

REPORT ON EVENTS IN SOERABAJA FROM 21st. SEPTEMBER, TO 27th. OCTOBER, 1945.BY LT. CLER. P. G. LE BACK, P.M.N.

On September 21st, I arrived at Sourabaya from Semarang as RAPMI representative to arrange with the Japanese authorities for the transfer of women and children from the camps in Central Java. A few days before the "flag incident" in front of the Cranje Hotel had taken place, reports of which have already been forwarded by Lieut. Antonissen, who left with his party for Batavia the day I arrived.

The preparations for accommodation and feeding of the expected transports from Central Java, under a Dutch RAPMI Committee in co-operation with a Japanese Committee, went smoothly. On the morning of 29th. September, the first lot of approximately 1,500 women and children arrived. They were accommodated in houses in the Larimo area. Two areas, Larimo and Goebang had been allotted by the Japanese, and all the Japanese had been instructed to move and to leave furniture and all household utensils behind. Four transports, totalling approximately 2,000 women and children, arrived and were accommodated in the Goebang area. Apart from these RAPMI transports approximately 3-4,000 women and children from the camps had already arrived individually and were looked after by the local Red Cross organisation.

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According to information from Mr. Masmoelin, a local Indonesian belonging to the local police, meetings were held by the Nationalists in order to discuss the action to be taken to take over all essential services from the Japanese before the arrival of the Allied Occupation Force. (This, the man's opinion was, would be the 1st. October.) This taking over of essential services indeed started on 1st. October without incident. Gas, electricity, telephone, telegraph, steelworks "Braat" etc., were that day handed over to the Indonesians.

During the night of 1st. October, an actual state of war started between the Japanese and the Indonesians. After some fighting, going on day and night, the Indonesians had taken over the Naval Barracks at Goebang, the Kempel Barracks opposite the Governor's building, the Naval Base and the aerodrome and the mercantile harbour. The Navy put up the strongest resistance; the Naval Barracks at Goebang for instance, was only taken after it had been stormed for the third time. The Indonesians, all young fanatics, used bamboo spears, rifles, pistols, some machine guns and also a couple of tanks. These weapons were already given to them during the Japanese occupation by the Japs themselves, who, as people told, were working behind the scenes. The guards patrolling the women's areas were all mopped up and disarmed. The Japanese G.O.C. and the Admiral were surrounded in their Headquarters and kept prisoner there with their staff.

By the end of 3rd. October, all Jap Army and Navy personnel were taken prisoner and disarmed. Individual Japs, still in their homes in town, were systematically mopped up during the following days.

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On the morning of 2nd. October, at approximately 0800. I was on my way from the hotel to the station to be present at the arrival of the train bringing women and children from Central Java, when in front of the Kempei building I landed in a mob of Indonesian rebels, who were just storming the building. I had to stop, I was pulled out of the car and my pistol was snatched from me. They searched the car and drove it away. Any arguments or use of force were useless. I was surrounded by bamboo spears, bayonets and a tommy-gun, was beaten in my face and told that "blanda's" had to walk. I was then driven to the Governor's building opposite as I told them I had to see Soedirman, the Nationalist "Resident" of Soerabaja. I was taken to this office where I complained about the behaviour of his people as I was a representative of an Allied institution, RAPWI, and had nothing to do with politics and was merely looking after internees. I told him that I was on my way to meet a transport of women and children from Central Java, and as he had taken prisoner all responsible Japanese, he now had to take full responsibility himself, and to see that RAPWI work could go on without hindrance, and that the women and children would be properly guarded. Soedirman apologised for what had happened to me and assured me that he understood his responsibility as far as RAPWI and the security of women and children was concerned. He then gave me a personally signed pass and arranged a car with armed Indonesian escort to take me to the station.

