Chapter III
MERDEKA NEXT DOOR
AUSTRALIA AND THE UPHEAVAL IN INDONESIA

The glorious realm of Insulinde, that winds yonder round the equator like a girdle of emerald.
- MUTATULI

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We who lie between Krawang and Bekasi We are not able to shout "Merdeka! " and take aim again.

We have already given our lives But work is not over yet, meaning has not yet been given to four or five thousand lives.

We are only scattered bones But they are yours YOU have to decide the value of those scattered bones.

Whether we lost our lives for the sake of Freedom, Victory and the Future or just in vain, We don't understand, we are not able to speak.

YOU have to speak now.

- CHAIRIL ANWAR (1922-49), Indonesian poet and martyr of freedom struggle.
UPSURGE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE BIRTH OF THE INDONESIAN REPUBLIC

The National Awakening in Southeast Asia

Australia's major preoccupation in the early post-war years was with the Indonesian Revolution, which can be understood only in the background of Asian and, particularly, Southeast Asian nationalism. The growth of national consciousness aroused the traditionally resigned and passive Asians to roaring passions, sometimes bordering on hysteria. It was the anti-thesis as well as the bi-product of European colonialism. Its conflict with the latter made it vigorous and militant. Where it was accompanied by violence and bloodshed, it brought into full play the intricacies of world power politics.

As compared to other White people, the Australians were better situated to assess the scope and strength of Asian nationalism. But in this lay their dilemma, as the Government in Canberra could not afford to alienate the actual masters of the day or the possible masters of tomorrow. At a time when both Australia and Asia were at the cross-roads of their histories, the former was under the Government of Australian Labour Party headed by Ben Chifley, the successor of John Curtin. The predicament of this Government at the revolutionary movements next door to it was best explained by a distinguished student of affairs Down Under.
"It must", he wrote, "walk circumspectly and fall into ambiguous silences, rather than strike out boldly on the anti-imperialist line to which its ideology leans." (1) But this ambivalence, this tight-rope walking was not possible too long. The Chifley Government had to take a plunge, as we shall see now, because political geography ordained Australia's involvement in the birth pangs of Independence in Southeast Asia.

The Asian nationalism, perhaps unlike its counterpart in Europe in the earlier centuries, represented the full force of ancient civilizations wanting to survive in the modern age and not merely a linguistic group's supposed right to separate political existence. This is illustrated by the remark of an Indonesian intellectual that

... the basic source of Indonesian nationalism lies in the glory and greatness of our forefathers in the times of Madjapahit and Sriwidjaya, which constitute a kind of Mandate of Glory from our ancestors. (2)


To Colijn, a Dutch writer, "... nationalism in Southeast Asia was but a destructive strife of an upper stratum which had lost its roots in its own social structure through Western education and ... it did not represent the voice of the people ..." (3) While disagreeing with this view, it may be said that this powerful movement, in the neighbourhood of Australia, was spearheaded by a small educated middle class, which came under the influence of Western ideas. More and more people learnt the methods of modern business organization at a time when large-scale industry was being set up in some of the colonial possessions of the Western countries. They also flocked to the Universities of Paris, London and Amsterdam. All this led to "the discovery of Europe by Asia", as a distinguished Indian diplomat has called it. (4) This discovery was bound to transform the proverbially unchanging societies of the East. This transformation was evident in the exertions of Princess Kartini for the freedom of Indonesian women and King


Rama IV's reforms in Siam, which started the modernization of what is Thailand today. This discovery enlisted an increasing number of recruits to the freedom movements in Asia. The French policy of assimilation sent Annamites to Paris in large numbers and they came back to strengthen their peoples' resistance to the French.

In 1920s, the village fathers of Kotagadan in Sumatra raised funds to send three men to Holland to get trained to start a school in the village. Many of the Cabinet Ministers, diplomats and professors of the Republic of Indonesia, during the period under review, came from that very school. The Western education thus added "faggots to a fire blazing in an over heated chimney". (5) Australia, of course, had a negligible hand in the training and inspiration of these elites in the Near North. (6)

The desire of these Western-inspired elites was to encompass the whole area of the former colonial administration and, in this, they rarely took notice of geographical, racial and cultural divisions. The national movement was almost always centripetal, but these societies were usually plural ("without organic coherence", as a Western writer calls them), whether it

5 The expression is from Thomas E. Ennis, "The Rise and Fall of France in Indo-China", Eastern World, vol. 9 no. 6 (June 1955), p. 37.

6 Dr Ismail, the first Minister for External Affairs of the Federation of Malaya was an alumnus of the medical school of the University of Melbourne.
was in Malaya or Burma or Indonesia. They were supposed to be held back from disintegration by Pax Britannica or Pax Neerlandica. This explains the motto of BHINNEKA TUNGGA IKA (Unity in Diversity), attributed to Tantular, the eighth century Javanese poet, which is now inscribed on a ribbon held in the claws of the sacred Garuda eagle in the coat of arms of independent Indonesia. The motto expresses the longing to bring together what equatorial waters and ethnic factors have separated. All South and Southeast Asian leaders have adopted similar emphasis in their statements.

This is certainly in marked contrast to most of the European countries and, also, Australia. As observed by an Australian writer, "... of diversity, Indonesia may be said to contain all that is diverse, and of uniformity, Australia may be said to be downright monotonous .... "(7) As a result of this, he explains, the Australian does not accept diversity as ordinary and natural. How could a culture change every hundred miles within a country, he asks. The man in the street in such a homogeneous society cannot comprehend easily that the Vietnamese can include the Montaignard tribals and the Indonesian nation can include the stone-age West Irianese. But in a large Asian country, there is always

7 Ivan Southall, *Indonesia Face to Face* (Sydney 1965), p. 128.
a quest for harmony, a complete synthesis of conflicting ideas that is embedded in the entire tradition of "Oriental" thinking. This also explains the ethics involved in Asian neutralism - a broad tolerance of rival ideologies.

Going through Soetan Sjahrir's Out of Exile,(8) one notices an under-current of philosophical eclecticism. This in fact runs through most Asian nationalisms. Ali Sastroamidjojo demonstrated this rather incongruous wedding of eclecticism to nationalism. when he said in America :

We (that is, Indonesians) must therefore endeavour to utilize modern science as a stimulating force to rejuvenate our own cultural heritage typified by the spirit of "rukan" or conciliatory spirit. (9)

Prime Minister Nu also expressed a similar view when he said :

We can blend successfully the religious values of our heritage with the benefits of modern technology. (10)

It is doubtful if this led to the emergence of "a new type of man possessing the best of two civilizations - the science of the Occident mingled harmoniously with

8 Dr Sjahrir's unique collection of letters translated by C. Wolff( New York, 1949).
the philosophy of the Orient, as some would have hoped. (11) However, mastery of sciences and technology was indeed the greatest urge of the Asians in their period of Western dominance. The educated classes met the Western challenge with the call: "Learn from the West in order to fight with the West." (12)

Asian nationalists, particularly, during the inter-war years, were committed to the democratic ideal, which was to be achieved through constitutional means. But constitutional means were given up because of the Fabianism on the part of colonial Powers in giving them the promised share in power. Increasingly, the Europeans claimed that Easterners were not yet ready to adopt the sophisticated institutions of parliamentary democracy. This, to the Southeast Asians, became a system of government, which the *kaum sana* (those on the other side, that is, the Dutch and other Europeans) pretended to have at home. Indians had resented that the Liberalism of Morley did not go beyond the Suez. Similarly Southeast Asians did not agree when Churchill told the colonial peoples that rights under the UN Charter were reserved for the Whites only and were not to be applicable to colonies

11 Ennis, n.5, p.37.
12 Jan Romein, n.4, p. 102.
and even the Atlantic Charter should be taken as "a
guide and not a rule". (13) If democracy did not last
much in the Eastern countries later, it was partly due
to this hypocrisy, this double life of the European
democracy, which, though talking of noblest precepts,
denied them to the colonial peoples. It lost many
votaries to the ideal in the East. It tried the latter's
patience to the utmost and brought them to the thesis
of Tjokrominoto (the political guru of Sukarno) in
1927 that "King John signed Magna Carta with the pen,
but not until his people had taken to the sword". (14)
Nationalism became warlike in many Southeast Asian
countries and, particularly, in Indonesia and Indo-China.

The nationalists in Southeast Asia identified
Capitalism with imperialism, which affected their
attitude towards communism. The economic sufferings of
the common men were attributed to foreign overlordship.
So the masses were enthralled when they heard the call
of Merdeka (Freedom). Rightly or wrongly, it promised
a better life to them. Even a Moderate like Soetan
Sjahrir said:

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13 Sudjarwo Tjondronegoro, "The United Nations and South
and Southeast Asia", in Philip W. Thayer, ed.,
Nationalism and Progress in Free Asia (Baltimore, 1956),
p. 272.

