

THE INDONESIAN EXILES IN
AUSTRALIA, 1942-47

Rupert Lockwood*

After the Japanese conquest of the Indies, the Netherlands Indies administration and armed forces leaders, made Australia the re-grouping base from which to reconquer their lost colony. Indonesian soldiers, sailors, and marines, airplane crews and merchant seamen, hospital attendants, civil servants and KPM shipping clerks were aboard the surviving Dutch cruisers, destroyers, frigates, submarines, sub-chasers, passenger and cargo liners, hospital ships and the mosquito fleet of small craft that had maintained KPM inter-island services, all of which now cluttered up major Australian ports already overtaxed by South-West Pacific War traffic. The vast majority of airplane and ship crews and civil employees were Indonesian; Dutch replenishments to the Indies had been virtually denied since May 1940, when the Germans sealed off Holland.

In the confusion of war no precise statistics of Indonesian arrivals in Australia could be kept. After the war, Mr. Arthur Calwell, Minister for Immigration in the late war and postwar era, announced that up to February 1949 the Commonwealth Government had provided repatriation ships for 3,768 Indonesians.¹ Nearly all of these fell into the category of mutineers against Dutch authority. They came from the military and air force camps maintained by the Dutch in Australia, from the Dutch ships of war and commerce boycot-bound in Australian ports, from military and civil prisons and some from civilian occupations in shipping offices and the Netherlands East Indies Government-in-Exile's various establishments in Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Fremantle. But these represented only a small part of the total number of Indonesian exiles in Australia.

The first Dutch-Indonesian confrontation in Australia--the April 1942 Indonesian seamen's strike--involved some 2,000 seamen. Dutch ships were moving in and out of Australian ports, serving the Indian Ocean and South-East Asian war fronts, and an Australian maritime union leader² estimated that, in all, about 5,000 Indonesian

* The author, Rupert Lockwood, was one of the very few Australian journalists ever to report directly on the Netherlands Indies. He was Reuter's news-agency correspondent for Singapore-Malaya in 1936-37 and an editorial executive of two Singapore dailies. From Singapore he visited the N.E.I. to write for a Melbourne newspaper group. He personally knew and interviewed Indonesian leaders in Australia, assisted their campaigns, propogandized for the Republic and for the dramatic actions against the Dutch in Australia that impeded their return to the Indies.

1. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 9 February 1949.
2. Estimate given to the writer in May 1961 by the late James Healy, General Secretary, Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia.

seamen passed through Australian ports between 1942 and 1945. The aggregate of Indonesian members of the Royal Netherlands Indies armed forces, of civil servants, merchant seamen, shipping company clerks and hospital staffs in Australia following the fall of the Indies to Japan was probably close to 10,000.³

Indonesians from the Netherlands Indies armed forces and some civilians of military age were put into re-grouping and training camps, under Dutch officers, at Melbourne, Sydney, Casino (North-Eastern New South Wales) and the Brisbane area. Netherlands Indies air force ground staffs and air-crews went to bases allotted to the Dutch at Bundaberg (between Brisbane and Rockhampton, Central Queensland coast), Brisbane and Canberra. Admiral C. E. L. Helfrich, Dutch naval commander who was appointed Commander-in-Chief for the Far East by the émigré Royal Netherlands Government in London, established a naval headquarters in Melbourne, with subsidiary naval establishments in Sydney and Fremantle.

The Australian Government proved a generous host to the Netherlands East Indies Government-in-Exile, which operated from the unlikely address of Wacol, near General Douglas MacArthur's U.S. Headquarters, temporarily in Brisbane. Australia provided camps, barracks, administrative offices, hostels, houses, munitions, transport, airfields, workshops, food supplies and so on. Though itself hard-pressed for experienced military cadres, the Curtin Labor Government provided officers to help train the Indonesians in Australia for the task of re-imposing Dutch rule.

Ironically, the Australian Government, while continuing to view South-East Asia through a dusty haze of White Australia prejudices and misconceptions about Dutch-Indonesian relations, was providing scarce wartime resources to train the captains and colonels of a future Republican Army--an army that would help make life in the Indies intolerable for Canberra's Dutch allies. For example, the Deputy Chief-of-Staff of the first Republican Air Force, Air Commodore Halim Perdana Kusuma, who was killed in action on December 14, 1947, was trained in Australia, sometimes by Australian instructors. The Indonesian Technical Battalion, which mutinied at the war's end and was subsequently repatriated to Republican territory, had received invaluable guidance in mechanics and communications.

The majority of Indonesians in Australia seem to have been Javanese and very few remained loyal to the Dutch when the crunch came in 1945-46. The Ambonese were, predictably, the exception--as the Gurkhas were to the British, so were the Ambonese to the Dutch. In June 1943 the Royal Netherlands Government sent to Australia a troopship-load of West Indians from Surinam and Curaçao, but only a minority of these later sided with the Indonesians against the Dutch. Numbers of West Indians earned unpopularity by serving the Dutch as military provosts.

First Confrontation

The problems created for a Labor Government playing host to a colonial government-in-exile and, at the same time, accepting custodial care of its reluctant subjects were realized before some of the

3. Writer's own estimate, from personal observation, involvement and research.

ex-Batavia plenipotentiaries could unpack their archives. To Indonesian seamen unexpectedly carried to Australian ports by fortune of war the situation seemed stark and simple. They were commanded to sail among Japanese mines, torpedoes and bombs for about £2 Australian (then worth about 7 dollars U.S.) a month by high-paid Dutch officers who usually bellowed at them. They were hazarding their lives to help restore Dutch rule over families at home. Through the blurred light of nationalist emotion, the Indonesian seamen held that the war was a purposeless clash of European and Japanese empires, after the resolution of which they would be asked to accept the familiar currency of authoritarian direction.

The 2,000 seamen in the Sydney zone in March 1942 as yet had no evidence of Japanese atrocities in Indonesia. They were mostly illiterate and had little knowledge of Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo. But they could count their pay packets and sense the falling autumn temperatures. Lightning Japanese victories had given the Indonesians little time to collect belongings. Many of those arriving at Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Fremantle wore sarongs and loin-cloths, but purchase of warm clothing and other necessities at Australian prices demanded Australian-standard wages. For these, the Indonesian seamen went on strike--as they were on war duty, it was mutiny--on April 1, 1942. Australian jails and camps were provided for their incarceration.

The Seamen's Union of Australia intervened on the Indonesians' behalf. The Australian Government insisted that Dutch ships with sub-standard crew accommodation should be reconstructed in local shipyards to provide adequate sleeping and messing facilities. Australian trade union and indirect government pressures forced the Dutch shipmasters to pay £22 instead of £2 a month, and limit the working day to eight hours. Thus Indonesian wages and hours were raised to something like the Australian minimum standards fixed by law. Indonesian working men for the first time in their history had won a non-colonial wage and an 8-hour day.