The train had just arrived, but only one Red Cross truck was there to meet them. On previous occasions transport had been arranged by the Japanese. However, after some time we managed to get three more trucks and the women were taken in parties (again under Indonesian escort) via the Red Cross Building, where they got some refreshment, to their houses. The distribution of food for the women's areas however had completely failed, as the rebels had pinched all cars and trucks and were driving in mobs through the town. I therefore cancelled (by telephone) further transport from Semarang.

In the afternoon of 3rd. October, Captain Huyer, R.N.N, who wanted to get a general idea about the situation in town asked for an armed Indonesian escort. The Kempei guard in the hotel was replaced by uniformed Indonesian police and two days later the Japanese liaison officers, the Jap. interpreter Matsuda and the Jap drivers were taken away by the Indonesians.

At his request I accompanied Capt. Huyer during his tour through the town. We drove in a car with a white flag, marked "Allied Command" and were escorted by armed policemen on motorbikes in front and behind.

First we went to the women's areas; all was quiet and Indonesians patrolling, assured us that the B.K.R. (Nationalist Police) had taken over protection. It was only against the Japs, they said, and they would see that nothing happened to the women and the children.

Then we went to the aerodrome (Perak) where no Japs were left and the "Pemoda's" (Youngsters) had taken over. The sea-plane base, adjoining the aerodrome, however, was still in Japanese hands, and they were still firing at Indonesians and trying to attack them.

The next stop was the Police Headquarters where some Japs were held in cells and from there a meeting with Soedirman was arranged in the Governor's building. Captain Huyer made it quite clear to Soedirman and his staff that

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his order to take prisoner and disarm them was against all orders of the Supreme Allied Command. Captain Huyer stressed the point that consequently he, Soedirman, was fully responsible for peace, order and safety of the people. Furthermore he told Soedirman that the Japanese had to be considered as prisoners of war and as such had to be handed over to the Allies, he being there as their representative. Captain Huyer showed Soedirman his instructions from Admiral Patterson, stating that he had to proceed to Soerabaja in order to prepare for the arrival of the Allied Occupation Force.

To carry out his instructions he told Soedirman, he should have at his disposal the Japanese minesweeping service, and also the base from where they had to operate. Also communications by air with Semarang and Malang, so far run with Japanese aircraft and pilots had to be continued, so the Jap pilots had to be released forthwith and the aerodrome and aircraft put at our disposal. Soedirman agreed in everything and said he would take the necessary action. Further Captain Huyer told Soedirman that he would go and see the Jap Naval and Army Commanders and instruct them to surrender to him and consider themselves as his internees. I did not accompany Captain Huyer on this mission but later in the evening he told me that he had received ~~from~~ Admiral's and G.O.C.'s swords as tokens of surrender. This was reported by signal to Admiral Patterson, using our transmitter in one of the rooms of the Oranje Hotel, which had been ordered from the Japs a few days ago for RAPWI communication. It should be clearly understood that the surrender of the Japanese Navy and Army in Soerabaja, to Captain Huyer, took place after all the Japs had been disarmed and taken prisoner.

Before Captain Huyer had gone to the Japanese Naval and Army Headquarters, we had paid a visit to the jail, where according to the Indonesians in charge approximately 4,000 Japs were held. There I left Captain Huyer and his interpreter Lieut. Hulseve, joined him.

During the meeting with Soedirman, I had the opportunity to have a short talk inconspicuously, with Masmoein. He told me that he found himself in a rather awkward spot, trying not to give himself away. There were many more and more serious difficulties to come, as, according to him, Soedirman and his assistants were losing control over the "Pemoeda's" (the extremists). This was found to be quite true. Despite orders from Soedirman to give assistance to RAPWI and to stop all looting, public safety, especially after dark in the women's areas was getting worse. As long as Europeans did not resist when young armed Indonesians came to their houses on the pretext of looking for Japs or weapons, but actually to take away everything they thought useful, they were not hurt. Several Dutch and Eurasians however, arrived, badly wounded in hospital after attempting to save their properties.