14 Quoted in Warmenhoven, n. 3, p. 61.
As long as there is Anglo-American capitalism and imperialism, we cannot achieve 100% independence however much we try. Because of this, the fate of Indonesian peoples is bound up with international conditions and developments and more than any other country, we need a changed basis of society. (15)

In the neighbourhood of Australia, these attitudes were galvanised with racist overtones into the nationalist war-cry of anti-colonialism. Ali Sastroamidjojo once pointed out that anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism were not slogans monopolised by Communists, but were "living realities" in the minds of the masses of Asia. (16) The conflict in Indonesia and, later on, on the question of West Irian were the meeting points of the ideological and political problems of the Asian Revolution.

All this ferment gave a tough exercise to the policy-makers in Canberra, as it was bound to. As an Australian student of Indonesian affairs stated later:

Sound foreign policies must be based on sound assessment of the situation confronting us. We will stumble into the most appalling miscalculations unless we understand and appreciate the forces that are shaping the new societies in South-East Asia. (17)

15 Quoted in Thayer, n. 13, p. 52.
16 Ibid., p. 63.
The Birth of Indonesia

The history of Indonesia was decisively influenced by the rise and fall of the Japanese Empire in Southeast Asia.

During the twilight years of Nippon, the Netherlands East Indies was called "Indonesiaazin",(18) the red and white colours of the ancient Madjapahit Empire (now adopted by the nationalists) were seen in most places and the nationalists occupied positions of influence. By 1945, the power of Japan was on the wane as the Americans had occupied Manila and Okinawa, the Chinese and the British had recaptured Burma and Borneo was already with the Australians and the Americans. So in August, the Government in Tokyo agreed to transfer to Sukarno and Hatta what it was going to lose in any case. This deal was settled in Saigon. On arrival from Saigon on 14 August, Sukarno told a huge crowd at the airport:

If I told you before that Indonesia would be free before the corn is ripe, I can now tell you that Indonesia will be free before corn is in the ear. (19)

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18 Romein, n.4, p. 315. This was in contrast to the attitude of the Dutch Government-in-Exile in London, which, in 1939, returned a flat "No" to the request of patriot M.H. Thamrin (1894-1941) that the term "Netherlands Indies" should be replaced by "Indonesia" in official documents and announcements. See ibid., p.237.

19 Quoted in ibid., p.316.
Still there was some difference between the Japanese Foreign Ministry and the *Panita Persiapan Kemaradekan Indonesia* (Committee for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence) on details of this transfer of power.

But the collapse of Nippon came sooner than anticipated and Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed the independence of their country on 17 August "in the name of Indonesian people", without authorization from Japan, which capitulated on the next day.

It was at this stage that Australia was brought into the emerging picture. The Japanese *Domei* news agency had a number of Indonesians on its staff. They quickly telegraphed the proclamation abroad. (20) Similarly, those in the *Domei* Indonesian radio broadcast the news to the world. (21) A well-documented study in the University of Adelaide states on good authority that this broadcast was relayed to the Australian Department of External Affairs through its listening post in Canberra. (22) Articles appearing in Australian newspapers made it amply clear that the declaration was immensely popular in Indonesia and that the Dutch would be resisted.

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20 Ibid.


if they decided to set foot in what was once their "girdle of emerald flung round the equator". (23)

The Republicans were helped by the fact that the Dutch had virtually no role in the recapture of the Netherlands East Indies from the Japanese (unlike Indo-China, where the French presence was maintained). Their earlier attempt to raise an army of occupation for invading and "liberating" the Indies from the Japanese had been unsuccessful because of the US and Allied resistance to the plan. (24) The period marked the nadir of their power in Europe as well as in the East. Their Queen was in London and not in The Hague. The Government of the Indies was being carried on from Brisbane in Australia and not from Batavia, and that too by a Lieutenant Governor-General, as the Governor-General was a prisoner-of-war in the Japanese hands. Roosevelt and Churchill had earlier decided that the Indies would be recaptured from the Japanese by Britain's Mountbatten instead of America's MacArthur. But Mountbatten's South East Asia Command was not ready for the task and took

Affairs in Canberra.

23 Ibid. For a leading article on the subject, see Noel Monks, "Home Rule Movements in South-East Asia", The Advertiser (Adelaide), 28 September 1945.

six weeks to land the first Europeans in Indonesia. Thus, in August 1945, there was a political and military vacuum in the Indies. (25)

From his headquarter in Kandy in Ceylon, Mountbatten instructed the Japanese to maintain status quo in the archipelago till the arrival of the Allied troops. The Japanese obliged by wresting Bandung from the Republicans, but they were now reluctant to die for "British policy, Dutch colonialism or Indonesian nationalism." Britain too did not want to be caught between "the immovable Dutch and the irresistible Indonesians". (26) Their most fierce clash with the Indonesians in Surabaya convinced them that it was futile to stem the tide of nationalism in the Indies.

Accepting the surrender of the enemy troops in the islands east of Borneo was an Australian responsibility. This involved the Australian troops in the birth pangs of the Indonesian nation, though in a small way, as the movement was not very strong in the "Outer Territories"

25 See ibid. This author lists three reasons for the politico-strategical vacuum in the Indies. One was that instead of launching an invasion of the archipelago, the Allies adopted a strategy (the so-called "die on the vine" strategy), which enabled them to progressively isolate the Indies from Japan. This coupled with the refusal to allow the Dutch to form an occupation army and the sudden and rather abrupt end of the Pacific war owing to the atomic bombs dropped on Japan created this vacuum during the early days of the Indonesian Republic.

26 For the British attitude towards the Indies, see P.S. Gerbrandy, Indonesia (London, 1950), p. 101. This writer has quoted Bevin, who said: "We have no inten-
of the archipelago. In November 1945, Rajahs and aristocratic leaders gave a petition to the Australian military authorities in Makassar for onward transmission to the United Nations. Through this, they urged that Celebes (Sulawesi) be considered part of the Republic of Indonesia. This petition apparently never reached its destination. Some of those who had signed it were later jailed or exiled by the Dutch. A patriot named Dr Ratulangi (1891-1949) was then the Republican Governor of Sulawesi. On 5 April 1946, the Governor was arrested by the Dutch with his staff and thus the Republican administration was ended in the remote island of Indonesia. (27)

At last, realism dawned upon the tenacious Dutch. For combating 80,000 Indonesians in rebellion, they estimated, they required 75,000 troops. But in December 1945, they had only 20,000 and could raise only 10,000 more in another eight months. (28) So the Dutch had to negotiate with the Republic, with the British in the chair. The result was that Van Mook and Sjahrir

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27 Kahin, n.21,p.355 fn. For a Dutch tribute to the role of the Australian occupation forces as opposed to that of their Government, see H.J. van Mook, The Stakes of Democracy in South-East Asia (London, 1950), p. 184 fn.

signed the Cheribon agreement (also known as the Linggadjati agreement) in November 1946. The Republican Government got de facto recognition by the Dutch representative in Batavia. Following this, Australia and certain other countries (including Britain, America and members of the Arab League) also accorded it similar recognition. Once this was done, the British Empire troops left the archipelago, leaving the Indonesians and the Dutch to settle their scores themselves. Australia, in particular, had again to enter the fray, but this time as an outsider and not one involved with its troops already on the soil of the Indies.

It is difficult to judge the role of Australia in the emerging drama of Southeast Asia in this period of uncertainty. Douglas Wilkie, a ranking journalist with a flair for Asia, saw in it a missed opportunity in Indonesia - a chance that was too lightly lost. Writing in 1947 (29), he observed that Australia could easily undertake the task, which the United Kingdom performed at that time. London would have agreed to the taking over of Java by the Australians and Canberra mediating between the Netherlands and the Republic of Indonesia in place of London. Australia would not have been out of place there, as Indonesia was vital to her own security. But,

as Wilkie asserted, Canberra declined the role. However, as we shall see now, Australia was destined to act, not as an auxiliary but as a principal, in the diplomatic battle fought for the freedom of Indonesia.

Developments after the Cheribon agreement, with particular reference to Australia's role, may now be narrated. Hardly had the ink dried up on the parchment of this agreement when the colonial Power began to obstruct its implementation. (30) On 21 July 1947, that is, within four months of the agreement, the Dutch attacked Java, Madura and Sumatra, over which they had recognised the de facto authority of the "Republik Indonesia Serikat". Outwardly, their "police action" appeared successful.

At this stage, the UN Security Council took up the matter and, on 1 August 1947, called for cease-fire and settlement of the dispute by peaceful means. On noticing that its call was being flouted, a UN Good Offices Committee was created. To this, Belgium was nominated by Holland and Australia by Indonesia. The two then picked up the United States as a third member. The significance of this lies in the fact that Australia, a "White" country with its cultural moorings in Europe,

30 Dr von Mook, later interviewed by Louis Fischer, told that "at least 75 per cent" of the blame for the failure of the Linggadjati agreement was on the Dutch Government. Fischer, n.28, p.96.
was projecting itself in South and Southeast Asian chess-board as a nominee (if not a spokesman) of a non-White Asian nation, struggling to achieve statehood against an established Occidental Empire, which had been an ally of Australia in the recent world war. Her regional interests now cut through her racial ties, which was a significant turn in Australia's international relations. Dr Evatt himself declared on the floor of the Australian Parliament on 26 February 1947:

Just as far as the people of South-East Asia cease to be dependent upon the decisions of European governments, so far do Australia's interests in the councils of South-East Asia increase. (31)

It also showed that, given a dynamic approach towards its neighbours, demonstrable results in terms of goodwill and friendliness were bound to come. After the Indonesian case, it appears, there was some diffidence in Canberra about making use of the vast potential of Asian gratefulness.

