

Mismanaging expectations

Dutch plans for re-establishment of the KNIL, 1942-1946

Maaïke van der Kloet

maaikevanderkloet@gmail.com

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Supervisor: E.P.M. Zwinkels M.A.

M.A. programme Colonial and Global History

Institute for History, Leiden University

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Introduction

The Netherlands East Indies were occupied by the Japanese army between 1942 and 1945. Many soldiers of the *Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger* (KNIL, Royal Netherlands Indies Army) were captured as prisoners of war (POW). These people were used as forced labourers, like the Japanese did with Indonesian workers (*romusha*) later during the war. Shortly after the start of the occupation, the Dutch colonial government and army command went into exile. The former established a Dutch camp in Brisbane, Australia as a government-in-exile, while the latter settled in Colombo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka). These colonial leaders were preparing for the post-war situation. They mainly focused on how to restore colonial rule in the Netherlands East Indies. This included re-establishment of the colonial army. The KNIL was established in 1830 and consisted of Dutch, other European and locally recruited Indonesian soldiers. A little over 90,000 soldiers served in the KNIL in 1942. The KNIL failed to defend the Netherlands East Indies during the Japanese attack in 1941 and 1942 and surrendered on 8 March 1942. The subsequent Japanese occupation lasted until 15 August 1945. What the Dutch did not expect, and did not prepare for, was a complete change of the political situation in the Netherlands East Indies during the Second World War: independence was declared after the Japanese surrender and a violent revolution broke out. British forces, who were responsible for taking over the power from the Japanese army decided in October 1945 that no more Dutch armed forces were allowed to re-enter the Netherlands East Indies. Dutch former POWs were thus forced to stay in camps elsewhere in Southeast Asia, in Siam (Thailand), Burma, Singapore and the Philippines.¹ The nationalist proclamation of 17 August 1945 was followed by the Indonesian Independence War, that lasted from 1945 until 1949. On 27 December 1949, the Netherlands recognised Indonesian independence and the Dutch withdrew their troops in 1950. Since Indonesia became an independent country, the colonial army was not needed anymore. The KNIL was liquidated on 26 July 1950.

During and after the Second World War, the Dutch made many plans for re-establishment of Dutch colonial rule as soon as the Japanese would have been defeated. The plans that were made during the war had to be adjusted to the post-war situation. The Dutch had to negotiate with different Allied governments and the newly established

¹ E. Touwen-Bouwsma and P. Groen, *Tussen Banzai en Bersiap. De afwikkeling van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Nederlands-Indië* (Den Haag 1996) 14; 22-23.

Indonesian Republic. The question in this thesis is what actions the Dutch took for re-establishment of the KNIL during and after the Second World War. This re-establishment was needed to restore Dutch colonial rule in the Netherlands East Indies. The analysis of how these plans were made and how they were adjusted is divided into two time periods: during the Second World War and during the seven months that followed the Japanese surrender.

The Dutch government's expectations about the return to the Netherlands East Indies differed very much from reality. To what extent the Dutch were able to carry out their plans is handled, as well as what the KNIL soldiers themselves thought of the governmental plans. This thesis research focuses on the re-establishment of the KNIL, which was much-needed hence the political and military situation on Java and Sumatra in the second half of 1945. Communication between different colonial and military leaders is researched and how these leaders have different opinions about military and political actions that should be taken. Sources that are used focus on communication between, and decision-making of, different officials of the colonial administration and the colonial army, who were situated at different places in Asia and Australia, and with foreign actors as well: the British, Australians and Americans that were present in the Asia-Pacific war theatre.

The Dutch colonial government's choice to settle in British territories after the defeat of the Netherlands East Indies and the KNIL was not accidental. Great Britain had the largest fleet in South and Southeast Asia, and they were responsible for the South East Asia Command (SEAC). Within this command, the British were responsible for Sumatra only. When the war was almost over, the British were made responsible for the entire Netherlands East Indies territories.² The Dutch leaders wanted to be close to where the decisions about the archipelago were made. Members of the Dutch colonial administration and the colonial army commanders continued, however in different places in Asia, to communicate with each other and with representatives of foreign governments. A lot of this communication survived and is nowadays studied, because of its importance for the course of the wars in the Netherlands East Indies. The colonial government also resumed communication with KNIL soldiers after the Japanese surrender.

The period that is discussed here is limited to 1942 until March 1946, with a focus on 1944 and 1945. These last two years did not yet receive the scholarly attention they deserve. Especially the time between 17 August 1945 and March 1946 is rarely discussed on its own, as can be determined from the existing historiography. In most literature on the

2 J.A. de Moor, *Generaal Spoor. Triomf en tragiek van een legercommandant* (Amsterdam 2011) 106.

Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia in the 1940s, a division is made between the Second World War and the Indonesian Independence War. The start of the Independence War can be set at 17 August 1945, when nationalist leaders Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed independence of the *Republik Indonesia*. It ended at 27 December 1949, when the Netherlands recognised the independence and withdrew from Indonesia. The Second World War lasted worldwide from 1939 until 1945, and in the Netherlands East Indies from 8 December 1941 until 15 August 1945. In historiography, these two wars are usually researched separately.³

There are not many books on the transitional period between the two wars. Some titles are *Tussen Banzai en Bersiap* about the outcomes of the war for various groups in the Netherlands East Indies, such as POWs, *romusha*, and civilian internees,⁴ and Dennis's *Troubled days of peace* on British SEAC commander Lord Mountbatten.⁵ The adaptation of war diaries written by POWs working on the Birma-Siam railway is an example of scholarly research that stops at 17 August, when the POWs noted down in their diaries that they had heard the war was over.⁶

This shortcoming in current historiography, which is also discussed in this introduction, needs correction. The time period between the Japanese surrender and the arrival of newly recruited Dutch troops from the Netherlands in March 1946 was important for the course of the Independence War. This is not only because of the Bersiap, but also influenced the course of the Independence War, with all its different kinds of soldiers fighting in it. *Indische* people were influenced in their thinking about decolonisation by the liquidation of the KNIL after the Dutch recognition of Indonesia's independence and the subsequent migration of *Indische* people and Moluccans to the Netherlands.⁷ This thesis

3 Some publications on the Second World War: L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* volumes 11a, 11b and 11c ('s Gravenhage 1984-1986); on the Independence War: W.H. Frederick, S. Soeroto and A.W. Adam, *Pemahaman sejarah Indonesia. Sebelum dan sesudah revolusi* (Jakarta 1982), P.M.H. Groen, *Marsroutes en dwaalsporen. Het Nederlands militair-strategisch beleid in Indonesië 1945-1950* (Leiden 1991); Ide Anak Agung Gde Agung, *From the Formation of the State of East Indonesia Towards the Establishment of the United States of Indonesia* (Yogyakarta 1985); J.J.P. de Jong, *Diplomatie of strijd. Het Nederlandse beleid tegenover de Indonesische revolutie 1945-1947* (Amsterdam 1988); and the series about the governmental communication between the Netherlands and Indonesia, S.L. van der Wal (ed.), *Officiële bescheiden betreffende de Nederlands-Indonesische betrekkingen 1945-1950* (in 20 volumes, 1971-1996) (hereinafter referred to as NIB I, II etc.).

4 Touwen-Bouwsma and Groen, *Tussen Banzai en Bersiap*.

5 P. Dennis, *Troubled days of peace. Mountbatten and South East Asia Command, 1945-1946* (Manchester 1987).

6 M. Heijmans-van Bruggen (ed.), *De Japanse bezetting in dagboeken. De Birma-Siam spoorlijn* (Amsterdam 2001) 427.

7 There were several types of *Indische* people: Indo-Dutch people, descendants from a Dutch and an Indonesian ancestor, and *totoks*, Dutch people born in either the Netherlands or in the Netherlands East Indies. Both groups migrated en masse to the Netherlands during and after the Indonesian Independence War. The expression *Indisch(e)* will be left untranslated, since it does not have a proper translation in

fills the gap in current historiography by focusing on the events and changes that happened during this time.

This research uses the communication between the aforementioned colonial offices in Ceylon and Australia and its most important actors. Also, communication with the Supreme Allied Commander of SEAC (SACSEA), Lord Mountbatten, was important for the Dutch plans for after the Second World War. SEAC was assigned the entire area of the Netherlands East Indies after 15 August 1945, and therefore Lord Mountbatten was the single most important person to convince of the Dutch plans. The KNIL soldiers themselves, who were POWs during the war, and were stuck in Southeast Asia afterwards, sent letters to the Dutch representatives in their area or the Queen. In this way, they expressed their dissatisfaction with their situation, and made clear that they had expected another treatment from the Dutch and colonial government. These letters, found among governmental documentation, are stored in the National Archive.⁸ Organisations like RAPWI (*Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees*, which was part of SEAC), NICA (*Netherlands Indies Civil Administration*) and KDP (*Kantoor Displaced Persons*) were all established during this time. They also communicated with officials of the colonial government and army. Personal archives of politicians and military leaders like Lieutenant-Governor-General H.J. van Mook, KNIL Colonel D.C. Buurman van Vreeden and army commander Lieutenant-Admiral C.E.L. Helfrich are used as well.

