defence force had only been partly completed when the Japanese struck. Most of the modern weapons ordered overseas had also failed to arrive in time. From the arms ordered in Britain in 1937 only twenty armoured cars had arrived; from the seventy tanks only twenty, armed only with machine-guns, had been shipped. From the 600 American tanks purchased only seven made it to Java, and they again were only equipped with machine-guns; from the 400 light armoured cars on order only twenty-five showed up. Also only a small part of the ordered American trucks, jeeps, and technical goods arrived. The delivery of 100,000 rifles was stopped by the US War Department because they were needed by the American forces themselves.

At the outbreak of the Pacific War the KNIL numbered close to 42,000 men, of whom 10,000 were Europeans; the remainder were indigenous troops consisting of about 13,000 Javanese, 2000 Sundanese, 5000 Menadonese, 4000 Ambonese, and 1000 Timorese. In addition most of the male European population from eighteen to forty-five years was either called up or served as volunteers, forming a force of about 32,000 men, who were used mainly for police and guard duties and to maintain internal security.

Significant here is General Nasution's comment that, as late as 1940 when he was a cadet at the military college in Bandung, most of the lectures were still oriented towards how to deal with internal rebellions and riots. The training in defence strategy and tactics against an outside aggressor took second place.<sup>12</sup>

The internal security situation had indeed been complicated

by the rise of radical Indonesian nationalism, which had been gaining momentum since the early 1920s. But unlike India where the British were too weak to contain a massive nationalist upsurge by suppression and had been forced to make important political concessions, in the Indies the Dutch had managed to keep the situation under firm control. In the 1930s the strength and the politically explosive capacity of the Indonesian nationalist movement was still too weak to pose a real danger to the colonial regime. This scenario was to change fundamentally towards the end of the Japanese occupation and the immediate aftermath of the Japanese surrender in August 1945.

It took less than three months after the devastating Japanese attack on the American fleet in Pearl Harbor in December 1941 for the whole Allied defence effort in South-East Asia to crumble. After the sinking of the *Repulse* and the *Prince of Wales*, and the ignominious debacle of Singapore, resulting in the imprisonment of the vast majority of the British, Indian and Australian forces, the fall of the inadequately armed Netherlands Indies was now a foregone conclusion. General Wavell, the British supreme commander, classed the military situation in Java as hopeless and decided against reinforcing the small British and Australian contingents stationed there with more troops and armour. This further undermined the Dutch colonial army's morale, already badly bruised by the British and Australian defeat in Malaya and Singapore.

After the valiant stand by the outclassed and outgunned Dutch air force and navy, supported only by a token Allied force, their heroic feats, performed mainly out of sight of the Indonesian population, had failed to stop the Japanese landings in Java and Sumatra. On 8 March 1942, the Dutch commander, General Ter Poorten, surrendered his forces, including the Allied units, to the Japanese. It is highly unlikely that Ter Poorten and the other Europeans present at the signing of the surrender outside Bandung realised that this sealed the definitive end of the Netherlands Indies.

The bulk of the Dutch colonial forces, like their British and Australian counterparts, ended up in Japanese prisoner of war camps. A sizeable number of Dutch merchant vessels and some naval ships and airforce planes had managed to reach Ceylon and Australia, but only very few army units were able to escape.

Unlike their allies the Dutch had no territory left to rebuild their armed strength as the Netherlands, the main source of manpower, was under Nazi occupation, and the remaining part of the Dutch empire in the West Indies was too economically underdeveloped to provide the required human and material resources. Moreover, attempts by the Netherlands government in exile to find recruits for its armed forces among Dutch citizens residing in North America and South Africa produced only meagre results. This meant the few remnants of the Netherlands Indies armed forces that had managed to escape to Australia and Ceylon could not be substantially augmented and the role they could play depended solely on the decisions of the Allied High Command and the goodwill of the host nations. Hence, after March 1942 the Dutch military role in the Pacific war had been reduced to that of a minor player.<sup>13</sup>

### **In the grip of Japan**

The speedy Japanese victory caused the Dutch to suffer a huge loss of prestige among the Indonesians, and the idea of the white man's superiority and invincibility, so carefully nurtured during the ages among the masses, was destroyed forever. Indeed many Indonesians came to the conclusion that if the Japanese could defeat the mighty Western nations, they could do the same.<sup>14</sup> Many among the traditional Indonesian ruling classes and bureaucrats, who were beholden for their position to the Dutch colonial regime, and had supported the Dutch colonial policy of gradual political and economic development, felt betrayed. They argued that the Dutch, by failing to defend their colonial subjects against the Japanese invaders, had lost their right to rule

(*wahyu*). There was indeed nothing to be seen of the supposed bond of sympathy between brown and white in sharing the same misfortune, a deep disappointment to many Dutchmen, who really had always believed that such a link existed.<sup>15</sup> The status of the Dutch and the Eurasians was further seriously eroded by the harsh, denigrating and often cruel treatment meted out by the new masters. Such was the case in Yogyakarta where, after the surrender, the all-powerful Dutch Resident was forced by the Japanese to direct the traffic. This was a gross insult and a public degradation causing irreparable damage to the Dutch reputation, and even more so here in the heartland of traditional Java, where power and prestige still strictly depended on the point reached in the highly socially stratified status system.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the impudent treatment of the governor-general and the armed forces commanders, who were transported from Bandung to Jakarta by train in a third-class compartment guarded by insolent soldiers, could only have caused the respect for the Dutch among indigenous onlookers to plunge even further.<sup>17</sup> Early in 1943 most Europeans, including women and children, had been interred. A sizeable number of Eurasians, although legally recognised as European, were left free. In an attempt to lure the nationalists to their side and to reduce any possible Indonesian resistance the Japanese, immediately after their arrival, had allowed the national red and white flag to be hoisted and the anthem to be sung. This stunt did not only fool the prewar cooperative nationalists, many of whom, already before the outbreak of the war, had decided to leave the sinking Dutch colonial ship. Some of the radical nationalists and Muslim leaders<sup>18</sup> also fell for this propaganda trick, believing that the Japanese were genuine in their promises of Indonesian self-government and even independence.<sup>19</sup>

The real intentions of the Japanese were revealed when, after control of the country had been established on 20 March 1942, regulations were issued prohibiting all Indonesian nationalist activities and revoking permission to use the national Indone-

sian flag and anthem.<sup>20</sup> It was Japanese policy to erase all vestiges of the former Dutch colonial regime and to bind the Indonesian people as closely as possible into supporting Japan's war aims.

In fact the Japanese turned out to be far stricter and more cruel masters than the Dutch had ever been and rather than bringing freedom they were busy turning the Indies into a Japanese colony. Any sign of an anti-Japanese stance or action was ruthlessly suppressed by the notorious secret police, the Kenpeitai, whose efficiency was considerably increased by the enlistment of a large number of Indonesian informers left behind by the Dutch intelligence service (PID). The Japanese used fascist-like front organisations and the centrally controlled radio service to conduct a propaganda and indoctrination campaign to try to mobilise the people for their war effort.

Indonesian leaders who desired to stay in the political limelight without wanting to commit suicide, could only agree to cooperate, hoping to guide the situation towards the national advantage. But according to General Nasution's recollection of events:

Quite a number of leaders in this first stage truly believed in official and unofficial propaganda 'to support Japan to death', to 'prosper together within Greater East Asia', and the implicit geopolitical theory behind it and so forth, a position which they maintained until the end of Japanese rule ...<sup>21</sup>

The relatively small number of Indonesian social democrats in the nationalist movement, as convinced anti-fascists such as Sjahrir, remained true to their ideals, laid low and refused to cooperate. Mohammad Hatta, who before the war had visited Japan, was also known as a committed social democrat, and hence was viewed with great suspicion. Probably because of his high national profile, the Japanese wanted to keep him under close observation, and put him on the spot by appointing him to a sideline job as head of an advisory bureau to army head-

quarters. Later in his autobiography Hatta tried to whitewash his involvement by stressing that he only agreed to cooperate as an adviser not as an official after having been assured by General Harada, the head of military government (Gunseikan), that Japan intended to give Indonesia its independence. This story remains unconvincing as at this point of time ideas of Indonesian independence were still far removed from Japanese thinking. More likely Hatta was forced to comply at gunpoint.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, many Indonesians and their leaders, as was demonstrated during the subsequent turbulent flow of Indonesian political history, showed no such deep commitment to Western democracy at all.

