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Jakarta: cooperation and resistance in an occupied city

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REGIONAL DYNAMICS OF THE INDONESIAN REVOLUTION
UNITY FROM DIVERSITY

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In the study of modern Indonesia, the word Jakarta has become a kind of shorthand for central authority. The national revolution of 1945 to 1949, which began and ended with the establishment of a Republican government in Jakarta, did little to alter this image. The city was effective capital of the Indonesian Republic during the last months of 1945, formal capital until 1947, and capital of the Netherlands Indies until 1947. It was the headquarters of the Japanese military administration on Java until late 1945, and of the Allied military administration on Java from October 1945 to November 1946, as well as the designated capital of the Republic of the United States of Indonesia (Republik Indonesia Serikat, RIS) in 1949. Although the political heart of the Republic lay for most of the revolution in Central Java, central power was heavily and obtrusively present in Jakarta. The activities of various elites in Jakarta cast their shadows over regions far removed from the center, and it is easy to forget that Jakarta has a history of its own as a region and that the revolution was a time when the local contribution to events there was clearly visible.

The city’s origins are traditionally traced to an armed trading post established in 1618 by Jan Pieterszoon Coen of the Dutch East Indies Company near the mouth of the Ciliwung, about forty-seven miles east of Banten, then the main political power in West Java.1 Over the following centuries the trading post expanded south, merging with other small settlements along the Ciliwung, while the harbor shifted a few miles along the coast to Tanjung Priok. The city of Batavia
began in its day the administrative, mercantile, and cultural center of the Dutch empire in Indonesia and a major center of European civilization in Southeast Asia.²

During its years of expansion, Batavia acquired a large and diverse population. By the twentieth century the old city where Coen originally built his fort was inhabited almost entirely by Chinese, the largest Chinese community on Java, who dominated medium-scale trade in the city. Inland and slightly uphill lived the Europeans and Eurasians—classified together under Dutch colonial law—in the leafy suburb of Weltevreden, where the most important government offices and business houses were also located. The oldest group of Indonesian inhabitants of the city were the Betawi, largely descendants of slaves brought from eastern Indonesia in the days of the East India Company to serve the Dutch city. They spoke their own dialect, Batavian Malay, and occupied a considerable area of land around the city. In the city, however, their numbers were diluted by large-scale immigration after the turn of the century, especially from the rest of Java.

Although Indonesians and Europeans inhabited the same city and depended on each other economically and socially, they were physically segregated in a kind of informal apartheid. The Indonesian kampong (neighborhoods) were tucked unobtrusively behind the European houses and commercial buildings which lined the main roads. "The suburb," wrote a British commentator of Weltevreden, "has been well planned, it is kept scrupulously clean, and while the natives in their bright coloured clothes, quietly making their way hither and thither, give the required picturesque touch to the life in the streets, the absence of the crowded native dwelling houses prevents the occurrence of those objectionable features which so often destroy the charm of the towns in the Orient."³

This physical segregation was matched by a social, cultural, and intellectual separation. Local Indonesians took little direct part in the administrative, commercial, military, and political life of the Dutch city. Education levels for the Betawi were low, for the Dutch ruled Jakarta more directly than other parts of Indonesia and had no need to build up a local elite as their agents, while the Betawi lacked their own traditional elite. A sizeable Indonesian educated elite also lived in Jakarta, coming almost entirely from other regions, and with few links to the other Indonesian inhabitants of the city. Its members enjoyed many of the privileges of an urban elite, but they also directly faced the racial discrimination which lay at the heart of the Dutch colonial system. This elite provided much of the leadership of the nationalist movement.

Despite its close associations with Dutch rule, therefore, Jakarta/Batavia never came to represent simply the baleful, corrupting aspects of colonial society. At the outbreak of the revolution, it had an essentially neutral hue in nationalist eyes, in comparison with such areas as Ambon, in the South Moluccas, and the Minahasa, around the city of Menado in northern Sulawesi, which were seen as having gone over to the Dutch. Indonesian nationalism could and did shape its image of Jakarta in terms of the city's role in the revolutionary struggle. But the image was ambiguous: as the scene of the declaration of independence, Jakarta had symbolic significance, and its importance was reinforced by its status as the capital city of the Republic. On the other hand, Jakarta, scene of repeated negotiations, also became known as the city of diplomacy, a deprecatory description, at least in those circles that regarded negotiations as selling out to the Dutch.

It is not surprising that both these images of Jakarta's role refer to activities of the national elite in the city and ascribe to Jakarta the role of nothing more than an arena for events of national importance. The people of Jakarta, however, were more than passive onlookers. A local revolutionary movement grew out of the distinctive social and economic conditions of the region and developed an independence of thought and action that shaped the course of events in the city despite the power of the center. The story of the revolution in Jakarta, therefore, is less a story of local self-determination than of the changing relationship between the Republic, the Dutch, and local nationalists. The Dutch were eventually defeated and the local nationalists overshadowed and overwhelmed. In 1949, with the formal transfer of sovereignty, Jakarta came finally into the hands of the Republic.

Independence and the Takeover of Jakarta

Japan surrendered to the Allies on August 14, 1945. First reactions in Jakarta to the prospect of a return to Dutch rule were hesitant. Sukarno and Hatta did not declare independence until the 17th, and
the older generation, uncomfortable as they may have been with the idea of renewed colonial rule, shrank for some time from supporting such a far-reaching act as a declaration of independence. Gradually, however, people from all levels of society in Jakarta, with the youth (pemuda) to the forefront, saw an opportunity to take part in deciding the future of their country. A pervasive atmosphere of action arose in the city. At first there was no clear sense of direction. No one knew what form the Dutch return would take or when it would come, and no one knew just how it could be met. But there was a compelling feeling that this was a wholly new situation, in which old rules did not apply and what had once been unthinkable could now be achieved. In a rising tide of activity during the weeks after the proclamation, the pemuda daubed walls and monuments around the city with patriotic slogans (often in English for the benefit of international audiences) such as "Indonesia never again the life blood of any nation." They hailed the red and white national flag to the top of mastheads; seized public buildings from the diffident Japanese military administration and painted their walls with the words "Milik Republik Indonesia" (property of the Republic of Indonesia). Popular enthusiasm reached a peak in the massive rally at what is now Merdeka Square on September 19, when an estimated 200,000 people converged on the largest open space in central Jakarta to demonstrate their support for the Republic.