The Indonesians, released from prisons and camps to return to the crewless Dutch ships, formed the Indonesian Seamen's Union (Serikat Pelajar Indonesia). Other Indonesians, who were directed to work on Queensland railways carrying American troops north, to munition factories and depots and wartime construction projects, followed the seamen's example, and, often with the aid of Australian trade unions, won non-colonial wage rates. Next came the demands of clerks employed by Dutch shipping offices and the Government-in-Exile. The demands for Australian-level wages had to be granted; the Indonesians could not have lived reasonably on less.

With civilized wages and more freedom, Indonesians began to mix socially with Australians, instead of with Dutch overseers and military provosts and prison warders. The Indonesians were adaptable people. Men who had sailed into Australian ports in sarongs appeared in tailored suits, well-ironed shirts, bright-patterned ties and shining shoes. Some tailors in the regions of their hotels and boarding-houses did well on Indonesian orders.

The fevers of economic egalitarianism spread to the Indonesian members of the Royal Netherlands Indies armed forces. The Indonesian Technical Battalion staged a series of mutinies against low pay. Mutineers were speedily thrust behind barbed wire, but there were not enough engineers to go around in the Netherlands army and the

Australian Army wanted anyone with half a skill. Some Indonesians were released to the Dutch army and air force on much higher pay; Indonesians with military-engineering skill were sometimes incorporated in the Australian Army Engineering Corps.

Transplanting a Prison Camp

Tanah Merah Digul⁴ stands as the first concentration camp that one nation ever accepted from another. The June 1943 arrival in Sydney Harbor of the Dutch transport *Both* with 507 internees from Tanah Merah was an embarrassing surprise for the Commonwealth Labor Government. Prime Minister John Curtin had had a record of resistance to repression in his early socialist days; the Minister for External Affairs, and Attorney-General, Dr. H. V. Evatt, on whom much of the responsibility would rub off, had made his name in the Australian labor movement for his dedication to civil liberties, as a King's Counsel, a High Court Judge and a politician, and for his stands for human rights had won some international repute.

How was it that the Dutch, though neglecting to deny to the Japanese the valuable installations at Hollandia, the Netherlands New Guinea capital, or even to destroy the stocks of Bols gin and Heineken's beer before the licentious soldiery got at them, attached so much importance to Tanah Merah camp, up the Digul River from Merauke in remote South-East Netherlands New Guinea? The Tanah Merah camp, isolated from the world, in a dread climate, escape-proof as Devil's Island, was intended to hold the rebels from the 1926-27 uprisings. The jungle-encircled banks of the Digul River also received subsequent dissidents, such as Sutan Sjahrir, deported there in March 1935.

Until the *Both* hove-to in Sydney Harbor, Tanah Merah had been a name embalmed in the Dutch censor's files. Only a few interested Australians had heard of it, though even to the rest, Tanah Merah should not have been unknown. More than a decade before, four prisoners had made a dash from Tanah Merah that should have high place in the chronicle of near-impossible prison escapes. One was speared by a New Guinea tribal warrior; the other three won sufficient succor from Papuans to reach the coast, through monsoonal downpours and over rugged mountains. They then voyaged in frail craft all the way to Thursday Island, at the northeasterly Cape York tip of Australia.

Under the pretext of the White Australia Policy, which bans Asian immigrants, three of history's most amazing escapees were handed back to their Dutch wardens. By the perversity of White Australia politics, one of the three who had survived the journey from Tanah Merah to Thursday Island and back was admitted to Australian residence in World War II--he arrived aboard the *Both*. He was Abdul Rachman, and this time he sought neither asylum nor entry.

The Dutch authorities offered no plausible reason why they had not bothered to rescue the many valuable Indonesian cadres but rather had sent an expedition up the Digul River from Merauke, to gather in

4. Sutan Sjahrir and some other former internees describe Tanah Merah Digul as Boven Digul and the recidivist camp nearby as Tanah Tinggi. See Sutan Sjahrir, Out of Exile (New York: John Day, 1949).

the interned rebels. Leaders among the Tanah Merah prisoners brought to Australia in the *Both* expressed the view⁵ that the Dutch authorities feared that, following their collapse in the Indies before the incursions of a relatively small Japanese force, seasoned rebels in the concentration camp would organize a Resistance movement and provide postwar difficulties. If they had known of the Dutch forfeit, a spokesman for the internees claimed,⁶ they would have made a break and organized guerrilla bands. But, as it happened, the Japanese never bothered to come to Merauke or the Tanah Merah region above it and so the prisoners, mostly in poor health, would have exerted little influence as partisans. By chasing seditious phantoms in the New Guinea jungle, the Dutch brought fateful consequences to their émigré establishment in Australia. Experienced revolutionaries from Tanah Merah played a leading part in organizing the apparatus of Republican power on Australian soil and in denying the Dutch a significant part of their re-occupation forces.

Dr. Charles O. van der Plas, Netherlands Indies Chief Commissioner in Australia and New Zealand and deputy to the Acting Governor-General, Dr. Hubertus Johannes van Mook, in the émigré administration, braved the hazards of a journey to Tanah Merah camp about a year after the capitulation in Java. The inmates were bewildered; they had received very little news of the momentous happenings beyond their jungle prison. In fact, Sardjono, Chairman of the P.K.I. at the time of the 1926 riots and interned at that time, told the writer that, before his arrival in Australia, he did not know that there had been a great world economic depression, that Japan had conquered Manchuria, that there had been Abyssinian and Spanish Wars or a Munich Pact. Sardjono, leader of one of the most important colonial revolutionary parties, did not even know that Trotsky had left the Soviet Union.

The Indonesian publicity apparatus set up later in Australia described the startling turn in their lives as follows:

The inmates of Tanah Merah were assembled and were addressed with fine irony by the head of the Dutch East Indies Commission in Australia [Dr. van der Plas] as "fellow-countrymen."⁷ They were told they would be evacuated. Except for a few, chiefly the old and the sick (who reasoned that their deaths would not help the oncoming Japanese), the internees were brought to Australia.⁸

According to the Indonesian Independence Committee, 507 were evacuated from Tanah Merah to Australia.⁹ The prisoners came down

5. The writer met and interviewed numbers of Tanah Merah ex-internees in 1944 and 1945.
6. Personal interview with the late Sardjono, Chairman, P.K.I., and in Tanah Merah since 1926.
7. Dr. van der Plas was born at Buitenzorg, Java.
8. Bulletin, Central Committee of Indonesian Independence, Brisbane, 16 October 1945.
9. Dutch Imperialism Exposed: The Green Hell of Tanah Merah (pamphlet), published by the Indonesian Independence Committee, Melbourne, 1946.

the Digul River to Merauke, and were there embarked on the steamer *Both* for Sydney. They slept on mats and ate little but rice.