Historiography

Numerous books and articles have been written about the Second World War and the Indonesian Independence War. The latter was until recently known as 'police actions' (*politioele acties*) in the Netherlands. Careful thoughts have been put in why I choose the expression 'Indonesian Independence War'. I consider a euphemistically given name like 'police actions', 'emergency' or 'rebellion' as old-fashioned and ignorant to the historical situation. The word 'revolution' would not cover the entire conflict, since actually multiple revolutions took place at the same time. Furthermore, with 'Indonesian Independence War', I intend to view this war above all as something that started as an Indonesian matter of becoming an independent country. The two Dutch 'police actions', among more military actions, took place in response to the Indonesian independence claim.⁹ I will however use

English. The word Moluccans is nowadays used for the old word Ambonese.

8 These letters can be found the archives of the Dutch Liaison Officier at the General Headquarters in New Delhi and the Netherlands East Indies Liaison Mission at the General Headquarters of the Allied Land Forces South East Asia and the Ministry of Defence, National Archive in The Hague.

9 In recent publications, scholars also used the expression 'Indonesian Independence War'. See for

the expression 'Netherlands East Indies' instead of Indonesia, since the main part of my thesis research handles the time when the archipelago was still occupied by the Japanese, and the *Republik Indonesia* had not yet been established.

Literature on the Netherlands East Indies between 1941 and 1945 is mostly focused on military history, on the Japanese attack and the general course of the Second World War. Also, a lot of attention goes to people's lives during the war, like people who experienced prisoner camps. More attention is paid to people inside camps like POWs or civilian internees, than to *Inhabitants Friendly To Us* (IFTUs), in Dutch known as *buitenkampers*. These were mostly Indo-Dutch people, who did not spend the war in internment camps, and were especially in danger during the *Bersiap*. This was the time between September and December 1945, when (Indo-)Dutch and Chinese citizens were violently threatened by *pemuda*, Indonesian youth groups. The estimation is that between 3,500 and 20,000 civilians died.¹⁰ In 1989, Van Delden graduated on a thesis on the Bersiap in Bandung. Her work was the first in Dutch that had focused on the Bersiap only. In recent years, attention for the *Bersiap* has grown more and resulted in a monograph on the topic, written by Bussemaker, a first-hand witness, historian and activist for *Indische* affairs.¹¹ Also, in non-Dutch historiography attention is paid to the British presence in the archipelago in 1945-1946, such as books by Dennis and McMillan.¹²

Much attention is given to the course of the Indonesian Independence War between 1945 and 1950.¹³ In the Netherlands, research of war crimes committed by soldiers of the Dutch and colonial army in the Netherlands East Indies has been carried out since 1969, when Dutch veteran Joop Hueting confessed on national television that he had been part of a group of soldiers that committed war crimes (then euphemistically called 'excesses'). Military strategies and political policies from 1945 until 1950 have also been researched widely. This includes publications on the longer history of the Netherlands East Indies by

example: I.V. Lessmeister, *Between colonialism and cold war. The Indonesian war of independence in world politics 1945-1949* (Ithaca NY 2012); R. Limpach, "Business as usual. Dutch mass violence in the Indonesian war of independence 1945-49" in: B. Luttikhuis and A. Dirk Moses, *Colonial counterinsurgency and mass violence. The Dutch empire in Indonesia* (London 2014) 64-90; P. Romijn, "Learning on 'the job'. Dutch war volunteers entering the Indonesian war of independence, 1945-46", *Journal of Genocide Research* 14:3-4 (2012) 317-336.

10 H.Th. Bussemaker, *Bersiap! Opstand in het paradijs. De Bersiap-periode op Java en Sumatra 1945-1946* (Zuthpen 2013) 342.

11 Bussemaker, *Bersiap!*; M.C. van Delden, *Bersiap in Bandoeng. Een onderzoek naar geweld in de periode van 17 augustus 1945 tot 24 maart 1946* (Doctoral thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1989).

12 Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*; R. McMillan, *The British occupation of Indonesia 1945-1946. Britain, the Netherlands and the Indonesian revolution* (London 2005); P. Ziegler, *Mountbatten. The official biography* (London 1985).

13 Usually, the time period is stated as 1945-1950 because the Dutch army only left Indonesia in 1950.

Van den Doel and J.J.P. de Jong.¹⁴ As De Jong analyses correctly, the debate on this topic is variable and scholars seldom agree with each other, which also has to do with their nationality. De Jong considers himself a 'revisionist', who believes that the Dutch policy for the Netherlands East Indies was one of gradual decolonisation under Dutch influence. His main opponent in this debate is Van den Doel, whom De Jong refers to as a 'traditionalist'.¹⁵ In most Indonesian, American and Australian literature, it is also assumed that the Netherlands wanted to continue their colonial rule. These scholars consider the British 'collaborating' with the Dutch to retain colonial power.¹⁶ Until the 1980s, the focus on the war was mainly on the Indonesians – the winners. The book *Nationalism and revolution in Indonesia* was the first publication (1952) in this pattern, which is followed by many more books on the Indonesian side of the war.¹⁷ The focus on Indonesia shifted since De Jong's PhD defence in 1988: scholars started to pay attention to the Dutch side as well.¹⁸ Since then, more researchers have obtained their PhD degree for research on the Dutch side of the war, such as Groen in 1991, Scagliola in 2002, Zweers in 2013 and Limpach in 2015.¹⁹ Their research includes knowledge about the role of the Dutch government in making propaganda for the war against the Republic, Dutch warfare and strategy during the Independence War, and reception of the war in veterans' circles decades after the war. Scholarly focus also lies on the KNIL: Zwitter and Heshusius collaborated on multiple books on the colonial army, most of these contain photo material from the colonial period.²⁰ Researchers working for the Dutch army also write about the

14 H.W. van den Doel, *Het Rijk van Insulinde. Opkomst en ondergang van een Nederlandse kolonie* (Amsterdam 1996); H.W. van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië. De val van het Nederlandse imperium in Azië* (Amsterdam 2001); H.W. van den Doel, *Zo ver de wereld strekt* (Amsterdam 2011); De Jong, *Diplomatie of strijd*; J.J.P. de Jong, *Avondschot. Hoe Nederland zich terugtrok uit zijn Aziatisch imperium* (Amsterdam 2011); J.J.P. de Jong, *De terugtocht. Nederland en de dekolonisatie van Indonesië* (Amsterdam 2015).

15 P.J. Drooglever, "J.J.P. de Jong, *Diplomatie of strijd*. Een analyse van het Nederlands beleid tegenover de Indonesische revolutie 1945-1947" [book review] in: *BMGN* 105:2 (1990) 308-310; J.J.P. de Jong, "Traditionalistische visie op dekolonisatie van Indië" [review essay H.W. van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië. De val van het Nederlandse imperium in Azië* (Amsterdam 2001)] in: *Internationale Spectator* January (2001) 40-44.

16 De Jong, *Diplomatie of strijd*, 10-11.

17 G. McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca NY 1952); B. Anderson, *Java in a time of revolution. Occupation and resistance 1944-1946* (Ithaca NY 1972); F. Colombijn and J.T. Lindblad (eds.), *Roots of violence in Indonesia. Contemporary violence in historical perspective* (Leiden 2002).

18 De Jong, *Diplomatie of strijd*, 9-11.

19 Groen, *Marsroutes en dwaalsporen*; S. Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog. De Nederlandse oorlogsmisdaden in Indonesië en hun verwerking* (Amsterdam 2002); L. Zweers, *De gecensureerde oorlog. Militairen versus de media in Nederlands-Indië 1945-1949* (Zutphen 2013); Publication of R. Limpach's PhD thesis is expected in 2016, with the title *De brandende dorpen van Generaal Spoor*.