At the same time, people of Jakarta had begun to organize, to give form to the feeling that Indonesians had taken control of their own future. The Japanese had sought to mobilize and coordinate the Indonesians behind their war effort through a variety of mass organizations, and this experience of organized political activity was readily turned in 1945 toward the creation of nationalist action groups, both to fight the Dutch and to back up the fighters. The Japanese, moreover, had given young Indonesians military and paramilitary training in several organizations. Two of these, the Peta (volunteer army) and the Heiho (auxiliary forces), which had received the best arms and training, were disbanded by the Japanese just after the surrender. Most of their members, however, reassembled in the BKR (People's Security Organization), but it was some weeks before the BKR became an effective military force. In the meantime, the paramilitary Barisan

Pelopor (Pioneer Corps) provided the guard at the declaration of independence and began to patrol the streets of the city. The more or less official armed forces, however, were soon far outnumbered by independent struggle groups (badan perjuangan later known as lasykar) which sprang up throughout the city. They were based especially in student hostels, under the leadership of educated pemuda, often with a strong ideological motivation, and in the kampung. There traditional, often ethnic, loyalties played an important role, and the neighborhood association, established by the Japanese as the smallest local unit of political control and mobilization, was a key element in translating will into organized action.

In administration, as in military training, the nationalists benefited from changes made under the Japanese. As the war began to turn against them in 1943, the Japanese drained Java of Japanese manpower and appointed Indonesians to increasingly senior positions, giving them administrative experience not available under the Dutch. At the time of the Japanese surrender, Jakarta had an Indonesian deputy mayor, Soewirjo, a nationalist leader who was prominent in the circle that was later to become the PNI (Indonesian Nationalist Party). Below him was a hierarchy of Indonesian officials with training and experience in managing the affairs of the city. The Indonesians in the municipal administration were cautious, however, in considering an immediate takeover of local government. The Japanese had been instructed by the Allies to maintain the political and administrative status quo, and they had been careful not to flout this instruction openly. There appeared, in fact, to be a real risk that the Japanese might turn on the Indonesian nationalist movement and suppress it in order to demonstrate their good faith to the Allies. Thus it was not until September 7, 1945, that a self-appointed committee of Indonesian officials of the Jakarta municipal administration unilaterally transferred authority to Soewirjo and sent a delegation to the Japanese mayor of the city, Shigeo Hasegawa, asking him to hand over the government of the city peacefully. In line with Allied instructions, Hasegawa refused officially, but in fact he ceased to go to his office. The following weeks saw more and more individual officials as well as whole departments declare their allegiance to the Republic, and Soewirjo was formally elected head of the PNKD (Pemerintah Nasional-
al Kota Djakarta, National Government of the City of Jakarta) on September 23, 1945. He was confirmed in his position on September 29, when Sukarno officially appointed him mayor of Jakarta. By October 1, the government of the city was effectively in Indonesian hands, and the PNKD, based in its city hall (Balai Agung) on the southern side of Merdeka Square, had begun the task of administering the city.

All this activity at first attracted relatively little opposition. Although there were many Indonesians, particularly of the older generation, who initially had doubts about the Republic, very few felt inclined to take action on behalf of the Dutch, and as the Republic displayed greater strength and identity, positive commitment to it grew. The Japanese, for their part, despite Indonesian fears, were generally sympathetic to Indonesian nationalism, concerned only that a nationalist revolution might be directed against them or that the Allies might blame them for the establishment of the Republic. They restrained themselves from moving against the Republic in Jakarta, therefore, as long as it avoided either endangering or compromising them. The Allies were unable to oppose the Republic in Jakarta, for they had no armed forces there. With Java being transferred to Mountbatten's South East Asia Command only on August 15, 1945, Mountbatten had neither the troops nor the transport to organize a rapid reoccupation of the island. The Dutch prisoners of war and internees on Java, just emerging from their internment camps, concentrated their attention on physical survival and an improvement in living conditions, and were in any case not yet organized enough to present an effective challenge to the Republic.

The Republic Challenged

Except for the looting of Chinese shops in Glodok, an uneasy peace reigned in Jakarta for two to three weeks after the proclamation. By early September, however, Dutch internees from other parts of Java had begun to arrive in Jakarta in large numbers. Their attempt to return to their old houses and their old way of life were the first tangible signs of a Dutch resurgence. In every region the Dutch colonial system had its own distinctive characteristics. In Batavia, its racial aspects had been particularly strong, and they had been highlighted by sharp disparities in wealth and by the physical segregation in the city. The sense of deprivation felt by the people of Jakarta was interpreted racially, rather than socially. As the Dutch showed signs of demanding their old positions again, the scene was set for an outbreak of racial conflict.