On arrival in Australia, some Tanah Merah internees were taken to a military internment camp at Liverpool, on the western outskirts of Sydney. Others were taken to the Cowra prisoner-of-war camp, whose inmates were mostly Japanese. The Tanah Merah internees complained that "at first they were victimized by the Dutch as Japanese P.O.W.'s."

Australian port workers wondered about the short, thin, sickly men and women, not of Japanese appearance, who had come down the *Both's* gangway at Sydney and been whisked away in military trucks, under Australian and Dutch guards, to railway stations. The Liverpool station staff were told that a train carrying Japanese prisoners would be passing through to a nearby internment camp. Railway staff noticed, as the train came to the platform, that the captives were darker and thinner than Japanese. Some prisoners were lying on seats and floors, obviously exhausted or ill. A note scribbled in pencil flew through a carriage window to the feet of one puzzled railwayman on the platform.

The note was in fair English; some of the Tanah Merah prisoners had kept mentally alert by learning foreign languages. The writer did not plead for help. He related the situation of internees transplanted from the Dutch concentration camp in New Guinea to Australia and expressed the deportees' determination to fight for their release from further imprisonment in a foreign country and for medical treatment of the sick. The writer of the note, it transpired, was a Javanese railway worker named Jojo.¹⁰ A tuberculosis sufferer, he died not long after his release and was buried in a Sydney cemetery. The Dutch provided the regulation pauper coffin; the Indonesian mourners at the graveside ripped up the coffin and buried Jojo in a blanket. They screened his body with the coffin boards so the earth would not fall on him. It was an anti-Dutch gesture not easily understood by Australians. Jojo had been in Tanah Merah since 1926.

The railway worker who picked up Jojo's note had it passed on to Mrs. Laura Gapp,¹¹ of the Civil Rights League in Sydney. With the help of sympathetic Australian soldiers, Mrs. Gapp traced the Tanah Merah exiles to an internment camp in the Liverpool area, then the largest military training and assembly area. Other Tanah Merah survivors were traced by Mrs. Gapp and friends to the Japanese P.O.W. camp at Cowra, inland New South Wales, where the bleak winter took its toll of their weakened bodies.

Mrs. Gapp was very soon in the office of Dr. Evatt at Canberra. This was the beginning of joint Australian-Indonesian political action against the Netherlands Indies Government-in-Exile; previous cooperation had been confined to economic issues. Mrs. Gapp found Dr. Evatt

-
10. Anglicized names were often conferred by Australians on the Indonesians; numbers of them answered to names in Australia that their families in Java would not have recognized.
 11. Mrs. Gapp, a widow, of Mona Vale (a Sydney suburb), described her experiences in the campaign to release the Tanah Merah internees to the writer at Sydney in May 1964.

"somewhat conscience-stricken" about the continued internment, under his Government's authority, of the Tanah Merah men and women. He bore chief ministerial responsibility for granting the Dutch the extra-territorial rights that allowed these re-internments at Liverpool and Cowra. Dr. Evatt quietly urged Mrs. Gapp to "go right ahead" with the campaign for the Indonesian internees' release, to help him to win the necessary support against the Dutch in a cautious Cabinet. It was later apparent, said Mrs. Gapp, that Dr. Evatt made personal representations to the Netherlands authorities to free the prisoners. Writers, poets, trade unionists and Australian soldiers guarding the Indonesian prisoners--the soldiers were mostly ageing veterans of World War I--were of considerable assistance in campaigns and manoeuvres that finally induced the Netherlands Indies émigré politicians to end internments that for some had continued since 1926.

The gates of Cowra P.O.W. camp finally swung open to the Tanah Merah deportees on December 7, 1943--second anniversary of Pearl Harbor. The Tanah Merah men and women emerged into a world where for the first time they could discuss politics openly and in reasonable freedom, attend political meetings, go to the cinema, catch up on past news, study the implications of war on the Axis and the Indies problem and have spending money in their pockets.

Those whose health was good enough went in to war work in Queensland, where the climate was more friendly. Mackay, a sugar port on the North-Central Queensland coast, had the main concentration of Tanah Merah veterans, working to assist the Australian armed forces. In Mackay the Tanah Merah veterans formed one of the first of the several Indonesian Independence Committees in Australia and they made Mackay an important base for Republican activity against the Netherlands Indies Government-in-Exile.

Little did Dr. van der Plas realize, as he arranged their transport down the Digul River to the *Both* at Merauke, that he was transplanting not only a prison camp, but a well-spring of hatred, a political nucleus that would play havoc with the planned march back from Australia to Batavia.

Anticipating the Republic

The Indonesian community in Australia began planning in 1944 in anticipation of resistance in the home islands to restoration of Dutch rule. The influence of the Tanah Merah men was felt. From their main base in Mackay, the ex-internees contacted the trade unions, in particular the Mackay Branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation, covering longshoremens. Tanah Merah veterans in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne also made contacts with trade unions and, more portentously, with the Communist Party of Australia.

On February 22, 1944, a large American force seized Humboldt Bay and Hollandia. On February 29, Biak Island, off Geelvink Bay, was assailed. The Hollandia-Biak zone rapidly became a major Allied base for re-entry to East Indonesia. By August, the Allies had taken Morotai, which became a main base in the Halmaheras. Behind General MacArthur's American and Australian forces was the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA), mobilized in

Australia as the spearhead for revived Dutch administration in areas cleared of the Japanese.

Serving with NICA were numbers of Indonesian loyalists and Indonesian revolutionaries who pretended to be loyal. Reports filtering back to the Indonesian leaders in Australia on NICA conduct in re-occupied East Indonesian areas indicated that the Dutch did not recognize any termination clause in the old imperial contract. Dr. van Mook, who had detected the first unknitting of the Netherlanders' administrative fabric¹² before he turned his back to the fires of Bandung and flew to his Australian refuge, tried to persuade The Hague that gestures toward renovation and liberalization were immediately necessary, but NICA officials persisted in trying to restore the same shapes of colonial tutelage.

The Dutch, though they lacked intelligence from the Japanese-held Indies, should have been warned by the seditious commotions in Australia. Yet NICA was startled to be greeted by the slogan: "Better to be in hell than colonized again."

