

Aerospace Centre

**Air Power and
Wars of National Liberation**

**The Proceedings of the
2002 RAAF History Conference**

Held in Canberra on 30 August 2002

Edited by Wing Commander Keith Brent, CSC

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Papers have been printed as provided by the authors, with only minor changes to achieve some consistency in layout, spelling and terminology. The transcripts of the panel discussions that followed the presentation of the papers have been edited for relevance, clarity and brevity. Copies of the edited papers and transcripts were sent to the authors for comment before publication.

My thanks are due to my colleagues at the Aerospace Centre, in particular Dr John Mordike and Ms Roz Bourke for their highly professional editorial assistance.

I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of Group Captain Ian MacFarling. It was with profound regret that we learned of his death in March 2003. As Director of the Aerospace Centre, Ian oversaw the planning and conduct of the History Conference and was instrumental in identifying the speakers and cajoling them to attend. Ian retired from the RAAF on 6 September 2002 and moved to Hawaii to begin his dream job as Professor of Southeast Asian Studies at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu. He collapsed and died, apparently from a massive heart attack, after returning from a run in preparation to participate in a marathon later in the year. Ian was one of the Air Force's intellectual giants and his loss will be keenly felt by all.

Keith Brent
Aerospace Centre
Canberra

June 2003

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

AIR MARSHAL A.G. HOUSTON, AM, AFC

Air Marshal Houston joined the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) as a cadet pilot in 1970 and spent the early part of his career flying Iroquois helicopters in various parts of Australia, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. After graduation from Flying Instructors Course in 1975, Air Marshal Houston completed several instructional tours on Macchi, BAC Strikemaster and Iroquois aircraft. A posting to the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) from 1976 to 1978 was followed by two years at No 9 Squadron RAAF Base Amberley. In late 1979 Air Marshal Houston was posted to Hill Air Force Base, Utah for exchange duties with a United States Air Force (USAF) helicopter unit. In 1980 he was awarded the Air Force Cross (AFC) for an open sea rescue in gale force winds the previous year.

After a further posting to No 9 Squadron as the Executive Officer, and staff training at RAAF Staff College, Air Marshal Houston was posted to the Department of Air (Development Division) where he was involved in the Black Hawk Project. In 1987, Air Marshal Houston assumed command of No 9 Squadron in time for the introduction of the Black Hawk, relocation of the unit from Amberley to Townsville, and its transfer to Army. In 1989 he enjoyed one year as a Squadron Commander with the 5th Aviation Regiment. Air Marshal Houston was admitted as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1990 for his work in the transfer of responsibility for Blackhawk operations.

Following graduation from Joint Services Staff College, Air Marshal Houston was posted to the Joint Operations staff at Headquarters Australian Defence Force and was involved in strategic planning during the Gulf crisis of 1990/91. On promotion to Group Captain in July 1992, he assumed the post of Director Air Force Policy and negotiated the establishment of the RSAF Flying School at RAAF Base Pearce. After completing a C130H conversion in 1993, Air Marshal Houston commanded No 86 Wing from 1994 to 1995.

Air Marshal Houston attended the Royal College of Defence Studies in London in 1996. He was Chief of Staff, Headquarters Australian Theatre in 1997–99, Commander Integrated Air Defence System from 1999 to 2000 and Head Strategic Command from August 2000. Air Marshal Houston was appointed as Chief of Air Force on 20 June 2001.

(Editor's Note: Air Marshal Houston was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in January 2003.)

PROFESSOR PETER DENNIS

Peter Dennis is Professor of History at The University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA). He is a graduate of The University of Adelaide and Duke University, North Carolina, and has taught at the Royal Military College of Canada, the University of Western Ontario, the National University of

Singapore, the Faculty of Military Studies at the Royal Military College Duntroon, and at ADFA since 1986.

He has published on British and Australian military history, including *Decision by Default: Peacetime Conscription and British Defence, 1919–1939*; *The Territorial Army 1906–1940*; *Troubled days of Peace: Mountbatten and South East Asia Command 1945–46*; and, as co-author, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, and *Emergency and Confrontation: Australian Military Operations in Malaya & Borneo 1950–66*. Most recently he was joint editor of the seven volume *The Australian Centenary History of Defence* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

PROFESSOR CARLYLE A. THAYER

Carlyle A. Thayer is Professor of Politics at University College, The University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA). He is concurrently Deakin University's On-Site Coordinator for the academic program at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, Australian Defence College. Professor Thayer first served in Vietnam in 1967–68 when he was attached to the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program. He returned to Vietnam in 1972 to conduct fieldwork for his doctoral dissertation, which focused on the rise of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. Professor Thayer first visited Hanoi in 1981 and has returned regularly since then. He is the author of over 280 publications including *War By Other Means: National Liberation and Revolution in Vietnam, 1954–60* (Allen & Unwin, 1989); *The Vietnam People's Army Under Doi Moi* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1994); *Beyond Indochina*, Adelphi Paper 297 (Oxford University Press, 1995); and co-author of *Soviet Relations with India and Vietnam, 1945–1992* (Macmillan, 1992).

Professor Thayer was educated at Brown University and holds an MA in Southeast Asian Studies from Yale and a PhD in International Relations from The Australian National University. He taught in the Faculty of Military Studies at the Royal Military College Duntroon from 1979 to 1985 before transferring to the academic staff at ADFA. He was Head of the School of Politics and Coordinator of the Graduate Program in Defence Studies from 1995 to 1997. Most recently he was Professor of Southeast Asian Security Studies at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Hawaii.

DR PATRICK FACON

Dr Patrick Facon is Director of Research in the French Air Force. He is a member of the National Academy of Air and Space, and he has published over 200 articles and twenty books on military aviation. He is a member of the prestigious Institute of Political Studies in Paris.

DR GREG LOCKHART

Dr Greg Lockhart is a graduate of the Royal Military College Duntroon and The University of Sydney. After military service in Papua New Guinea and Vietnam, he held various research and teaching positions in Asian studies at The Australian

National University between 1986 and 2001. His books include *Nation in Arms* (1989), *The General Retires* (1992) and, with Monique Lockhart, *The Light of the Capital* (1996). Now a freelance writer, he has been appointed as the honorary historian of the Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia.

GROUP CAPTAIN IAN MACFARLING

Group Captain Ian MacFarling served in both the Royal New Zealand Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force. During his flying career as a navigator, he amassed a total of over 5650 flying hours in fifteen different types of aircraft. His last flying post was at the Aircraft Research and Development Unit, where he conducted a range of trials on weapons systems, navigation equipment, and aircraft performance. He finished that tour as the flight commander responsible for slow-speed aircraft testing.

His involvement with Indonesia began in the late 1960s, when he visited Jakarta in July 1968 as a member of No 14 Squadron RNZAF, the first British Commonwealth squadron to go there after Indonesia's confrontation with the newly formed Malaysia and its allies. He was a graduate of the Indonesian Command and Staff College, a native-level speaker in Bahasa Indonesia, and taught Indonesian politics at University College, The University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy. His doctorate from The University of New South Wales was on civil/military relations in Indonesia.

Group Captain MacFarling's final post in the RAAF was as Director of the Aerospace Centre. He retired from the RAAF on 6 September 2002 to become Professor of Southeast Asian Studies at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu.

It was with deep regret that we learned of Group Captain MacFarling's death in Honolulu on 10 March 2003. He collapsed and died, apparently from a massive heart attack, after returning from a run in preparation to participate in a marathon later in the year. Ian is survived by his wife Pamela and daughters Cecelia and Rebecca.

MR GERARD J. CASIUS

Mr Gerard J. Casius was born in Utrecht, the Netherlands in 1940. After serving his two-year National Service in the Royal Netherlands Air Force (1959–61), including a term at Biak in then still Dutch controlled Western New Guinea, he completed his studies with an Aeronautical Engineering degree. In his professional career he worked many years in engineering and management positions in the Netherlands, South America, the Caribbean and the United States, as well as a period with the UN (ICAO) Development Program in Africa. While in the United States, he obtained a second BS in Management. Before retiring in 1999, he served as vice president, international sales for a leading turbine engine overhaul company, based in the United States as well as the Netherlands, where he returned in 1992.

From a young age, Mr Casius was interested in the history of aviation in the former Netherlands East and West Indies. This interest led to a lifelong study of and many publications on this and other aviation subjects, including co-authorship of two books. Mr Casius is a member of several aviation history organisations in the Netherlands,

United States and United Kingdom. After retirement he was asked to carry out some research and organisational projects for the Dutch Military Aviation Museum. In 2000 he was invited to take over a volunteer position at the Royal Netherlands Air Force History Section to manage and expand the photographic and memento collection covering the former Netherlands East Indies Air Force.

CAPTAIN CLAYTON WEHNER

Captain Clayton Wehner joined the Australian Army in January 1992 and attended the Australian Defence Force Academy from 1992 to 1994, obtaining a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Political Science. After completing officer training at the Royal Military College Duntroon, Captain Wehner was allocated to the Australian Intelligence Corps. In 1995 he returned to ADFA to complete an Honours degree specialising in Australia–Indonesia relations. His thesis topic was: ‘The Provision of Australian Military Aircraft and Support to Indonesia under the Defence Cooperation Program’.

Since completing his studies, Captain Wehner has served as an infantry platoon commander and assistant adjutant at the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment in Townsville from 1997 to 1998, and as the S2 intelligence officer at the 51st Battalion, The Far North Queensland Regiment, Cairns, in 2000–01.

Captain Wehner is a Bahasa Indonesia linguist having completed the Bahasa Indonesia General Language Course at the Australian Defence Force School of Languages, Point Cook, in 1999. In 2001–02, he served as the Military Assistant and interpreter to Commander Sector West, UNTAET Peacekeeping Force, in Suai, East Timor.

Captain Wehner currently works at Australian Defence Headquarters at Russell Offices in Canberra and is studying part-time towards a Masters of Management Studies at The University of New South Wales. He is married to Jodi.

DR IAN PROUDFOOT

Dr Ian Proudfoot is a highly regarded academic in his field and lectures in the Faculty of Asian Studies at The Australian National University, where he teaches the course ‘Malaysia: A Developing Multicultural Society’.

MR PETER RIXON

Mr Peter Rixon joined the ADF in 1981, serving for the next 21 years with the Australian Army. Commissioned into the cavalry from the Royal Military College Duntroon, he then went on to serve with military intelligence, the Defence Material Organisation and as a sponsor of projects in the capability development arena. He retired from the Army in 2001 and joined the Australian Public Service, taking up his current appointment as Deputy Director Strategy Assessment with the Aerospace Centre. Mr Rixon has undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and is a certified PRINCE2 project management practitioner.

DR MILTON OSBORNE

A graduate of The University of Sydney (First Class Honours and the University Medal in History) and Cornell University (PhD in Southeast Asian History), Dr Milton Osborne has been associated with South-East Asia, and with Cambodia, Vietnam and Singapore in particular, since being posted to Phnom Penh as an Australian Foreign Service Officer in 1959.

After completing graduate study at Cornell in 1967, he held academic appointments in Australia, Britain, the United States and Singapore. From 1982 until mid-1993 he was Head of the Asia Branch of the Australian Government's Office of National Assessments. Before taking up that appointment and while a Senior Research Fellow at The Australian National University, he acted as a Consultant to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in relation to the Cambodian refugee problem, working along the Thai–Cambodian border.

Dr Osborne is the author of eight books on the history and politics of South-East Asia, including, *The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia* (Cornell University Press); *River Road to China: The Search for the Source of the Mekong, 1866–73* (Allen & Unwin), first published in 1975 and reissued in 1997; *Southeast Asia: An Illustrated Introductory History* (Allen & Unwin), now in its eighth Edition and the most widely used introduction to the subject; and *Sihanouk: Prince of Light, Prince of Darkness* (Allen & Unwin), the first full-length English-language biography of Cambodia's flamboyant leader, which was published in 1994. He has also contributed widely to journals, newspapers and magazines and is the author of the 'History of Cambodia' and part-author of the 'History of Vietnam' entries in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Both *Southeast Asia* and *Sihanouk* have been published in Japanese editions, with *Southeast Asia* recently published in Thai. His latest book, *The Mekong: Turbulent Past, Uncertain Future*, was published in Australia (Allen & Unwin) and the United States (Grove/Atlantic) in May 2000. This book also was published in paperback in New York and Sydney in 2001.

He has been a member of the editorial board of *The Australian Quarterly*, and a corresponding member of the editorial boards of *The Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Singapore, and *Modern Asian Studies*, Cambridge. He is a member of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, the American Association for Asian Studies, the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, and the Asian Arts Society of Australia.

Milton Osborne is now a full-time author and consultant on Asian issues. He has presented seminars and lectures in association with such bodies as The University of Sydney's Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, the Asia-Australia Institute of The University of New South Wales, and the Australian College of Defence and Strategic Studies, Canberra. In addition, he provides briefings to Australian individuals and companies developing links with Asia. In support of his work he visits South-East Asia frequently.

In 1997 Milton Osborne was invited to accept an appointment as a Visiting Fellow in the Faculty of Asian Studies at The Australian National University, Canberra.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABDACOM	Australian, British, Dutch, and American Forces Command
ACSC	Australian Command and Staff College
ADFA	Australian Defence Force Academy
AFC	Air Force Cross
AM	Member of the Order of Australia
AO	Officer of the Order of Australia
AURI	<i>Angkatan Udara Republik Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Air Force)
BMA	British Military Administration
BKR	<i>Badan Keamanan Rakyat</i> (People's Security Agency)
CSC	Conspicuous Service Cross
CT	Communist Terrorist
FEAF	Far East Air Force
HMS	Her Majesty's Ship [UK]
KNIL	<i>Koninklijk Nedlandsch Indisch Leger</i> (Dutch East Indies Army)
MCA	Malayan Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MPABA	Malayan Peoples' Anti-British Army
MPAJA	Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army
MRLA	Malayan Races Liberation Army
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NEI	Netherlands East Indies
NEIAF	Netherlands East Indies Air Force
NP	<i>Nam Phong</i> (Southern Wind)
PETA	<i>Pembela Tanah Air</i> ('Defenders of the Homeland')
PKI	Indonesian Communist Party
POW	Prisoner of War
PP	<i>Persatuan Perjuangan</i> (Struggle Union)
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAPWI	Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees
RI	Republik Indonesia
RN	Royal Navy
RSAF	Republic of Singapore Air Force
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
SEAC	South East Asia Command
SLOC	Sea Lines of Communications
STOL	Short Take-Off and Landing
TNI	<i>Tentara Nasional Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Republican Army)
UK	United Kingdom
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USAF	United States Air Force
USS	United States Ship
VJ	Victory over Japan
VNQDD	Vietnam Nationalist Party

OPENING ADDRESS

AIR MARSHAL ANGUS HOUSTON, AM, AFC

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, a very warm welcome to this tenth Royal Australian Air Force History Conference.

Today we break new ground. Where our previous conferences have dealt with the subject of Royal Australian Air Force history, this one embraces a much broader area of interest. The topic of this conference is *Air Power and Wars of National Liberation*. Essentially, these were wars of decolonisation. Three areas will come under examination: France and Indochina, the Netherlands in the Dutch East Indies, and the British Commonwealth in Malaya.

Each of these upheavals was the result of a long historical process, but they were precipitated by the defeat of Japan in 1945. The European powers that had previously colonised Indochina, the Dutch East Indies and Malaya during an age of imperial expansion, felt that they had the right to return and reclaim their colonies. In each instance they encountered resistance or rejection, an expression of nationalism by the indigenous people. The enduring theme is one of imperial and national dissonance. There are some fascinating questions that arise out of the struggles that developed. Hopefully, these issues will arise in today's discussions.

Firstly, how could a technologically advanced power find itself unable to deal with a popular insurgency? Secondly, what are the limits to the application of combat power, specifically air power? Thirdly, how did different cultural perspectives—different world views—shape the interaction and outcome? Next, what were the differences between Malaya, Indochina and the Dutch East Indies? What are the enduring lessons for Australia in our relationship to our region? What are the lessons for the employment of air power?

Papers will be presented by a number of distinguished Australian academics and, for the first time at a Royal Australian Air Force History Conference, two visitors from overseas. Each speaker will be introduced as we proceed, but at the outset let me extend to you a very warm welcome, especially to those who have travelled a long way to be here today. I hope that today will be as enjoyable and informative experience for you as it will be for us.

As we have done for all our history conferences, the papers and proceedings will be published, adding to the historical record for further research and education. I trust that the presentations will not only be informative but they will also promote some lively debate during the discussion periods. Let me encourage you to participate.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased to open the tenth Royal Australian Air Force History Conference – *Air Power and Wars of National Liberation*.

SAVAGE WARS OF PEACE: MOUNTBATTEN AND SOUTH EAST ASIA COMMAND 1945–46

PROFESSOR PETER DENNIS

When looking at the unfolding events in South-East Asia in 1945–46, our focus is invariably on the circumstances surrounding the end of the war against Japan and the attempts to establish peace in the region, if not to restore the status quo *ante bellum*. The ending of the war and the establishment of peaceful conditions was certainly the primary task assigned to Vice-Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia Command (SEAC), but that should not bind us in all circumstances to the perspective that Mountbatten necessarily and properly brought to his task.¹ There were, in fact, a number of perspectives, and from the distance of 50 years and with the incomparable benefit of hindsight we can now see, as indeed some individuals saw at the time (if only dimly), that the period under question was one of immense change, the intersection of several strands of Western and South-East Asian developments.

For the West, 1945 marked the triumphant end of the war against Japan and went some way towards restoring the imperial prestige that had been so shattered in 1942. For the peoples of South-East Asia, it marked the end of a brutal Japanese occupation, but an occupation that had been cloaked in the rhetoric of the ‘Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Scheme’ that was, at least in theory, designed to enshrine the principle of ‘Asia for the Asians’. Nationalist movements, which existed well before the shattering events of 1941–42, drew inspiration from the Japanese destruction of the myth of European colonial supremacy but did not subscribe for the most part to the Japanese substitute. Instead those movements capitalised on the apparent weakness of the West and, when the Japanese showed themselves in a different way to be no less weak, they seized the opportunity to push their various political agendas that had long been brewing.

In other words, the situation in South-East Asia was far more complex than Mountbatten and his subordinates—and indeed, his superiors—expected. They encountered the intersection of the problems arising out of the end of a prolonged war

¹ I have dealt at length with Mountbatten’s trials and tribulations in *Troubled Days of Peace: Mountbatten and South East Asia Command, 1945–46*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1987. Since then I have looked at the main problems from several different angles—and have moderated some of my earlier conclusions: ‘Peacemaking/Peacekeeping Southeast Asia 1945–46’, in Serge Bernier (ed), *Peacekeeping 1815 to Today: Proceedings of the XXIst Colloquium of the International Commission of Military History*, Department of National Defence, Ottawa, 1995, pp 362–70; ‘From War to Peace: Southeast Asia 1945–1946’, in Peter Dennis (ed), *1945: War and Peace in the Pacific*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1999, pp 95–105; ‘Netherlands East Indies 1945–1947: An Unwelcome Commitment’, in Julian Thompson (ed), *The Imperial War Museum Book of Modern Warfare: British and Commonwealth Forces at War 1945–2000*, Sidgwick & Jackson in association with the Imperial War Museum, London, 2002, pp 29–48. Philip Zeigler’s biography of Mountbatten (*Mountbatten: The Official Biography*, Collins, London, 1985) covers his long and fascinating career; see especially Chapter 24. My own study of one part of Mountbatten’s career is more critical but, as I said in my conclusion in *Troubled Days of Peace*, no less admiring.

and the explosion, in circumstances that had not existed before, of nationalist movements willing and able to use military force. Some of the first set of problems were anticipated, if not always on the scale and in the detail that were encountered; few of the second initially entered into Allied calculations.

The ending of the war against Japan came unexpectedly. All the Allied theatres had been preparing for a prolonged struggle against Japan as Allied forces drew closer to the home islands. The most optimistic predictions looked to victory in 1946, and 1947 and beyond was not ruled out. In terms of SEAC, Mountbatten was planning to use the victory in Burma to launch a major offensive against Malaya. The capture of the British heartland in South-East Asia, including Singapore, would be of immense geopolitical and symbolic importance, and would provide a secure base from which imperial control could be extended to reclaim those areas lost in 1942. British resources would be used to re-establish British prestige.

Things turned out very differently. First, at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, Mountbatten was informed of two things. He was told that the Allies, specifically the United States, now possessed a weapon—the atomic bomb—that would dramatically shorten the war, dramatically both in terms of the time span that now was measured in days and at most weeks, and also in terms of the nature of the military end—not a drawn-out campaign of huge casualties on both sides, but an unprecedented single blow against the Japanese homeland. Second, he was informed that the boundaries of SEAC had been changed. General Douglas MacArthur, intent on his messianic drive to the Philippines and the fulfilment of his promise to return, divested his South West Pacific Area Command of those parts he no longer deemed of central importance to the achievement of his mission. Java and the eastern territories of the Netherlands East Indies and the southern half of French Indochina were transferred to SEAC.

At a stroke, therefore, Mountbatten's area of operations was vastly enlarged. Now, instead of dealing with British Malaya and Burma, he was responsible for the whole of the Netherlands East Indies and half of French Indochina—'other people's empires'—and not in the wake of a great military victory in the theatre itself but as a consequence of a distant, and barely comprehended, single act of unprecedented technological violence. The result was that when Mountbatten stood on the steps of the City Hall in Singapore on 12 September 1945, presiding over the surrender ceremony, the justified sense of triumph had a certain hollowness. Except for Burma and some of the outlying islands of the East Indies, the Japanese in the enlarged SEAC had not been engaged by Allied forces, and the returning Allied troops had not demonstrated to those they were supposedly liberating that they were superior in military terms to the Japanese. Certainly they had done nothing to restore Allied prestige in the wake of the disaster of 1942 or, more immediately, to suggest that the return of imperial control was in the natural order of things.

Mountbatten's tasks, as laid down by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, were clear and deceptively simple, and they were couched entirely in terms of winding up the war against Japan. He was charged with disarming Japanese troops and making provision for their eventual repatriation to Japan, locating and repatriating an unknown number—but estimated to be in the thousands—of Allied prisoners of war and civilian internees, and making provision for the return of imperial control—the Dutch in the Netherlands East Indies, the French in Indochina, and of course the British in

Burma, Malaya and Singapore. Each of these tasks was difficult enough in itself, but the fact that Mountbatten had to operate in a setting that was both the end of a war and was also a new and radical stage in a series of nationalist revolutions presented him, his commanders and troops with a situation that was unprecedented and completely unexpected.

Japanese successes in 1942 in South-East Asia had been so total that the Allies were almost completely shut out of the area for the remainder of the war. The result was that they remained largely ignorant of the political changes that their defeat had created. They failed to appreciate that the British surrender at Singapore, followed shortly after by the collapse of Dutch resistance in the Netherlands East Indies had forever shattered the fundamental promise of empire; that is, the guarantee against external aggression. In every case the Allies thought they would be greeted as liberators who had freed their colonial subjects from the yoke of Japanese brutality. For the most part, it is true, there was widespread relief that the era of Japanese occupation was over, but it was not accompanied by any sense that the clock could be turned back to what had been before Pearl Harbor and the fall of Singapore. Too much had happened since then, but much of what had happened was unknown to the imperial powers.

In the Netherlands East Indies the Japanese had cultivated some of the nationalist leaders, hoping to enlist them in the campaign against Western imperialism. Men such as Sukarno had worked with the Japanese, but for *his* ends, not theirs, and when the Japanese at the very end of the war urged Sukarno to proclaim an Indonesian Republic, thereby to queer the pitch for a return of the Dutch, Sukarno eagerly did so, but on a day of *his* choosing, not the Japanese preferred date, in order to establish his independence from all imperial control, Western or Japanese. Under pressure from President Roosevelt, Queen Wilhelmina had made a radio broadcast in December 1942, with vague promises of a new political structure for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, but it offered far too little, and when the former Lieutenant-Governor of the Netherlands East Indies (and now Minister of Colonies) Dr Hubertus van Mook tried to add some detail to the very broad outline offered by the Queen, he was promptly disavowed by his own government. In truth the Dutch were not in a position to offer much more: the Netherlands were occupied by German troops, the Dutch Government was in exile in London, the war was not going well, and it hardly seemed the right time to advance proposals for radical change.²

The case of French Indochina was even more complicated. With the fall of France in mid-1940 and the establishment of the Vichy Government under Marshal Pétain, France was torn apart. The Free French movement, eventually under Charles de Gaulle in London, bitterly opposed Vichy as collaborationist, and was in turn condemned and proscribed by Vichy. In Indochina, the government reflected the changes in metropolitan France, and a Vichy administration was installed in 1940 and allowed to remain in power by the Japanese after 1941. Not until March 1945 did the Japanese stage a *coup d'état* and replace the Vichy Government with its own administration. By then France had been liberated, and de Gaulle and his Free French

² See Yong Mun Cheong, *H.J. van Mook and Indonesian Independence: A Study of His Role in Dutch-Indonesian Relations, 1945–48*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1982.

movement had made the eradication of Vichy from French political life (and from French memory) one of its prime goals.³

In Malaya, British resistance to the Japanese had been coordinated by Lieutenant Colonel Spencer Chapman's Force 136,⁴ the greater part of whose field operatives were part of the Malayan Communist Party's Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army. Its leadership accepted the overall authority of SEAC from 1943, but clearly expected a reciprocal recognition of its contribution when the war was over. Herein lay part of the origins of the Malayan Emergency that was declared in 1948. In the immediate aftermath of the Japanese surrender a British Military Administration was established: it proved to be both corrupt and incompetent, and did much to create the circumstances in which the Malayan Communist Party could flourish. British attempts to create a new constitutional framework—the Malayan Union—alienated all the racial groups in Malaya, further adding to the Malayan Communist Party's appeal in at least some of those communities.⁵

How was Mountbatten to accomplish his tasks? He had inadequate forces at his disposal, and even more inadequate shipping, both to get his own forces to the required areas, and to move Japanese troops and Allied POWs and internees out of the theatre. The whole area teetered on the brink of famine as the fighting in Burma destroyed the agricultural infrastructure of the rice bowl of South-East Asia. There were virtually no trained Dutch or French troops available, and the British troops that Mountbatten had were largely veterans of the Burma campaign—many of them long-term conscripts anxious to return home. The bulk of his forces, however, were Indian, and the Indian Government constantly pressed Mountbatten to return them to India where growing unrest made their presence desirable for internal security purposes.

Disarming the Japanese proved to be very difficult. Many of the Japanese, in defiance of post-surrender orders from SEAC, handed their weapons over to the nationalist forces. When British troops landed in Batavia, capital of the Netherlands East Indies, in early September 1945—that is several weeks after the formal Japanese surrender—they were confronted by a large nationalist force that was well-armed and in control of much of the city, and backed by a populace that was eagerly awaiting not British or Dutch forces as representatives of their respective colonial powers, but American forces, the anti-imperialist power that would surely support their nationalist dreams. In anticipation of the arrival of the Americans they painted slogans on the city walls—quotations from the US Declaration of Independence and the speeches of Abraham Lincoln—only to find that Mountbatten's message was that he was charged with making it possible for the Dutch to resume control.

The rescuing of Allied POWs and internees quickly became caught up in the political storm that was developing. Mountbatten could quite properly argue that the rescue

³ See Paul Isoart (ed), *L'Indochine Française 1940–1945*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1982.

⁴ Force 136 was a British-led, anti-Japanese guerrilla unit that operated in Malaya during World War II.

⁵ See Albert Lau, *The Malayan Union Controversy 1942–1948*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1991; and Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948–1960*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1993, especially Chapter 1 on the British Military Administration.

program was a pressing humanitarian concern, and that the advance of his troops into the hinterland to locate and secure POW and internee camps had no ulterior motive, but distrust ran deep on the nationalist side and there was increasing suspicion that the rescue mission was being used as a cover for the growing control of the Netherlands East Indies by SEAC forces, which themselves were to be the vanguard for the return of the Dutch. It did not take long, therefore, for some of the nationalists to realise that control of the POWs and internees and access to them could be a useful bargaining tool in negotiations with the forces of SEAC.

Mountbatten's own views quickly changed. In the first instance he interpreted his mission very narrowly, that is purely in terms of tidying up the loose ends of the war against Japan and making it possible for the 'rightful' powers to resume their pre-war positions. He made it clear that he had no intention of entering into talks, let alone negotiations with any of the nationalist groups who had seized upon the delay in the Allied arrival—the so-called 'interregnum'—to consolidate their hold over key areas in both the Netherlands East Indies and southern Indochina. It was not long before he was disabused of such a simplistic approach. Lieutenant General Sir Philip Christison, General Officer Commanding 15th Indian Corps in the Arakan campaign in Burma, was appointed to spearhead the Allied re-entry into Java through Batavia. Just before leaving for Batavia, Christison gave a press conference in Singapore in which he said that he intended to occupy only key areas, that he would not include any Dutch troops in his force because the nationalists had said they would oppose such inclusion by force, and that as soon as possible he would convene talks with the nationalists and the Dutch and bring them face-to-face, 'something', he added, 'that the Dutch have steadfastly refused to do'. His comments caused uproar in Dutch circles: they amounted, the Dutch claimed, to a virtual recognition of the nationalists and their cause. The Dutch were determined that nothing be done that would, directly or indirectly, confer any sort of recognition on the nationalists. Apart from their determination to restore the old imperial order, however it might be dressed up in the concessions of the 1942 broadcast, they were constrained by the fact that in their eyes Sukarno and many of his associates were collaborators. How could they negotiate with such people when at the same time some 80,000 Dutch citizens in the Netherlands were awaiting trial on charges of collaborating with the Nazis. It was a perfectly valid point when viewed in terms of the war—that is, the past—it was irrelevant in terms of the present and the future, especially in the Netherlands East Indies.

Christison was rebuked by Mountbatten for his barely concealed criticism of the Dutch, but Christison was in fact only repeating the advice he had been given by the visiting Secretary of State for War, namely that:

... nothing must be done to suggest your troops are going to reimpose Dutch colonial rule. The Dutch and any rebel factions must be allowed to sort things out for themselves. You may, though, use your good offices to arrange [a] meeting if this seems necessary.

It quickly became clear to Christison that it was necessary. The simple fact was that nationalist forces controlled much of the hinterland, access to which was vital if POWs and internees were to be rescued quickly. There were increasing numbers of reports of their deteriorating conditions, and their numbers grew rapidly as more

camps were located. In only three areas of central Java—Batavia and several provincial cities—some 68,000 POWs and internees had been found. Clearly their repatriation was going to be a massive undertaking. Equally clearly, like it or not, nationalist forces had some degree of control over those areas in which rescue operations would have to be mounted. More than anything else, pragmatic considerations, dealing with the situation as it was, meant that the nationalists would have to be included in any calculations, for or against. Theirs was a real presence, whereas the Dutch were still very much on the sidelines. Furthermore, the Dutch seemed unable to agree among themselves. When the Deputy Governor of the Netherlands East Indies, Dr Charles van der Plas, arrived in Batavia on 15 September 1945, he arranged for Queen Wilhelmina's 1942 speech to be rebroadcast. Nationalist leaders welcomed it as an indication of Dutch willingness to make political concessions, and accepted that British forces had no ulterior political motives but were simply trying to accomplish the rescue of POWs and internees. Van Mook, however, repudiated van der Plas and his initiative in broadcasting the speech, and flatly ruled out any accommodation with the nationalists, whose leaders he thought had little real control over their subordinates.

Mountbatten himself soon came to appreciate that the situation that confronted Christison was far removed from what either of them had been led to expect. After briefings from the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Land Forces South East Asia, General Sir William Slim, who had visited Batavia to see conditions first-hand, Mountbatten put his dilemma squarely to the Chiefs of Staff and the Foreign Office in London. If he took a restricted view of his mission, and limited himself to recovering POWs and internees and paving the way for the return of Dutch forces, then a limited military involvement would be possible, and British operational deployment could be confined to the areas around Batavia and Surabaya. If, however, his mission was extended to include the whole of Java, let alone the rest of the Netherlands East Indies, then some sort of accommodation would be necessary between the Dutch and the nationalists. If that was not achieved, the SEAC's military involvement would be hugely extended. Such an extension, however, would run counter to the British Government's intention of repatriating and demobilising its own forces as quickly as possible, and to the Indian Government's insistence that its troops be returned to India forthwith. Rather than give Mountbatten clear directives, the Defence Committee, under pressure from the Foreign Office which felt that Mountbatten was far too ready to concede recognition to the nationalist forces, sought further information.

Events got tragically out of control in eastern Java. In late October 1945, units of 49th Brigade arrived at Surabaya and quickly established a bridgehead, reinforcing their determination to brook no resistance with a flight of twelve Thunderbolts over the city. The following day, the British commander, Brigadier Mallaby, reached an understanding with the nationalist leaders: they would disarm the unruly mobs but their own structured forces would retain their weapons and would assist in the POW and internee recovery process. It was a pragmatic and sensible arrangement that seemed to allow British forces to accomplish their primary goal at minimal cost, but it was derailed when, without reference to Mallaby, a Dakota out of Batavia dropped thousands of leaflets over Surabaya calling for the surrender of all arms to British forces and the acknowledgment of British authority. Charges of bad faith were inevitably made, the more radical elements in the nationalist camp gained the upper hand, Mallaby was killed while attempting to calm the crowds, and the situation

spiralled out of control. A British ultimatum to the nationalists was backed by the landing of the 5th Indian Division at Surabaya on 9 November 1945 and reinforced by the deployment of Thunderbolts and Mosquitos from Batavia and naval artillery from three destroyers anchored off shore. The British were opposed by a force of about 100,000, and not until late December, after costly and protracted street-by-street fighting, was a semblance of peace restored. One estimate put Indonesian casualties at 15,000.

British force of arms prevailed at Surabaya and in one sense cleared the way for a more rapid recovery and repatriation of POWs and internees. But it also created a new problem. The fighting polarised the population, and as the scale of nationalist atrocities increased, many local people sought the protection of British forces. By the end of 1945 this group, named IFTUs (Inhabitants Friendly To Us), numbered scores of thousands. The Dutch demanded that British forces be responsible for their security, but to do so would have enormously expanded Mountbatten's task, and the Chiefs of Staff in London ruled that he was not to provide for their safety.

The Surabaya crisis fuelled the demands of nationalist forces elsewhere in the Netherlands East Indies. As an example of how complex the situation quickly became, consider the events that unfolded at Semarang, on the central north coast of Java. The Japanese force in the area at the time of the Japanese surrender, the Kido Battalion, had handed its weapons over the nationalists—in blatant defiance of the Allied order—and promptly interned itself in the local gaol, there to await the arrival of Allied troops. For reasons that are not clear, local nationalists gradually removed a number of the Japanese and tortured and killed them. This eventually provoked an uprising on the part of the prisoners who, armed only with sticks and stones, overpowered their captors, regained their weapons and fought their way out of the compound. As they moved towards the harbour they ran into the 3/10th Gurkha Battalion, which had just landed. There was a brief fire fight until both sides realised they were in effect opposing a common foe, the nationalists. Thereafter the Kido Battalion fought under British command, was included on the 49th Brigade's order of battle, and performed so well that it was suggested that the unit be awarded a British commendation. This was a political embarrassment to the British Government, just as was the publication in the British press of photographs showing Japanese military police in Saigon directing traffic and issuing infringement notices to British soldiers.

At the same time as British forces were battling nationalist troops to rescue POWs and internees, they also benefited from a measure of cooperation from the nationalists, especially in the areas around Surabaya. This infuriated the Dutch who complained that while the British were only too willing to work with the nationalists when it suited their ends, they were doing little or nothing to assist in the movement of Dutch forces to the Netherlands East Indies. The former charge was true: a pragmatic assessment of the situation convinced Christison, and then Mountbatten, that the nationalists had to be part of any successful process, whatever the long term implications might be. The latter charge was also true, but only in part. Much as the British wanted to get out of the Netherlands East Indies as quickly as they could, once they had accomplished their primary humanitarian, end-of-war task, they were reluctant to see large numbers of Dutch troops introduced too early. They regarded the Dutch as unreliable, vengeful and trigger-happy, whose presence would only delay, probably at great cost, the POW and internee rescue mission. However, the question

of sending Dutch troops to the Netherlands East Indies was not one for the British to decide. Shipping was controlled by the Allied Shipping Board which decided, under pressure from the United States, that the movement of troops to areas such as the Netherlands East Indies or Indochina were not essential war-related tasks. Furthermore, the United States ruled in September 1945 that American facilities for the training of the Dutch Marine Landing Force would not be extended to the additional numbers requested by the Dutch once it became clear that their return to the Netherlands East Indies would be opposed by nationalist troops. (American pressure, in particular from MacArthur, also severely restricted the amount of shipping available for the repatriation of Japanese troops from South-East Asia, so that by the time Mountbatten left in May 1946, barely 47,000 Japanese had been returned to their homeland.)

The situation in Indochina was even more complicated. When SEAC was established in 1943, Indochina was excluded from its boundaries. Roosevelt regarded the French administration as the least defensible of the colonial powers, and clearly marked out Indochina for American and Chinese domination. American opposition to imperialism was, in Roosevelt's mind, most keenly directed against the French. British attempts to ameliorate American hostility to the French colonial record merely increased suspicions of Britain's own position, which had already led to some American critics to dub SEAC as 'Save England's Asian Colonies'. When SEAC's boundaries were changed to include the southern half of Indochina, the directive given to the British commander in southern Indochina, Major-General Douglas Gracey, was similar to that of Christison in the Netherlands East Indies. He was to disarm and repatriate Japanese forces, he was to locate and repatriate Allied POWs and internees, and he was to maintain law and order until the French were ready to resume control. Unlike the Dutch, however, the French were unwilling to take over from the British until they were able to bring overwhelming force to bear against the Viet Minh who had established a provisional government in late August 1945 and established effective control over the three main cities of Hanoi, Hue and Saigon. French plans to move forces to Indochina were hampered by President Truman's decision to stop the Lend-Lease program immediately following the surrender of Germany, and by the restrictions of the Allied Shipping Pool on the use of vessels to transport forces for what the Americans saw as political purposes, that is the restoration of colonial control. The troops best prepared and most readily available, the Madagascar Brigade, were ruled out because they were mainly black, and the French authorities thought that it would be unwise to use them to restore the prestige of white rule. That left for immediate use the 11th Colonial Infantry Regiment which had been imprisoned by the Japanese following the March 1945 coup against the Vichy administration. Released from captivity, the Regiment went on a murderous rampage in Saigon in an attempt to avenge its humiliation and to punish those local inhabitants whom it thought had welcomed its confinement.

Undeterred by this display of unrestrained aggression, Gracey further allied himself with the French cause. He rejected any suggestion of talks with the Viet Minh or other local political groups, and when they refused to bow to his demands for absolute compliance with his orders, threatened to unleash the full might of British warships, aircraft, tanks and ground forces against them. When that failed to curb their activities he deployed aircraft to bomb and strafe their positions and sent in troops to burn their huts and houses. The contrast with Christison's approach in the Netherlands East

Indies could hardly have been greater. Mountbatten was appalled, and was hardly reassured by Gracey's comments that if the matter had been left to the French they would have destroyed many more dwellings. Whether or not in August–September there was a chance for a peaceful and constructive settlement in Indochina that would have avoided the tragedies of the next 25 years is a moot point.⁶ What is surely indisputable is that a policy that looked back to the pre-war situation and that was applied in the narrowest sense, ignoring the new realities that had arisen, contributed in no small part to the problems of Indochina for the next several decades. In the Netherlands East Indies, Christison was reviled by the Dutch; in Indochina, at the point of his departure, Gracey was made an honorary citizen of Saigon by the French administration, the first time in the city's history that that honour had been bestowed.⁷

In all these developments the United States played a very secondary role. Although the Pacific War was essentially America's war, its interest in the various regions of Asia and the Pacific seemed to fade as the battle perimeter around Japan shrank. Truman had none of Roosevelt's interest in dismantling colonial empires, which might otherwise have caused the United States to become more actively involved in the unfolding political situations throughout South-East Asia, nor was he interested in the region as a whole. What American interest there was centred on China and Japan. In the wider picture the Europeanists in the State Department were gaining the upper hand as fear grew of the Soviet Union. Europe was the centre of United States attention, and Britain, France and the Netherlands were more important for their potential role in a post-war, anti-Soviet Europe than they were a matter of concern because of their imperial interests in South-East Asia.⁸

Let me conclude by referring back to the title of my paper. I took the 'Savage Wars of Peace' from the third stanza of Rudyard Kipling's famous—some would say infamous—poem, 'The White Man's Burden':

Take up the White Man's burden—
The savage wars of peace—
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease.
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch Sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought.

Kipling began the poem after Kitchener's victory over the Madhi at the battle of Omdurman in the Sudan in September 1898 to avenge the death at Khartoum of General Gordon. He was polishing the verse as the situation in South Africa sharply

⁶ See David G. Marr, 'Was There a Peaceful Window of Opportunity in Vietnam, August–September 1945?' in Dennis (ed), *1945: War and Peace in the Pacific*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1999, pp 127–41; and his authoritative account, *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995.

⁷ A more favourable assessment of Gracey's role in southern Indochina is provided by Peter Dunn, *The First Vietnam War*, C. Hurst, London, 1985.