In the second and third weeks of September, moreover, a new threat to the Republic appeared in the seas off Jakarta, and the uneasy calm disappeared. A flotilla of British and Dutch ships arrived in Tanjung Priok, the port of Jakarta, on September 15, carrying Ch. O. van der Plas as representative of the Netherlands Indies government. As representatives of the Allies, the British were there to accept the Japanese surrender and arrange for the repatriation of both the Japanese army on Java and the Allied prisoners of war and internees on the island. Lacking sufficient troops even to occupy Jakarta, the British stayed on their ships and worked primarily through the continuing Japanese military administration. The British had also expected to give general military cover to the returning Dutch administration, but as the strength of the Republic became clear, they retreated to a more narrow interpretation of their tasks and informed the Dutch that they were not prepared to fight a colonial war on behalf of the Netherlands. When new contingents of British and British Indian troops arrived and began landing in Jakarta on September 28, 1945, therefore, they did so not under the banner of the returning Netherlands Indies government but as awkwardly apolitical representatives of the Allies, entrusted with purely humanitarian and legal tasks. On these grounds, and hoping to win international approval by being cooperative, Sukarno and the other Republican leaders urged the Indonesians of Jakarta to cooperate with the Allies. The Indonesians accepted British professions of neutrality, albeit with some doubts, and there was little resistance as the British disembarked in Tanjung Priok on the 28th. At the request of the British, van der Plas had not shifted his headquarters ashore on his arrival. Following the British landings, however, he took up residence first in the Hotel des Indes and then in an office building in the center of the city. He was joined at the beginning of October by Dr. H. J. van Mook, lieutenant governor-general of the Netherlands Indies, together with officials of the Netherlands Indies government-in-exile who had spent the war in Australia. Their arrival marked the beginning of the restoration of Dutch authority in Jakarta.
Distrusting Dutch political judgment and acutely aware that any provocative act by the Dutch was likely to result in British casualties, the British commander, Lt. Gen. Sir Philip Christison, tried to keep the Dutch presence as unobtrusive as possible by attempting to insist that the Dutch not expand their power in any field without his approval. Van Mook, however, disregarded these instructions and moved into the palace of the governor-general, while his skeleton staff of Dutch officials from Australia, supplemented by recruits from the Netherlands and former internees from Indonesia who had recuperated for a time in Australia, went about the business of reconstructing their administration. They requisitioned former government buildings under Allied authority, erased the words “Milik Republik Indonesia” and expanded the Dutch administrative structure in all fields.

The Battle for Jakarta

These signs of a resurgent Netherlands Indies encouraged former internees on the one hand and pemuda on the other to carry the struggle onto the streets of Jakarta. Armed vigilante groups of former internees and prisoners of war began to form soon after the Japanese surrendered. Ambonese soldiers of the Dutch colonial army were particularly active, gaining a reputation for indiscriminate harassment, intimidation, and shooting of Indonesians. The British suspected them of seeking to promote a breakdown of law and order in which the British would have to intervene. On the Republican side were the struggle groups, which had undergone many changes since they first emerged as serious political and military forces in early September. Some groups had merged into the formal defense structure of the Republic as units of the BKR, and more did so after it was transformed into the TKR (People’s Security Army) on October 5. Others, often those with stronger ideological orientation, such as the left-wing API (Angkatan Pemuda Indonesia, Youth Force of Indonesia), remained firmly independent, both of the army and of the political parties which began to form only in late October. The Barisan Pelopor, for its part, having begun as a strong supporter of the government, drifted gradually away from it, becoming largely independent and changing its name to Barisan Banteng (Wild Buffalo Corps).

Although they were already engaged in running street battles with the Dutch vigilantes, the struggle groups offered no real resistance to the British forces as they landed. Within a few days, however, reports began to circulate that Dutch troops were also landing, disguised in British uniforms, and clashes began with the British as well. Fighting in Jakarta never reached the intensity of the battle of Surabaya, but it was persistent and costly for all sides. The heaviest fighting took place in local clashes between the struggle groups and the vigilantes. The warning cry Bersiap! (Get ready!), used to summon pemuda for battle with an approaching hostile force, was heard often enough to become a general term for the violent months of late 1945. The violence of this period included, however, individual and apparently random kidnappings and murders, often accompanied by torture, and it was the randomness of this terror, conducted by both sides, which gave late 1945 its particularly gruesome reputation and the conflict in Jakarta its strongly racial character.11

Despite the clashes that were taking place, the Republic’s leaders still urged the people of Jakarta to remain calm and to avoid action. The leaders wanted to demonstrate to the world that the Republic was capable of maintaining law and order as an effective government, though their attitude was probably also influenced by humanitarian considerations and the potential political danger to themselves of strong revolutionary armed forces in the city, which might have ended up beyond their control. On November 19, Sjahrir, as prime minister, seeking to avoid a repetition of the events in Surabaya, ordered the TKR and the pemuda forces to evacuate the city. As Sjahrir must have expected, not all struggle groups obeyed him, but the order made it clear that those who continued to fight the Allies in Jakarta did so outside the framework of the Republic’s strategy.

The British in Jakarta were suffering mounting casualties in the street violence of the bersiap period. Without any immediate prospect of relief, they decided that the city of Jakarta at least must be made safe. In Operation Pounce of December 27–29, 1945, they threw a cordon around the city, arrested known or suspected terrorists—a general term used in those days to refer to pemuda, bandits, and the Republican police force in Jakarta—took over public utilities, and impounded all cars in civilian hands.12 Security for Europeans in Jakarta improved immediately, but acts of violence against Indone-
sians by Dutch and Ambonese soldiers and vigilantes continued. Shortly after Operation Pounce, Ambonese soldiers attempted to assassinate Prime Minister Sjahir. Republicans also feared that the British might at any moment put Sukarno, Hatta, and other leaders on their arrest list. In secret and at short notice, therefore, it was decided that most of the government should move to Yogyakarta. On January 4, 1946, Jakarta woke to find that Sukarno, Hatta, and Amir Sjarifuddin had gone. Jakarta remained the capital in name, and Sjahir and several ministries continued to be based there, but from that time on Yogyakarta, and not Jakarta, was the political and administrative center of the Republic.

The Army and Lasykar in Krawang

The arrests of Operation Pounce were supplemented by further British action to break the power and organization of the pemuda in Jakarta, and large numbers of so-called extremists were held in the jails of Jakarta or imprisoned on the island of Onrust in Jakarta Bay. Many pemuda, however, were able to retreat to the relative safety of rural areas outside the demarcation line drawn by the British. There they consolidated and regrouped. The largest and best organized group in the area east of Jakarta was the 5th Regiment of the TKR, under the command of a former Peta officer, M. Muffreini Mukmin, at Cikampek. West of the city, at Tanggerang, was the 4th Regiment, under Singgih. In theory, both commanders were responsible to the commander of the Cirebon Division, but in fact each had a great deal of autonomy. Muffreini, in particular, took advantage of this autonomy to work out a modus vivendi with many lasykar operating in his area.