The Tanah Merah internees had never concealed their intent. Mrs. Laura Gapp, who knew them better than most, said: "The theme of their conversation from the first days when I met them behind barbed wire at Liverpool was: 'We shall return to Indonesia--but the Dutch? Never.'¹³"

Many Indonesians studied and improved their English while in Australia. One English language class in Sydney was run by Mrs. Gwyn Williams of Darlinghurst for former Tanah Merah internees, Indonesian civil servants, clerks and seamen. Mrs. Williams said:

In 1944 these Indonesians talked incessantly of the independent Indonesia that would arise. A few pro-Dutch Indonesians found their way to the English classes but were soon excluded by the Republicans. As I taught English to these exiles in Sydney, I could see the Republic growing before my eyes.¹⁴

The English classes greatly improved propaganda capacities. In 1944 the Indonesian community in Melbourne produced a magazine, *Penjoeloeh*, in English, carrying advocacy of independence. Indonesian clubs and societies were formed in the main centers of Indonesian congregation; in September 1945 these evolved into Indonesian Independence Committees, serving as unauthorized agencies of the newly proclaimed Republican Government. The clubs and societies formed bases for resistance to the Dutch in Australia, sponsoring struggles for improved economic conditions for the Indonesian community and discussing the overthrow of colonial rule. The Indonesian Seamen's Union, by 1944-45 covering most Indonesian seamen in Australian ports, spread agitation against the Netherlands Indies Government-in-Exile from its headquarters in Woolloomooloo, a Sydney waterfront suburb.

12. H. J. Van Mook, The Stakes of Democracy in South-East Asia (New York: Norton, 1950).

13. Personal interview with Mrs. Gapp, May 1964.

14. Personal interview with Mrs. Williams at Sydney in May 1964.

Many of the 1926-27 rebels interned at Tanah Merah were Communists--by Indonesian rather than Marxian definitions--and in Australia their contact with the Communist Party was close. R. Dixon, then Assistant General Secretary of the C.P.A., served warning of action to come on Indonesia's behalf by a declaration in December 1944 that "the old order in South-East Asia must go," that Australia's contribution to the war against Japan in South-East Asia entitled her to "a major say" in the final Indonesian settlement, and that "the various sections of the labor movement" and progressives among other sections of the people must stand together to show that "Australia stands irrevocably for the freedom and independence of the oppressed peoples."¹⁵ After this, Communist publications kept up a steady barrage of Indonesian independence propaganda. The Communist Party was then at the pinnacle of its influence, with about 25,000 members and key positions in the maritime and land transport trade unions, and the engineering unions manning the shipyards.

In July 1945 an Australia-Indonesian Association was formed in Sydney. The character of its leadership presaged Australian support for an independent Indonesia extending beyond the Leftwing. The Association's executive included liberals like Professor A. H. Elkin (Anthropology, University of Sydney), Bishop Cranswick (Church of England), Mr. Guy Anderson (centrist Secretary of the New South Wales Trades and Labor Council), Mr. G. Goddard (a well-known Sydney businessman), and representatives of women's organizations.

Counter-Revolutionary Preliminaries

The Dutch started the preliminary skirmishes of the counter-revolution before the nationalist revolution had been launched. In May 1945 the captains of KPM ships in Australian harbors issued a document headed "Notice No. 62"¹⁶ to Indonesian petty-officers and seamen. "Notice No. 62" said that deferred pay set aside for Indonesians aboard Dutch ships, running at the rate of 25 guilders a month for an able-seaman since June 1943, "will be paid to each seaman or his dependents after the Netherlands East Indies has been liberated from the Japanese." The notice added:

It is important to remember that only those seamen whose service is continuous and satisfactory to their captains and/or the KPM as from June 1943 will be entitled to receive this deferred pay. The deferred pay of 25 guilders to all seamen is to be regarded as a bonus for their services.

This KPM action compounded a genuine economic grievance with the independence struggles that were to be fought on the unscheduled Australian arena. "Satisfactory" service was construable as loyalty to Dutch rule; the "continuous" provision disqualified those who had

15. "Australia and the Indonesians," Communist Review, Sydney, December 1944.

16. A copy of "Notice No. 62" found its way to what was labelled "Indonesian File," in the archives of the Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia, Federal Office, Sydney.

been on strike. And payment would only be made in the "Netherlands East Indies." Deferred pay to a seaman is not supposed to be a good conduct bonus but rather a legal wage entitlement.

As if to rule out any possibility of misinterpretation, the KPM executives in Sydney informed Indonesian petty-officers, temporarily shipping-office clerks because the vessels in which they sailed had become war casualties, that they intended to cut their wages by the equivalent of about 27 dollars U.S. a month. Considering war-inflated costs in Australia, this wage cut would have been catastrophic to the Indonesian petty-officers.

The petty-officers struck work. The Dutch retreated, but cancellation of the wage cut could not cancel the warning that the old colonial wage rates would be resumed if the Dutch again ruled the Indies. This blundering attack ensured alienation of the Indonesian petty-officers, many of whom might normally have stood on the sidelines in the coming conflict. Indonesian petty-officers were to play a major role in mutinies that disrupted Dutch reoccupation plans.

Max Soeprapto and Willi Pandi Iroot, two of the leaders in the fight with the KPM, were Vice-President and Secretary respectively of the Sydney Indonesian Club. While they were on strike, the Dutch, exploiting their extra-territorial rights, asked for their arrest. The Labor Government, now led by Mr. Ben Chifley following Mr. John Curtin's death in April, obliged by having Soeprapto and Iroot arrested in May 1945 under Section 8c of the Commonwealth Immigration Act, by which device they were rated as "prohibited immigrants." These arrests roused both Indonesian and Australian trade union anger and evoked reactions most unfavorable to the Dutch in Labor Party ranks.

Mr. Alan Fraser, Labor Party member of the House of Representatives, protested to his Government that Indonesians employed by the Dutch in Australia were in "a state of great alarm" and "very much afraid of what may happen to them after the Japanese have been driven back and the Dutch regain possession of their territories."¹⁷ The protests were of no avail. The two Indonesians, after a short term in Sydney's Long Bay Jail, were taken in a railway prison-van to Queensland and from there flown to Netherlands New Guinea for internment.

Indonesian dissidents were, even before this, being quietly interned in a Dutch military prison camp at Casino. In the weeks before the Japanese surrender of August 15, Dutch military officers in Australia began arresting and airlifting Indonesians to Hollandia, from where, according to Australian trade union and Indonesian protesters, they were flown to Merauke and then shipped up the Digul River to a re-opened Tanah Merah concentration camp. Tanah Merah ex-internees in Mackay asked help from the Mackay Trades and Labor Council. The unions in Mackay protested to the Minister for External Affairs, Dr. Evatt; the Minister for External Territories, Mr. E. J. Ward; Mr. G. W. Martens, Labor M.P. for the electorate embracing Mackay; and to the Queensland Trades and Labor Council in Brisbane. By telegram Mackay unions conveyed the Indonesians' request that they be allowed to remain in Australia "until they can be returned to Java, Sumatra,

17. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, May 18, 1945.