⁸ The best overall analysis of the United States position is Robert J. McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945–49*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1981, although I think that McMahon credits the Truman administration with far too much insight into the realities of the Netherlands East Indies situation in the immediate post-surrender period.

deteriorated, soon to lead to the outbreak of the Boer War. But it was the Philippines that attracted his attention. In the Spanish American War of 1898, imperial Spain was defeated by the New World democracy of the United States. Kipling's poem was both a call to the United States to take its place among the imperial, civilising, nations of the West, and a sombre reminder that imperial glory also brought with it thankless burdens and responsibilities. Two days after 'The White Man's Burden' was published in the London *Times* on 4 February 1899, dedicated to 'The United States and the Philippine Islands', the US Senate voted to annex the Philippines. Several days after that decision, a revolt broke out in Luzon against the American military occupation. The 'savage wars of peace' in South-East Asia had begun, and were to rage, on and off, for the next 75 years.

THE FRENCH IN INDOCHINA: THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT

PROFESSOR CARLYLE A. THAYER

INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses three questions: why France colonised Indochina, how the French weathered World War II in South-East Asia, and why France re-colonised Indochina after Japan's defeat.¹ It should be noted that France (or 'the French') is not a unitary actor. This chapter will make reference to the differing views of missionaries, businessmen, government officials, and the military (especially the Navy) both in Paris and in Asia.

French colonialism in Indochina must be set in the larger context of European conquest in the Far East that was driven by conflicting motivations: interstate rivalry, acquisition of riches (spices) and propagation of religion. The French in Indochina were preceded by the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and English. Indeed, Portuguese, Dutch and English trading posts were opened on the central coast of Vietnam in the 16th century, long before the arrival of the French.

THE FRENCH COLONISATION OF INDOCHINA

There are three main reasons why France colonised Indochina. The first was religious. French missionaries sought freedom to proselytise. After they established themselves they then demanded an end to religious persecution against converts and punishment for Vietnamese officials responsible. The French Society of Foreign Missions was established in 1664 and the first French missionary contacts with Indochina took place in the remaining years of the 17th century.

The second reason was to promote trade and commercial interests. In 1664, sixty years after the Dutch and the English, the French East India Company was founded. It established a presence in Vietnam sixteen years later.² According to a contemporary account by an English businessman, 'the French have arrived in Vietnam but we cannot make out whether they are here to seek trade or to conduct religious propaganda'.³ By the end of the 17th century, however, trade with Vietnam had dwindled to such an extent that all of the European powers withdrew from their trading posts except Portugal.

The third reason was to advance national power and prestige. France came to Indochina in the larger context of its rivalry with Britain. In 1676 France established a

¹ This chapter draws heavily on Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam*, F.A. Praeger, New York, 1958; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, Vol 1, 'From Colonialism to the Vietminh', F.A. Praeger, New York, 1967; and Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, Viking Press, New York, 1983.

² Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, p 208.

³ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 61.

base at Pondicherry on India's east coast decades after England. There was a renewed French push into Asia in the 1840s after the Opium Wars.

Spreading Christianity

The first French missionary in Indochina was the legendary Jesuit priest Alexandre de Rhodes who arrived in 1627 and worked through the established Portuguese missionary network at Faifo. Rhodes opened the gate to French influence in Vietnam.⁴ He had a flair for learning the Vietnamese language and is responsible for creating the modern Romanised script—*quoc ngu*—in use today. Because of his linguistic abilities Rhodes was posted to Hanoi where he is credited with baptising 6700 Vietnamese converts.

The Vietnamese response to Christian missionary activities was contradictory and unpredictable. It swung from toleration to persecution.⁵ When the Vietnamese court banned missionary activity, some missionaries disguised themselves as merchants.⁶ In 1630 Rhodes was arrested and then banished for his religious activities. He returned to the south and then to Macao. He returned to Vietnam repeatedly over the next decade. In 1645 Rhodes was rearrested, sentenced to death and expelled once again. Of the nine priests who accompanied him, seven had their fingers cut off and two were beheaded.

Rhodes sought to develop missionary activity outside Portuguese control. He lobbied the Vatican unsuccessfully to permit French missionaries to work in Indochina. He then went to Paris where he lobbied religious and commercial leaders. He portrayed Vietnam as an 'El Dorado' that was ripe for religious conversion and commercial profit.⁷ During his life, Rhodes was transformed from a missionary into an advocate of imperialism. This same pattern would be repeated by other men of the cloth. Rhodes died in 1660.

One prime example of the missionary turned imperialist is the case of Apostolic Vicar François Pallu. In 1658 he became a vocal advocate of cooperation between the Catholic Church and business. From his vantage point in Vietnam he wrote reports to both the French East India Company and to the French Foreign Minister. In one letter, for example, he advocated using military means to oust the Dutch.⁸

After the end of the Seven Years War (1756–63), France sought a strategic location to interdict British shipping between China and India. In 1778 France dispatched a ship to explore the islands off Vietnam as a suitable base. Also that same year the British seized Pondicherry and Chandernagor from the French. Thereafter, France was motivated to recover from this loss.⁹ Anglo-French rivalry also extended to the New World, where France was poised to enter America's war of independence on the side of the colonial settlers.

⁴ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 214–17.

⁵ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 59; and Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 221–22.

⁶ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, p 220.

⁷ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 60; and Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 216–17.

⁸ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 218–19.

⁹ *ibid*, p 226.

Commerce

By the 18th century the French had accomplished little in Vietnam. The Vietnamese court had grown so suspicious of foreigners that it placed restrictions on their activities. For example, in the mid-18th century Pierre Poivre switched from missionary work to trade.¹⁰ He received a license to open a post in Tourane, the site of present day Da Nang. In 1768, faced with bankruptcy due to Vietnamese restrictions, he decided to punish the Vietnamese. He teamed up with a buccaneer and together they drew up plans to seize Tourane militarily. Poivre's plan failed because there was little enthusiasm for imperial ventures in France at that time.

For two centuries Vietnam was racked by civil war between two competing dynasties, the Trinh in the north and Nguyen in the south. In 1772 a massive peasant rebellion broke out which took the name Tay Son from the village where it originated. The Tay Son rebels conquered the south first and then the north. Vietnamese instability at this time offered the French an opportunity to intervene in Vietnam.

In 1775 Nguyen remnants fled to Phu Quoc island where they came into contact with Monsignor Pierre Pigneau de Béhaine who had been conducting missionary activity for a decade. Pigneau became Nguyen Anh's adviser. In 1784, when Nguyen Anh failed in an attempt to retake Saigon, Pigneau convinced him to request French assistance.¹¹ Nguyen Anh entrusted his son, Prince Nguyen Canh, to Pigneau's care. They both travelled to France where Pigneau and his young charge were received in court at Versailles. There, Pigneau warned French officials that Britain would seize Vietnam and offered a military plan to ward off this threat. In 1787, after negotiations, Pigneau was successful in securing a treaty between King Louis XVI and Nguyen Anh. Under the terms of this document, France agreed to provide 1650 men, arms, and transport in support of Nguyen Anh. In return, Nguyen Anh agreed to cede Tourane and Poulo Condore, and to grant France commercial privileges 'to the exclusion of all other European nations'.¹²

During Pigneau's return voyage, King Louis reneged on the treaty.¹³ When Pigneau arrived at Pondicherry, he successfully convinced French merchants to fund his efforts. With their support he hired mercenaries and naval gunnery officers. At this time the Tay Son rebels were torn by internal dissent. Prince Canh finally defeated them in 1799. Pigneau died during the course of this campaign. In 1802 Nguyen Anh ascended the throne and proclaimed himself Emperor Gia Long (1802–1820). Gia Long's loyalty had been to Pigneau not France.

Gia Long was succeeded by Ming Manh (1820–1841).¹⁴ Ming Manh rebuffed French efforts to negotiate a treaty with him. During his reign there were over two hundred uprisings against his rule. Because the Emperor suspected Christians of siding with local leaders, he proscribed Christianity. At that time there were an estimated three

¹⁰ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 61; and Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 229–32.

¹¹ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 233–37.

¹² *ibid*, p 238.

¹³ *ibid*, pp 238–41.

¹⁴ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 243 and 273–80; and Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, pp 66–68. For an overview of developments between 1802 and 1858 consult: Mark W. McLeod, *The Vietnamese Response to French Intervention, 1862–1874*, F.A. Praeger, New York, 1991, pp 13–40.

hundred thousand converts. In 1833 when Christians were implicated in an uprising, Ming Manh not only ruthlessly suppressed the rebels but also executed ten missionaries suspected of supporting them. In 1835 he issued an edict banning the entry of any further missionaries.

Religious persecution continued under the reign of Ming Manh's successors, Emperors Thieu Tri (1841–1847)¹⁵ and Tu Duc (1847–1883).¹⁶ Thieu Tri denounced French priests as foreign agents, but fearful of reprisals he did not order the execution of a single missionary during his reign. When missionaries were arrested they were later freed because Thieu Tri sought to offer no pretext for foreign intervention. Under Tu Duc, several thousands of native converts were put to death along with twenty-five foreign priests.

There was a marked rise in religious sentiment in France under the Bourbon monarchs in the aftermath of the French Revolution and Napoleonic era. After 1819, French missionaries renewed their agitation to spread religion in Vietnam.¹⁷ In the 19th century when French military intervention failed to attract support from native Catholic converts, the influence of the Church on French policy waned.¹⁸ In 1830 King Louis Philippe suppressed the militant Catholic clergy completely. Considerations of trade, commerce and profit, which had always been background factors, now became more prominent in France's push into Indochina.

Imperialism

The desire for commercial profit became linked with the drive for national prestige as the prime motivators for French imperialism.¹⁹ Overseas colonies were seen as a natural extension of the metropole, *France outre mer*, and a reflection of French national grandeur. Missionaries and the French Navy became natural allies. In 1840, they were instrumental in rebuffing envoys of Emperor Minh Mang who had come to France in an attempt to deter military intervention.

The opening up of China to foreign trade, following the Opium War in 1841, spurred French interest in seeking markets elsewhere in Asia. In 1843 a permanent French fleet was deployed to Asia to protect and defend France's political and commercial interests.²⁰ This included the rescue of missionaries whose persecution now became a convenient pretext for intervention. The scene was set for the era of imperialism and repeated French military intervention in Vietnam.

In 1844 Dominique Lefèbvre, a French missionary, joined in a plot to overthrow the Vietnamese Emperor.²¹ Lefèbvre was captured and condemned to death. His sentence was commuted and he was imprisoned in Hue. He was later released and went to Singapore. When Lefèbvre attempted to re-enter Vietnam he was re-arrested and

¹⁵ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 243, 274–77, 332–34 and 391–92; and Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, pp 68–71.

¹⁶ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, p 244.

¹⁷ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 67.

¹⁸ *ibid*, p 75.

¹⁹ John F. Cady, *The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1954, pp 87–102.

²⁰ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 68.

²¹ *ibid*, pp 69–70.

sentenced to death once again. In response, in 1847 two French ships were dispatched to free him and to force the Vietnamese Emperor to end religious persecution. When the ships arrived off Tourane they were unaware that Lefèbvre had already been deported. The French sunk three Vietnamese ships, and killed hundreds while bombarding the harbour forts.²²

During his reign, Emperor Tu Duc embarked on a fierce campaign to eliminate Christianity from Vietnam.²³ He issued anti-Christian edicts in 1848 and 1851. Under the latter, Vietnamese converts were to be branded 'infidel' and their property confiscated. European missionaries were to be drowned, while Vietnamese priests were to be quartered. In 1851, when Vietnamese Christians were implicated in an abortive rebellion, two French priests were executed on orders of the Emperor. French missionaries and officials in Asia called for action.

In 1852 Louis Napoleon declared himself Emperor of France with the support of the Catholic Church.²⁴ His wife was deeply religious and supported missionary goals. France's pro-imperial lobby developed a plan of action to force the Vietnamese Emperor to cede Tourane as indemnity for mistreating missionaries. Tourane was strategically located and was a valuable harbour for commerce and a base for war. Its acquisition would assist in the restoration of France's international dignity. Napoleon was persuaded to endorse this plan and French ships in Shanghai were ordered to set sail.

In September 1856, the French fleet arrived off Tourane. The Vietnamese chose stalling tactics. In frustration, the Captain of the *Catinat* opened fire and destroyed Tourane's fortifications.²⁵ He landed a detachment that seized the citadel. But the force was too weak to remain and it was withdrawn. This setback ironically only served to whet the French appetite to try again. In order to enlist the support of French businessmen, officials inflated reports of Vietnam's wealth in silver, gold, timber and coal. National pride was stirred when it was argued that intervention would block England's empire in Asia. France alone among the major European powers had no colonial possessions in Asia and Tourane, it was argued, would become France's 'Gibraltar' in the Far East.²⁶

Under pressure from Catholic lobbyists, Napoleon once again agreed to intervene and appointed a committee to handle the matter. The pretext for intervention would be Vietnamese mistreatment of missionaries. The French plan called for the seizure of three ports.²⁷ In August 1858 the Commander of the French fleet in Asia set sail for Tourane, supported by Spanish forces from the Philippines. They attacked Tourane and quickly overran its defences. But significantly the local Catholics did not rally to support the French. The French left a small garrison before departing.

²² Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 332–34.

²³ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, pp 70–71; and Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 243–44, 274–77 and 313–17.

²⁴ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, pp 71–73.

²⁵ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, p 339.

²⁶ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 74. For an overview of the period 1858–1862 consult McLeod, *The Vietnamese Response to French Intervention*, pp 41–59.

²⁷ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, pp 73–74; and Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, p 344.

The French fleet, numbering nine transports and warships, headed south for Saigon where they dominated the city.²⁸ Again, the local Catholic community did not rise up to support them. The French were then subject to guerrilla warfare waged from the countryside. They left a small garrison and the fleet returned to Tourane. There the French position had deteriorated as a result of cholera and typhus and repeated attacks by the Vietnamese. For every Frenchman killed in battle, twenty died of disease. Tu Duc adopted an intransigent attitude and refused to negotiate and the French were eventually forced to evacuate their forces.

Back in metropolitan France a new mood took hold as nationalist intellectuals began agitating for France to take its culture overseas to backward people.²⁹ This was termed *mission civilisatrice* (civilising mission) in French. This new breed of imperialists joined merchants, manufacturers, military and colonial officials in advocating French expansion overseas. All raised their voices to Napoleon III. In 1860 Justin Chasseloup-Laubat was appointed head of a new hybrid Ministry of the Navy and Colonies. He soon generated the main impulse for French imperialism.³⁰ The new Minister ordered another expedition to relieve the garrison in Saigon.

In July 1861 the French expedition marched inland and entered Saigon and claimed it for France. French forces then began making forays into the Mekong Delta. In June of the following year, the French forced Emperor Tu Duc to sign the Treaty of Saigon.³¹ Under the terms of this agreement, the Emperor ceded three southern provinces around Saigon and Poulo Condore island to France. The French were also given the right to veto any Vietnamese cession of territory to a third party. Tu Duc also agreed to grant freedom of religion, open three ports in the central northern provinces to France, and pay an indemnity of twenty million francs over ten years.

The loss of three Mekong Delta provinces was a blow to Tu Duc as he needed their rice to feed his armies who were under rebel threat in the north. In late 1862 resistance spread to the south. France called in reinforcements from China and the Philippines. France took no action with respect to the northern rebels who, with the support of foreign missionaries, were trying to overthrow the Emperor. This demonstrated once again that factors other than religion were dominant in French decision-making. Tu Duc tried to negotiate with Napoleon III but any hint of compromise was howled down by French naval officers. They wanted a free rein to pursue France's colonial domain and the used *fait accompli* as their chief means.³² In 1863 a French admiral extended control over the Kingdom of Cambodia by declaring it a French protectorate. And in 1867 France, in response to an insurrection in the Mekong Delta, annexed the three western provinces of what they now called Cochinchina (southern Vietnam).

In 1870 Napoleon III was defeated by Prussia, and Paris became a battleground between republicans and monarchists. French officials in the Far East were left to

²⁸ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 345–47.

²⁹ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 76; and Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 348–49.

³⁰ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 74.

³¹ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 350–51; and Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, pp 76 and 107. A new treaty was signed in 1864; Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, p 359.

³² Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, pp 78 and 81.

pursue their own schemes.³³ In 1866–68 a French naval officer, Francis Garnier was sent on an expedition to explore the Red River in northern Vietnam as an alternative trade route to China.³⁴ In 1873 he published his account of his travels in two volumes entitled *Voyage d'Exploration*. This book provided a rather optimistic account of the possibilities of trade in Chinese silk, tea and textiles along the Red River route from Haiphong on the coast to Yunnan. This book helped provide justification for those who argued that France should extend its reach to central and northern Vietnam.

By the end of the 19th century France experienced an imperialist revival.³⁵ First, there was the rise of nationalist sentiment following France's defeat at the hands of Prussia. Secondly, geographical societies began debating the political, economic and moral advantages of expansion. Finally, as the industrial revolution swept the country, French businessmen wanted outlets for their investments, raw materials and markets. By 1879 the dominance of French admirals was replaced by civilians who were even more aggressive in pursuing colonial conquest and the acquisition of territory. French industrialists feared their European competitors would beat them to Vietnam's resources such as the anthracite coal deposits at Hongay. Jules Ferry became the first French Prime Minister to make imperialism part of his party's platform. Ferry declared, 'colonial policy is the daughter of industrial policy'.³⁶ In sum, the prime motivation for French imperialism was the desire to exploit Vietnam for the benefit of France. Civilising inferior peoples was a secondary consideration.

French expansion in northern Vietnam was led by private businessmen. In 1873 Jean Dupuis, a private merchant and gun-runner, began to use the Red River under the authority of Chinese issued credentials. He came into conflict with a guild of local merchants who controlled the salt monopoly.³⁷ They blocked his river route to China. In retaliation Dupuis ordered a band of mercenaries to seize a part of Hanoi and raise the French flag. Dupuis then appealed to French officials in Saigon for assistance.

At this time northern Vietnam (Tonkin) was in chaos as remnants of the Taiping Rebellion in China were driven across the border. Emperor Tu Duc appealed to China for assistance. When Chinese forces arrived they sided with the rebels. The French termed them the 'Black Flag' pirates.³⁸ French colonial officials telegraphed Paris to act now in order to secure a foothold near the Chinese frontier to deter the English, Germans or Americans. Action was a matter of life or death for France in Asia, they argued.³⁹

The French force sent to Hanoi to restore order exceeded its authority and sided with Dupuis.⁴⁰ The Red River was declared open to foreign trade and customs tariffs were

³³ *ibid*, p 79.

³⁴ Milton E. Osborne, *River Road to China: The Mekong River Expedition, 1866–1873*, Liveright, New York, 1975.

³⁵ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 83.

³⁶ *ibid*, p 84.

³⁷ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 367–69; and Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 80.

³⁸ David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885–1925*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1971, p 42; and Henry McAleavy, *Black Flags in Vietnam: The Story of a Chinese Intervention*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1968.

³⁹ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 81.

⁴⁰ For a critical account of this episode see McLeod, *The Vietnamese Response to French Intervention*, pp 97–130.

lowered. When local officials protested, the French force seized the city's citadel and then proceeded to occupy the overland route from Hanoi to the port of Haiphong and southwards to Nam Dinh.⁴¹ The French soon became overextended. Under new French Government orders, French forces withdrew from Tonkin and expelled Dupuis from Hanoi. In 1874, however, the Vietnamese Emperor was forced to sign a treaty confirming French control over all of southern Vietnam (Cochinchina) and opening up the Red River to French commerce.⁴² France was permitted to establish consulates in three towns. The treaty also included a provision authorising French forces to assist the Emperor in the event of external attack.

In May 1883 the French Parliament voted five million francs for a major expedition to impose a protectorate on Vietnam. France then took advantage of internal instability following the death of Emperor Tu Duc and the ensuing struggle for succession. In August 1883 the French fleet arrived off Hue and began bombarding shore installations. The Emperor was forced to sue for peace and sign a treaty granting France northern Vietnam (Tonkin) and central Vietnam (Annam) as protectorates.⁴³ France installed its officials and set up garrisons. It then regulated commerce, collected customs duties, assured defence and managed Vietnam's foreign relations. Approximately 20,000 French forces were stationed in Tonkin at this time.

The 1884 treaty was not recognised by China, which responded with military force. A brief Sino-French war broke out that spread beyond Vietnam.⁴⁴ French naval forces bombarded the Chinese coastal post of Fuzhou and attacked the port of Keelung on Taiwan. In order to preserve its own territorial integrity, China signed a treaty with France that recognised France's protectorates in Tonkin and Annam. In 1885 France completed its military conquest of Vietnam by defeating a breakaway royalist group that sought to rally Vietnamese resistance behind the young Emperor Ham Nghi.⁴⁵

Thus at the end of the 19th century the separate kingdoms of Vietnam (now divided into three), Cambodia and Laos were united into one Indochinese Union or *Indochine française* (French Indochina). Cochinchina was ruled directly as a colony. Tonkin, Annam, Cambodia and Laos were ruled indirectly as protectorates.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a full account of French colonialism and its impact on Indochina up to the start of World War II.⁴⁶ It should be noted that France's military expeditions in Tonkin had resulted in huge debts. Colonial finances were disorganised and mismanaged. In 1897 Paul Doumer was appointed Governor General. During the period 1900–02 he single-handedly transformed Indochina from a loss to a profitable colonial enterprise by increasing public revenue. Under his rule the

⁴¹ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 370–72; and Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 81.

⁴² Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 82.

⁴³ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 376–79; and Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 85.

⁴⁴ Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, pp 379–80; and Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 86.

⁴⁵ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, pp 87 and 108; and Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism*, pp 47–55.

⁴⁶ For an overview see Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*; Thomas E. Ennis, *French Policy and Developments in Indochina*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1956; Donald Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina*, Octagon Books, New York, 1974; Vinh Long Ngo, *Before the Revolution: The Vietnamese Peasants Under the French*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1973; Milton Osborne, *The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia: Rule and Response (1859–1905)*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1969; and Virginia Thompson, *French Indo-China*, Octagon Books, New York, 1968.

burden of development was passed from the French taxpayer to the Vietnamese people.⁴⁷ Doumer centralised French authority at the expense of the ‘Cochinchina clique’ of bankers, merchants, landowners and colonial officials. The economy of Indochina was put into the black, as it became a source of raw materials and a protected market for French merchandise.

Under Doumer, customs duties and direct taxes went to the central treasury. He sanctioned official monopolies to produce and market salt, opium and alcohol, which taken together accounted for one-third of income.⁴⁸ He also established monopolies over the market and the sale of produce. Doumer was responsible for opening up the Mekong Delta to large-scale rice production, making Vietnam the third largest rice exporter in the world after Burma and Thailand. Doumer also oversaw the development of coffee, tea and rubber plantations and coal mines and in so doing created a new landless proletariat class. He introduced *corvée* labour to build roads, railways and bridges. His land policy, however, depressed rural living conditions and created a large landless peasantry. When global depression broke out in 1930 it provoked a massive peasant revolt in north-central Vietnam and created the right conditions for the establishment of Vietnam’s first Communist party.

FRENCH INDOCHINA DURING WORLD WAR II

As the storm clouds of World War II gathered, French colonial officials undertook preparations for the defence of Indochina against Japan.⁴⁹ They approved in principle the idea of raising a national army. French forces in Indochina were increased from 80,000 to 100,000. The expansion mainly drew on the Foreign Legion. The French strengthened fortifications, ports and airfields, particularly the naval base at Cam Ranh Bay. In economic terms, however, Japan and Indochina were mutually dependent. Prior to World War II, rice and resources had already begun to flow from Indochina to Japan in increasing amounts. French officials in Indochina were left isolated by France’s quick defeat at the hands of Nazi Germany and the capitulation of the Vichy Government in June 1940.

During Japan’s conquest of China in the late 1930s, Vietnam’s port of Haiphong served as one of three logistic routes for supplies to reach the Kuomintang forces in Yunnan in southern China.⁵⁰ Yunnan was linked to Haiphong by a rail line and traffic over this route doubled between 1936 and 1938. In 1937 Japan began to protest the shipment of arms to China. On 19 June 1940 Japan delivered an ultimatum demanding that France close the frontier with China in order to prevent the export of trucks, petrol, and other war materials. Japan also demanded that France permit a Japanese mission to enter Indochina to supervise the suspension of military assistance to China. French colonial authorities, who were given twenty-four hours to respond, accepted the Japanese terms the next day. But the Pétain Government in Vichy disapproved and appointed Vice-Admiral Jean Decoux to head the colonial administration.

⁴⁷ Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, pp 5–9; and Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 115.

⁴⁸ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, pp 116–18.

⁴⁹ This section is drawn from Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, pp 227–41.

⁵⁰ Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, p 228.

Japan made new demands for the free passage of Japanese troops through Tonkin and access to its airports for action against China. On 30 August 1940, the Vichy Government gave in and recognised the pre-eminent position of Japan in the Far East and agreed to provide Japan military facilities in Tonkin for the liquidation of the 'China incident'.⁵¹ In return, Japan recognised French sovereignty in Indochina. This quirk of history resulted in rather unique circumstances; whereas colonial authority had been overthrown by the Japanese elsewhere in South-East Asia, it remained in place in Indochina. From August 1940 until March 1945, French colonial authorities in Indochina collaborated with the Japanese. It was an invidious position as increased Japanese demands stripped away any pretence that French sovereignty remained intact.⁵²

On 22 September the Japanese staged a naval demonstration in the Gulf of Tonkin. Japanese forces in southern China crossed into northern Vietnam and attacked French garrisons at Dong Dang and Lang Son, killing eighty. In this context Decoux reached agreement with General Nishihara and permitted Japan to station 6000 troops north of the Red River, and not more than 25,000 troops in the whole of Indochina.⁵³ Japan was granted access to Haiphong and three airports as points of entry.

In 1941 Japan negotiated the first of several onerous commercial agreements with French colonial authorities. In May, for example, the French agreed to ship all available supplies of rice, corn, coal, rubber, and minerals to Japan. Japanese firms were granted most favoured nation status. In July, Vichy France and Japan negotiated a treaty for their common defence that integrated Indochina into Japan's military system. Japanese troops were now stationed throughout Indochina and were granted the use of all airports and naval bases. The size of Japan's occupation soon reached 35,000, well above the limit agreed the previous year. In November, another commercial agreement placed all enterprises in Indochina under Japanese control. Japan quickly converted rice fields to the production of jute, cotton and ramie.⁵⁴ Vietnamese grain was used as source of fuel. Finally, in December 1941, in the wake of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, the French agreed that Indochina would form part of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

The Japanese secret police or Kempeitai were not entirely satisfied with these collaborative arrangements. They sought to mobilise Vietnamese nationalist sentiment not only to support the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere but also to undermine French colonial influence. The Kempeitai spread anti-white racist propaganda. They chose as their prime mechanisms pro-fascist organisations, such as the Association for the Restoration of Viet Nam (*Viet Nam Quang Phuc Hoi*), and the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao religious sects. The French reacted by encouraging sports and youth movements in the hope of creating an alternate Indochina identity.⁵⁵ While Japan and the French colonial authorities collaborated at one level, the Kempeitai and French Sûreté Générale competed at another.

⁵¹ *ibid*, p 236.

⁵² J. Davidson, *Indo-China: Signposts in the Storm*, Longman Malaysia Sdn Berhad, Kuala Lumpur, 1979, pp 28–36; and Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina: Viet Nam and the French Experience*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, Calif, 1966, pp 8–35.

⁵³ Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, p 237.

⁵⁴ 'Ramie' is an Asiatic shrub, *Boehmeria nivea*, whose fibres are used to make cloth.

⁵⁵ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 143; and Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, pp 244–60.

In 1942 most French in Indochina were pro-Vichy and against the Free French led by Charles de Gaulle. In June 1943 the Allies launched an offensive in the Pacific. It was now clear that the tides of war had shifted against Japan and the convictions of French *colons* (colonial settlers), military officers and officials began to change accordingly. Support for the Allies rose in August 1944 when de Gaulle and his Free French triumphantly entered Paris.⁵⁶

General Mordant, the French military commander in Indochina since 1940, became a de Gaulle supporter after the successful Allied campaign in North Africa. He established contact with Free French operatives stationed in Ceylon at the South East Asia Command headquarters. A debate was underway about the course of action open to France at the end of the war. There were two major strategies. The first was to continue collaborating with the Japanese right up until their collapse in the hopes of keeping the French administration and military forces intact. In this way, France would be in a better position to resist China. The second strategy was to enter the war on the side of the Allies by taking action against the Japanese in Indochina. By 1944 the majority of French in Indochina favoured the second course.⁵⁷

On 6 June 1944, French Major Langlade was parachuted into Vietnam to confer with General Mordant. On 12 September, General de Gaulle appointed Mordant Delegate-General of the French Government to Indochina. France then set up an Action Committee for the Liberation of Indochina. After the liberation of the Philippines in October 1944, French colonial officials mistakenly believed that the Allies would land in Indochina as part of General Douglas MacArthur's Pacific campaign. Operating under this delusion they made preparations to turn on the Japanese when the landings commenced.⁵⁸ The Royal Air Force began parachuting arms, ammunition and French agents into Vietnam.⁵⁹

Unfortunately, the Japanese caught wind of French plans. They raised their force levels to 60,000. And on 9 March 1945 they conducted a *coup d'état* and rounded up all French officials and military forces.⁶⁰ Where French forces offered resistance they were wiped out. An estimated 1700 French were killed at this time. When French forces surrendered peacefully, they were shown respect and allowed to march into their internment camps. French civilians were also imprisoned. In one fell swoop French colonialism was brought to an end as it had been four years earlier in South-East Asia. The French now suffered confinement, privation and humiliation. Of the estimated 750 French civilians interned, 400 died in prison. A small military force escaped the Japanese dragnet and initiated armed resistance; some made a forced march into southern China.

THE FRENCH RE-COLONISATION OF INDOCHINA

In 1942 US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in order to encourage de Gaulle's Free French in the war against Germany, promised that all of France's overseas

⁵⁶ Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, pp 271 and 279.

⁵⁷ *ibid*, pp 279–81.

⁵⁸ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 143; and Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, p 281.

⁵⁹ Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, pp 281, 307 and 316.

⁶⁰ Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina*, pp 36–42; and Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, pp 282–86.

dominions would be returned after the war. Roosevelt later became more critical of the French and changed his offer to one of trusteeship—the return of colonial possessions for a period of time to be followed by independence.⁶¹ In May 1945, after Roosevelt's death, President Harry Truman reversed this policy and assured French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault that the United States recognised France's claim to Indochina.⁶²

In August 1945 the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought an abrupt and unexpected end to the Pacific War. As a result of Allied discussions at the Potsdam Conference in July, agreement had been reached that for purposes of organising the Japanese surrender and rescuing Allied prisoners of war, Indochina would be divided into two.⁶³ Chinese Kuomintang forces were given responsibility north of the 16th parallel, while British forces were given responsibility south of that line. Prior to the arrival of the Allies, Japanese forces were ordered to remain neutral. However, Vietnamese nationalists took matters in their own hands.

In 1941 Ho Chi Minh and other nationalists founded the Viet Minh (a contraction of the Vietnamese League for the Independence of Vietnam). The Viet Minh cooperated with the Allies in providing intelligence and in rescuing downed pilots. They were the only nationalist political group in Vietnam of any note. Immediately after the atomic bombings Viet Minh forces swept down from the mountains and remote hinterland to seize power before the French could return. The Viet Minh quickly captured Hanoi, Hue and Saigon. In Hue, Emperor Bao Dai abdicated. On 2 September 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam independent under the name Democratic Republic of Vietnam. These events are known collectively as the August Revolution.⁶⁴ Viet Minh forces were relatively unified in Hanoi but were divided into various factions in the south.⁶⁵

The Viet Minh seizure of power put them on a collision course with France. During World War II the Free French adopted the policy of restoring the status quo ante in their pre-war colonies. De Gaulle was personally committed to restore French rule in Indochina for reasons of national prestige and power.⁶⁶ After the liberation of France, he vetoed any collaboration with the Viet Minh. De Gaulle dispatched Jean Cédile to Vietnam as his personal representative.⁶⁷ Cédile found that local French residents were fearful for their security, while French merchants, planters and colonial officials were anxious to safeguard their own interests.

British forces under the command of Major General Douglas Gracey arrived in the south to confront an unstable Viet Minh coalition in which extremist nationalists were

⁶¹ Archimedes L.A. Patti, *Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America's Albatross*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1980, pp 17–22; and Davidson, *Indo-China: Signposts in the Storm*, pp 37–38.

⁶² Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 137; and Patti, *Why Viet Nam?*, pp 116–23.

⁶³ Patti, *Why Viet Nam?*, pp 130–31.

⁶⁴ Stein Tonnesson, *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945: Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh and de Gaulle in a World at War*, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, 1991; and David G. Marr, *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995.

⁶⁵ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 148.

⁶⁶ Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, pp 301–03.

⁶⁷ Davidson, *Indo-China: Signposts in the Storm*, p 40.

active.⁶⁸ General Gracey refused to recognise Viet Minh authority. When anti-Western incidents took place he responded by declaring martial law on 21 September 1945. He also released and armed over 1000 French prisoners, mainly Foreign Legionnaires and paratroopers. On 22 September, French forces expelled the Viet Minh from city hall, police stations and other public buildings in Saigon, and raised the French flag. Two days later, the Viet Minh ordered a general strike. Armed Vietnamese attacked the airport, central market, and local prisons. An estimated 150 French civilians were massacred and some hostages mutilated.⁶⁹ In order to restore order, General Gracey ordered Japanese forces to assist in internal security. The Viet Minh were driven out of Saigon and initiated armed resistance in the countryside.

De Gaulle was determined to reassert French rule. He appointed Admiral Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu as High Commissioner and General Jacques Philippe Leclerc as his chief military commander. Britain turned over United States military equipment to French forces and transported them to Indochina.⁷⁰ In October 1945 General Leclerc's forces arrived in Vietnam and broke the Viet Minh blockade around Saigon and expanded their control into the Mekong Delta and the central highlands. In response, the Viet Minh adopted scorched earth tactics. With the arrival of the French, British forces were withdrawn.

In northern Vietnam political developments took a different turn.⁷¹ Kuomintang forces led by General Lu Han marched into Vietnam and brought with them members of the Vietnam Nationalist Party (VNQDD).⁷² The VNQDD was a nationalist anti-Communist party that had sought exile in China during the war. The VNQDD provoked incidents with the Viet Minh that soon led to violence. Ho Chi Minh was forced to dissolve the Indochinese Communist Party, the core of the Viet Minh, and include anti-Communist Vietnamese nationalists in his government. This enabled Ho to remain in power in very delicate circumstances.

In August 1945 de Gaulle dispatched Jean Sainteny as his personal representative to hold talks with Ho Chi Minh.⁷³ These proved inconclusive. Matters were taken out of their hands when Nationalist China and France negotiated a deal in February 1946. China agreed to withdraw from Indochina and let France restore its power, in return for which France gave up its concession in Shanghai.⁷⁴ France then negotiated an accord with Ho Chi Minh on 6 March 1946.⁷⁵ Under the terms of this agreement Vietnam would become a free state in the French Union. France was permitted to station 25,000 troops in Vietnam for five years, during which period a referendum on the future of southern Vietnam (Cochinchina) would be held.⁷⁶ This accord greatly

⁶⁸ For an overview of political events in South Vietnam at this time see Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, pp 313–37; and Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina*, pp 106–27.

⁶⁹ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, pp 149–50.

⁷⁰ *ibid*, p 150.

⁷¹ For an overview of political events in North Vietnam at this time see Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, pp 351–62; and Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina*, pp 128–47.

⁷² Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 152; and Patti, *Why Viet Nam?*, pp 281–93.

⁷³ Jean Sainteny, *Ho Chi Minh and His Vietnam: A Personal Memoir*, Cowles Book Company, Chicago, 1970, pp 41–68.

⁷⁴ Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, pp 362–63; and Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 152.

⁷⁵ For the text of this agreement see Davidson, *Indo-China: Signposts in the Storm*, pp 215–16.

⁷⁶ Buttinger, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, p 369; and Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 153.

upset the French *colons* in Saigon. Further talks were held between the Viet Minh and France in Dalat which again proved inconclusive.

In May 1946, Ho Chi Minh took his case for independence to France. While en route at sea, French *colons* in Saigon declared southern Vietnam independent under the name of the Republic of Cochinchina. Ho arrived in Paris at a time of political instability.⁷⁷ The French Government sought to restrict Ho's contacts with the sizeable Vietnamese community in Paris by sending Ho to Biarritz. During May and September, negotiations took place in Fontainebleau, where agreement was reached on a draft accord that reinforced France's economic position in Tonkin without resolving the problem of Cochinchina.⁷⁸ France would not give an inch on Vietnam's independence. In desperation, on the eve of his departure back to Vietnam, Ho worked out a *modus vivendi* (interim understanding) on 19 September 1946.⁷⁹

Ho Chi Minh's negotiations with the French were hotly debated by nationalists in Vietnam. Some saw his *modus vivendi* as a sell out. Maintaining command and control over the Viet Minh proved difficult. This led to incidents between armed Viet Minh and French forces. In November a dispute over customs duties escalated into street fighting. The French Government in Paris sent a telegram to Vietnam ordering Ho Chi Minh to pull all Viet Minh forces out of Haiphong and return control to France. A flash message to the French army commander instructed him to teach a severe lesson and employ 'all means at your disposal to master Haiphong completely'.⁸⁰ On 23 November 1946, the Viet Minh were handed an ultimatum with a two-hour deadline. At the expiration of the deadline French infantry and armour went on the attack. French aircraft bombed and strafed Viet Minh positions. The French cruiser *Suffren* shelled Haiphong inflicting between 1000 and 6000 casualties.

A telegram carrying an appeal from Ho Chi Minh to the new French Government led by socialist Leon Blum was deliberately held up for nine days by French officials in Saigon during which time the conflict continued to escalate. On 17 December 1946, three French soldiers were killed by Viet Minh militia in Hanoi. This led the French commander, General Etienne Valluy, to threaten, 'if those gooks want a fight, they'll get it'.⁸¹ Violent incidents now multiplied in both Haiphong and Hanoi. The French demanded that Ho disarm the Viet Minh and return responsibility for maintaining security in French hands. On the evening of 19 December Viet Minh units struck. After sabotaging the Hanoi power plant they murdered the French in their homes. The next day the French launched a counter attack and Hanoi became a battleground. After intense fighting, the Viet Minh were expelled and France renewed its military conquest of Vietnam. What followed was an eight-year war of Vietnamese resistance that culminated in France's defeat in May 1954 at Dien Bien Phu.

⁷⁷ During the Fontainebleau Conference, Georges Bidault, leader of the Christian Democrats, became Prime Minister of a coalition government. This marked a shift to the right in French politics. Bidault was a strong supporter of the French Union.

⁷⁸ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 155.

⁷⁹ For the text of this agreement see Davidson, *Indo-China: Signposts in the Storm*, pp 217–20.

⁸⁰ Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p 156.

⁸¹ *ibid*, p 157.

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**THE FRENCH AIR FORCE AND THE INDOCHINA WAR:
A STRUGGLE OF NEARLY TEN YEARS 1945–54**

DR PATRICK FACON

Unfortunately, a copy of Dr Facon's paper was not available for publication.

VIETNAMESE STRATEGY FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION

DR GREG LOCKHART

INTRODUCTION

The only strategic air offensive that had a fundamental effect on the Vietnamese war of national liberation between 1945 and 1975 was the one in which the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan in early August 1945. After this, the Japanese administration in Indochina, which had replaced Vichy French rule there in the Japanese *coup d'état* of March 1945, collapsed. The opportunity thus arose for Ho Chi Minh's government to come to power over all Vietnam in August 1945.

Thereafter, in thirty years, total French and awesome United States air superiority was never translated into a successful strategic formula for repressing Vietnamese national independence. Even after the USAF dropped five times the explosive capacity of the Hiroshima bomb around the Marine position at Khe Sanh in early 1968, the People's Army of Vietnam went on to victory in 1975. As a result, my paper is about the formulation of the strategy for national liberation, which effectively neutralised Western air power in Vietnam. Towards the end, I will nevertheless indicate the impact which French air power had on the development of the People's Army.

My main point is that the formulation of Vietnamese strategy for national liberation, and its successful implementation, was the product of an historical process. In other words, Vietnamese strategy was not the outcome of a Communist plot in which the Vietnamese were slavish clients of Chinese or any other 'Communist imperialism', as the United States and Australian Governments believed in the 1960s.¹ It would indeed be easy to show that Vietnamese Governments have never been as responsive in their relations with Chinese Governments as, for example, Australian ones have been in theirs with American administrations since 1945.

COLONIAL RULE AND THE TRANSFER OF SOVEREIGNTY FROM 'THE MONARCH' TO 'THE PEOPLE' (1859–1945)

In old Vietnam the central notion of political obligation was 'loyalty to the king' (*trung quan*). Since the king owned the country (*quoc*), loyalty to him was synonymous with loyalty to the country. If a monarch had become corrupt and/or been toppled by foreign invaders, the old regime then fell back on the Confucian notion of a 'righteous uprising' (*khoi nghia*) in which 'righteous armies' would form in the countryside and eventually re-establish a good monarch. With the French conquest, however, this option was no longer open. Not only had the Nguyen Dynasty

¹ The basis for this argument is still my *Nation in Arms: The Origins of the People's Army of Vietnam*, Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989. It also includes some updated findings I made during my involvement in a Princeton University project in the mid-1990s. See my 'In Lieu of the *Levee en masse*: Mass Mobilisation in Modern Vietnam' in Dan Moran and Arthur Waldron (eds), *The People in Arms*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2002.

failed to protect the country against the French, but also French power was so great that the Nguyen emperors became collaborators in the colonial project. As well as humiliating the Nguyen Dynasty, French power thus destroyed the ancient institution of the monarchy and created the crisis in Vietnamese political, social, and cultural values that would lead to the so-called Vietnamese revolution.