The lasykar were regarded as troublesome and disruptive by many of the Dutch-trained officers, who were rapidly gaining ascendance in the West Java command of the TKR. They competed with the army for weapons and supplies and refused to accept orders from the army, thereby offending against the notion of a strict military hierarchy capable of pursuing a coordinated strategic program. The lasykar, for their part, regarded the Dutch-trained officers as suspiciously Westernized and incapable of understanding the meaning of revolution.

This antipathy led to armed clashes between the two groups in other parts of West Java, but in Krawang, military leaders generally avoided a confrontation with the powerful local lasykar. This was partly because they could be less sure of victory and partly because leaders of both groups were willing to submerge their differences in their common opposition to Dutch military expansion.\(^{13}\)

The lasykar of the area east of Jakarta were among the strongest in the Republic. The rural hinterland of Jakarta from the edge of the city as far east as the Citarum river consisted before the war largely of the "private domains"—tracts of land made over to private, generally non-Indonesian, landlords in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The landlords possessed many seigneurial rights and the restrictions placed on their activities by successive governments were often not enforced, with the result that the area was known as one of the most depressed on Java. In response, there grew up a strong tradition of rural unrest, expressed most often in the presence of gangs of brigands. On the outbreak of the revolution, the area was one of the first where the Japanese were disarmed and where Indonesians who had served the old order were removed from office and often killed. It was in this rural discontent that the lasykar found their principal support.\(^{14}\)

There was, however, a general tactical confusion amongst the lasykar of the region. Their first inclination after the retreat from Jakarta was to launch a massive counterattack on the city. The idea of retreat did not sit comfortably with pemuda who had joined the revolution in order to prevent the return of Dutch power. Plans for a counterattack, however, were always postponed, often thanks to the urging of Muffreini, and the lasykar had to content themselves with what they saw as an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with the Allies across a demarcation line set by Allied patrols. Both the army and the lasykar organized a good deal of small-scale infiltration into Jakarta, using a network of generally unarmed nationalist ethnic, labor, and other organizations, especially in the port area of Tanjung Priok. The objects of infiltration were propaganda, sabotage, and general disruption of the Dutch administration. The infiltrators had a notable success in May 1947 when they were able to burn down the warehouse containing the cargo of the Martin Behrmann, an American ship cap-
tured by the Dutch while it was carrying a load of Republican rubber from Cirebon to Singapore in the face of a Dutch naval blockade of Java.\textsuperscript{13}

Republican military theorists recognized early in the revolution that the Republic could wage a guerrilla war against the enemy far more effectively than a conventional war. The existence of the demarcation line around Jakarta, however, drew the Republican forces willy-nilly into a front-line strategy. Such a strategy, however, depended far more than guerrilla warfare on cooperation and coordination between various armed groups. Good personal relations between some army officers and lasykar commanders made informal cooperation possible, but the army’s determination that it alone had ultimate responsibility for the military side of the revolution was an underlying source of tension between them. Tension increased between the two in November 1946 when the army began to implement a ceasefire with the Dutch as part of the Linggajati negotiations. In the same month unknown individuals kidnapped and killed a senior TRI (Army of the Indonesian Republic) officer involved in the truce negotiations and in attempts to persuade the lasykar to comply. In March and April 1947 the tension erupted into outright clashes between the TRI and lasykar groups in various places east of Jakarta. With their superior organization and generally superior arms, the TRI prevailed. Nevertheless, opposition in lasykar circles persisted, most maintaining the hardline position that the army’s policy of accepting the truce and avoiding frontal clashes was soft on the Dutch.\textsuperscript{16} In the months between March and July 1947, the TRI was able to consolidate its position to some extent and began at last to prepare for guerrilla war in the region. When the Dutch attack came, however, it was still far from ready, and effective Republican resistance around Jakarta collapsed rapidly.

### The Balai Agung in Occupied Jakarta

Within Jakarta, meanwhile, the struggle was being carried on in rather different terms. The retreat from the city by Sukarno and Hatta at the beginning of 1946 was a hastily conceived operation. No one thought until considerably later to call it a \textit{hijrah}, to equate it with Muhammad’s temporary retreat from Mecca to Medina; rather, it was ex-plained publicly in terms of the threat to the physical safety of the Republican leaders in Jakarta and the need to give leadership to the reconstruction effort in Central Java. It was, moreover, only one of a series of shifts by government departments and officials into the interior, a movement which had begun in October 1945 and was to continue well into 1946. It marked, however, a new phase in Republican liberation strategy, in which the creation of a functioning state apparatus was emphasized as a prerequisite for effective diplomatic and military action. The political energy which had gone at first into taking over the existing administrative structure now went into expanding it and making it work. Self-reliance and a consolidation of political strength were seen to be necessary. Public discipline was as much a part of the new strategic phase as of the old, and calls for discipline in the interests of the national struggle were only barely distinguishable from simple calls for political obedience, but the orientation toward national construction was new. Sukarno, addressing the people of Indonesia over Yogyakarta radio on the evening of his arrival, called 1946 a year of organization, coordination, and development and urged the pemuda to become “heroes of construction” rather than heroes of the battlefield.\textsuperscript{17} This new emphasis did not assign an essential role to Jakarta, but it was a strategy with considerable relevance there.