Ambon and the Celebes as free people."¹⁸

The Queensland Trades and Labor Council, in a resolution arising from the Mackay telegram, asked the Federal Government that the Indonesians ". . . should be allowed to remain in Australia until they are repatriated to their home areas with complete political freedom and the right to form their own trade unions."¹⁹ Mr. Gerald Peel, a descendant of the nineteenth century British Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel, a Cambridge M.A. who became in Australia an active propagandist for the Indonesian cause, said in Sydney that: "Tanah Merah concentration camp in Western New Guinea is again being used by the Dutch authorities to house Indonesian political prisoners."²⁰

The Netherlands Indies Air Force Command at Bundaberg later denied published charges that batons, boots and guns had been used on Indonesians to force them aboard the planes for deportation to New Guinea.²¹

Indonesian Counter-Attack

The KPM shipping line's attacks on wages and deferred pay, the arrests and the deportations to Netherlands New Guinea had already created ferment in the Indonesian community by the time the Republic was proclaimed in 1945. From the August 15 Japanese surrender, a group of Indonesians at the Indonesian Seamen's Union office in Woolloomooloo kept ears expectantly to a short-wave radio that had come into their possession. Here in Woolloomooloo the émigré Indonesians heard the Batavia broadcast of the Republic's August 17 proclamation.

One of them was a young Indonesian seaman named Tukliwon, known as Tuk to Australians and, back in Java, called Tuk Subianto, later a member of the Republican Parliament. Next morning, Tukliwon set out for the head office of the Seamen's Union of Australia, to notify its leaders that Indonesians in Australia "would actively support the new Republican Government." Within a week, Tukliwon was back to notify the Federal Secretary of the Seamen's Union, Mr. E. V. Elliott,²² that the Dutch had indicated that Indonesian seamen would be required to sail Dutch ships back to Java from Australia. The Indonesian seamen intended to refuse duty. The Seamen's Union of Australia promised full support. Tukliwon and Mr. Elliott then interviewed the General Secretary of the Waterside Workers' Federation, the late Mr. James Healy, who offered "unstinted support," subject to approval by his governing Federal Council.

18. Minutes, Queensland Trades and Labor Council, meeting at Brisbane, August 22, 1945.
19. Ibid.
20. Tribune, Sydney, August 23, 1945.
21. Bundaberg News-Mail, October 29, 1945.
22. Personal interview with E. V. Elliott, Federal Secretary, Seamen's Union of Australia, June 1964.

The Australia-Indonesia Association, immediately after the Republic's proclamation, arranged pro-Indonesian broadcasts over Sydney radio stations. It printed 20,000 copies of the Political Manifesto of the Republic of Indonesia, as soon as a copy reached Australia.

By the middle of September the Indonesian Independence Committees were in good shape at Mackay, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. As Brisbane was the headquarters of the Netherlands Indies Government-in-Exile and many Indonesians were in the ships and military camps of the area, the Central Committee of Indonesian Independence was in the Queensland capital, guiding the work of the others. Mackay had an additional organization of importance, the Indonesian Political Exiles' Association, composed of Tanah Merah ex-prisoners. It was this Tanah Merah organization that made the decisive approach, by telegram, to the Waterside Workers' Federation, asking for action against Dutch shipping. The W. W. F. General Secretary then sought telegraphed votes from members of his Federal Council. With only a single dissent in Melbourne, the W. W. F. Federal Council voted to boycott Dutch ships in Australian ports. The longshoremen's officials in all ports around the Australian coast were notified by a circular on September 26 that all Dutch shipping was "black" and no stevedoring labor was to be provided.^{2 3}

Sydney longshoremen had anticipated the decision. A meeting in their union hall on September 20 resolved to "place an embargo on all ships carrying munitions or any war materials to be used against the Indonesian Government."^{2 4}

On Sunday morning, September 23, two Indonesians, Powito and Slamet (the last, ex-Tanah Merah) met secretly with the Secretary of the Queensland Trades and Labor Council, Mr. Michael Healy, and two officials from the Brisbane longshoremen's union branch, Messrs. E. Englart and A. Graham, to prepare the strategies for a walk-off of Indonesian seamen the next day. As a profitable tactic, the Indonesians' demand for their deferred pay and retention of non-colonial wage rates was combined with political support to the Indonesian Republic. By featuring the legitimate industrial issue the Indonesians attracted general Australian trade union support for their strike against the Dutch shipping masters.

Indonesian seamen marched off six Dutch ships in the Brisbane River on Monday, September 24, and Brisbane longshoremen and other waterfront trade unions promptly declared Dutch ships "black." Thus began one of the greatest maritime political boycotts in history. In the Brisbane River there were six Dutch war-supply ships immediately under ban: *Minyak-Tanah*, *Janssens*, *Van Outhoorn*, *Van Heutz*, *Cawra* and *Khoen-Hoea*. The *Both*, transport for the Tanah Merah evacuees, was coyly flying no flag; she was identified as Dutch and black-banned on September 25.

-
23. Circulars, telegrams and resolutions concerning the imposition of the trade unions' boycott on Dutch ships are in the Waterside Workers' Federation Indonesian File.
 24. Resolution by Sydney Branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation as quoted in Merdeka (pamphlet), published by the Central Committee of Indonesian Independence, Brisbane, 1946.

In Sydney, the main port, longshoremen were striking on an industrial issue on September 24. But shipyard unions walked off the troopship *Swartenhondt*, then completing refit, and, their industrial dispute ended in a few days, Sydney longshoremen refused to load cargo for *El Libertador*, *Japara*, *Maetsuycker*, *Patras*, *Van Swoll* and *General Verspijck*. Indonesian crews walked off the Dutch troop and munitions ships as in Brisbane.

In Melbourne Indonesian crews deserted in a body from the Dutch ships *Karsik* and *Merak*. Other ports involved in boycotts of Dutch craft were Fremantle (Western Australia), Geelong (Victoria), Port Kembla (New South Wales), Bowen and Townsville (Queensland).

Indonesians of the Royal Netherlands Indies Navy had had virtually no contact with the trade unions. *Tromp*, one of the swiftest cruisers afloat, had gotten away for Tanjung Priok on September 2, despite mutinous disturbances in her crew. The Queensland Trades and Labor Council reported that Indonesian sailors at Brisbane had refused to man a Dutch warship, but did not name the warship.²⁵ Several Dutch warships were held for varying periods in Australian dockyards. One of them, a submarine, never got away; the submarine, denied repairs in Fremantle by trade unions, eventually was used as part of a breakwater at the entrance to Fremantle Harbor. Indonesian sailors at Admiral Helfrich's naval depot in St. Kilda, Melbourne, mutinied.

