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WHO KILLED BRIGADIER MALLABY?

J. G. A. Parrott

About 8:30 P.M. on the night of Tuesday, October 30, 1945, near the Jembatan Merah (Red Bridge) in Surabaya, the Commander of the 49th Indian Infantry Brigade, Brigadier A. W. S. Mallaby, C.I.E., O.B.E., was shot to death.

It was, of course, not unusual for senior military officers to be killed during the Second World War and its aftermath, but the death of Brigadier Mallaby aroused world-wide interest. In fact an eminent Indonesian has described it as:

... a disaster that decided the course of the history of Surabaya and also the course of our freedom struggle throughout Indonesia.¹

In 1973 there appeared what is probably the most complete account so far of the affair from the Indonesian point of view.² This series includes a detailed description of the prelude to the arrival of the Allied (British) forces in Surabaya, the failure of the negotiations leading to the outbreak of fighting between October 28 and 30, the killing of Mallaby on the evening of October 30 and the events that followed.

1. Extract from the seventh of a series of articles by Dr. Roeslan Abdulgani published in the Surabaya Post between October 25 and November 9, 1973, with the general title "Seratus Hari di Surabaya yang menggemparkan Indonesia" (The Hundred Days in Surabaya which Shook Indonesia). These articles were kindly forwarded to me by Dr. Doel Arnowo. They were recently republished in book form under the same title (Jakarta: Yayasan Idayu, 1974). I will use the book pagination in my citations.

Other versions of how Brigadier Mallaby died include: A. J. F. Doulton, The Fighting Cock: Being the History of the 23rd Indian Division, 1942-47 (Aldershot: Gale and Poulden, 1951); L. H. O. Pugh, "Soerabaja (NEI) 1945," Royal Artillery Journal, LXXV, 4 (1948), pp. 320-49; Pusat SBPI [Sarikat Buruh Pertjetakan Indonesia?], Dokumentasi Pemuda: Sekitar Proklamasi Indonesia Merdeka (Jogjakarta: Badan Penerangan Pusat SBPI, 1948), p. 60; "Official Statement of the Surabaya Contact Bureau on the Death of Brigadier Mallaby," November 1, 1945, Indies Collection of the Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (IC-RVO), document no. 056029; S. Woodburn Kirby, The War against Japan (5 vols.; London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1957-69), V, p. 324; David Wehl, The Birth of Indonesia (London: Allen and Unwin, 1948), pp. 60-61; Great Britain, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates: Official Report (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1909-); M. G. Abhyankar, Valour Enshrined, a History of the Mahratta Light Infantry 1768-1947 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1971), p. 488; J.H.B., "Sailor in Sourabaya," Blackwoods Magazine, CCLX, 1570 (August 1946), pp. 73-84; "Report on Operations of 49 INI/INF/RDF, SOURABAJA 25 Oct-8 Nov 1945," from the papers of the late General E. C. Mansergh and kindly presented to me by the Royal Artillery Institution, London.

2. This is the Abdulgani series of "Surabaya Post" articles referred to in note 1. Abdulgani was himself a participant in the events described and much of his narrative is in the nature of "eyewitness" reporting.

By coincidence, I had also commenced a study of this episode and have recently come into possession of new evidence which differs in one or two important aspects from the Abdulgani version.³

It is the aim of this paper to investigate the circumstances of Brigadier Mallaby's death in the light of the evidence at my disposal and hopefully to find the answers to the following questions:

1. Who gave the troops of "D" Coy, 6 Mahratta (who were in the Internatio Building) the order to fire on the crowd?⁴
2. Who killed Brigadier Mallaby?
3. Who, if anyone, was to blame for Brigadier Mallaby's death?