Left behind in Jakarta when Sukarno and Hatta departed was the PNKD (National Government of the City of Jakarta), generally referred to by the people of Jakarta simple as the Balai Agung.\textsuperscript{18} The leadership in Jakarta differed from that in most regions in not having strong local roots. Those who held positions in the Balai Agung did so by virtue of decisions they had made as members of the largely Dutch-trained Indonesian intelligentsia, a group that included very few Betawi. The Balai Agung, like the national elite in Yogy, was dominated by Javanese and Minangkabau. In the diverse immigrant society of Jakarta there was no traditional elite, and the Betawi produced very few national-level political leaders.\textsuperscript{19} Soewirjo, a Javanese from Wonogiri who had first come to Jakarta to study at the law school, was elected to power by colleagues with similar backgrounds. His primary political base, therefore, lay in the Republican governmental apparatus in Jakarta. This structure in turn depended heavily on the political and material support of the central Republican government. The
Balai Agung lacked popular roots to begin with, and in the face of Dutch expansion never had the opportunity to consolidate its local power as a government; it was therefore the strategy of the central government which the Balai Agung had to implement.

It operated, moreover, within narrow limits. It was defenseless against Dutch military power in Jakarta and survived only because the British vetoed any attempt to remove it. In all their dealings in Jakarta, the British still maintained the polite fiction that they were not interfering in the internal political affairs of Indonesia, beyond carrying out their humanitarian tasks and insisting that the two sides meet to negotiate an agreement. Operation Pounce was intended officially to do no more than restore law, order, and stable government in the city, and it left the Republican establishment relatively intact. Thereafter, with Dutch-Indonesian negotiations under way, the British were not prepared to allow the arrest of Soewirjo and the abolition of the Balai Agung for fear that the negotiations would be jeopardized. This protection, however, had its price: the Balai Agung would be safe only as long as it did not disrupt law and order by excessive political agitation and made itself useful by contributing to stable government.

Thus, although the Republic intended the Balai Agung to be a gesture of commitment to its citizens in Jakarta, and maintained it at considerable expense to the treasury, there were strict limits on the extent to which the Balai Agung could act as a political agent for the Republic. It was a focus for the loyalty of the people of Jakarta, a sign that they had not been forgotten by Yogy, and an encouragement to continue with symbolic and emotionally important acts of nationalist defiance, such as shouting "Merdeka!" (Freedom!) in public places or erasing the blue stripes that Dutch sympathizers painted under the red and white Republican flags with which nationalists had decorated train carriages running in Jakarta. The Balai Agung provided a municipal government but was not geared to a more active role. It organized no anti-Dutch rallies and produced no strong anti-Dutch propaganda. And, although it had links with various underground and clandestine Republican organizations in Jakarta, it neither created a shadow administration that might have survived a Dutch purge nor infiltrated the Dutch administrative hierarchy in order to wreck or subvert it from within.20

The Balai Agung was, rather, a gesture to the world and to the Dutch concerning the nature and aims of the Republic. Maintenance of a Republican administration in multiracial Jakarta constituted a statement that Indonesians could manage their own affairs, not only in the fastnesses of Central Java where they had no competition, but also at the very heart of the Dutch colonial empire. The political purpose of the Balai Agung, therefore, was best carried out by staying aloof from the Dutch, by maintaining a kind of apartheid under which each nationality was master in its own house. The British, however, were no more sympathetic to this esoteric view of the Balai Agung's political role than they were to more active alternatives. In Operation Pounce of December 1945, they had taken over the public utilities of Jakarta—water supply, gas, electricity, public works—as well as the police force, and they insisted that the Republic and the Dutch cooperate to run them. The British provided a head for each department to save either side from having to work under the command of the other, but this did not remove politics from the issue.

Under van Mook, the Netherlands INDIES government was trying to transform Indonesia from a colonial society based on overt racial discrimination to a postcolonial meritocracy offering equal opportunities to all races. In practice it was expected that Europeans would continue to play a disproportionately large role, thanks to their greater training and skills, advantages which were the product of colonial inequalities. In theory, however, Indonesians would be able to advance as far as their abilities justified. In order to make this transformation credible, van Mook was not only willing but eager to accept skilled personnel from any quarter, including the Republic. He is even reported to have said that he would be glad to have Amir Shariuddin, then the Republic's minister of defense, as his director-general of economic affairs.21 In any cooperative arrangement, therefore, the Dutch were keen to establish a single hierarchy based on technical skill, a hierarchy that they expected to dominate. The Republicans, by contrast, sought a system of parallel, equal hierarchies through which they would retain their integrity.

In practice the results were mixed: the police force, reorganized after Operation Pounce, consisted of two separate corps, Republican and Dutch, each with its own hierarchy and commander and united only by a single British officer at the head of the whole structure. In the public utilities, by contrast, there was a confused situation in
which acceptance of Dutch technical expertise under British supervision was difficult at times to distinguish from subordination to Dutch control. In the course of 1946, the Dutch, by appealing to administrative rationality, were able to encroach steadily on the Republican domain. Individual buildings and departments in Jakarta were taken over one by one in a low key and unobtrusive manner. Dutch technicians assumed greater responsibilities where circumstances allowed. When the British finally withdrew from Jakarta on November 21, 1946, they handed over the positions they had occupied in the police and the public utilities to the Dutch. Without ever revising their commitment to preserve the Balai Agung, the British presided over a steady erosion of its position in Jakarta. The Balai Agung resisted as best it could with protests and the occasional strike, but it was largely powerless to stem the rising tide of Dutch authority.22 On May 25, 1947, not long before the first Dutch attack, Republican officials in Jakarta formed a Nationalist Front in the city to oppose establishment of the state of Pasundan, which was announced by R. A. M. Soeria Kartalegawa in Bandung on May 4, 1947, at the instigation and with the assistance of local Dutch authorities.23 They did this, however, only when propaganda for the Pasundan movement in Jakarta seemed to be winning a certain number of the city’s Sundanese residents for Soeria Kartalegawa’s cause. The Front itself concentrated on counter-propaganda and did not seek actively to build a mass base.