The most prominent critic of Western democracy was Sukarno, who, rather than being forced, gave the distinct impression of being keen to offer his services to the new conquerors. The metamorphosis of Sukarno from a prewar Marxist-tinged anti-imperialist into a Japanese cooperator par excellence is striking, and cannot solely be attributed to his consummate acting skills. The deeper reasons for this must be found in Sukarno's own political philosophy that showed some similarity to the Japanese model. Certainly, his dismissal of Western democracy and values, his insistence on a one-party state, the advocacy of the *musyawarah* and *mufakat* political decision-making machinery, which in essence was a native Indonesian version of the corporate state, all points in that direction. Still Sukarno was too complex a political figure to be readily slotted into one of the major political ideologies. He was a radical nationalist who tried to devise a political philosophy and government system which he believed suited the existing Indonesian situation. He was influenced by Western political thinkers as well as by Javanese traditional concepts.<sup>23</sup>

Sukarno and the other leaders tried to use the Japanese imposed mass organisation, PUTERA, primarily to strengthen nationalist sentiment among the people. But the Japanese remained silent on the question of Indonesian self-government and inde-



pendence. In fact PUTERA was forbidden to establish branches in the countryside. The peasantry was of central importance in the war economy and had to be closed off from any nationalist propaganda by urban leaders, which potentially could easily inflame an already smouldering anti-Japanese feeling into open rebellion. Agricultural production, particularly the target of self-sufficiency in food, had become even more essential, as the supply lines to Japan and other parts of Asia were coming under an ever-growing threat by Allied submarines. In a policy reminiscent of the notoriously oppressive forced export crop cultivation system (*Cultuurstelsel*) of the 19th century the peasantry was pushed and cajoled into increasing their output, which had to be delivered to officially controlled village cooperatives. The Japanese tried to control both the supply and demand of rice, but the price offered to rice producers was too low for production to rise. A resulting inflation spiral, a growing black market, and a spread of official corruption caused a great deal of economic hardship and widespread rural unrest.<sup>24</sup>

But to keep Indonesian expectations alive, in 1943 in a 'magnanimous' gesture Japan endowed the Javanese people with a Central Advisory Council, which was powerless and forbidden to criticise their colonial masters and their policies. It was a real parody of the prewar Volksraad, whose members had enjoyed the normal parliamentary privileges making its proceedings an important source of Indonesian nationalist criticism of the Dutch colonial government policies and other failings.

More important to the Indonesian national cause was the decision to transfer more higher echelon administrative posts to Indonesians at a much larger scale than the Dutch had done. On the other hand the recognition of the authority of self-rulers of Yogyakarta and Surakarta in central Java in their own areas was merely a return to the Dutch colonial status quo, a move that hardly could have impressed leftist leaning nationalists.

In order to retain peace and order in the countryside the Japanese reversed the old established Dutch colonial practice of reli-

ance on the services of the *priyayi* and *adat* chiefs and suppressing Islam; instead they took up direct contact with rural Islamic teachers to gain their support. By indoctrination courses and granting concessions the Japanese tried to increase the social status and power of rural religious leaders vis-a-vis the *priyayi*. Furthermore, they attempted to widen the divisions within Islam itself by ostracising the more radical PSII and legally recognising the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the Muhammadiyah, which were essentially non-political Islamic organisations. In November 1943 the Japanese set up the Masjumi, or the Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims, which comprised the NU, the Muhammadiyah, and individual religious teachers (*ulama*), but the more politically radical Muslims were not included. The Masjumi was meant to link the moderate urban Islamic leadership with rural Islam, to form an effective counter against radical-leftist agitation. While this tended to heighten Muslim self-esteem and political consciousness it also, as intended by the Japanese, created an ever-growing fissure between Islam and the rest of the nationalist movement. Still, the efforts of Sukarno and other leaders who used their cooperation with the Japanese to advance the Indonesian nationalist cause remained unrewarded.

By the end of 1943 the war was going badly for Japan and even more stringent measures were taken to involve the Indonesian people directly in the defence their country against an expected Allied invasion. The PUTERA had not lived up to Japanese expectations and in March 1944 was replaced by the Djawa Hokokai, which tried to mobilise the whole of the population for the war effort. It was under direct central Japanese control and Indonesian leaders were only used in an advisory capacity. Nationalist demands for greater political concessions were ignored and in fact the secular nationalists no longer had an organisation of their own. In contrast the Masjumi, although linked with the Djawa Hokokai, remained a separate entity and also the *priyayi* again came to play a predominant role. With the Djawa Hokokai, as indicated both by its name and intent, the

Japanese had clearly abandoned any attempts to alleviate any Indonesian nationalist sensitivities. The main objectives of the new organisation was to increase the impact of official indoctrination at grass roots level and mould the people into a more cohesive and effective national force to aid the war effort. For that purpose the traditional Japanese system of neighbour associations (*tomari gumi*) was introduced, which were to be joined by all ethnic groups, including the Chinese and Eurasians. The *tomari gumi* were led by the lower *priyayi*, and village chiefs, but the Masjumi affiliated local religious teachers were also recruited on a large scale.

Radical nationalists, such as Sukarno, who had been cooperating with the Japanese, were now only 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 staying united with Dai Nippon for victory. It was especially Sukarno with his demagogic talents who proved to be an important asset to his masters. It was owing to his urgings that thousands of young Javanese were duped into volunteering as labourers (*romusha*) to be sent to various parts of the archipelago and mainland South-East Asia to build airfields, harbours and roads. Working conditions were often atrocious and inhumane causing thousands of *romusha* to die of starvation and disease.<sup>25</sup>

In 1943 the Japanese war machine showed signs of being stressed to the limit. Japan was in retreat in the Solomon Islands and New Guinea, and the occupying forces in Indonesia were depleted to bolster the defence capacity at the front. The military authorities in Java decided to fill the shortfall of manpower with indigenous recruits. As a first step in April 1943 a Java-wide paramilitary youth movement, the Seinendan, was set up to mobilise men to be trained for local defence and the spreading of Japanese war propaganda. Of great value to the national cause were the exhortations of Sukarno and other national leaders to young Indonesians to join the Seinendan, and various other auxiliary armed services set up by the Japanese. The Seinendan is

reported to have numbered half a million members in mid-1945. There are also reports that from 1944 some branches of the Seinendan, following the Japanese example, set up training suicide units (Barisan Berani Mati). Another development was the formation of an auxiliary police force, the Keibodan, which was more than 1 million strong at the end of the war. This was followed in mid-1943 by the Heiho, an Indonesian auxiliary force forming an integral part of the Imperial Japanese Army, and containing many former KNIL soldiers and NCOs. The officers were all Japanese and Indonesians could not advance above the rank of sergeant. The main tasks of the Heiho were to man anti-aircraft batteries and to defend airfields and other military installations.

In October 1943 an Indonesian volunteer defence, Pembela Tanah Air (PETA), or Defenders of the Fatherland, was founded, which was commanded by Indonesian officers up to the battalion level. Obviously not entirely sure of Indonesian loyalty, the PETA was left without a central command structure; it was a lightly armed infantry force of individual battalions each bound to defend a particular region. Training emphasised the development of fighting spirit (*semangat*) and other Japanese military values, but tactics and strategy were neglected. In 1945 PETA was estimated to have comprised 37,000 men.

Continuing their classical colonial divide-and-rule tactics, in August 1944 the Japanese allowed Sukarno to found the Barisan Pelopor (Vanguard Corps), another paramilitary youth movement, which attracted a large number of radical nationalist recruits.

In order to balance the political situation again, in December 1944 the Masjumi was given permission to set up its own military organisation, the Hisbullah, the Army of God, which, like the Barisan Pelopor, was only armed with sticks and sharpened bamboo poles (*bambu runcing*).

In the meantime the cause of Indonesian independence had received an unexpected boost with the announcement, on 7 Sep-

tember 1944, of Prime Minister Koiso in the Japanese parliament that the whole of Indonesia would be granted its independence in the future. On the next day there was an official announcement in Jakarta by the occupying authorities allowing Indonesians to use their national flag and anthem. But this was as far as the Japanese wanted to go at this stage. The main point of the Koiso declaration was to arouse Indonesian nationalist feeling to such a high pitch, that Indonesians would be eager to cooperate with the Japanese to defend their country against an Allied invasion in order to elude the re-imposition of Western colonialism. Tokyo directed the occupation authorities in Java to retard the process toward promised political self-government as long as possible and to get the people on side by increasing Indonesian participation in government administration and by stepping up political indoctrination. As a result, at the end of 1944 more Indonesians were appointed as mayors in various towns and in leading positions in the civil service.<sup>26</sup>

The call for an intensification of indoctrination was grist to Sukarno's mill who now excelled himself by trying to turn the growing hate of the people for the Japanese onto the Allies with such hysterical outbursts as: 'we will flatten America, and we will crush England'.<sup>27</sup> Sukarno and most other leaders argued that with a Japanese defeat coming closer the chances of exacting substantial political gains and even independence for loyal cooperation were a distinct possibility. And it was believed that the realisation of a free Indonesian state before the end of the war would be difficult to be pushed aside by the victorious Allies.