The Good Offices Committee got into a procedural wrangle about the venue of the Dutch-Indonesian talks. Ultimately it was suggested that the meeting should take place on extra-territorial "ground" aboard an American battleship, but America wanted to keep away from any

semblance of "gunboat diplomacy". Somebody wondered if Australia might place one of its ships at the disposal of the Committee, but Australia, it is alleged, was not ready to incur the expenses. (32) At last, the talks were held on the Renville, an unarmed transport ship of the American navy.

On the Renville, the Dutch talked from a position of strength owing to their seemingly successful "police action", carried on by the help of 92,000 troops. In the far-flung islands of the archipelago, they were carving out "independent" States under the aegis of Holland. The first of these "Federalist" States was Negara Indonesia Timur (State of East Indonesia) set up in December 1946. But, as it is said, the Dutch hen was hatching more and more "Federalist" eggs and there were thirteen of them on the eve of the Renville parleys. These talks led to an agreement, which was "Linggadjati without the Republic". In sheer desperation, "the Republic drank the Renville cup of gall", because it rescued the Republic and deprived the Dutch of some of the fruits of their military victory. After this, a

32 Fischer, n. 28, p. 102. This renowned author has referred to a suggestion that Australia might place a battleship at the disposal of the Committee. But this could hardly be possible as Australia had no battleship in 1947.
series of diplomatic blunders culminating into the second "police action" lost the Dutch the goodwill of the world and aroused Asia against them. At this time, some of the bitterest comments in the Western world on the Dutch policies came from the Antipodes. Before assessing the Australian support to the cause of Indonesian independence, it will be worthwhile discussing the Madiun Communist revolt in September 1948, which brought Cold War to the Indies and made the Indonesian conflict three-dimensional.

The revolt of Musso in Indonesia can be understood in the background of identical insurrections in Burma, Malaya and Telangana (India).(33) In Indonesia, people were greatly frustrated after the humiliating Renville agreement. The Dutch blockade had brought hunger and starvation close to them. Like Lenin in 1917, Musso had come back from his exile after the "bourgeoisie" had struck at a veritable ancien régime, in this case represented by the Dutch. The "bourgeois" revolution in Indonesia had to be changed into a people's revolution now. If Lenin could topple down the Kerensky Government in 1917, Musso could by all means do the same to the Government of Sukarno and Hatta. In the ancient kratons - the tiled royal palaces - of Jogjakarta and

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It is said that in February 1948, two international conferences were held by the Communists in Calcutta. They, it is alleged, marked a new turn in the Communist movement in Asian countries, as they were followed by the above uprisings.
Surakarta and in the heartland of the infant and struggling Republic, a new and different language was heard. The Indonesian Republic, Musso charged, had lived "for three years under the leadership of the national bourgeois class which has always been decisive and vague in facing the imperialists in general and America in particular." (34) Externally, attacks were made on "neutralists" like Nehru. (35) The Republic now moved firmly and crushed the revolt. Among those killed were Sjarifuddin (the rebel "Prime Minister") and Musso himself. The episode disgusted many friends of Indonesia including a few in the Australian Department of External Affairs. (36) The success of the Republic proved beyond doubt that it was neither pro-Fascist (37) nor pro-Communist. It rather proved that the Republic was the

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34 Quoted in Kahin, n.21, p. 293. Also in Fischer, n.28, p. 113. The extract is from Musso's broadcast of 19 September 1948 in reply to Sukarno's call on radio to choose between Musso and Sukarno-Hatta.

35 Kahin, n.21, p.279 and Fischer, n.28, p.110. One of the statements on this was made at the time by SOBSI, the trade union wing of the Communist Party of Indonesia. They declared: "Imperialist America is the leader of the imperialist Front. We cannot remain neutral. We must choose one of the two worlds. The talk about a 'Third Force' is nonsense. Nehru, who proposes to form a third force, is pursuing a pro-imperialist policy...."

36 A former official of the Department of External Affairs, who wishes to remain anonymous, told this author about a rather too frank discussion between the Secretary of the Department (Dr Burton) and Premier Sjahrir on the subject about this time.

37 This was the Communist charge against it. Musso's broadcast on 19 September 1948 referred to "Sukarno-Hatta, the slaves of the Japanese and America!" Kahin, n. 21, p. 294.
only element that could effectively check the play of irrational forces in the Indies and, as such, had to be supported. Once its credentials were established, help came to it spontaneously from the liberal segment of the world. It also dispelled whatever doubts Canberra could have about the soundness of its Indonesian policy.

AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE AND THE INDONESIAN DISPUTE

The people of Australia had known little about the Indonesian archipelago except that it was Dutch - "a great coffee and sugar plantation of the Kingdom of Holland". It did attract some attention during and after the "bonza war" with Japan, but this new interest was rather casual and did not lead to a deeper understanding of the people and problems next door. The society and Government in Australia, as in any other Western country, did not clearly grasp what was coming over Japan and the rest of Asia, though articulate Asians, like Aung San and Sukarno, were quick and much more clear in grasping it. Nehru had good reason to complain, as he did in 1939, of "the total incapacity of the West to read the signs of the times and comprehend what is happening."(38) It was not, therefore, strange that in December 1945, barely four months after the Proclamation of Indonesian

38 Quoted in Romein, n.4, p. 316.
Independence, an Australian Gallup Poll revealed that only 6 people out of 10 had read about the situation in the Indies. (39) Their views about the type of Government they would like to have in the Indies were also interesting, as 41 per cent supported the maintenance of the Dutch rule and only 29 per cent went in for Indonesian Home Rule. Of the rest, 17 per cent had no opinion and 13 per cent preferred some other system. Similar surveys were held in 1947 (40) and in the beginning of 1949. (41) Surprisingly enough, both produced similar results, despite the fact that the canvas of the Australian mind was now too much crowded with events and ideas relating to Indonesia. One can, therefore, conclude that the Australian people did not go as far ahead in their support of the Indonesian nationalism as their own Government and some of their own vocal groups. The latter, though not quite numerous, were powerful and articulate enough to influence the decisions and actions of the Government in Canberra.

The Dutch and Indonesian Influences

(a) The Dutch. Even before the flare-up in Java, there was a considerable Dutch presence in Australia. After

41 Ibid., Nos. 569–78 (Melbourne, February–March 1949), p. 2.
the ouster of the Dutch from the Indies by the Japanese, Dr van Mook operated from Australia as "Minister for Colonies".\(^{42}\) In 1943, when Japan's defeat was imminent, a Dutch royal decree re-established administration in the Indies headed by a Lieut. Governor-General.\(^{43}\) In September 1944, the city of Brisbane was chosen as a place from where this Dutch administration would operate and the royal decree of August 1946 confirmed this arrangement.\(^{44}\) Finally the Indies "Government" shifted from Brisbane to Batavia, leaving behind a Netherlands East Indies Information Service, a sizeable Dutch community, and, of course, the Dutch Consulates in Australian cities.

When the crisis began, all these tried to convince the Australian people that the Republic was a hoax - "a quisling Japanese-sponsored Government, which had been disbanded." \(^{45}\) The Information Service, while taking the same line, claimed that the Dutch had always supported ultimate self-government for the "Netherlands


\(^{43}\) Ibid. The decree referred to was "The Transitory Decree General Administration of December 1943".

\(^{44}\) Ibid., p. 40.

\(^{45}\) The Advertiser (Adelaide), 25 September 1945. Cited in Schneider, n.22, p. 31. This statement was made by the Dutch community in Melbourne to the Press on 25 September 1945.
Indians". Bitter handouts began to come out of the Information Service, when, on 24 September, trade unions boycotted ships proceeding to the Indies. They appealed for mercy on the ground that the labour move would deprive the European interests in the Indies of the supplies they "desperately" needed. They also threatened that the move would economically penalise Australia. The Dutch business houses too repeated this argument. They, together with the Dutch Director of Economic Affairs and World Controller of Dutch shipping, warned early in 1946 that their trade with Australia would be stopped, if the boycott continued. (46)

In April, the Dutch administration in the Indies gave a dramatic touch to their resentment by cancelling orders in Australia to the tune of 6 million Pounds. The Dutch efforts, it seems, were not entirely without effect, as some of their arguments were repeated in the Australian Press editorials.

(b) The Indonesians. At the time, there was in Australia, an odd assortment of Indonesian exiles, numbering about 3,000. (47) Apart from military and merchant marine personnel, there was, among them, a hard core of nationalists and Communists from Tanah Merah and Boven Digoel concentration camps of the Dutch (both in what is

46 Ibid.
47 CPD, HR (February 1949), p.61. Statement of the Minister for Immigration.
now West Irian). These persecuted sons of Indonesia, styled by the Dutch as Japanese Prisoner-of-War (48), were interned with Italians, Japanese, Koreans and others in the camp in Cowra (Queensland) and elsewhere. Soon the real truth came to light and a high-ranking Australian Commission went into the matter. To their chagrin, the Dutch had to release them and the Australian Government enlisted them for war effort. When the Republic was proclaimed, these revolutionaries provided direction and leadership to their compatriots in Australia.