Economic Pressure and the End of the Balai Agung

Only from outside Jakarta was the Republic able to put effective pressure on the Dutch in the city. In May 1946 the Dutch introduced a postwar Netherlands Indies guilder to replace the Japanese occupation currency that had been circulating until then. Jakarta, however, depended for its food supply on the flow of rice and vegetables from the surrounding countryside, then under Republican control, so that when the Republic banned the new currency, the value of the new guilder sank and the Dutch were forced to tolerate the continued circulation of the Japanese money. This situation, economically damaging and politically embarrassing for the Dutch, lasted until the final months of 1946, when the army and lasykar around Jakarta cooperated in imposing a partly effective blockade against the flow of rice into the city. By this time, imported consumer goods were becoming increasingly available in Jakarta and, even without the blockade, the terms of trade between Jakarta and the interior were turning in favor of the Dutch. The Republic’s own new currency, ORI, fell sharply in value, and only the continued blockade kept economic pressure on the Dutch. Realizing their vulnerability, the Dutch agreed, under the Linggajati Agreement of November 1946, to hand over their enclaves on Java to the Republic as part of a broader settlement. As the possibility of implementing Linggajati became steadily more remote in the course of 1947, however, the Dutch turned more and more to the idea of using military force to expand the enclaves into economically self-supporting regions.24

After the departure of the British in November 1946, the Dutch continued encroachment on the position of the Balai Agung. They were careful, however, to keep the Balai itself intact, for although the British were no longer present to veto any attempt to take it over, other considerations were important. At first, the Dutch had no wish to spoil the atmosphere of cooperation that surrounded the reaching of the Linggajati Agreement; later they did not want to risk appearing aggressive by removing the Balai Agung when they were considering more extensive plans for expansion. The Republicans of Jakarta for their part had to avoid acting provocatively, but they were no longer under pressure to cooperate and retreated into an increasingly penurious isolation in the city. From the last week of May 1947, it seemed increasingly improbable that a peaceful solution would be achieved. As the atmosphere darkened, the Republicans in the Balai Agung began to make preparations for an evacuation to the interior, and for strikes and sabotage to hamper whatever activity the Dutch might have in mind.25 But the blow fell late in the evening of July 20, 1947, and well before the full attack began at dawn the following day, the Republican official presence in Jakarta was ended. Soewirjo and most of his senior subordinates were arrested, as were most of the Indonesian police force and a number of Republican officials present in Jakarta for the negotiations. Most of the remaining Republican buildings were also occupied. Jakarta was in Dutch hands.
Guerrilla Warfare in Krawang

The Dutch attack, though destructive and demoralizing, nonetheless left many army units and laskyar groups largely intact in the newly occupied environs of Jakarta, and these groups, once reorganized, began a rural guerrilla war against the Dutch. Within months of the Dutch attack, the Krawang area had regained its old reputation as a center of militant nationalism, and it remained so, in spite of Dutch pacification campaigns in late 1947. In addition to locally based armed groups, a cluster of Republican sabotage and intelligence organizations operated in the area, linked directly to Yogyakarta rather than with each other or with local units. The army and the laskyar also received indispensable financial support from Yogyakarta, through both more or less official channels controlled by the ministries of defense and finance, and party connections. The Renville Agreement of January 1948 briefly checked the military campaign in the Jakarta region, for it was agreed that the Republic should withdraw its forces from occupied West Java. In fact, though many were withdrawn, a number of units were instructed to stay behind surreptitiously and unofficially to continue their military activities and to strengthen the Republic's political campaign in the area.

Many laskyar, too, refused to evacuate or disband, and several large units—the Bambu Runcing (Bamboo Spears), SP88 (Satuan Pemberontakan 88, Revolution Unit 88, originally an intelligence organization directly under the Ministry of Defense in Yogyakarta), TII (Tentara Islam Indonesia, Islamic Army of Indonesia, the military wing of the Darul Islam movement to realize an Islamic state), and others—continued fighting, not only in disregard of official instructions from Yogyakarta, but also, and increasingly, with the attitude that they, rather than Yogyakarta, represented the pure expression of Indonesian nationalism. The Renville Agreement, which in effect recognized Dutch authority in the territories occupied in the attack of July 1947, was bitterly felt, by those who had fought for the Republic in West Java, as a betrayal. The ideological affiliations of these alienated laskyar ranged from the Islamic fundamentalism of the Darul Islam to the national communism of the followers of Tan Malaka, and cooperation between them was limited largely to agreeing to keep out of each other's way. In January 1948, a few days after the signing of the

Renville Agreement which handed West Java to the Dutch, the Bambu Runcing, the SP88, and the TII in the Krawang area came together to form the Government of the Republic in West Java. This they claimed to be the true heir to the Republic declared by Sukarno and Hatta in August 1945. They set up an extensive local administration in the Krawang area, with its headquarters in Pangkalan on the slopes of Mt. Sanggabuana. When the West Javanese Siliwangi Division returned to the area in early 1949 after the second Dutch military action, this government cooperated in establishing a network of territorial commands as the basis for further guerrilla war against the Dutch. Conflict between the army and the laskyar, however, broke out again after the ceasefire arranged between the army and the Dutch in August 1949 and persisted well beyond the transfer of sovereignty which marked the end of the revolution in 1949.