The Indonesian leadership, in the main, attempted to keep the lid on the surging anti-Japanese feeling among the population, and frantically tried to avoid a national rebellion that was advocated particularly by a large section of the younger generation (*pemuda*), that is exactly that part of society that had been trained for warfare and primed for armed action. The older leaders such as Sukarno and Hatta argued that this patriotic fighting spirit (*semangat*) should be directed at the invading Allied

forces rather than the Japanese, who were to depart but in the meantime were still strong enough to crush the lightly armed Indonesian forces thereby obliterating any chance of staging a national revolution against the real enemy, the Allies, and particularly the Dutch.

In 1944 to 1945 the economic situation had even further deteriorated because of crop failure. Rice stocks, already low as a result of the defective Japanese organisation of food supply, fell far below national requirements, causing widespread famine, malnutrition and disease. Medicines and clothing were unobtainable, and many people were clad in gunnysacks. The black market was flourishing and corruption was rife serving only the better off, many of whom were civil servants already receiving rice rations. The urban poor and the rural landless classes, comprising by far the largest proportion of the population, remained outside the official food distribution. As a result starvation was spreading widely in Java in 1944 to 1945.<sup>28</sup>

Still, the attempts of the nationalist leadership to prevent the steaming cauldron of hate of the Japanese from boiling over were not entirely successful. In May and August 1944, anti-Japanese rebellions broke out in Indramayu, a long-standing economically depressed area, followed in February 1945 by a rebellion at Singaparna in west Java, led by a local Islamic teacher (*kiai*). Both uprisings, reminiscent of the spontaneous, ill-planned anti-colonial rebellions of the 19th century, were quickly and ruthlessly suppressed by the Japanese. More significantly there were uprisings in February and March 1945 of PETA units in Blitar and Kroya, indicating to the Japanese that during an Allied invasion their own created Indonesian army forces might turn against them.<sup>29</sup>

With the war approaching Indonesian territory itself, on 1 March 1945 the Japanese announced that a committee to investigate Indonesian independence would be established. As the title suggests the Japanese still wanted to move slowly and the first meeting of the committee did not take place until the end of May.

To keep the fervour of the radical nationalists in check, not Sukarno but the more conservative nationalist Dr Radjiman was put in charge. Still, Sukarno seemed to have dominated the proceedings and managed to push through his formula for national unity, namely the Panca Sila, and the draft constitution, which showed a strong influence of his corporate state ideas.

The rapid deterioration of the Japanese military situation in South-East Asia forced the time schedule for the granting of Indonesian independence to be put forward and on 7 August 1945 the Radjiman committee was replaced by a committee for the preparation of independence, headed by Sukarno and Hatta, and consisting of twenty members representing a cross-section of opinions and interests of the nation as a whole. Sensing that the great event, fervently yearned for so long, was near, Sukarno, in a now famous speech, referring to the prophecies of Djojobojo an ancient Javanese king who had foretold the demise of Dutch colonial rule, told the Indonesian people that the country would be free before the corn would ripen.

On 8 August, Sukarno, Hatta and Radjiman were flown to Japanese headquarters in Saigon to be told by Marshal Terauchi that Indonesia would be granted its independence in the immediate future and urged them to speed up their preparations.

The Japanese occupation policies had engendered enormous psychological and social changes in Indonesian society shattering any chances for a return to the prewar colonial system. Indeed, the Japanese occupation meant much more than merely a change of colonial masters. In fact it proved to be a major watershed in modern Indonesian history in forging an entirely different dimension in the popular Indonesian mentality regarding colonialism and imperialism. It was particularly the younger generation that, unlike many of their elders, was absolutely opposed to the return of the Dutch colonial regime, which not only had lost all credibility and prestige by their 1942 defeat, but also was hated as a result of Japanese indoctrination and military training. The Dutch myth of the Javanese being the most gentle

and pliable people in the world had been exploded by the impact of Japanese fascist training. A colonially instilled national inferiority complex had been replaced by a greater feeling of self-worth and a will to control one's own national life and destiny. Moreover, pressed together into nationwide organisations and subject to constant anti-colonial and anti-Western propaganda served up by nationalist leaders like Sukarno, national fervour and a sense of national belonging had vastly increased in the masses. So in 1945 a situation had been created that was very different from the one in 1942. A strong revolutionary ethos had emerged that cried out for fulfilment, a situation that was further aggravated by a general economic malaise and great suffering caused by hunger, malnutrition and social despair.<sup>30</sup>

The Dutch, almost hermetically closed off in the camps from the outside world for three and a half years, were not at all or only partially aware of the vast traumatic upheavals and fundamental change that had taken place in Indonesian society. Neither the Allied command nor the Netherlands Indies government in exile in Australia seems to have been any better informed about the situation in Indonesia. A rude awakening was awaiting Dutch prisoners, who, on leaving their camps expected to take up again what they had left in 1942. Also in the Netherlands it took some considerable time for reality to sink in.

### **The Indonesian revolution**

Most of the existing histories in English dealing with the Indonesian freedom struggle in 1945 to 1949 have largely focused on the Indonesian side. Here an attempt will be made to fill some of the gaps by concentrating on the Dutch reactions and policies.

The news of the proclamation of Indonesian independence by Sukarno and Hatta on 17 August 1945 was dismissed by the Dutch authorities in Australia and the government in The Hague as Japanese inspired. The Indonesian republic was seen as a Japanese puppet and Sukarno and its other leaders, as Netherlands-



Indies citizens, were branded as traitors.

The spell holding the Indonesian nation in anxious suspension since the proclamation of independence had, by early September, started to weaken, when groups of *pemuda* commenced to break up the delicate power-sharing arrangement of the republican government with the Japanese authorities. After first testing the Japanese will to retaliate by raising the national flag on public buildings, and painting nationalist slogans all over the cities and holding rallies in defiance of the Kenpeitai, the emboldened *pemuda* went on to occupy government offices and installations. This also triggered off a more revolutionary response from the masses, causing clashes with the Dutch and Eurasians, many of whom had just returned from the prison camps.<sup>31</sup>

Mountbatten, the SEAC commander, charged with liberating the South-East Asia mainland and Java and Sumatra, was stretched to the limit in terms of ships and troops. The six-week interval between the proclamation of the Indonesian republic and the first Allied landings in Java, partly caused by the lengthy time needed to clear mines in the Straits of Malacca and the shortage of shipping, proved to be crucial to the Indonesian cause. But perhaps even more important was the fact that Allied intelligence was not aware of the highly explosive political situation in Java, which allowed Mountbatten, after the British returned to Malaya and Singapore, to give priority to the occupation of Saigon, where Japanese headquarters and a vast number of troops were concentrated. It is irrefutable that this long delayed arrival of the British forces in Java presented the Indonesian revolutionaries with a welcome and highly valuable breathing space in which to reinforce their position.

The first contact of the Allies with Java was finally made on 15 September with the arrival in Jakarta of two warships, the British cruiser *Cumberland* and the Dutch cruiser *Tromp*, under the command of Vice-Admiral Patterson and accompanied by Charles van der Plas, Dutch representative at SEAC and com-

mander of the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration, better known as NICA, a name intensely hated and despised by republicans. NICA was a semi military organisation consisting of a number of small contingents of Dutch colonial officials attached to the Allied forces and charged with establishing Dutch rule in the areas reoccupied.