After the Republic was proclaimed, Indonesians throughout Australia, rebelled against their Dutch employers. On 12 September, the Indonesian militia at the Casino camp (in Queensland) went on strike. The Indonesian seamen in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane followed suit. (49) In each of these cities, Indonesian communities set up the "Indonesian Independence Committees". On 24 September, the Indonesian crew of the Kersik, a Dutch ship, stopped work, thus delaying the departure of the ship. The "Independence Committees" soon formed a central organization named Central Komik Indonesia Merdeka (CENKIM), with headquarter in Brisbane. The CENKIM and its affiliates

48 The Indonesian Independence Committee, Dutch Imperialism Exposed : The Green Hell of Tanah Merah (Melbourne, 1946). Also in Southall, n. 7, p. 42. Also see Schneider, n. 22, p. 32.

49 For the motives of the strike, see Schneider, n. 22, p. 33. The strike, Schneider points out, was ostensibly due to
did a good job in conducting public relations on behalf of the freedom movement of their country. They defended the Republic in the daily newspapers and organized meetings and demonstrations. (50) They also established links with the Australian people and, particularly, with the Australian seamen and trade unionists.

After the strike, these Indonesians became \textit{persona non grata} with the Dutch in Australia and were refused admission to Indonesian Hostels and hotels in various cities. But the trade unions opened their premises for such Indonesians. The Dutch police, accompanied by Australian officials, arrested some Indonesians in major Australian cities. Once the Dutch had withdrawn their protection from them, these Indonesians were charged of being "prohibited immigrants" in Australia. (51) Then arose a legal problem. The question was whether these were to be repatriated to the Dutch-held territory of the Indies or to the Republican one. Here the Government of Australia, brought into the picture by the Dutch, decided that these people should go to the Republican territory.

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\textit{50} \textit{The Advertiser}, 1 October 1945. \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, 2 September 1945. According to their reports, a largely attended meeting was held in Savoy theatre in Melbourne. It passed a resolution demanding the Government to urge the closing of concentration camps in Dutch New Guinea and preventing arms being sent to the Dutch East Indies.

a claim for £110 back pay from the Netherlands Government. But later it became clear that the real issue was the independence of the Netherlands East Indies.
and not the Dutch. This saved them from Dutch persecution and was, therefore, appreciated by them and their compatriots in Indonesia. (52) Those who were left, carried on the work of the Independence Committees. The Adelaide study has cited the opinions of well-known scholars in asserting that these Committees functioned better than similar groups in Britain, America and, also, Holland. (53) These Committees, it should be remembered, were entirely un-official and did not have contact with Jogjakarta, the seat of the Republican Government. Usman Sastroamidjojo, the official representative of that Government arrived in Australia later in May 1947.

Groups in Australia and the Indonesian Dispute

(a) The Trade Unions. The Australian workers made big headlines in world Press when they boycotted the shipment of arms and supplies to the Netherlands East Indies at a rather critical moment in Indonesia's struggle for independence.

51 The Advertiser, 3 October 1945 and 6 October 1945 and the Sydney Morning Herald, 6 October 1945.

52 For an Indonesian tribute to the Australian attitude, see the pamphlet of Indonesian Independence Committee, n. 48, p. 7. "All Indonesians who have been in Australia", stated the Committee, "have the friendliest feeling for the Australian people, who have shown the greatest possible friendship for us."

53 The authorities cited in the study are Herbert Feith and George Kahin. See Schneider, n. 22, p. 35.
The reasons for the trade union support to the Revolution next door were not difficult to find. Strong left-wing influences were working in the Australian trade union movement at that time. In fact, Communists were then controlling some of the unions of waterside workers, who were most active in the boycott. (54) But it was also true that there was widespread knowledge that the pre-war Dutch administration of the Indies "had required a good deal of reformation" and, as Prime Minister Chifley himself pointed out, this feeling "ran very deeply through the whole trade union movement ... not ... merely ... among a few Communists." (55) Further, the trade unionists were also influenced by the presence, in Australia, of some Indonesian workers. When the latter struck, sympathy among their Australian counterparts was but natural. Besides, some trade unionists had personal contacts with a number of Indonesian exiles. Whatever be the reasons, the trade union move had wide repercussions inside and outside the country.

An unpublished study in the University of Adelaide (56) has made an admirable contribution to the

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54 Ibid., p. 43.
55 Prime Minister Chifley in CPD, HR, vol. 186 (6 March 1946), p. 16.
56 Schneider, n. 22. The author is deeply indebted to this study for most of his material in this section.
existing knowledge about the role of trade unions and other groups during the Indonesian crisis. Only the main episodes may be narrated here to examine the oft-repeated accusation that "waterside workers determined the policy of the Department of External Affairs." (57) In Australia, the waterside workers - the "wharfies" were the first to give the clarion call and then the movement against the Dutch spread like a bush-fire in the coastal cities from Perth to Brisbane. On 24 September, the Federal Executive of the Waterside Workers' Federation declared a black ban on all ships carrying any material likely to be used against the Republicans. Its Sydney branch declared support for the Indonesian seamen on strike. Then it spread to "diverse unions in diverse States". Boiler makers, iron workers, tug men and even bus drivers joined in it. (58) In Sydney, the N.S.W. Trades and Labour Council held a meeting and passed a resolution appealing to the Government to apply the Atlantic Charter to the Indonesians. It also sent a telegram to Dr Evatt requesting him to raise the Indonesian question in the Council of Foreign Ministers in London.

57 For instance, see CPP, HR, vol. 216 (4 March 1952), p. 731 for the charge of Mr Treloar in the Parliament.
58 In Melbourne, the tug men refused to assist the Dutch ship named The Karsik in moving out of the harbour. Bus drivers also refused to drive the crew of this ship.
The trade union move, as we saw, came in the wake of the Indonesian strike in Australia. It was, therefore, over when the Indonesians departed. The Dutch also helped in quietening the crisis, as their ships silently moved out of Brisbane, leaving their supplies. The extremist elements still pressed for the continuance of the strike, but more moderate elements raised their heads and advocated the lifting of the ban on the Dutch ships. "Fissures" were reported in the trade union movement on this question. (59) Voices, criticising the Indonesians in derogatory terms, were also heard in trade union meetings. (60) On 9 July 1947, work was started on The Tjikampeck, a new Dutch ship.

However, the work on The Tjikampeck continued only for 12 days. The process of normalization was suddenly reversed on 21 July 1947, when the Dutch launched their first "police action" against the Republic in Jogjakarta. The more extremist Waterside Workers Federation and the moderate Australian Council of Trade Unions were now one in imposing a total ban on all the Dutch ships in the country, irrespective of their destination. "Dutch military action in 1947",

59 __, "Australia : Fissures Among Trade Unions", The Round Table (March 1946), p.188.

60 For such views expressed by the Vice-President of the Australian Workers' Union Convention (C.P.Fallon), see The Advertiser, 5 February 1946. He condemned the attempts to assist "a Japanese ally" and contumuously referred to Sukarno's men as mostly "ignorant niggers".
observes Schneider, "caused a more united reaction than the Indonesian strike in 1945". (61) Even the moderate Australian Council of Trade Unions passed a strong resolution on 8 August condemning the Dutch "war of aggression" against the Indonesian people. (62) It also urged the Government to close all Dutch bases in the country and prohibit the use of Dutch troops for work usually done by the civilians. The ban continued till May 1947. But it was re-imposed in December 1948, when a second "police action" was started by the Dutch against the Government in Jogjakarta. It was finally lifted only when the Indonesians had achieved their independence.

The action of the Australian workers greatly boosted the morale of the Indonesian in those difficult days. From Jogjakarta, Sukarno himself cabled his gratitude to the unions for their "... magnificent and freedom-loving attitude", which showed that "the world's social conscience recognises the justice of our cause." (63)

61 Schneider, n.22, p.39.
63 The Advertiser, 4 October 1945. It is interesting to note that throughout this period of intense activity on behalf of Indonesia, the Australian people continued to support Dutch rule for that country, as repeated Public Opinion Polls indicated. Support for the Indonesian
(b) Other Groups. Among these, the Communists had better or, at least, more purposive reasons to support the Republic. At first, they were lukewarm, because, in Russia's assessment, the Republic was Japanese-inspired and, thus, Fascist. But the label did not hold good. Even the Indonesian Communists, flown to the Indies by the Dutch, (64) realized how wrong they had been in their earlier assessment. After this, the colonialism of the Dutch became the last stage of Dutch capitalism to the Communists. As they looked at it now, striking at it in Indonesia amounted to striking another blow at the world capitalism. "To assist the Dutch in any way", declared the organ of the party in Australia, "is to assist avaricious Dutch imperialism against Indonesia's democracy." (65) The Communists in Australia, as we have seen, were most vocal and fairly effective in trade union activity and were in actual control of some unions of the "wharfies". They had insisted on the continuation of the ban even when other unions were in the mood to call it off. In November 1945,

cause was associated with political Leftism and not quite incorrectly. A Gallup Poll in late 1945 showed that among ALP supporters, 43 per cent favoured the Indonesians and only 28 per cent supported the Dutch.