20 H.L. Zwitter and C.A. Heshusius, *Het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indische Leger 1830-1950. Een terugblik* (The Hague 1977); H.L. Zwitter, "Het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger in Australië 1942-1945", *Mededelingen van de Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis Landmachtstaf VIII* (1985) 67-90.

colonial forces, such as Elands and Teitler.²¹ They exclusively write military history, that also learns us about the friction that always occurs between politics and the army. Oostindie's book on egodocuments written by Dutch soldiers on the Independence War analyses how these soldiers changed their opinions about the war constantly, also decades after it took place.²²

During recent years (2012-now), the question for a more extensive research about the Indonesian Independence War was constantly raised. The initial call for more research was urged by several lawsuits against the Dutch state about responsibility for war crimes that took place during the Independence War.²³ Unfortunately, the focus during discussions stayed on the Independence War, and attention for the *Bersiap* period was only sidelong called for, nor was given attention to the situation of the colonial government and army directly after 15 August 1945. The entire Dutch historiography on the last decade of the Netherlands East Indies has, in my opinion, been too much focused on the 'Netherlands', and not on the 'Indies', and not at all on 'Indonesia'. This also makes veterans from both KNIL and the *Koninklijke Landmacht* (KL, Royal Army) who live in the Netherlands feel ignored. The number of people living in the Netherlands with an Indische background is estimated around 900,000. This number, which includes veterans from the KNIL and Moluccans, but also second and third generation offspring, makes *Indische* people the largest 'migrant' group in the country.²⁴

In the Netherlands, collective memory about the Second World War and Independence War in Indonesia is shaped in the same way as the historiography: the division between the two wars is visible in both memory culture (collective cultural memory) and memorial culture (culture of remembrance). Every year on 15 August, the

21 Military historical research is conducted at both the Netherlands Institute for Military History (NIMH) and the Royal Military Academy (KMA), the bachelor course for officers of the Dutch army.

M. Elands (ed.), *Van strijd tot veteranenbeleid. Het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger en zijn veteranen, 1941-2001* (Amsterdam 2001); G. Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië 1942-1945. Strategien, conflicten, frustraties* (s.l.19XX); G. Teitler, *Vlootvoogd in de knel. Vice-admiraal A.S. Pinke tussen de marinestaf, Indië en de Indonesische revolutie* (Assen 1990).

22 G. Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië 1945-1950. Getuigenissen van een oorlog aan de verkeerde kant van de geschiedenis* (Amsterdam 2015).

23 *Volkskrant*, 19 June 2012.

24 This estimation is based on two publications: M. de Vries, *'Indisch is een gevoel'. De tweede en derde generatie Indische Nederlanders* (Amsterdam 2009) 367-368; Beets, G.C.N., E. van Imhoff, and C.C. Huisman, "Demografie van de Indische Nederlanders, 1930-2001", *Bevolkingstrends eerste kwartaal 2003* (CBS) 58-66. The Central Bureau for Statistics estimated the number of first generation Indische Dutch in 2008 around 124,000 and the second generation around 263,000. With a reproduction factor of 2.1, the third generation would be around 552,000 in 2008 (my estimation). This makes a total of around 939,000 people. A part of the first generation has died since 2008, thus around 900,000 people with an Indische background live in the Netherlands in 2016. The fact that these people, which stretches three generations now, have a historical connection with the former Netherlands East Indies does not say anything about their emotional connection.

Japanese surrender and the Dutch victims of the Second World War in the Netherlands East Indies are commemorated at the *Indisch Monument* in The Hague, without any reference to the Bersiap period that immediately followed after this surrender. The subsequent Independence War is only commemorated from the point of view of the Dutch soldiers that were sent overseas to re-establish colonial rule. This takes place on the first Saturday of September in Roermond. There is no general remembrance day for the entire Dutch colonial history.

There is obviously a lack of attention in historical research for the period between 15 August 1945 and March 1946 in the Netherlands East Indies. This is remarkable because several important changes took place during this time. The Japanese army was no longer in control of the Netherlands East Indies. Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed independence of the *Republik Indonesia* on 17 August, forced by *pemuda*. After this proclamation, it was relatively quiet for almost one month. On 15 September, the British arrived on the HMS *Cumberland*, together with RAPWI teams and Dutch colonial officers from NICA. Shortly upon their arrival, some KNIL units were re-established. Their presence and actions provoked violence, particularly against (Indo-)Dutch and Chinese people.²⁵ Next to planning the re-establishment of the KNIL, the Dutch government decided in 1945 to form an army in the Netherlands to send overseas, to operate next to the recuperating soldiers of the KNIL. These were war volunteers (*oorlogsvrijwilligers*) that were sent to restore 'peace and order'. From 1946, conscripts were also sent to the Netherlands East Indies. Restoration of colonial administration is rarely a topic in historiography. Not much has been published on the NICA, nor did the re-establishment of the KNIL receive much attention in historiography.²⁶

During the second half of 1945, the Dutch could do little to nothing to protect the people from the violence they experienced. Japanese troops were, according to the agreements of surrender, required to protect civilians during the power vacuum, but failed to do so, and the Dutch did not have troops of their own. The volume *Tussen Banzai en Bersiap* pays attention to the different groups (KNIL soldiers, European civilians, *romusha*) affected by the Second World War and how the end of the war was unwinded for these groups.²⁷ Especially Groen's article on KNIL soldiers is important: this is so far one of the only studies on the situation of KNIL soldiers directly after the Japanese surrender. It

25 McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism*, 143.

26 Schoonoord, who wrote his PhD dissertation on the Marine Corps, is working on a monograph on the NICA.

27 Touwen-Bouwsma and Groen, *Tussen Banzai en Bersiap*.

analyses the problems these former POWs encountered in returning to the Netherlands East Indies, and how they ended up to be left in transit camps, some soldiers even for up to a year.²⁸ Another article that partly deals with the problem of recuperation and repatriation of KNIL soldiers is *Onmacht, ontkenning en onderschatting* by Brocades Zaalberg en Willems. They discuss the problem that Dutch civilians and soldiers still lived in camps around Asia at the end of 1945, when the war was long over, and how they returned to the Netherlands after leaving those camps. The KNIL soldiers that were rehabilitated in Southeast Asia are not included in their article, which is still useful since it discusses the problematic situation for all recuperating people in Southeast Asia.²⁹

The focus in the historiography has also not been on the continuation of the colonial government during the Second World War, which could not officially exist during Japanese the occupation. The Dutch government in exile in London did at first not allow Van Mook, who was Lieutenant Governor-General of the Netherlands East Indies at that time, to form an official Netherlands Indies government-in-exile in Australia, but he was allowed to establish a Netherlands Indies Committee for Australia and New Zealand. This committee became operative on 7 April 1942.³⁰ Next to Van Mook and the offices in Australia, the Dutch had various liaison missions at British offices and embassies in Southeast Asia: at the General Headquarters of the India Command in New Delhi, Colonel D.C. Buurman van Vreeden was the Dutch liaison officer, who reported to the *Bevelhebber der Strijdkrachten in het Oosten* (BSO, Commander in chief of armed forces in the East), Lieutenant-Admiral C.E.L. Helfrich, who held office in Colombo, Ceylon. The Southeast Asia Command (SEAC) and the South West Pacific Area command (SWPA) were the allied commands in Asia and the Pacific during the Second World War. SEAC had its headquarters in New Delhi and later moved to Kandy, Ceylon. There, the same Buurman van Vreeden worked as a liaison officer. The British Embassy and the Allied Land Forces Southeast Asia (ALFSEA, the 11th British Army) near and in Singapore also received Dutch liaison officers in the last war years.

The current historiography lacks attention to inter-organisational Dutch communication, which provides interesting information about how the Dutch prepared for

28 P.M.H. Groen, "Prisoners of war, prisoners of peace. De opvang van repatriëring van de krijgsgevangenen van het KNIL, augustus 1945-augustus 1946" in: Touwen-Bouwsma and Groen, *Tussen Banzai en Bersiap*, 43-58.

29 T. Brocades Zaalberg and W. Willems, "Onmacht, ontkenning en onderschatting. De evacuatie van Nederlanders uit Zuidoost-Azië na de Tweede Wereldoorlog", in: C. Kristel (ed.), *Binnenskamers. Terugkeer en opvang na de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Besluitvorming* (Amsterdam 2002) 63-92.

30 T. van den Berge, *H.J. van Mook 1894-1965. Een vrij en gelukkig Indonesië* (Bussum 2014) 166.

the end of the war and the re-establishment of the colonial rule in the Netherlands East Indies. It is necessary to add this knowledge to the existing historiography on the Netherlands East Indies, since it provides insight in how the Dutch regarded their post-war position and how they considered the course of the independence movement. Sources that give insight in this inter-organisational communication are the army commander's and liaison officers' paperwork and correspondence, which are stored in the National Archive.³¹

The biography on Van Mook is one of the few publications that covers the longer period of Netherlands East Indies politics. It provides insight into the different problems Van Mook encountered in his search for a balance between Dutch and Indonesian wishes. Also, De Moor's biography *Generaal Spoor* shows difficulties and disagreement between army and politics in preparation of, and during, the Independence War.³² Other books and articles only focus on a smaller time period, usually one of the two wars, and the books that cover a longer period, like the publications by Van den Doel, L. de Jong and J.J.P. de Jong, cover an area and time period too long to be specific about these couple of months in 1945. Some Dutch and British publications that are very specific on a certain topic added an interesting perspective to the historiography, such as Dennis' book on Lord Mountbatten, and Rinzema-Admiraal's book on *romusha*.³³ Unfortunately, there does not seem to be a middle way between focusing on a certain topic during a limited time period, while at the same time putting events in a bigger context.