Just before leaving Singapore for Jakarta, van der Plas is reported to have boasted that only a hundred Dutchmen, supported by the British forces, would be needed to annihilate that small group of desperadoes that had proclaimed a republic in Java. Still, van der Plas was aware of Mountbatten's warning to Patterson that a British attempt to stamp out the Indonesian freedom movement would be extremely dangerous and that he was to ignore the Indonesians and only deal with the Japanese. As a result Patterson ordered that only the Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War (RAPWI) teams and the British troops on the *Cumberland* were allowed to land; the Dutch army detachment on the *Tromp* was ordered to remain on board.<sup>32</sup>

Soon after his arrival van der Plas was forced to change his tune considerably, confronted by a political scenario far worse than he and his colleagues in Australia could ever have imagined. He was also painfully taken aback by the fact that so many of the higher-echelon *priyayi* (indigenous colonial officials), the backbone of former Dutch rule on whom he had based his hope, were siding with the republic. He reported to Lieutenant Governor-General van Mook, who was still in Australia:

We have underestimated the size of the anti-Dutch action and the corroding effect of years of anti-Netherlands propaganda. Certainly the Japs are hated. But we Netherlanders are also ...<sup>33</sup>

The Dutch themselves were powerless to stop the revolutionary tide as they lacked the necessary armed forces. After the defeat by the Germans in 1940 the Netherlands army had been disbanded and part of the officer corps interred. Only a very small section of the Dutch armed forces, mainly from the navy, had

managed to reach England. The army units became part of the Netherlands 'Irene' brigade, which took part in the Normandy invasion. It was not until the end of 1944 that further army units could be trained again in the southern part of the Netherlands. Still, owing to the unwillingness of the Allied command to release Dutch shipping forthwith it was not until early 1946 that sizeable contingents of troops could be dispatched to Indonesia. The small KNIL units that escaped to Australia had joined the Australian campaign in eastern Indonesia. After the Japanese surrender the strength of the KNIL was increased by returned prisoners, although many were found to be unfit for service. In addition, in October units of the Dutch Marine Corps, trained in the USA, had arrived in Malaya.

Van der Plas, greatly upset by the horrible conditions and the terrible inhumane treatment endured by European women in the Jakarta prison camps, where he was reunited with his own wife, further commented on the very precarious food situation caused by crop failure and the general desolate situation in the city:

... everything is in disrepair: roads, sewage, irrigation. Even the lampposts have disappeared. There is a great shortage of drinking water and there are leaks everywhere ... In Batavia on the streets many of the Jap lovers and employees get about reasonably well attired, but in the interior and also in central Java many people walk around almost naked ...<sup>34</sup>

But van der Plas still believed that it was possible to reverse the situation in favour of the Dutch, if Allied forces were landed immediately with strong support of armoured units. Moreover, only European Dutch forces should be used, which were to be landed together with the British forces.

An even more strident example of wishful thinking is provided by Major-General van Straten, the NICA commander for Java, who, in a dispatch of 20 September to van Mook in typical pre-1942 fashion, dismissed the revolutionary movement with the following arrogant lines:

## The West New Guinea Debacle

In my own opinion this whole republican movement does not amount to much. Some riots and pillaging will certainly occur during to the takeover of Batavia – these are already happening now. But in my opinion after some show of armed power this whole business will fall apart like a house of cards, providing some of the leaders have been arrested, as is planned ...<sup>35</sup>

In a report of 22 September written by van der Plas on board the *Cumberland*, it was proposed that in order to avoid a dangerous power vacuum the Japanese forces should be ordered to stay at their posts until relieved by the Allies. After this the Japanese forces were to retire fully armed to the countryside to keep peace and order. Moreover, the Japanese should be ordered to arrest Sukarno and some other prominent revolutionaries twenty-four hours before the Allied landing.<sup>36</sup>

Reports by RAPWI teams and other British observers in Java depicted the situation as extremely dangerous. This caused Mountbatten to tread extremely warily by keeping to a minimum British military interference in the political situation. During a meeting on 27 September attended by the British Minister of Defence, Lawson, he told van der Plas that the British government had firmly decided that not one British soldier was to be used to restore the Dutch to power. British troops were to occupy only two key areas of Jakarta and Surabaya and were to concentrate solely on two main objectives: to free and take care of the thousands of prisoners in the camps and to disarm and evacuate the Japanese. British forces would only be allowed to operate outside these perimeters in case the people in interior prison camps were endangered. If necessary the Japanese were to be used to maintain peace and order. Completely galling to van der Plas was Mountbatten's statement that the only way open for the British forces was to establish a working relationship with the Sukarno government, a method that had been effective in Burma. But van der Plas's objection that the Dutch government was absolutely opposed to dealing with Sukarno, who was seen

as a despicable, fascist traitor, and his point that after all it was up to the Netherlands to determine what policy to follow, not Britain, failed to make any impression. Mounbatten informed him that if the Netherlands refused to take up contact with Sukarno he would order General Christison, the commander of the Java operation, to do so; and he threatened that if because of this attitude the Dutch would get into trouble they should not expect to receive British help. He emphasised that this move was only designed to win more time for the Dutch. Van der Plas ended by stating that he would be willing to ask van Mook's approval to invite, via a radio broadcast, all prominent Indonesian leaders of all political persuasions, including the Sukarno group, to discuss how the reforms promised by Queen Wilhelmina in 1942 alluding to a gradual process leading to autonomy, would be realised.<sup>37</sup>

In fact van der Plas made his promised broadcast on 30 September and started to meet with politically moderate Indonesians. But the impact of this move was almost immediately lost because of a broadcast by General Christison from Singapore on the previous evening, in which he declared that the British forces were not allowed to operate outside the key areas of Batavia and Surabaya in Java, and Padang and Medan in Sumatra, and that the responsibility for peace and order for the rest of the islands rested on the Indonesian government and the Japanese. Christison emphasised that the British had absolutely no intention of interfering politically and that their objectives were strictly limited to the evacuation of the detainees from the camps and the relocation and disarming of the Japanese. Furthermore, he stated his intention to bring Indonesian and Dutch leaders together at the conference table and that in deference to Indonesian objections, the landing of further Dutch troops was to be halted for the time being. The general's message was confirmed the same day by a statement by British Minister of Defence Lawson to the effect that neither the Dutch nor the French in Vietnam had a legitimate right to call on Britain to restore their

colonial possessions to them.<sup>38</sup>

This essentially de facto recognition by the British of the Indonesian republic immediately caused a barrage of Dutch invective, charging that it was a betrayal of a loyal ally. In The Hague loud cries of 'Perfide Albion' could be heard, sentiments highly understandable and accusations surely difficult to refute. The British government's Indonesian policy in 1945, if viewed in terms of the long history of Anglo-Dutch power-sharing in the Indies archipelago, could well be characterised by the epithet: Britain giveth and Britain taketh away.

Looking at it from a British perspective there were some compelling reasons for their actions. Firstly, Mountbatten lacked the military manpower and arms to engage in a protracted colonial war. Secondly, this problem was further compounded by the precarious political and military situation in India that had forced Britain to the point of granting independence. Hence it could not be expected that the predominantly Indian forces under Mountbatten's command would agree to suppress another colonial people in their struggle for freedom. Thirdly, and probably most important of all was the fundamental change in the political situation in Britain itself where the Churchill-led Conservative government had been displaced by Labour. The Labour Party was ideologically anti-colonial and this, together with the ruling war weariness in the country, militated against the use of British troops in operations to return the Dutch to power in the Indies against the wishes of the local people.

The Christison declaration, apart from causing the expected deterioration of Anglo-Dutch relations, completely failed in its objective of defusing the highly explosive situation in Java. In reality the opposite occurred as the *pemuda* and other action groups took the cautious and conciliatory British overtures as a sign of weakness and intensified their actions. Now the defiant actions of the previous weeks grew into a fully-fledged armed revolution, showing also in some areas the distinct signs of a social revolution. During this *bersiap* (literally 'be prepared')

period an amok-like national frenzy pervaded sections of the revolutionary movement. It raged on for about three months in the main cities and many rural areas of Java, causing thousands of Dutchmen, Eurasians, Chinese, including women and children, Indonesians suspected of pro-Dutch leanings, and also a sizeable number of Japanese, to be murdered. Their mutilated bodies became familiar sights floating in rivers and canals. There was little either the Allies, or the Indonesian government and its official army, the Badan Keamanan Rakjat (BKR), could do to stop the carnage. As it happened the Netherlands was unable to gain hold of the situation since for the first six months the available Dutch colonial armed forces were too thin on the ground to turn the tide and the restoration of Dutch rule depended on the British forces under Mountbatten. But the British government prohibited its task force to turn against the Indonesian revolutionaries and instead insisted on Netherlands-Indonesian negotiations. Unlike the situation in Saigon there was no pukka British officer like General Gracey to be found in Indonesia willing to disobey orders and attack the Republican forces.

Still the Netherlands government stuck to the position that any meetings with the republicans, whom it condemned as rebels, Japanese stooges and traitors, were absolutely out of question. A conference about political reforms as envisaged in the Queen's promises of December 1942 would have to wait until Dutch rule had been restored.<sup>39</sup>

Obviously The Hague seems to have been oblivious to the fundamental and drastic socio-political changes which had been put into motion during the Japanese occupation and were now being pushed towards their final completion.