65 The extract is from The Guardian, the organ of the Party. Quoted in Schneider, n.18, p.45.
they actually demonstrated against the Dutch troops on the
Sterling Castle berthed at Woolloomooloo. In 1947, the
Indonesian Federation of Trade Unions (SOBSI) held its
conference in Malang, Java. Three of the four fraternal
debates to the conference were well-known Australian
Communists.

The Australian clergy were indifferent at
first, but the first "police action" of the Dutch in
Indonesia brought them on the side of the Republic.
The Catholic Bishop of Armidale and four other ministers
appealed to the Government to get it stopped by the
United Nations. In Tasmania, the Catholic Archbishop
joined with the Anglican Bishop to make a similar appeal.
The Indonesian Medical Aid Appeal was set up by a group
of Australian churchmen and businessmen. The group
included an Anglican Bishop, a Catholic priest and
Protestant ministers. (66) Unfortunately, the plane
carrying $10,000 worth of medical supplies thus
collected was shot down by the Dutch before landing in
Java. (67)

66 K'tut Tantri, n.64, p. 296.
67 Ibid., p. 305.
There was yet another group with strong opinions on the question, but it was on the other end of the spectrum. It consisted of the business and commercial interests, which preferred the immediate certainty of the Dutch markets to the uncertain trade with the Indonesians. They implicitly supported the return of the Dutch to the Indies and were highly critical of the ban on Dutch shipping. They were touched to the quick when, in April 1946, the Dutch cancelled orders in Australia. A spokesman of the manufacturers claimed that this action on the part of the Dutch was "one of the greatest trade calamities suffered by Australia" and that twenty years of goodwill had been lost. (68) The fruit growers were worst hit by the loss of trade and protested against the continuance of the ban on Dutch shipping. (69) In July 1947, the President of the Victorian Chamber of Commerce claimed that the country had lost 30 million pounds in two years because of the Indonesian impasse. (70) These interests, it appears, were successful in getting some of their arguments reflected in newspaper editorials.

68 Schneider, n.22, pp. 45-6.
69 Ibid., p. 46.
70 Ibid.
Government and the Pressure Groups. The labour and trade union ban posed a question of constitutional propriety, a question that went into the very roots of political democracy in the country. Critics of the Government alleged that "the Watersiders dictated Australia's foreign policy." (71) The point was that Western democracy concedes the right of collective action to a special group on matters of domestic policies, but when it comes to the external relations of a State with another State, can these very groups act "on opinions which are not in line with a Government's foreign policy." (72) It was argued on behalf of the workers that they had as much right to influence foreign policy as Menzies, the Leader of Opposition, and the monopoly interests he represented. In addition, the Maritime Worker, their organ, cited the earlier precedent of their interesting themselves in their country's foreign affairs in 1938, when they had persistently refused to load pig iron bound for Japan, because the latter had embarked upon a wanton attack on China. (73)

71 Wolfsohn, n.62, p. 17. Menzies, the Leader of Opposition, called it "monstrous", The Sydney Morning Herald, 2 October 1945.


73 "No Pig Iron for the Japs! Nor Arms for the Dutch", The Maritime Worker (October 1945). Quoted in Schneider, n.22, p. 57.
There was, however, little truth in the allegation that trade union-Government collaboration against the Dutch interests was responsible for the boycott of Dutch ships bound for the Indies and elsewhere. There was rather a triangular situation with the Government at the apex and the two opponents - the trade unions and the Dutch interests - at the base. The Dutch interests in Australia were represented by Baron von Aerssen, their Minister. Even after the Indonesian strike, the Australian workers had continued loading of cargo on the Dutch ships, as they had received a guarantee from the Dutch (through their own Government) that the cargo would not contain arms. (74) But then there was an accidental discovery of tommy guns in the cargo of one of the ships being loaded and the trade unions immediately applied a ban on 24 September. A member asked a question in Parliament on this discovery next day. Before replying to it, the Prime Minister held a conference with Von Aerssen and asked for a categorical denial of this allegation, which the Dutch Minister refused. (75) The Prime Minister, therefore, told Parliament that the Dutch ships contained arms and ammunition in addition to mercy supplies and, thus, could not be loaded by anyone other than Dutch labour. (76)

74 Disclosed by Burton, the then Secretary of the Dept. of External Affairs to the writer of Adelaide study in 1955. Ibid., p.49.
During this period, Dr Evatt had been mostly abroad and was none too happy with these developments. On his return in 1946, he held a conference with the trade unionists. In this, the latter told him that loading of arms against the Indonesians was out of question and insisted that even the mercy supplies should be equally distributed between the Republican and Dutch-held areas. The Dutch Minister agreed to this, but in another conference next week, the workers' representatives insisted that their own observers should look after the impartial distribution of the mercy supplies. Evatt, on the other hand, suggested Government observers for the purpose, but the workers' representatives did not agree. Thus, the stalemate continued and the Dutch ships remained harboured in Australian docks for want of labour and services.

This, however, created a problem for the South-East Asia Command. Ban on the Dutch ships meant increase in the pressure on British shipping for carrying supplies to the Indies. This area was then a responsibility of the South East Asia Command (SEAC).

75 Disclosed by Burton, as above. Ibid., p.51.
76 Prime Minister in CPR, HR, vol.185(28 September 1945), p. 6128.
On 29 March, Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander for Southeast Asia, had a conference with trade union representatives in Sydney. In this, it was decided that the supplies would be distributed through the SEAC in such a way that 1/3 went to the Dutch territory and 2/3 to the Indonesians. The Prime Minister conveyed the decision to the Dutch, who, it appears, did not agree. To relieve the British ships, Prime Minister Chifley tried to charter the Dutch ships immobilized in the Australian ports, but the Dutch were as hard-headed as the trade unionists and increased the charter rates. (77)

The situation was worsened by the first "police action" of the Dutch against the Government in Jogjakarta. On 5 August 1947, eighteen trade union organizations, working in unison, took a more drastic step than ever before. They decided not only to ban supplies to the Indies but also to boycott Dutch goods in Australia. In this, they came in conflict with their country's Foreign Office, as Australia was taking a neutral attitude in the UN Security Council. Prime Minister Chifley then held a conference with the trade unions and urged them to lift the ban in the interest of Australian economy. This was followed by another conference on 14 August. Finally the trade unions obliged by modifying their ban to include

77 The Advertiser, 10 April 1946.
arms only. In Parliament and outside, the Government was
everently criticised by the Opposition for its attitude
towards the trade unions. The Leader of Opposition charged
it of "passivity" in dealing with the trade unionists.
A motion of No Confidence was also moved against it on
6 March 1946. The Government, however, was not apologetic
about its "passivity" because it had ideological sympathy
with the trade unions (78) and, if Prof. Partridge is to
be believed, was not displeased that the waterfront
unions should have taken some of the burden of responsibi-
ity from its shoulders. (79) Besides, its members felt
that they had popular backing in not taking action against
the trade union ban. (80)

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE INDONESIAN IMBROGLIO

Outside the United Nations

Australia had made bold claims about its
special interests in the South-west Pacific region. But
when the trouble developed in the Indies, the Commonwealth
of Australia was found groping for a policy. For some
time, there was not even a senior political observer

78 See the Prime Minister's speech in CPD, HR, vol. 185
(25 September 1945), p. 5833. "If the Dutch authorities",
said the Prime Minister, "cannot make their subjects
do the job, I can easily imagine that the subjects of
another country, are not likely to take action which
might be regarded as 'scabbing'."

79 P.H. Partridge, "Depression and War", in G. Greenwood, ed.,
Australia: A Social and Political History (Sydney, 1955),
p. 402.
representing Australia in Batavia. In his statement to the Parliament on 13 March 1946, the Minister for External Affairs was not at all specific and vaguely talked about Article 73 of the Charter, which deals with non-self-governing people of the world. (81) On 15 November, he advocated a substantial measure of autonomy for the Indonesians under the sovereign Power of the Dutch (82)—a solution, which, though attractive to all Asians from the Red Sea to the South China Sea until the First World War, had been rejected in the subsequent years in favour of complete independence. (83) The official policy of Australia was of neutrality ("vacant-eyed neutrality", as Douglas Wilkie calls it), which it had in common with Britain. If Australia gained Indonesian and Asian friendship, it was due to the unofficial actions of the "wharfies" and, as we shall see now, the soldiers, the writers of radio scripts and some devoted individuals like Justice Kirby.

