

~~The emergence of the new situation.~~
the Japanese army on Java after the surrender

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drs. W. G. J. Remmelink
reserve tweede luitenant der intendance

The Dutch Parliamentary Enquiry Committee which was created by the Dutch Parliament on November 6, 1947 to enquire into the policies of the Dutch government during the war, concluded that the following ten factors were decisive in frustrating Dutch policy in Indonesia after the surrender of Japan.

De schrijver van nevenstaand artikel is sino-looog/japanoloog. Gedurende meer dan een jaar — tot hij als reserve tweede luitenant der intendance met groot verlof vertrok — was hij werkzaam op de Sectie Krijgsge-schiedenis van de Landmachtstaf. Voor de studie van het onderwerp raadpleegde hij onder meer een aantal tot dusver niet of nauwelijks toegankelijke bronnen, waaronder ook Japane. De belangstelling in, ook buitenlandse, vakkringen voor dit artikel is reeds gebieken, reden waarom het in het Engels werd gesteld. Inmiddels stemde de redactie in met een vanwege de afdeling Indonesische Geschiedenis van de James Cook University te Townsville (Australië) ontvangen verzoek het te mogen overnemen. Ook in Indonesië vond de schrijver reeds erkenning: in het kader van het culturele verdrag tussen Nederland en Indonesië aanvaardde hij een docentfunctie aan de Gaja Madah Universiteit in Djokjakarta.

Voor de oudere lezers is het ongemeen boeiend in dit artikel beschreven te vinden wat de achtergronden zijn geweest van de beruchte Bersiap-periode. De jongeren kunnen zich terdege laten voorlichten over de wijze waarop het eertijds zo imposante Nederlandse imperium verbrokkelde. Voor een ieder is het goed, aan de hand van deze studie te beseffen welke verreikende consequenties eruit kunnen voortvloeien wanneer een oorlogvoerende partij zich zózeer heeft geconcentreerd op het winnen van de oorlog dat er geen of nauwelijks aandacht werd geschonken aan de voorbereiding van wat onmiddellijk ná de eindzege zou dienen te gebeuren.

1. The almost complete lack of information on the Dutch side about political and military developments in Indonesia during the Japanese occupation.

2. The coinciding surrender of Japan and change made in operational theatres in the Far East. As a result of these events, too few troops were available to the English to permit them to execute those occupational tasks they had undertaken freely and, even, at their own insistence.

3. The proclamation of August 17, 1945 instituting the new Republic of Indonesia.

4. The underestimation by the Dutch of the magnitude and the strength of the Republican movement.

5. The time lag between the surrender of Japan and the first Allied landings on Java.

6. The insufficient information available to the Dutch government about the situation on Java after September 1945.

7. The very great shortage of Dutch military power, caused primarily by the liberation of the whole of the Netherlands in May 1945 instead of September 1944.

8. The public actions of General Christison at the end of September and the beginning of October 1945 and the attitude of higher English authorities.

9. The unwillingness of the Japanese to obey the orders of the Allied Commander, especially those concerning the maintenance of public peace.

10. The delayed liberation of 80,000 Dutchmen interned in camps on Java, who remained in Republican territory.

(Enquêtecommissie Regeringsbeleid 1940-1945, 1956, Vol. 8A and B: 721).

History, it seems, had dealt the Dutch a very bad hand to play in Indonesia after the war. But they were not, even if they gave this impression, the only ones, for the same could be said of the other three players, the Indonesians, the English, and

trump; but even this was a trump which, when played, might only make a winner of one of the other players. These were the Japanese, for only they had sufficient military means at their disposal to force the situation in a direction favorable to one of the other parties. It was clear to the Dutch, the Indonesians, and the English that the attitude taken by the Japanese 16th Army on Java would certainly be crucial to the subsequent course of events.¹

Thus, the foremost question in the minds of all three of these parties was what the reaction would be of the 16th Army to 'the emergence of the new situation', as the Japanese euphemistically called their unconditional surrender.