Captain Huyer's instructions to Soedirman regarding the release of the above mentioned Japs, were not carried out, despite several reminders. I personally went daily to Soedirman's office, more particularly to arrange the food supply for the women and to get the planes into the air, but every time they told me to be patient because the Indonesians were still in a very excited mood. They even admitted that they had no control over the young extremists and could not guarantee my safety if I drove about in town unescorted by their Police. It took such an incredible long time to get such an escort however, that I always went out alone. Apart from being stopped many times, I was not molested.

The B.K.R., official Nationalist Police was also losing control rapidly. In the meantime the P.R.I. (Pemoeda Raja Indonesia) had settled their Headquarters in the "Simpan" club and were terrorising the town. Some of the members of the civilian RAPWI Committee were given passes by the B.K.R. to carry on with their arrangements for food supply for the women. This only worked for a few days. Later when they were stopped by groups of armed Pemoeda's they were told that those B.K.R. passes were not effective and that the P.R.I. only had the power to give them permission to get, for instance, rice out of the stores/.....

stores. These stores of rice were specially arranged by the Japs in the vicinity of the women's areas, but were all marked by the Pemoeda's with "Milik Indonesia" (property of the Indonesians.)

The first three days, from 2nd. October, we had to give the women money to buy their food themselves. Afterwards the distribution of food was carried on with the help of the Indonesians, but actually this was only possible by means of personal bribery with money.

The Local Red Cross organisation, under Mr. Keller, a Swiss, was in these days of great assistance.

On Saturday, 6th. October, I was refused admittance to see Soedirman or his son-in-law, Dr. Moersito, who was dealing more particularly with RAPWI matters. Later in the day Captain Huyer received a letter from Soedirman. He pointed out that he understood that Soerabaja there were two Allied functions represented by Captain Huyer and his staff, and ~~that~~ the RAPWI., but that there were indications, according to reports from other places in Java, that N.I.C.A. (Netherlands Indies Civil Administration) work was going on under cover of those names. Hence he could not co-operate with the above-mentioned functions until further instructions were received from the President of the Republic in Batavia. So then diplomatic relations were officially broken off.

However, some of the civilian members of the RAPWI Committee, detailed by the Indonesians ((ex-Government officials for instance, were not desired) carried on with the ~~Indonesian~~ Nationalist Indonesians, so as to get at least some food for the women and children. These Indonesians, who were told to work in co-operation with the Indonesian Red Cross were scared to be too generous as they explained that the Pemoeda's were watching them carefully. The only way to get the women more food than the rations laid down by the Indonesians Red Cross which were based on Japanese interment camp quantities, was to get an Indonesian Doctor to certify that the women needed extra food on account of their bad condition of health.

After Soedirman had broken off relations, Captain Huyer tried to get to Batavia by plane, but even Wing Commander Groom, who usually managed to achieve a lot with the Indonesians, could not get the Jap pilots out of jail. Captain Huyer then decided to go by train and managed to get an escort of Indonesian Police. He left with a small party during the afternoon of 9th. October.

Twice they were taken out of the train, firstly at Kertosono and later, on the way back to Sourabaya, at Djombang, from where they were taken to Sourabaya by bus. After being Questioned at the Police Office, Captain Huyer was taken into safe custody in a house at Kajoon, Formerly the residence of the British Consul. Wing Commander Groom went to see Captain Huyer later in the evening and told us that preparations were being made to accommodate more people in the same house. That same morning I had already got some information that the next step very shortly to be taken by the Indonesians was to mop up all Dutch and Eurasians. We therefore expected to follow Captain Huyer very soon. I reported this to Batavia by ET signal.

Early in the morning of 11th. October, all Dutch in the Oranje Hotel were woken up by armed Indonesians and were ordered to the guardroom next to the hotel entrance, opposite the hotel a tank with a machine gun and another machine gun were put in position to cover the guardroom. Our names were checked with the guest-book of the Hotel and we were taken to the Simpang club by truck. The small hand baggage we had been allowed to carry was thoroughly

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examined and later two of us were interrogated. According to Doctor de Timmerman his interrogator was an Indonesian who had studied at the Leiden university and was mainly asking questions about the N.I.C.A. He later actually admitted that it would probably be a lost battle for the Indonesians, but they would not tolerate any attempt to interfere with their republic, and that it would be fought for with their blood. He hinted at certain events at Batavia where Indonesians had been killed by Dutch troops.