After their liberation from the Nazis in May 1945, the vast majority of Dutch people expected as a matter of course that the Indies would return to its prewar normality after the Japanese defeat. For most people the Indies still brought to mind the comfortable 1940 scenario, indoctrinated by school and the media, of an indigenous people, still often called inlanders (natives) liv-

ing happy and contented, with the exception of a few communist troublemakers, under a benevolent, just, and socially-committed colonial government. Public knowledge about the Indies was still largely restricted to the idyllic images evoked by the songs learned in school, for example, *Sarinah in de desa*, and the wall posters and maps. All Dutch schoolchildren were drilled in naming the main islands and cities in the archipelago in the same way as Indonesian children were expected to be familiar with the map of the Netherlands. Sukarno later was wont to demonstrate to Dutch visitors his geographical knowledge about the Netherlands and asked them if the dunes were really as white as the school song suggested. Secondary students in Holland learned more about the geographical and economic features of Indonesia and colonial history, but knew little about Indonesian nationalism. In the Netherlands knowledge of Indonesia and its conditions was restricted to a relatively small number of people: experts in their fields in universities (mainly in Leiden and Utrecht), the Department of Colonies, various missionary bodies, trade, commercial and transport circles, and retired colonial servants and employees of private colonial enterprises. It was especially from these last two categories that Indonesian experts in parliament were drawn. There was, however, a general appreciation that the Indies were essential to the Netherlands' economic prosperity and that indigenous socio-economic development depended on the continuation of Dutch colonial rule. The Netherlands' civilisation mission, that had been interrupted by the Japanese occupation, had to be taken up again. There was a national consensus in Holland that self-government for the Indies – full independence was out of the question – was still a question of the distant future, and the demands of Indonesian nationalists for far-reaching political concessions were dismissed again, as in the late 1930s, as immature and untimely. The new elite of Dutch-educated Indonesians was generally considered as still too small and inexperienced to be able to replace Dutch colonial rule.

The Indonesian question initially caused only a muted public



reaction in Holland, where most attention was directed towards the rebuilding and rehabilitation of the national economy and infrastructure devastated by the Nazi occupation and the Allied invasion.

Negotiations between the Netherlands and the republic lumbered on excruciatingly slowly, resulting at last, on 13 November 1946, in the Linggajati agreement by which the Netherlands recognised the *de facto* republican authority in Java and Sumatra, and the republic agreed to join an independent federal state of Indonesia constituting an integral part of a Netherlands-Indonesian union, headed by the Netherlands monarch. Both parties also agreed to a cease-fire.

The agreement was only passed by the Dutch parliament after the addition of extra clauses ensuring that the Netherlands had paramount political and economic power in the projected Indonesian federation, and the inclusion of the principle of political self-determination allowing any region within the archipelago to decide to stay outside the federation. The majority of Dutchmen remained opposed to full decolonisation and seemed to have considered the time-consuming negotiation process as a breathing pause necessary to build up a military machine strong enough to annihilate the Indonesian republican forces. As in France<sup>40</sup> too many Dutch socialists, accounting for a third of seats in parliament, played a dubious role putting Dutch nationalist views and national interests above their avowed anti-colonial platform. The Linggajati agreement was seen by the Netherlands as only granting a limited degree of self-government in a federal construction leaving the Netherlands still with considerable political as well as economic power.

A crucial new element that entered Dutch policy considerations was the financial and economic aspect of the Indonesian question, which hitherto had been pushed sideways by the almost exclusive concentration on the political dimension. Early in September 1946 the Minister for Finance, Lief tinck, had drawn attention to the precarious foreign exchange situation of the

Netherlands, which allowed only short duration military expenditure in the Indies, and that only at the existing level.<sup>41</sup>

The Minister for Overseas Affairs, Jonkman, during a meeting with his departmental heads on 13 September, also put it on the line that the only way open to the Netherlands was to come to an agreement with the Indonesian revolutionaries, on matters economic included. He pointed to the urgent need for political stability and the guaranteed legal security of capital necessary for the rehabilitation of plantations and the Western economic sector in general. But he rejected calls from the colonial diehard conservative factions for the subjugation of the republic by military means.<sup>42</sup>

During the almost three-month long, tortuous, protracted way taken by the republic to finally, on 5 March 1947, ratify the Linggajati agreement, the Netherlands trading position had continued to deteriorate to the point where a speedy resolution of the Indonesian dispute had become absolutely essential.

In 1938 Dutch private investment in Indonesia had amounted to 2.8 billion guilders accounting for one-sixth of the Netherlands national capital resources and producing about 15 per cent of the national income. The external trade of the Netherlands Indies was conducted for a good part in US dollars, which were used to balance the trade deficits with the Netherlands.

In 1945 a vast part of the European industrial complex had been destroyed by the war, and the huge demand for consumable and capital goods dammed up for years by wartime economic contingencies had, for the most part, to be filled by imports, mainly from the USA, causing a serious dollar shortage in Europe. In the Netherlands this situation could not be ameliorated by the traditional supply of American currency earned by Indonesian exports owing to the disastrous impact on the Indonesian economy of the Japanese occupation and the outbreak of the revolution. Hence a speedy settlement of the Indonesian dispute and the rehabilitation of the plantation and mining sectors were regarded as an important precondition for the effective

economic recovery of the Netherlands.<sup>43</sup>

In February 1947, Posthuma, the economic adviser to the Commissie-Generaal, a body of negotiators sent by the Dutch parliament, told Minister Jonkman that the Netherlands Indies' foreign exchange reserves would run out by the end of 1947 and that the Batavian government had requested of Lief tinck an extra 300 million guilders to stave off imminent insolvency. Lief tinck himself, in April 1947, warned the cabinet that both the Netherlands Indies and the Netherlands were on the brink of bankruptcy and advocated a military attack on the republic to take control of the most productive areas to provide the Netherlands with an extra 300 million guilders of foreign exchange.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, van Mook wrote to Minister Logemann on 22 February that because of the continuing political uncertainty and economic and financial problems, especially the precarious food situation, the position was fast becoming untenable. The most important food-producing regions were in the republican-held parts of west and east Java and if by mid-March no agreement had been reached with the Indonesians then the only option open would be military action. However, van Mook argued that the unilateral changes made to the Linggajati Agreement in The Hague were the cause for the republican procrastination during the negotiations. Still, considering war as disastrous for both sides he would, in such an event, immediately resign as he did not want to be accused of having negotiated with the republic for one and a half years only to buy time to build up the Dutch military potential to the point that a devastating blow could be delivered to the republic. He was very scathing about what he called the weakness, indecisiveness, and stupidity of the Dutch government, and obviously disillusioned, indicated that even in the event the agreement was signed he still wanted to quit, as the difficulties would continue and he deserved a rest.<sup>45</sup>

In fact the Linggajati Agreement was seen by the republic government as more than mere *de facto* recognition. Rejecting the Dutch insistence of *de jure* sovereignty in the interim period

the republic presented itself to the world as an independent nation with its own overseas representatives, armed forces, and currency. To the great chagrin of the Dutch the first international recognition of the republic was accorded by the Arab states in March 1947, followed by Britain, the USA, Australia, China, and India. The republic also tried to use this de facto recognition by the Dutch to break the Dutch navy's economic blockade. A number of Western nations were pressing The Hague for permission to establish direct trade and commercial links with the republic, while some USA and Australian trading interests simply ignored the Batavia government in their commercial dealings with the republic. The American government, although officially keeping its distance, did nothing to stop this activity. As it was, the USA was intensely interested in restarting its large prewar trade with Indonesia, which in 1940 had accounted for half of American rubber, 10 per cent of tin, 90 per cent of quinine, 80 per cent of palm oil, and 25 per cent of tea imports. Moreover, the Netherlands Indies was the second largest recipient of American investment in Asia, which further explains the urgency of American pressure on the Netherlands, apart from its traditional anti-colonial rhetoric and its new-found anti-communist mission, to settle the Indonesian problem.