On the Indonesian side there were two general views held about the situation. On the one hand, the *pemudas* (youths) held the radical view that independence should be proclaimed regardless of what attitude the Japanese would take. They gambled on the probability that the Japanese would not interfere, and that, even if they did, the Indonesians would be able to withstand them with Peta, Heiho, and other Indonesian armed forces.² On the other hand, the older Nationalist leaders held the opinion that against the armed might of the Japanese the Indonesians were defenceless, and that the attitude of the Japanese had to be ascertained before an independent Indonesia could be proclaimed (Nugroho 1975: 17-19).

Unlike the Indonesians, the Allies were in no position to ascertain anything. They could only hope that the 16th Army would keep to normal procedures and maintain the status quo at the time of surrender, even though they had, in fact,

¹ There were about 70,000 Japanese on Java at the time of the surrender. This number comprised roughly 30,000 Army personnel, 20,000 Navy personnel, and 20,000 civilians. The latter were for the most part directly employed by the Army in the Military Administration. (For more details see Miyamoto 1973: 44, 193; and 'Bundel Japanse Rapporten' Doc. II, Vol. 5). The 16th Army was organized in three territorial units: the 27th and 28th Mixed Brigades were stationed in West and East Java respectively, each built around a nucleus of four battalions, and a provisionally formed unit of two battalions was located in Central Java. As Japanese war strategy in Southeast Asia had been centered on Singapore, Java figured mostly as a supply base. The plan had been that if the Allies were to land on Java, the 16th Army would retreat to the mountains of East and West Java, and conduct guerrilla operations from there, with the Bandung plateau as the last redoubt (Defence Agency of Japan 1976, Vol. 92: 393-5).

The Rangoon agreement

On August 14, 1945, Admiral the Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia (SACSEA) learned that not only had Japan accepted the Potsdam Proclamation, but also that this operational theatre had been enlarged to include the greater part of SWPA (South West Pacific Area) south of the Philippines, which had been the responsibility of General MacArthur. The change in operational theatres at this time was unexpected, although not a complete surprise, for since the conception of SEAC (South East Asia Command) in August 1943 there had been moves to change the boundaries of SEAC and SWPA, and it had previously been discussed with Mountbatten at Potsdam (Mountbatten 1951: 181).

The reasons for this change have never been made completely clear. Initially, the British seemed to have been in favor of it for prestige reasons, and later the Americans for political reasons, in that they did not want to have any part in reinstating colonial powers in their former colonies (*Enquêtocommissie* 1956, Vol. 8A and B: 484-523; Djajadiningrat 1958: 7-17). The reasons given to Mountbatten, however, were purely military. By taking responsibility for SWPA south of the Philippines Mountbatten would free MacArthur to completely concentrate on the invasion of Japan (Mountbatten 1951: 181). The degree to which these military reasons remained pertinent when Japan surrendered is not stated, but the change was nevertheless effected, placing Mountbatten in a very difficult position. And with this new arrangement, the

² The Peta (*Sukarela Tentara Pembela Tanah Air*, or in Japanese *Giyugun*) was a Indonesian-officered, locally based volunteer army. Its formation had been ordered on October 3, 1943. After cadres had been trained, the actual formation began at the end of January 1944 in each residency and continued, until by the end of the war 67 battalions of about 500 men each had been formed. The total strength comprised about 38,000 men. Prominent local men were appointed as battalion commanders to provide general leadership, but the actual leading of troops was entrusted to company and platoon commanders (Defence Agency of Japan 1976, Vol. 92: 447-8). In contrast to the Peta, the Heiho or Auxiliary Corps was completely integrated into the Japanese Army. (For further information on these and other Indonesian forces, see also Aziz 1955: 224-230, and Anderson 1961: 37). These forces were supposed to play an important part in the guerrilla operations which were mentioned in note 1.

start all over again.