The Republic's victory deprived the laskyar of their main political reason for existence. Some simply disbanded, some retreated into banditry. A few took on the far more difficult task of trying to change the nature of the independent Republic by armed struggle. The Bambu Runcing fought on in Krawang for a time before retreating toward the hills of Banten. The Darul Islam, though based to the southeast in the Priangan, also had its supporters in Krawang, but the area was generally brought under government control by the end of 1950.28

The Civilian Underground

Although the Dutch arrested Soewirjo in July 1947 and eventually expelled him, along with other senior Republicans, they invited the remaining Republican officials, numbering several thousand, to join Dutch service. In order to demonstrate the illegitimacy of the Dutch takeover, however, the Republic instructed its officials to remain inactive in the offices taken over by the Dutch. Most of them obeyed the order at first. But the Republic, crowded into a mere portion of Central and East Java and Banten, was in no condition to send large sums of money to Jakarta to support its officials there, as it had done before the Dutch attack. Many officials were willing to sell their furniture and clothes to avoid cooperating with the Dutch, but both furniture and patience were limited. During 1947, in the absence of financial
support and even of clear political instructions from Yogyia, there began a steady drift of Republican officials into Dutch employment. The Renville Agreement of January 1948, by recognizing Dutch control of the areas conquered the previous year, made the principle of non-cooperation somewhat pointless, for it gave the Dutch the legitimacy which the boycott sought to deny them. The Republic then gave its officials formal permission to seek employment with the Dutch. Nonetheless, many Republicans who had remained faithful to their instructions at considerable personal cost resented the fact that their sacrifices seemed to have been thrown away. The resentment was compounded when in early February 1948 Hatta announced, as a consequence of Renville, an amnesty for all who had gone to work for the Dutch.39

With the signing of the Renville Agreement, however, Yogyia did develop a more coherent policy toward the occupied territories. On January 26, 1948, the Hatta government established a Cabinet Bureau for Occupied Territories, under the chairmanship of Soewirjo and with the general goal of coordinating Republican activities in areas under the Dutch, particularly East and West Java. In West Java it worked primarily through the remaining Republican officials in the region, who had ceased officially to be servants of the Republic once the agreement was signed. These officials were incorporated into what was called the Coordinator movement, an unofficial network of Republican officials, the aim of which was to preserve the fabric of the Republic's administrative structure in West Java for the eventual return of Republican government. The Coordinator movement received financial support from Yogyia, largely the proceeds of covert sales of gold, opium, and plantation crops by the Republic in Jakarta and Singapore. The movement was strongest in rural areas, where Dutch power was weakest, but it found itself threatened there by the Siliwangi Division, whose own territorial command system expected to take over virtually all administrative responsibilities at the local level in the name of Nasution's concept of total people's defense. Tension developed at times between the two as each tried to establish and preserve its own authority. In Jakarta the Coordinator movement worked through the Republican delegation, which was based in Sukarno's old house at Pegangsaan Timur 56, where he and Hatta had declared independence, for the continuing negotiations with the

Dutch. The delegation had diplomatic immunity and safe communications facilities by virtue of its diplomatic role, and it was therefore an ideal coordinating point for Republican illegal activity in West Java, though the Dutch soon discovered this fact and made use of the delegation in their attempts to gain intelligence about Republican plans.31 The Coordinator movement apparently never succeeded in creating an extensive network in Jakarta itself.

The Federal Option

In the wake of their military attack of July 1947 the Dutch began to plan seriously for the creation of a federal state in West Java, later called Pasundan. Jakarta was included provisionally in plans for this projected state, although the city was supposed to be separated eventually as a federal capital territory under the direct control of the federal government. The Renville Agreement, however, provided for a plebiscite in the territories occupied by the Dutch in 1947 to decide their future status in the proposed Federal Republic of Indonesia.32 Although no date was set for the vote, the Republican delegation in Jakarta soon became the coordinating center for the Republican campaign to win the plebiscite. In February 1948, Ali Budiarjo, a member of the delegation, formed the GPRI (Gerakan Plebiscit Republik Indonesia, Republic of Indonesia Plebiscite Movement) to campaign for the Republic. The GPRI established branches both in Jakarta and the surrounding countryside and began an active political campaign to consolidate and expand the Republic's support. The movement put the Dutch momentarily on the defensive. In the event, the plebiscite was never held. The Dutch banned the GPRI in some areas, but it joined with other Republican organizations in West Java, particularly in the areas around Jakarta, to create a network which was able, despite the Dutch presence, to tighten the Republican's political control in the area.33

Jakarta and the northern coastal plain of West Java as far east as Girebon were ideal political terrain for Republican resistance to Dutch sponsorship of the West Javanese state based on a supposed sense of nationalism among the Sundanese. The region, part Batavian Malay, part mixed Sundanese and Javanese, and part Javanese, and with a
strong antifeudal tradition in many areas, was not likely to be enthusiastic about a state dominated by the feudal Sundanese of the Priangan. Republicans made up most of the indirectly elected delegation from Jakarta and the northern coastal plain to the Third West Java Conference in Bandung in February and March 1948—a conference that the Dutch planned as an alternative expression of popular will to the plebiscite. The delegation, led by Soejoso, a former Republican official in Jakarta, formed a strong caucus in the conference but could not prevent Pasundan's establishment. Initially, the Jakarta delegation had considerable influence in the provisional parliament of Pasundan, where it formed the principal backing of the first Pasundan cabinet of Adil Poeradiredja. Without openly discarding their original intention to destroy the Dutch-sponsored state, the members of the delegation began to see the possibilities Pasundan offered, both for power and privilege for themselves and for destroying the greater enemy, the Dutch federal system, from within. Lacking a clear sense of direction, the Republican initiative in Pasundan soon became bogged down in the Byzantine world of Sundanese politics and lost much of its effectiveness.

The second Dutch military action of December 1948 barely affected Jakarta; the city was no more than the site of some of the constitutional negotiations that followed. In early 1950, after the transfer of power, the city was ruffled by an attempted coup organized in Bandung and Jakarta by R. P. P. Westerling, a Dutch counterinsurgency expert who had gained notoriety for his brutal tactics in southern Sulawesi in 1946. He was rumored to have links with the laskyar groups around Jakarta and the Darul Islam around Bandung, but his coup was essentially the work of outsiders and was soon crushed. In other respects the transfer of power was orderly. No significant Jakarta group emerged in national politics as the product of shared revolutionary experience in the occupied city, and Jakarta slid with little effort back into its accustomed role as capital of the archipelago.