On 29 January 1947, Batavia introduced regulations to stop these international trading contacts of the republic and came down particularly hard on the lucrative smuggling operations from Singapore by Chinese and British vessels. This Dutch naval blockade caused British and Chinese protests. Furthermore, an American ship the *Martin Behrman*, and a British vessel the *Empire Maybower*, both of which had loaded at republican ports, had their cargoes confiscated by the Dutch navy again resulting in protests from the respective governments.<sup>46</sup>

In the republic the Linggajati accord caused general condemnation and serious political upheaval. The republic considered the Linggajati agreement merely as a further stage towards the final aim of full independence and a welcome opportunity to put

itself in the international limelight. It also provided a sorely needed breathing space to build up its armed forces. Another factor causing the republican government to take a 'haste slowly' attitude was that it was aware of the dire straits in which the Netherlands found itself economically and financially, hoping to use this impasse to drive the Dutch towards more concessions.<sup>47</sup>

The Netherlands' foreign exchange problem continued to worsen. During a cabinet session on 21 April, Minister Lief tinck argued that the Indonesian situation was so serious that it could only be solved by Anglo-American help. He suggested the establishment of an American-British control commission to oversee the maintenance of peace, a move that also would make Washington more amenable to providing the Netherlands with financial help.<sup>48</sup> He further warned that the Netherlands was financially unable to continue an arms race with the republic. Instead, current military expenditure had to be severely curtailed and in order not to bring the Dutch position to a dangerous impasse, all efforts should be directed at achieving gradual demobilisation and disarmament by both sides, creating a more favourable climate to reach a final solution of the problem. Lief tinck, pointing at the recent example of Britain, which when similarly confronted by national bankruptcy had moved the target date for Indian independence forward to 1948, stressed that the Netherlands should follow suit and leave the Indies as soon as possible after having secured a guarantee for Dutch investments and commercial interests.<sup>49</sup>

While these proposals were realistic in themselves, they were rejected by cabinet in view of the very inflammable political situation in the Netherlands. So owing to the continued refusal by the republic to offer new concessions and with the armed truce starting to break up, all signs were pointing towards war.

The resulting military action (*politieonele actie*), ostensibly to establish peace and order was, in reality, dictated by pressing Dutch national economic needs, as pointed out above. The main

objective was to take possession of the major plantation areas and oil fields in Java and Sumatra. The occupation of Yogyakarta and the annihilation of the whole of the republic was not intended at this stage.

The subsequent Renville agreement recognised the Dutch conquests, causing serious political turmoil in the republic. Netherlands-Indonesian relations continued to deteriorate owing to the Dutch attempts to hem in the republic by creating additional federal states and to reduce its power by trying to encapsulate it in an interim federal Indonesian government.

The Indonesian question became more complicated by being drawn more deeply into the Cold War. In 1948 the Moscow affiliated Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) started a strong offensive in opposition to the Renville agreement and pushed towards a showdown with the politically more moderate Hatta government. The USA, deeply troubled by this development, decided to change course by transferring its support from the Dutch to the Hatta government. Undoubtedly to Washington's relief this gamble paid off, as by the end of October the Hatta government's armed forces had been able to put down a communist armed rebellion after a great deal of bloodshed.

Still the Netherlands government refused to bow to American pressure to give in to the republic's demands and to speed up the transfer of sovereignty. An important reason for this was the role of the Catholic Party, a major power in parliament. In the past colonial affairs had been monopolised by the protestant parties and the liberals. Catholics had hardly been involved in the colonial power structure and administration. But as a major partner in the government coalition with the socialists from 1946 the Catholic Party gained a major say in the Indonesian question. It was particularly the persistent support of the powerful party leader Romme for a Netherlands-Indonesian union (Zware Unie) that still left the Dutch with considerable political power that was responsible for the protraction in the Dutch-Indonesian decolonisation negotiations. Romme was not convinced that the

vast Dutch business interests in Indonesia could be maintained without Dutch political power. He was supported in this by the diehard colonial camp that included Joseph Luns, a foreign affairs officer at the United Nations (UN) in New York, with whom he was in correspondence.<sup>50</sup> It was the Catholic trio of Romme, High Commissioner Beel, and the Minister of Overseas Territories, Sassen, supported by the protestant parties and the majority of liberals, that was bent on destroying the power of the republic completely.

The Dutch army struck on 19 December 1948 and quickly sliced through the Indonesian defences occupying the urban centres of Java and Sumatra, including the republican capital of Yogyakarta, and capturing most of the cabinet. Still, the main objective of the annihilation of the republican armed forces was not achieved. In fact the Dutch military position had deteriorated because their lines of communication between their armed concentrations in the cities had become over-extended, leaving large parts of the countryside in the control of the Indonesian guerilla forces. To break this stalemate a large injection of extra Dutch troops was needed to defeat the republic's armed resistance after time-consuming anti-guerrilla operations. In fact the Dutch treasury could not afford such a large additional outlay and this, together with the pressure of the United Nations and particularly the veiled threats of the Americans to cut off Marshall aid, forced the Netherlands to the conclusion that it had failed to achieve its political objectives in Indonesia. Now all efforts were directed at safeguarding its vast economic stake.

### **The Round Table Conference**

The decision of the USA in 1948 to put its support behind the republic was of paramount significance in causing the Netherlands to return to the negotiation table and end its colonial rule in December 1949.

In contrast, a different American policy was adopted regard-

ing the French in Vietnam, where the moderate nationalist forces were no match for the communist controlled Viet-Minh. It was hard pragmatic reasoning, rather than its much vaunted, popular, anti-colonialist stand, that determined the fundamentals of American policy in South-East Asia. In Indo-China after 1945 the USA initially had adopted a neutral stand, refusing military support to both the French authorities and the Ho Chi Minh forces alike. But after the communist takeover in China the Americans changed course dramatically putting their support behind the French puppet Bao Dai government, and pouring in massive military aid, surpassing more than \$1 billion by 1954, amounting to 78 per cent of French war expenditure.<sup>51</sup>

A similar American military boost to the Dutch in Indonesia might well have resulted in the demise of the republican forces. Fortunately for the republican cause the Indonesian government had been able, of its own accord, to avert a communist takeover, although only temporarily as became evident in the 1950s with the power of the PKI rapidly looming up again. Still there was no communist leader in Indonesia able to attract the same national support as Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam. The only leader in Indonesia to establish a similar hold on the masses was the charismatic, and eclectic, President Sukarno.

The negotiations that had started on 14 April, led on 7 May to the Roem-van Roijen Agreements. Accordingly the Indonesian negotiator, Mohammad Roem, in the name of Sukarno/Hatta, declared that the Indonesian armed forces would be ordered to stop their guerilla activities and the republican government consented to participate in the Round Table Conference (RTC) in The Hague to expedite the granting of unconditional independence to the federation of Indonesia. Sukarno and Hatta promised to have these agreements accepted by the republican government as soon as possible after its return to Yogyakarta. On his part van Roijen declared that the Netherlands government agreed to restore the republican government to Yogyakarta and to cease all military operations and free all prisoners of war



taken after 19 December 1948. Furthermore, the Netherlands government agreed to refrain from creating and recognising new federal states in areas under republican control before 19 December and recognised the republic as a separate state, which was to form a part of the federated states of Indonesia. The RTC was to discuss and determine the ways and procedures under which Indonesian independence could be speedily effected.<sup>52</sup>

Among the Dutch community in Indonesia the Roem-van Roijen agreements were generally condemned. While part of the business world was favourably disposed, the people in the public sector in which the majority of Dutchmen were employed, and also the armed forces, were generally outraged, seeing the agreements as the last spasms of the death rattle of the colonial system, cutting off their jobs and careers.<sup>53</sup> The following fragments of a letter written by General Spoor should not be dismissed as the deranged ramblings of a defeated military man but rather as truly portraying the general feeling of dismay and disgust in most of the Dutch community in Indonesia at the time. Spoor wrote:

In the meantime you will have heard about the latest disaster that has hit Indonesia resulting from our exhaustive efforts to give disastrous concessions in return for a 'personal' assurance from two Republican fellows known from experience as untrustworthy. You can imagine what the Army and [Dutch] citizens here feel about this 'diplomatic' success ...