An important book that is absent in current historiography is a monograph on the KNIL and how this colonial army changed over time during its 120 years of existence. The army's liquidation is however subject of a few publications.³⁴ A connection that is not made either is the one between Dutch politicians and colonial officers, and the plans they made for re-establishing the colonial army.

This thesis will not only research government plans for the re-establishment of the

31 Archives used for this internal communication are, among others, the archive of the Commander in chief of the armed forces in the East (BSO) and the Dutch Liaison Officier at the General Headquarters in New Delhi and the Netherlands East Indies Liaison Mission at the General Headquarters of the Allied Land Forces South East Asia.

32 De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*.

33 Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*; W. Rinzema-Admiraal, *Romusha van Java. Het laatste front 1942-1945* (Bedum 2009).

34 See for publications on the liquidation of the KNIL: A. den Hoed, *Het KNIL, een vergeten leger? Een beleids-historische analyse van de reorganisatie van het KNIL. Het militaire personeelsbeleid van het KNIL in de periode 1945-1951* (Doctoral thesis, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, 1988); Elands, *Van strijd tot veteranenbeleid*. In an article on post-war and post-colonial memory in the Netherlands, the only KNIL soldiers that are mentioned are Moluccan soldiers who were forced to move to the Netherlands after the Indonesian Independence War. See: I. van Ooijen and I. Raaijmakers, "Competitive or multidirectional memory? The interaction between postwar and postcolonial memory in the Netherlands", *Journal of Genocide Research* 14:3-4 (2012) 463-483.

KNIL and recovery of its soldiers that were POWs during the Second World War, but will also pay attention to the living conditions of the KNIL soldiers around Southeast Asia in 1945 and 1946, and their personal thoughts about the situation that dragged on. What these soldiers wrote about their personal situation is important, since it reflects how most soldiers experienced these years. Egodocuments, including letters, are a very promising source, which is unfortunately not extensively explored by historians yet. Egodocuments reflect personal thoughts and opinions about anything and everything: living conditions, social contacts, military life, communication with superiors, thought on the government. Research in this thesis is based on letters written by KNIL soldiers to the organisations that were responsible for their recovery and repatriation back to the Netherlands East Indies: NICA, RAPWI, and KDP, and on egodocuments, which soldiers later published. These letters and egodocuments reflect thus their personal opinions, which provides an interesting contrast with the government policies from that time.

This thesis will add more knowledge to what is already known about the re-establishment of the KNIL, what plans the Dutch made for this and how these plans were adjusted in the period between 15 August 1945 and March 1946. The Dutch encountered severe troubles in trying to restore colonial rule, both military and political. British, American and Australian decisions influenced the Dutch policy in this time period. Finally, the Dutch had to accept the loss of the Netherlands East Indies, and saw hundreds of thousands of citizens (re)turn to the Netherlands after 1950. It was the first European empire in Asia to finally collapse after the Second World War. The war in the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia was followed by many more independence wars in (former) colonies, the Dutch armed conflict about the Netherlands New Guinea (1960-1962) included. This thesis research adds a refreshing point of view to the scholarly field, because it combines sources from the government with the personal testimonies of the KNIL soldiers. This unique combination is not yet made for KNIL soldiers during the Independence War, who had a difficult position: most KNIL soldiers considered the Netherlands East Indies their motherland, while they were in Dutch military service.

Structure

This introduction is followed by the first chapter that explains the historical situation and the international context of Second World War and the post-war period. International relations with Great Britain, Australia and the United States are stressed out, as well as the

time period prior to the Second World War.

Ideas and plans the Dutch had about the restoration of the colonial army during the Second World War are discussed in the second chapter. This is mainly based on archival research on the liaison missions to the British offices in India, Ceylon and Singapore and the Dutch government-in-exile in Brisbane.

The third chapter focuses on the adjustments that the Dutch had to make after the Japanese surrender and the Indonesian proclamation of independence, due to the changing political situation on Java, SEAC's position, and the possibility that Dutch administrators and soldiers would arrive in the Netherlands East Indies. The question comes up whether the Dutch administrators considered how the re-established KNIL would be different, since a part of the Dutch soldiers died between 1942 and 1945, and many other Dutch soldiers would not be able to serve again in the army directly when needed due to personal circumstances and their mental and physical condition.

The fourth and final chapter is based on personal opinions of KNIL soldiers, derived from letters and egodocuments. Most former POWs gathered themselves soon after the Japanese surrender. They formed new military units, usually under command of the senior officer in command. How did the KNIL soldiers react to the fact that they were forced to stay in the recovery camps longer than other Allied POWs? Personal writings reflect their thoughts from that time and also show how this period influenced the later thoughts about decolonisation of the Netherlands East Indies.

Chapter 1: International relations in a time of war

Introduction

This chapter looks into the historical and international context of the Netherlands East Indies and its government and army in 1945. The historical background up to 1945, including the Second World War, is handled first. The international context is analysed after that. This includes the Allied co-operation in SEAC and disagreements the Dutch and British had about which strategy to use in the Netherlands East Indies. The Dutch were heavily influenced by the international situation of the time, and were unable to decide about their own colonies. The British involvement in 1945 was very influential for how the Independence War developed. The last point of discussion in this chapter is the situation of the POWs around Asia after the Japanese surrender.

History of the Netherlands East Indies

The Netherlands East Indies were a Dutch colony since 1816. Before that time, the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC, Dutch East India Company) possessed parts of the Indonesian archipelago and used it for trading purposes. After the bankruptcy of the VOC in 1799 and the Napoleonic Wars, the Dutch government took over the colony and started expanding it through different wars, using it as both a trading post and living colony. Every self-respecting colonial power needed an army to expand and maintain colonial rule, and hence the *Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger* was erected in 1830. This army fought colonial wars like the Aceh War (1873-1914). Unlike other countries, the Netherlands and its colonies did not actively participate in the First World War (1914-1918). The war did have influence on the Netherlands East Indies, mainly in economic and political level. It also changed the colony's mentality in relationship to the motherland into a less dependent way of thinking.³⁵

The Second World War turned out to be completely different, and more disastrous, for the Netherlands East Indies. The Japanese Empire had become impendent during the twentieth century, and the Netherlands East Indies also felt threatened. When the support of the motherland was omitted in May 1940, the colony started to organise the defence on its own: new weaponry was ordered at American companies and so-called *Stads- en Landwachten*, mainly Indonesians, were trained and deployed in Javanese cities and

35 K. van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War 1914-1918* (Leiden 2007) vii.

elsewhere in the colony.³⁶ Around 30,000 of these forces were used to support the around 90,000 KNIL soldiers in 1942.³⁷ Unfortunately, this extension and reinforcement of the colonial army did not help with the defence of the Netherlands East Indies when the Japanese Imperial Army attacked from December 1941. The KNIL was forced to surrender on 8 March 1942.

When the Japanese occupation started, (Indo-)Dutch civilians and KNIL soldiers were captured and interned in internment camps. Most Javanese soldiers were released after a couple of months. Other Indonesian soldiers were less fortunate: those who had their origins in Menado, Timor or the Moluccas (Ambon) were mostly also imprisoned, used as *romusha*, or forced to work as *heiho*, soldier in the Japanese army. Around 38,000 KNIL soldiers and 4,000 soldiers of the *Koninklijke Marine* (Royal Navy) were taken prisoner of war.³⁸ In June 1942, Japan decided to build a railway between Nong Pladuk in Siam (Thailand) and Thanbyauzayat in Burma (Myanmar), a distance of around 415 kilometres partly running through uninhabitable rain forests. This part completed the railroad between Bangkok and Rangoon and was used to support the Japanese occupation of Burma. The British and French, prior colonisers of this area, had made plans for this railway sometime but never executed them, because they had reached the conclusion that building it would be impossible. The Japanese thought differently about this. About 18,000 Dutch men, mostly KNIL soldiers, circa 43,000 other Allied POWs and around 250,000 *romusha* were transported and used as forced labourers to build the railway in Burma and Siam. It was completed in November 1943. Around 15,500 people lost their lives working on it, hence the nickname 'Death Railway'. From late 1943, part of the POWs was transported to other (work) camps, in Japan and Indo-China. Also, many POWs and *romusha* were left in Burma and Siam.³⁹

After the Second World War ended in the summer of 1945, many Dutch former POWs remained in Japanese camps. Around 8,200 KNIL soldiers died during their imprisonment and forced labour.⁴⁰ Besides the internment of soldiers, (Indo-)Dutch civilians had been interned in camps in the Netherlands East Indies, including spouses

36 Van den Berge, *H.J. van Mook*, 153; De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk, 11a Nederlands-Indië I tweede helft*, 613-615 and 629-631.

