

At 0345 hours on 21st the Indonesians attacked the convoy but the Gurkhas drove them off. At 1100 hours the convoy moved on, a mined bridge held it up and as darkness fell it was still only two miles from AMBERAWA. Lt. Col. Edwardes of 3/10 Gurkhas decided the only thing to do was to push on in darkness headed by a tank. As they passed a convent they found nine women murdered, and twenty more mutilated but still alive. For the next three days there was desperate fighting to protect the convoy as the relief column fought its way to the rescue. On December 1st the Indonesians fired 95 shells from Field Artillery into the convoy killing 8 women and wounding 20 more; we lost 5 killed and 15 wounded. It was not until 14th December that the convoy reached SEMARANG having had to fight a rearguard action all the way. This operation was only one of many, although the largest and most fiercely opposed.

#### SURABAYA

On 25th October 1945 the advanced troops of 49 Brigade of Hawthorn's 23 Division landed at the Dutch Naval Base of SURABAYA, a large city stretching some seven miles inland from the port. On 27th October the landing was complete and leaflets approved by Mountbatten and printed in SINGAPORE were dropped that day on BATAVIA, SEMARANG, HANDEUNG and SURABAYA. These leaflets included an order to hand in all arms. Hoestopo the Indonesian 1 Div. Commander and Atmaji of the Navy hastened to Brig. Mallaby to say they would not obey the order. An inflammatory speech which accused us of being the covering force for the Dutch was broadcast and the city incited to fight and drive us into the sea.

I estimated the total strength of the 1st Indonesian Division and attached troops as 20,000 trained men, but 140,000 untrained fanatical citizens had to be reckoned with. They had tanks, armoured cars, light and heavy artillery, many AA guns and ample transport and supply services. It was called the TKR (Peoples Defence Army) and was based in and responsible for EAST JAVA.

Suddenly about 1630 hours on 28th October the whole city rose against us, 20,000 Jap-trained and armed troops with a mob of 140,000 carrying various weapons surged through the city thirsting for blood and running amok. To meet this 49 Brigade had 4,000 troops mostly in company and platoon posts in key parts of the city and had begun to evacuate RAPWI. The bestial scenes that followed in the name of freedom rivalled the vilest moments of the French Revolution.

Twenty 3-ton lorries of 123 Company RIASC were ferrying women and children, many of them sick to DARMO hospital and Barracks from the large camp. DARMO was at the south side of the city about 6 miles from the dock area. There was an escort of Mahrattas under a Lance Havildar. About 1830 the leading lorry was halted at a road block and Indonesian troops opened fire. At the first volley the Officer in charge of the convoy and several evacuees were killed; some more wounded. At once more troops appeared and hemmed in the convoy though the driver of the rear lorry reversed into the mob and got away under a hail of bullets. Drivers and escort humpered about 60 to try and defend over 400 women and children against TKR troops backed by an armed mob yelling for blood. Inspired by the Indian Subadar and the Lance Havildar as many women and children as possible were got into houses fringing the street, and their defenders who only had 2 Bren guns, their rifles and their courage, fought for 2½ hours to try to save their charges. The street was piled with dead and wounded but still the Indonesians launched attack after attack trampling on the fallen.

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It was quickly dark and the mob left the barricades and swarmed into the gardens round the houses uttering blood-curdling screams as they saw their prey now within their grasp. When our ammunition ran out, they broke into the houses, swords, daggers and knives doing their hellish work. The screams of the maimed and mutilated women and children mingled with the cries of triumph of their butchers. Most of the lorries were now set alight but the Lance Havildar's jeep and three lorries were still intact. Seeing the end was near he ran to the jeep and drove at full speed over the pile of bodies and the barricade under a hail of fire to reach a Rajput Rifle post. The subadar followed with 3 lorryloads of women and children neglected while the butchery was going on. Lost in a strange city he took his charges - nearly all wounded - into a house where he dressed their wounds and gave them his rations and water. Now the mob, glutted with their butchery and dismemberment of living bodies left the area and started roaming the city in search of further victims. Some Officers out with patrols were never heard of again. Several Officers bodies were later found hideously dismembered and defaced floating down the KALIMAS. Many gallant deeds were performed. The Havildar Major of 3 Indian Field Regiment RA saved his battery. Caught on the road while moving up to a position the men left their vehicles to fight off the attack. They did not know their Officers had been murdered as they were ahead looking for a position. The WO dashed into the middle of the battle, started the leading vehicle and drove the first gun back to safety. Seven more guns remained but one by one all were hauled out under our covering fire. A lance-havildar gallantly went forward alone to look for his Officer and found him lying severely wounded. As he was lifting him he was rushed by four TRI men all of whom he killed and then got his Officer on his back and brought him safely in.