Spoor was furious about what he termed the unbounded fear of the Dutch delegates of the United Nations and the belief that:

... the rejection of this agreement or rather more truly this Republican imposition would be disastrous for the Netherlands. Whether we thereby push Indonesia into an abyss seems to be totally of secondary importance. Professions of faith in the future and other similar embellishments are irritating and unworthy after three years of experience with these gentlemen. I would have pre-

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ferred that in the last resort we should have taken an uncompromising stand in the Assembly and go down honourably rather than [lose] to people of the level of Roem *cum suis* ...<sup>54</sup>

Yet General Spoor decided to continue in his post in solidarity with his troops and, as he put it, to limit the damage of the new accord. On 23 May Spoor suffered a heart attack and died two days later. It was a great loss particularly to the conservative camp.<sup>55</sup>

High Commissioner Beel rejected the Roem-van Roijen Agreements, because by recognising the republic as a separate nation four years of Dutch policy were annihilated. Secondly, by consenting to cease creating new federal states and territories until the transfer of sovereignty, Beel argued that the agreements reinforced the republican claims on the existing federal states, leaving them feeling abandoned and having their chances of survival greatly weakened.<sup>56</sup> With the ground sagging away under his feet, Beel, on 7 May, sent in his resignation.<sup>57</sup>

In the Netherlands the reaction to the Roem-van Roijen agreements ran along party lines; the Labour Party was in favour and the Catholics were divided, although the majority leant towards acceptance. The conservative ARP and the Communist Party were opposed and the other protestant party, the CHU, and the Liberal Party (VVD) were divided.

It was the Catholic Minister of Overseas Territories, van Maarseveen who managed, by deft manoeuvring, to guide the parliament towards approval.<sup>58</sup> Attempts by the Catholic Party (KVP) leader, Romme, to save some of his scheme of a Dutch-controlled Netherlands-Indonesia Union (Zware Unie), by enticing the supposed anti-republican federal state of Sumatra's east coast to his side, failed.<sup>59</sup> His intention to cause a cabinet crisis by forging a coalition with the protestant parties was also unsuccessful owing to a lack of support in his own party.<sup>60</sup>

In Indonesia the Roem-van Roijen agreement met with widespread suspicion. In fact a rift occurred in republican ranks be-

tween the exiled Sukarno-Hatta government and the Sumatran-based emergency government of Sjafrudin Prawiranegara, supported by Sjahrir's socialist party and the armed forces. It was also not until the end of May that the major parties, the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI) and Masjumi announced their acceptance of the Roem-van Roijen agreements. It still took a great deal of persuading to have the Commander in Chief, General Sudirman, agree to leave his guerrilla hideout and return to Yogyakarta and announce a general cease-fire.

To put the agreements into practice took time. It engendered a great deal of political bickering both in Holland and the Republic and between the two delegations. During a visit to Indonesia van Maarseveen, although still worried about the political fallout at home, had become convinced that for the sake of the Netherlands' national interest the Roem-van Roijen plan should be accepted. He received cabinet approval on 20 June.

At a crucially important Dutch-Indonesian meeting on 22 June the most fundamental issues about future Dutch-Indonesian power relationships were discussed and accepted by both parties. The document dealing with the RTC contained a charter of the transfer of sovereignty, incorporating the following stipulations:

1. Complete and unconditional sovereignty shall be transferred in accordance with the Renville Principles;
2. A Union shall be established by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the United States of Indonesia on the basis of voluntary and equal partnership with equal rights;
3. An agreement with regard to the transfer of the rights, powers and obligations of Indonesia (the Netherlands Indies) to the United States of Indonesia ...

Another and no less momentous provision concerned the Netherlands-Indonesian Union, specifying that:

In the Union, neither of the two partners, namely the Netherlands

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and the United States of Indonesia, shall be expected to transfer or concede any more rights to the Union than the other. Nor will this transfer include any rights other than those which either partner may voluntarily decide to concede in the conviction of serving thereby as best as he can the common interests as well as his own. The Union shall not be a super state ...<sup>61</sup>

Obviously, the original Dutch policy of containing the republic in a federal straitjacket and to superimpose on the new Indonesia a Dutch-supervised political construction, had utterly failed. Instead as Romme ruefully but nevertheless accurately predicted, on 27 June the republic would play a preponderant role in the United States of Indonesia. Secondly a favourable economic and financial arrangement with Indonesia without leaving the Netherlands with any political clout in the country would, in the long run, prove to be counter-productive to Dutch interests. Finally he dismissed the Union as a farce.<sup>62</sup> On 24 June, van Roijen was able to announce that the preparations for the return of the republican government to Yogyakarta were completed and that the Dutch armed forces were to leave the city and the surrounding areas on 24 June.

Minister van Maarseveen again succeeded in gaining majority support in parliament for the 22 June agreements. Voting against were the ultra-conservative block and the Communist Party.

In Indonesia on 6 July there took place the triumphant return from exile to Yogyakarta of Sukarno and Hatta. On 13 July the emergency government of Sjafrudin returned its mandate, and the Hatta cabinet decided to confirm the Roem-van Roijen agreements. Furthermore, a working arrangement was established with the TNI command structure and the Sultan of Yogyakarta was appointed as Minister of Defence. This was followed by a Dutch-Indonesian ceasefire agreement, to be announced simultaneously by both parties on 3 August and to come into force in Java on 11 August and in Sumatra on 15 August.

The RTC was opened in The Hague on 23 August and ended on 31 October having reached agreement on all issues in the agenda, with the exception of the West New Guinea question.

The most difficult problems encountered concerned the Dutch-Indonesian Union, the right of self-determination of minorities, the future status of West New Guinea, the transfer of the national debt and related financial matters and the future of the Dutch colonial army.

The union question caused long and bitter debate. The Indonesian delegation strenuously opposed the Dutch proposal to designate the Queen of the Netherlands as the union monarch. It was only agreed to accept the Queen as a symbol of voluntary association of two fully independent nations, a function holding no powers in terms of constitutional and international law. In order to break this serious deadlock a special committee was appointed, which, with the help and pressure of Chairman Cochran, of the United Nations Commission for Indonesia (UNCI), reached a compromise by adopting the wording: 'the Head of the Union symbolises and personalises the cooperation ...' Furthermore, agreement was reached on the exchange of high commissioners rather than ambassadors, the establishment of a Union Court of Arbitration and a Union Secretariat. In addition, mutual cooperation and coordination in foreign affairs was decided upon, a provision that in practice was almost totally meaningless. Clearly, the union remained a largely symbolic and powerless gesture.<sup>63</sup> Another rather sharp clash happened on the matter of the right of self-determination of regions and states, including the right to decide not to join or secede from the United States of Indonesia. This principle had been included, after strong republican protest, in both the Linggajati and Renville agreements. But the provisional federal constitution, however, adopted by the republic and the Federal States Council (BFO) during the all Indonesian conference in June, had only acknowledged the right for greater autonomy for states or regions within the context of the Indonesian federal state, and denied the right to stay

out of the system.<sup>64</sup> It was the latter possibility that was very close to the heart of the conservative sections of parliament, including a minority of KVP politicians led by Romme. Hence, strong pressure was put on the Dutch delegation at the RTC to have enshrined in the final agreement the right of self-determination, in the sense of secession from the United States of Indonesia. The agitation of the colonial diehard organisation, the Nationaal Comité Handhaving Rijkseenheid (National Committee for the Maintenance of Unity of the Kingdom), supported by the conservative parties and media, resulted in having the cause of the Indonesian minority groups included in the RTC agenda. Petitions were sent to the Queen, who received in audience representatives of TWAPRO, an organisation from Minahassa (north Sulawesi) demanding to be accepted as the twelfth province of the Netherlands, and envoys of the PTB (Ambon) wanting to maintain a special political relationship with the Netherlands. In addition the status was questioned of the areas in Sumatra invaded by the Dutch army during the second action causing republican suspicions to escalate. As Hatta put it: 'The Republican delegation can only declare to find it impossible to cooperate in the destruction of the Republic.'<sup>65</sup>

Both the republican and BFO delegations remained opposed to the right of secession. In the end, with the help of the UNCI, a compromise solution was reached in which the question of the composition of the federal states was left to the Indonesian Constituent Assembly. Population groups in a state would be allowed under the recommendation and supervision of the UNCI or another UN organ to hold a plebiscite on forming their own federal state. Also, federal states had the right to accept or reject the final constitution and in the latter case the state concerned was accorded the right to hold negotiations on establishing a special relationship with the United States of Indonesia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.<sup>66</sup> Still, the final decision on secession remained in the hands of the United States of Indonesia,<sup>67</sup> and the reaction of Jakarta in such a case could be safely pre-

dicted to be in the negative, making this concession meaningless.<sup>68</sup>

Another complex question to be addressed was the withdrawal of the Dutch military forces, including the highly delicate problem of the dissolution of the colonial army, the KNIL. The Netherlands agreed for its remaining 80,000 troops to be repatriated within six months and for the KNIL to be dismantled as quickly as possible, its 45,000 Indonesian members being offered the choice of joining the Indonesian armed forces or resigning.

In addition, a Netherlands Military Mission was to be established for the following three years to help in the training and development of an efficient and modern Indonesian army.