Rubiono, an Indonesian Doctor, belonging to RAPWI staff, was already separated from us on arrival ~~in jail~~ at the Simpang Club. He was treated very roughly and called a "traitor" and "dirty native", not an Indonesian. We have not seen him since and according to later statements about maltreatment of Indonesians, Eurasians and Ambonese, there is not much hope that he is still alive.

At approximately 4 o'clock that afternoon we were transferred to the house at Kajoon where Captain Huyer was. We were guarded by young Indonesians, armed with all sorts of Japanese weapons. Treatment was reasonable. We got food from the Oranje Hotel and were free to move about in the back garden. We were 37 altogether including two girls from the N.E.I. Womens Volunteers Corps.

At 0500 on 16th. October, we were woken up again by armed Indonesians. We dressed hurriedly and came outside where a truck was waiting. We had to leave everything behind and were driven at a great speed through the town to the jail at Werfstreet. At the entrance of the jail we were met by a mob of armed Youngsters who searched us and took everything they liked, beating at random. The first half of our party was put in a cell with approx. 25 civilians, who had been picked up the day before. They told of much maltreatment and rough handling during the mopping up.

Half an hour later our party was divided over the other bare cells, cleared for the purpose. I was in a one-man cell with fourteen others, amongst whom were Captain Huyer and his staff.

The two girls were separated from us on arrival in jail. They later told us that they were taken to the women's quarters and particularly on the first day they had a bad time. They did not understand Malay and were beaten and attempts were made to make them confess that they had come from Australia as N.I.C.A. agents, as they were wearing an Army uniform. They also ~~were~~ were robbed of everything they had, including rings and jewels. Sub. Lieut. Luigje, Neth. Fleet Air Arm, was also separated from us as he was a Eurasian. He told us later that he was taken to a dark cell and was badly beaten.

The first two days food was very scarce and insufficient, but then some prison clerks told us that we would not be treated as political prisoners like the civilians but were under protection ("perlindoengan"). Indeed, we got more and better food and were even given mats to sleep on. Moreover we did not see any more un-uniformed and fantastically dressed youngsters who were all over the place during the first days. They were all ~~replaced~~ replaced by prison staff, wearing an armband marked "R/P." (Roemah Pandjahan-prison).

On 22nd. October, our party was transferred to another part of the jail, known as the hostages quarters. We were allowed to walk freely within the walls of our quarters and accommodation was better (average 5 per cell). Here we were joined by two doctors, belonging to Capt. Huyer's staff, who were not living in the Oranje Hotel and were picked up later. For about a week they had been confined in the billiard room of the Simpang Club and had been witnesses of grave maltreatment, especially of Eurasians and Ambonese, but also Japs.

On 25th. October, we saw several aircraft over Sourabaya and we were locked

up in the cells/...

up in the cells early in the afternoon. At 1030 ^{P.M.} on 26th. Oct. some British officers with Indian troops entered our quarters and collected the others of our party plus some women, mainly Red Cross. We were told by the Counter-Intelligence Officer that the situation in Sourabaya was still very delicate but that he would make arrangements to get us out as soon as possible. He left a guard of Indian troops behind in our quarters. The next morning first Captain Huyer's staff was taken away and later I was transferred, with all the RAPNI staff, in a great hurry in a truck to the harbour. We boarded a British frigate which took us to the anchorage outside the minefield. There we were transferred to H.M.S. "GLENROT" and sailed for Singapore the next day.

BATAVIA

11th November 1945.

W.G.

P.O. LE BACK.

LT. CIP. E.N.N.

Voor eensluidend afschrift
N.S. den Secretaris E.S.O.



Koj. E. Merens.