If one didn't have a king, one didn't have a country. If one didn't have a country, there was no longer any foundation for a sense of the Vietnamese collectivity. And, if there was no foundation for the Vietnamese collectivity, how could one imagine a 'righteous uprising'? It was in these dire conceptual straits that Vietnamese political-military vocabulary was then forced to find new moorings in the early 20th century.

These new moorings included nothing less than the construction of new terms for 'world', 'nation', and 'liberation'. The old term for 'world' was *thien ha*, literally 'all beneath heaven'. It defined a realm in which people lived on a flat earth surmounted by a curved sky.² Under the impact of modern change, however, the new term for world, which became current from around 1900 was *the gioi*, in which *the* (time) plus *gioi* (the directions—north, south, east, west, up and down) added up to temporal and spatial coordinates that encompassed the modern globe.³ In the semantic revolution that created this new sense of 'world', 'the people' were then constructed as the fundamental category of political and social significance in the 20th century.

A key text that catches the transfer of sovereignty from 'the monarch' to 'the people' is *A History of the Loss of the Country (Vong quoc su)*, which the Confucian Scholar, Phan Boi Chau, published in 1905. For in this seminal modern Vietnamese history, Chau wrote a remarkable sentence: '*Nuoc Viet nam co dan*'—'The country of Vietnam has people'.⁴ In pre-colonial times there are good reasons why no scholar would have been likely to write such a sentence. Not only was it self-evident that the country had people, but a fundamental political assumption was that, since the king owned the country, it had a king. As I have discussed elsewhere,⁵ Chau was thus emphasising how Vietnam had people *because* the French conquest had destroyed the ancient institution of the monarchy.

The fundamental change Chau's stress on 'the people' (*dan*) indicated in Vietnamese political consciousness was then developed in numerous other writings he has left from around the same time. In his 1906 *Letter Written in Blood*, for example, we see

² The first modern Vietnamese geography was Truong Vinh Ky, *Du Do Thuyet Luoc* (Elementary Geography) of 1887. Even though it still used the term *thien ha*, it presented modern maps of all the continents and lessons on modern historical and administrative geography. These lessons located and described 'Annam' and 'Basse Cochinchine' in relation to the other countries of Asia and the world, and were prefaced with an explanation of why the 'earth' (*trai dat*) was a 'globe' (*dia cau*) and how, with '1,200 million people' on its surface, the globe rotated around its own axis every twenty-four hours. An entirely new sense of global 'movement'—leading to other new historical constructions such as 'progress', 'revolution', 'world revolution', 'mass movements' and many others—had clearly begun to change the Vietnamese conception of 'the world'.

³ The term *the gioi* had been revived from medieval Buddhist sutras. It is thus most accurate to describe it as one of the many old/new terms that reflected the reorganisation of ancient categories that occurred under the impact of modern change.

⁴ Phan Boi Chau, *Viet nam vong quoc su* (A History of the Loss of the Country), Chinese edition 1905, translated from Chinese to Vietnamese by Chu Thien and Chuong Thau, Van Su Dia, Hanoi, 1957, p 55.

⁵ Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, pp 41–51.

such fascinating new formulations as ‘the people are of the country and the country is of the people’ and ‘if we do not have people then we do not have anything’.⁶ ‘The people’ have been placed in such a new light that we see how they have become the foundation for the entirely new political category of ‘nation’. And, indeed, while that is firmly based on ‘the people’, I have also previously argued, that two of the 20th century Vietnamese constructions for ‘nation’—*dan toc*, literally ‘a people of clans’, and *quoc dan*, a ‘country of people’—no longer bear any trace of ‘the monarch’.

Simultaneously, the new notions of ‘love of country’ (*ai quoc*) and ‘patriotism’ (*chu nghia ai quoc*) replace the old notion of political obligation—*trung quan*—or loyalty to the monarch. And in this radically new historical context, the institution of national sovereignty came to be encapsulated in a plethora of new terms that also grounded Vietnam’s modern revolution in an unprecedented sense of ‘the people’. Such terms include *Bao nhan dan* (The People’s Daily), *Uy ban nhan dan* (People’s committee’s), *Toa an nhan dan* (People’s Tribunals) and *Quan doi nhan dan* (People’s Army).

In relation to the development of a concept of national liberation it is also worth noting that the Vietnamese notion of ‘freedom’ (*tu do*) was transformed in the colonial era, partly under the impact of French literary romanticism. In pre-colonial Vietnam, *tu do* was something slovenly or loose. But beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, when it began to appear in modern novels alongside other new terms such as *thoat ly* (emancipation) and *doc lap* (independence), it came to mean something positive.

In this new literary context, *tu do* was a state of emancipation or independence that young people aspired to by breaking the constraints of the old feudal society. It came, for instance, to signify the ‘freedom’ young people should have in a modern society to avoid arranged marriages. Only later in the 1940s, when the nation began to define itself in clear opposition to imperialism, is the notion of ‘freedom’ linked with that of ‘nation’ to give us such terms as ‘national liberation’, ‘freedom’ and ‘independence’. At this time we also begin to hear of regular army units that had been ‘emancipated’ from work in the fields—to distinguish them from guerrilla units whose members had to work the fields by day and fight at night. The key point about the new terms and their construction of a sense of either ‘social’ or ‘national liberation’ is that for Vietnamese they were a part of what it meant to be modern.

So also was the new construction of military affairs that was fundamental to the eventual emergence of a strategy of national liberation.

THE GENERAL CONSTRUCTION OF MILITARY AFFAIRS 1916–45

In old Vietnam, the monarchical political-military regime was characterised by its fragmented, regional foundations. Even the strongest royal courts only raised regular regiments (*linh ve*) from loyal clans in provinces around the capital. Auxiliary forces (*linh co*) from less loyal clans in more remote regions were recruited by military secretaries, who did not deal with individuals, but negotiated with village councils

⁶ *ibid*, p 42.

about the number of men a village might release from work in the fields.⁷ In modern Vietnam, regional autonomy has continued to have a strong effect on military recruiting. The strike battalions of the colonial army and the draftees who went to World War I tended to be recruited from particular regions. Moreover, in the war of national liberation between 1945 and 1975 regional forces (*dia phuong quan*) recruited by local committees were fundamental to the formation of the People's Army and its approaches to strategy. As indicated, however, such military affairs were placed in new global and national contexts, whose novelty lay in their abstract universality. And this first becomes clear in the general construction of Vietnamese military affairs that occurred during World War I, when 86,000 Vietnamese soldiers and workers went to France.⁸

The first modern Vietnamese war narratives,⁹ which date from 1917, began to disseminate a range of new terms that were necessary to relate the new sense of an emerging national polity to what the French commonly referred to as 'the war of nations'. I am thinking of such expressions as: 'general mobilisation' (*tong dong vien*), 'general offensive' (*tong cong*), 'general counter-offensive' (*tong phan cong*), 'general staff', 'general munitions board' (*dan duoc tong cuc*), and 'general strategy and tactics' (*chien luoc va chien thuat chung*).¹⁰

This new vocabulary embodied a level of conceptual and organisational abstraction that was fundamental to the development of the modern Vietnamese sense of nation. These terms would be widely used in the war against the French and Americans. But not before the old insurrectionary terms I mentioned earlier underwent a mutation that also led to the general construction of revolutionary war after the Indochinese Communist Party was formed in 1930.

One of the most striking features of Indochinese Communist Party ideology in the 1930s was the way it aligned the ancient terminology of the 'righteous uprising' with the abstract and generalised vocabulary of World War I. The notion of a 'general righteous uprising' (*tong khoi nghiã*) and of a 'general rebellion' (*tong bao dong*) had come into circulation during certain peasant uprisings in 1930s. In the decade before World War II many other new terms also contributed to the development of new conceptions of political and military action in Vietnam: 'general strike' (*tong dinh cong*), 'mass struggle' (*dau tranh quan chung*), 'class struggle' (*dau tranh giai cap*), 'general insurrection', 'general secretary' (*tong thu ky*) of the Communist Party and many others.

⁷ *ibid*, pp 13–23.

⁸ For more on the general construction of military affairs see my 'In Lieu of the *Levee en masse*' in Moran and Waldron (eds), *The People in Arms*.

⁹ See the Hanoi journal *Nam Phong (NP)* (Southern Wind).

¹⁰ Also see, for example, 'general munitions board', *NP*, 5 (Nov 1917), p 337; and 'general strategy and tactics', *NP*, 16 (Oct 1918), p 194. Many other terms further reinforced this generalising inference of the *NP* commentaries: 'Aircraft Production Board (*phi co che tao cuc*)', 'national defense [sic] bonds (*bang ve quoc phong trai phieu*)', *NP*, 5, p 347; and 'territorial integrity (*linh tho hoan toan*)', *NP*, 6, p 404. Later in the 1920s and 1930s related terms such as 'general manager', 'general strike', and 'general uprising' could be added to the list. In so far as these terms were subversive in the colonial context, it may be added that *NP* also covered the Russian Revolution from July 1917.

A point to highlight here is, of course, that what distinguished the old conceptions of a 'righteous uprising' from that of the new was that the new no longer assumed the possibility of restoring a good king. Yet the genius of the new terms was that they tended to place Vietnamese regionalism in a new context in which the ancient language of the clan-based insurrection became married to the rhetoric of modern revolutionary internationalism. And never was this more so than in relation to Vietnamese appropriations of the Mao model for national liberation in a protracted war.

MAO'S MODEL

As early as 1938, the writings of various Chinese revolutionary strategists, which emphasised the motive force of 'the people' or 'the masses' (*quan chung*), were in circulation in Vietnamese translation and compilation. And with these came the essential elements of what would become Mao's famous three-stage model for a guerrilla war of 'national liberation'.¹¹

To briefly recapitulate this model: In the 'defence stage' (*phong ve*), revolutionary cadres would build their bases among the masses and resist the onslaught of the enemy's regular army by manoeuvre and blending in with the people. In the 'holding stage' (*chong cu*), the guerrilla units would gradually gain ascendancy in a region through hit-and-run tactics and the mobilisation of quasi-regular battalions and regiments. Then, finally, when guerrilla tactics and mass mobilisation in many regions had tired the enemy and permitted the concentration of regular 'main force' (*chu luc*) units, it was envisaged that the regular army would lead the masses in a 'general counter-offensive' (*tong phan cong*). The overarching theme was the integration of small-scale guerrilla actions within a broadly progressive scheme of political and military activity that would lead to the creation of a mass army.

The relevance of this approach to 'national liberation' in Vietnam was confirmed by the formation of Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh Independence League (*Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi*) in the mountains of north-western Vietnam in 1942. Herein, guerrilla activity was part and parcel of a process of mass mobilisation. And the mechanism that drove this process was the political-military method of 'armed propaganda' that Ho first learned about on a visit to China in 1942.

ARMED PROPAGANDA, POST-1942

In its basic form Viet Minh cadres simply arrived in remote highland villages offering to work in the fields. As time passed they would explain their mission to sympathetic supporters and gradually begin recruiting. A Viet Minh training manual, written close to the August 1945 seizure of power, explains the technique: 'Propaganda teams must ... help our people in their work or work their way into a crowd of people who are harvesting or transplanting in the fields and propagandise them.' They must:

use pamphlets, cartoons, and slogans to carry out propaganda. But verbal communication is most important so that the propaganda teams [must] organise

¹¹ See for example Mao Tse Tung and Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, London, 1965.

meetings and lectures and use theatrical performances and songs (with accompaniment if possible).¹²

They would also become involved in social events such as village feasts, festivals and marriages.

The implantation of ‘people’s committees’ (*uy ban nhan dan*) and ‘national salvation organisations’ (*hoi cuu quoc*) was crucial to the early stage of the mobilisation process. As these groups spread throughout sympathetic villages, they became constituents of a mass organisation designed to focus the support of different groups in society—peasants, women, youth, artisans, intellectuals, religious groups and others.

Because the organisational structure suggested links with similar groups everywhere, it provided a conceptual foundation for the integration of the people into a network that would harness the military energy of the nation.

Until quite close to the end of World War II, the resulting network did not extend far beyond the Viet Bac, where armed propaganda teams made great propaganda out of food issues during famine of the winter of 1944–45 that left some two million dead. Then, after the Japanese *coup d'état* of 9 March 1945 had created a power vacuum, much more or less spontaneous mobilisation followed in the northern provinces, as units of the Viet Minh’s new styled ‘Liberation Army’ made great propaganda from a number of small skirmishes with Japanese forces.

As it then struggled to recreate public order in the famine stricken society, the basic problem for the expanding Liberation Army was how society was going to feed, clothe, equip, and generally support it. From around May 1945, therefore, the resistance leadership began a detailed formulation of the economic and general community assistance that would be necessary to ensure the success of their plans for military expansion.

One Vietnamese military manual that deals with economic issues was probably printed around May 1945.¹³ After establishing that ‘rear area work is very important’ because ‘the rear area is our base area, the origin of our vanguard’, the manual presents a series of questions and answers telling of the method of electing people’s committees in the villages, and of how to raise mass organisations. It then goes on to explain the concrete ways in which community support would be organised for the army. Two sample questions and answers are enough to convey the method:

Q: What is the People’s Government’s position with respect to the people who work for it?

A: At the beginning when the Government does not yet have finances it can only help officials and army men to a limited extent and order the people to help their

¹² ‘Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh’ (Vietnam Independence League), *Chinh Tri Vien Trong Quan Doi* (Political Cadres in the Army), Hanoi, 1945, pp 13–14. Hoang Van Hoan also describes the participation of cadres in weddings and other village rituals. See *Giot nuoc trong bien ca: Hoi ky cach mang* (A Drop in the Ocean: Revolutionary Memoirs), Peking, 1986, pp 210–11.

¹³ *Cong Tac Khang Nhat Hau Phuong: Van Dap* (Anti-Japanese Resistance Work in Rear Areas: Questions and Answers), Viet Bac, [April/May] 1945.

families. For example, a family with a person in the ranks of the revolutionary army will receive help in ploughing, transplanting, collecting firewood, and carrying water from the other people in the village. When a soldier's parents are sick, the village committee looks after them etc.

Q: What can people in rear areas do to help the Liberation Army?

- A:**
- a) Establish Liberation Army supply stores that are stocked with the help of the people or the confiscated paddy of the Vietnamese traitors that support the Japanese.
 - b) Help with clothing, medicinal herbs, food, shoes etc.
 - c) Help by guiding the army along the road. When the Liberation Army is launched into battle then the self-defence forces help by carrying their equipment, preparing the battlefield, and rescuing the wounded.
 - d) Mobilising ever-greater numbers of youth, men, and women to join the ranks of the Liberation Army.¹⁴

Later, after the anti-Japanese resistance effort merged into an anti-French resistance war, and the anti-French resistance war eventually merged into an anti-American one, the economic aspects of the Viet Minh's war effort became increasingly internationalised. Yet no matter how extensive the international dimension of the logistics battle would become, the army was never able to outgrow the kind of community self-help that the resistance manuals already emphasised by mid-1945. This was because, to survive and expand, the army had to be integrated—through armed propaganda and mass mobilisation—with the society's capacity to support it with people, food and resources at village level.

By 1945, then, mass mobilisation of people and resources was the Vietnamese strategy for national liberation. This was the outcome of an historical process in which continuous political and military adjustments to concrete circumstances would eventually produce victory in the Vietnamese war of national liberation that got off to a shaky start on 22 September.

On this day elements of a French expeditionary force landed in Saigon and began to reoccupy the southern half of the country. On 23 September, the Southern People's Committee responded to French moves in Saigon by declaring a guerrilla war. In the north, Ho Chi Minh's new government did what it could to support the southern guerrillas. At the same time, it bargained with the French in the hope that a negotiated settlement of Vietnamese independence might still be possible and to buy time to organise the National Army if it were not. Negotiations eventually broke down and Franco-Vietnamese clashes around Hanoi in December 1946 finally initiated full-scale hostilities.¹⁵

¹⁴ *ibid*, pp 10–11.

¹⁵ Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, pp 146–53 and 180–82. Stein Tonnesson, *1946: Le Déclenchement de la Guerre d'Indochine*, Editions l'Harmattan, Paris, 1987, offers a discussion based on French sources.

1945–46: THE INITIAL STRATEGIC FAILURE

Almost from the outset, the French Army was aware of the ‘universal hostility’ that confronted its mission to reoccupy Vietnam. In such conditions armed propaganda was no longer needed to mobilise people. Village self-defence forces and guerrilla units actually multiplied at such a rate that the government had difficulty controlling them. By late 1946 Vietnamese sources claim that, in the north alone, ‘almost a million’ people had become involved in the irregular militias,¹⁶ and French sources generally agree.¹⁷

In the south, where Tran Van Giau, the head of the regional People’s Committee, was well-acquainted with French revolutionary history, the main response to the French attacks in September 1945 was to form a ‘Republican Guard’ (*Cong hoa ve binh*) with a paper strength of some 17,000 men.¹⁸ Likewise in the north, when the French attacked in December 1946, their intelligence calculated that Vo Nguyen Giap, another Viet Minh leader with a taste for French revolutionary history, had massed some 35,000 men in 30 battalions around Hanoi.¹⁹ Many Vietnamese officers and soldiers from the former colonial army joined the new revolutionary forces. The official history of the People’s Army mentions the contribution of ‘former soldiers who loved the country’.²⁰

Nevertheless, this upsurge of popular military energy contained the seeds of the Viet Minh’s first military disaster. In the south, the Republican Guard simply disintegrated with the first touch of French air mobile forces in late 1945. In the north, Giap’s thirty battalions would later be dispersed by a combination of river and airborne operations launched by the French in late 1946 and early 1947. Afterwards, Communist press critiques identified the weaknesses in the initial battle array: ‘a plan was slow in coming out’, and ‘orders and instructions were not concrete’. But the fundamental problem was that:

The organisation of our units was still slapdash. It can be said that from the form of organisation to the system of administration nothing was clear. Units were not quite regular units and not quite guerrilla units. Each zone simply followed its own developments concerning tactics and organisation.²¹

The plan to stop the French had failed, because spontaneous and uncoordinated action led to such hasty and unbalanced military development that the French were able to divide the army and the people.

¹⁶ Vo Nguyen Giap, *Unforgettable Days*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi, 1978, p 86.

¹⁷ Philippe Devillers, *Histoire du Viet-Nam de 1940 à 1952*, Editions de Seuil, Paris, 1952, p 184. ‘Each street and village had its self-defense [sic] groups comprising all the young people eligible to carry arms, as well as selected former soldiers. In the minds of the government the self-defense [sic] groups placed under the authority of the People’s Committees would become guerrillas in the case of a French invasion.’ Even in French accounts, the popular image of the self-defence fighter comes through. He/she is young and, emerging from the people, is eager to fight the French. He/she represents the army and the people.

¹⁸ *Lich su quan doi nhan dan Viet Nam* (History of the People’s Army of Vietnam), Quan Doi Nhan Dan, Hanoi, 1974, pp 187–88; and Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, p 150.

¹⁹ Tonnesson, *1946: Le Déclenchement de la Guerre d’Indochine*, p 169.

²⁰ Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, pp 175–76, quoting *Lich su quan doi nhan dan Viet Nam*, p 210.

²¹ *Cuoc khang chien than thanh cua nhan dan Viet Nam* (The Sacred Resistance War of the Vietnamese People), Hanoi, 1958–60, 2 vols, 2, pp 40–41.

As the Viet Minh strategists came to understand this, however, they were able to recreate the political-military links that were necessary to develop the People's Army. In fact, the most important aspect of the critique of 1947–48 was its identification of the need to break large units down into many smaller ones. This meant that the People's Army no longer presented a significant target to a technologically superior enemy, and it made armed propaganda and guerrilla units available to return to the villages and mobilise people and resources there.

As the war developed into a contest between respective liberated and occupied zones, victory would then tend to go to the side that had the greatest capacity to mobilise people in the other's occupied areas. Referring to the period when the armed propaganda campaign was revived in 1948, therefore, one recent Vietnamese study thus tells us how:

to facilitate the task of mass mobilisation in enemy controlled areas the independent companies usually designated an armed propaganda squad to go in advance of it and establish the initial infrastructure for the remainder of the unit to advance into. This was a very important [strategic] development. Later it had a big influence on the operations of independent companies.²²

It would not be difficult to show that this was indeed the case in the mobilisation of people and resources for the most important regular offensives of the war.²³ And this is another reason why the history of mass mobilisation in Vietnam's Thirty Year War is best constructed as a gloss on armed propaganda.

At the same time, however, the certain rhythm of success and failure in the regular Vietnamese offensives throughout the Thirty Year War reminds us that armed propaganda had another important function in the strategy for national liberation.

STRATEGIC CYCLES

Clearly, the purpose of a guerrilla presence and propaganda in the villages was to re-establish infrastructure for the reformation of large units once the stronger enemy had left an area, or been weakened by protracted guerrilla warfare.²⁴ In these terms, the small-scale guerrilla war tended to regenerate the earlier process of mass mobilisation, until it culminated in either a successful general counter-offensive, or a new cycle of unbalanced military development that led to a tactical failure.

²² Nguyen Manh Ha, 'Dai doi doc lap' (Independent Companies), *Thong Tin Lich Su Quan Su*, (The Journal of Military History), 15 March 1987, p 15.

²³ I have discussed the armed propaganda that was necessary to support such campaigns as Le Loi, Hoa Binh and Dien Bien Phu against the French in *Nation in Arms*, pp 217–19, 250, and 253. Nguyen Huy Thuc, 'Phong trao dong khoi', *Thong Tin Lich Su Quan Su*, 2, 1990, p 31, mentions the use of 'armed propaganda' in the south in 1960. Although it does not stress 'armed propaganda', I assume it was behind the 'mass mobilisation' referred to in Nguyen De, 'Dong bang Song Cuu Long trong tong tien cong va noi day xuan, 1974' (The Mekong Delta in the 1974 Spring General Offensive and Uprisings), *Thong Tin Lich Su Quan Su*, 3, 1990, pp 6–13 and 9. Another function, which Independent Companies could have as they prepared a region for a forthcoming offensive, was to go into an area and cultivate gardens that would be used to feed the troops.

²⁴ For a full discussion see Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, Chapter 6.

Just as the popular uprising of 1945–46 led to a downturn in the strategic cycle, its upturn between 1948 and early 1950 led to another downturn. In fact, once the armed propaganda revival of 1948–49 and the opening of links with China in early 1950 created the conditions for the formation of the first main force division—308—what quickly followed were the remarkable border victories of late 1949 and early 1950. With this, the hurried formation of three more divisions—304, 312 and 316—and the partial formation of 320 Heavy Division led to the precipitate ‘general counter-offensive’ on the Red River Delta in late 1950. Here the first French use of napalm, which Vietnamese soldiers thought was the atomic bomb, helped to defeat the rushed offensive. But the main reason for this defeat was the same as for the one in 1946–47: the excessive development of large regular forces that tended to follow a major victory, because of the unrealistic expectations it generated.²⁵

A recent Vietnamese study explains how, in early 1947, the Viet Minh leadership ‘made guerrilla strategies the principal ones’ so as to ‘advance to people’s war’.²⁶ By November, the leadership had ordered numerous regiments to dissolve one or two of their battalions. These were then formed into hundreds of small units: independent companies (*dai doi doc lap*), armed propaganda units and armed propaganda assault units. Many suicide squads (*quyet tu quan*) were also formed. The function of the independent companies was to assist guerrilla units with cadres, weapons, training and organisation; that of the suicide squads was ‘to create a movement’ among the people. In other words, all these units would provide good ‘propaganda to mobilise the masses and create infrastructure’.

Similar cycles of success and failure also characterise Vietnamese strategy in the 1960s and 1970s. As a corrective to this inherent strategic instability, however, the People’s Army had the technique of armed propaganda to help integrate the development of small and large unit war.²⁷

Consider the strategic formulation that Vo Nguyen Giap made in 1961, at a time when the People’s Army was beginning to apply the lessons it had learned in the anti-

²⁵ James Pinckney Harrison, *The Endless War: Fifty Years of Struggle in Vietnam*, Collier Macmillan, London, 1982, p 123, gets at the existence of strategic cycles when he describes the effects of support from China after the Communist victory there in October 1949: ‘The final phase in the war was not long in coming. Viet Minh units, following victories along the northern border in 1950 and temporary setbacks in 1951, began moving into north-western mountain areas, especially after October 1952’—from which time the Viet Minh suffered no major strategic reversals before the division of the country after the Geneva accords.

²⁶ Nguyen Manh Ha, ‘Dai doi doc lap voi viec gay dung va phat trien chien tranh du kich’ (The Independent Companies and the Task of Stimulating and Developing Guerrilla War) in *Thong Tin Lich Su Quan Su*, 15, March 1987, pp 14–15.

²⁷ This integration took place at various levels. For example, the integration of quasi-regular regional forces and village guerrillas can be found in the south in the build up to the ‘general uprising’ (*dong khoi*) of 1960. See Nguyen Huy Thuc, ‘Phong trao dong khoi cua nhan dan mien nam’ (The General Uprising Movement of the Southern People), *Thong Tin Lich Su Quan Su*, 1990, pp 30–31. Then, as in the regular main force offensive in Quang Tri in 1972, there were cases where tank and infantry columns were guided into position on the battlefield by local village guerrillas. See Nguyen Giang, ‘Chien dich tien cang Quang Tri nam 1972’ (The 1972 Quang Tri Offensive), *Thong Tin Lich Su Quan Su*, 15, March 1987, p 7. A good work, written from the American perspective, which understands this interaction is Eric M. Bergerud, *The Dynamics of Defeat: The Vietnam War in Hau Nghia Province*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1991, Chapters 4 and 5.

French war to the war against the American-backed Ngo Dinh Diem regime in the south:

If you do not have guerrilla war then you are unable to have a war of movement; but if you have guerrilla war and do not advance to a war of movement then not only will the strategic responsibility to destroy the enemy's main force be unrealised but you will not be able to maintain and develop the original guerrilla war.²⁸

Note the global grasp of this circular strategic conception. It assumes the dissolution and concentration of regular forces on a bed of guerrilla resistance. This further assumes the central role of armed propaganda in the process of integrating the complex cycles of small and large unit war. Fundamental to Giap's concept, however, were the regional variations in political-military and other circumstances that led to different rates of political-military development in different times and places.

As long as the development of regular forces was maintained in a certain number of regions, while the development of guerrilla forces was in others, the overall effect would be progressively to weaken and divide the better-armed enemy forces. This was as they were forced to disperse in an attempt to deal with the various regular and/or irregular tactical configurations they faced. And when the French faced such a situation in Indochina by 1952–54, far from not being able to reverse this trend, French air power actually advanced it.

A NOTE ON AIR POWER

As indicated earlier, French air power had a significant tactical impact. The Dakotas in Air Transport Command were crucial to the deployment of parachute regiments that played a significant role in dispersing regular Viet Minh Units in 1946–47. As mentioned, tactical bombing with napalm helped save the French position in the Red River Delta in late 1950 and early 1951. Also later, as at Nghia Lo in 1951 and Na San in 1952, paratroopers could again play a crucial role in breaking up Viet Minh offensives by attacking their logistics.

Yet as it helped to protract the war in these ways, French air power also tended to crank up the military performance of the People's Army in two important ways. The first was by forcing it to make tactical adjustments on the battlefield. These adjustments included the increased incidence of night attacks from 1951. They led to the Vietnamese infantry tactic of hugging French positions to neutralise the effects of artillery as well as air support. They led to the formation of small sapper units that specialised in attacking French airfields. By 1954 they led to the development of the first anti-aircraft regiment, the 367th, which did much to close the airstrip at Dien Bien Phu before the battle began—and to presage high quality anti-aircraft defences that took a heavy toll on US Strategic Air Command from 1966.

The most important sense in which French air power shaped the Viet Minh victory, however, was strategic. For as it helped to protract the war, French air power served increasingly to do what Vo Nguyen Giap's strategic formulation said it would:

²⁸ Vo Nguyen Giap, *Nhung kinh nghiệm lon của Dang ve lanh dao dau tranh vu trang va xay dung vu trang cach mang* (Major Experiences of the Party in Leading the Armed Struggle and Building Armed Forces), Hanoi, 1961, p 41. For more on this see Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, p 217.

disperse French forces. And, indeed, it provided the means as well as the need to do this.

When the People's Army's 308, 312 and 316 Divisions began to threaten the north-western highland region and Laos in late 1952, it meant that the French, who needed to save this region for reasons of political prestige, would be fighting either beyond or, at least at, extreme air range. In addition, the threat to Laos would further divide French forces, which were already dangerously divided by combinations of small and large unit war between the lowlands of northern, central and southern Vietnam.

With no political alternative but to defend the highlands and Laos in 1952–53, General Salan thus came up with the concept of establishing fortified airheads there. These, he hoped, would attract the enemy's elusive main force divisions and bring them to battles in which the advantages of terrain, strong fortifications and superior French air and other firepower would triumph. This worked to some extent at Na San, where a Viet Minh attack was defeated in late 1952. But after Salan left and General Navarre arrived in 1953, it actually handed a decisive victory to the People's Army at the French airhead at Dien Bien Phu.

While, the survival of the French position at Dien Bien Phu was totally dependent on air power operating at extreme range, Navarre counted as Salan had formerly done on the main weakness of the People's Army: its logistic system. Main force units had often been forced to withdraw from a battle because of a shortage of rice and ammunition. By the time the French occupied Dien Bien Phu, however, the armed propaganda of the People's Army had not only mobilised the political and economic support of the entire north-west region, but also the nine northern provinces around Hanoi and Thanh Hoa.

As a result, hundreds of thousands of villagers were organised to provide huge quantities of rice for the battle, to haul the artillery into position, and to keep the small arms, anti-aircraft, mortar, and artillery ammunition arriving at the front-line from China for fifty-six days. In addition, 10,000 replacement soldiers were fed into the battle.

As the army mobilised the people, this was a classic case of the people supporting the army. Especially as French air superiority had pushed the decisive battle to extreme air range, French air power was virtually helpless against what General Salan described to me in a 1980 interview in Paris as 'the simplicity and the suppleness' of Viet Minh logistics. Put another way, it was helpless against what General Vo Nguyen Giap described to me in a 1989 interview in Hanoi as the '*suc luc cua nhan dan*', the 'strength (or force) of the people'.

What Salan and Giap meant in their different ways is not difficult to reduce to a common denominator. It was impossible for French air or any other power to prevent rice reaching the front from about 5000 of the 7000 villages in the north and north-west of Vietnam. Equally, it was impossible to prevent ammunition reaching the front that had been trucked and portered 500 miles from the Chinese border to Dien Bien Phu. This was because it was a relatively simple matter for a few hundred peasants to rebuild a bamboo bridge or to create a detour for a bicycle train 100 metres to the left or right of the old one, if it happened to get bombed.

As indicated, Giap's 1961 formulation assumed that the French defeat was implicit in the mass mobilisation of the people. To the extent that French and, later, American air power stimulated such mobilisation by advancing the armed propaganda campaign of the People's Army, was complicit in its own defeat. In other words, it tended to verify the Vietnamese strategy of national liberation.

PANEL DISCUSSION: FRANCE AND INDOCHINA 1945–54

Mr Leo Mahony (RUSI): It has been a most interesting morning. I'd like to make reference to some interesting points made by the two immediately previous speakers. Both Dr Facon and, in the last part of his address, Dr Lockhart referred to the two most important set piece battles that took place during the course of the Indochina war; namely, at Na San, which the French won, and at Dien Bien Phu, which they lost. Of course, the important difference was that, at Na San, General Salan selected an airfield—my recollection is that Na San was the airfield for the provincial capital of Son La—and he built his garrison around that. The important thing was that he kept the airfield open during the whole of the battle and the French inflicted very severe casualties on the Viet Minh. But at Dien Bien Phu the airfield was in a river valley surrounded by high hills and, of course, once the Viet Minh captured some of the hills they dragged the artillery pieces to the top and, as a result, the airfield couldn't be kept open. Hence, they eventually lost the battle.

Now Dr Lockhart also referred to the battle of Khe Sanh in the Vietnam War and he referred to the amount of ordnance that the Americans dropped around that place and, in fact, held the fortress at Khe Sanh as a result of the massive amount of air power that was deployed there. Could I ask both Dr Facon and Dr Lockhart, would they like to comment on what might have been the outcome at Dien Bien Phu—and I appreciate this is speculative—had General Eisenhower approved Operation *Vulture*, which of course was the plan that provided for 98 American B-29s to drop about a thousand tons of ordnance a day in support, from north of the fortress right to Lai Chau, the supply point?

Dr Patrick Facon: You are right for Dien Bien Phu. Dien Ben Phu was too far from the air bases of the Tonkin and there were few radio navigation systems also. It was a big problem for the French Air Force and when the operation was conceived, General Navarre asked the airmen if they had the means to send air transport to reinforce the garrison, and the air commander said, 'If the airfield is in good state, we can'. But, as you know, the airfield was under fire from the Viet Minh artillery, and it could not be used two days after the beginning of the battle. It was the end for Dien Bien Phu. Dr Lockhart showed us a chart of the lines of communication. I think that the principal fault in the use of air power during the battle of Dien Bien Phu was bombing the lines of communication as if it were in a European theatre. As soon as the line was bombed, the Viet Minh passed to the side or approached along other lines, and the efficiency of the air bombardment was very low.

Dr Greg Lockhart: I think the question also asked whether a massive bombardment would have had an effect. I believe the use of nuclear weapons was also mooted at one point around Dien Bien Phu and the American authorities decided that they wouldn't go any further with that. Could that have changed the outcome? Quite possibly—an atom bomb might have had a fairly significant effect, I imagine. In relation to Khe Sanh, the bombing there added up to something like five times the explosive power of the Hiroshima bomb before it eventually stopped the attacking troops. But, then, if the Viet Minh had been defeated at Dien Bien Phu, the

hypothetical question would be whether they would have fought on or not. I believe they would have. Could I also make a point here about strategic bombing? Remember that the US bombing offensive on northern Vietnam was the greatest bomber offensive in any war of national liberation and, perhaps, ever. Yet it never decisively swung the balance in favour of the US.

Mr Tim Coyle (Department of Defence): Dr Facon, you mentioned that in 1954, at the peak of French Air Force involvement, there were some 400 aircraft and 10,000 men, many of whom were professional air force personnel rather than conscripts. I'm wondering what logistic load there was on the French Air Force as a whole. You mentioned the dichotomy of the requirement to fight the campaign in Indochina while the French Air Force was building up to be a strategic air force in support of NATO. Was the support of the French Air Force in Vietnam impacting on the operational efficiency and logistics capability of the French Air Force in the European theatre as a whole?

Dr Patrick Facon: Yes, it's a very important question because at the beginning the French sent to Indochina regular units, which were squadrons and wings—they took a unit and they sent it to Indochina. At the beginning of the 1950s the method changed. For different reasons, the French Air Force decided to create composite squadrons and they took men and aircraft from every squadron of the French Air Force. This caused problems, for to create one composite squadron it disorganised two squadrons of the French Air Force. It was a very significant problem at the end of the war. It disorganised the French Air Force and undermined its contribution to the NATO organisation.

Dr Alan Stephens: I'd like to pick up on Dr Lockhart's report from General Giap on the idea of a strategic contest within this kind of struggle, but actually direct my question again to Dr Facon. Did the French really understand the conflict in terms of strategic contest?

Dr Patrick Facon: It's a very important question because I think that at the beginning the French did not understand what kind of conflict they had to fight. They thought that it was merely a classical conflict or a colonial conflict. The problem was that they did not understand at the beginning that it was a revolutionary war. And they did not understand that, as soon as the Chinese Communists were on the border of the Tonkin, it was impossible to stop the Viet Minh because there was the Chinese sanctuary. It was the same during the war in Algeria; there was sanctuary in Tunisia and sanctuary in Morocco.

Dr Greg Lockhart: I think the French probably saw the conflict in terms of a clash of civilisations rather than of strategies. I think it is interesting that at the time of Dien Bien Phu, French journalists and reporters were making an analogy between the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the fall of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The analogy was with the fall of the Holy Roman Empire; Dien Bien Phu was being linked to the story of the rise and fall of civilisations. But if I could take this point a bit farther. What interests me about that comment begins with the fact that 50 years after the fall of Constantinople, Vasco da Gama sailed around the Cape and dropped anchor in Goa in 1493, and for the next four and a half centuries world history was a one-way street of Western expansion. Then, suddenly, after 1945, a fact that many of us here have

grown up with, all this was turned around after the Japanese destroyed the European imperial order in Asia.

The Constantinople analogy is a Gaelic one. But I think from an Anglo-Saxon point of view, our ‘Constantinoples’ were Singapore in 1941 and Saigon in 1975. In any case, I think the French were right to suggest that the fall of Dien Bien Phu was part of a turning back of four centuries of world history—especially when the British had left India and were soon to pull back ‘east of Suez’. So it’s out of this turning back that we get the whole 1945–75 period of decolonisation and its wars of liberation. And the point I would make about this is that Australian historians are not very good at talking about decolonisation.

They talk about our post-1945 conflicts almost exclusively in terms of the Cold War and the Communist menace. There are issues to be discussed here. But the fundamental thing going on in Asia at that stage is something they largely miss: decolonisation. It’s in that context that you get the rise of ‘the people’ in national independence movements in Indonesia and China also. It’s a similar sort of thing to what I’ve been talking about in the case of Vietnam. And it’s in this new national context that a political-military strategy based on mobilising ‘the people’ is so important. The strategies for national liberation could not have worked without widespread popular support and that’s where you get back to a fundamental turning back of history in the post-colonial era post-1945. Once you had such a major historical change that stimulated national independence new strategies to bring the new nations into being were bound to invent themselves.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE WAR OF NATIONAL LIBERATION IN THE INDONESIAN ARCHIPELAGO 1945–1949

GROUP CAPTAIN IAN MACFARLING

Britannia Rules the Waves; We Waive the Rules.

This paper sets out the background to the conflict that occurred in the Indonesian archipelago, particularly on the island of Java, during the four years immediately after World War II. The focus will be on what happened before the fighting between the Dutch and the Indonesians began in earnest.

There were several groups involved besides the Dutch colonial authorities and the Indonesian nationalists. The British had responsibilities for organising many of the post-war activities in the region; the Japanese were, on occasion, forced to support both sides, and the United Nations tried to organise agreements that would at least limit the bloodshed, for the hatred between the two sides was deep and abiding.

The time period covered in this prefatory chapter is several centuries long, because some of the causes of this conflict were created by much earlier decisions that were made entirely for reasons of their own. The sequence of the discussion is chronological. It includes the reasons why the Europeans went to Asia, the Dutch colonial period, which leads on to the rise of Indonesian nationalism and its effect on the fighting during World War II, from which flows the Indonesian plans for independence. The penultimate subject is the British actions in Indonesia, and the final element covers the Dutch return in the aftermath of the precipitate Japanese surrender in August 1945.

THE EUROPEAN FORAYS INTO THE REGION

There were several reasons for Europeans embarking on their drive to colonise the rest of the world in the 15th century. These included a new-found interest in learning caused by the Renaissance; religious fanaticism—Henry the Navigator was on a crusade when he set off¹—the idea of finding new lands was a bonus; and greed, in that people wanted to find the source of spices, particularly cloves, nutmeg and mace, for themselves so they could get the huge profits.

The first issue was the arbitrary division of the world into two hemispheres. On 4 May 1493, His Holiness Pope Alexander VI split the world into two halves. At first he decreed that the dividing line would be 100 leagues (480 kilometres) west of the Cape Verde Islands. This gave too much land to Spain and on 7 June 1494 the Treaty of

¹ Sabri Zain notes that Henry ‘was also a crusader and hoped that by sailing south and then east along the coast of Africa, Muslim power in North Africa could be attacked from the rear’. Sabri Zain, *The Age of Discovery*, <http://www.sabrizain.demon.co.uk/malaya/port2.htm>.

Tordesillas² between Spain and Portugal revised the line to be 370 leagues (1770 kilometres) west of the Cape Verde Islands but, given that there was a dispute about the length of a league and also about the whole concept of longitude, this was not particularly helpful. His Holiness gave the Western hemisphere to the Spanish and the Eastern hemisphere to the Portuguese.

A quarter of a century later on 22 April 1529 the Treaty of Saragosa was sanctioned by Pope Clement. The antemeridian that had been agreed at Tordesillas was very close to the fabled Spice Islands, where cloves and nutmeg grew naturally, and both Spain and Portugal disputed ownership of these. At Saragosa the Spanish bought the rights to the islands for 350,000 ducats. Both nations however continued to monopolise the spice trade until the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588.³

Notwithstanding Henry the Navigator's religious zeal, the other Portuguese had a clear idea of what they wanted. They went for profit as well as a crusade.⁴ The early maps show that they knew the value of the sandalwood forests in Timor and they took little or no notice of the island of Java that would later become so important in the politics of Indonesia.