Australia's earliest contact with the brewing ferment in Indonesia was through radio. Since 1939, Radio Australia had spoken to the Indonesians against the Japanese Occupation. It had also promised them a fair

80 For this, see the Prime Minister's speech in CPD, HR, vol. 185 (6 March 1946), p. 16
81 Ibid. (13 March 1945), p. 201.
82 Ibid. (15 November 1946), p. 339
deal based on the Atlantic Charter. During the period of war, Australia too had its ears turned towards the Indies. Its listening posts in Brisbane, Canberra and Melbourne picked up the broadcasts of the Japanese-controlled Domei Indonesian radio. Four or five people in the Dept. of External Affairs then processed the news. (84) This group was thus aware of the initial preparations for the freedom of Indonesia from the Dutch. In August 1945, the Government was involved in a minor incident with the Netherlands Government. It refused to allow 30,000 Dutch troops to be stationed in Australia and the Dutch alleged that Australia had committed a breach of faith in doing so. (85) It seems that the Government had some doubts about the return of the Dutch to their former colony, though the Prime Minister denied it. Further, to the great annoyance of the Dutch, a representative of Australia and not of Holland signed the Japanese surrender instrument in Dutch Timor. (86)

84 Disclosed to the author of Adelaide study by a senior official of the Dept. of External Affairs. Schneider, n. 22, p. 63.
85 The Argus (Melbourne), 8 August 1945.
To the chagrin of the Dutch, the Australian Occupation forces in the outlying islands of the Indonesian archipelago were friendly to the native populations rather than to the European interests. It is interesting that in the erstwhile colonies of the European Powers, the attitude of the Occupation troops was making a decisive difference to the progress of national liberation movements. In Java, Britain's Rear-Admiral Patterson, as we have seen, was trying to be an honest broker between the Dutch and the Indonesians, but not so in Indo-China. In Cochin-China (South Vietnam), Britain's General Gracey overstepped his orders and took it upon himself to restore Indo-China to the French. (87) and allegedly burnt down great sections of the native quarter of Saigon (88) by way of reprisals against the Annamese. Very different, however, was the picture in Tonkin (North Vietnam), where the Chinese General Lu Han openly supported Ho Chi Minh and thus

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88 Edmond Taylor, Richer by Asia (London, 1948), p.386. The writer was with the Occupation troops at that time.
sealed the fate of the French rule in the area. (89)
Nationalism was dormant in Timor, Kalimantan (Borneo) and Sulawesi (Celebes), which were occupied by the Australians with instructions to be neutral in case of uprisings. (90) A correspondent of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation wrote in 1946:

The friendliness and fair dealings of our occupation forces in Borneo were already a legend among Indonesians. (91)

At the same time, the Dutch were becoming unpopular with the Australian troops. On 28 November 1945, the Dutch radio claimed that the Dutch troops were being insulted by Australian soldiers and some of them were selling arms to the Indonesians. (92) Thus the Government was trying to be neutral, but the "diggers", like the "wharfies" back home, were fostering friendship among the Indonesians for Australia.

The Government's neutrality was also not always "vacant eyed". This was evident from the Government's response to a Dutch request that the Indonesians living in Australia should be repatriated

89 Hammer, n.87, p.133.
90 For a faint manifestation of the Indonesian nationalism in Macassar (Sulawesi) with which the Australians had to deal with, see pp. 99-100.
91 John Thompson, Hubbub in Java (Sydney, 1946), p. 67.
92 In fact, pistols were often sold by the Australian soldiers to the local population. The Argus (Melbourne), 29 November 1945.
to the Indies in Dutch ships. Legally the Dutch request was perfectly in order, because after all, the Indonesians were Dutch citizens. But many of them were political enemies of the Dutch rule and it would be inhuman on the part of Australia to leave them to the mercy of the Dutch. Canberra, therefore, agreed to the Indonesians' request that they should be repatriated to the Republican territory only. But after the departure of the bulk of them, Australia gave in to the pressure of the Dutch. It entered into an agreement with SEAC and accordingly 44 of these Indonesians were to be forced off the ship at Koepang in Timor. But when the ship came to Koepang, the entire group of Indonesians rallied as one man and did not permit these 44 to be disembarked. When the ship arrived in Batavia, 19 of these were prevented from disembarking and were sent back to Koepang to face Dutch persecution.(93)

A fortnight after this incident, Radio Australia was involved in a controversy over the tone of its broadcasts. It was noticed that the broadcasts directed to Asia and America were unfriendly to the Dutch and Lord Mountbatten himself sent a message taking "strongest possible exception" to them.(94) The Prime

93 The Advertiser, 7 and 8 November 1945.
94 The New York Times, 20 November 1945. The broadcast scripts were not available to this writer. But obviously they gave the opinion of script-writers only, among whom were G.Sawer and M.Keon.
Minister disowned the talks and promised tighter control over them. (95) After this, Radio Australia ceased to be a morale-booster to the Javanese, but it certainly remained the main source of information and entertainment to the people cut off from the world owing to tight Dutch blockade. Also, a listening post in Jogjakarta processed the news from Radio Australia and then spread it throughout the Republican territory by means of news sheets.

In April 1946, there was a serious happening, which could easily have spoiled Canberra-Jogjakarta relations. In Buitenzorg (renamed as Bogor later), three Australians were killed by an Indonesian gang. This led to anti-Republican feeling in Australia and Justice Kirby was sent to inquire into the matter. Kirby found that these Australians were not killed because of their nationality. They were subjected to popular wrath because they were found to be in possession of Dutch currency, which was undermining the Republican economy at that time. (96) After making these findings, Kirby thought that something had to be done to assuage feelings back home. He, therefore, visited the Republican capital in Central Java and made a call on President Sukarno. The latter assured him that his Government would pay reparation for the deed of irresponsible elements

95 The Advertiser, 16 November 1945.
96 Schneider, n.22, p.67.
in its territory. The Australian also convinced the Indonesian leader that this would prove that the Republic was prepared to take responsibility, where it was necessary, and would present it in a favourable light in Australia and elsewhere.

Australia was also generous to the Republican cause in allowing K'tut Tantri, the legendary "Surabaya Sue" to come to Australia. She was an American woman, who used to make broadcasts from the Republican radio. She presented herself at the Australian mission in Singapore with a request that she might be allowed to proceed to Australia. But this was not so simple, as her passport had been destroyed during the war by her Japanese captors and she was, thus, virtually stateless. Massey, the Australian Commissioner, heard her story and forwarded her request to Canberra. Canberra relaxed the formality of possessing a passport in her case.(97) In Australia, "Surabaya Sue" contacted groups favouring Indonesia, inspired Indonesian Medical Aid Appeal and addressed several meetings and press conferences. Her lecture in the University of Sydney led to a march of the students to the Dutch Consulate. The orderly demonstration turned into a riot when the polic, called by the Dutch, interfered.

97 K'tut Tantri, n.64, pp. 283, 292.
Even before the Linggadjati Agreement of November 1946, the Republicans were looking forward to a meaningful co-operation with Australia. Three weeks before that Agreement, Graham Jenkins of the Argus reported that Indonesian leaders were anxious to have Australian aid if their independence was recognized. Besides, plans were also ready for sending students and buyers to Australia. (98) The Agreement permitted Australia to seek trading contacts with the Republic and offer the planned interim federal government of Indonesia advice and assistance in the fields of trade, finance, communications and economic rehabilitation and development. (99) The de facto recognition of the Republic by Canberra after this Agreement enhanced the status of Dr Usman Sastroamidjojo in Australia, but the Foreign Office continued to insist that Australia had no official diplomatic relations with Jogjakarta. (100) In 1948, Australia co-sponsored a move to have the Republic admitted as an associate member of ECAFE, but the move was opposed by the

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98 The Argus (Melbourne), 21 October 1946.
100 The Advertiser, 25 January 1947. After the first "police action", the paper reported, Premier Amir Sjarifuddin requested Australia to represent the Republic in Batavia, but the latter declined on the ground that it had no official diplomatic relations with the Republic. Also see ibid., 18 August 1948. A report in it shows that even a year after the de facto recognition of
Netherlands and the United States and coolly received by the United Kingdom and France. (101)

The second "police action" of the Dutch in Indonesia spurred the Asians into holding a conference of interested regional Powers in Delhi in January 1949. It was, as General Romulo of the Philippines called it, "the first inter-governmental conference on the political level to be held in Asia". (102) Australia's participation in the New Delhi conference was one of her major contributions to the independence of her Southeast Asian neighbour. Her leading role in the conclave in New Delhi (103) made it "the one and only Afro-Austral-Asian Conference". (104) In fact, Australia took part in the conference despite strong opposition at home. Prime Minister Nehru's invitation to the Australian Government created dissensions in Canberra. Some felt that senior Ministers should go to Delhi, while

the government in Jogjakarta, officials attending a reception by Dr Usman Sastroamidjojo claimed that they were doing so in personal and not official capacity.


103 For Australia's contribution to the deliberations of the conference, both in open as well as private in camera sessions, see ibid., especially, pp.90-91.