The RTC expended most of its time and effort on the settlement of financial and economic questions, which, as has already been stressed, was now seen by the Netherlands cabinet and most of the parliament as being of paramount national importance. To safeguard Dutch investments as much as possible and to retain the overpowering Dutch hold on the Indonesian economy had become the first article of faith.

Speedy agreement was achieved on the protection of Dutch business interests and trade relations. The greatly profitable Dutch-dominated transit trade in Indonesian products remained intact and Dutch economic interests in Indonesia were guaranteed. Nationalisation of Netherlands-owned enterprises would only be allowed when the interests of the state were at stake and legally determined compensation was to be paid. The transfer of profits, however, could be restricted during times of shortages of foreign exchange. The traditional Dutch preponderance in the import trade was to be reduced in favour of Indonesian traders, and Dutch firms and plantations were required to employ and train more Indonesians to fill higher staff and managing positions. Finally, Indonesia was to adopt an open door trading policy according the Netherlands most-favoured-nation status.

The biggest obstacle during the negotiations was posed by the transfer of the national Netherlands Indies debt. The Dutch del-

egation based its position on the point of international law requiring that the United States of Indonesia, as legal successor of the Netherlands-Indies, in principle should take over all financial obligations. On 31 December 1949 the total debt was put at 6.5 billion guilders, consisting of 3 billion guilders of internal and 3.5 of external debt, of which 3.5 billion was owed to the Netherlands.

Indonesia was only prepared to take over debts accrued until 1942. Those added after 1945 should be discounted since the new Indonesian state should not be expected to be burdened with the enormous bill of military expenditure incurred in the attempt to destroy it. Also subtracted should be Netherlands loans after 1945 as they had been mainly designed to facilitate the lucrative trade from Indonesia to Holland or to rehabilitate the plantation and other industrial enterprises, the proceeds of which ended up almost solely in the pockets of Dutch investors.

The greatest hawk in the Dutch cabinet on the debt question was Prime Minister Drees, who insisted that Indonesia should be required to take responsibility for the total internal debt and a part of the foreign debt. The rest of the cabinet was divided, with some ministers willing to reduce the Indonesian liability varying from 350 to 700 million guilders. During further negotiations the Netherlands offered to reduce the amount by 500 million and the Indonesians on their part indicated a willingness to take over 2.5 billion guilders of the total debt. But the Netherlands refused to bear the remaining 3.7 billion guilders, particularly because the Dutch deficit at the end of 1947 stood at 15 billion and in contrast Indonesia was showing a positive balance of 245 million guilders.

When the negotiations stalled on 21 October an ad hoc committee was appointed consisting of Dutch financial expert Hirschfeld, and from the Indonesian Djuanda (republic) side, Indra Kusuma (BFO), and Chairman Cochran (UNCI). Pushed by time constraints and having the disastrous consequences of a failure of the RTC in mind, on 23 October, under pressure from



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Cochran, a compromise was achieved. As such Indonesia agreed to be saddled with a debt of 4.6 billion guilders, consisting of 3 billion internal and 1.6 billion foreign debt. Hirschfeld had reduced the Dutch demand by 200 million guilders, which included most of postwar Dutch credits to Indonesia and part of the Dutch military expenditure. It was especially this last concession that made the Indonesian delegates agree.

The only major obstacle remaining was the question of the status of West New Guinea. The Dutch government was unwilling to transfer this territory to the United States of Indonesia mainly for the reason that otherwise the target of two-thirds of the votes in parliament needed, to pass the RTC agreement Bill, would not be reached. The conservative parties, after losing their fight in Indonesia, and with their national pride deeply hurt, still insisted on extracting their colonial pound of flesh in the form of a Dutch West New Guinea. The Indonesian delegation, doggedly defending their contention that West New Guinea, as part of the Netherlands Indies, should by right also be transferred to the United States of Indonesia, refused to give in. This time the Netherlands also dug in and it was again as a result of the efforts of the UNCI that a compromise was reached, in which the territory was to remain under Dutch control and that within a year negotiations were to be held to determine its final political status. While this solution had the immediate advantage of bringing the RTC to a successful end, its long-term effects proved to be disastrous totally wrecking the implementation of the agreement and leading the two nations to the brink of war.

Both in Holland and Indonesia the RTC agreements, like the earlier Roem-van Roijen accord, were received with a great deal of disappointment and misgiving.

In the Netherlands parliament the debates on the Bill of the transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia ran again along party lines. The most furious denouncements of the RTC accords came from the members of the Nationaal Comité Handhaving Rijkseenheid. This included such arch conservatives as former Prime Minister

Gerbrandy, and Welter, a former Minister of Colonies, who had founded a Catholic splinter party, and exerted a considerable influence on the protestant parties ARP and CHU, and also the Liberals (VVD). In the end they proved unable to sway the rest of their colleagues, and van Maarseveen, Minister for Overseas Affairs, managed to obtain the required approval from both houses. He argued that overwhelming parliamentary consent would strengthen the position of the union and stressed that High Commissioner Lovink, and the Netherlands business concerns in Indonesia were adamant for the RTC agreement to be ratified. The government was unwilling to bear the consequences of rejection or postponement and would resign. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stikker, outlined the existing unfavourable international position of the Netherlands, which, he argued, would become untenable after a rejection of the RTC agreement. He also read out a telegram from the Dutch business community in Indonesia asking, in the strongest possible terms, for the Bill to be passed.<sup>69</sup>

The Bill was passed by the Tweede Kamer (Second Chamber) by seventy-one votes for and twenty-nine against and in the Eerste Kamer (First Chamber) the required two-thirds majority was only just reached by thirty-four votes in favour and fifteen against. Strongest approval came from the Labour Party followed by the KVP.

Dutch public opinion seemed to lag behind the two major political parties and was generally condemnatory. For example, a poll of the KVP rank and file in December 1949 showed 34 per cent against, 20 per cent approving, and 46 per cent without opinion.<sup>70</sup> A general poll at the time showed almost the same results: 33 per cent for, 21 per cent against and 46 per cent no opinion. Perhaps a more truthful measure of public opinion was provided by another poll in the autumn of 1949 testing the role played in the Indonesian question of various important personalities in which General Spoor topped the list with 60 per cent support. Second was van Roijen with 39 per cent, followed by

van Mook with 33 per cent. Among the Indonesians, Sultan Hamid of Pontianak was the most favoured and Sukarno appeared at the bottom of the list.<sup>71</sup> In Indonesia the reaction to the RTC varied from condemnation in radical republican quarters to moderate optimism. As the agreements largely were a repetition of the Roem-van Roijen accords they generally were accorded rather muted public response, although confident predictions were lacking about future Indonesian-Dutch relations. In the more radical press such as in the nationalist *Merdeka*, and the socialist *Pedoman*, the RTC was criticised for not granting real independence because the Netherlands would still be able to wield a great deal of influence in economic and other fields. There had as yet been no economic decolonisation and that, together with the federal system, the union, and the West New Guinea question, showed clearly that colonialism was still fully alive. Most radical nationalist leaders such as Ali Sastroamijoyo also played the neo-colonialist Dutch drum. As he stated in an interview to the author in 1977, he, like most republicans, viewed the RTC merely as a first necessary step leading ultimately to complete Indonesian independence. Other leaders and newspapers showed a less sanguine attitude, although the Dutch unwillingness to withdraw from West New Guinea was universally condemned. The otherwise politically moderate prime minister of the State of Eastern Indonesia, Ide Anak Agung Gde Agung, who had been at the forefront of the fight to retain West New Guinea within the United States of Indonesia, warned that the RTC decision on the territory would result in serious repercussions in the future, causing the union to be stillborn. Another moderate nationalist, Dr Abu Hanifah, a more Western-orientated Masjumi leader, was deeply perturbed about the large debt Indonesia was forced to carry and also saw the West New Guinea question as a major reason for the later debacle in Indonesian-Dutch relations.<sup>72</sup>

The RTC agreements were ratified by the provisional Indonesian parliament (KNIP) on 14 December with 226 votes in

favour, sixty-two against, and thirty-one abstentions.

On 27 December 1949, the ceremony of the transfer of the Netherlands sovereignty to the United States of Indonesia took place at the Dam in Amsterdam. Later on the same day a similar ceremony occurred in Jakarta. Dutch colonial rule of the Indonesian archipelago had officially ended.

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7. Tarling, 1993, p. 100.
8. De Jong, L., 1984, Volume 11a, pp. 600-3.
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