Indonesian marines in Netherlands uniforms were in readiness to board the Dutch troopships at Brisbane, Sydney and Geelong. Indonesian militia and the Technical Battalion were at Casino, awaiting transport to the Brisbane River for embarkation. Indonesian militia units were also stationed at Wacol, headquarters of the Netherlands Indies Government-in-Exile at Brisbane, at various camps just outside Brisbane and at Sydney and Middle Park (Melbourne). Indonesian air-crews and ground staffs were at Bundaberg, Brisbane, Canberra and the Rose Bay flyingboat base on Sydney Harbor. While mutinies were not always unanimous, all of these groups of Indonesians in the Dutch armed forces were immobilized by disaffection.

The Central Committee of Indonesian Independence had issued on September 1 from Brisbane a manifesto that was tantamount to a call to mutiny. The first military mutiny appears to have been by the Indonesian militia at Casino on September 12.²⁶ The Queensland Trades and Labor Council Secretary Healy reported on September 17 that 104 Indonesians had been interned at Casino. Two days later, the Council was informed that a further 100 Indonesians had been arrested by the Dutch at Casino, after a mutiny by the Technical Battalion on September 15.²⁷ The remainder of the engineers, signallers and other technicians were disarmed.

25. Leaflet (mimeographed), authorized by M. Healy, for the Queensland Trades and Labor Council, Brisbane, September 1945.

26. Bulletin, Central Committee of Indonesian Independence, Brisbane, October 16, 1945.

27. Minutes, Queensland Trades and Labor Council, meeting at Brisbane, September 19, 1945.

After the Casino refusals of duty, reports of trouble came from all the other centers. At the Wacol camp base of the Netherlands Indies Government-in-Exile, 230 Indonesian soldiers "unanimously and outspokenly" told the Dutch officers that they supported the Republic. They surrendered their weapons. Another 240 Indonesian soldiers were interned at Camp Lytton, Brisbane area, and 100 Indonesian marines were in Geelong Jail. By October 1945, 470 Indonesian mutineers were crowded into a small prison enclosure at Casino.²⁸ Rioting at the Bundaberg aerodrome, which followed the physical resistance of Indonesians to being bundled aboard Dutch planes for deportation and which caused Australian Air Force mechanics to impose a temporary boycott on the Dutch air squadron they were in duty bound to service, probably involved about 100 Indonesians. The description of the Dutch commander at Bundaberg, Colonel van Haselen, was scarcely adequate: "It was just a case of men under military law refusing their duty and being arrested."²⁹

The Republic's First Victory

The soldiers, sailors, airmen, merchant seamen, civil servants, ships, airplanes and apparatus of resumed colonial government held up by the Australian mutinies and boycott had significance far beyond numbers and tonnage.

The *Van Heutz*, securely held by Indonesian and Australian boycott in the Brisbane River, had been scheduled to carry back to Batavia the officials of the Netherlands Indies Government-in-Exile, bags and archives already packed at Wacol. The *Karsik*, from which the Indonesian crew walked in Melbourne, had in her holds the re-occupation guilder notes and coins, newly-minted in America and shipped to Australia. Without currency the Dutch Indies administration could not function. An emergency Indian crew replaced the striking Indonesians. The Indians promised Australian agitators they would also walk off, but they were afraid for their future and so the *Karsik* sailed, without tugs or pilot, out of the Yarra River. *Karsik* was a coal-burner and, due to trade union action, could not bunker. She got as far as Bowen in Queensland, where miners and longshoremen refused to supply coal. HMAS *Bungaree*, an Australian sloop, was used by the Australian Government to break the boycott of the currency, but the *Bungaree* did not arrive at Tanjong Priok till March 1946, by which time the Japanese occupation currency adapted by the Republic had gained a long lead.

The Netherlands Indies Government-in-Exile, with its ships, soldiers, munitions, and personnel and equipment of administration, was originally asked to rendezvous with Lord Louis Mountbatten's South-East Asia Command forces at Batavia on October 4, 1945. To the irritation of the Dutch, who were not consulted, responsibility

28. Republic of Indonesia (pamphlet), published by the Central Committee of Indonesian Independence, Brisbane, 1946.

29. Bundaberg News-Mail, October 29, 1945.

for Indies reoccupation had been switched at Potsdam, on British request, from MacArthur's to Mountbatten's Command. When Mountbatten's force was on its way from Ceylon to Singapore to take the Japanese surrender and follow on with the Java operation, MacArthur sent him a surprise order that no British reoccupations were to begin until Japan formally signed the articles of surrender. Mountbatten, chafing at the delay, had to keep his ships forward afloat, in a pelting Bay of Bengal monsoon, till the September 2 ceremony aboard USS *Missouri*.

Mountbatten, with his Malaya-Singapore and French Indo-China responsibilities, had few forces to spare at this stage to rethroned the Netherlands in some 3,000 inhabited islands. In Holland, in agony and ruin after the bombings and Allied-German battles on her soil, training of raw soldiers would take time. Wartime shipping losses and Allied demands on depleted tonnage for repatriation of soldiers, replenishment of devastated Europe and normal trading meant that, even if metropolitan Holland could train sufficient recruits, transport to Indonesia would not be easy.

The only Dutch Army available for immediate deployment in the Indies, with sufficient ships of transport and supply, was near the ports of Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney. Mountbatten's delays compounded the havoc created by the Indonesian strikes and mutinies and the maritime unions' boycotts of Dutch ships in Australia.

Mutiny and boycott were not the only trouble for the Dutch in Australia. Easy living in the Indies did not make for organizational *élan*. At the Pangkalpinang conference in 1946, Dr. van Mook had to answer criticisms that the "Brisbane Government" had spent too much time in enjoyments and diversions to allow study of likely Indonesian developments. The criticism was not entirely groundless. Earlier, construction trade unionists had registered a public protest against having to build luxury beer-gardens for colonial Dutch officers amid wartime austerity. Between the Japanese surrender of August 15 and the Brisbane waterfront boycott of September 24, the somewhat slothful colonial Dutch émigrés had not shown much energy in getting their ships loaded with war supplies. Not even the *Van Heutz*, the "government ship," had been ready to sail when the thunderbolt of the Indonesian strikes and Australian sympathy actions struck.

The pre-Republic attacks on Indonesian wages in Australia, the attachment of the condition of loyalty to the "Netherlands East Indies" to payment of deferred wages of seamen and refusal to pledge an autonomous Indonesia within a Netherlands-led "Commonwealth," plus the persisting colonial mannerisms of the émigré establishment, made Indonesian disaffection inevitable.