With inadequate troops, shipping, and Intelligence, Mountbatten had to occupy an area which he had not expected to come under his command until much later, if at all, for he had never given his definite agreement to the scheme (Mountbatten 1951: 181-183). Moreover, any speedy action on his part was precluded by MacArthur's² order of August 19 that no actual document of surrender could be signed and no landings on or reoccupation of territory in Japanese hands could be made until the formal surrender of Japan had taken place. Likewise, as Mountbatten learned on August 21, the official change in operational theatres would not become effective until after that date (Woodburn Kirby 1969: 230).

The first task which Mountbatten set himself was to try to contact the Japanese, at the same time proceeding with *Operation Zipper* (the invasion of Malaya) more or less as planned. This, however, proved to be much more difficult than expected.

Until August 20 was contact established with Field-Marshal Count Terauchi Hisaichi, Supreme Commander Japanese Expeditionary Forces Southern Regions, who was headquartered in Saigon. Terauchi's area of command coincided for the greater part with that of SEAC, and by General Order No. 1 he would have to surrender to Mountbatten. Only on August 23 did Terauchi, after having received the formal cease-fire order from the Japanese High Command, comply with Mountbatten's order to send a delegation to Rangoon to sign a preliminary agreement of surrender (Woodburn Kirby 1969: 236). On Sunday August 26 a Japanese delegation arrived at Rangoon, and finally, more than ten days after the Japanese had surrendered, the Allies were in a position to ascertain the attitude of the Japanese Army.

The Japanese delegation, headed by Japanese Army Southern Regions Chief-of-Staff Lieutenant-General Numata, and further consisting of Rear Admiral Chudo, Lieutenant-Colonel Tomura, and two interpreters, were met in a 'strictly correct and coldly polite' manner, as Mountbatten had wanted it, by a twenty-man delegation headed by Lieutenant-General Browning. Representatives of the United States, China, Australia, the Nether-

² MacArthur had been made Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers on August 15.

here for [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]

Although it was clear from these meetings that the Japanese intended to carry out the cease-fire and the surrender in a honourable and responsible way, it was soon apparent that both delegations had come to Rangoon with different attitudes. The Japanese, writes Mountbatten, 'had come to Rangoon feeling that they were in a position to bargain over, or at least comment on the terms which I had laid down for the execution of the surrender' (Mountbatten 1951: 184). They were even 'unrepentant' as he indicated to the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff (SEACOS 458). The British felt that since the Japanese had accepted unconditional surrender they had no right to criticize or to comment on the orders; they should only ask for clarifications, as Rear Admiral Chudo did when he asked an explanation of the term 'radar' which was new to him (Minutes 2nd Plenary Meeting). According to Mountbatten, the Japanese attitude was most clearly reflected in a letter from Terauchi to him, which Numata produced during the second plenary meeting: in this 'are set forth, in considerable detail, what amounts, in effect, to the conditions which are to govern the surrender and the subsequent period' (SEACOS 458).

Mountbatten was clearly not prepared to take Terauchi's 'desires' into account, and Terauchi's letter met the same fate as the so-called 'Final Note of Japan', which was sent to the Allies the day after Japan had accepted the Potsdam Proclamation, and to which it bears a curious resemblance. Both the letter and the note list a number of 'desires', which if fulfilled would have enabled the Japanese government in the one case or Terauchi in the other to better deal with problems resulting from the surrender. But neither Washington nor Mountbatten wondered whether these desires could reveal anything about the situation in Tokyo or Saigon. To them, the messages seemed more like 'brazen-faced impertinence', coming as they did after the unconditional surrender (Butow 1954: 225). Both requests were ignored, for, as Mountbatten writes, 'my orders are clear and explicit and cover all necessary points with the exception of three on which I have sought confirmation of my policy viz: the status of the surrendered Japanese, their employment on labour, and disarming' (SAC(45) 144/1).

A closer reading of Terauchi's letter, of Mount-