104 Ibid., p.87.
others were opposed to any association of their country with the conference. As a compromise, two officials (Burton and Moodie) were sent on behalf of the Government of Australia. The conference opened with Prime Minister Nehru's remark:

Here we are, representatives of the free nations of Asia, and our friends of Australia and New Zealand as well as of Egypt and Ethiopia, meeting together for the first time to consider a matter of common concern to us. (105)

The conference passed three resolutions, two dealing with transfer of sovereignty to the Republic and the third with wider issues of regional organization in Southeast Asia. Australia played a significant part in Delhi by moderating the extremist views of some Asian delegations, whose countries had no strength to back the views they were propounding. Thus the "White" nation invited as full-fledged participant tried to bring realism into the conference and not without success. After the New Delhi Conference, Asian-Australasian grouping was a factor of considerable importance in the United Nations.

Australia's neutrality in the dispute of its Asian neighbour with a distant European state was precarious right from the start. It could not stand the onslaught of the two "police actions" of the Dutch after the Linggadjati Agreement. Besides, Australia could no more be equivocal when it came to supporting a just cause in the world body. The so-called geographical determinism had left but few choices before the policy-makers of Canberra; they wholly agreed with the Sydney Morning Herald, when it wrote in November 1945:

No part of the world would be harmed more by chaos /in Indonesia/ than Australia, because the Indonesian archipelago is a vital section in Australia's northern arc of defence. (106)

A unified nationalist state, straddling the approaches to Australia from the Asian mainland, it was felt, might be more useful to Australia in security terms than a "divided, oppressed and wasted state". (107)

Then there were the ideological prejudices of the ruling ALP Government against colonialism (108) and the faith of its Minister for External Affairs in

106 The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 November 1945.
the United Nations as an instrument of "bolstering international morality and security". (109) It was also obvious that the success of the Indonesian Revolution was only a matter of time and there was a need to ensure the friendship of the people next door in the times ahead.

Inside the United Nations, as we shall see now, Australia had to carry out the dictates of history by giving a voice to the organized conscience of mankind. What an Australian said of his country's posture on Indonesia in the pub or at his sheep farm can only be guessed. But what is beyond question is that the Javanese, in their kampong and makan shops, increasingly talked about Australia as a friend in those murky days. Without alienating the two great leaders of the Anglo-Saxon world, Australia was in the Asian bus and, in it, near the driver's seat. To the Indians then, it was a matter of common knowledge that Evatt and their own Nehru went hand in hand on many regional and world problems and would play a part together in guiding the region to the advantage of all. If the prospect did not materialize, it was due to certain developments, as we shall see now, in world power politics as well as in the domestic politics in Australia itself.

109 For a detailed analysis of the possible causes of Australia's support to the cause of Indonesian independence, see W.J. Hudson, "Australia and
Inside the United Nations

The story of Australia's UNomanship on Indonesia began with the first "police action" launched by the Dutch for "the clearance of the pirate's nest at Djokja and the occupation of the whole of Java..." (110) Earlier E.C. Ballard, the Australian Consul, had joined other diplomats in Batavia in trying to prevent this type of situation to develop, (111) though without success. On 24 July 1947, three days after the military action, Australia renewed offers of mediation. On the same day, the British Cabinet met in London to hold discussions on the situation and the High Commissioner for Australia attended it on cabled instructions from Canberra. (112) The air was now thick with the rumour that Australia was at last going to act and there was a spurt of diplomatic activity in the Australian capital. On 24 July, while in Queensland, the Prime Minister received Usman Sastroamidjojo's appeal for raising the issue in the


UN Security Council. Dr Usman had an interview with the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs (Dr Burton) on the same day. The Prime Minister returned to Canberra post-haste, but was told that India's Permanent Liaison Officer to the world body (S.Sen) had forwarded to the Security Council a letter from Jawaharlal Nehru, the Member for External Affairs in the Indian Interim Government. India had invoked Article 34 and 35(1) of the UN Charter, which dealt with "danger to peace and security". This was on 30 July.

The Indian move, though seemingly welcome to Australia, put Canberra on the horns of a dilemma. Not to support the Indian move would be the undoing of Australia's emerging Indonesian policy. But supporting it had its own complications. The Government in Australia felt that the Indonesian conflict should not be debated in the United Nations on the basis of racial line-up. This has indeed been revealed to several writers by those, who, at that time, were directing Australia's affairs from their desks. As politics were in Australia at that time, they say, it would have been most difficult for any Government to have supported the Indian initiative. The dispute itself would then have appeared to be an Asian versus European one. Though Evatt was abroad, it was clear to the Prime Minister (who was officiating for Evatt) and to the officials in the
Department that India had to be forestalled. Dr Burton later wrote in a report:

The primary purpose of Australian intervention in the Security Council over the fighting in Indonesia has been to prevent the dispute from being on a colour basis. (113)

Thus some hours after the Indian move, and under cabled instructions from Canberra, the Acting Representative of Australia, Col. W.R. Hodgson, submitted to the Secretary General a letter from his own Government invoking Article 39 dealing with "breach of peace". By citing this article, Australia took a more serious view of the Dutch action than India. In fact, as disclosed to this writer by some of the people who planned this strategy in the Department, Australia moved without giving the Indians enough time to take similar action and its choice of Article 39 (Chapter VII) was in order to steal a march over India. Apart from Dr Burton, Mr Keith Shann, later Australia's Ambassador to Jakarta, had a hand in initiating the Australian move, which gave good results from the country's point of view. (114)

114 To understand the implications of reference to Chapter VII (by Australia) and Chapter VI (by India), one has to look at the Rules of Procedure of the Security Council, rather than at the Charter. Under Chapter VII, the Security Council has to act within twenty-four hours, while under Chapter VI, the Security Council has a discretion to delay up to three days. If then a country were known to have referred
The Indonesian question had come up before the Security Council as early as February 1946. A Ukrainian move asking for withdrawal of the British troops from the Indies had been dropped. (115) At that time, Australia's N.J.O. Makin had denied that the situation in Indonesia was a threat to peace but he had also demanded Australia's participation in case there was an inquiry in response to the Ukrainian demand. (116) But now, Col. Hodgson, the Australian representative, moved a resolution. (117) While the Dutch stressed lack of competence on the part of the United Nations (on the ground that the matter fell within their domestic jurisdiction), the British stressed that the resolution was futile, as the United States had already offered mediation on 31 July and, as such, any action by the Security Council at that stage was unnecessary.

something under Chapter VI and another country was keen to have the reference to the same matter in its own name rather than in the name of the other country, then rapid recourse would be made to the Rules of Procedure under Chapter VII. And it is a logical deduction that the position of the two countries (that is, India and Australia) in relation to the matter was highly competitive rather than co-operative.

115 UN, SCOR, Meeting 18, 13 February 1946, pp.258, 263. For the speech of the Ukrainian delegate, see ibid., Meeting 12, 7 February 1946, pp. 174-8.

116 Ibid., Meeting 16, 11 February 1946, p. 234.

117 For the text of the Australian Resolution, see UN, SCOR, Meeting 171, 31 July 1947, p. 1626.
Ultimately, an American amendment was carried. But it took the teeth out of the Australian resolution. Still the European members - Great Britain, France and Belgium - abstained, while Russia expressed its disappointment at the mildness of the resolution. (118) By 4 August, both parties in Indonesia received orders to stop fighting, but it did not stop. So, on 7 August, Hodgson moved that a Commission be appointed. The Australian and Russian motions on the subject were vetoed by France, but a Dutch suggestion for the Consuls in Batavia to function as a group was carried. (119) The final report of the Consular Commission was pro-Dutch, but its appendices contained reports by various Consuls in field trips and they were quite revealing. A writer, who has analysed these separate reports, has made the observation that

... When an Australian official was involved, a report was likely to be favourable to the Republic; where an Australian was not involved, a report was likely to be pro-Netherlands. (120)

The final report, however, disclosed that minor fighting continued. So Russia moved a resolution with the support

118 For Vyshinsky's speech, see ibid., p. 1663.
119 This suited the Dutch as the Consuls in Batavia were mostly pro-Dutch Europeans, of course, with the exception of Australia's Eaton.
120 Hudson, n.109,p. 233.
of Australia, but the motion was not carried. Chifley then made a statement that Australia was prepared to act as mediator or arbitrator, jointly with the United States.(121) Sjahrir tacitly rejected it in the hope of getting a more powerful Security Council Commission instead.

So, the emerging voting pattern in the Security Council was like this. Poland and the USSR urged that the Security Council take the responsibility and enforce solution. Australia at first held that the Council should insist on cessation of hostilities. But later it swung in support of the Republic and advocated arbitration by the Security Council, thus joining hands with the USSR. America, on the other hand, favoured Security Council's assistance to the parties, but often voted with the European bloc comprising the United Kingdom, France and Belgium. However, it was America's intervention, which was almost always decisive. It has been pointed out that

Such progress as was made occurred, generally, when the middle-of-the-road group - and particularly the United States - was able to give qualified support to the pro-Indonesian bloc, of which Russia and Australia were the two most outspoken leaders. (122)

121 For the Prime Minister's statement, see Current Notes, vol.18, no.6 (August 1947), p. 469.
122 C. Wolf, Jr., The Indonesian Story (New York, 1948), p. 142.
In August 1947, Australia supported the admission of the Republican spokesman to the Security Council discussions. (123) On 14 August, she moved a resolution for the creation of a Good Offices Committee. (124) It was, however, diluted by an American amendment (125) and was passed as such.