Every day's delay in the arrival of Dutch officials and military forces was precious for the Republic. It could go on organizing its administration and economy, disarming Japanese to equip an army and propagandizing against the coming reoccupation.

Some of the Dutch ships to come under boycott in September 1945 did not clear Australian ports until nine months later. In one's, two's, and three's, Dutch ships got out of rivers and harbors, tugless and pilotless. A few of them got to sea on wood fuel, spouting white smoke like old Mississippi paddle-wheelers, to be bunkered

from waiting Dutch colliers. Few of them had anything like full cargoes; what they had aboard was loaded by Dutch soldiers and, at Fremantle, by Italian prisoners-of-war. Further Dutch ships were sent from Europe to try to load war supplies for Java.

Over the period of the three boycotts of Dutch shipping--1945-46, the First Police Action of 1947 and Second Police Action of 1948--the total shipping in some way affected by boycott included: 36 merchant and troop ships, 21 Dutch vessels of war, two British troop ships, three Australian Navy vessels, two tankers and 35 smaller ocean-going oil-carrying crafts, and 450 power and dumb barges, lighters and surf-landing craft, essential to stevedoring in Indonesian ports without wharves, in shallow estuaries, rivers and canals. Among Dutch cargoes held by boycott on Australian wharves and warehouses were munitions, uniforms, foodstuffs, over 1,000 motor-trucks, cement, canvas and other items of military value. Numbers of Dutch aircraft were delayed at Australian airports.

The Indonesian mutinies in Australia and friendly local responses inflicted heavy damage on the plans to train the Dutch army of re-occupation. Dr. van Mook noted that the Australian Army was "very helpful and agreed to put at our disposal camps, equipment and training facilities in Western Australia, which were ideally suited for the training of the light battalions we shall need."³⁰ This was written on May 29, 1945. In the following month, Major-General L. P. van Temmen, of the Netherlands Indies Army in Australia, claimed that 100,000 Dutch troops would soon be coming to Australia to train for the invasion of the Indies. "It was hoped," he said, "that Australia would be able to equip most of the army personnel."³¹

The Australian Department of External Affairs had already complained about this 100,000 total, stating that a proposal to base 30,000 Dutch troops in Australia "commended itself in principle," but pointing to the strain on resources.³² While there is no doubt that the Australian Government did offer facilities for the training of a large body of Dutch troops, the arrival of the first 1,500 Dutch troops at Sydney aboard the *Stirling Castle*, a British troop ship, on November 4, 1945, showed that the climate was now far too inhospitable. The Dutch aboard, mostly young and untrained, expected to go to a training camp near Brisbane. Australians, Indonesians, Indian and Chinese seamen demonstrated rowdily against the Dutch troops at the Sydney wharves and a riot developed. The Dutch commander of the troops had to ban shore leave to prevent clashes. The troops were transferred to the British naval auxiliary *Moreton Bay* and carried, untrained, to Java. *Moreton Bay's* sailing was delayed by further demonstrations and trouble among the British crew, some of whom jumped ashore in Sydney rather than carry the Dutch soldiers to Indonesia.³³

30. Van Mook, The Stakes of Democracy, p. 182.

31. The Argus, Melbourne, August 29, 1945.

32. The Argus, Melbourne, August 8, 1945.

33. The writer interviewed 10 British seamen who deserted the Moreton Bay at Sydney in protest against transport of Dutch troops to Java.

The Illegal Guests

The thousands of Indonesian military mutineers and striking seamen were a problem to everyone--Dutch, Australians and themselves. They wanted repatriation to Republican territory. Indonesians were crowding jails and military prison camps in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. The Australian penal authorities could not cope with them all, particularly when more than a thousand Indian seamen flown or shipped in joined the boycott movement against the Dutch. The Indonesians, rejecting duty with the Dutch whom the Australian Government had granted extra-territorial rights, were doubly inadmissible as immigrants; they were deserters from an Allied service and they had the wrong color skin for White Australia.

Trade union officials in Brisbane could think of nowhere else to house them but in the Trades Hall, the union center. Typists and clerks came to work on Tuesday, September 25, 1945, to find the place teeming with Indonesians, camped on the dance floor with their possessions and the presents they intended to take back with them: sewing machines, bicycles, musical instruments, tin trunks of clothes, children's toys. September nights were too cool for Indonesians without blankets. Someone remembered that members of the Chinese Seamen's Union, formed in Australia, like the Indonesian Seamen's Union, to enforce Australian-standard wages and hours, were employed by the US Navy at Bulimba on the Brisbane River. The Chinese, forewarned, contrived an absence of guards at the US Navy base gate as a big trade union-manned truck drove in. The Chinese piled the truck high with US Navy blankets, rice and cigarettes.

With some 300 Indonesians in the Trades Hall and others billeted in private homes, press and radio opened an attack on this illegal accommodation, violating health as well as immigration laws. The Queensland Trades and Labor Council was forced to put the Indonesians aboard trains and trucks bound for the Netherlands Indies Government-in-Exile camp at Wacol. Dr. van Mook was told that it was his responsibility to feed Indonesians his regime had brought to Australia. Dr. van Mook had the Indonesians transferred to Grovelly, Gaythorne, Lytton and other military internment camps and to the antiquated Boggo Road Jail in Brisbane. In Sydney, where the pro-Indonesian movement was strongest, only small numbers of Indonesian deserters were jailed for short terms. Two large private hotels, standing empty, were seized and sympathizers raised sufficient money to feed them. Indonesian deserters were jailed or privately accommodated in Melbourne.

The official agreement between the Australian Government and the Netherlands Indies required Canberra to regard the Indonesians as Dutch subjects and to accept their deportation to Dutch-held territory. However, pressure from trade unions, civil liberties organizations and significant sectors of liberal and Labor Party opinion was applied against deportation to Dutch territory, where internment would have been the end to the journey. In any event, the Chifley-Evatt Labor Government had become rather disgusted with Dutch obduracy and refusal to set their sails to the new nationalist breezes in South-East Asia.

Although shipping for the repatriation of Australian soldiers abroad was desperately short, the Australian Labor Government chartered the troopship *Esperance Bay* from the British and used the Australian naval auxiliary *Manoora*, a converted passenger liner, to repatriate the Indonesians to Republican territory. The decision to land these Indonesian revolutionaries from Australia into the keeping of the Republic, to wage war on the Dutch, in breach of protocol, roused furious protests from the Dutch, the British of Mountbatten's South-East Asia Command and the Australian Liberal Party Opposition and the press. The Federal Opposition Leader, Mr. R. G. Menzies, vigorously criticized the Labor Government for a repatriation operation that would "precipitate" into the Republic's territory "natives who by this time are calculated to be fanatically opposed to Dutch authority" and who were also "fanatically persuaded that Australia is anti-Dutch and anti-British." The "Indonesian natives" in Australia, he said, had been "constantly indoctrinated . . . with a few superficial ideas of a revolutionary kind."³⁴

Sydney Harbor and the Brisbane River had never seen such a departure as that of the *Esperance Bay* in October 1945. Mutinous Indonesian marines from Melbourne and Geelong and deserting Indonesian seamen from the Dutch ships in Sydney marched up the gangway, lugging their Australian-acquired possessions. Acting in a new role that infuriated its Dutch guests, the Australian Government sent launches to all Dutch ships in Sydney ports, collecting those Indonesian seamen held aboard under duress by armed Dutch guards. Indications were that not a single Indonesian seaman remained with the Dutch shipmasters.