Many people knew that the spices they sought appeared somehow in the entrepot sultanate of Malacca, which had been founded on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula in 1402 by an Indonesian aristocrat. The Portuguese adventurer Barbarosa noted that 'Whoever is Lord in Malacca has his hand on the throat of Venice',⁵ so the aim was either to interdict the spices en route from the Moluccas, or seize Malacca itself. The latter option was seen as the best course, and Malacca was captured first by the Portuguese (in 1511), and later in 1641 by a Dutch force—but this was designed to transfer as much trading power as possible to the Dutch in Batavia (now Jakarta) with the aim of removing Banten, an enclave to the west of Batavia on the island of Java, which was an indigenous alternative to Malacca.

THE DUTCH COLONIAL PERIOD

The most important relationship in the colonial period was that which occurred between the indigenous people and the dynamic traders from a small, newly-established north European state called the Netherlands. The first element was a

² For the translated text of the Treaty see the 'The Avalon Project at Yale Law School: Treaty between Spain and Portugal concluded at Tordesillas; June 7, 1494 (Ratification by Spain, July 2, 1494; Ratification by Portugal, September 5, 1494)': <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/moder/mod001.htm>.

³ 'The Victorian Web: Literature, History and Culture in the Age of Victoria' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* at <http://65.107.211.206/history/empire/eic.html>.

⁴ Portuguese colonisation, which received impetus from the development of greatly improved methods of navigation, began with the establishment of trading ports in Africa and the East, while the Spanish concentrated most of their efforts in the Americas. Both the Spanish and the Portuguese exercised strict governmental control over their colonies and used them primarily as a basis for rich commerce with the parent government. They discouraged them from becoming economically self-sufficient. See <http://www.bartleby.com/65/co/coloniza.html>.

⁵ This quote is regularly cited in Malaysian travel literature about Malacca [aka Melaka]: <http://www.geocities.com/Yosemite/Falls/9251/malacca.html>.

company, the Dutch East India Company,⁶ that in its heyday was in relative terms larger than any multinational company in existence today.

The Company was founded at the start of the 17th century as a joint stock company—that is, profit and loss was shared equally between the shareholders according to stockholdings. Under its charter from the Government or States General it had an official monopoly over all Dutch trade between the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Magellan. It exercised political power in Dutch territory but, because of its narrow, spice-based trade, it declined and became bankrupt at the turn of the 18th century. Because of its focus on trade it had minimal impact on the local societies where it held sway.

The trade routes to Asia via the Southern Ocean were dangerous. One story tells of a very fat businessman who, having got to Java, had been so frightened on the voyage across the southern part of the Indian Ocean that he had lost half his body weight. He returned to Holland overland, rather than face the return voyage home by ship.

The Dutch had replaced the Spanish and Portuguese in the region and they brought with them a totally different style. As Tate notes:

... before the 19th Century their abiding interest was trade. They did not propound theories of colonisation; they had no doctrine of a master race ... they felt no urge to convert 'Moors' [which is where the word *Moro* comes from] to Christianity. They were businessmen not crusaders and – unlike the Portuguese they never allowed prejudice to outweigh commercial advantage. Their aim was to maximise profit at the expense of every other consideration. Consequently, they imposed methods for guarding their monopoly, which were so severe that periodic revolts against their cruelty broke out on many islands throughout the Moluccas.⁷

It must be remembered that a nation such as the Netherlands had to trade and fight wars simply to exist—and they did this with great skill, and particular nastiness. The VOC (refer note 6) went bankrupt at the time when Napoleon was coming to power in France. Later in the Napoleonic Wars the British realised that the archipelago would be vulnerable to his manoeuvring and they seized Batavia in 1811. This is not the place to review the events in detail, but it is important to note that the British leader, Stamford Raffles, was so successful that when the Dutch returned to Java after the Napoleonic Wars—having worked out an agreement with the British—the locals revolted against their resumption of power.⁸

The Dutch were back in earnest by 1825. They slowly expanded the former Company strongholds out to encompass the entire archipelago. There was local opposition everywhere and, in all cases, they put it down violently. They never had enough Dutch people so they used local rulers to keep their own people in check. They

⁶ In 1602 a number of small, independent trading companies, all operating out of the Netherlands, joined to form a coalition known as the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (in English, the 'United East India Company') and nowadays more generally called the 'Dutch East India Company', or simply the 'VOC': <http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/age/resunact/voc.htm>.

⁷ Graham Irwin, in Soedjatmoko et al (eds), *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1965, p 237.

⁸ Ian MacFarling, *The Dual Function of the Indonesian Armed Forces: Military Politics in Indonesia*, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1996, p 14.

employed a highly competent mercenary army to impose their rule, and continued fighting until well into the 20th century. By 1911, they had essentially conquered the entire archipelago.

The Dutch East Indies Army⁹ (*Koninklijk Nedlandsch Indisch Leger* (KNIL)) was formed in 1830. It was a mercenary army and drew its troops from all sorts of men. It even included African-American civil war veterans from the Union Army to man its artillery in the 1870s. Everyone started as a private soldier and once commissioned could rise in rank according to ability. To rise above major required the candidate to become a Dutch citizen.

The indigenous people were reluctant to join and were often press-ganged into service. As one observer noted, only poverty or a brush with the law could force them to enter the ranks. The force was usually thirty to forty thousand strong and would put down rebellions as needed. If it was in Java, troops from other islands were used, and vice versa. There was no consideration of using conscripts from Holland. It was pointed out that *the social background of common soldiers was such that forcing respectable people into their company would cause uproar in Holland*. And, finally, there were no indigenous officers until the very end of the colonial period—but these had a significant influence on the future of Indonesia.

There were many regions where indigenous leaders governed on behalf of the Dutch. These were known as *Nederlands-Indië-Zelfbesturen*.¹⁰ This concept was not as enlightened as might seem at first glance. All the statelets involved—there were 282 in 1942—acknowledged Dutch suzerainty. Moreover, the Dutch had strong powers of intervention, including the free use of land—control of mining—and the right to appoint a ruler's successor. It was not a move to independence.

As the Dutch came to see the archipelago as their property they adopted a rigid class system. The pecking order was strictly adopted. This however did not stop Dutch men marrying the local women and their children were seen as Dutch. By 1930 there were close to a quarter of a million Europeans in the archipelago, of whom about 70 per cent were Indo-European. The division of society sharpened even further so that you had Europeans seeing themselves as superior to the Indo-Europeans, while there was further subdivision into those Europeans who came out solely to work and then go back home in retirement (*trekkers*), and those who had every intention of staying in the archipelago for good (*blijvers*). The intransigence of the *blijvers* was one of the main problems in 1946.¹¹

Indonesian nationalism did not suddenly flare overnight into a great conflagration. The Dutch had been canny and had worked through coopting, coercing and finally threatening the recalcitrants into submission. One of the most persuasive dissenters was Eduard Douwes Dekker—who under the pseudonym of *Multatuli* (which means

⁹ The information on the KNIL comes from MacFarling, *The Dual Function of the Indonesian Armed Forces*, pp 15–7.

¹⁰ See <http://www.gimonca.com/sejarah/sejarah06.html> for maps at the 1932 point in the timeline. This was reproduced in part from Robert Cribb, *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia*, Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, NJ, 1992, p 21.

¹¹ I am grateful to Mr Gerard Casius of the Royal Netherlands Air Force History Section for his advice on both the meaning and pronunciation of these words.

‘I have suffered much’) had written the celebrated novel, *Max Havelaar*. He wrote to the Dutch King pointing out that:

a Northsea coast state of robbers ... building railways from stolen money [had] stunned the victims with opium, Gospels and Dutch gin ... I dare to ask you in confidence is it your order that more than thirty million of your subjects in the East are maltreated and squeezed in Your name?¹²

The answer was yes, of course, but Dekker got no official reply. And the Dutch did send home a great deal of money.

Revenues from the Indies paid for as much as one-third of the Dutch government’s budget in the mid-1800s. These monies helped to finance the industrialization [sic] and development of the Netherlands in the 1800s. The burden fell especially upon the Netherlands Indies, since the Dutch had lost many of their other colonies to the British during the Napoleonic wars (including South Africa and Sri Lanka), and since Belgium with its business and industry broke away from the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1830.¹³

In 1901, Queen Wilhelmina announced a new policy, which was the so-called Ethical Policy.¹⁴ It was expressed in a new determination of the government in the Netherlands to involve itself in the archipelago’s social and economic affairs. It was done in the name of rational efficiency. It produced better health care, improved education, expanded communications, infrastructure—particularly irrigation in a country dependent on wet rice farming—and transmigration. It was paternalistic, and it helped Western colonial interests as much as it helped the indigenous people.

The problem for the Dutch was that they produced a group of Western-educated young men who felt entirely frustrated that their new-found capacity to manage archipelagic affairs was subject to persistent close Dutch supervision. The nationalist movement was born from a plan that did not include the idea that it would be the source of independence. And for all the good intentions in the Netherlands, the colonists still believed that they were entirely superior to the local population.

THE RISE OF INDONESIAN NATIONALISM

The first purely Indonesian organisation was *Budi Utomo*, which was formed in 1908. It had a non-political platform that stressed both education and the need to guarantee dignity for the people of Indonesia. It was essentially Javanese in nature, and this

¹² See <http://home.iae.nl/users/arcengel/NedIndie/introengels.htm> for the English translation of Dekker’s letter.

¹³ Not attributed to an author. See <http://www.gimonca.com/sejarah/sejarah05.html>.

¹⁴ An anonymous author notes: ‘In 1899 a liberal lawyer named Conrad Théodoor van Deventer published a polemical essay, “A Debt of Honour”, [in] the Dutch journal *De Gids*. Van Deventer, who had long experience in the Indies, argued that the Netherlands had a moral responsibility to return to the colony all the profits that had been made from the sale of cash crops following the *Dutch Staten-Generaal’s* assumption of fiscal responsibility for the islands in 1867. He estimated that this amount totaled [sic] almost 200 million guilders, which should be invested in welfare and educational facilities. When a liberal government was elected in the Netherlands in 1901, these ideas became the basis for what was known as the Ethical Policy.’ See: <http://www.lupinfo.com/country-guide-study/indonesia/indonesia26.html>.

ensured that older people held sway over the younger ones. Thus, its popular appeal dwindled in the face of the rising *Sarekat Islam*.

Sarekat Islam was formed in 1912 and in seven years had a membership of two and a half million. Its success was due to a number of factors, including reaction to aggressive Christian missionaries, a surge in Chinese nationalism after 1911 and the rise of Sun Yat Sen, a consequent increase in Chinese business competition to the disadvantage of Indonesians, and the inability of the Dutch colonial administration to come to grips with the popularity of the organisation. The Dutch had not seen anything like it before.

There are a number of other organisations that could be mentioned but they are outside the scope of this paper. It is, however, important to mention one event where many organisations participated enthusiastically. This was the second Youth Congress held in 1928 in Batavia. The young men and women who took part in the congress came up with some particularly persuasive ideas of one people, one nation and one language. In this last issue, they were particularly savvy because they chose Bahasa Indonesia, which originates from the Riau Islands south of Singapore. It has a much wider spread of use than Javanese, which is not only difficult to learn but would also have implied a Javanese hegemony. Having devised the concept of an archipelagic homeland, they gave it a flag and an anthem. The event and its explicit opposition to external rule was a source of great concern for the Dutch colonial authorities.¹⁵

INDONESIAN NATIONALIST LEADERS

There are three major personalities who guided Indonesia during the post-World War II period. Sukarno was the father of Indonesia.¹⁶ His father was Javanese and his mother Balinese. He was a complex mixture of courage and cowardice, honour and charlatanry, idealism and corruption, great education and total ignorance (particularly of economics), a socialist in theory and a sybarite in practice. He was an engineer who was educated in Bandung in West Java and became politically involved by marrying the daughter of the founder of *Sarekat Islam*. He was the only man who could command widespread loyalty, yet he was not necessarily the man you would trust—particularly if there was a woman in the room. The Dutch saw him as a major threat and he paid dearly for that.

Mohammad Hatta was the antithesis of Sukarno.¹⁷ He was a devout Muslim who felt that he could create a better Indonesia that was just and prosperous. He was a product of a Dutch education in the Netherlands and an admirer of many Western things. He was an aesthete and swore himself to celibacy until Indonesia was free. He broke off his engagement and maintained that vow until Indonesia was an independent nation. He then married the daughter of his former fiancée. While Sukarno was the fiery

¹⁵ For a brief description of these events see Ian MacFarling, *Military Aspects of the West New Guinea Dispute, 1958–1962*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, The Australian National University, Canberra, 1990, p 6.

¹⁶ The best bibliography of Sukarno is J.D. Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography*, Allen Lane, London, 1972.

¹⁷ For a detailed analysis of Hatta's achievements see Mavis Rose, *Indonesia Free: A Political Biography of Mohammad Hatta*, Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 1987.

revolutionary leader, Hatta was the dour, highly competent administrator. They would become the *dwitunggal*—or inseparable pair who led the nation to its independence.¹⁸ When Sukarno was gaoled and his political party broken up, Hatta formed a new association with Sutan Sjahrir.¹⁹

Sjahrir was the son of a West Sumatran nobleman and lawyer, and a high-flyer. By the time he was 25 he had gained a Dutch education, become a leading intellectual—and was deemed to be such a threat that he was exiled for several years. He would become the Prime Minister at 36 and then go into decline, being imprisoned by the Republic he had done so much to found and finally dying from the ill health that had dogged him since his exile.

The Dutch went out of their way to isolate the troublemakers and to make life particularly difficult for them. *Boven Digul* in the jungle of south-west Dutch New Guinea rivalled the fabled French prison at Devil's Island for its nastiness. Hatta and Sjahrir were sent there in 1935 after being detained in 1933. They stayed in the camp for two years and were then moved to the Moluccas, which was much more comfortable but still entirely isolated from the political powerhouse of West Java. Sukarno was in and out of gaol in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and finally exiled to Bengkulu in south-west Sumatra until the Japanese invasion of early 1942.

EUROPEAN COLONIALISM IN THE 1930S

To the colonial powers, the concept of South-East Asia did not exist. In their terminology it was always 'the Far East'. The issue for them was the link between the colony and the mother country in Western Europe, and they actively discouraged direct links between their colonies and the colonies of their European rivals. Consequently, there were few if any links between Indonesians in Java and Vietnamese in French Indochina, while there were many links between Indonesians and the Netherlands, and also between the Vietnamese and France. There was thus no concept of region or of nation states in South-East Asia, with the notable exception of the Kingdom of Thailand.

As World War II approached, the Dutch were determined to maintain their grip. The Governor General of the Indies, Jkhr Mr B.C. De Jonge gave a newspaper interview, in which he was reported as saying: 'I believe that since we have laboured here in the Indies for three hundred years, another three hundred should be added to them ere the Indies shall perhaps be ripe for some form of independence'. The fact that he had personal business interests in the archipelago may have influenced that opinion. He was also reported as giving a parallel opinion that 'we have ruled here with the whip

¹⁸ A valuable description of the links between the two men can be found in Herbert Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*, Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 1962.

¹⁹ For a useful description of Sjahrir see John Legge, *Intellectuals and Nationalism in Indonesia: A Study of the Following Recruited by Sutan Sjahrir in Occupation Jakarta*, Cornell Modern Indonesia Project Publications, Ithaca, NY, 1988. See also Angus McIntyre (ed), *Indonesian Political Biography: In Search of Cross-cultural Understanding*, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, Clayton, Vic, 1993, p 35.

and the club for three hundred years and we will do the same for the next three hundred’, and this reflects how most Dutchmen felt in the archipelago at the time.²⁰

World War II started as a European affair, though many Indonesians were worried that the Japanese had also espoused fascism and would link themselves in an Axis with Nazi Germany and Mussolini’s Italy.²¹ The Dutch had been neutral in World War I and hoped to maintain that throughout this war. They were completely unprepared for the Nazi invasion of 10 May 1940 and collapsed rapidly. The Dutch Government and the Royal Family went into exile in London. This meant that the East Indies was run as a colony without a real colonial master. The few links with other European colonies meant that there was no support for those that had lost the European direction.

The interesting issue in all of this was that the Dutch East Indies authorities would not countenance indigenous participation in government as a route to cooperation in the face of a mounting Japanese threat. Hatta had pointed out that many Indonesians were unhappy with the Japanese and would help if they were given some political rights, but none were offered.

THE BEGINNINGS OF A NATIONAL ARMY

Despite political intransigence, there were some Dutch colonial organisations that accepted locals into their ranks. The KNIL inducted 12 cadets into the military academy in Bandung in 1940. They were all remarkable men. They mixed with the Dutch cadets as equals. They generally achieved better passes than their Dutch colleagues, with Tahi Bonar Simatupang graduating as the dux and Abdul Haris Nasution coming second. They were to become leaders in the aftermath of World War II and continued to have an influence into old age.²²

THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

The Japanese did not take long to begin making demands. Kenkitshi Yoshizawa, a member of the Japanese Upper House and former Minister of Foreign Affairs arrived in Batavia in November 1940 with a long list that included:

- acceptance of the Japanese vision for South-East Asia,
- mining rights across the archipelago,
- fishing and shipping rights in archipelagic waters,
- unhindered business opportunity,

²⁰ For a thorough discussion on this see <http://www.engelfriet.net/Aad/NedIndie/ggjonge>.

²¹ An unknown author states that ‘[in 1935] Nahdlatul Ulama issued a ruling that “the Netherlands Indies is a nation where Islam can be practiced, and should be defended against Japan”’. <http://www.gimonca.com/sejarah/sejarah06.html>.

²² For a detailed description of their performance see MacFarling, *The Dual Function of the Indonesian Armed Forces*, particularly Chapter 2, pp 19–31.

- opening of Netherlands East Indies markets for Japanese goods,
- a huge increase in oil supply to Japan, and
- development of airline and telegraph links between the Netherlands East Indies and Japan.²³

When they realised that the Japanese were becoming a threat to their interests, the colonial powers in the region developed a plan for a joint command of Australian, British, Dutch, and American forces (ABDACOM). ABDACOM was a disaster from start to finish. The Allies selected one of the most gifted generals of the 20th century, General Sir Archibald Wavell, to command what was a complete sham.²⁴ Even then, they realised that his task was extremely difficult.

Churchill, who did not like Wavell and always bore a grudge, noted that ‘it was almost certain that he [Wavell as ABDACOM] would have to bear a load of defeat in a scene of confusion’.²⁵ Field Marshal Sir John Dill wrote to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff General, Sir Alan Brooke that ‘never was a soldier given a more difficult task’.²⁶ While Wavell himself, using the robust humour that was often hidden behind his silence, remarked that ‘I have heard of a man being left holding the baby – but this is twins!’²⁷ All of the Allies knew they were ill-prepared and had few illusions of what would happen once the Japanese attack came.

The Japanese assault on the archipelago started just before Christmas 1941 and was over shortly after St Valentine’s Day the next year. It was a campaign that lasted 59 days and removed the colonial forces from the field of battle. The Japanese moved quickly, using bicycles to outmanoeuvre their opponents. And when these met opposition they used light tanks to force their entry. The Japanese were remarkably adept. The 16th Army in Java was 55,000 strong and it occupied the island in ten days, capturing an Allied force that seriously outnumbered them, for a trifling loss in killed and wounded.²⁸

The occupation surprised everyone. The Japanese were not prepared—the Allies were not ready—and the Indonesians did not really care at the outset, and when they realised what was going on it was too late. When the Japanese did conquer Europe’s *Far East*, they then distributed the administrative responsibility for areas within the region in a way that conflicted with both ideas of nations based on ethnic and religious grounds, and the way the former European colonies had been structured

²³ See the text of the demands at http://www.geocities.com/dutcheastindies/DEI_oil.html.

²⁴ For a brief resume of Wavell see <http://www.geocities.com/dutcheastindies/wavell.html>.

²⁵ John Connell, *Wavell, Supreme Commander 1941–1943*, Collins, London, 1969, p 71.

²⁶ Quoted in Arthur Bryant, *The Turn of the Tide 1939–1943*, Collins, London, 1957, p 294.

²⁷ Quoted in [british-forces.com](http://british-forces.com/articles/abda_structure.htm) articles\abda structure.htm.

²⁸ Jack Ford notes: Despite this, for 61 days from 10 January to 12 March 1942, the Dutch fought a series of confused and desperate actions against the Japanese. In the course of their defence of the NEI, the Dutch lost 85 warships, 227 combat aircraft and approximately 121,000 troops. Japanese losses were not unsubstantial, including 28 ships, mostly valuable troop transports. Each battle for the Dutch was a rearguard action while they awaited Allied assistance. The Dutch defence of their colony lasted longer than the British defence of Malaya and Singapore. J. Ford. *Allies in a Bind: Australia and the Netherlands East Indies in the Second World War*, Australian Netherlands Ex-Servicemen & Women’s Association, Queensland Branch, Loganholme, Qld, 1996, p 68.

before the Japanese occupation. The 25th Army controlled Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. Java was controlled by the 16th Army from Batavia, and the Imperial Japanese Navy controlled the rest of the archipelago.²⁹ This meant that notions of independence were different in the various regions. What was permissible in Java was a gaoling offence in Sumatra, and a death sentence in the Japanese Navy's area of responsibility.

The war crimes charges formulated after the end of the war included the following comments:

All expressions of society were supervised and controlled by Japanese authority. Life itself had been forced into rigid moulds for the support of the Japanese Army, which was ensured by manifest and multifold expansion of police activity, spying and terror.

The Japanese may not have been prepared logistically or administratively to control Java, but they had no doubt that their superiority gave them the right. The Japanese Army Newspaper was unequivocal in March 1942 in its editorial, which read:

First of all we must rescue Indonesians from the habit of laziness. We must teach them diligence, effort, perseverance and devotion. If they knew what strenuous efforts we have made ... they would not be able to behave easily as our brothers.

While the Japanese in Java were, in general, quite accepting of national pride, they were very disdainful of nationalism. A review stated:

Indonesian nationalism is narrow-minded. The revival of Asia under the leadership of Japan has little in common with the self-determination of the peoples in the Western sense. The purpose of the Japanese effort is to *let the people bathe in the Imperial Graces*.

INDIGENOUS FORCES DURING THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION³⁰

The Japanese faced the same problem as the Dutch before them. How could they develop an indigenous force that was strong enough to help them, yet remain too weak to be a challenge to them? In the end they created several organisations that were not linked to one another:

- *Heiho* [the Soldier Auxiliaries] was simply a force of servants in uniform. They dug ditches and fortifications and only fought if they had to.
- *Giyugun* was a volunteer army in Sumatra that was structured for local defence.
- *Peta* was to have the greatest influence on affairs in the War of Independence and I shall concentrate on that. The force was territorial, and no one battalion knew where the adjacent battalions were or who commanded them. It was a case of keeping them apart to ensure they could not unite.

²⁹ A useful map of the distribution can be found at <http://idd02n6r.eresmas.net/195045in.gif>.

³⁰ The data for this section were drawn from MacFarling, *The Dual Function of the Indonesian Armed Forces*, pp 18–25.

The training was based on bushido. Élan was everything. Discipline and self-confidence (often misplaced) were essential, and the Japanese instructors taught these young men that violence was a panacea and could be used as policy. This flew in the face of what the Dutch had taught the cadets in Bandung in 1940, and Simatupang and Nasution and their colleagues would spend much of the rest of their careers fighting the uneducated Peta officers who realised that, if the former KNIL cadets came to power, the Peta group's chances of promotion were slim.

INDONESIAN NOTIONS OF INDEPENDENCE

While the Japanese had developed what was a sound scheme in support of Japan's national interests, the Indonesians had other ideas. Sutan Sjahrir wrote a very interesting book describing his struggle. In it he describes the thoughts prevailing as the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and then moved south:

For the average Indonesian the war was not really a world conflict between two world forces. It was simply a struggle in which the Dutch colonial rulers would finally be punished by Providence for the evil, the arrogance, and the oppression they had brought to Indonesia. Among the masses anti-Dutch feeling grew stronger and stronger. This was naturally reflected in the nationalist movement and its leadership, part of which expressed sympathy for the Axis openly.³¹

Some of this was revisionist. There had been those who would have preferred to support the Dutch if only they had offered some opportunity for indigenous political participation in return. But as mentioned before, the Dutch were intransigent on this point. Sukarno and Hatta agreed to work with the Japanese while working for independence, while Sjahrir would go underground and work to undermine the Japanese authority.

As the Japanese realised they were losing the war they allowed the indigenous politicians in Java to work more openly. Thus in the closing months of the war in the Pacific there was:

- political leadership that was competent and accepted by the people,
- a constitution that was sophisticated and acceptable to most,
- a five point state ideology that captured the imagination of most people because it synthesised quite brilliantly all eleven forms of common law within the archipelago,
- an embryonic parliament that was developing a capacity for administration, but
- they did not develop an armed force for a variety of reasons—mainly to avoid angering the returning Allies who would surely come.

³¹ Sutan Sjahrir, *Our Struggle*, Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 1968 (translation by Benedict R.O'G. Anderson), p 20.

In the aftermath of the precipitate Japanese surrender there was a strong push for a formal declaration of independence. There was—as one might expect from the issues noted immediately above—a strong Javanese input to politics. The majority were Muslims, but many were extremely tolerant, so that they accepted other non-Muslims as brothers in arms. Most were young. This was to be expected; the average age for men dying in the archipelago in the mid-1940s was 33 years. Many were Dutch educated and, because they had been well-treated in Holland, this tended to make them refuse to accept the prejudices of colonial life in Indonesia. Most thought the British were pro-Dutch—and this was to put them in a difficult position with a group of people who thought that they had won the war and thus had a right to make the rules in the post-war world.

On the morning of 17 August 1945 Sukarno read the proclamation of independence. It reads:

We – the people of Indonesia hereby declare the Independence of Indonesia. Issues associated with the transfer of power etc will be done in an orderly fashion and in as short a timescale as possible.

Jakarta³²
17 August 05³³
On behalf of the Indonesian nation
Sukarno/Hatta

Then Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta watched as Colonel Latief Hendrodiningrat raised the red and white flag of Indonesia. The dispute over power in the archipelago had begun.

THE RETURN OF THE BRITISH AND THEIR ALLIES

The British had other ideas. They had long had a plan to retake the Malay Peninsula and Singapore. The command that they had created was South East Asia Command or S-E-A-C, which the Americans decoded as ‘Save England’s Asian Colonies’. In August 1945, the Potsdam Conference made changes to the division of Allied responsibility in South-East Asia. Admiral Mountbatten’s SEAC was enlarged to include the eastern half of the former Netherlands East Indies.

The British arrived on 15 September 1945 in Batavia when the 5th Cruiser Squadron, under the command of Rear Admiral W.R. Patterson RN, docked at the port of Tanjung Priok. On board were members of RAPWI (Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees) and some Dutch representatives of the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration. It was the start of an unhappy and frustrating 15 months for the British officials.

General Sir Philip Christison, the officer who had been selected by Admiral Mountbatten to lead the British force into the archipelago, was a fine combat officer but not a diplomat or civil affairs man. He was not a great success.

³² Not Batavia.

³³ They were still using the Japanese calendar.

The first task was to rescue the Allied POWs who had been in captivity since March 1942 and were in a very poor state. The second was to recover as many Allied internees as possible, usually women and children. However, the most difficult problem was to disarm the Japanese before they gave their weapons to the Indonesians. Some 52,000 rifles and well over 250,000 grenades found their way into Republican hands.

The British were also there to pave the way for a Dutch return, given that the British Prime Minister Clement Atlee had given that undertaking—long before he had been briefed on the situation in the archipelago.³⁴ And finally, they were there to maintain security. This was an almost impossible task and one that they had to conduct using different ideas, including the use of Japanese troops.

General Christison did his best to get the Dutch Lieutenant Governor General Hubertus van Mook to talk to the Indonesians. It should be noted that the people he allowed to meet the Dutch were all non-collaborators and thus gave some legitimacy to any talks.

What the Dutch did not like was that the Republic had been declared before they could move to prevent it, and they refused to acknowledge its existence in any way. They also felt that it was a Japanese ‘time bomb’ and illegal under the terms of the Japanese surrender. However, what they disliked most was the sympathy for the Indonesian cause among the Indians and—more astonishingly to them—from the Australians who supported the idea of the Republic. The Australian effort is outside the scope of this paper, but we should all remember that Australia’s support to the Indonesian cause was one reason why it survived. The British paid a considerable price for their involvement. In the first few months of supposed peace—particularly in Surabaya on Eastern Java—they suffered 1063 casualties, of whom 350 were killed or missing. (This was more than the British had lost in the last year of the war on the Burma Road against the Japanese.) Air power was used so extensively during the 15 months that the British were there that five aircraft were shot down by ground fire—perhaps with Japanese help—and 15 aircraft crashed in bad weather and for other reasons. Overall the British flew almost 20,000 sorties for a total of over 36,000 flying hours.³⁵

THE DUTCH RETURN

The Dutch did return, without the slightest misgiving or the notion that they might actually be unwelcome. The Netherlands had been denuded of treasure by the Nazis and had only just been restored to nationhood in April 1945. In short, the country needed the income from the archipelago. The Dutch also took a legalistic approach. For them the Japanese occupation had been an aberration—a mere hiccup in 300 years of Dutch control of the archipelago. Therefore they had the legal right to recover what they felt was legally theirs.

³⁴ The British Prime Minister told the House of Commons of the British reluctance to take the Indonesians at face value and also about the ‘strong moral obligation towards our Dutch Allies as the sovereign power (in Indonesia) until they are in a position to resume control’. A.H. Nasution, *Memories of Youth*, CV Haji Masagung, Jakarta, 1990, p 132.

³⁵ David Lee, *Eastward*, Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, London, p 128.

For the Indonesian leaders, who had impeccable credentials with no Japanese links to harm their reputations, the situation was quite simple. The Dutch had lost any rights when they surrendered to the Japanese. Thus, the Republic was a product of national and constitutional will, and it therefore had both *de facto* and *de jure* authority over the archipelago. For such Indonesians, any attempt to reinstate Dutch rule was tantamount to military aggression.

There was intransigence on both sides. The Dutch, particularly the *blijvers*, were most outspoken and racist. There was no point of contact for negotiations. Sukarno was a collaborator. The Dutch would not agree to dealing with him when they were holding 80,000 of their own for collaborating with the Nazis at home. Furthermore, the Indonesians were using the POWs and internees as bargaining chips in the conflict, and this was a 'red rag' to some men whose families were in the internment camps. The upshot was that no headway could be made. Both camps were severally prepared to fight and die for their cause, and battle was joined. My colleagues will describe how it progressed.

THE USE OF AIR POWER IN THE NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE IN INDONESIA 1945–49

MR GERARD J. CASIUS

INTRODUCTION

The following points should be kept in mind when considering this paper:

- The Dutch serving in the Netherlands East Indies Air Force (NEIAF) were, largely, born and raised in the country, not ‘temporarily based there’. They regarded Indonesia as their home country and their own immediate families (wives, children, brothers, sisters and parents) were interned in the Japanese camps, in several cases until well into 1947, and held there as bargaining pawns in the control of the Indonesians. Thus, the stake of the Dutch personnel in the struggle was one of liberating one’s own family, not just as a soldier with a job to do. This is a rather different situation than that which prevailed in the British and French forces, and this explains to some extent the stubbornness of the Dutch not to give in.
- The air operations by the Dutch in Indonesia took place over a massive area, which had to be covered with a relatively small operational strength. Ferry flights of 3–5 hours by fighter aircraft to the different operational areas were common. For example, the distance Medan–Jakarta–Surabaya was about 2200 kilometres (1400 miles) and Sabang–Merauke was 5200 kilometres (3300 miles). By way of comparison, Melbourne–Darwin is 3300 kilometres (2100 miles).
- The surrender of the Japanese came as a complete surprise and caught the Dutch unprepared for the task to re-establish themselves in the Indies.
- The NEIAF was actually not an independent Service, but an integral part of the Army, in an organisational sense on par with the infantry, artillery, cavalry etc. Thus, there was no separate Air Force Operational Doctrine; the Air Force (more correctly, Army Air Corps) in the post-1945 era was purely a tactical support force for Army ground operations. Therefore, this will not be a story of massive, long duration air actions and bombing raids.
- Finally, it must also be mentioned that the NEIAF, as part of the Army, was administered by the Ministry of Colonial Affairs (after 1945, the Ministry of Overseas Territories) and, as such, not part of the Dutch Air Force in Europe, which came under the Ministry of Defence. Starting from 1946, however, the Air Force in Holland sent two air squadrons to Indonesia to reinforce the NEIAF (No 6 Squadron with Austers and No 322 Squadron with Spitfires), as well as air base defence troops (similar in concept to the RAF Regiment,

including anti-aircraft artillery) and relatively large numbers of ground personnel—and some aircrew as well—who did not come in organised units but were assigned on an ad hoc basis to the NEIAF organisation to alleviate urgent personnel shortages.

THE PERIOD 1945–46

Delusions About the Situation in the Netherlands East Indies

The Dutch lacked adequate intelligence about the true political, economic and social situation in Java and Sumatra. Their leadership in Australia had ignored reports from their own intelligence officers who had visited liberated areas of the Philippines and who had concluded that the Japanese occupation had brought about a complete upheaval of pre-war conditions. To the Netherlands East Indies Government, it was incomprehensible that ‘our nice and loyal Javanese’ would not welcome the Dutch back.

This is well-illustrated by the following quote of General Kengen (Commander Netherlands East Indies Air Force) on the occasion of the first anniversary of VJ [Victory over Japan] Day:

We returned here with in our hearts the desire for the olden days, the longing to restore the relationship with the Indonesian people with whom we knew so well, our family life, our old interests. That was a fictitious idea and now it has gone. With incredible force the new Indonesia has presented itself.

Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees (RAPWI)

The first entry back into Netherlands East Indies by a Dutch aircraft was on 13 September 1945 for RAPWI purposes. Many crews of No 18 Squadron—then based in Balikpapan flying B-25 Mitchells—made unauthorised flights over Java to try and find family members in the known locations of internment camps.

For instance, Captain Winckel searched for his mother and sister by flying over Bandung, in vain. But another pilot flew over the internment camp at Banjoe Biroe near Semarang and saw written on the ground in white flour ‘NINI’, the name of Winckel’s sister who obviously realised her brother would be in an aircraft looking for her. Winckel flew over there and dropped a letter, and four days later he dropped a load of food into the camp. These sort of missions were flown without any official authorisation.

A Netherlands East Indies air element was incorporated into the British-run RAPWI organisation, their local knowledge of course being of great use. Due to the uncertain condition of airfields and fuel supplies in the interior, Captain Arens, the Dutch commander of the RAPWI air element, organised the use of Japanese transport aircraft and crews. The Japanese proved very cooperative and this operation, nicknamed ‘Arens Airlines’, continued well into 1946 and evacuated many of their former prisoners.

THE RAF IN INDONESIA, 1945–46

Mountbatten wanted to receive the actual Japanese surrender in his area (South East Asia Command) before entering Indonesia. This took place on 12 September 1945. The task of the British forces entering Indonesia was:

- to disarm the Japanese,
- to liberate POWs and internees (estimated at 120,000), and
- to re-establish the Netherlands administration.

The British forces occupied three bridgeheads in Java (Jakarta, Semarang and Surabaya) and three in Sumatra (Medan, Palembang and Padang). The bridgehead at Jakarta was slowly expanded with a corridor to Bandung.

It is ironic that the British, who did not want to get involved in a colonial conflict in Indonesia, ended up involved in heavy fighting; in 13 months taking losses worse than the Dutch did in the following three to four years of fighting. In four months in Java, the British took more losses than in a year in Burma—namely, over 1200 casualties, versus total Dutch losses in 1945–49 of 2526.

The British employed largely Indian troops, war-weary and not unsympathetic to the Indonesians, at least until heavy casualties occurred. The murder of Brigadier Mallaby signalled the start of an all-out three-week offensive in Surabaya. Equally decisive in a change of British attitude was the incident when an RAF Dakota of No 31 Squadron made an emergency landing near Jakarta and all 23 occupants were seen by an escorting RAF Thunderbolt to exit from the aircraft in good shape, but when a ground rescue party reached the location, all occupants were found murdered and mutilated.

It became necessary to move in a strong RAF element: No 904 Wing, which was completely mobile, meaning that it brought its own support and housing. Based at Kemajoran, it eventually grew to a total of 110 aircraft, including squadrons of Thunderbolt, Mosquito and Spitfire fighter-bombers, a Dakota transport squadron, and Spitfire photo reconnaissance aircraft. Special dispensation was obtained from the United States to keep operating Lend-Lease supplied P-47 Thunderbolts.

Details of RAF units based in Indonesia during the period October 1945–November 1946 are provided at Figure 1.

RAF UNITS IN INDONESIA: OCTOBER 1945–NOVEMBER 1946		
Unit	Equipment	Base
Headquarters No 904 Wing (Mobile)		Kemajoran
No 27 Squadron (Detachment)	Beaufighter	Kemajoran
No 31 Squadron	Dakota	Kemajoran
No 47 Squadron (Detachment)	Mosquito FB-6	Kemajoran (disbanded March 1946)
No 60 Squadron	P-47 Thunderbolt	Kemajoran, later Surabaya
No 81 Squadron	P-47 Thunderbolt	Kemajoran
No 84 Squadron	Mosquito FB-6	Kemajoran (withdrawn May 1946)
No 155 Squadron	Spitfire FB-8	Medan
No 656 AOP Squadron	Auster	Kemajoran and Surabaya
No 681 PR Squadron (Detachment)	Spitfire PR-11	Kemajoran – renamed No 904 Wing PR Flight (withdrawn May 1946)
No 684 PR Squadron (Detachment)	Mosquito PR-34	Kemajoran (May–November 1946)
No 904 Wing Communications Flight	Auster, Sentinel	Kemajoran
Total Strength – approx 110 aircraft		
In addition, Hellcats of the Fleet Air Arm flew some sorties against targets in Southern Java late in 1945, presumably off carriers of the British East Indies Fleet		

Figure 1 – RAF Units in Indonesia: October 1945–November 1946

Air Operations by the RAF

One of the first major air operations carried out by the RAF was to attack Indonesian radio stations with Mosquitos armed with rockets in order to stop Indonesian propaganda inciting the population to resist. Beaufighters first dropped leaflets warning the population. ‘Surabaya Sue’ (alias K’tut Tantri, Miss Daventry, Vannie Walker, Muriel Purson) became notorious from her propaganda broadcasts. ‘Sue’ was actually a United States citizen originating from Isle of Man, who produced radio programs aimed at the British troops in the fashion of ‘Tokyo Rose’ during the war.

Major air support was also necessary around the Semarang enclave when Indonesian forces tried to overrun this important base from where internees from Central Java were being evacuated.

The heaviest fighting took place during the battle for Surabaya over the period 12–30 November 1945. Initial air support sorties were flown by Thunderbolts and Mosquitos that had to fly from Jakarta—a 900 mile round trip that left them with only

half an hour in the target area. The Mosquitos deteriorated in the tropical climate and had to be withdrawn in June 1946. Forty-six aircraft were written off and burned in Java.

Air transport was the major task of the RAF, for evacuation of internees to the Jakarta bridgehead, as well as flying in supplies to the bridgeheads at Bandung, Semarang and Surabaya, and for troop movements. This job fell to No 31 Squadron with Dakotas, which were heavily engaged in the air bridge to Bandung, requiring 40 round trips daily. In addition, ten flights per day were made to Semarang. In total, No 31 Squadron flew 11,200 sorties in 24,000 hours, and transported 128,000 passengers and 25,000 tons of cargo during the period in Indonesia.

Political problems often occurred. Indonesians obstructed the evacuation of internees because they were thought to be useful as bargaining chips. There was an incident in Solo when Indonesians refused the unloading and loading of an RAF Dakota that carried the re-introduced red-white-blue RAF roundel on the fuselage, claiming that this was the Dutch insignia. Incidents like this stretched patience to the limits, as can be judged by the massive task at hand—during June–July 1946, some 37,000 internees were evacuated by air from Solo.

Casualties were taken: Indonesian ‘ack-ack’ (often thought to be manned by Japanese gunners) fired frequently at Dakota aircraft landing at Andir (Bandung) and several other locations. The incident with the murder of a Dakota crew and passengers has already been mentioned above. This caused a definite change in attitude with RAF crews. The RAF lost at least two P-47D Thunderbolts to anti-aircraft fire, and as late as September 1946 a P-47 was shot down near Sabang.

In June 1946 the RAF gave one-week notice to the Dutch that they had to take over the Bandung ‘Air Bridge’. The British had had enough. After 14 months in Indonesia, No 904 Wing was officially withdrawn on 28 November 1946. Total losses amounted to 32 officers and airmen killed in action. The RAF bases in Java and Sumatra were handed over to the Dutch, who had considerable problems to provide sufficient air units to take over the tasks of the British squadrons.

THE DUTCH BACK IN INDONESIA

At the end of World War II, and for a considerable time thereafter, Dutch air squadrons were completely under RAF and RAAF operational control. NEIAF aircraft strength at the time of Japan’s surrender (VJ Day) is shown at Figure 2.

NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES AIR FORCE AIRCRAFT STRENGTH		
Aircraft Type	Strength	Remarks
B-25 Mitchell	66	(of which 20 disarmed/transports)
P-40 Kittyhawk	37	(29 operational)
C-47 Dakota	13	(but soon increased to 60 by end 1946)
Lodestar	4	(loaned out to RAAF or unserviceable)
Lockheed 12	7	(trainers/light transport)
Total Strength (VJ Day) – 127 aircraft (about 70 combat aircraft)		

Figure 2 – Netherlands East Indies Air Force Aircraft Strength

The personnel in the Dutch squadrons were mixed NEIAF and RAAF. The Netherlands East Indies element comprised mostly the aircrew—the ground staff being nearly all RAAF—and amounted to the numbers shown at Figure 3.

NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES AIR FORCE PERSONNEL STRENGTH		
Unit	Location	NEI Personnel
No 18 Squadron	Balikpapan	230
No 120 Squadron	Biak	88
No 19 Squadron	Brisbane	98
PEP	Bundaberg	236
Total Personnel Strength – 652 (but this figure includes cooks, guards etc). Effective air combat personnel numbered about 400		

Figure 3 – Netherlands East Indies Air Force Personnel Strength

Besides the Army Air Force, the Dutch also operated a Naval Air Service, headquartered at Ceylon, with a forward operational base on Cocos Islands and a small element in Australia (Rose Bay) used for intelligence work over New Guinea and the Timor/Aru Islands area. Naval Air Service aircraft strength at the time of Japan's surrender is shown at Figure 4.

NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES NAVAL AIR SERVICE STRENGTH		
Unit	Location	Aircraft
No 321 Squadron	Ceylon	9 Catalinas, 7 Liberators
No 321 Squadron (Detachment)	Rose Bay	5 Catalinas
No 321 Squadron (Detachment)	Cocos Islands	8 Liberators, 2 Catalinas
Total Naval Air Service Strength (VJ Day) – 350 personnel, 41 aircraft		

Figure 4 – Netherlands East Indies Naval Air Service Strength

The RAAF components (mostly maintenance personnel) in the Dutch squadrons were withdrawn in November 1945, causing a major problem, because trained Dutch replacements were largely unavailable until much later. Nevertheless, the Dutch acquired substantial reinforcements in aircraft, either still supplied under Lend-Lease—but paid for in cash and, therefore, not subject to withdrawal—or purchased surplus in the Philippines, United States or United Kingdom.

DUTCH REINFORCEMENTS 1945–46					
Reinforcements		Total Additional Aircraft		Total Aircraft Strength End-1946	
C-47 Dakota	+35 (Air Force), +15 (Navy)	Fighters	55	Fighters	80
P-51 Mustang	+40	Reconnaissance	28	Reconnaissance	28
L-4 Piper Cub	+28	Transports	50	Transports	63
Firefly	+15 (Navy)	Flying Boats	13	Flying Boats	22
Catalina	+13 (Navy)			Bombers	40

Figure 5 – Dutch Reinforcements 1945–46

AIR FORCE OPERATIONS: SEPTEMBER 1945–JULY 1947

POWs Set Up Base

Immediately after Japan’s surrender, self-liberated POWs set up an airbase organisation at Kemajoran (Jakarta), in anticipation of arrival of Allied aircraft. When the British forces arrived, this Dutch establishment was forced to move to Cililitan. Although only a short distance away from Jakarta city proper and from Kemajoran, Cililitan was surrounded by Indonesian-controlled territory, very unsafe and subject to frequent Indonesian attacks. It was soon nicknamed ‘Rimboe Tjililitan’ or ‘Jungle Tjililitan’. What few Dutch aircraft were allowed into Java by the British, were not allowed to overnight at Kemajoran, nor was fuel made available. Dutch aircraft could only refuel at Singapore or at Balikpapan (Kalimantan).

Ground transportation to and from Cililitan was virtually impossible due to the many attacks. The NEIAF group at Cililitan, therefore, received four ex-Japanese Willow biplanes from the RAF for reconnaissance and liaison. Soon these were replaced by a few of the first Piper Cubs the Dutch had purchased from dumps in the Philippines.

No 18 Squadron (B-25 Mitchells) continued to be based at Balikpapan, still under control of the RAAF. On 15 January 1946, the squadron was taken out of the RAAF and transferred to South East Asia Command (SEAC). It was allowed to base aircraft at Cililitan by March 1946; however, under strict operational control of the RAF until November 1946. No 120 Squadron (P-40 Kittyhawks) was kept at Biak (New Guinea) until April 1946, when it moved to Cililitan, but it was not allowed to stay in the Jakarta area and was sent to Surabaya to take over the task of the RAF Thunderbolts in the still volatile situation there.

No 18 Squadron flew mostly relief flights and supply drops to Allied prisoners of war and internees camps with disarmed B-25 Mitchells, and also evacuated 5820 persons for the RAPWI organisation. Other tasks involved the transport of aircraft fuel in drums to Bandung. From early 1946, the B-25s were re-armed and flew operational sorties on behalf of the RAF, such as armed air cover for British Army road convoys between Jakarta and Bandung.

Other operational duty included support for army actions in south-east Kalimantan, and for the landing of Dutch troops at Bali in March 1946. At the same time, the Mitchells became more active in supporting British troops around the enclaves in Java and Sumatra—for example, they flew weekly pamphlet drops for the British over Sumatra. All this did not take place without losses. On 2 July 1946, a Dutch B-25 on a pamphlet dropping mission had to make an emergency landing at Pakanbaru (Sumatra) and all six crew members were murdered by Indonesian irregulars. On 4 August 1946 another Mitchell, supporting British troops during an Indonesian attack on the perimeter of Semarang, was shot down by anti-aircraft fire and in this incident as well the six crew lost their lives.

Reinforcements

As mentioned above, materiel reinforcements reached the NEIAF during 1945–46, which were used to modernise existing units and form new squadrons, which were to take over from the RAF when it departed from Indonesia during the second half of 1946. These included the following:

- Forty P-51 Mustangs flown from Australia March–May 1946, and used to equip two new Squadrons (Nos 121 and 122), founded 1 May and 1 November 1946 respectively.
- No 17 AOP Squadron with Piper Cubs, founded 13 July 1946.
- No 16 Squadron with B-25 Mitchells (Palembang), founded 1 November 1946.
- No 20 Squadron, a purely military transport unit, as distinguished from No 19 Squadron which had become mostly involved in scheduled airline services, was founded 1 November 1946.

- PVA (Photo Reconnaissance Unit) with B-25 Mitchells, P-51 Mustangs and Piper Cubs, founded 1 January 1947.
- No 6 AOP Squadron with Austers, a unit of the Netherlands Air Force in Holland, arrived in November 1946.

All these air squadrons, except the transport squadrons, were organised under LUCOJA (Air Command Java) and LUCOSU (Air Command Sumatra) with effect 1 January 1947. Additional firepower was obtained for the Mitchell squadrons by converting several B-25s to 'strafers', with a total of fourteen (8 + 3x2) .50 calibre machine-guns firing forward.

In addition, the Netherlands Navy brought in air reinforcements which will be discussed later.

Personnel and Equipment Problems

The NEIAF was severely handicapped by a shortage of personnel. As already mentioned, the RAAF ground crews were demobilised and withdrawn from the Dutch squadrons by September–November 1945. The NEIAF had to rely on the few Dutch ground crew already in the squadrons and on liberated POWs who were very weak. For example, one pre-1942 pilot went solo on the Piper Cub without realising how bad his eyesight was as a result of malnutrition, and could barely find the airfield again! In addition, the ex-POWs were unfamiliar with the aircraft in use.

Early in 1945, an agreement had been made with the RAAF to train substantial numbers of air and ground crew, who were being recruited in the now liberated portions of Holland, but the Australian Government cancelled this agreement after VJ. The British would not allow these recruits to enter Indonesia and they ended up being held in camps in Malaya until May 1946, some 12–18 months after they had signed up for duty in the Far East.

When the British departed towards the end of 1946, Dutch squadrons took over from RAF in Java and Sumatra as follows:

- No 16 Squadron (Mitchells) to Palembang (November 1946)
- No 122 Squadron (Mustangs) to Medan (November 1946)
- No 17 AOP Squadron (Piper Cubs) to Padang, Medan and Palembang (October 1946)
- No 121 Squadron (Mustangs) at Cililitan (since May 1946)
- No 120 Squadron (Kittyhawks) at Semarang (December 1946)
- No 860 Squadron (Navy, Fireflies) at Surabaya (October 1946)

Their equipment and support was minimal, as is well illustrated by the following quotation from the December 1946 monthly report of No 121 Squadron:

Intelligence Section: Materials:

Available: round head pins, glue, scissors, pencil, stapler, perforator, eraser, 7 ea file folders, one typewriter.

Received on 16 December: red/blue pencil, thumbtacks, glue, 30 cm ruler, envelopes.

Desired: more thumbtacks, file boxes, pencil compasses, protractor.

Made ourselves: two cardboard triangles with grid and scale for maps and a cardboard protractor for maps 1:500,000.

Combat Actions

Combat actions were never massive, but quite frequent, and were all carried out under control of the British. Examples included:

- No 121 Squadron in December 1946 (report cited earlier) flew 66 operations in the Jakarta area, with 142 sorties (total air time 230 hours 25 minutes), of which 13 operations (24 sorties) were for infantry support.
- In the Surabaya sector, the Kittyhawks of No 120 Squadron had been active in the second half of 1946 (that is after the 'Battle of Surabaya' had ended), flying 125 combat sorties, during which five P-40s were damaged by ground fire, two seriously.
- On 6 August 1946 a bombardment was carried out by B-25s near Bandung.

There was a steady escalation of hostilities until a cease-fire was agreed, under British mediator Lord Killiarn, on 14 October 1946. However, this cease-fire was constantly broken. The Republik Indonesia (RI) did not control all of its revolutionary factions, and the Dutch were quite keen to exploit the situation to gain control of more territory.

On 13 November 1946 the Linggadjati Agreement was concluded, whereby the Netherlands recognised the RI as having de facto control over Java and Sumatra, and whereby a federal arrangement of the 'United States of Indonesia' was to be established, of which the RI would become a member state.

While the Indonesians had agreed very reluctantly, as the 'best possible deal to be achieved at that moment', the hard-line factions in Holland thought the agreement went too far and they started to add interpretations to it, resulting in what became known as 'Linggadjati dressed up', which in turn was unacceptable to the RI. Concerning the military aspects, the Dutch plans for a 'Joint Gendarmerie', which would include Dutch as well as Indonesian forces, was especially unacceptable to the RI because it would give the Dutch direct involvement with the Indonesian military. As a result, armed incidents increased again and soon a solution appeared further away than ever.

Massive Air Transport Task

All during these conflict situations, the NEIAF still had to take care of a massive logistical task. In order to cater for the greatly increased air transport requirement that the Dutch had to undertake after the British departed, the Dakota fleet was increased to 60 aircraft. No 19 Transport Squadron (NEIAF), which until 1 January 1947 was officially still part of the RAAF, functioned largely as a scheduled airline operation, although with none of the amenities usually associated with an airline. For instance, 12 x B-25 transport aircraft flew on routes to Surabaya and Balikpapan with 15 passengers jammed into the small bomber's space. In cooperation with the Dutch Navy Reconnaissance and Transport Squadron, consisting of 15 Dakotas and a dozen PBY Catalina flying boats, organised in the Air Transport Group (VTG), it operated services all through the Indies and to Australia.

Until May 1946, maintenance of the transport fleet was still carried out in Bundaberg, with the assistance of Australian civilian companies. In the months following VJ, the Dutch air transport effort suffered the same handicaps as Dutch combat planes: they could land at Kemajoran but had to overnight at Cililitan, which was very unsafe. Only in November 1946 could they be based at Kemajoran. Fuel was available to the Dutch only in Singapore and Balikpapan, not in Jakarta, despite the fact that No 19 Squadron was vital for the rehabilitation of sick and destitute internees.

The fuel boycott required that long detours be flown and, to solve that problem, an apparently underhanded deal was struck in January 1946 to obtain 'bootleg' fuel in Wyndham, which was airlifted to Timor, thus opening up the southern route to Australia. This cut three days (and 3000 kilometres) from the Jakarta–Brisbane trip.

Increasingly, maintenance was done in Jakarta, for which Australian civilian maintenance personnel were hired. They were not the happiest lot in the overcrowded, hot and often unsafe conditions of Jakarta in those days. As No 19 Squadron Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Versteegh, noted: 'Their preferred beverage – beer – was available plentiful and cold, but the climate was not to their liking and eating rice – that was asking too much!'

Many of the pre-war Indonesian personnel came back to work at Kemajoran but whenever there were riots or cases of intimidation by anti-Dutch factions, they stayed home. It became necessary to house and feed many of the Indonesian workers on the airfield itself to keep them at work.

As mentioned above, a new purely military transport unit (No 20 Squadron) was split out of No 19 Squadron, which operated five Dakotas and 12 'stripped' B-25 Mitchells, and on 1 April 1948 the 'airline operation' of No 19 Squadron was transferred into an Indonesian division of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, while retaining an extra number of Dakotas in No 20 Squadron for military transport and paratrooper operations.

NAVY AIR SERVICE OPERATIONS: SEPTEMBER 1945–JULY 1947

As mentioned earlier, the Royal Netherlands Navy Air Service (RNNAS) operated a separate organisation, which had the following strength at the end of World War II:

NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES NAVAL AIR SERVICE STRENGTH		
Unit	Location	Aircraft
No 321 Squadron	Ceylon	9 Catalinas, 7 Liberators
No 321 Squadron (Detachment)	Rose Bay	5 Catalinas
No 321 Squadron (Detachment)	Cocos Islands	8 Liberators, 2 Catalinas
Total Naval Air Service Strength (VJ Day) – 350 personnel, 41 aircraft		

Figure 6 – Netherlands East Indies Naval Air Service Strength

The morale in the RNNAS was not very good and the personnel were tired; many had been in continuous service for seven years and they wanted to go home to Holland, which had already been liberated for many months now.

The first Dutch Navy personnel to return to Java were several Netherlands Navy pilots who arrived at Jakarta on 16 September 1945 on board the cruiser HMS *Cumberland*. They had served in squadrons on the carriers of the British East Indies Fleet and, most of them being natives of the Netherlands East Indies, they had been taken off the fleet to act as liaison officers for the British landing force in Java. One of them managed to get hold of a Japanese Zero fighter and flew 20 reconnaissance missions in it for the British.

On 2 October 1945, the first Dutch Navy Catalina Y-87 landed at Jakarta, but the British were not at all delighted with this event. The Catalina was quickly sent away and its welcome at the next stop, Surabaya, was even less encouraging. Upon landing, it was shot at by Indonesians in prahus¹ and the pilot was wounded, which surely was a bad omen for things to come. In mid-October 1945 approval was received to base five Catalinas at Jakarta, and the rest of No 321 Squadron arrived in December. The Lend-Lease supplied Liberators had to be returned to the US; only five could be kept temporarily for supply missions, but they were not of much use because they could not be kept at Kemajoran, while the runways at the Morokrengan Naval Air Station of Surabaya were in too bad a shape for these heavy aircraft.

In January 1946 the Dutch Navy received permission to return to its pre-war Surabaya base, but it had been devastated during the November 1945 battles. Much vital equipment had been destroyed or dragged away by the Indonesians. Men of the RNNAS spent considerable time tracing the missing items and requisitioned them back with 'looting chits' issued by the RAF.

The Navy's Catalinas and Dakotas were largely used for air transport and supply drops, plus evacuation of internees. Liberator aircraft operating from Cocos Islands dropped 22,000 kg in September alone. Between September 1945 and March 1946, the six Catalinas based at Tandjung Priok (Jakarta) brought back 4000 internees to Jakarta from all over Java and Sumatra.

¹ A 'prahu' (or 'proa') is a swift Malay sailing boat built with the leeward flat and balanced by a single outrigger.

Navy Dakotas operated scheduled flights on the routes Jakarta–Penang–Sabang–Ceylon, Jakarta–Sydney and Jakarta–Surabaya, plus thousands of unscheduled flights. From February 1946, Catalinas operated a weekly schedule Jakarta–Pontianak–Singapore and Jakarta–Makassar.

From 1947 onwards, the Catalinas were employed largely on anti-smuggling patrols, which caused great damage to the ability of the Indonesian Republic to earn foreign currency with export of products. The fleet of Catalinas was increased considerably, with purchases in India (six aircraft in November 1945) and Canada (11 aircraft in September 1946).

Like the Air Force, the RNNAS also had a severe lack of personnel. In April 1946, the official organisation for 12 Catalinas and 12 Dakotas called for 1140 men, but only 660 were on strength.

The addition of No 860 Squadron with 15 Fairey Firefly Mk-1 fighter-attack aircraft has already been mentioned. These aircraft arrived at Surabaya in October 1946 and relieved the Kittyhawks of No 120 Squadron, which in turn moved to Semarang. The Fireflies immediately became engaged in operations against Indonesian targets around Surabaya, where it remained unquiet and ground troops often required air support to maintain their positions. Indonesian forces had control of the important irrigation works at Modjokerto, near Surabaya, and thereby could and did flood the countryside and threaten the city with inundation. Therefore, the Dutch undertook action to expand the enclave to include the waterworks complex and Fireflies played an important part in this action. Anti-aircraft fire was frequently encountered and a Firefly was lost due to this on 14 May 1947.

A remarkable long-range operation took place in November 1946, when four Fireflies flew a mission against Lho Nga in Aceh (Northern Sumatra). They ferried with extra tanks via Palembang to Sabang, a distance of 2500 kilometres, accompanied by a Catalina with ground crew and supplies. On 12 November 1946, in cooperation with a Netherlands Navy destroyer, they attacked anti-aircraft gun positions at Lho Nga airfield and coastal artillery emplacements in the vicinity with rockets and bombs. The Catalina acted as an observation post and was available for air-sea rescue if needed. The fact that Navy fighters flew this mission over such an extreme distance, while the NEIAF had Mustangs and Mitchells available much closer by, may indicate that Army-Navy coordination was not optimal at that time.

FIRST POLICE ACTION (AGRESSI I)

The continued disagreement over the execution of the Linggadjati Agreement and the resulting continued and increasing military conflict produced a very difficult situation for the Netherlands, as the limit of Dutch financial resources was rapidly approaching. In short, the Dutch could no longer finance the colonial war unless revenues were derived from export of products from Indonesia.

Therefore, unless the Republik Indonesia (RI) would agree to the Dutch version of the Linggadjati agreement—which was unlikely—the Dutch Government decided for a military action.

The military plans included three options:

- Operation *Product* – intended to capture important economic targets;
- Operation *Amsterdam* – a direct attack on Yogyakarta to eliminate the RI Government; and
- Operation *Rotterdam* – a combination of the above two plans.

The Netherlands Government chose Operation *Product*, much to the dislike of the military leadership, who still were of the opinion that once the ‘festering sore’ of the ‘so-called Republik’ was done away with, the majority of the Indonesians would welcome the Dutch version of a gradual course towards autonomy within the Dutch Kingdom.

Operation *Product* was implemented as detailed below:

- In Java, the Operation would consist four main drives, as follows:
 - A – From Jakarta: east and south.
 - B – From Bandung: east and north.
 - C – Central Java: amphibious landings to take place at Tegal, west of Semarang. From Semarang drive west to Tegal, link up with Drive A, then south to Cilacap.
 - D – From Surabaya: amphibious landings in the East Java panhandle, thence south and west.
- In Sumatra drives would be conducted as follows:
 - From Palembang: west and south – oilfields.
 - From Medan: south to the plantation areas and Lake Toba.
 - From Padang: east, limited to a small perimeter expansion.
- On Madura:
 - Landing by Dutch marines for a full occupation.

The First Police Action started on 21 July 1947 and ended on 4 August 1947.

STRENGTH AND LOCATION OF DUTCH AIR UNITS 21 JULY 1947				
Unit	Base	Serviceable Aircraft *		Crews
WEST JAVA				
No 18 Squadron	Jakarta	5 (8)	B-25 Mitchell	5
No 20 Squadron	Jakarta	6 (13)	B-25 Transports	10
		37 (45)	C-47 Dakota	40
No 121 Squadron	Jakarta	8 (12)	P-51 Mustang	8
No 6 Squadron	Bogor	7 (10)	Auster AOP	10
	Andir	3 (3)	Auster AOP	3
PVA (Photo Reconnaissance Squadron)	Jakarta	1 (4)	FB-25	4
		3 (3)	Piper Cub	-
CENTRAL JAVA				
No 120 Squadron	Semarang	9 (19)	P-40 Kittyhawk	9
No 6 Squadron (Det)	Semarang	3 (3)	Auster AOP	4
EAST JAVA				
No 6 Squadron (Det)	Surabaya	2 (4)	Auster AOP	4
No 860 Squadron (Navy)	Surabaya	10 (13)	Firefly	10
Eastern Reconnaissance and Transport Squadron (Navy)	Surabaya	10	Catalina	10
		13	Dakota	15
SOUTHERN SUMATRA				
No 16 Squadron	Palembang	5 (8)	B-25 Mitchell	6
No 17 Squadron	Palembang	2 (3)	Piper Cub	3
CENTRAL SUMATRA				
No 17 Squadron (Det)	Padang	1 (4)	Piper Cub	4
NORTHERN SUMATRA				
No 122 Squadron	Medan	4 (9)	P-51 Mustang	10
No 17 Squadron (Det)	Medan	2 (3)	Piper Cub	7
* Figures in () = organisational strength, including U/S aircraft				
Total Strength – Serviceable Aircraft: 131 / Total Crews: 162				
Note: Of 53 aircraft in combat squadrons, only 39 were crewed.				

Figure 7 – Strength and Location of Dutch Air Units 21 July 1947

Operation *Pelikaan*

For the air forces, the Police Action started with Operation *Pelikaan* (Pelican), which was intended to neutralise the *Angkatan Udara Republik Indonesia* (AURI – Indonesian Air Force), even though the threat from this force was considered minimal. The AURI was thought to have 30 serviceable aircraft, all of World War II

Japanese vintage and in questionable condition. Intelligence had shown the following disposition of AURI aircraft:

- Kali Djati – two aircraft
- Maguwo – two bombers, seven trainers, and one fighter
- Madiun – one reconnaissance aircraft

No 120 Squadron (Kittyhawks) attacked Solo and Madiun, and claimed eight aircraft destroyed on the ground. At Maguwo (Yogyakarta) there was fog when the P-40s arrived and the mission was delayed, which probably saved the life of Prime Minister Sutan Sjahrir, because he was leaving in a Dakota just before the P-40s attacked.

Mustangs of No 121 Squadron attacked the airfields at Gorda, Tasik, Parigi and Kali Djati. At Kali Djati, a hangar containing Indonesian aircraft was destroyed with rockets. Fairey Fireflies of the Navy's No 860 Squadron carried out Operation *Pelikaan* at the airfields at Pasirian and Malang, where nine Lilys, Oscars and Dinahs were destroyed.

In two days the AURI lost approximately 20 of their estimated 30 serviceable aircraft. The NEIAF claimed 24, and the Navy nine.

Operation *Pelikaan* had been effective in destroying the Indonesian air strength on the ground, but good camouflage was thought to have saved a considerable number of AURI aircraft, thus attacks on Indonesian airfields were repeated until 4 August 1947. The Dutch lost a P-40 Kittyhawk in these actions at Maguwo (Yogyakarta) as a result of an old Japanese trick, namely luring the attacking fighter to a booby-trapped aircraft on the ground which was then blown up. The pilot was killed.

Radio stations were an important target to prevent Indonesian communications and propaganda. On 23 July 1947, No 121 Squadron destroyed transmitters at Garut and Tasikmalaja.

During the Police Action, the NEIAF was used mainly to provide air support for ground forces. For example, fighter aircraft kept bridges under cover ahead of the advance of Dutch ground troops, so that the TNI (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*) could not blow these up. The Indonesians widely used old Japanese aircraft bombs to mine bridges but were then prevented from setting them off. The same situation occurred at the important dam and electric power station at Kali Tuntang near Semarang, where Kittyhawks of No 120 Squadron prevented the TNI from blowing up the dam. Likewise, an important bridge across the Ci Tarum River was saved by Mustangs of No 121 Squadron. Later on, 38 bombs and mines were found under this bridge.

In East Java, Fireflies supported the amphibious landings at Pasir Putih (east of Surabaya). They attacked an important Indonesian telephone switching centre, which created havoc with the communications of the TNI.

Operations in Sumatra

The operations in Sumatra also started with attacks on AURI airfields (Operation *Pelikaan*), including Lho Nga and Kotaradja by Mustangs of No 122 Squadron, and Mandah by a No 16 Squadron Mitchell, followed by the ground troops advancing towards the important oilfields near Palembang and agricultural areas near Medan. On 22 July 1947, near Palembang, the TNI opened oil pipes and set the oil on fire. Two B-25 Mitchells of No 16 Squadron attacked the pumping stations near Kluang and Paja Kabung to cut the oil flow. They also attacked a railroad line near the coalmines at Muara Enim.

Mustangs of No 122 Squadron supported an amphibious landing south of Medan, and the Squadron also flew 13 sorties to destroy anti-aircraft guns near the town. In addition, standard army ground support missions were flown by B-25 Mitchells, Mustangs and Piper Cubs. The latter, like the Austers of No 6 Squadron in Java, were most useful in supporting troops by providing short-range reconnaissance of the advance routes and directing artillery fire. These light aircraft were often used to attack Indonesian ground troops by firing with a sten-gun from the front seat, and dropping hand grenades. One B-25 flown by Lieutenant Stuurhaan was shot down in Sumatra.

Being very limited in their anti-aircraft defences, the close air support had a devastating effect on the TNI—the same experience which the Dutch had had in 1942 at the hands of the Japanese. It is interesting to note that the orders for the Dutch aircrews specifically prohibited attacks on non-combat targets, such as railroad stations, housing, road traffic etc. When Lieutenant General Spoor, the Commanding General of the Dutch forces in Indonesia, read in the second daily report of Air Force activity that such attacks were nevertheless taking place, he again issued strict orders to all squadron commanding officers that these must cease immediately.

Apparently, the Dutch staff still believed that, rather than an all-out liberation struggle, this war was one between them and a relatively small band of revolutionaries. The general population was thought to be on the sidelines of the conflict and generally of good will towards the Dutch, and thus should not be harmed. In the present era of limiting collateral damage this will sound logical, but barely two years after World War II it must have been considered a novel approach to air warfare.

AURI Counterattack

The AURI did attempt a few token air attacks on Dutch targets. Because Maguwo airfield (Yogyakarta) had not been attacked on the 21 July 1947 due to fog, the Indonesians had been able to save some aircraft. At 0500 hours on 29 July 1947, a 'Sonia' aircraft (known as 'Guntei' in the AURI) attacked the harbour area at Semarang with two bombs and machine-gun fire. Seven Indonesian civilians were killed. Dutch anti-aircraft fire at the Semarang airfield (Kali Banteng) could not reach the Sonia and Dutch P-40 Kittyhawks were too late to intercept the AURI aircraft. At Salatiga and Ambarawa, two 'Willow' biplanes (named 'Cureng') dropped bombs, approaching the target very low and then climbing to 3000 feet. One bomb fell near the hospital but did not explode.

These attacks, though entirely ineffective, still demonstrated great courage on the part of the AURI crews, especially after having suffered extensive Dutch air attacks during the preceding week, and their names should be recorded here:

- Sonia aircraft: Pilot: Muljono
Gunner: Abdurrachman
- Willow aircraft: Pilots: Sutardjo Sigit, and Suharnoko Harbani
Gunnery: Kaput and Sutardjo

During the rest of the day (29 July 1947) and the next, Dutch P-40 Kittyhawks flew air cover over Semarang, in anticipation of more Indonesian attacks.

Attack on Indian Dakota Aircraft

In the late afternoon of 30 July 1947, two Kittyhawks spotted a Dakota near Yogyakarta. It was getting dark when the Kittyhawks pursued this bogey. The Dakota ended up hitting the ground three kilometres north of Yogyakarta. The Dutch explanation was that the two fighter aircraft had fired warning shots in front of the aircraft, trying to force it to follow them towards Semarang, but that instead it tried to get away by flying low and had hit some trees. The aircraft turned out to be an Indian Dakota (VT-CLA) on its way to Yogyakarta. The nine persons on board were all killed, including Vice Air Commodore Adisutjipto (one of the few experienced pilots of the AURI), the Australian pilot and his wife, and the British copilot.

The Indonesian Government claimed that this was an attack on a peaceful civilian aircraft. The Dutch claimed that the Kittyhawk pilots thought that the aircraft was another hostile act towards Semarang and, besides, they claimed that the aviation regulations required that foreign aircraft en route to an Indonesian destination had to land at a Dutch-held airbase first. This latter rule may have followed from the fact that the Dutch officially still held sovereignty over Indonesia but, needless to say, the Indonesians did not recognise this rule, nor complied with it. The Dutch explanation was not a strong one, and in 1950 the Netherlands agreed to supply a replacement Dakota to the Indian owners.

TNI Paradrop in Southern Kalimantan

Getting ahead of the chronological sequence, it is worth mentioning here that, like the Netherlands East Indies Army, the TNI organised a paratroop unit and actually put it into action before the Dutch did. On 17 October 1947, an Indonesian Dakota dropped 13 paratroopers in Southern Kalimantan, near Sampit, with the purpose of setting up a radio station for liaison with Yogyakarta, and then organising resistance groups in Kalimantan.

The group lost much of their equipment during the landing, including the power plant and batteries and distilled water for the radio. Most of the paratroopers were rounded up fairly quickly by the Dutch, including the second radio operator (who carried the transmitting codes), who was captured on 20 November. Much intelligence was gained from him, which enabled Dutch military intelligence to listen in on TNI radio traffic.

Attack on Cilacap

One of the main targets of the Dutch campaign was Cilacap, the harbour on Java's southern coast, with the purpose being to cut Java in half and prevent export traffic from Cilacap. As mentioned earlier, a drive overland was planned to start from Tegal and, at the same time, an amphibious force would land at Cilacap.

The overland drive was successful, but a naval bombardment by Dutch warships was unable to silence Japanese coastal artillery situated at Nusa Kambangan, the island in front of the harbour entrance. Therefore, on 4 August an air attack was carried out by three B-25 Mitchells which bombed the artillery positions, followed up by rocket-firing Mustangs, while another B-25 controlled the action from the air. This succeeded in opening the entrance by sea to Cilacap. It was the first and only time in the 1945–49 period that the NEIAF carried out a 'classic' altitude bombardment with a formation of bombers.

Other important targets of the Air Force during the First Police Action were railway lines. Rail lines were cut off so that TNI could not move out rolling stock, which of course was of vital importance to get export products moving towards the ports. Some major operations in this respect were carried out at Cirebon (Central Java) and in Sumatra near Pematang Siantar (29 July 1947), where two trains with TNI troops were encountered that tried to get away. The first train was stopped by a Mustang of No 122 Squadron, then the second train ran into the first one, and both were derailed.

Dakota's were kept very busy with air supply. One pilot, who was tasked to carry out a supply paradrop at the disused airstrip at Banjoemas (West Java), checked the 800 metre strip and decided he could land on it. Within a few hours, 13 Dakota loads had been flown in, which speeded up the operations in the area very considerably.

Very important was the aerial mapping and target area photography work, which had been carried out by the PVA (Photo Reconnaissance Squadron) before and during the actions. Maps of the operational areas were often outdated or lacking entirely, and the PVA did sterling work to provide these in time.

End of First Police Action

On 4 August 1947, the First Police Action was stopped under pressure of a UN Security Council Resolution passed on 31 July. The economic targets had been reached and exports of Indonesian products could start flowing and generating much needed foreign currency. Militarily the action had also been a success, but the Indonesian Republic had survived and gained respect and sympathy internationally as the 'victim of colonialism'. Hostilities continued with mopping up operations and a much larger area to be neutralised and patrolled, which ultimately proved an impossible task.

The Air Force continued to be engaged in these mopping up actions. In the period from 8 August until 30 September 1947, another 700 sorties (1800 hours) were flown against Indonesian targets within the 'occupied' area.

An additional burden on the Air Force was the occupation and maintenance of the airfields and strips captured during the Police Action. Before, there had been 11 airfields to be manned and secured, now there were 80! This proved to be a heavy drain on the already minimally available manpower.

Summary of Air Activity During First Police Action

During the First Police Action a total of 2700 sorties were flown, involving 3400 flying hours. On average, aircraft crews flew 70 sorties (5 sorties per day average) and 87 hours (6 hours per day average). A breakdown of the sorties by role is shown at Figure 8.

SUMMARY OF AIR ACTIVITY DURING FIRST POLICE ACTION 21 JULY–4 AUGUST 1947			
Role	Number of Sorties Flown	Percentage of Total Sorties	Flying Hours
Transport	290	9%	850
Reconnaissance/AOP	2 000	59%	2 650
Bomber	132	4%	334
Fighter	820	24%	1 100
Miscellaneous (PR etc)	150	4%	250
Navy flew 5% of the sorties and 11% of the flying hours			

Figure 8 – Summary of Air Activity During First Police Action 21 July–4 August 1947

Losses were as follows:

- Aircrew Lost: 6 (total Dutch Army losses: 28 dead, 74 wounded, 1 missing)
- Aircraft Shot Down:

B-25 Mitchell	2
P-40 Kittyhawk	2
Firefly	2
Auster	1
Piper Cub	<u>1</u>
Total	8
- Aircraft Damaged:

B-25 Mitchell	1
P-51 Mustang	3
P-40 Kittyhawk	1
Piper Cub/Auster	several

The Air Force and Naval Air Service had performed very well with the minimal resources available, but it was clear that such an effort could only be delivered for the short term. The Technical Department, which was only manned to half the normally

required levels, was now faced with an almost insurmountable backlog of repairs and scheduled maintenance.

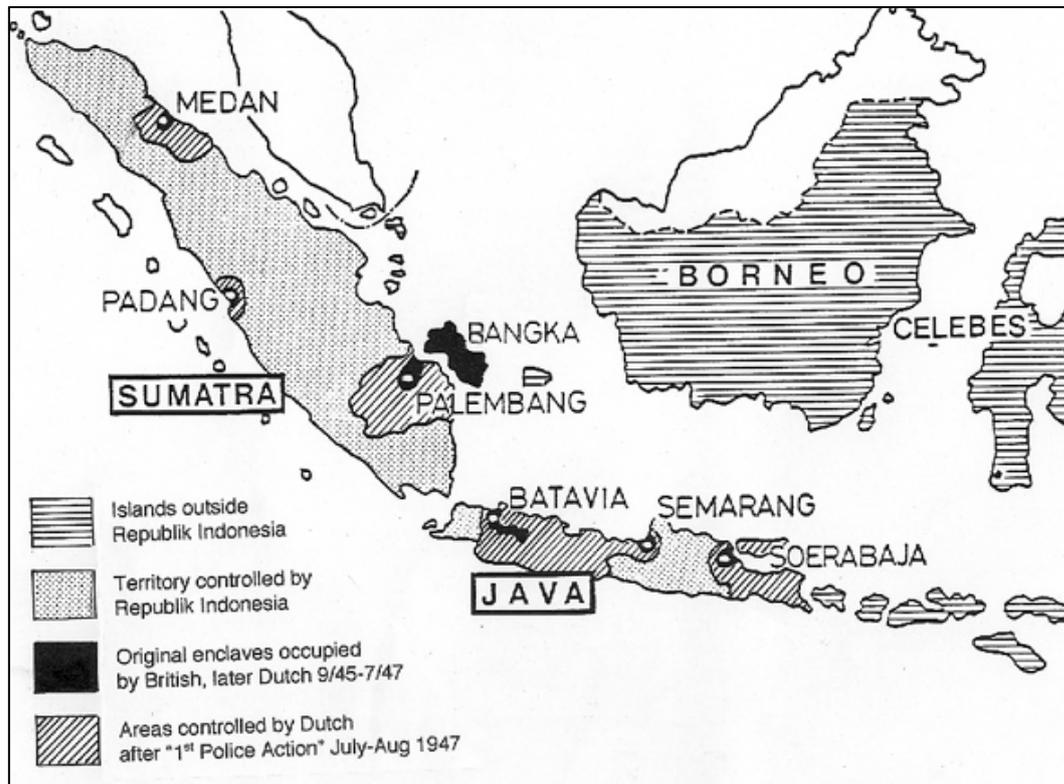


Figure 9 – Dutch Controlled Areas After First Police Action

BETWEEN FIRST AND SECOND POLICE ACTIONS

Personnel Problems Continue

Although during the end of 1946 and mid-1947 the Air Force had been supplemented with additional ground crew (and some aircrew) from Holland, the second half of 1947 saw the discharge of many World War II veterans and draftees whose service time was up. There were also additions to the force. No 322 Squadron of the Netherlands Air Force, equipped with Spitfires, arrived from Holland in October 1947, and was soon followed by more draftees (ground staff), which only partially filled the organisation.

Very important was the founding of a Paratrooper Corps—initially based at Hollandia (Jayapura, Irian), it was moved to Bandung in June 1947. It had a strength of about 400 men, of whom 70 per cent were Indonesians. To provide airlift for this new combat unit, No 20 Transport Squadron was expanded with 18 Dakotas from No 19 Squadron, the ‘military airlines’ unit, which itself was transformed into a division of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines at the same time.

Due to the continuing personnel shortages, it became necessary in early 1948 to take severe measures within the organisation. Squadron aircraft strength was reduced by 50 per cent, while a strict reduction of flying hours was enforced. No 121 Squadron (Mustangs) was put on non-active status with effect 1 December 1947, and No 16

Squadron (Mitchells) was disbanded in August 1948. To partially fill the gap in Sumatra, one flight of Mitchells from No 18 Squadron was based at Bangka, off the coast of Southern Sumatra. A major reorganisation also took place to concentrate the NEIAF on fewer air bases. One positive development was that finally some money became available to purchase badly needed spare parts from overseas. During all this time, it was still necessary to fly operational sorties and air supply missions in support of the ground troops wherever they got into difficulties.

SECOND POLICE ACTION – 19 DECEMBER 1948 – 8 JANUARY 1949

The Netherlands had now grudgingly accepted the existence of the Republik Indonesia and also acknowledged that an independent Indonesian state would become fact in the near future. However, the hardliners in Holland, who had decisive political influence, insisted on a so-called 'heavy Union' between Indonesia and the Netherlands. This was to take the form of a political tie-up between the two countries headed by the Dutch Crown, whereby the Netherlands was to retain considerable control over the military and foreign relations.

This had been the reason for the Dutch to 'dress up' the Linggadjati Agreement of 1946, but had (of course) never been accepted by the Republik. Because of Indonesian refusal to go along with this, the call by Dutch conservative political parties to 'finish the job' of capturing Yogyakarta and 'wiping out' the RI—which had been rejected in the First Police Action—became stronger and stronger.

The RI successfully used guerrilla tactics to keep the Dutch from gaining control of large areas plus their economies. It became a battle of who could hold the longest breath, which the Dutch were losing. Therefore, towards the end of 1948, a major military drive was urged by the military 'top brass' and many politicians in Holland. Time was running out to start such a renewed campaign because, starting in 1949, repatriation of large numbers of Dutch troops became due and, after that, the resources to carry out a large offensive would be lacking.

Another reason to start a 'Second Police Action' was that the Indonesian Republic had just experienced the Communist uprising in Madiun and it was thought that this had left the RI Government powerless and unable to react forcefully.

The time chosen to start the Second Police Action was shortly before Christmas 1948, because the UN Security Council would have gone into recess for the Christmas holidays and be unable to pass a restraining resolution against the Netherlands before the goals of the action would be achieved. The major target would of course be the swift occupation of the Indonesian capital, Yogyakarta, as well as the 'back-up' capital of Bukittinggi in Sumatra.

A much larger role for the air force was planned, because of the larger scale of the operation and also because the Paratrooper Corps was now available for an airborne attack. Air operations would take place simultaneously in areas as much as 1800 kilometres apart (which equates to the distance Sydney–Alice Springs), which required careful planning and swift transfer of air units between the different operational areas in Java and Sumatra.

The Second Police Action would kick off early in the morning of 19 December 1948 with Operation *Kraai* (Crow), the airborne landing at Maguwo airfield (Yogyakarta) by the paratroopers, who would be carried in Dakotas from Andir (Bandung). After securing Maguwo, the main base for the airborne follow-up was Kali Banteng airfield (Semarang). The general leader of this operation was Major 'Bertie' Wolff, who later would become Commanding General of the Royal Netherlands Air Force.

On 16 December 1948, a special Transport Command (TransCo) was organised, consisting of: sixteen Dakotas of the NEIAF, ten from the Dutch Navy and ten (re-militarised) from KLM. The actual management of the airdrop and follow-up airlift would be in the hands of KLM personnel, as it was considered that they had more experience with tightly controlled air schedules.

Additional measures to prepare for the air operations were as follows:

- 18 December 1948 – No 121 Squadron was reactivated with pilots from staff jobs and instructors; and
- Nos 121 and 322 Squadrons ('JaCo' – Fighter Commando) were to fly top cover at Semarang, to keep the AURI from having a peek at what was being prepared.

Concentrated at Semarang airbase (Kali Banteng) were 20 Dakotas (to which 16 more would be added after the initial paradrop), ten Kittyhawks, six Mustangs, ten Spitfires, five B-25 Mitchells (two strafers and three bombers), and six Auster AOP aircraft.

On 19 December 1948, the Second Police Action started with Operation *Southern Cross*; attacks on Indonesian held airfields in Java and Sumatra, in order to destroy whatever few aircraft the AURI might still have operational. This was almost simultaneously followed by the first sorties of Operation *Kraai* to prepare for the paradrop at Maguwo airfield (Yogyakarta).