Next day the situation of 49 Brigade was desperate. All its Units were split up guarding key points in the south of the city. Brigade Headquarters was in the middle of the enemy, and reserves of food and ammunition in the docks could not be brought forward those 6 miles. But these troops, veterans of the BURMA Campaign fought with magnificent gallantry. There were desperate battles all over the city; every detachment was surrounded. When ammunition ran out the enemy swarmed in for bloody butchery. Midnight came with no pause to the fighting. In one case 70 Indonesians fell before a Mahratta platoon post yet hundreds scrambled over the dead bodies only to be mown down by our troops. The sands of time were running out, and to make matters worse Indonesian tanks were brought up. Two tanks attacked a Rajput Rifle Post. The naik threw several grenades at the tracks to no avail so he dashed out, climbed on each tank, one after the other and pushed a grenade into each. Both tanks were abandoned.

When General Hawthorn told me of the desperate situation of 49 Brigade, I decided that as the security of his force is the first duty of a Commander, I must disobey my order not to have anything to do with "President Soekarno" and I sent Colonel Abdul KADIR to bring him to my HQ and I also sent for General Hawthorn, in whose presence I said: "Look here, Dr. Soekarno, you have heard what is going on in SURABAYA. You allege your people owe you allegiance and I hold you personally responsible for the outrages that have been taking place. You will go at once in my aeroplane along with General Hawthorn to SURABAYA and sort things out and stop all fighting. Take some of your red and white flags and wave them from the plane as you approach. I don't want it fired on". Dr. Soekarno was a well-educated man, A PHD, and an Honours Graduate of LEYDEN University. He spoke perfect Dutch, and very good English. A small typical Malay in stature, he had spent years in prison at various times for offences in connection with attempts to gain home

rule. He was interested in music and art, and was no bad painter himself. "I shall carry out your Excellency's orders to the best of my ability", and he went off with General Hawthorn to KOMARYAN airfield en route for SURABAYA. Soekarno and Hawthorn reached SURABAYA on 29th October and proceeded to HQ 6 Mahratta which was under heavy mortar fire. A truck was produced, and waving a red and white flag Soekarno went on into the battle where firing soon died down. He was quite fearless.

About 1600 hours that afternoon, an Intelligence Officer arrived at 49 Brigade HQ with Soekarno. He said to Brig. Mallaby the "President" has come to see you, Sir". They agreed on a truce and went to the Broadcasting Station. Soekarno's broadcast did something to calm the situation, but it did not establish control over the mob that had been backing up the Indonesian troops.

Ambulances were to be granted safe conduct, but as soon as any took to the streets, they were shot at and had to return empty. The wounded suffered badly from lack of attention. All night 29/30 October there was desultory firing and here and there pitched battles took place. The worst instance was the case of a Mahratta platoon commanded by a jemadar. By 1600 hours on the 29th October they had fought all day to hold a four-storey building on the ground floor. They had driven off a series of vicious attacks and put two tanks to flight. Then fresh tanks arrived and their fire set the house ablaze and ammunition was running low. Suddenly the blazing roof fell in and some of the defenders were burned to death or crushed. The survivors took off their burning clothes, and the jemadar collected his men for a last stand. They fought till the last round. Then choked by fumes and smoke in the intense heat the jemadar led his remnant out into the streets where they were called on to surrender. He replied they would die before surrender and charged into the mob with their bayonets and were hacked to pieces in the melee. A few wounded men were later rescued from the ruins of the house alive to tell the tale.

When General Hawthorn arrived at the airfield with Soekarno and Dr. Hatta OC 6 Mahratta said it was doubtful if he could hold it and it had been under attack. It was vital to stop the fighting and retain the airfield, so Hawthorn, Soekarno and Hatta went to the Government building and met the full East JAVA Committee. Soekarno failed to convince them and was obviously nervous and unsure of himself.

As part of the terms of the truce no one was to fire unless attacked. This order was strictly obeyed by us, though our troops had to watch their enemy creeping forward into better positions. Only at one point was the truce broken. A mob rushed in a mass towards D Company of the Mahrattas and quite rightly the Company Commander ordered a salvo of mortars to be put down to stop the attack before it got too close. Those mortar bombs nearly proved disastrous. General Hawthorn had gone to the Conference with a very weak hand to play. He knew that if fighting could not be stopped his forces would be overwhelmed; should this happen, the repercussions all over JAVA, SUMATRA AND BALI were too ghastly to contemplate. On one side were Hawthorn, Soekarno and some elderly and moderate Indonesians; on the other a collection of young hotheads, the dedicated revolutionaries who had already tasted blood. Suddenly the sound of mortar bombs close by shattered the Conference. The local Commander of the TKR rose in fury but was pacified when General Hawthorn told him he need not lay down his arms at this stage. Soekarno then agreed to dividing SURABAYA city into three zones. The British would occupy the airfield, docks area and the RAPWI Camps south of the city; while the city itself would remain in Indonesian hands. This brought Sutomo angrily to his feet. He was a veritable firebrand with fanatical protruding eyes which General Hawthorn told me rolled incessantly with hatred and unreason. He claimed that by this agreement his forces would be enclosed by ours!