37 Zwitzer, "Het KNIL in Australië", 67; Zwitzer, "Enkele gegevens over krijgsgevangenen en gesneuvelden onder de Europese militairen van het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger gedurende de oorlog in de Pacific (1941-1945) in: *Mededelingen Sectie Krijgsgeschiedenis I* (1978) 5-23, there 13; Elands, "Strijd, opheffing en erfenis", 15-16.

38 M. Elands, "Strijd, opheffing en erfenis van het KNIL" in: M. Elands (ed.), *Van strijd tot veteranenbeleid. Het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger en zijn veteranen, 1941-2001* (Amsterdam 2001) 9-54, there 18.

39 Heijmans-Van Bruggen, *De Japanse bezetting in dagboeken*, 12-16.

40 Zwitzer and Heshusius, *Het Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger*, 158-161.

and children of soldiers. Also, lots of (Indo-)Dutch civilians had not been interned, they were able to live outside the camps or 'protected neighbourhoods', which did not mean their lives were safer. Over a year after the Japanese surrender, most people, both soldiers and civilians, had returned to the Netherlands East Indies. The Independence War was one of the reasons for the government to start evacuation to the Netherlands from 1946.⁴¹

During the Second World War, the Indonesian nationalist movement had grown, also because the Japanese encouraged this. Some months before the surrender, the nationalist Indonesians were allowed to establish the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence (Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia, PPKI).⁴² In the power vacuum that emerged after the Japanese surrender, the nationalist leaders and the *pemudas*, the young people that supported the independence movement, seized the opportunity and proclaimed an independent republic on 17 August 1945. The nationalist movement and this proclamation were ignored by the Dutch. They considered the nationalists a small and local minority, that should not be taken seriously.⁴³ The Dutch established an intelligence service, the Netherlands Forces Intelligence Services (NEFIS), which was responsible for intelligence gathering in the occupied areas, together with the *Korps Insulinde*. The deployment of 'parties' that were sent to the Netherlands East Indies failed completely, despite the fact that NEFIS was one of the largest departments within the KNIL in the last war year.⁴⁴

Allied co-operation during WWII: SEAC

Despite the measures taken by the colonial government, the Netherlands East Indies was not able to defend itself during the Japanese attack of 1941-1942. The Allied powers in Southeast Asia gathered in the ABDA command, which had the task to protect the countries from the attacking Japanese.⁴⁵ The ABDA command was, just like the KNIL, unable to carry out this task. Debates about whether the Netherlands East Indies, and in specific the KNIL, could have had a better defence have been conducted extensively.⁴⁶

41 Brocades Zaalberg and Willems, "Onmacht, ontkenning en onderschatting", 82.

42 Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*, 81.

43 De Jong, *De terugtocht*, 13-16 and 21-22.

44 Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*, 73-75; De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 149; McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and revolution*, 142.

45 The American-British-Dutch-Australian command.

46 A.J.Th. Boester, *Nederlands-Indië contra Japan* ('s Gravenhage 1949-1961, in 7 parts); H. Bussemaker, "De geloofwaardigheid van de Indische defensie 1935-1941" in: *Militaire Spectator* 154 (1985) 163-180; De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 96-100; G. Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië 1942-1945* (s.l., 19XX); H.L. Zwitzer, "De verdediging van Java bij de Japanse invasie", in: *NRC Handelsblad* 31 August 1991.

During the war, tasks like fighting the Japanese army, reconquering colonies and countries, and making plans for when Japan was defeated, were carried out by the British and the Americans. They divided the Asia-Pacific war theatre into a British part, the South East Asia Command (SEAC), and an American part, the South West Pacific Area (SWPA). The boundaries between SEAC and SWPA were changed on 15 August 1945, that coincidentally was the same day as the surrender of Japan. Lord Mountbatten, the British SEAC commander, was assigned many more areas: next to Burma, Siam, Malaya, Singapore and Sumatra, he was also assigned the command of the southern part of Indochina and Java.⁴⁷ Because of these changes, the American army could faster proceed their island-hopping to Japan instead of reconquering more islands first. Manpower nor materiel were increased in the areas that were assigned extra to Mountbatten.⁴⁸ The change of authority was earlier requested by the Dutch government, which hence did not protest against this decision.⁴⁹ The Dutch did not see the transfer to SEAC as a negative move, since the British were considered to be more positive about colonial empires.⁵⁰

Since the Netherlands East Indies did not have an existing army during the Second World War, the Dutch depended on the British and Americans for military aid. In the Netherlands East Indies, it was SEAC that had the task to take over authority from the Japanese occupiers. SEAC was primarily a military organisation. For liberation, recovery, and medical care of the 135,000 POWs in the SEAC areas, the *Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees* (RAPWI) was established. This organisation could start its activities from 28 August 1945, when it was granted that the local Japanese commanders would follow the orders to surrender.⁵¹ RAPWI's activities were the most successful of all Mountbatten's tasks, especially for the recovery of POWs. This was in stark contrast to the recovery of IFTU's in the Netherlands East Indies, when Mountbatten's forces were unable to protect (Indo-)Dutch civilians during the Bersiap.

To co-ordinate the recovery teams for both civilians and POWs, the Netherlands East Indies government in Australia established the *Kantoor Dislocated Persons* (KDP) on 12 July 1945. Also erected was the *Netherlands Indies Civil Administration* (NICA), a civilian but militarised organisation, that was responsible for all civilian tasks concerning the liberation of the Netherlands East Indies. It worked together with the American Sixth

47 NIBI, no. 21.

48 Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*, 5-6.

49 Bussemaker, *Bersiap!*, 50.

50 Teitler, *De weg terug*, 98-99.

51 Touwen-Bouwsma and Groen, "Van Banzai tot Bersiap", 22.

Army command.⁵² It was originally established to take over colonial administration directly after the Americans had liberated islands in the archipelago, but this plan could not be effectuated because of the change of SEAC/SWPA areas on 15 August.⁵³ It only consisted of no more than 500 employees mid-1945, thus making it not a very powerful organisation.⁵⁴

The colonial government-in-exile sent liaison officers to SEAC offices to make communication and co-operation easier. This Dutch liaison mission was fulfilled by KNIL Colonel D.C. Buurman van Vreeden. The SEAC headquarters were first in New Delhi, India, but were moved to Kandy, Ceylon, in July 1944. As a part of SEAC, the Allied Land Forces South East Asia (ALFSEA) were founded in 1944. Other high-ranking KNIL officers were appointed as liaison officers to these headquarters, that were in Singapore. The Dutch mission to this office was located in Changi, near Singapore.⁵⁵ Buurman van Vreeden had to report to Lieutenant-Admiral Helfrich in Colombo. They maintained regular contact, also with other KNIL staff members and colonial administrators in Australia. From 1944, Buurman van Vreeden regularly wrote memoranda about the Netherlands East Indies, such as one to inform the British about the Netherlands East Indies and its military strategic important places, and various other ones with his visions for the future colonial armed forces. He sent these memoranda to Helfrich for discussion.⁵⁶

Helfrich's function as commander-in-chief of the Netherlands Eastern forces was only an administrative one. In practice, the few Dutch forces that survived the Japanese attack fell under the command of SEAC or SWPA. The political-diplomatic side of the Dutch government-in-exile was assigned to the Lieutenant Governor-General. Between 1942 and 1945, Van Mook was occupied with maintaining diplomatic relationships with Great Britain and the United States. The latter would, until 15 August 1945, play the most important role for the Netherlands East Indies. Van Mook had thus focused on gaining American political and military support during his diplomatic visits. He was successful in this, particularly because of his closeness with American General MacArthur, who was a supporter of Van Mook's ideas for the Netherlands East Indies.⁵⁷ They shared the same

52 Van den Berge, *H.J. van Mook*, 186-187.

53 Bussemaker, *Bersiap!*, 48-52.

54 Brocades Zaalberg and Willems, "Onmacht, ontkenning en onderschatting", 65.

55 National Archive, The Hague, Nederlands Liaison Officier at the General Headquarters in New Delhi and the Netherlands East Indies Mission at the Headquarters Allied Land Forces South East Asia, 1942-1946, entry number 2.13.130, inventory introduction.

56 National Archive, The Hague, Collection 177 D.C. Buurman van Vreeden, entry number 2.21.036.02, inventory numbers 8 and 9 contain various memoranda about the Buurman van Vreeden's visions on the future of the colonial army and the strategy for rebuilding the army [May-October 1945].