As the *Esperance Bay* pulled into the stream, Indonesian soldiers, till then members of an Allied power's armed forces, stood on deck and publicly stripped from their uniforms all buttons and insignia bearing the Netherlands insignia or imprint. They ceremoniously flung them into Sydney Harbor's blue waters. The air was rent with cries of "Merdeka! Down with the Dutch!"

In Brisbane some 800 Indonesian deserters and mutineers, with a few Indonesian and Australian wives, boarded the *Esperance Bay*, to make the total of repatriates 1,416. Brisbane citizens, like those in Sydney, showered gifts on the departing Indonesians, many of them just out of prison. As a token of gratitude for Australian Government help, the Indonesians sailing from Sydney subscribed nearly 150,000 dollars saved from wages earned in Australia to the Fourth Victory Loan.

Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell gave the homegoing Indonesians a pledge that they would be delivered to areas of Republican administration and not to the Dutch. Lord Louis Mountbatten overrode the Calwell undertaking by refusing to grant 40 of the Indonesian political leaders a safe conduct to Java. Brigadier-General L. G. H. Dyke, Australian and Allied commander in Dutch Timor, was instructed to remove the 40 from the ship at Kupang. The Indonesians resisted, but 19 were removed forcibly. Among them were three former Tanah Merah inmates, Senan, Soerparmin and Saedyat, and "Jim" Lumanauw, a prominent spokesman for the Indonesians in Australia. Indonesians, Australian trade unions and Mr. Calwell protested vehemently.

34. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, March 6, 1946.

Lumanauw reported³⁵ that he was detained ". . . under Australian jurisdiction at the instance of the Allied South-East Asia Command at Kupang, Timor; later in British North Borneo and Singapore." He only reached Java about a year after his arrest at Kupang; the other 18 were in Java by August 1946. This affront to Australian national dignity still rankled later, in 1949, when Mr. Calwell reviewed his repatriation of Indonesians. "All the trouble we have experienced," he said, "has been made by colonial Dutchmen and colonial Englishmen."³⁶

The next repatriation ship was the HMAS *Manoora*, carrying some 800 Indonesians, including 191 Tanah Merah veterans from Mackay. The *Manoora's* commander, Captain Alan Paterson Cousins, had an iron dedication to his briefing from Immigration Minister Calwell, which required him to see that the Indonesians went to Republican and not Dutch control. A truckload of Dutch soldiers quickly appeared as the *Manoora* berthed at Tanjong Priok. They demanded that the Indonesians aboard be placed in their custody; they particularly mentioned the Tanah Merah men from Mackay. Captain Cousins made it clear to the Dutch that he would break out small arms to the naval ratings of his crew to protect the Indonesians, if the Dutch military persisted. As a further precaution, the Australian Navy captain had brought to the wharf a Gurkha regiment recently landed by the British. The Indonesians, at Captain Cousins's request, were escorted by the Gurkhas to a point 60 miles from Batavia where Republican units were stationed.³⁷

Other repatriations followed. A few key Indonesians were allowed to remain in Brisbane and Sydney until 1947 to look after the assets left behind by Indonesians in savings banks and government bonds and to issue Republican propaganda. Reviewing the repatriation operation later, the Immigration Minister could say (overlooking the 1945 Dutch deportations of Indonesians to New Guinea and the Kupang incident):

Every Indonesian who left these shores left voluntarily. I did not have to issue a single deportation order against one of them. And when they landed in Indonesia they were handed over to their own people. They were not delivered into the hands of any persons who might exact revenge upon them because of their political opinions.³⁸

The Dutch, as Mr. Calwell complained in 1949, refused to pay for the repatriation "of those whom it asked us to accept." Australia had to foot the bill. He accused the Dutch of "playing a tricky

35. Letter from Lumanauw in archives of Sydney Branch, Boilermakers' Society of Australia, dated April 6, 1946.

36. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, February 9, 1949.

37. Personal interview with Mr. E. McCormick, then an able-seaman in the *Manoora's* crew, now a member of the Victorian Executive, Australian Labor Party; also a report from one of the Indonesian leaders aboard *Manoora*, Najoan, to Labor News, organ of the Federated Ironworkers' Association, Sydney, April 1946.

38. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, March 7, 1946.

game." "They claimed that this is a sort of lend-lease transaction, and even have claimed that we owe them money."³⁹

Some of the Indonesians from Australia soon occupied senior positions in the political parties and governing agencies of the Republic and in the armed forces. Quite a few of them died in the fratricidal affray at Madiun, Java, in 1948. The killings that followed the "September 30 Movement" of 1965 further reduced the ranks of the ex-Australia repatriates.

The Indonesians voyaging fatefully to Australia in 1942 made a unique contribution to the Republic's victory. Theirs was the first Indonesian confrontation with the Dutch imperial power following the capitulation to Japan. The Indonesians in Australian exile fought the first skirmishes for the Republic against the Netherlands Indies Government before it could bring arms and cadres to Batavia. The mutinies and desertions of Indonesians in military camps, airports, naval depots and ports of the nominated Dutch reoccupation base, Australia, were the signal and inspiration for a trade union boycott movement of dimensions never known before or since in the South Pacific. This boycott of Dutch ships, munitions and other supplies was to deprive the Netherlands Indies Government of resources vital to reconquest.

The Indonesian exiles gave White Australia its first face-to-face introduction to the colonial revolutions of Asia. Witness of Indonesian resistance potently influenced an Australian Government whose committal to resumed Dutch rule was never previously questioned. Anti-colonial mutinies on their own soil provoked Australian statesmen into redefinitions and reformulations of their policies toward Asia, up till then mere appendices of metropolitan Britain's, Europe's and America's relationships with colonies and dependencies. The Canberra Government that in 1942 so willingly pledged its resources to revival of the Dutch Empire of the East became, on invitation from Jogjakarta, the Republic's spokesman at the United Nations in 1947 and a critic of American and British aid to Dutch "Police Actions."

39. Ibid., February 9, 1949.