From Good Offices Committee to the Indonesian Independence

When the Good Offices Committee was to be formed under the Australian resolution, as amended by the United States, Indonesia sprang a surprise by nominating Australia as its representative. The hope, so far, was that Jogjakarta's choice would fall on India for the purpose. The Indonesians, by choosing Australia, gave evidence of their political sagacity. It was as necessary to avoid racial line-up in the Good Offices Committee as in the world body itself. It was in the interest of the Republic to achieve not merely Asian solidarity but also the sympathy and support of the multi-racial Family of Nations. Holland's

123 Australia verbally clashed with Belgium on this issue. For this see UN, SCOR, Meeting 181, 12 August 1947, p.1930.
124 Ibid., Meetings 183-4, 14 August 1947, p.2147.
125 Ibid., p. 2179.
representative on the Committee was Belgium, while the United States was the third member. In their very first meeting, the three members - Justice Richard C. Kirby (Australia), Paul von Zeeland (Belgium) and Frank P. Graham (USA) decided that they would not represent the parties, but would uphold the principles of the United Nations instead. (126) Catching up with the spirit, Prime Minister Chifley categorically stated in the Parliament that his Government would not influence the judicial decisions of Justice Kirby. (127) Still the members of the Committee remained at cross-purposes during the Renville talks, though a truce was affected somehow by the Committee.

After the Renville truce, not one but three reports came to the Security Council from this Committee. The main argument in the report of Justice Kirby was that the Republic had made concessions on the assurance that its integrity would be upheld by the Security Council and, as such, the latter should uphold it. This view was later supported in the Security Council by Australia's Forsyth. (128) The earlier "vacant-eyed neutrality" of Australia was nowhere to

128 UN, SCOR, Meeting 247, 17 February 1948, p.176.
be found now. It was rather seeking the protection of the Security Council for the Republic, though the Soviet criticism of the Committee was more extreme. (129) In due course, Judge Kirby and Frank Graham were succeeded by Critchley and Du Bois respectively. They together prepared "the Australian-American Working Paper" on the conflict. (130) The paper was meant to preserve the integrity of the Republic, but the Dutch refused to discuss it. The Communist revolt in September 1948 was an embarrassment to Australia, (131) but the Government of Hatta crushed it, before Australia could begin an agonising reappraisal of its policies towards its immediate northern neighbour. It convinced Australia and, more so, the United States that the weakening of the Republic meant the spread of communism in the archipelago.

By December, clouds began to gather again on the political horizon of Indonesia. The Committee reported the failure of negotiations. Since there was a threat of war again, Indonesia asked for a meeting, which Langenhove, the Belgian Chairman, obviously in

129 Ibid., Meeting 248, 18 February 1948, p. 176.
130 The text of this working paper is in ibid., Supplement for December 1948, Document 5/1117, Appendix 6, p. 194 and fn.
collusion with the Dutch, refused. Not only this, but the European bloc in the Council got another victory by a decision that the Security Council could not reconvene after 17 December except on a three days' notice. Thus assured from that side, the Dutch mounted their second "police action" next day, that is, on 18 December. The Republic, with only eighteen hours' ultimatum, was taken unawares. Over 100,000 troops were landed in the Republican areas. Jogjakarta fell to the invader without much fighting. The President and members of the Republican Government were taken captive and landed in a wire cage on Maneubing Hill on the island of Rungka, with six Cabinet Ministers sharing a room 18' by 18' with all windows nailed and barbed wire outside. (132) Someone, it seems, had taught something to the Dutch during their recent period of defeat and effacement: Unfortunately, it was Hitler, their arch foe.

The Dutch conquered the Republic by the force of arms and cunning, but shortened their stay in their erstwhile Empire. Delegations of Indonesia, India and Australia called on the American delegation in Paris and successfully persuaded the latter to reconvene the Council. In the meeting, America, supported by Syria and Columbia, put up a moderate

resolution, which too was not approved by France and Belgium. But the Australian amendment for the release of the Republican President and other dignitaries was carried with a rider that the Good Offices Committee report on the situation. A weak resolution, thus, came out of the Security Council.

This session was perhaps the stormiest in the history of the Indonesian question and Col. Hodgson saw to it that it was so. His country was granted speaking rights, though she was no more a member of the Security Council. Hodgson complained that in the previous week the Council had discussed the Indonesian complaint and now, after all this, Belgium was proposing, like Pontius Pilate, that they should wash their hands off the whole thing and refer it to the International Court of Justice to see if they had jurisdiction. (133) Then, looking sharply into the eyes of the Dutch, he said, the "Dutch ultimatum of 17½ hours was even worse than what Hitler gave to the Dutch in 1940." Col. Hodgson was later criticised in the Australian Press for his "intemperate" language and was also compared to a bull in the china shop. (134)

133 UN, SCOR, Meeting 390, 23 December 1948, p.6.
134 For the full text of Col. Hodgson's speech in the Security Council on Indonesia, see ibid., pp. 5-14.
but it was later established that Canberra had instructed him to say every word of what he said in the Security Council.

On 22 September, four days after the second "police action", Prime Minister Chifley announced that henceforth Australia would press the question of Indonesian elections and transfer of sovereignty in accordance with the Linggadjati Agreement of November 1946. (135) On 27 December, after the passage of the Security Council resolution, Australia complained that the Dutch had neither ceased firing nor had released their captives. (136) On this, the American delegate proposed a resolution committing the Security Council to pass judgement on the issues at stake in the Indies. Sections on elections, interim government and transfer of sovereignty were quickly passed. In addition, the Good Offices Commission was changed into the UN Commission for Indonesia (UNCI) with power to act by majority vote and to make recommendations to either party or to the Security Council, something for which Australia had stood all along in the world organization.

135 The Advertiser, 22 December 1948.
136 UN, SCOR, Meeting 396, 29 December 1948, p.44. For the full text of Col.Hodgson's speech, see ibid., pp. 42-4.
In March, the Indonesian question again came up in the world organization, at the instance of the Asian-Australian group. The Council asked the UNCI to convene a preparatory conference on Indonesia, ignoring the Australian objection that this could be done after the Republican Government leaders were allowed to go to Jogjakarta, the seat of their Government. On 11 April, Australia and India jointly requested that the Indonesian question be placed on the agenda of the General Assembly. The purpose was to demonstrate world support for the Republic. It was included in the agenda by 41 votes to 3, with 12 abstentions. But on 7 May, the Roem-van Royen Agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia was signed. So the Australian delegate called a meeting of the New Delhi group and, on 10 May, a joint Australian-Indian resolution to defer discussion till the next session was carried by 43 votes to 6. (137)

The Roem-van Royen Agreement in The Hague was the happy culmination of the efforts made by countless people inside and outside Indonesia to write a finis to the three hundred years of Dutch colonialism in Asia. Credit has been variously given to the UNCI, the New Delhi Conference, the heroic resistance of the Indonesian people themselves, the exertions of the

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delegations of Australia and India in the lobbies of the world organization and so on. A substantial factor was, of course, the change in the policy of the United States, culminating in the threat to withdraw Marshall Aid from Holland. (138) However, Lambartus Palar of Indonesia placed on record his country's thanks to Australia and, especially, to Col. Hodgson, among others. (139) The final act in the drama of Indonesia was the joint sponsorship, by Australia and India, of the admission of their common neighbour to the United Nations in September 1950. (140)

By the time the Indonesians were able to breathe the air of liberty, a coalition of Liberal and Country parties, headed by Robert Menzies, had succeeded the Government of Ben Chifley. While in Opposition, the Liberals had manifested little sympathy for the cause of Indonesian independence. But they promptly recognised the new State in February 1950 and took steps to further augment

138 Fischer, n.28, p. 79. Welter, the Dutch Minister for Colonies from 1937 to 1941, told Louis Fischer that the United States threatened the Dutch with starvation. Food in Holland, he told, was for fifteen days only and the State Department told the Dutch that they would starve them if they did not liberate the Indies.

139 UN, SCOR, Meetings 223-4, 18 and 19 December 1947, p. 2798.

140 UN, GAOR, Pl.Meeting 289, 28 September 1950,p.176.
the already existing friendship with the newly
independent nation. Percy Spender, Minister for
External Affairs in the new Government, visited
Jakarta on his way to Colombo to attend the
Commonwealth Foreign Ministers' Conference. Australia
also set up an Embassy in Jakarta, which was her first
in Southeast Asia. As a sop to Holland, Ambassadors
were also exchanged with that country. In due course,
relations with Holland also improved. Of the 77,338
Hollanders who settled in Australia in ten years after
the war, 20,000 were former residents of the Indies.
A professor in Amsterdam told Louis Fischer about these
Dutch Australians:

These sons of Holland are not lost to
us. They eat Dutch cheese, drink Dutch
beer, smoke Dutch cigars, read Dutch
books — and nobody minds if they cele­
brate Queen Juliana's birthday as well
as Queen Elizabeth's. (141)