57 Van den Berge, *H.J. van Mook*, 192-195.

views on how the Allies should fight the Pacific War, and what role the Netherlands East Indies played in this. Van Mook on the one hand preferred to leave the fighting to the Americans, and to let the Netherlands East Indies focus on restoration of the colonial rule using civil forces, not military.⁵⁸ Helfrich on the other hand wanted the Dutch to participate in defeating Japan, and preferred the KNIL and Navy to play a role in the fighting, instead of leaving the colonial restoration to NICA. This will be further discussed in chapter 2.⁵⁹ After the transfer of the command over the Netherlands East Indies from SWPA to SEAC, Van Mook had to collaborate with Lord Mountbatten, with whom he did not have the friendly relationship as he had shared with MacArthur.

Dutch-British disagreements

Before Van Mook and other colonial officials, like Ch.O. van der Plas, head of the colonial internal administration (BB, *Binnenlands Bestuur*) arrived in the Netherlands East Indies early September 1945, none of them had imagined how the situation was on Java and Sumatra, political and military, as well as the living conditions for everyone. Intelligence agencies that were responsible for information gathering in the occupied areas had not been successful, neither had they achieved anything meaningful after the surrender. The Dutch in Australia only heard the news about the proclamation of independence two days after the happening on 17 August 1945, and they did not take this news seriously at all. Van Mook and Helfrich, together with their British colleagues, regarded the *Republik Indonesia* as a Japanese creation, that did not have a large support among the people.⁶⁰ Indonesian youth movements had indeed worked together with the Japanese armed forces in order to be able to proclaim independence, but the Indonesians acted autonomous in actually proclaiming independence. The nationalist movement even put thought in how to handle Christian minorities to prevent them from going to support the returning Dutch.⁶¹ Van Mook made other mistakes too. In his radio speech for Radio Melbourne on 15 August, he underestimated the situation of the interned (Indo-)Dutch, but he was quickly corrected about this by Mountbatten.⁶² After some other Dutch military

58 De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 146; G. Teitler, *Vlootvoogd in de knel. Vice-admiraal Pinke tussen marinestaf, Indië en de Indonesische revolutie* (Assen 1990) 19.

59 De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 108, Teitler, *Vlootvoogd*, 19

60 *NIB I*, no. 49; Touwen-Bouwisma and Groen, *Van Banzai tot Bersiap*, 14; National Archive, The Hague, Nederlands Liaison Officier at the General Headquarters in New Delhi and the Nederlands East Indies Mission at the Headquarters Allied Land Forces South East Asia, 1942-1946, entry number 2.13.130, inventory number 32: Letter 081537 from ALFSEA to SACSEA, about the relationship between local Japanese forces and Indonesian nationalists on Java [s.d., September 1945].

61 Anderson, *Java in a time of revolution*, 65-66 and 87-88.

62 Van den Berge, *H.J. van Mook*, 200-201.

personnel had arrived on Java in late September 1945, they still did not assess the political situation correctly.⁶³

The Dutch were in general very unsatisfied by the small amount of help the British seemed to offer concerning the military situation in the Netherlands East Indies, while Lord Mountbatten thought the political situations on Java and in Burma seemed similar, and needed similar treatment.⁶⁴ Next to this Dutch disappointment, Dennis analysed that the Dutch were very much unprepared for the time when the war was over, and how they underestimated the amount of work and people it would cost to re-occupy the colony. "Ignorance and self-delusion were a potent mixture, and the Dutch were yet to appreciate the enormity of the situation facing them and the limits of their own power", Dennis wrote in his judgement of the Dutch attitude.⁶⁵

The number of soldiers that had continued working for the colonial army in Australia had grown to around 5,000 soldiers in the summer of 1945. How this increase was reached, is further handled in chapter 3. Because of this amount of soldiers that the KNIL consisted of, the organisational structure of the KNIL managed to survive the war.⁶⁶ Major-General W. Schilling was one of the first KNIL commanders that returned to Java, on board of a British ship that arrived there on 29 September 1945. He became the commander of a contingent of KNIL soldiers south of Batavia (Jakarta). Dutch and Moluccan soldiers who had recently arrived, or were released from their camps, formed provisional army units. These forces, and other groups, acted provocatively against British and Indonesian Republicans. Skirmishes between Indonesians and KNIL soldiers in September and October, the following Battle of Surabaya, and the outbreak of the *Bersiap* made first Mountbatten decide to only occupy key areas (cities) as safe havens on 29 September.⁶⁷ Mountbatten based this decision also on more accurate information he received from his wife Lady Edwina, who had visited Java and Sumatra in a humanitarian worker position, and Laurens van der Post, who was a British intelligence officer in the Netherlands East Indies. According to them, the nationalists developed into a powerful organisation, and had an army initiated by the Japanese. Mountbatten's decision was followed by General P. Christison's decision to not allow Dutch troops to return to the Netherlands East Indies for the time being. These changes yielded Mountbatten much criticism from both the Foreign Office and the War Office back in London. They thought

63 Groen, *Marsroutes en dwaalsporen*, 17.

64 Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*, 95.

65 Idem, 73.

66 Elands, "Strijd, opheffing en erfenis", 22-23.

67 De Jong, *De terugtocht*, 26.

Mountbatten was losing grip on the evolution of the conflictuous situation on Java, they were however also unable to come up with a better plan or advice.⁶⁸ The changes that took place in October 1945 are further discussed in chapter 3.

It took time and persuasion, but eventually Mountbatten forced Van Mook to negotiate with the Indonesian nationalists, in exchange for a British promise to send more troops to Java. Van der Plas had already considered this option.⁶⁹ The British solely recognised Dutch sovereignty over the archipelago, and Van Mook agreed to meet with Sukarno and his followers.⁷⁰ This led to a meeting between the two, and other Republicans, on 31 October 1945. Prime Minister Schermerhorn and his ministers had prohibited Van Mook to meet Sukarno, whom they regarded as a collaborator, communist and Japanese puppet politician.⁷¹ The Dutch government found Van Mook's actions were unacceptable. Queen Wilhelmina however refused to fire Van Mook, because it would be 'incorrect to change commanders in the middle of ongoing struggles', and she wanted to restore colonial rule first.⁷² Politicians in The Hague and in Southeast Asia stood on opposite sides when it came to how the situation in the Netherlands East Indies should be handled. The Dutch had lost control and self-determination when it came to deciding how to solve the problems they encountered on Java and Sumatra, not only with the newly proclaimed Republic, but also other cases, like the Bersiap and the situation of POWs.

Prisoners of war

Different numbers on how many KNIL soldiers were imprisoned during the war appear in the sources. Generally, it is assumed that Zwitzer's research is most correct, and that the KNIL consisted of a little over 120,000 soldiers in 1942. Around 45,000 of this number were Europeans. The Netherlands Indies Red Cross estimated in February 1945 that 13,050 Dutch POWs were situated in camps outside the Netherlands East Indies in February 1945. An additional 658 soldiers deceased before that time, which would make the total of POWs outside the archipelago almost 14,000.⁷³ These numbers were not

68 Bussemaker, *Bersiap!*, 112; Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*, 137; McMillan, *The British occupation of Indonesia*, 85-87.

69 NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 56: Report of a meeting with a.o. Van der Plas present [30 September 1945].

70 Van den Berge, *H.J. van Mook*, 206-207; Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*, 139; De Jong, *Koninkrijk 11c*, 621.

71 De Jong, *Koninkrijk 11c*, 634.

72 Van den Berge, *H.J. van Mook*, 206-207.

73 National Archive, The Hague, Ministry of Colonies in London, entry number 2.10.45, inventory number 279: Information from the Netherlands Indies Red Cross Society in Melbourne about POWs in Japanese imprisonment [7 February 1945].

estimated correctly. The post-war paperwork mentions around 11,000 POWs in Siam and 6,700 in Manila⁷⁴ of a total of 38,386 Dutch KNIL soldiers that was imprisoned. Around 8,200 of that number died.⁷⁵ For the re-establishment of the KNIL, it is important to know how many Indonesian (in Dutch literature often called indigenous or native) and Dutch POWs and free soldiers were present where and when, but it still seems very difficult to establish exact and correct numbers from both literature and archival sources. The Dutch colonial administrators had made plans that former POWs and internees who needed it, could stay in mountain resorts on Java and Sumatra for their recovery. NICA wanted the estimated number of around 25,000 men in Burma, Siam, Indochina and Japan to repatriate as quickly as possible to re-enter military service. Repatriation to the Netherlands was by all means out of the question. It was after all the expectation that colonial rule would soon be re-established.⁷⁶

The Allies arranged that each country or colonial power would send liaison teams to areas where their citizens were expected to be after the Japanese surrender. The Dutch failed to do so because of personnel shortages and haziness concerning the transfer of command from SWPA to SEAC.⁷⁷ In the American areas, relief of the POWs went quite smoothly. Around 6,700 Dutch former POWs were gathered in American camps in Manila, the capital of the Philippines. They could not stay there for long, since the Americans needed the space for their own. From 8 October, these POWs also started to form a political risk. They organised themselves into army units and told the press that the Americans trained them to fight against Sukarno. Since the United States wanted to remain impartial for the time being, they insisted on repatriating these former POWs to the Netherlands East Indies.⁷⁸ How this situation further developed is discussed in chapter 3.