Conclusion

Jakarta began the revolution as a city of action. The Indonesians of the city mobilized early and on their own initiative against the Dutch, whom they resented as colonial masters, rather than against local indigenous elites seen as agents of colonialism. The nationalist rather than social orientation of the revolution in Jakarta fitted well with the attitudes of the dominant section of the national elite of the Republic, which sought to postpone extensive social reform until after the Dutch had been dealt with. The Republic, however, did not want to fight in Jakarta. For reasons of broader policy, its leaders discouraged the people of the city from acting, ordered Republican forces to leave the city, and used the Balai Agung as a statement of the Republic's claim to Jakarta rather than as a body to coordinate political or military struggle in the city. The Dutch, using their political and military power to bring the city almost completely under their control, destroyed the local revolutionary movement by mid-1947. Only in 1948 did the Republic begin seriously to attempt a political and military mobilization of the people of Jakarta, and then it was an effort directed almost entirely from outside. The remnants of Jakarta's mobilized youth of 1943, who carried on a militant struggle against the Dutch as laskyar in the areas around the city, were seen by the Republic's leaders as a dangerous embarrassment and were eventually crushed by the Republic.

Notes

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1. Coen in fact built his fort on land that the Dutch East Indies Company had obtained in 1611 from the local ruler of the town of Jakarta, also on the Ciliwung, which was tributary to Banten. Jakarta itself was the name given to the older settlement of Sunda Kelapa to celebrate the defeat of a Portuguese fleet in Jakarta Bay in 1527. The present Jakarta municipal government dates the founding of the city to that year. See Abdurrahman Surjohardjo, Perkembangan kota Jakarta (Jakarta: Dinas Museum dan Sejarah DKI, 1973), pp. 16–17.

were deliberately kept low-key in order to avoid giving the impression that small parties were all that the British could field in Jakarta.

11. See Indonesia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, List of Material and Personal Offences and Injuries Perpetrated against Indonesians by Dutch Soldiers in the City of Jakarta October–December 1945 (Jakarta, 1946); Kota


nings)” (May 1946?); Algemeen Rijksarchief [hereafter ARA], Archieven Proce-

ur-Generaal bij het Hoogerhofschrift van Nederlandse-Indië [hereafter Proc. Gen.], dossier no. 480; and Troepencommando: “Kort verslag over

November 1945,” Centraal Archief Republiek, Ministerie van Defensie, The


Jakarta], “British control Batavia,” profile no. WO 208/1699; AFNEI (Allied Forces, Netherlands East Indies) to ALFSEA (Allied Land Forces, South East Asia), Dec. 30 and 31, 1945, WO 208/1699.

13. General questions of military organization and strategy and relations

between the army and laskyak groups are dealt with in Ulf Sundhaussen, “The

Political Orientations and Political Involvement of the Indonesian Officer


i, Sektor perang kemerdekaan Indonesia, jilid 3: diplomasi sambit bertem-


14. Detailed but patchy information on the laskyak and the TKR/TRI

around Jakarta can be found in S. Z. Hadiwijaya, Buku dan njaia revolusi

phikis di Djakarta (Jakarta: Dinas Museum dan Sedjarah DKI Jakarta, 1971); Dinas Sejarah Militer Kadam V Jaya, Sejarah perjuangan ratyak

Jakarta, Tanggerang dan Bekasi dalam mengekang kemerdekaan R.J. (Jakarta: Virgo Sari, 1975); and Sejarah pertumbuhan dan perkembangan Kodam

V Jaya: pengawal-penyelamat ibukota Republik Indonesia (Jakarta: Komando Daerah Militer V Jayakarta, 1974).

15. Nieuwsbrief (Jakarta), May 2, 1947; Rapport uitgevoerde werkzaam-

heden, d.d. 13–4–1948, opsteller onbekend, MdV, HKGS-NOI. [Hoofdwater-


16. One laskyak group, apparently tempted by unofficial Dutch promises


18. On the Balai Agung in general, see Kotasradja Djakarta Rayo, pp. 76-82; The, Sedjarah pemerintahan, pp. 115-117; and Minggoan Merdeka, (Jakarta), June 15, 1946. Something of the atmosphere of Jakarta as it was felt by a civilian in this period can be gained from Mochtar Lubis, A Road with No End, trans. Anthony H. Johns (London: Hutchinson, 1968).

19. Moehammad Hoessni Thamrin, who headed the prewar nationalist group Kaum Betawi (Bataonian group) and was a leader of national stature, died in 1941 without a political heir.


21. Interview with Dr. P. J. Koets, head of the cabinet of the lieutenant governor-general and one of the chief political advisers to van Mook, Ellemeet, Zeeland, Nov. 24, 1980.


23. Soeria Kartalegawa's state of Pasundan, which the Dutch never officially recognized, should not be confused with the Negara Pasundan established by the Dutch in occupied West Java in 1948 as part of their plan for a federal Indonesia. Pasundan was also the official term in the Indonesian language for the prewar province of West Java.


30. It is striking that the Republicans habitually referred to such activity as "illegal" as the same way as the Dutch resistance to the German occupation was known as the "illegaliteit," although in both cases it was the whole legality of the existing system that was being challenged.

31. Confidential interview, Rijswijk, the Netherlands, Nov. 26, 1980.

32. R.V.D. Mailbrief no. 1, February 1948, Bijlage 2, "Six additional principles for the negotiations towards a political settlement submitted by the Committee of Good Offices at the fourth meeting on 17th January" (ARA), Archief Algemene Secretarie te Batavia, Tweede Zending (hereafter Alg. Sec.II), dossier 666.


34. See the documents gathered in Alg. Sec.II, 1066, especially "Overzicht van de 3e West Java Conferentie, gehouden te Bandoeng van 23 Februari t/m 5 Maart 1948.

35. See Propinsi Djawa Barat, pp. 228-232; also Kahin, Nationalism and Revolution, pp. 454-455. Westerling's own account stresses the local composition of his forces; see Raymond Paul Pierce Westerling, Mijn memoires (Antwerp and Amsterdam: P. Vink, n.d.), pp. 204-205.