Operation *Kraai*

At 0445 hours on 19 December 1948, three B-25 Mitchells took off from Semarang to bomb and strafe Maguwo, while 16 Dakotas, with 250 paratroopers, departed from Andir (Bandung). The Dakotas headed south from Bandung in radio silence and took up formation over the sea according to the colour codes applied to the tails of each section (red, black, orange, green and blank). They then headed towards the Dutch Navy ship, HNLMS *Banda*, which acted as a beacon, codenamed *Torenvalk* (Falcon). The Dakota crews had been instructed that under no circumstances were they allowed to abort the mission, even in case of an engine failure. During the briefing it was jokingly added that the only exception would be in the case of both engines failing!

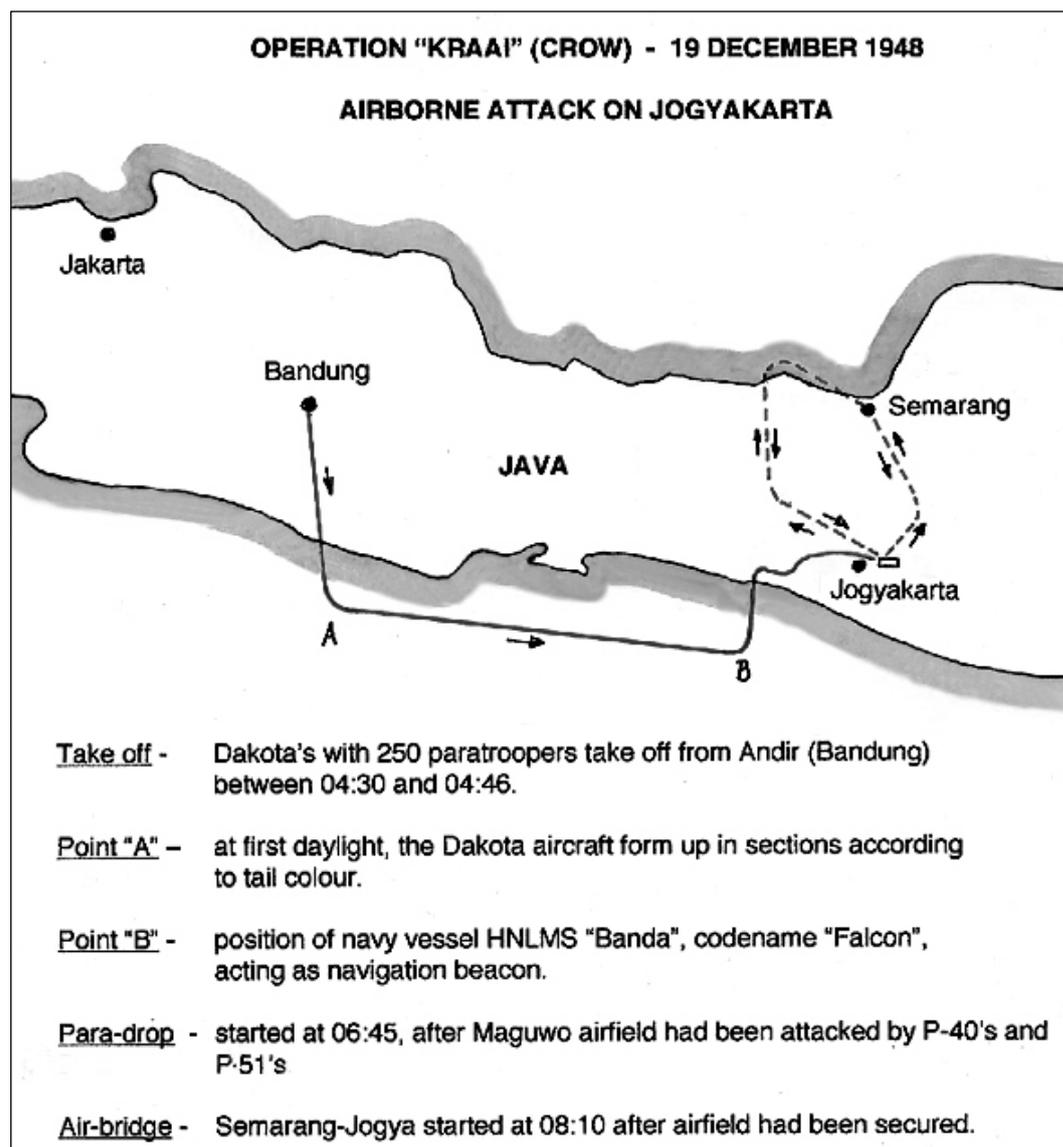


Figure 10 – Operation *Kraai* – 19 December 1948

Maguwo airfield was attacked by P-40 Kittyhawks and P-51 Mustangs a few minutes before the paratrooper drop, which began at 0645. From aerial reconnaissance it was known that the runway had been mined and that the electrical ignition controls to detonate the explosives were most likely located in a shed adjacent to the control tower. A Mustang fired rockets through this shed, which prevented the Indonesians from setting off the charges. Indonesian Vice-President, Mohammad Hatta, actually had a narrow escape, when the car in which he was travelling from Kaliurang (where negotiations were still taking place the day before the attack) to Yogyakarta was attacked by a Mustang of No 121 Squadron.

Other aircraft dropped 24 dummy parachutists over Yogyakarta town to act as a diversion. Actually, Maguwo was only defended by a weak group of AURI cadets.

An experienced NEIAF pilot jumped with the paratroopers to lead a special bomb disposal team, which was to dig up and disarm the buried bombs at Maguwo airfield, but since the detonation controls had been effectively destroyed, it was decided to

leave the bombs in place and proceed with the landing of the follow-up air link. The Dakotas for this part of the operation, carrying firefighting jeeps, command radio sets etc, besides ammunition and heavy arms, had already taken off from Semarang at 0700 hours and were orbiting near Maguwo. At 0810 hours the runway was declared clear and the air link Dakotas landed, soon joined by the 16 aircraft, which had dropped the paratroopers.

The Army Commander, Lieutenant General Spoor, witnessed the whole operation from his personal B-25.

The air bridge scenario called for the following time table:

- 8 minutes for loading/unloading passengers
- 20 minutes for loading/unloading cargo
- 5 minutes for taxiing to/from the runway
- 15 minutes for refuelling
- 26 minutes for flight time Semarang–Yogyakarta

At 1235 hours, the advance of ground troops to Yogyakarta town started, even though their heavy weapons had not arrived as yet, and at 1730 hours Yogyakarta town was occupied. At 1858 hours the last Dakota landed at Semarang.

The results of the air transport operation on that first day were impressive. A total of 126 sorties were flown—78 with troops, 9 light equipment cargo and 39 heavy cargo. On the average, there had been a take-off from Semarang every four minutes and it was proudly announced that this was ‘more than the Berlin Airlift’.

Interestingly, an Indonesian Catalina landed at Maguwo in the middle of the attack; the American pilot not having a clue of what was going on until he climbed out of his aircraft and found himself surrounded by Dutch paratroopers. The Indonesian Government, including Sukarno and Hatta, as well as AURI Chief, Suriadarma, were taken prisoner. A curious development was that none of the NEIAF pilots wanted to fly them out into exile, and a rather young pilot from the Netherlands, recently arrived in Indonesia, was given orders to fly them out in a Mitchell to Bangka and Medan with instructions to burn the written orders as soon as he had delivered the Indonesian VIPs to Sumatra. One can only guess at the reasons why Netherlands East Indies aircrew were not interested in this mission—possibly they feared reprisals against themselves or their families, or maybe it was the presence of their former colleague, Suriadarma, who had gained much respect as a crew member on Netherlands East Indies bomber aircraft attacking Tarakan during the Japanese invasion of 1941–42.

The Royal Netherlands Naval Air Service, as mentioned above, supplied ten Dakotas for the Maguwo airborne operation. Fairey Firefly fighter-bombers, of which only six were active, checked several AURI airfields in East-Central Java for enemy aircraft, but found none. They also supported amphibious landings of Dutch marines in East Java. As it was expected that the AURI could have hidden some aircraft at Madiun

airfield, a Navy Catalina was kept orbiting over Madiun all day on 19 July to be sure that no surprises would take place.

While the civilian Government of the RI had been captured, the high command of the TNI had not, because Panglima Besar (High Commander) Sudirman objected to staying in Yogyakarta and decided to escape to mountains. The Dutch kept looking for him and on 26 December attacked his suspected location at Karangnongko. The Indonesians suspected that the Dutch had informants within their ranks and decided to prove this by letting someone who looked like Sudirman walk around at a different location, dressed in his typical army greatcoat. Sure enough, an attack by Mustangs quickly followed.

Dutch air action concentrated on stopping railroad traffic and securing bridges, and providing tactical support to advancing ground troops. Losses for the air forces were light. On 22 December a P-40 Kittyhawk was lost due to a bomb-trap.

On 30 December 1948, the Dutch declared a 'cease-fire' in Java, but not yet in Sumatra, where more major action was about to take place.

The Second Police Action in Sumatra

As mentioned above, the RI, anticipating an all-out attack on Yogyakarta, had set up a 'back-up' capital at Bukittinggi in Central Sumatra. In order to prevent RI emissaries from Bukittinggi leaving for overseas, a Catalina flying boat orbited over Bukittinggi during the night of 18–19 December 1948 to ensure that no Indonesian aircraft could leave. On 19 December, an overland drive was started to occupy Bukittinggi. In order to secure two vital river crossings necessary for this advance, four Catalinas with two sorties per aircraft landed 120 troops at Lake Singkarak, 80 kilometres north-east of Padang, who successfully occupied these two bridges. Support for this operation was given by Mustangs of No 122 Squadron, based at Padang.

A similar landing was carried out by five Catalinas on 23 December that transported 100 troops from Medan on the Toba Lake at Balige, who then captured the airfield at Si Borong Borong. At this airfield, an additional 14 Dakota sorties and 18 Catalina sorties then flew in 250 more troops and 250 tons of supplies.

Paratrooper Operations in Sumatra

However, the major Dutch operations in Sumatra did not start until 29 December 1948, again using the Paratrooper Corps. These operations proved a lot more difficult than those at Yogyakarta, due to the fact that the targets had better TNI defences and were more spread out in difficult terrain, and in some cases the drop zones were missed.

There were two paradrops in Sumatra: at Jambi and at Rengat/Aer Molek. Operation *Ekster* (Magpie) at Jambi was conducted on 29 December 1948. For the 250 paratroopers the operation was the second jump into combat in ten days. The drop was to take place at four locations, including the airfield near Jambi, Paal Merah. However, at Paal Merah the drop zone was clouded in and the drop was cancelled, and the formation of Dakotas was forced to land at Palembang to refuel. Mustang

fighters of No 121 Squadron (which had been moved from Cililitan in Java to Palembang for this operation) had already carried out the preliminary attacks in the drop zone, therefore, the element of surprise was lost. Nevertheless, a decision was made to re-launch the operation in the afternoon.

At 1440 hours the Dakotas took off again for Paal Merah and, as it turned out, the TNI defenders had not counted on this and were still caught off guard. The drop at the airfield went off without problems, and at 1700 hours the field was cleared and the first Dakotas landed with follow-up supplies and troops. The airfield had been partially flooded with crude oil from a pipeline, which had been laid for this purpose by the TNI, but Mustangs destroyed the pumping station which eliminated the oil flow.

At the other three drop zones, located south of Jambi, some of the paratroopers were dropped too far away from their targets, or the drop zones proved to be unsuitable. Many of the paratroopers and much of their equipment landed in flooded swamp terrain, or as much as one kilometre from their target. Despite these difficulties and unexpected heavy resistance from the TNI, the objectives for that day were gained. On 31 December 1948, the paratroopers were flown back to Andir (Bandung) to prepare for their third combat jump during this campaign.

The other major airborne operation in Sumatra, called Operation *Modder* (Mud), took place at Rengat and Aer Molek on 5 January 1949. For the third time in 17 days the same paratroopers were dropped. The code name of this operation (Mud) was very appropriate—the jump zones were all swamp. The importance of the objectives lay in the fact that Aer Molek was rich in oil and quinine production, while Rengat was a centre of the smuggling trade with/by Chinese from Malaya, and thus a source of much needed revenue for the RI. Simultaneous with the airborne attack, an amphibious force came up the Indragiri River towards Rengat.

At Aer Molek, where the drop took place at 1000 hrs, the drop zones for the paratroopers were again missed by 1–2 kilometres, due to the inadvertent early pressing of the ‘jump-bell’. At Rengat, the paratroopers jumped at 1045 hours and landed in chin-deep swamp and lost much equipment, including a money safe containing 10,000 guilders. Still, the troops occupied Rengat by 1330 hours. The airborne attack was supported by Mustangs of No 122 Squadron, which prevented TNI troops from withdrawing from the area.

The Netherlands East Indies Paratrooper Corps probably established a record during the Second Police Action: the same paratroopers jumped into combat three times within two and a half weeks, and this was not the end because in March 1949 the same paratroopers jumped a fourth time, at Gading (Central Java).

Summary of Air Activity During Second Police Action

During the Second Police Action a total of 2934 sorties were flown, involving 5287 flying hours, as shown at Figure 11.

SUMMARY OF AIR ACTIVITY DURING SECOND POLICE ACTION 19 DECEMBER 1948 – 9 JANUARY 1949			
Squadron	Aircraft Type	Sorties	Flying Hours
AIR FORCE			
No 6 AOP Squadron	Auster	315	502
No 17 AOP Squadron	L-4 Piper Cub	359	533
No 18 Squadron	B-25 Mitchell	337	718
No 20 Squadron	C-47 Dakota	680	1 121
No 120 Squadron	P-40 Kittyhawk	183	314
No 121 Squadron	P-51 Mustang	113	253
No 122 Squadron	P-51 Mustang	206	352
No 322 Squadron	Spitfire	196	238
PVA (Photo Reconnaissance Squadron)	B-25 Mitchell P-51 Mustang L-4 Piper Cub	20	76
CVS (Central Flying School – under control of No 6 AOP Squadron)	Harvard	3	3
Sub-Total		2 412	4 110
NAVY			
Squadron 'A'	Catalina	169	486
Squadron 'B'	Dakota	227	556
No 860 Squadron	Firefly	126	135
Sub-Total		522	1 177
GRAND TOTAL		2 934 Sorties	5 287 Hours
PERCENTAGE OF SORTIES FLOWN BY ROLE			
	Bomber	12 %	
	Fighter	28 %	
	Reconnaissance	26 %	
	Transport	34 %	

**Figure 11 – Summary of Air Activity During Second Police Action
19 December 1948 – 9 January 1949**

The losses of the NEIAF during the Second Police Action were seven aircraft with crews, including four P-40 Kittyhawks, a P-51 Mustang, an Auster and a Piper Cub.

WIND DOWN AFTER JANUARY 1949

After the termination of the Second Police Action, a fairly rapid wind down of flying activity by the NEIAF took place, as is shown in the graph at Figure 12.

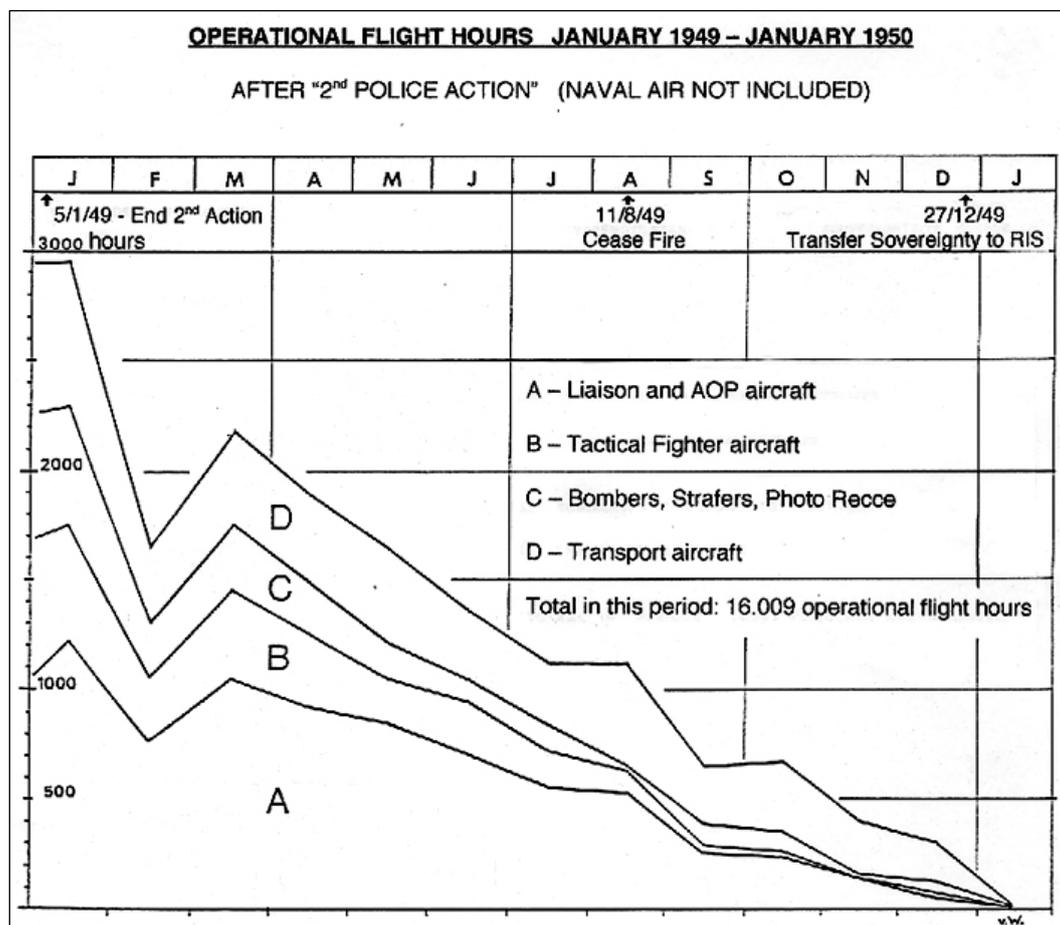


Figure 12 – Operational Flight Hours January 1949 – January 1950

The bulk of the flying hours after April 1949 was flown by transport (Dakota) and liaison aircraft (Auster and Piper). This illustrates well the changing nature of the military confrontation, which continued despite official agreements and cease-fires. The Dutch ground forces, spread very thinly over a much larger, so-called, 'occupied' territory, were increasingly harassed by guerrilla activity from Indonesian forces. As a matter of fact, the losses for the Dutch forces in the eleven months after the termination of the Second Police Action were much heavier than in the entire period between VJ and January 1949. Air transport and supply for the small, isolated Dutch units became very important, as was aerial reconnaissance for the patrols in the terrain, but 'heavy' air attacks with Mitchells or Mustangs became rare.

The big exception was the last airborne operation carried out in March 1949 at Gading, near Wonosari (east of Yogyakarta).

Action Gading: 10 March 1949

The major problem the Dutch faced—apart from the UN sanctions and an extensive international boycott—was that while the RI Government leaders had been captured, the military leadership had escaped and the TNI had not been defeated. On the contrary, the Dutch did not have a real answer for the newly adapted guerrilla tactics employed by the Indonesians. The NEI military leadership clung to a last straw by proposing that once the TNI leadership had been eliminated, resistance would collapse. Therefore, based on intelligence information, repeated attempts were made to capture the TNI Commander-in-Chief, General Sudirman. This culminated in another major paratrooper operation at Gading airfield, followed by an advance to Wonosari, where the Dutch suspected Sudirman and some Indonesian Government ministers were located. In fact, Sudirman was 80 kilometres further east near Sobo. The whole operation was kept completely secret, because it was of course in violation of the cease-fire agreement, and even the participating troops did not know what the main goal really was.

The airborne attack at Gading was carried out by 17 Dakotas, supported by P-40 Kittyhawks. The Kittyhawks destroyed the radio station, which the TNI used to coordinate/liaise with Sudirman’s Headquarters at Wonosari. The airborne operation went off without problem but the objective, the capture of General Sudirman, was not achieved.

Disbanding of Air Force Units.

Following the end of the Second Police Action, the temporarily reactivated No 121 Squadron was again deactivated on 21 January 1949. The Naval Air Service (MLD) also deactivated 13 of the 25 available Catalina aircraft.

Due to diminishing personnel levels, the NEIAF was obliged to establish the ‘Temporary Formation 1949’. This called for 63 manned aircraft (fighters, bombers and transports), but only 60 per cent was actually achieved. The actual operational strength in April 1949 was as shown in Figure 13.

NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES AIR FORCE STRENGTH – APRIL 1949		
Unit	Aircraft	Crews
No 18 Squadron	12 x B-25 Mitchells	8 crews
No 20 Squadron	15 x C-47 Dakotas	10 crews
No 120 Squadron	9 x P-51 Mustangs	6 pilots
No 122 Squadron	9 x P-51 Mustangs	6 pilots
No 322 Squadron	9 x Spitfires	6 pilots
The total aircraft inventory was 228, including trainers, liaison and non-operational aircraft.		

Figure 13 – Netherlands East Indies Air Force Strength – April 1949

CONCLUSION

Occasionally, larger operations were still flown by combat aircraft, such as in May 1949 around Medan (Northern Sumatra) where Mustangs of No 122 Squadron cleared out TNI concentrations. Under heavy UN and US pressure, the Dutch had to agree to abandon the Indonesian capital of Yogyakarta. The withdrawal took place on 29 June 1949 and was covered by Spitfires of No 322 Squadron, which was thereafter disbanded and repatriated to Holland.

In July 1949 a general cease-fire was concluded and a Round Table Conference started which culminated in the agreement to hand over sovereignty to the *Republik Indonesia Serikat* (United States of Indonesia), connected to the Netherlands in a Dutch-Indonesian Union, on 27 December 1949. For many Dutch people this was a big disappointment, for others it was a signal for hope of a continued future in Indonesia.

The NEIAF celebrated its 35-year existence with a big air show at Cililitan on 3 July 1949, still not realising that one year later it would be disbanded and become history. Soon after the transfer of sovereignty, the handing over of NEIAF units, bases and material to the *Angkatan Udara Republik Indonesia Serikat* (AURIS) started on 1 March 1950. As long as possible, the Dutch kept under their own control No 18 Squadron (Mitchell bombers) and No 120 Squadron (Mustang fighters), just in case there were any problems. No 18 Squadron was the last unit to be handed over to the Indonesians on 26 June 1950 and the next day, the *Koninklijk Nederlands Indonesisch Leger* (KNIL, Royal Netherlands Indonesian Army – note that the term ‘Indies’ had been changed to ‘Indonesian’) was disbanded, and thereby the NEIAF as well.

MERDEKA!

INDONESIA'S STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE 1945–49

CAPTAIN CLAYTON WEHNER

In August 1945, the Japanese war effort was on the brink of capitulation. When the imminent surrender came, the fledgling Indonesian Republic hurriedly declared its independence in the ensuing power vacuum, mindful that the Allies, and the Dutch colonists, would soon move to reoccupy South-East Asia.

As the Dutch filtered back to the archipelago, the Republic launched a two-pronged strategy of *diplomasi* (diplomacy) and *perjuangan* (struggle) to win its freedom. While President Sukarno and his Cabinet engaged the Dutch at the negotiating table, the Republic's ramshackle guerrilla army, supported by the wider populace, confronted the more professional and technologically superior Dutch military forces on the battlefield.

The nationalist fervour and resolve of the Indonesian people surprised and ultimately overwhelmed the Dutch. After 350 years of colonial occupation, and four years of failed negotiations and bitter fighting, the Republic prevailed in its struggle to achieve *merdeka* (freedom). This paper is a commentary of the tumultuous four-year period from 1945–49 in Indonesia.

By the start of 1945, the Japanese position was becoming tenuous and surrender to the Allies in South-East Asia was imminent. The Japanese forces in Indonesia attempted to win the hearts and minds of the local population by promising them independence prior to the surrender. It even assisted with the preparations, allowing the Indonesian nationalists, led by Sukarno, to formulate a basis and philosophy for an independent Indonesian nation through a preparatory committee, the *Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (BPUPKI), which later became the *Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (PPKI). This group consisted of prominent Indonesian nationalists, including Sukarno, who was later to become the President of the Republic, Mohammad Hatta and Sutan Sjahrir, the Republic's first Prime Minister. The deliberations of the preparatory committee were conducted against the backdrop of a growing restlessness in Indonesian society at large.

At a meeting of this committee on 1 June 1945, Sukarno delivered a passionate speech, which proved to be one of his most famous. In it he stated the core features of his political thinking, putting forward his secular philosophy of a Pancasila, an ideology consisting of five principles which would bind the disparate and far flung peoples of the archipelago. The speech offered a grand plan for a unitary Indonesia and, after three years of oppressive Japanese occupation, the speech provided inspiration and hardened the resolve of the nationalists.

On 6 August 1945, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and Japanese capitulation was but days away. The Indonesian youth, or *pemuda*, became edgy, poised to grab independence at the first available opportunity. With surrender

imminent, the Japanese summoned Sukarno and Hatta to Saigon, where Marshal Terauchi gave the Indonesian leaders the go ahead to form a new Republic under Japanese guidance.

The final steps to independence proved to be the most difficult. Sukarno knew that the Japanese were on the brink of collapse and hoped that a peaceful transfer of power could be brokered before Japan's capitulation. But Sukarno did not want to move too early for fear of antagonising the Japanese at what was a highly sensitive juncture. He thought that any premature move could result in futile bloodshed. In a quandary, Sukarno decided to bide his time, rather than take pre-emptive action.

For the *pemuda* there was no dilemma. They urged the nationalist leaders to declare independence immediately, but still Sukarno stalled. On the evening of 15 August 1945 the youth leaders approached him, demanding an immediate declaration, to which he refused. The youth leaders were furious, kidnapping Sukarno and Hatta early the next morning, in an attempt to force them to act.

Sukarno and Hatta were soon returned to Jakarta with news of a Japanese surrender. After receiving tacit approval from the Japanese Commander, Admiral Maeda, to declare independence, the preparatory committee set about drafting a *proklamasi* at Maeda's home. By 3.00 am on the morning of 17 August 1945 the document was complete. It was agreed that the proclamation would be read that day at 10.00 am at the front of Sukarno's house at *Pegangsaan Timur 56* in Jakarta.

At 10.00 am, Sukarno, flanked by Hatta, read the declaration which signalled the commencement of the revolution:

We the people of Indonesia, hereby declare Indonesia's independence. Matters concerning the transfer of power and other matters will be executed in an orderly manner and in the shortest possible time.

Signed Sukarno and Hatta

To mark the occasion, a handmade flag of red and white was hoisted and the Indonesian national anthem, *Indonesia Raya*, was sung.

Sukarno and Hatta quickly set about creating the formal machinery of the Republican Government. A new Constitution was brought into law and a temporary legislature, a Central Indonesian National Committee (*Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat* or KNIP), was formed. Additionally, the Republic established 12 government ministries, appointed a cabinet and mapped out eight new provinces.

One institution that was not enshrined in legislation was a national army. Sukarno feared that a Republican Army would be viewed as an enemy by the returning Allies and he decided instead to establish a pseudo-military force called the People's Security Agency (*Badan Keamanan Rakyat* or BKR). This force was drawn from the ranks of the Japanese created 'PETA auxiliary army' (*Pembela Tanah Air* or 'Defenders of the Homeland'). PETA was established by the Japanese to assist with homeland defence and in August 1945 it consisted of 65 battalions, and had 37,000 men in Java and 20,000 men in Sumatra.

The BKR was the genesis of the Indonesian Armed Forces, later becoming the vehicle for the armed struggle and going through a number of transformations and name changes during the four-year revolutionary period.¹

The Republic was born in a situation which quickly came to border on anarchy as independent groups sprang up to struggle for *merdeka*. Some of these groups were large and based on existing military organisations established by the Japanese, such as PETA, *Heiho* and the *Masyumi Hizbullah*. Others were informal struggle groups and localised militias seeking to contribute to the common effort of the revolution. These groups were known as *laskyar*, irregular forces that did not answer to outside authority.

As well as improvising and creating their own weapons, including wooden rifles, spears, clubs and knives, many of these groups sought weapons and ammunition from the Japanese. Having surrendered, the Japanese were primarily interested in self-preservation and often relinquished their weapons to the local forces.

The momentum and sheer intensity of these movements was vital, but so too was central control. It was crucially important that the Republic could demonstrate its ability to keep order when the Allies returned. For Sukarno, it was equally important that the Republic was able to 'negotiate' with the British and the Dutch, as well as 'struggle'. He was fearful that the desire to revolt would ultimately be detrimental to the Indonesian cause. These divergent strategies of *diplomasi* and *perjuangan* often conflicted and brought the government and the military into disagreement. Ultimately, though, it was the awkward combination of both that enabled the Indonesians to win their independence.

On 8 September 1945, as the Japanese Navy was surrendering to Australian forces in Balikpapan, Morotai and Kupang, the first Allied mission arrived in Indonesia with seven British officers parachuting into Jakarta. Soon after, HMS *Cumberland* arrived, led by Mountbatten's representative Rear Admiral Patterson, along with a number of Dutch officials who sought to assess the situation in the colony.

Confrontation was not far away. On 19 September 1945, a group of Dutchmen in Surabaya contemptuously hoisted a Dutch flag atop a prominent hotel. This incensed the local nationalists and they stormed the building, ripping the blue bar off the Dutch flag to create a crude Indonesian flag of red and white.

On 29 September 1945, Allied forces landed in Indonesia. The British had been given the overwhelming responsibility of disarming the enemy, recovering Allied prisoners of war and repatriating Japanese servicemen throughout the archipelago. Britain was unwilling to fight a colonial war and it immediately recognised the de facto authority of the Republic, much to the chagrin of the Dutch. Sukarno, too, tried to prevent outbreaks of violence by directing that Allied landings should not be opposed.

¹ The Republican Army had a succession of names during the revolutionary period – BKR, *Tentara Keamanan Rakyat* (TKR), *Tentara Keselamatan Rakyat* (TKR), *Tentara Republik Indonesia* (TRI), *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI), *Angkatan Perang Republik Indonesia Serikat* (APRIS) and *Angkatan Perang Republik Indonesia* (APRI).

But the British and the Republic soon did come into conflict. The most infamous battle between the British and the Republic was the Battle of Surabaya in October and November 1945. The Allies had landed in Surabaya on 25 October 1945, and although first contacts between the two forces were cordial, the British started to raise the ire of the Indonesians by occupying key points and distributing pamphlets, threatening heavy penalties for those who failed to surrender their arms. Sporadic fighting broke out and lasted until the 10 November 1945, when the two parties sat down to broker a ceasefire settlement.

As negotiations were being conducted, Brigadier General Mallaby, the commander of the British forces, was shot dead in a confused skirmish. Subsequently, the British ordered an all-out assault on the city, supported by air power and naval bombardment, and it was only after great bloodshed that the Indonesians were defeated. The date, 10 November, thereafter became known as 'Heroes Day' and Surabaya became the city of heroes. Heroes Day is still celebrated today in Indonesia.

The Indonesian resistance to the British astonished the outside world. The Dutch thought that the Republican Army and the *laskyar* were nothing more than a gang of extremists and agitators, but their performance in battle proved otherwise. They had shown that they were capable of adopting appropriate combat tactics against a larger and technologically superior force.

After the early battles of Central Java, General Sudirman was installed as the Commander-in-Chief on 12 November 1945 by his army colleagues, a promotion which was later formally recognised by the government on 18 December 1945. The Army had swelled in numbers and the force needed a commander that could unify all of its constituent elements, as well as harness the power of the independent *laskyars* and struggle groups. The leader needed to be visionary, authoritative and acceptable to all factions. Sudirman filled this bill.

Sudirman, a devout Muslim, was 29 years of age, and a former PETA officer and school teacher. He was a quiet man, strong-willed and gracious in speech, but firm as a leader of men and passionate about the nationalist cause. He had distinguished himself at the Battle of Ambarawa in Central Java, and had been successful in arranging the wholesale surrender of arms by the local Japanese, such that he controlled the largest single supply of weapons in Java.

Upon his appointment, Sudirman set about developing a defence strategy for the archipelago based on the concepts of guerrilla warfare. Soon he commanded undivided loyalty from his subordinates and his personality seemed to transcend many of the gaping divisions that existed amongst the forces fighting for Indonesian independence.

By the end of December 1945, Dutch forces began to filter into Jakarta. Sensing the danger of remaining in Jakarta, the Republican Government and the military hierarchy moved to Yogyakarta on 4 January 1946. Yogyakarta now became the centre of the revolution.

Later that month, the Indonesia issue was raised in the United Nations for the first time. Indonesia was fortunate at the time because the world was seeking to eradicate

colonialism and Dutch efforts to retake its former colony were viewed dimly by the international community. Australia was one of the countries that exerted pressure on the Dutch to leave the archipelago. On 7 March 1946, Australian dockside workers boycotted Dutch vessels in protest about their actions against the Indonesians.

The Dutch return was not the only problem for the Republic. A factionalised Indonesian society saw the emergence of other challenges to the Republic's role as the saviour of the nation. Leftist and Islamic political groups, such as *Masyumi*, *Partai Nasionalis Indonesia* and the *Partai Socialis*, were beginning to proliferate.

One such political movement was the Struggle Union (*Persatuan Perjuangan* or PP) led by Marxist champion, Tan Malaka. Russian trained Tan Malaka was unhappy with the Republic's intent to negotiate with the Dutch, preferring instead to meet the Dutch head-on in armed confrontation as they returned. On 27 June 1946, the PP, aided by elements of the Army, detained Prime Minister Sjahrir and occupied Yogyakarta. Sukarno declared martial law, demanding that Sjahrir be released. The coup attempt, which became known as the 'third of July affair', was soon foiled when it became clear that the move lacked popular support.

An impasse soon developed between the Indonesian nationalists and the returning Dutch. The British announced that they would leave Indonesia in the middle of 1946 but had offered to act as a mediator in negotiations between the Dutch and the Republic at Linggadjati. An agreement was established there on 15 November 1946. The Dutch recognised the Republic's de facto authority over Java, Sumatra and Madura, and both parties agreed to cooperate in the formation of a Federal Republic of Indonesia. The Republic as it stood was to become one of the constituent states of this federation.

The agreement was immensely unpopular and both parties never really abided by its guidelines. The Republic was sceptical about the Dutch concept of federalism. It was clear that the Dutch sought to entrench a system which would ensure their continuing political and economic influence in an independent Indonesia.

Soon the Dutch lost patience. On 20 July 1947, they launched a military assault, Operation *Product*, calling the offensive a 'police action' to avoid criticism from the international community. The main sphere of action had shifted from the negotiating table to the battlefield.

Initial efforts by Republican forces to repel the attackers were overwhelmed by the professionally trained Dutch forces and their technologically superior weaponry—the Dutch had long-range weapons, tanks, mortars and air power. Apart from an audacious attack by the Republican Air Force using two old ex-Japanese 'Cureng' aircraft, which bombed Dutch positions at Semarang, Ambarawa and Salatiga, the Republic had provided little resistance to the Dutch advance.

The Indonesians were forced to withdraw to the interior. Within two weeks the Dutch had secured control of most of the chief cities and major towns and partial control of the lines of communication between them—but, importantly, the resistance controlled the countryside. The Indonesians now avoided frontal combat, preferring instead to

employ hit-and-run tactics and implement the guerrilla warfare plan which had been devised by Sudirman and his officers.

The Dutch 'police action' drew international attention and widespread condemnation. The Australian Government instructed its UN representative in the United States to raise the Indonesian situation at the next session of the UN Security Council on 30 July 1947. Also a source of pressure was the recently deposed former Prime Minister Sjahrir, who had taken up a special ambassadorial role with the UN and who provided constant updates on the situation in his homeland.

On 2 August 1947, the UN passed a resolution calling for a ceasefire and the reopening of negotiations between the two belligerents. On 5 August 1947, a ceasefire was negotiated, but it was ignored on the battlefield. The Dutch continued to capture strategic towns and destroy bypassed soldiers in what they dubbed 'mopping up operations'.

As a part of the ceasefire, the van Mook Line was established delineating the Dutch and Republican held areas, leaving the latter with only one-third of the entire island and an area which contained limited food resources. In contrast, the ceasefire left the Dutch in possession of substantial areas of Java and Madura. The Dutch had gained the upper hand and this was reflected in the truce that was signed on 17 January 1948 on board USS *Renville*.

The Renville agreement caused great divisions across Indonesia because the agreement was seen to weaken Indonesia's claim to sovereignty. Again, provision was made for an Indonesian federation, but this time the proposal required the demobilisation of the indigenous Army and the installation of a colonial Dutch military as the Republic's armed forces.

Not surprisingly, the Republican Army was unhappy with this agreement. Such diplomatic retreats by Republican politicians were regarded as betrayals amongst the guerrilla fighters who wanted nothing less than total victory. This resulted in mutual suspicion and a number of sharp and serious differences between the Republic's military and political leaders.

The government had perceived the struggle in a broad international context. The politicians thought that the military was overly enthusiastic and that its belligerence was hurting the overall strategy of diplomacy. The Army, on the other hand, had a more insular view. It believed that the politicians were too accommodating and not acting in the best interests of the Republic.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian Communist Party, the PKI, and other left wing parties also started to criticise the Republican Government's policy of negotiation, favouring all-out guerrilla war against the Dutch. The opposition came to a head in Madiun on 18 September 1948 when the PKI, led by Musso, launched an insurrection against the Republican Government. The revolt was quickly put down by General Abdul Haris Nasution's Siliwangi Division and the town was recaptured on 30 September 1948.

The government portrayed the insurrection as treachery at a time of national struggle against an external adversary. Importantly, the events at Madiun changed the opinion

of the United States towards the new republic. Formerly suspicious, the United States now saw Indonesia as a potential ally against Communism.

The Madiun Affair weakened the military, but it was still able to confront the Dutch in what was to become its greatest military challenge of the period—the invasion of Yogyakarta. The military had yet to reorganise after the Madiun Affair when the Dutch attacked in the second ‘police action’, dubbed Operation *Kraai* (Crow), on 19 December 1948. The invasion was a complete surprise. High-level negotiations between the two parties were still underway and there was a UN Committee of Good Offices delegation in-country to assist with the deadlock at the time of the attack.

The Dutch military commenced its assault with an air strike on the Yogyakarta airport using Mitchell bombers. Paratroopers followed soon after and the assault on Yogyakarta commenced in blitzkrieg fashion, with P-51s and Spitfires softening up the city for the assault. The Indonesian forces on the ground offered little resistance and the Dutch seized Yogyakarta quickly.

Many Republican military units were still in regional areas when the offensive commenced, and many were short of ammunition, food and medicine after operations against the Communists at Madiun. General Sudirman, too, was unprepared. He was suffering from tuberculosis and had just had an operation on his lungs. He was forced to leave his sickbed and escape the city as the Dutch entered, issuing deployment orders to his forces as he fled.

Meanwhile, Sukarno and his cabinet had decided to surrender themselves, believing that their capture would attract international attention to the plight of the Republic. Before being detained, the Dutch requested that Sukarno deliver an order to the Republic that it should cease its existence, a request that he rejected out of hand. The politicians were later exiled in Sumatra and on Bangka Island, as the conflict was played out in Java. Many believe that Sukarno’s surrender was mere desertion, whilst others think that his capture attracted the necessary international attention which pressured the Dutch to end the conflict. At the time, however, his decision further polarised negative opinions about the government. Indeed, the military-political divide was at its worst when the military hierarchy found out that the central government had allowed itself to be captured.

With Sukarno and his politicians incarcerated, Sudirman was now alone to prosecute the war as he saw fit. His entourage moved to the interior, moving constantly to avoid detection, and managing to avoid the Dutch at every turn, despite a number of close shaves. He was gravely ill and for much of his journey to his command post at Sobo, he was carried in a litter or by piggyback. Sobo was the home for Sudirman and his command post for almost four months, and it was from here that the guerrilla war was controlled.

General Nasution, the then Commander of Java Command, was the architect of the defence plan across the island. The country was divided into *wehrkreise* (zones), in which local army units operated independently, drawing on the support of the local population. These military areas corresponded to local government divisions, in what was the beginning of the military’s present day socio-political role in Indonesian

society. Even today, the Indonesian military retains a similar doctrine of total people's security and defence which was used so effectively during the war for independence.

The doctrine did not stop the Republican Army from occasional offensive action. During the Dutch occupation of Yogyakarta, a young officer by the name of Suharto led a 'general attack' on the city on 1 March 1949. Republican forces captured and occupied the city for six hours, before being driven back by the Dutch.

With Indonesian military resistance and international condemnation increasing, the Dutch soon realised that they could not impose a solution by force. The United States was threatening to suspend post-war aid to the Dutch under the Marshall Plan and boycotts had been initiated by 19 Asian countries, leaving the Dutch with little option but to abandon its 'police action'.

Political negotiations recommenced in April and May 1949 and the Roem van Royen Agreement, based on the earlier Renville Agreement, was struck on 7 May 1949. Once again, the military was not consulted and the formal instrument of agreement was demeaning to Sudirman's forces, dubbing them 'armed followers of the Republic'. Furious that the sacrifice of the Army had been cheapened, Sudirman demanded that the words be changed to 'armed forces of the Republic'. Sudirman was so infuriated by the wording that he briefly contemplated resigning his post, but was talked out of it by his staff.