Surabaya, August 20-October 29, 1945

The Japanese capitulated on August 15, 1945, after the dropping of atomic bombs respectively on Hiroshima (August 6) and Nagasaki (August 9). However, between the date of the Emperor's announcement of Japan's acceptance of the Allies' demand for unconditional surrender and the arrival of the first Allied (British) troops in Jakarta, there was a hiatus of 41 days. It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss fully the reasons for this delay, which was perhaps the most important single factor affecting everything that took place subsequently. But it is clear that during this six-week period the Indonesian revolutionary government was able to establish itself and gain an ascendancy over the Japanese occupation forces, a major part of which became thoroughly demoralized.

In Surabaya, news of the Proclamation of Independence was first heard on Saturday, August 18, over Radio Japan which had been taken over by pemuda groups.⁵ It was only on the next Monday that the full text of the Proklamasi Indonesia Merdeka was first published in the newspaper *Soeara Asia*.⁶

From August 22, 1945, onwards, various organizations in Surabaya, mostly led by pemuda elements, began--at first in a rather tentative manner--to take action to assert their newly proclaimed independence. This movement rapidly gained momentum until, by early October, the town was in the hands of the revolutionary movement and the Japanese rendered

3. This evidence comprises:
 - (a) A report compiled by Dr. R. C. Smith--formerly Captain R. C. Smith, 6th Battalion The Mahratta Regiment (6 Mahratta)--who was a liaison officer on Brigadier Mallaby's staff; also two letters from Captain Smith elaborating points in his report.
 - (b) A letter from Major K. Venu Gopal who was, at the time of the incident, company commander of 'D' Company, 6 Mahratta, which was posted in the Internatio Bank Building in Surabaya.
4. The abbreviation "Coy" is used for the military subunit "Company" numbering approximately 120 men.
5. Abdulgani, Seratus Hari, p. 12.
6. It is interesting to note that in both the Proclamation of Independence and the August 20 issue of Soeara Asia, the year is shown as "2605"--in accordance with the Japanese calendar.

completely impotent. In addition, a large amount of arms and ammunition was handed over by or seized from the Japanese and distributed among the population.⁷

The following "progress chart" gives, in outline, the sequence of events which culminated in Surabaya becoming virtually "an armed camp."⁸

Wednesday, August 22	Instruction received from Jakarta to set up a Komite Nasional Indonesia (KNI) and a security organization called Badan Keamanan Rakyat (BKR).
Thursday, August 23	Nightly blackout enforced by the Japanese cancelled.
Monday, August 27	Telegram received from Jakarta requesting that everyone fly the Sang Merah Putih (the flag of the Republic)--on August 29 and 30 to celebrate the first meeting in Jakarta of the Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat (KNIP). Announcement issued that the people of Surabaya would fly the flag from Wednesday, August 29 to Saturday, September 1. (This action is often referred to as the <i>vlaggen-actie</i>).
Tuesday, August 28	KNI Surabaya formed--consisting of thirty-two members headed by Doel Arnowo.
Monday, September 3	The Japanese Surabaya Syuu became the Keresidenan Surabaya of the Indonesian republic.
Tuesday, September 11	Mass meeting at the Lapangan Tambaksari where the crowd was addressed by Soemarsono, head of Pemuda Republik Indonesia (PRI), Resident Soedirman and Doel Arnowo.
Tuesday, September 11- Wednesday, September 19	Frequent clashes between pemuda and Dutch ex-internees who had walked out of the Japanese camps, culminating in the incident at the Yamato (Oranje) Hotel on September 19. A crowd of Indonesians hauled down the Dutch flag there and ran up the Sang Merah Putih. During a scuffle a Dutch lawyer, Mr. Ploegman, was killed. He was the first of many Dutch and Eurasians to become victims of mob violence. ⁹
Wednesday, September 19- mid-October: the <i>siap</i> period	Frequent clashes between Indonesians and Japanese and Dutch elements. Attacks on Japanese military and naval installations and the takeover of large stocks of arms, including tanks. Summary trials and executions in the Simpang Club. Manifestations of "mob-ism." ¹⁰
Sunday, September 23	Attack on the Japanese Kenpeitai Headquarters (now the site of the Tugu Pahlawan). Surrender and handover of arms by Japanese navy at Gubeng. ¹¹

7. The weapons handed over were believed to be 200 guns, 690 heavy and 700 light machine-guns, 25,000 rifles, 1,240 tommy guns, 3,360 revolvers and large quantities of ammunition. Kirby, *The War*, p. 331, n. 2.

8. Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 154. See *ibid.*, pp. 126-29, 155-66, for a description of developments in Surabaya prior to the arrival of the 49 Brigade.

9. Abdulgani, *Seratus Hari*, p. 16. "With the death of Mr. Ploegman, our people began to smell blood. We realized that from now on we faced two enemies, the Japanese army and the Dutch ex-internees."

10. *Ibid.*, p. 23. "This mob-ism manifested itself in mob attacks not only on the Dutch, innocent women and children, but also on other nationalities."

11. This is described in a copy of an account in Japanese by a staff officer of the Japanese navy kindly sent to me under arrangements made by Benedict R. O'G.

- Friday, September 28 Arrival of Kapten Huijer (Royal Dutch Navy) "representing the Allied Command."
- Monday-Friday, October 1-5 Further large-scale attacks on Japanese installations.
- Saturday, October 6 Kapten Huijer and team taken off a train (to Jakarta), placed under arrest and subsequently thrown into Kalisosok jail.¹²
- Friday, October 12 Setting up of the Barisan Pemberontakan Rakjat Indonesia (BPRI) under Soetomo (Bung Tomo), whose nightly broadcasts over his own radio station (Radio Pemberontak) strongly influenced the people of East Java. Arrival of Soerjo, governor of East Java.
- Friday and Monday, October 21 and 22 Mass meeting organized by the Nahdatul Ulama of Java and Madura.¹³

From about October 20 until the arrival of the Allied Force, there was an uneasy lull. At this time the city was described as "a strong unified fortress."¹⁴

The Arrival of 49th Indian Infantry Brigade and the Outbreak of Fighting (October 25-30, 1945)

By late October, the stage was set for the arrival of the Allied Force comprising the 49th Indian Infantry Brigade Group¹⁵ under the command of Brigadier Mallaby. (See Appendix for the Order of Battle and composition of this brigade group.) The 49 Brigade was a formation of the 23rd Indian Division commanded by Major-General Hawthorn, whose headquarters had been established in Batavia (Jakarta). The division had seen fighting in India and Burma during 1944, mainly in the Imphal area. It had not taken part in the subsequent XIV Army campaign which cleared the Japanese from Burma. During this campaign 23 Division was in training for its role in the proposed amphibious assault on Singapore and Malaya planned for August 1945--code-named Zipper.¹⁶

Anderson. The narrative has been translated by Mrs. Willing of the Japanese Department of Monash University. A significant aspect of this account is its close similarity to the Huijer report (P. J. G. Huijer, "Report on the Surabaya Affair," IC-RVO, doc. no. 007177-007179). There has been a tendency among observers of this period to dismiss the Huijer report as unreliable because of its supposedly exaggerated pro-Dutch bias. In fact, most of the events described by Huijer are verified by this Japanese account.

- 12. Huijer, "Report"; Abdulgani, Seratus Hari, p. 22.
- 13. Anderson, Java, p. 157.
- 14. "Besides that, the Angkatan Muda with its branches in each government agency--railways, electricity, radio, education, and others--were already active. There were also workers' organizations with their militia; and the youth and militia of the Surabaya ulama. All these plus the mothers and daughters who ran the public kitchens and medical posts ensured that Surabaya at that time was a strong unified fortress." Abdulgani, Seratus Hari, p. 24. See also note 8 above.
- 15. The Force was termed a brigade group because, in addition to its normal brigade complement, it was accompanied by divisional troops, comprising a regiment of artillery and a transport column. For convenience, in this paper it will be referred to as 49 Brigade or abbreviated as 49 Bde.
- 16. Kirby, The War, p. 9.