Because of Christison's decision to not allow more Dutch forces to return to Java, Dutch former POWs were forced to wait in transit camps in Bangkok and Singapore, while they anxiously waited for news about the safety of their families back home.⁷⁹ Around two-

74 NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 60: Letter from Weijerman, NICA, to Headquarters of Dislocated Persons, part of the Netherlands East Indies government, Brisbane, Australia [25 September 1945]; National Archive, The Hague, Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service [NEFIS] and Central Military Intelligence service [CMI] in the Netherlands East Indies, entry number 2.10.62, inventory number 2300: letter from Captain Egelie, HQ Batavia [4 December 1945].

75 P.M.H. Groen, "Japanse krijgsgevangenschap. Niemand heeft iets aan mythes die nieuwe, onzekere cijfers met zich meebrengen", in: R. Krimp, *De doden tellen. Slachtofferaantallen van de Tweede Wereldoorlog en sindsdien* (Amsterdam 2015) 20-25, there 20; Zwitser and Heshusius, *Het KNIL*, 158-161.

76 Brocades Zaalberg and Willems, "Onmacht, ontkenning en onderschatting", 70-71.

77 Touwen-Bouwsma and Groen, "Van Banzai tot Bersiap", 19.

78 Groen, "Prisoners of war", 52-53.

79 Brocades Zaalberg and Willems, *Onmacht, ontkenning en onderschatting*, 74; Bussemaker, *Bersiap!*, 66-68.

third of Dutch POWs stranded outside the Netherlands East Indies, squeezed between a finished world war and a beginning revolution.⁸⁰ In the Bangkok area, about 11,000 Dutch POWs were gathered, and a part of them was trained to go back into military service.⁸¹ This is also further discussed in chapter 3.

Unlike the British, who got assigned the Netherlands East Indies in SEAC, the Americans were not that much interested in the political and military situation in the Netherlands East Indies. In summer 1945, the American media paid little attention to news about the Indonesian independence proclamation.⁸² The Americans did support the Netherlands financially and military in reconquering the Netherlands East Indies from summer 1945. Around 4,500 Dutch Marines were trained in Camp Lejeune (North Carolina) by the U.S. Marine Corps during the Second World War. In October 1945, these trained and equipped marines left for the Netherlands East Indies, where they played an important role in the transfer of Surabaya from the British to the Dutch.⁸³ The Americans also supplied materiel, such as uniforms, arms and jeeps to Dutch forces in the Netherlands East Indies. Until 1948, the Americans did not oppose restoration of Dutch colonial rule in the archipelago. Before the 'Second Police Action', American loyalties transferred to the Indonesian Republic. This happened because of Cold War strategies and the Indonesian reaction to the Madiun revolt in September 1948, when the Republic demonstrated an anti-communist attitude.⁸⁴

Conclusion

In this chapter, the international context of the Asia-Pacific war theatre is laid out. The British and Americans had divided it into two areas, and consequently SEAC was responsible for temporarily taking over power from the Japanese. In the Netherlands East Indies, a nationalist movement had grown during the war. Violent groups of *pemuda* encountered newly formed KNIL units, that consisted of Dutch and Moluccan soldiers, in September and October 1945. This and other happenings made Mountbatten and Christison decide to not allow more Dutch armed forces to the Netherlands East Indies.

80 Groen, "Prisoners of war", 52-53.

81 NL-HaNA, NEFIS and CMI, 2.10.62, inv.no. 2300: letter from Captain Egelie, General Headquarters [4 December 1945] and inv.no. 2306: letter from NEFIS Director Hoorweg to the Army Commander [9 May 1946].

82 F. Gouda and T. Brocades Zaalberg, *American visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia. US Foreign policy and Indonesian nationalism 1920-1949* (Amsterdam 2002) 127-128.

83 Bussemaker, *Bersiap!*, 71; D. Schoonoord, *De Mariniersbrigade 1943-1949. Wording en inzet in Indonesië* (Amsterdam 1988) 77-78.

84 Gouda and Brocades Zaalberg, *American visions*, 29, 32-35, 193.

Therefore, former POWs were forced to wait in transit camps in areas around Bangkok, Singapore and Manila. The Dutch had not foreseen any of these developments, and ignored the nationalist movement in particular.

Chapter 2: Planning from 1942 until 15 August 1945

Introduction

The Dutch colonies experienced a chaotic Second World War. The Netherlands East Indies was occupied by Japanese forces, Dutch citizens and subjects were interned and colonial soldiers were captured and used as forced labourers. The colonial authorities fled to British soil, the military divided between Australia and Ceylon, while the politicians settled in Brisbane, Australia. The Dutch government had already left The Hague for London in May 1940, where Prime Minister Gerbrandy led a wartime cabinet. Two ministers had a dual position, and also worked for the Netherlands East Indies government-in-exile: Van Mook and his Navy colleague J.Th. Furstner. Preparations for the Dutch return to the Netherlands East Indies were made during the Second World War. These were not only focused on restoration of Dutch colonial rule in the Netherlands East Indies, but some Dutch leaders also wanted Dutch forces to actively participate in the war against Japan. The KNIL was central to many of these plans. In this chapter, the preparations that were made concerning the colonial army until the Japanese surrender are studied. The Dutch made these plans without extensive knowledge on the changes that the Netherlands East Indies had gone through during the Japanese occupation. Opposing views about what role the Dutch should take up are analysed, next the Dutch connections with the Allies, then the plans in 1942-1943, 1944 and finally the first eight months of 1945 are discussed. It is important to know how the Dutch approach in developing these plans was, since it reflects how they thought re-colonisation would work out after the Second World War.

Opposing views

Different opinions on how the Dutch should return to the Netherlands East Indies not only existed between the Americans and the British, as is already discussed in the first chapter, differences also existed among Dutch leaders. At first, most Dutch colonial leaders like Helfrich, Van Mook and Van der Plas assumed that they could easily return to their pre-war positions and continue their political authority.⁸⁵ Both the Dutch and the British had not expected that the situation had changed that much. Therefore, they had not put extensive thought in preparing for a situation where they would not be welcomed back with open

⁸⁵ Gouda and Brocades Zaalberg, *American visions*, 138.

arms.⁸⁶ This yields a difficult situation: the Dutch could have prepared their return better, if they would have had more information about the wartime developments in the archipelago. They however did not have a functional intelligence service that was able to provide this information. Could they also have planned better whilst not having this intelligence? This kind of 'what if' historical thinking provides a different perspective to the Dutch situation between 1942 and 1946. The Dutch assumed that they could return to the Netherlands East Indies without a fight, after the surrender of the Japanese army. This idea can be considered naive, or as a sort of colonial hubris. The Dutch had a self-evident attitude, that is reflected in their relationship with their colonies. The Dutch approached their colonial rule in the Netherlands East Indies as something naturally, something they were entitled to have, even after the Japanese occupation that lasted for three and a half years.

The Dutch preparations on how they would return to the colony and restore colonial authority focused on how to do this using armed forces. During the Second World War, the Dutch armed forces had already accepted that restoration of colonial rule in the Netherlands East Indies on their own would be impossible, and that alliances with Great Britain and the United States would be necessary. The focus was on Great Britain, which had the largest and most powerful colonial empire in Asia, and the United States, which were occupied with their march to Japan. Each country had its own colonial political priorities: the United States advocated for independent Asian countries, and was in this respect less preferred by the Dutch, while Great Britain, like the Netherlands, wanted to re-establish its colonial empire. The French empire was in more or less the same dependent position as the Netherlands.⁸⁷

During the Second World War, Dutch leaders had opposing views about how to handle the colonial situation. Army officers on the one hand, like Helfrich, Buurman van Vreeden and S.H. Spoor, head of NEFIS, wanted the colonial army to play a large role in the restoration of colonial authority during a time of Military Authority. Van Mook on the other hand preferred NICA to carry out the task of colonial restoration. Neither van Mook, nor Van der Plas and other administrators were army-minded.⁸⁸ One point on which all colonial leaders, both political and military, agreed, was the instability of the political decisions that were made by The Hague government. The government wanted to decide on Indische affairs, instead of allowing the colonial administrators to determine what was best for the colony. This is obvious in a number of cases: Van Mook had to find a balance

86 Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*, 73-76, 83-87; McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and revolution*, 142.