The first Indonesian troops returned to Yogyakarta on 29 June 1949, and on 6 July 1949 Sudirman returned to Yogyakarta and formed a triumvirate with Sukarno and Hatta. Although unhappy with the political agreement struck by Sukarno and the Dutch, Sudirman understood the requirement for solidarity at such a crucial time in the Republic's short history.

At the Round Table Conference, in The Hague, delegates from Holland, the Republic and the 15 other Indonesian states set up by the Dutch, met to bring the four-year struggle to an end. On 27 December 1949, the Dutch finally recognised the independence of the Republic of the United States of Indonesia. The federal construct was accepted reluctantly by the Indonesians, and it was not long after that the nation reverted to a unitary state.

On 29 January 1950, General Sudirman passed away in Magelang, having given his heart and soul to the struggle for the Republic. Today he is known as the Father of the Indonesian Armed Forces and the man responsible for wresting the Republic away from the Dutch.

At the height of Dutch activity in the 1940s, there were around 150,000 Dutch forces in Indonesia. Fighting on their own territory, using stand-off guerrilla tactics, and with intimate support from the population, Sudirman's Republican Army was able to wear the Dutch down. Although it was a poorly trained and poorly equipped force, the Indonesians had a strong will and common desire to achieve *merdeka*. In concert with diplomatic efforts and international pressure, the Army was able to overcome a technologically and professionally superior force, which arrogantly believed that it could simply march back into its former colonial territory and reclaim its sovereignty.

There were many challenges to come—the fires of Communism, radical Islam and separatism burned brightly over the ensuing years, and they continue to do so in Indonesia today. But the first obstacle to nationalism had been breached. Indonesia had overcome its colonial master.

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PANEL DISCUSSION: THE NETHERLANDS AND THE DUTCH EAST INDIES 1945–49

Group Captain Doug Hurst (RAAF Ret'd): I'd like to make an air power comment—we've talked a lot about politics. The two 'police actions' were basically won by air power. The differing factor was that the Dutch had a very high ability to move troops and all their supplies by air, and they had the advantage of having bombers and ground attack aircraft. In fact, they won both 'police actions' quite easily. They lost the guerrilla war and they lost the political war, but from the point of view of air power, air power proved itself in this conflict, as far as I'm concerned.

Air Commodore Tom Trinder (RAAF Ret'd): I wonder how much the takeover of, well, a unitary state was seen by the outlying provinces as just a new colonial movement with Java at the head of it, and how much of today's problems were really laid down then.

Captain Clayton Wehner: Certainly the Javanese have always had a very predominant position in Indonesia and the Indonesian Republic. The Republic as it stands today covers over 17,000 islands and has over 500 distinguishable languages in it, so any efforts to try and bring all of these disparate parts of the archipelago together into one single unitary nation were always going to be very difficult. So I think Sukarno's efforts with the Pancasila were a pretty good stab. What do you think, sir [Group Captain MacFarling]?

Group Captain Ian MacFarling: I think the basic problem concerned whether they wanted to keep the Dutch colonial structure? The constitution they got from the Round Table Conference in The Hague in 1949 was a Western constitution that no-one liked. It brought in Western ideas that no-one wanted. There was a desire, and there always had been amongst most leaders—most nationalist leaders—to have a unitary state. The interesting thing for me has always been that you'll see many rebellions and many uprisings around the archipelago, but this isn't because the people involved don't want to be Indonesian; they just want a slightly different version of Indonesia. I don't believe that going back to a *Republik Indonesia Serikat*—the United States of Indonesia—would solve anything. I believe that there has to be power in the centre, but how you devolve down to second and third order government is another thing. But, certainly, I always believed that, since 1928 and the second Youth Conference, they got it right, they got a good language. It wasn't Javanese, so it wasn't a Javanese hegemony—I don't think you could ever see it as Javanese colonialism. I think they got it right as a unitary state. It's just damnably difficult to control something that big.

Group Captain Doug Hurst (RAAF Ret'd): I have a comment about that. They were far from united. That picture you saw of the paratroopers ready to jump out, were all Indonesians. When I did a book on this recently, I got a phone call from a Dutch person who'd fought there and he said, 'I'm glad you put the picture of those Indonesian guys in Dutch uniforms in the book. In my unit, 85 per cent of the troops were Indonesians from the outer islands and they were all volunteers, and they said,

“We’re here because we’d rather have the Dutch than the Javanese run the place.” So there was not unity.

Group Captain Ian MacFarling: Well we’ve got one versus two here, and I’ve got a Dutchman alongside me. I beg to differ on that one. Yes, you did have quite a few people from Ambon and the Moluccas—that was where they had got, for want of a better term, the ‘black Dutchman’ from. But if you look at the politics of the area, no, they were, as political organisations after 1952, organised. If you look at the election of 1955, the reason they wanted that election was to get rid of the Dutch influence. They wanted an Indonesian influence and the reason for the rebellions after the election was that it turned up exactly the same structure as they’d had before. That was the disappointment that people got. But I’ll hand over to Jerry Casius, for a Dutch point of view.

Mr Gerard Casius: I think it’s a mistake to read any political opinions in relation to the Indonesian volunteers. The ‘Company’, as they called it, derived from the old Dutch East India Company. The Indonesians called the army the ‘Company’—it was a job, you got paid, you got fed, and you got medical care and so on. I think really the people that served in the colonial army, even after 1945, were in it for a job but not politically motivated as individuals. So I would not read into it that there was support for the Dutch—I really don’t think that that was the case. We like to think in those terms but I don’t believe that was on. Of course, we know what happened with the Ambonese. There’s still a lot of them in Holland because they were not very welcome in Indonesia and they chose the better of two evils and moved out. So, I would disagree that that would be any sign of disunity in Indonesian ranks—I wouldn’t see it that way.

Dr Alan Stephens: Jerry [Mr Casius], I’d like to direct a question to you. Captain Clayton ‘kicked air power into touch’ fairly deftly at the start of his talk, and it wasn’t an unreasonable comment. The use of air power in what we’ve called low intensity conflicts, small wars—this whole range of unsuitable labels, but that’s the best we can do—has been and remains a vexed issue. Is there any legacy in the Dutch Air Force today of lessons and ideas from the Indonesia experience?

Mr Gerard Casius: I don’t know if there are any lessons because, as Dr Patrick Facon mentioned this morning, the Dutch Air Force very quickly became a NATO air force with completely different purposes, and experience in Indonesia didn’t exactly fit in there. What is a fact though is that the Dutch gained a lot of knowledge and we had a very strong, let’s call it, Indonesian influence in the Dutch Air Force because the majority of the Dutch East Indies Air Force folks went over to Holland and continued their career in the Netherlands Air Force—a very strong element that was very American oriented. I don’t know if you had the discussion in Australia but, you know, the Dutch Air Force started out with British Spitfires and Ansons and so on, and we’re now completely American orientated. That had a lot to do with the experience in Indonesia; the equipment, the outlook, the attitudes and so on. But a lot of experience was vitally needed in Holland at the time because we were trying to expand. I’m sure that the leadership of the Dutch East Indies Air Force that came across had their influence, but I think it was more knowledge than applied experience coming out of the Indonesian situation.

THE ETHNIC BACKGROUND TO THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY

DR IAN PROUDFOOT

The Emergency in Malaysia is different from the Vietnamese and Indonesian cases considered in this conference because it involves an insurgency that failed. The insurgency began in 1948, but by the mid-1950s the British colonial government had succeeded in reducing its scope and impact to such a degree that it was possible to bestow independence on Malaya in 1957. Part of the explanation for this success obviously lies in the political and military strategies the British developed to combat the insurgency. The other members of this panel, Mr Peter Rixon and Dr Milton Osborne, will discuss these in more detail. But another part of the explanation lies in some peculiar features of the Malayan cultural environment. It is this aspect that I wish to deal with briefly.

One of the first features to strike any observer of Malaysian life today is its rich diversity of races, religions, languages, food and customs. Almost every facet of Malaysian life seems to be governed by this heritage of the colonial period. This was probably even more true of Malaya (as it then was) at the end of World War II. The census of 1947 gives the following snapshot of its ethnic make-up:

'000	Malays (million)	Chinese (million)	Indians (million)	Others (million)	Total (million)
Malaya	2.4	1.8	0.5	0.06	4.9
Singapore	0.1	0.7	0.07	0.02	0.9
Total	2.5	2.6	0.6	0.09	5.8

%	Malays	Chinese	Indians	Others	Total
Malaya	49 %	38 %	11 %	1 %	100 %
Singapore	12 %	78 %	7 %	3 %	100 %
Total	43 %	46 %	10 %	2 %	100 %

Figure 1 – 1947 Malaya Census Figures

The ethnic categories used in the census are a shorthand for other cultural and religious differences. In broad terms, the Malays were the indigenous people, followers of the Muslim religion. The Chinese were Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian, speaking the several different Chinese languages of South China. The Indians were mainly Hindu Tamils, but there were also some Muslims, and Sikhs from North India.

The total population numbers are quite small. Although the population of the Malay Peninsula had grown rapidly during the previous hundred years, the territory was still quite sparsely populated. The population was concentrated along the west coast of the Malay Peninsula where Chinese and British had opened up the great new industries of colonial development: tin mining and rubber plantations. Outside these areas of the

modern economy were pockets of rice-producing land populated by the Malay population. The sparseness of the indigenous population led the British to recruit large populations of immigrant Chinese and Indian labourers to work in harsh conditions in the tin mines, rubber plantations and other industries that British capital created. By the middle of the 20th century, the immigrant populations of Chinese and Indians outnumbered the indigenous Malay in the British-controlled territories. In particular regions, the balance was tipped one way or the other; but the comparable demographic strength of the Malay and Chinese communities raised the danger of inter-ethnic antagonisms.

The cultural and religious differences between Malays and Chinese were reinforced by economic divisions. The Chinese tended to be found in the modern sectors of the economy, in the mines or the towns that sprang up in their vicinity. Meanwhile the indigenous Malays generally remained in their traditional occupations as rice farmers and fishermen. The British indeed encouraged them to stay on the land for two reasons. First, because they wished to preserve the feudal structure of the Malay states, in which each Sultan ruled over a loyal peasantry; they found this system of indirect rule was efficient and cheap. Secondly, because they wanted a cheap supply of rice to feed the immigrant proletariat; for this purpose, tracts of agricultural land were set aside as 'Malay reservations' which could only be owned by Malays. The result of this pattern of development was not only ethnic diversity, but a division of the economy along ethnic lines. In the 1950s, only 15 per cent of Malays lived in cities; but 47 per cent of Chinese did. The towns and cities of Malaya were Chinese territory.

The modern sectors of the Malayan economy were spectacularly successful. In the early 1950s, Malaya was the world's largest producer of tin, with one third of the world's output. It also produced just under one third of the world's rubber, surpassed only by Indonesia. This production made Malaya critically valuable to Britain after World War II. Britain was struggling to repay the huge debts it had incurred with the United States during the war, and Malaya was by far the largest earner of US dollars in the Empire. On the other hand, Malaya's agricultural economy was small and backward. Malaya was chronically unable to feed its population. Throughout the period we are interested in, Malaya imported more rice than it was able to produce.

During the pre-war colonial period, there was no serious interracial violence. The British successfully ran a divide-and-rule policy, which kept the population in their allotted functions. This came to a dramatic end with the Japanese occupation.

First, race relations were greatly worsened. The Chinese were treated very harshly by the Japanese throughout the occupation period. The Japanese 15th Army came directly to Malaya from China. They saw the Chinese as the enemy, and indeed the Malayan Chinese had given generous financial support to the defence of China against Japan. Both the Japanese and the Chinese in Malaya saw the Japanese occupation as continuation of the struggle in China.

In the last days before the fall of Singapore, the British finally allowed a mainly Chinese volunteer defence force to be set up. With only five days training, and only partly armed, it nevertheless made a contribution to the defence of Singapore, and no doubt made the Japanese even more determined to root out the Chinese enemy, which

they immediately began to do in a program of mass executions. The volunteer defence force was the precursor of the MPAJA, the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army, which stayed behind Japanese lines. The MPAJA was led by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), and was mainly Chinese. It harassed the Japanese in minor ways, more actively in the latter part of the war when it began receiving supply drops from Ceylon, and was advised by British liaison officers of Force 136.¹

The Malay experience of the Japanese occupation was rather different. The Malays felt they had merely exchanged one colonial master for another. For educated Malay youth in particular, the Japanese regime offered new opportunities, and its rhetoric of 'Asia for the Asians' clothed them in a new self-respect. The Malay Sultans remained on their thrones; Malay administrators continued to run the civil service and (with Sikhs) manned the police force, as they had under the British. In this way, Malays became part of the Japanese apparatus of oppression directed against the Chinese. The MPAJA, on the other hand, was seen as the avenger of Chinese.

The occupation brought severe economic disruption. Malaya was not able to export its produce, nor to buy rice. The economic collapse affected the relatively self-sufficient Malays of the countryside less severely. It bore most heavily on the Chinese and Indian population. The loss of employment, rampant inflation, a sense of vulnerability to Japanese oppression, and above all the desperate shortage of food pushed many thousands of Chinese into the countryside to squat on Malay reservation land where they might at least find a way to feed themselves. These rural Chinese squatters were a major source of logistical support for the MPAJA: they were generally sympathetic to the policies of the MPAJA, and were easy targets for its levies.

The trauma of Japanese rule provoked a dark aftermath. Right across South-East Asia, there was a vacuum at the end of the Japanese period; and this was also true in Malaya. Between the Japanese surrender on 15 August 1945 and the landing of the first British reoccupation troops 19 days later there was a brief period in which law and order collapsed. The MPAJA stepped into this vacuum. They emerged from the jungles to a heroes' welcome from local Chinese communities, celebrating what was seen as a Chinese victory over the hated Japanese. In areas where they were strong, local units of the MPAJA set up communes and people's courts, and began executing Malay collaborators. Malay police were a particular target.

The outbreaks of inter-ethnic violence that had pockmarked the last months of the Japanese occupation increased in frequency, particularly in districts of Johor and Perak where large populations of Malays and Chinese lived side by side. There were some instances in which local MPAJA bands, joined by other Chinese who now jumped on the bandwagon, launched some atrocious anti-Malay and anti-Muslim actions. Mosques were desecrated; Malays were forced to eat pork. These acts stemmed from a combination of Chinese triumphalism and the bitterness engendered by Malay collaboration during the occupation. In response Malay religious brotherhoods and martial arts bands mobilised and counterattacked. Memories of these dark days poisoned ethnic relations in Malaya for a generation.²

¹ 'Force 136' was a British-led, anti-Japanese guerrilla unit that operated in Malaya during World War II.

² The best account of this period is Boon Kheng Cheah, *Red Star over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation of Malaya, 1941–1946*, Singapore

On return, the British therefore found themselves in an uneasy relationship to their allies in the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). The British Military Administration (BMA) declared the MPAJA no longer operational after 12 September, but the MPAJA units remained armed and in the field. It took another two and a half months to negotiate the demobilisation of the MPAJA. They were paid off, and required to surrender their arms. It was, however, widely believed that they had concealed their newer and better arms in caches in the jungle.

The economic crisis was not, at first, relieved by the return of the British. The rash decision of the BMA to demonetise the 'banana' money that had been issued during the Japanese occupation exacerbated the sufferings of town-dwellers and labourers. The BMA was unable to stabilise the economy. It was understaffed, incompetent and corrupt. Food remained in critically short supply. Severe food rationing and price controls were so ineffective and impossible to administer that the BMA became known as the 'Black Market Administration'. As during the Japanese period, these economic hardships bore most heavily on the Chinese and Indian workforce and urban dwellers.

These were the circumstances in which the British and the MCP joined battle over the future of Malaysia.

The returning British accepted from the beginning that there would have to be room for greater political participation in post-war Malaya, and gradual progress to eventual self-government. For this new Malaya (excluding Singapore), the British set up a revamped civil administration centred on Kuala Lumpur, under a British High Commissioner. All those residing in Malaya, whether of Malay or immigrant stock, would be equal citizens of this modern unitary state. This was radically different from the semi-feudal pre-war government. The nine Malay states would be submerged in this new Malayan Union, and the Malay Sultans would become mere figureheads. The Malays would lose the special privileges they had enjoyed as the indigenous people. In other words, Malaya was no longer to be seen as *Tanah Melayu*, 'the Land of the Malays', but as a modern multi-ethnic state.

Not unexpectedly, the Malayan Union ran aground on the rocks of ethnic rivalry. Malays were outraged that their special position had been sold out by the British. The British felt they had no special debt toward the Malays, who had by and large collaborated with the Japanese. Agitation quickly spread through the Malay community. A political party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), sprang into being to lead protests against the Malayan Union. Under the slogan *Hidup Melayu* (Long Live the Malays), UMNO succeeded in orchestrating a boycott of the public inauguration of the first High Commissioner on 1 April 1946. None of the Malay Sultans attended, kept at bay by crowds of Malay demonstrators. The Malayan Union was thus shown to be unviable. (This success propelled UMNO to centre stage, where it has remained ever since as the ruling party of independent Malaya and later Malaysia.)

University Press, Singapore, 1983. A more contemporary source is K.O.L. Burridge, 'Managerial influences in a Johore village', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 30:1, 1957.

As the British began the search for a new political formula, the Malayan Communist Party also flexed its muscles. It used its strength in urban areas to organise General Labour Unions. These mobilised a spate of strikes and shows of strength during 1946. However, as the British administration became more confident, it used laws and police powers to confront urban demonstrators, to curb union power and to depoliticise unions. The MCP at first retreated to a strategy of working behind the scenes to mobilise opposition to the British through a united front strategy.

As the MCP's scope for legitimate political activity became more and more constrained, it re-evaluated its commitment to legal struggle. A change of leadership brought Chin Peng to power and in March 1948 the party resolved on armed struggle. In June 1948, three European planters were assassinated in simultaneous attacks, and several days later, on 18 June 1948, a state of Emergency was declared for the whole of British Malaya. Immediately upon the declaration of the Emergency, the MCP was declared an illegal organisation, and some 13,000 activists and union leaders were deported to China.

The new policy of armed opposition to the British was in line with Cominform policy, but was also inspired by excitement over Mao's successes in China. Leftist Chinese in Malaya were galvanised by the success of the Chinese Communist Party in freeing China from foreign rule. During these early post-war years a stream of idealistic young Chinese returned to China to help rebuild the fatherland. In this context it is not surprising that the MCP still tended to see the struggle in Malaya as a branch of the Communist struggle in China. The Malayan Communists thus dug themselves into a trap.

Rationally, it was self-evident that the MCP needed to recruit support from both the Chinese and the Malay communities in Malaya if it was to have any chance of ousting the British Government. To this end the MCP tried to set up front organisations that would involve members of all ethnic groups. The General Labour Unions, for instance, had mobilised some Indian and Malay plantation and railway workers. However Malaya's ethnic divisions were always the MCP's Achilles' heel. One of the tactics used by the British planters to defeat union action was to bring in Malay workers to replace Chinese or Indian strikers.

In sentiment, the MCP was a Chinese party, and was seen by Chinese and Malays alike as a Chinese party. Its leadership was Chinese, and its membership was overwhelmingly Chinese. Moreover, memories of wartime and the brief but violent aftermath of the war confirmed this alignment in the popular mind. The MPAJA had fomented ethnic conflict—its victory had been hailed as a Chinese victory—and now the Communists were returning to the jungle, it was as if the same fight was being continued. Previously the enemy had been the fascist Japanese and their Malay lackeys in the police force and administration; now the Japanese had been replaced by the British. The armed resistance movement was at first named the Malayan Peoples' Anti-British Army (MPABA), as if to underline this continuity. This movement was subsequently renamed the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA), giving the struggle a more international character; but this appeal to anti-colonialism did not succeed in recruiting many Malays to the struggle. There was a Malay unit in Terengganu (an overwhelmingly Malay state), but Malay participation was

insignificant in the MCP's operations in the multi-ethnic western states where the bulk of the population resided.

So, while the MCP never received more than moral support from the Chinese Communist Party, its identification with the Chinese cause internationally and in Malaya was a major political weakness. As it regrouped to launch its guerrilla war against the British administration, this political weakness would be exposed as a critical strategic weakness as well.

At first the British were quite unsuccessful in countering the MCP guerrilla operations. The reasons for this initial failure are many. The British administration was still weak. In particular the police force was undermanned and demoralised in the wake of the desertion of many Malays and Sikhs who had collaborated during the Japanese occupation. Police recruited from outside Malaya had no sense of the local society. The British relied on the army to make sweeps of rural areas where the Communist guerrillas were active. It imposed collective punishments on villages thought to have given support to the guerrillas. However, since the army was not able to maintain a presence in these areas, it could not guarantee the security of the rural population. The result was that its operations tended to heighten the sense of grievance among villagers who, lacking protection from the British, had succumbed to pressure from the guerrillas. The failure of this conventional military approach revealed that the problem was not going to be solved simply by military operations. The second British High Commissioner, Gurney, recognised this by stressing 'armed support for a political war, not political support for an army war'. The military power must serve the civil power. In practice this meant placing the army under police control. However, given the state of the police force, this was a poor solution. On 16 October 1951, Gurney was killed in an ambush outside Kuala Lumpur. The 'anti-bandit' operations that Gurney had hoped would restore peace within two years were also clearly failing. The tide began to turn decisively under Gurney's successor, General Sir Harold Templer. The economy was booming now, thanks to the Korean War. The price of tin had doubled, and the price of rubber shot up to four and half times its 1949 level. The government now had the resources necessary to finance an adequate counter attack. It had support from Commonwealth forces. It also had a new plan of attack, the 'Briggs Plan'. Dr Osborne will discuss this plan in more detail.

A central plank of the Briggs Plan was the need to cut the MRLA off from its sources of civilian support. Now that the Communists were operating from the jungle, they had to find sources of support in rural areas. The task of the British was to close the countryside to the MRLA. This was not difficult in Malay areas. As Malay villagers had no sympathy for this Chinese army, the British judged it safe to train and arm Malay home guards so that they could defend themselves against the impositions of the MRLA. This judgment proved sound: almost no weapons found their way from the home guard to the MRLA.

Chinese living in rural areas were both more sympathetic and more vulnerable to the demands of the MRLA. A residue of goodwill towards the MCP for their opposition to the Japanese made it easy for the civilian arm of the MPAJA, the Min Yueh, to garner support from rural Chinese who had previously supported the MPAJA. Thus, the Communist-led guerrillas could rely on plantation workers, mine workers and squatters for intelligence, financial support and, above all, food. To take control of

this situation, the British embarked on a huge project of civilian control. First, the whole adult population was registered and issued with photographic identity documents. Second, compulsory mass resettlement of rural Chinese began. Where possible Chinese who worked on mines or plantations were 'regrouped' into settlements attached to their places of employment. Others were forcibly resettled into the so-called 'New Villages', which were fenced and guarded. About half a million people were moved into these 'New Villages', and another seven hundred thousand were regrouped. By these means about one-seventh of the whole population of Malaya was brought under the direct surveillance of the government.

The 'New Villages' cut the lifeline of the guerrillas. Villagers had to be within the village lines during all the hours of darkness. The entry and exit of villagers was checked at a guard post, and they were searched to ensure that no food was taken into the countryside. In troubled areas, communal cooking of food was imposed. The government's ability to control the food supply in this way was doubly effective in a rice-deficit area like Malaya. The effect on the morale and fighting capacity of the guerrillas cannot be overestimated. They were forced to spend more and more time and energy simply scraping together the basic necessities of life.

The 'New Villages' also provided a captive audience for government-approved political mobilisation. Here the government started on the back foot. The resettlement, often at very short notice, was resented. The same measures that were highly successful in denying food to the guerrillas also made life difficult for the villagers. The daily searches by Malay police were particularly irksome. In the beginning, facilities in the villages were poor to non-existent. Schooling was often inaccessible, and basic health services unobtainable. Yet gradually things improved. The 'New Village' settlers were given legal title to their house-plots. Social amenities were provided with government help or organised and funded by the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA).

This was the second prong of the government strategy. It involved the creation of a new political vehicle that could wean the Malayan Chinese away from the Communists. In the immediate post-war period, politically aware Malayan Chinese were still fixated on the politics of China, divided according to whether they were partisans of the Kuomintang or the Communists. The British needed to find a way to channel Chinese political aspirations *in Malaya*. This was engineered through the MCA, whose leadership was drawn from the English-educated business and professional elite of the Chinese community. Equipped with money it raised from a national lottery, the MCA began providing social amenities in the 'New Villages' and working to win over Chinese support.

The MCA thus became a counterpart to the conservative Malay party, UMNO, which had a similarly English-educated elite leadership. These two formed an alliance, with a third party that represented the Indian community. As the British opened up opportunities for democratic participation, the Alliance, as it was called, scored stunning electoral successes. This conservative Alliance provided a mechanism for representing competing ethnic interests within Malaya, which was strongly anti-Communist and congenial to British economic interests. Thus the scene was set for the transfer of independence to an Alliance Government in 1957.

The arrival of independence took the remaining wind out of the sails of the anti-colonial guerrilla resistance. It had already been defeated in the field, being pushed ever deeper into the jungle and northwards toward the Thai border. A small surge in defections during 1958 was the *coup de grâce*. Although the Emergency remained technically in operation until 1960, the battle had already been won by a well-orchestrated combination of military and police actions and political initiatives.

In retrospect, the weakness of the Malayan Communist Party is clear:

- its power-base was the urban proletariat: but the urban areas were most easily kept under control by the British administration; and
- it never managed to be more than a Chinese party, which made it possible to isolate it in the predominantly Malay countryside.

There was in the end no escape from the ethnic divisions in Malaya. The MCP was never able to gain multiracial support for its war of liberation. Despite its rhetoric, the Malayan Races Liberation Army was always seen as a Chinese force. Its struggle was seen, by Malays certainly, as an attempt by Chinese to usurp Malay rights and privileges.

From this perspective, the Malayan Emergency was quite different from the national struggles in Vietnam and Indonesia. The difference is not just that the insurgency in Malaya was successfully suppressed by the colonial power. It is also that this was not a *national* struggle in the same way that the Vietnamese or Indonesian anti-colonial movements were. There has never been a *Malayan* or *Malaysian* nationalist movement of that kind. This is another heritage of Malaysia's ethnically divided society.

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AEROSPACE POWER IN THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY

MR PETER RIXON

The Malayan Emergency involved a military commitment by Commonwealth forces to counterinsurgency operations lasting longer than the United States commitment to the war in Vietnam. For much of the period Commonwealth forces were in Malaya, serving within those forces were squadrons and members of the RAAF. This paper seeks to outline the contribution of aerospace forces in combating Communist guerrillas during the Emergency. Some contemporary observations on current aerospace policy are given in light of the lessons learned from operations in Malaya. In line with the theme and timeframes of the history conference, the period of analysis will be limited to between 1945 and the mid-1950s.

In mid-2002 the Australian Defence Force published *The Australian Approach to Warfare*. One of the guiding principles of the document was a reminder to Service personnel that ‘the [Australian] Government directs the Australian Defence Force to conduct military operations in a political context’.¹ This guidance is part of an overall philosophy that serves to educate military and civilian personnel within the Department of Defence that military operations are always a subset of a broader geo-political strategy. During the Malayan Emergency, Commonwealth air forces operated within the constraints imposed by the geo-political circumstances of the time.

The Communist-led, Chinese-based insurgency in Malaya began in mid-1948. The operational area as defined by the Australian Government for the purposes of operational service was peninsula Malaya, including the contiguous waters of the coast to a distance of ten nautical miles from the coast.² From the commencement of the Emergency, air commanders were cognisant of the fact that the Emergency and Commonwealth responses to it had to be handled within the setting of a broader geo-strategic environment. This environment would shape or constrain the ability of air commanders to employ air power to combat enemy forces within Malaya.

The most significant of the geostrategic factors was the existence of a Cold War between the West and Soviet bloc powers at the time. The West, and more particularly Great Britain, were seeking to undertake the task of post-war reconstruction, whilst maintaining sufficient military forces to limit Soviet expansion. Reflecting this global perspective of the role of air forces in the Far East were the comments attached to the British request for Australian assistance in combating the Emergency.

In April 1950 the British Government wrote to the Australian Government requesting that the RAAF provide air elements for duty in South-East Asia. In order of priority, the RAF asked for a Dakota transport squadron, a squadron or flight of Lincoln

¹ *The Australian Approach to Warfare*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2002, p 24.

² *Nature of Operations in Malaya: Enquiry by the Premier of New South Wales*, National Archives, A432/80 control symbol 1952/2251, Canberra, folio 7, p 2.

bombers, and the maintenance personnel to sustain either or both.³ Whilst their employment in support of operations in Malaya was a priority, they were to be assigned under command of the Air Commander-in-Chief Far East in order that they might also be employed in support of operations in Hong Kong if necessary.⁴

Events unfolding throughout the world as a consequence of the Cold War, coupled with a rising sense of individual national identity internationally, drove the drafting of such a request by British authorities. China had just fallen to the Communists. However for Britain, the focus of operations was continental Europe, and hence it was in Europe that the majority of UK military forces were concentrated. Reinforcing the European focus of British forces, the cutting off of food supplies to Berlin in 1947 by the Russians had only been countered by NATO through the use of significant air transport assets to break what was in effect a siege. RAF commanders in Europe realised that if the Soviet forces could blockade Berlin once, they could do so again in the future. Demands for air transport elsewhere in the world would therefore have to be balanced against the need for such assets in Europe. Commanders of UK air forces in the Far East knew and understood this.⁵

In addition to the need to provide sufficient aerospace assets to support NATO needs in Western Europe, Britain also had to ensure access to oil supplies from the Middle East and, along with those, transit rights through the Suez Canal. Sufficient air forces had to be stationed in the Middle East to meet all likely contingencies. Collectively, the demands for air forces in Europe and the Middle East led directly to drawdowns in air assets in the Far East. For example, when helicopters were finally introduced in Malaya, the maintenance of helicopter squadrons was curtailed, and the number of helicopters provided for operations was reduced.⁶ Restrictions on rotary wing forces extended to fixed-wing forces as well.

In 1947 there occurred the partition of India. The sub-continent fell within the area of responsibility of the Far East Theatre. Some one million persons died during partition, and several tens of millions of persons were displaced. Conditions on the sub-continent throughout almost the entire period of the Malayan Emergency remained volatile. Air commanders could not ignore the need to plan for, and if necessary respond to, any breakdown which threatened British interests in the Far East theatre of operations. Whilst none occurred, the commitment of air assets to Malaya had to be undertaken with this constraint in mind.

Elsewhere in the theatre, several other conflicts occupied the attention of Far East air commanders. China found itself embroiled in civil war. By 1949 the Communists had succeeded in seizing control of all the country, except for a few colonial outposts. Whilst Hong Kong was not directly threatened, there was always concern in Britain about the security of that outpost. Further contributing to the spectre of growing

³ *United Kingdom Operations in Malaya: Request for Assistance from Australia*, National Archives A5799/15 control symbol 44/1950, Canberra.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ To gain a clear understanding of higher level air force thinking in the Far East during this period, see Air Vice-Marshal Sir Francis Mellersh, *Report on the Royal Air Force – Operations in Malaya*, AHQ (M)/S.310/3/Air Ops, NA, 1951.

⁶ Royal Air Force, *The Malayan Emergency 1948–1960*, Ministry of Defence, London, 1970, p 105.

Communist power was the loss of Indochina by the French to the Viet Minh in 1954, and the outbreak of the Korean War in mid-1950. These three conflicts, together with events in Europe, and the seizure and closure of the Suez Canal by Egyptian nationalists in 1956, all played their part in restricting the role and contribution of air power in Malaya.

Aside from obvious Communist military efforts in the theatre, nationalists also demonstrated their capacity to successfully achieve self-determination in the region. In Indonesia, from 1945 until 1949, the Dutch found themselves involved in a long-running war that eventually saw them withdraw from much of the Indonesian archipelago by 1950. Given the economic importance of Malaya to Great Britain, the same could not be allowed to occur. Britain felt she could not afford to lose the economic wealth of Malaya's rubber and tin.

Illustrating just what role Far East Air Force (FEAF) saw themselves fulfilling in support of these considerations was an observation made by the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Far East. He stated that whilst major air activities focused on Malaya, the basic function of FEAF remained 'primarily the air defence of the Federation, Singapore Island, North Borneo and Sarawak, and secondly its maritime role in cooperation with the Royal Navy'.⁷ At the same time, the various wars and other commitments elsewhere on the globe meant that there was pressure on FEAF to release ground troops for duty in theatres such as Korea and NATO. Subsequently, there was an increase in emphasis on offensive air support to counter the loss of ground troops in Malaya.⁸

The use of air power in Malaya, therefore, had to be exercised within a complex political environment, where significant economic interests were at stake. The use of air power in the Emergency had to be managed in a way that curtailed the threat posed by the ethnic Chinese insurgents. At the same time, military operations had to limit any collateral damage to political, social or economic interests that were vital to maintaining the continued presence of the Commonwealth in Malaya. Binding these two, was an acknowledgment by the British that indigenous Malay aspirations for self-rule would also have to be managed. Throughout much of the insurgency, whilst independence had been promised to the indigenous Malay community, Britain sought to delay granting it (independence was granted in 1957), thus maintaining access directly to the revenues generated by the colony.

The air headquarters responsible for the mounting and sustainment of aerospace operations during the Malayan Emergency was Headquarters FEAF. The Headquarters was located in Singapore and assigned only a handful of squadrons. Its span of command extended from modern-day Sri Lanka (Ceylon as it was then known), to include all of current South-East Asia. The command also had extended responsibility for maintenance of Commonwealth military trunk air links to places as distant as Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East, and later Japan after the outbreak of the Korean War in mid-1950. In addition to the provision of aerospace forces for operations over land, FEAF was responsible for provision of maritime air patrols over the Sea Lines of Communications (SLOC) throughout the entire theatre.

⁷ Mellersh, *Report on the Royal Air Force – Operations in Malaya*, p 3.

⁸ Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948–1960*, Frederick Muller, London, 1975, p 248.

Finally, FEAF was responsible for all training, for maintenance of aircraft within theatre, for servicing all routes, and for the provision of staging and basing facilities.⁹

FAR EAST AIR FORCE SQUADRONS		
	1948	1954
Heavy or Medium Bomber	0	2
Fighter	3	3
Medium-Range Transport	4	3
Short-Range Transport	0	4
Photographic Reconnaissance	1	1
Flying Boat	1	3
Helicopter	0	3
Total	9	19

Figure 1 – Far East Air Force Squadrons

The air assets of the command were not substantial. As Figure 1 shows, there were less than ten squadrons in the entire FEAF in 1948 when the insurgency broke out. Even at the height of military operations in 1954, whilst the number of squadrons had doubled, FEAF responsibilities remained at their pre-Emergency levels. In 1948, one of the three fighter squadrons was a Beaufighter unit deployed in Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka). It was redeployed to provide close air support to ground operations in Malaya. In 1954, while there were now three medium-range transport and three flying boat squadrons assigned to FEAF, the command was still maintaining the same SLOC commitments it had in 1948. Commitments to trunk military communications were such that two of the three medium-range transport squadrons were assigned to these tasks, and thus were rarely available for operations in support of security forces within Malaya.

The armed forces in Malaya, including the air force, operated throughout the Emergency in support of the civil power. The primacy of the civil power was enshrined in paragraph 23 of Emergency Directive No 2.¹⁰ In practical terms, it was reflected in a force ratio of one policeman for almost every soldier deployed on operations.¹¹ Perhaps the function of the security forces was best encapsulated by the comments made by Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey when they wrote, ‘Action by the security forces had to operate in parallel with the extension of government control and the extension of tangible benefits to the population at large’.¹²

⁹ Mellersh, *Report on the Royal Air Force – Operations in Malaya*, pp 2-3.

¹⁰ Royal Air Force, *The Malayan Emergency 1948–1960*, p 147.

¹¹ Richard Miers, *Shoot to Kill*, Faber and Faber, London, 1959, p 13.

¹² Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, *Emergency and Confrontation: Australian Military Operations in Malaya and Borneo 1950–66*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996, p 14.

Support to the civil power translated in operational terms into specific restrictions on what air assets could and could not attack. Aircrew, for example, could be punished for damaging rubber plantations, and standing orders included provisions for recouping from aircrew the cost of replacing damaged trees. These instructions extended to cover the loss of domestic animals by local farmers. For example, should aircrew drop explosives on a chicken coop, the aircrew could not only be made to recompense the farmer for the loss of the chickens, but also for the loss of income from any eggs the chickens might have laid.¹³

Instructions such as these were meant to guide commanders in their thinking on employment of air assets, and to reinforce that the military role in the Emergency was one that was secondary to other strategic considerations. Commanders and aircrew understood why such instructions were raised, and abided by their direction.¹⁴ Illustrating the collective mindset of British authorities was the decision to call the situation in Malaya an ‘Emergency’ rather than a ‘war’. Insurance would not be paid for facilities destroyed in a war, but facilities and infrastructure damaged in a civil emergency were covered.

Further impacting air operations in Malaya was the British financial position, which during the Emergency remained precarious. By 1941, some eight years prior to hostilities by the Communists in Malaya, Great Britain was technically bankrupt. Britain was sustained in World War II by the raising of loans and through other financial arrangements facilitated under the American sponsored Lend-Lease program. Indicative of the financial burden of these loans was the fact they were not fully repaid until the early 1980s.¹⁵ In the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, Malaya’s resources represented one of the few sources of revenue available to the British Exchequer that could be used to repay such loans. Just how important Malaya was to the Exchequer is indicated by the 1947 export earning statistics. The combined value of all manufactured goods produced in Great Britain and exported internationally was worth some US\$180 million. Exports of Malayan rubber on the other hand, on their own, earned approximately US\$200 million.¹⁶

The impact of economic, fiscal, and political considerations are not directly evident in the words of air operations reports sent back to London by FEAF commanders. But given their social position in the local community, it seems highly likely that senior air commanders would have been aware of the cost on Britain of such operations. Further research may help in determining whether such considerations directly influenced the employment of air assets in Malaya, and whether air assets were held back from some operations because senior commanders were aware of the cost of employing them.

The unique geography of Malaya had considerable impact on the nature of air operations. There were few roads in Malaya—two major routes crossed the peninsula

¹³ These observations were provided to the author by Wing Commander Len Brighton (Ret’d) in August 2002. Wing Commander Brighton served with No 224 Group during the Emergency, and the instructions were part of the Group’s Standing Orders.

¹⁴ Observation made to the author by Wing Commander Brighton (Ret’d), August 2002.

¹⁵ A highly readable yet informative work on the British financial position and its post-war effect is the work by C. Ponting, *1940: Myth and Reality*, Ivan Ree, Chicago, 1991.

¹⁶ John Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency*, Palgrave, Hampshire, 1982, p 41.

east to west; whilst on the west coast there was a continuous single road running from Singapore via Kuala Lumpur to the Thai border. There was no similar trunk on the east coast. Running off the existing roads were just a few tracks, closely hugged by rugged and difficult terrain, all easily susceptible to ambush.

Along the entire west coast was a narrow coastal strip, alternating between patches of rubber, rice and coconut plantations, and swamp. Throughout the southern tip of the peninsula was a similar strip of terrain.¹⁷ In the north-east could be found further rubber plantations. In the central region of the western coastal strip, between the rubber plantations and the interior, were a series of tin mines. But all of these terrain types covered only approximately 20 per cent of a land area the size of modern England. The remaining terrain of the country was covered by heavy jungle, and along the centre of the peninsula from the Thai border to Singapore ran an extensive series of mountains, with spurs in several places extending east to west almost to the sea. It was an environment totally unsuitable for mechanised operations, traversable on foot only with great difficulty, frequently accessible in many parts most easily from the air. This was the physical environment in which the military had to operate in support of the civil power.

The tactics of the enemy also had considerable impact on air operations. Initially in 1948 the Communists had sought to mount attacks both in urban areas and against economic interests. However, it was in urban areas that the security forces enjoyed their greatest advantage. The Communists, therefore, chose to move their focus from actions in urban environments to operations directed against people and infrastructure located on the jungle fringe. By the early 1950s, the combination of improved coordination of security operations on the jungle fringe, and the adoption by the government of a relocation program amongst Chinese squatters, denied the insurgents food and support. When the insurgents then decided to move deep into the jungle, this forced the security forces to undertake operations that required penetration and sustainment within the rugged jungle and mountain areas.¹⁸ These factors guided the conduct and nature of aerospace operations.

Aerospace power in Malaya was used in both offensive and support operations. In offensive operations, aircraft employed included small single-engined observation aircraft like the Auster¹⁹ and commonly known aircraft such as the Spitfire, Beaufighter, Mosquito and Brigand, and also saw four-engined bombers such as the Lincoln play a crucial role.²⁰ Smaller aircraft were useful on the jungle fringe where absolute precision in delivering ordnance was required. But the lack of endurance of such aircraft, their relatively small payloads and a shortage of suitable airfields limited their employment.

¹⁷ M. Postgate, *Operation Firedog: Air Support in the Malayan Emergency, 1948–1960*, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1992, p xiii.

¹⁸ See Chapter 10 of the book by H. Miller, *Jungle War in Malaya: The Campaign Against Communism, 1948–1960*, Arthur Barker, London, 1972, for a more detailed explanation of the change in Communist tactics and why changes were made.

¹⁹ See Neil C. Smith, *Mostly Unsung: Australia and the Commonwealth in the Malayan Emergency, 1948–1960*, N.C. Smith Publishing, Melbourne, 1989, for observations of the Auster in this role.

²⁰ Postgate, *Operation Firedog: Air Support in the Malayan Emergency, 1948–1960*; for examples of such aircraft on operations, see the pictures detailed in this monograph.

The Lincolns were well-suited to the role in which they most commonly became employed. They could fly for up to 11 hours, and a five aircraft formation could deliver up to seventy 500 lb bombs anywhere in Malaya by day or by night.²¹ Their serviceability rate was amongst the highest of any aircraft type that served in Malaya.²² There were never more than two Lincoln bomber squadrons serving with FEAF, and from mid-1950 until mid-1958 one of them was the RAAF's No 1 Squadron.²³

A reflection of the different approach taken to flying operations in the RAAF of the 1950s and the RAAF today is the manner in which training and resourcing of the squadron was handled. At least some of the crews that initially served in Malaya received no specialist training in aerial jungle operations prior to departing Australia. Furthermore, in theatre, there was no access to such modern-day conveniences as Global Positioning System satellites to help crews locate their position. Crews found that the on-board radar was of little use, there was no radio compass in some aircraft, and frequently navigation was done by dead reckoning and observation.²⁴

Very often, crews would be tasked to undertake from Singapore the bombing of a section of jungle somewhere on the peninsula. The target would be chosen as the result of intelligence gleaned from other elements of the security forces. Tactics at the target point varied. Sometimes, it was a case of simply dropping on-board ordnance. More often, having dropped their bombs, the assigned aircraft would adopt a pinwheel formation, and fly about the target site in a nose down attitude that allowed all on-board machine-guns and the mid-upper 20 mm turret to be used against a location on the ground. Frequently, aside from the obvious explosions, tracer and debris generated, there was little indication either of the condition of the enemy, or what impact was being made on the target. Occasionally, aircraft would be tasked to operate at night, flying a box pattern of some kilometres over the jungle, dropping a single bomb every thirty minutes, in order to deny sleep to the enemy.²⁵

A crucial point in understanding the nature of operations in Malaya, and therefore the contribution of air power, is appreciating that at no point were the Communists seeking to engage in major battles with the security forces. This explains why a succession of operations over many years often succeeded in killing only a handful of insurgents each time. To illustrate this point, a series of operations involving ground and air forces in 1950 (*Operations Rose, Kota, Jackal, Letter, Autumn Double, Walkover* and *Trek*; all involving at least a battalion of ground troops and several air sorties in each named operation) collectively contributed to the death of only 11 terrorists. In the whole of 1950, only 648 terrorists were killed and 147 captured.²⁶ Yet

²¹ Robert Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency: The Commonwealth's Wars 1948–1966*, Routledge, London, 1991, p 69.

²² M. Postgate, *Operation Firedog: Air Support in the Malayan Emergency, 1948–1960*, Annex N.

²³ Royal Air Force, *The Malayan Emergency 1948–1960*, Annex M.

²⁴ These observations were provided to the author in July 2002 by Mr Paul Choquenot, a pilot who served with No1 Squadron in Malaya during the Emergency.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency: The Commonwealth's Wars 1948–1966*, p 35.

this was at a time when the terrorists were estimated to have a strength of approximately 7000 armed personnel.²⁷

The difficulty with analysing offensive air operations in Malaya is in determining just what contribution the operations described made to the battle on the ground against the Communists. Forty years after the Emergency, there continues to be little enthusiasm amongst informed sources as to the effectiveness of offensive air operations. John Coates was moved to write that:

The dispersion of the insurgents in Malaya, the lack of specific information concerning their whereabouts, and the limitations of visual and photographic reconnaissance, all militated against effective use of offensive air support.²⁸

Anthony Short, who wrote the official history of the Malayan Emergency, commented that 'there could be no reliance on the illusions of air power'.²⁹ The decision not to include a separate chapter on offensive air power in the official history suggests Short himself did not have a high regard for it. The RAF official history provides perhaps one of the most conclusive comments on offensive air support in the Emergency when—in commenting on the tangible results arising from such operations—the authors wrote that 'offensive air support provided during the Malayan campaign was hardly worthwhile'.³⁰

However a key observation made by the same authors went on to state that:

...but the incalculable effects which it [offensive air support] had on weakening the terrorists' morale and reducing their ability to mount offensives or withstand security force pressure was considered to be an important factor in preventing the insurgents from progressing beyond the first stage of their campaign to the domination and control of selected areas. In any case, when the terrorists retired to deep jungle areas, air power was frequently the only method of maintaining some pressure against them and was therefore directly instrumental in shortening the duration of the campaign.³¹

The controversy over whether offensive air operations in Malaya were effective, in part serves to illustrate the difficulty in identifying the contribution of various elements of the Services in a joint operations environment today. The role of the Navy for example receives scant attention from most authors when writing about the Malayan Emergency. The significance for analysts today when deciding on modern force structures becomes one of deciding to what extent the absence of an offensive air threat or the capacity to generate supplies or movement over the sea is a reflection of an absence of enemy capability. As a consequence, do friendly forces today need such resources against our current range of anticipated threats and intended operating environments? Or, did possession of robust air and sea resources by the security services in Malaya at such magnitude deny throughout the entire period of the Emergency those domains to the enemy?

²⁷ Bower Report, *Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948–August 1957*, National Archives, A452/2 Control #1968/4248, Canberra, p 4.

²⁸ John Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948–1954*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1992, p 172.

²⁹ Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948–1960*, p 502.

³⁰ Royal Air Force, *The Malayan Emergency 1948–1960*, p 150.

³¹ *ibid.*

Where there is almost universal agreement on the utility of air power in Malaya during the Emergency is in the field of air support operations. Reflecting the adoption of old and proven tactics adapted to a new environment was the use by the security services of a chain of isolated forts in the jungle ranges. The British had used similar forts in the Boer War period of 1901–1902 to break up the freedom of manoeuvre of Boer Commandos. In Malaya, the forts served a similar function. Whilst they were tactically vulnerable and logistically incapable of sustainment without external supply, with air support they were viable defensive positions capable of supporting the interdiction function for which they were established.

Aerial resupply proved crucial in allowing the security forces to take the fight to the insurgents in their jungle hide-outs. In this role, No 38 Squadron RAAF and No 41 Squadron RNZAF were significant contributors to the logistics, air insertion and psychological warfare operations of the security forces. Without air resupply, ground forces simply could not carry sufficient supplies to operate for any length of time in the jungle. This in turn limited the depth to which they could penetrate the jungle interior.

Few wars or confrontations are won standing on the defensive. Indicative of the importance of air supply to offensive operations by ground forces is that illustrated by Operations *Sword* and *Valiant* in 1953. The security forces were able to deploy six battalions—the equivalent strength of all the regular battalions in the current Australian Army—over a period of several weeks; four battalions in the mountains and jungle of central Malaya, and two in similar terrain in north-west Malaya.³² Without aerial resupply, operations of this magnitude, conducted deep in the jungle, would simply have been impossible.

Helicopters emerged from 1953 as a new force element in the Emergency. The key roles of helicopters were troop insertion and medical evacuation. In the medical evacuation role, the importance of the helicopter is reflected in a comment by Richard Clutterbuck, who wrote, ‘the knowledge that [medical evacuation by helicopter] could be done—instead of a ghastly journey on a stretcher—gave a tremendous boost to the morale of every soldier on patrol’.³³ In troop lift, in spite of possessing small numbers of aircraft, relatively large numbers of troops were moved. In May 1953, when there was only one squadron of eight Sycamore helicopters available, over 1900 troops were airlifted in the field whilst on operations.³⁴

The cost of operating helicopters as against operating fixed-wing aircraft, a shortage of helicopter numbers, and difficulties in providing adequate maintenance (particularly later in the 1950s) curtailed the widespread employment of helicopters on a Vietnam scale. Reflecting back to an earlier comment about commanders and economic considerations in war is the observation by Clutterbuck that:

³² These operations and many others like them are described in detail in both Robert Jackson’s book *The Malayan Emergency: The Commonwealth’s Wars 1948–1966* and in John Coates’ book *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948–1954*.

³³ R. Clutterbuck, *The Long, Long War: The Emergency in Malaya 1948–1960*, Cassell, London, 1966, p 157. (Editor’s Note: Apparently, Clutterbuck’s book also was published by F.A. Praeger, New York with a slightly different title, *The Long, Long War: Counterinsurgency in Malaya and Vietnam*.)

³⁴ Postgate, *Operation Firedog: Air Support in the Malayan Emergency, 1948–1960*, p 109.

the short take-off and landing fixed-wing Scottish Aviation Pioneer aircraft ... could carry four passengers or 800 pounds of cargo, was faster than a helicopter, took far less maintenance effort to back it up, and had a cost effectiveness 10 times as good as a helicopter.³⁵

Whilst eventually three helicopter squadrons would be created within FEAF—two Royal Air Force and one Royal Navy—serviceability rates in the tropical conditions bedevilled operational employment. Due to their age and the operating environment, serviceability rates sometimes were as low as 40 per cent.³⁶ However, in spite of these shortcomings, helicopters were a vital and popular asset amongst force commanders.

Technical problems were not the only factors that impinged on the employment of air power in Malaya. It took considerable time to build all-party coordination amongst the security services. Writing in December 1950, some two and a half years after the outbreak of the Emergency, the Commander FEAF commented that until the Briggs Plan of June 1950 was implemented, 'the combined operations of the Police, the Army and the Air Force had not been based on any premeditated plan of campaign'.³⁷ As late as 1951, the police were having trouble obtaining sufficient funds to equip their posts with vehicles, communications equipment and uniforms.³⁸ Within FEAF, there was the difficulty in finding suitable officers and senior NCOs to act as air liaison officers. At District level, where infantry battalions or police security forces would coordinate their initial activities for counterinsurgency operations, the collective impact of these problems hampered the arranging of timely air support.³⁹

Air operations in Malaya at a tactical level reflect a problem existing in most military forces today: operational ambitions often exceed the technical capacity of systems available at the time. Indicative of this was the need for ground liaison parties to carry the enormous valve radios of the day into the jungle with patrols. Troops loaded with rations and personal weapons had great difficulty also hauling the radios, antenna and batteries for such systems over the gruelling terrain. Without such systems, it was extremely difficult to coordinate offensive air or air support assets. The later introduction of jet aircraft into the theatre—deployed because of their suitability to undertake the primary task of air defence—meant that aircraft optimised for air superiority tasks were not greatly suited to provide offensive ground support.

In spite of the difficulties encountered by the security forces, the perseverance and ingenuity of Commonwealth forces ensured that at no time was there ever any capacity for the insurgents to exploit the air or maritime domains. In the absence of an enemy capability, the security forces achieved total spectrum dominance in the air and at sea throughout the Malayan Emergency. Reflecting the unique difficulties associated with counterinsurgency operations, however, dominance on the ground was not achieved until the security forces had a ratio of ten security personnel (a combination of soldiers and policemen) for every insurgent.⁴⁰ Knowledge of this fact

³⁵ Clutterbuck, *The Long, Long War: The Emergency in Malaya 1948–1960*, p 158.

³⁶ Postgate, *Operation Firedog: Air Support in the Malayan Emergency, 1948–1960*, p 109.

³⁷ Mellersh, *Report on the Royal Air Force – Operations in Malaya*, p 7.

³⁸ Bower Report, *Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948–August 1957*, p 12.

³⁹ The Bower Report makes extensive though incidental remarks about the changes in air staff management arising from the implementation of the Briggs Plan under Sir Gerald Templar.

⁴⁰ Observation made in the Bower Report, p 7.

influenced thinking at the most senior levels of British leadership as to what constituted reasonable measures when looking to the external defence of the peninsula, even when it was known the insurgents had been beaten.

In a conversation in October 1955, the then General Officer Commanding Malaya (General Bourne) in discussions with Australia's Minister of External Affairs (Richard Casey), outlined what he felt was the best means of defending Malaya should an external—predominantly Communist threat—be posed. In light of developments in Vietnam and the broader global political environment, General Bourne felt that no US military support would be available to the Commonwealth should external defence of Malaya be necessary. In this case, Bourne opined that a strong atomic bomber force based on Singapore would provide the best means of regional defence.⁴¹

That reliance on nuclear weapons was seen as a reasonable military option by such a senior figure at that time, sends a warning to defence policy makers in today's complex international environment. The ADF today through its Force 2020 doctrine hopes to further enhance the role of the 'seamless force'; a combination of all parties—military, civilian and non-government—acting collectively to contain and then overcome future threats.⁴² General Bourne's comment, however, serves to illustrate that when funding for adequate forces is insufficient, some of those tasked with implementing security policy might be prepared to opt for extreme security measures in a conflict scenario. What impact this might have on the political and economic dimensions of crisis management, and the ultimate success of any adopted Australian security policy, is incalculable. In analysing the role each element of the security forces played in combating the Communist insurgency in Malaya, revisiting the campaign may serve to provide further insight into how it is we as a military force can better enable our doctrine in future conflict.

⁴¹ *Note of conversation between Mr Casey and General Bourne – Director of Operations in Malaya. 24th Oct 1955*, National Archives, A816/52 control symbol 19/321/51, Canberra, p 3.

⁴² See *Force 2020*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2002, Section 3 for further information on what the Department and the ADF see as what Australians need to know about Defence in order to secure the future of Australia.

THE MALAYAN COMMUNIST PARTY'S RESPONSE TO THE BRITISH USE OF AIR POWER IN THE CONFLICT

DR MILTON OSBORNE

INTRODUCTION

The successful defeat of the insurgency mounted by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) against the Federation of Malaya, and known as the Malayan Emergency, deserves both to be better known and better understood. It deserves to be better known since the final defeat of the MCP reflected a notably successful integration of military and civil measures to achieve this goal. It deserves to be better understood since what was achieved in Malaya was too easily seen as resulting from a set of policies that could be readily applied elsewhere. This mistake was made, most notably, in relation to the developing conflict in South Vietnam (the Republic of Vietnam) in the early 1960s, particularly in terms of the thought that it would be possible to replicate the successful settlement policies associated with the 'New Villages' program in Malaya through the establishment of 'strategic hamlets'. A brief summary of some of the important differences between developments in Malaya and South Vietnam will be found at the end of this paper.

AN ETHNIC CHINESE INSURGENCY

It is impossible to place too much stress on the fact that the Malayan Emergency, which lasted from 1948 until 1960, was essentially an insurgency mounted against the government by ethnic Chinese insurgents in which the Malays, the 'people of the country', were *mostly* not actively involved as opponents of the existing regime. (The words in the preceding sentence are chosen carefully since, [a] there *were* a small number of Malays who fought with the MCP, and [b] some Malays cooperated with the MCP insurgents under duress.)

The essentially ethnic character of the insurgency must also be understood as reflecting the participation and support of only part of Malaya's ethnic Chinese population. At no stage did the insurgents represent a majority of Malay's ethnic Chinese, whose political loyalties were either to the Malayan Chinese Association or to the Kuomintang, or to both. In round figures, the population of Malaya in 1948 was 5 million, of whom 38 per cent (or 1.9 million) were ethnic Chinese. Of this latter figure, the number of active insurgents at the height of the Emergency was of the order of 8000–9000. In short, given the fact that ethnic Chinese were a minority in the overall population of the Federation of Malaya, the MCP insurgents were very much a 'minority of a minority'.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SQUATTER COMMUNITIES

The disruption caused by the Japanese occupation of Malaya during World War II had, as one of its major consequences, the establishment of large-scale settlements of

Chinese squatters who lived outside the control of government and who, as a result, were not recipients of government services. The development of these communities followed on from earlier, smaller squatter settlements that grew up during the 1930s, following the loss of agricultural and plantation employment in the wake of the Great Depression. While estimates of the total numbers of squatters vary considerably, a figure of 500,000 seems justified. So, while active MCP insurgents (initially known as 'bandits' but later, as a matter of deliberate government policy, described as 'Communist Terrorists' or 'CTs') never numbered more than around 8000–9000, their maximum potential support base from within the squatter communities represented 26 per cent of Malaya's ethnic Chinese population. (In comparison, a breakdown of the government forces ranged against the insurgents at the height of the Emergency shows that there were 40,000 regular British and British Commonwealth troops, including Air Force and Naval units, police forces numbering 70,000, while there were 200,000 Home Guards for static guard duties.¹)

Nevertheless, despite the minority character of the insurgents they were able to mount a challenge against the government that was both costly and sustained. Without question, a major reason for the insurgents' survival against vastly superior government forces was because of the support provided, either voluntarily or under duress by the ethnic Chinese squatter communities that were such a feature of post-World War II Malaya. A fictional work giving an insight into the attitudes of the squatters is Han Suyin's 1956 novel, *...And the rain my drink*.²

This background is important, since as early as 1949 a captured MCP document revealed the reliance that the insurgents placed on access to squatter communities, and this at a time when the major resettlement of squatters into 'New Villages' had still not begun. In part, the captured document read:

Our greatest weakness is that we have not sufficient strength to protect cooperative villagers. Therefore, our environment becomes more and more difficult, especially from the financial and provision supply aspects. We suffer from unreliable information, non-cooperation of the people and difficulty of movement.³

GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES AND THE BRIGGS PLAN

As the government faced the challenges of the insurgency, and simplifying considerably but not improperly, defeating the MCP insurgency involved three linked strategies. These were:

- the neutralisation of the MCP's military capability;
- the prevention of the MCP's access to Chinese squatter communities, and so to the support that these communities could provide the insurgents; and

¹ G.Z. Hanrahan, *The Communist Struggle in Malaya*, International Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, 1954, p 75.

² Han Suyin, *...And the rain my drink*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1961.

³ Milton E. Osborne, *Strategic Hamlets in South Viet-Nam: A Survey and a Comparison*, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 1965, p 15, quoting a Federation of Malaya Press Release, 12 May 1949.

- the development of policies, including working towards the achievement of Malayan independence from Britain, that extended effective government control over and the provision of services for the majority of Malaya's population.

In relation to the first two of these points, the formulation in May 1950 of the Briggs Plan, named after General Sir Harold Briggs, laid the essential basis for the politico-military strategy that ultimately defeated the MCP. The strategy was:

- to dominate the populated areas and to build up a feeling of complete security which would in time result in a steady and increasing flow of information coming from all sources;
- to break up the Communist organisations within the populated areas;
- to isolate the 'bandits' (the term was still current in May 1950) from their food and supply organisation; and
- to destroy the bandits by forcing them to attack the security forces on their own ground.⁴

An essential feature of the implementation of the Briggs Plan was the successful meshing of all departments and services into a unified plan under central control. And it is in terms of this 'all of services' approach to the insurgency that an assessment must be made of the use of air power as a contribution to the defeat of the MCP insurgents.

A MONOPOLY OF AIR POWER

As various commentators have pointed out, the government forces confronting the insurgents in Malaya had a monopoly of air power. In his excellent summary of the role of air power during the Emergency, General Richard Clutterbuck in his book *The Long, Long War: Counterinsurgency in Malaya and Vietnam*, notes:

One of its [air power's] more effective uses in Malaya was bringing government services and control to remote areas This task, though small, was significant. Other uses included the rapid movement of troops, the air supply of isolated garrisons and patrols, reconnaissance, psychological warfare, and offensive air strikes. The last, because of the terrain, was the least important of all in Malaya.⁵

To carry out these tasks, the government had access to a range of aircraft, of which troop-carrying helicopters, which were to become of the greatest importance for *transport* as opposed to *tactical* operations, were not available until 1953. Helicopters became vital for the quick insertion of patrols into isolated jungle areas. It is

⁴ H. Miller, *Menace in Malaya*, Harrap, London, 1954, p 139.

⁵ R. Clutterbuck, *The Long, Long War: Counterinsurgency in Malaya and Vietnam*, F.A. Praeger, New York, 1966, p 156. (Editor's Note: Apparently, Clutterbuck's book also was published by Cassell, London with a slightly different title, *The Long, Long War: The Emergency in Malaya 1948-1960*.)

Clutterbuck's conclusion that government forces would never have cleared remote areas of insurgents without the capability they provided to ferry patrols into action rapidly.

Much use was made of STOL fixed-wing Scottish Aviation Pioneer aircraft, and where longer landing strips were available of De Havilland Beavers. Both the Pioneers and the Beavers were used to supply remote posts, for communications and to transport Surrendered Enemy Personnel (SEPs) from jungle redoubts to administrative centres. In terms of numbers of sorties, the next most frequently deployed aircraft were RAF Valetta transport aircraft. These were used for transport and psychological warfare, mostly the dropping of propaganda leaflets.

Auster artillery observation aircraft were used both for visual reconnaissance and to help patrols fix their positions.

There were limited efforts made through the use of helicopters, Pioneers and Beavers to destroy enemy food gardens by spraying weed killers. No attempt was made to carry out defoliation of forest cover along the lines later used in Vietnam.

It is no denigration of the importance of any of these tasks to accept Richard Clutterbuck's conclusion that the use of air power in Malaya was not an end in itself. Its contribution lay in the support it provided to 'other agencies—police, army and civil government services'.⁶

HEARTS AND MINDS, THE MCP AND THE SQUATTERS

It is only possible to discuss the impact of air power on the course of the Malayan Emergency if it is considered as part of the government's integrated operational strategy. Clutterbuck provides a detailed example in relation to the village of Batu Bintang (Eastern Stone village).⁷ This isolated village was providing assistance to a fourteen-strong MCP unit led by Kwok Lung, a guerrilla leader who ruthlessly killed the newly born child of one of his group's female associates in case the baby's cries revealed their position to the security forces.

The village had been under surveillance of the extremely efficient Malayan Special Branch for a considerable time. When one of the Branch's officers sensed that the villagers of Batu Bintang were ready to cooperate with the government—or at least inclined to stop cooperating with the MCP—police forces took up positions within the village while troops established a cordon around it. Under the provisions of the Emergency Regulations, which permitted measures of collective punishment, a strict curfew was imposed and access in and out of the village controlled in such a fashion that it became extremely difficult for villagers to work their paddy fields.

These measures both prevented Kwok Lung's guerrillas from being able to receive food supplies from Batu Bintang and led to villagers denouncing those who had previously given assistance to the MCP band. With this breakthrough achieved, 60 parachutists were dropped into the surrounding jungle from aircraft that followed

⁶ *ibid*, p 157.

⁷ *ibid*, pp 128-29.

flight patterns already established by other aircraft. Broken into small patrols, the parachute troops tracked Kwok Lung and his associates, destroying any food dumps that they found. The first guerrillas surrendered ten days after this operation began, followed by another three, while the patrols killed two other guerrillas shortly after. Before a month had elapsed Kwok Lung and his remaining associates had also surrendered.

What can be seen in the case of Batu Bintang is an example of the way in which, through a variety of means, squatter villagers were brought to the point where they were ready to reveal who had been helping the insurgents. This, on a wider basis, was indeed an example of how the government forces were able to influence 'hearts and minds'. It was certainly not the case that the often harsh measures of collective punishment that were instituted during the Emergency, particularly under the leadership of General Sir Gerald Templer, turned all members of squatter communities into enthusiastic supporters of the government. Bringing the squatters to the point where they were no longer intimidated into helping the insurgents was what mattered, and this indeed, involved a change of both heart and mind. Moreover, it is important to remember that the hearts and minds of the majority of the population were already linked to the government and opposed to the MCP insurgents.

There was another lesson to be gained from the successful defeat of the MCP insurgency; this was the fact that hard decisions and their implementation by regular military forces were the responsibility of foreigners. This was only one of many differences between the Emergency in Malaya and the later Second Indochinese War. Among other major differences that deserve mention is the fact that throughout the Emergency the government authorities from the very beginning were equipped with good intelligence on who the leading MCP insurgents were. And there was the distinct ethnic advantage that resulted from the MCP's ethnic Chinese character. Although key members of the police Special Branch were ethnic Chinese, the police who were deployed to provide security and control of resettled squatters were overwhelmingly ethnic Malays already suspicious of the ethnic Chinese.

The defeat of the MCP insurgency was the result of a notably successful integration of all arms of government, with air power playing an important part, most particularly in relation to the transport of men and supplies into remote jungle areas. These were the areas to which the MCP retreated and from which they could not have been readily attacked if it had not been for air power.

A BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHIC SURVEY

The fullest account of the Malaya Emergency is Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948–1960*, but Richard Clutterbuck, *The Long, Long War: Counterinsurgency in Malaya and Vietnam* is a more accessible summary account. Gene Z. Hanrahan, *The Communist Struggle in Malaya* remains useful, as does Harry Miller, *Menace in Malaya*. There are some useful points to be gained from Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*, though it is not always clear whether Thompson fully appreciated the fundamental differences between the insurgencies in the two countries. Han Suyin's novel, *...And the rain my drink* is written from a 'progressive' point of view, but nevertheless provides an insight into squatter attitudes. A scholarly examination of the same aspect

is provided by Lucian Pye, *Guerrilla Communism in Malaya*. My own monograph, *Strategic Hamlets in South Viet-Nam: A Survey and a Comparison*, examines the collapse of the Strategic Hamlet Program in South Vietnam and compares it with the resettlement policies followed during the Emergency.

A PERSONAL NOTE

My own understanding of the Emergency in Malaya owes a great deal to the information and insights provided by a remarkable scholar-official, the late Professor O.W. Wolters, OBE. Oliver Wolters was my Cornell PhD supervisor and the author of a series of outstanding studies of early South-East Asian History. This scholarship followed upon a career in the Malayan Civil Service in which, after internment in Changi during World War II, Wolters, as a Chinese affairs specialist, was closely associated with the early resettlement schemes for the squatter communities. Escaping from ambushes twice in the early phases of the Emergency, Wolters went on to appointments as District Officer Tapah, in southern Perak, and later to the more senior posting as District Officer Larut and Matang in the north of the same state. It was while he was in Tapah that he first met General Templer, a man whom he greatly admired. He became, as he put it, 'quite simply a Templer Man'. At the time of his retirement from Malaya in 1957 he was Director of Psychological Warfare. A member of the Cornell University Faculty from 1964, Wolters, the Goldwin Smith Professor of Southeast Asian History Emeritus, died in December 2000.

PANEL DISCUSSION: THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH AND MALAYA

Professor Peter Dennis: I refer to Ian MacFarling's presentation earlier when he quoted the Dutch Prime Minister as saying that 'if we lose the East Indies, the Netherlands will be bankrupt'. Now, the British basically were sick to death of the Dutch by about October 1945 and really wanted to be rid of them. But they understood what the Dutch were on about. Peter Rixon referred to the deficit in the British economy. Britain was technically bankrupt by March 1941. It was kept alive during World War II by Lend-Lease. Lend-Lease was cancelled in May 1945 and Britain was faced with the appalling problem of how to pay back huge dollar loans. Its biggest dollar earner was Malaya, particularly rubber and tin, which were essential to the American post-war boom. Therefore, the reason why the accidental bombing of rubber plantations was a court-martial offence was that they were absolutely essential to Britain's post-war recovery. The use of words is interesting. Richard Clutterbuck talks about the 'long, long war', but that was never a term used by the British. The reason they used the term 'emergency' was that, apart from the political implications, there was a commercial one. Business insurance policies are null and void in a situation of war, and that's why they did not call it a war. They called it an emergency, so that their commercial activities being used to pay off these massive war debts—which I might say were not paid off until the early 1980s—could continue.

I will just say one other thing. I think it's very noble of Peter Rixon to make a nod in direction of the Navy but I've really got to take issue with this. There was never any suggestion at the time that the Malayan Emergency was ever supplied either from outside Malaya or that it used sea routes within the Malayan Peninsula to resupply itself, and there has never been a skerrick of evidence since to suggest that it was otherwise. When I wrote my volume in the Australian official history on the Emergency I really had to struggle to say something about the Navy because, you know, everyone expects a 'guernsey'. I simply made this point; that the Navy played no part in the Emergency and yet they persist to this day to claim that they were there in battle situations. This is not so. I said so in the official history and I got a barrage of abusive letters, which have continued to this day. So with all respect to Peter Rixon, a former student of mine, on this one he's wrong.

Mr Peter Rixon: I think the comment 'the dog that didn't bark' has a little bit of applicability as regards the Navy in this particular situation. I mean, Professor Dennis is quite right about the fact that it's senseless to suggest any seaward supply but it's a little bit like trying to assess the efficiency of offensive air operations. There were naval patrols, and there was quite a bit of naval activity, and there was naval support for riverine and coastal operations. So, at the risk of being at loggerheads with my professor, I don't know if we can completely dismiss their contribution. It's part of a joint force approach to this particular problem space.

Air Marshal Ray Funnell (RAAF Ret'd): This is something that really comes out of the last presentation. This is on the insurgents and the Emergency in Malaya. We saw, for example, that in the period of about 15 days from the Japanese surrender until the

British forces returned to Malaya, the insurgents slaughtered thousands of people (mainly ethnic Malays) whom they believed had collaborated with the Japanese. During the war, the insurgents didn't seem to be very active. It seemed that their main aim in life was just to maintain themselves, just to keep going. I wonder if you could you give us some sense of the operations of the insurgents that caused this massive reaction, give us some sense of what it was that they were reacting to.

Mr Peter Rixon: One of the things that I discovered with the archives was that—and a lot of this material, gentlemen, is put into both the National Archives and the War Memorial—there was what I'll call an affinity with Chin Peng and the MCP. They were conscious of the effect of their actions on the Chinese community. There are some extraordinary decisions taken by the MRLA in the campaign. For example, they deliberately chose to go into the jungle. One almost gets the impression partly because of this desire to remove security force action against the Chinese community and perhaps undermine their own basis of support. At least that's partly the impression I have formed. There is a degree of affinity between MRLA actions, they are conscious of the impact on the Chinese community of anything they might do, which is why you don't see a big urban assassination campaign like you do in Vietnam. You know, there's the occasional bus burnt and blown up but there's not the urban operations you would've expected to see, particularly 1948–50.

Professor Peter Dennis: Can I add something to that? That's true, but in the rural areas the CTs regularly raided rubber plantations. They put the hard word on people to provide food. If they didn't comply they were murdered and usually in quite appalling situations of torture. The result was that many hundreds—in fact, well over a thousand—Chinese people were killed by the CTs. If I can just say, several years ago I had lunch with Chin Peng in the Officers Mess at ADFA—I wanted to get him on my ground. He was an extraordinary character. He's like a quietly spoken grandfather and I had to keep reminding myself that this man, who was utterly reasonable when we talked, except every time I mentioned something out of my book he said, 'Well, that really wasn't right'. I had to keep reminding myself that this man was directly responsible for the killing, and I would say murder, of several thousand people in Malaya. It was a very uncomfortable experience for me.

I'll just say one thing. I did ask him about air power, and I said, 'Really, did it have any effect at all? Surely it disturbed the CTs and contributed towards the surrender process.' He completely denied it. He said, 'No, no, we knew when they were coming. We had good procedures in place to avoid the bombs.' My only response to that is that given that he thinks that the Emergency on his side succeeded, my response was, 'Well, he would say that, wouldn't he?'

Dr Milton Osborne: May I add a comment too? With the emphasis that's been placed on Malaya as an export earner—as a credit country—if you could tie up the plantations, as they thought they could, that was a major strike against the government. I think one just has to look at the numbers who were involved to break the Emergency in the first seven years. After that it's pretty well over; they're mopping up, although they've got the problem of the insurgents still finding opportunities to base themselves with the aboriginal people in the hills. But it was a situation not all that dissimilar to Kenya, where the closing down of plantations by terrorising the plantation management and the plantation workers, many of whom, as

Peter Rixon just said, were killed in the most appalling manner, was something that struck right at the heart of the government. Your life was very much at risk if you were a government officer and particularly if you were working in areas away from the cities. I've spoken already and warmly of Oliver Wolters, who as a district officer was ambushed twice and luckily managed to escape on both occasions. But that was a standard sort of life for people in the early stages of the Emergency.

Group Captain Doug Hurst (RAAF Ret'd): I'm Group Captain Doug Hurst, the elder and not the book writer. This is not really a question, I suppose, just an expansion of what Peter Rixon said when he referred to jungle forts. I spent two years in the JOC in Kuala Lumpur in 224 Group and the main effort of air support was resupplying the jungle forts by single Pioneer aircraft, on very short strips at high altitudes quite often, by replacing units in the forts by the use of Whirlwind helicopters mainly. They would bring them in, take ten or a dozen people out to an area where they could be taken away by vehicle. That went all the way north from Kuala Lumpur up to the Thai border. In fact, I went on one exercise with them when we went to Betong, which is just north of the border. Sycamore helicopters were used for medical evacuations, casualty evacuations and other small units, where they descended 50 or 60 feet through the canopy into areas very little larger than the area of their rotors.

The other one that was quite important was the use of Vickers Valetta twin-engine aeroplanes for resupply of small units in very isolated areas in jungle. I went on a couple of those sorties as well. It was great to see the expertise of the aircrew to find the place and then the efforts by the three or four or more crew in the back throwing out supplies into a very small area. Now and again they threw 44 gallon drums of fuel out into a nearby creek, so that they could float and be rescued by the people on the ground. That was quite a big effort. It had its ups and downs but it went on consistently, mainly from Kuala Lumpur.

Squadron Leader Dick Wilson (RAAF – ACSC): A question for Peter Rixon. Just further to the court-martials and the rubber plantations, given that the UK was suffering financially after the war, were any aircrew court-martialled? And, given that they were probably putting their lives on the line, an operational necessity, surely they would have got out of it if they were.

Mr Peter Rixon: Dick, I must confess that searching the archives I could not find any instances of court-martial but I don't have access to the Defence Legal Service records in the UK. That's the only way, I would be able then to give you the statistics. I can only inform you of the fact that there was a standing order in Far East Air Force about bombing the rubber plantations, but I can't tell you the exact number of personnel who may have been prosecuted for such an offence. But I'm sure that the accuracy of the bomber crews was such that they probably never struck a plantation in their Service careers.

Professor Peter Dennis: Could I just add something to that? This sort of policy has an interesting antecedent. You may or may not be aware, in the opening stages of World War II, RAF crews in Britain were technically forbidden to bomb private property in Germany, on the grounds that Britain was at war with the German Government and not with German industry. Now, this didn't survive very long. I mean, it was clearly a crackpot idea. But it's illustrative of how long it took, really

from World War I, to harmonise the use of air power with your concept of total war. So the possible court-martialling of people destroying rubber plantations is actually quite traditional in British circles.

Dr Alan Stephens: I think it can be said also that bombing in Malaya, which primarily was done by the RAAF's No 1 Squadron flying Lincolns, was extremely accurate. There was no air opposition, no ground opposition. Raids were planned extremely carefully and rigorously controlled. So that compared to, say, the experience of World War II, certainly, raids were very, very accurate.

Mr Colin Norris: I was a resident in Malaya for many years. One thing that's never been mentioned but which was important was what was the action on Cominform, which came out in 1948 just before the three planters were murdered and led in other countries to other things happening? You know, Cominform replaced Comintern which was buried in 1943 or so, when Russia needed our aid during the war. The other thing is you say 'not much was received' but the Chinese Government in 1989 discontinued money supply to the MCP. Up to 1989 the Emergency, in a way, was still on.

Dr Alan Stephens: Yes, thanks. My recollection is that Comintern pretty well ran out of steam in the mid-1930s when Stalin lost interest in it and was more concerned with building a few bridges with the West. Cominform is a little bit outside my area. Milton Osborne, can I flick pass that to you?

Dr Milton Osborne: Well, no, I think I'm going to 'flick pass' that also. At the 1948 Calcutta Conference, which assembled various representatives of student bodies linked to the Communist Party, including some from Australia and which Chin Peng attended, is thought to have had a significant part in the final decision of the insurgency.

Professor Peter Dennis: Could I just say something on Chin Peng? I always find it interesting that he was awarded the OBE in 1945, and actually marched with Mountbatten in the Victory Parade in London in May 1946, and then several years later disappears as this process starts. On the Calcutta Conference, there have long been suggestions that the Malayan Emergency grew out of this international conspiracy to promote worldwide Communism. Again, for what it's worth—and you might say, 'He would say that'—I asked Chin Peng this and he said it was absolutely nothing to do with the Calcutta Conference. He was perfectly able to make up his mind without being told by a group of activists, including some Australians, in Calcutta as to what to do. But it certainly fuelled some British suspicions that they were dealing with a much wider campaign than this Chinese campaign in Malaya. There was suspicion that it was being orchestrated from outside, but I still reiterate there was absolutely no evidence of material support. The support for the MCP from the Chinese Government was actually to pay for Chin Peng's hotel bills in Beijing for most of the time he lived there and for his supporters, who in the 1960s moved across the Thai border into camps which were left untouched for 25–30 years.

Mr Peter Rixon: I think an important feature of all three conflicts, is that quite often from the West we looked for that Communist influence, that broader international conspiracy. The lesson I hope that came home from the three presentations today was

that frequently we missed the fundamental point. It was about domestic issues, about nationalism or about personal agendas within specific geographical entities. Military authorities in the Commonwealth, for example, or in other countries misinterpreted that agenda and looked for a broader series of explanations which perhaps weren't there.

CLOSURE

AIR MARSHAL ANGUS HOUSTON, AM, AFC

Ladies and gentlemen, I know it's getting reasonably late and I know a lot of you have got places to go and I think it's time to wrap up what has been an absolutely outstanding day. I don't intend to summarise what we've covered in any great detail because I think that's been done very well by Dr Alan Stephens through the day, but I would say that I think we have broken new ground on an important part of regional history. I think the excellent presentations that we've received have given us a new perspective on the wars of liberation in our region and, indeed, they've improved our understanding of not only those conflicts but also our neighbours in the region now. So I think it was a very worthwhile activity today and I hope you all enjoyed it as much as I did.

A conference like this takes a lot of planning and organisation, and I would like to extend my thanks to the Director of the Aerospace Centre, Group Captain Ian MacFarling, not only for leading the team but also for being a very active participant in today's proceedings. I think Ian's done a great job as the leader of the Aerospace Centre and every event that's been put on in his time has been first class. I'd also like to thank Dr John Mordike, Mrs Sandra Di Guglielmo, Ms Roz Bourke and Mr Jason Lyons for making sure that the conference was a pleasant experience for both speakers and participants. I'd also like to thank on your behalf Dr Alan Stephens for the excellent job of chairing today's proceedings.

Once again, the speakers make these sorts of conferences and they deserve special mention. It takes a considerable effort to research and write these papers, and I'm sure that there are many here today who have learnt from what they have heard. My thanks to each and every one of you for the effort that you have made and for sharing your knowledge with us. Let me wish those of you who have travelled so far to be here today a safe return to your families and homes. Finally, I would like to thank all of you for attending and participating. I trust that you have benefited from the experience. As was the case in previous years, you will each receive a copy of the papers and the proceedings. Next year's conference will take place again in August and next year also will mark the centenary of powered flight. So the conference will be titled *100 Years from Kittyhawk*. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your participation.

I'd now like to move on to launching the fourth edition of the Royal Australian Air Force aerospace doctrine: *The Fundamentals of Australian Aerospace Power*. It's a great piece of work and I think you, like I, will be very impressed with it. It is the product of the evolutionary process that characterises the development of all doctrine. In it we set out what makes us the Royal Australian Air Force at the start of the 21st century. It defines what we believe and how we have developed these beliefs. It tells people how we see ourselves fitting into the demanding task of defending Australia and its interests, and gives a clear picture of what Australians should expect from us as we go about our duties. Our doctrine is based on well-established principles developed and passed on by our predecessors and also on what we do now. By

examining the transitions that have been made over long periods we can get a glimpse of what the future may hold for us as a Service and how we might work in that environment. This is important. Our doctrine must be valid for both the present and the immediate future. Many people at all levels of the Service have made valuable contributions. This means we all own it. We must now do it justice by using it as the guide for our activities across the Royal Australian Air Force.

While some of the content clearly reflects what was written in the earlier *Air Power Manual* series, there are a number of significant changes. The first is the layout of the new edition. It has been designed for use by every member of the Air Force, from the newest recruit to members of the senior leadership team. A brief scan of the outer columns of the book will tell you the essence of our doctrine. A deeper read will take you through historical examples, useful quotes and thoughts for the future, while all the sources of the material are set out to guide you to further reading that will enhance your professional mastery. The first four chapters set the context. They describe the environment in which we operate. The next five are an explanation of what we do and why we do it. Note that our doctrine does not dictate how things should be done. If we allowed it to do so we would remove any opportunity for initiative or creativity that is the hallmark of Australian military professionalism, particularly the professionalism of the Air Force. Thus, doctrine at this level is a guide, not an order or an instruction. The final chapter sets out some thoughts on how the future might evolve and what issues could influence our doctrine in the next decade or so.

The aim is to provide ideas that generate discussion about the Royal Australian Air Force's place in any future Australian Defence Force. This book will be your guide. Use it to understand your profession more fully. Discuss the contents with your colleagues. If you disagree with some elements then direct your comments to the Aerospace Centre, which is the organisation that is responsible for the development of aerospace doctrine. In that way we will all benefit by the debate that is generated, and our capability to meet the demands of the Australian Government will be significantly enhanced. Well done to the authors and thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, I am now very pleased to launch the fourth edition of our aerospace doctrine – *The Fundamentals of Australian Aerospace Power*. Thank you.