87 Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 1-7.

88 De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 163; Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 112.

between his feeling that he was counterworked by the ignorant Hague politicians, and the Indonesian nationalist movement.⁸⁹ Helfrich thought that there were too many Hague politicians involved in deciding on Indische affairs, and that they did not want to enlarge the power of the colonial army leaders. The Navy and KNIL however had never been closer in co-operating than during the preparations for the end of the Second World War. Helfrich's view of the unstable Dutch politics was also formed because of doubts and ignorance the Hague politicians showed in deciding about army enlargement and military training.⁹⁰

Ties with the Allies

After the government's flight to Australia in March 1942, Helfrich appointed Buurman van Vreeden, who used to work at the General Headquarters of the KNIL in Bandung, Netherlands Liaison Officer at the General Headquarters of the India Command in New Delhi. His tasks covered all military matters, first and foremost as a liaison officer between the BSO and the General HQ, but he also had to collect information and intelligence about British strategies from India and Ceylon during the war. Other tasks included collecting intelligence on the movements of enemy forces and pass this information on to the BSO.⁹¹ In November 1943, Buurman van Vreeden was also appointed liaison officer at the SEAC headquarters, where Lord Mountbatten held office. His third position was as a military attaché at the Dutch Embassy in Chungking, China.⁹² That fact that Buurman van Vreeden held three positions at the same time was sometimes seen as a problem by his colleagues. In early 1944, objections were raised against his dual positions in New Delhi and Chungking, because of the limited time he could devote to these two tasks.⁹³

The Netherlands had a permanent military representation at the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS), the supreme Allied war command in Washington. This delegation served the interests of the all parts of the Dutch army, although KL and Navy were the only ones who had representatives in this delegation.⁹⁴ Before the Second World War, the responsibilities

89 Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 119; Gouda and Brocades Zaalberg, *American visions*, 138.

90 Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 119-121.

91 National Archive, The Hague, Ministry of the Navy: Commander in chief of the armed forces in the East (BSO) 1942-1946, entry number 2.12.37, inventory number 372: "Instructions for the Dutch liaison officer at the General HQ in New Delhi" [26 December 1942].

92 NL-HaNA, Buurman van Vreeden, 2.21.036.02, inventory description.

93 NL-HaNA, Commander in chief of the armed forces in the East, 2.12.37, inv.no. 372: Letters to the BSO [s.d., early 1944]; NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 19: Orders from BSO contain letters about the dual position of Buurman van Vreeden [s.d.].

94 National Archive, The Hague, Ministry of the Navy: Netherlands Representative at the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington, 1942-1949, entry number 2.12.36, description in inventory for their names. One of the representatives was General-Major A.H.Q. Dijkhoorn, who had never been to the Netherlands East

over different armies lied with different Ministries. The Ministry of Navy was responsible for the Royal Navy worldwide, also including the Navy in all colonies. The Minister of Warfare was responsible for the Royal Army (KL) and the colonial army fell under responsibility of the Minister of Colonies. This division could decision-making difficult, especially in situations of occupation. The representatives in Washington only represented the 'Dutch' armies, thus Navy and Royal Army, and not the colonial army. The KNIL was supposed to be represented by the other two. The representatives in Washington complained with the Minister of Warfare that their tasks were complicated, due to the fact that the Americans did not trust them with information.⁹⁵ It is therefore questionable how much work they were able to do.

Despite the government's refusal to add a KNIL member to the military representation, the colonial army sent a military attaché to the Dutch Embassy in Washington, Colonel F.G.L. Weyerman. He served as a liaison officer between the Dutch in the United States and the KNIL leaders. Weyerman was extremely annoyed by the fact that he was not added to the Netherlands Representation to the CCS. The only way he was able to influence the two Dutch delegates at the CSS was through Van Mook, who, as Minister of Colonies, was his military superior. Van Mook was even more annoyed by the situation that the KNIL was not directly represented in Washington. Since the KNIL did not have a direct representative, it was unable to influence the CCS's decisions on the Netherlands East Indies. The KL and Navy delegates were, in Van Mook and Weyerman's eyes, unable to carry out this task as they wished.⁹⁶

In 1945, Weyerman was transferred to NICA, where he became chief staff officer in Ceylon. In this position, his contact with Van Mook continued. His job included serving as a liaison officer between Van Mook and RAPWI. He was also involved in meetings with Van Mook with Lord Mountbatten, where the proclamation of the Indonesian Republic was discussed, and the British reaction to that.⁹⁷ To Lord Mountbatten's disappointment, NICA and thus also Weyerman fell under the command of Van Mook, not the BSO. The division between army commanders and civil administrators complicated the Dutch relationship

Indies according to De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk. Deel 9 I*, 304-305.

95 National Archive, The Hague, Ministry of Colonies in London, entry number 2.10.45, inventory number 740: letter from the Dutch representatives at CCS to the Minister of Warfare in the Kingdom [s.d.].

96 Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 55.

97 De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, 11c, 555; NL-HaNA, Liaison Officie HQ New Delhi en South East Asia, 2.13.130, inv.no. 20: documents about the colonial administration in the Netherlands East Indies. Letters between Weyerman and Van Mook and between Weyerman and Creutzberg (RAPWI) [September and October 1945].

with SEAC.⁹⁸

During the Second World War, Van Mook travelled the world in his dual position as Minister of Colonies and Lieutenant-Governor-General. He frequented the United States to maintain contact with military and political leaders in Washington D.C. and New York. He developed a close relationship with SWPA commander MacArthur during the war, when they worked together on the planning how the American liberation of the Netherlands East Indies would take place, and how NICA would carry out the civil affairs directly after the American progress.⁹⁹ Van Mook preferred, as is discussed in chapter 1, to work together with the Americans. This way, the Dutch would not actively participate in the war against Japan, but contribute in the form of a temporary civil authority, that is to say NICA, to restore Dutch rule in the areas after they would be liberated by American forces.¹⁰⁰

Plans in 1942-1944

Already in 1942, the Dutch government-in-exile in London started to make plans to establish several armed forces to send overseas to fight against Japan, after the Netherlands had been liberated. It was expected that this liberation would take place in 1944, and that re-establishment of the army could start beforehand. Van Mook was at first not informed about these plans, despite the fact that he was the Minister of Colonies. These plans could influence the existence of the KNIL, but he was only informed about these until at a later stage, with the excuse that they were Navy plans and thus were another Minister's responsibility. At the same time, the KNIL branches that had gone into exile in Australia also discussed long-term plans for when the war was over. Spoor's plans for the colonial armed forces focused on co-operation between KNIL and Navy, and also included deployment of more local Indonesian soldiers. He did not want the KNIL to play a role in the liberation of the Netherlands East Indies, but preferred the available soldiers in Australia to serve as intelligence and liaison officers.¹⁰¹

The year 1943 can be characterised as the year of severe discussions about military preparations. The Dutch foresaw the possibility that a power vacuum would occur after the Japanese surrender, and started to anticipate for when this would be the case.

98 National Archive, The Hague, Ministry of the Navy: Personal archive of Lieutenant-Admiral C.E.L. Helfrich, 1940-1962, entry number 2.12.44, inventory number 27: Minutes of a meeting between BSO and Lord Mountbatten [22 August 1945].

99 Van den Berge, *H.J. van Mook*, 186.

100 Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 44-45.

101 NL-HaNA, Helfrich, 2.12.44, inv.no. 6: Memorandum about the command of the armed forces in the East and Military Authority by Navy Captain J.J.L. Willinge [24 June 1945]; De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 79 and 142-145; Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 19-22.

Opinions about the military solution for a possible power vacuum were various.¹⁰² The two different plans for the Dutch forces are explained here, each with their own supporters.

The Navy was the first to launch plans about a new army, which would be a Marine force. A Marine Corps (*Mariniersbrigade*) would be erected, which would serve as the Dutch contribution in the Allied war against Japan. Navy Minister Furstner strongly supported this plan. Van Mook however preferred a strategy of leaving liberation of the colonies to the Americans. In his reasoning, the Marine Corps would not be needed, since this force would only be useful for fighting against Japan. Peace and order troops would be much more useful for restoration of colonial rule, and thus time and effort must be put in restoration of the KNIL. The Navy criticised the KNIL that the KNIL did not have enough power to be able to support American troops after they had reconquered the Netherlands East Indies.¹⁰³

The Ministers of Colonies and the Navy were not the only ones who stood opposite each other about the plans which armed forces needed increasement. In general, Navy people were supportive of the Marine Corps plan, while supporters of the American side preferred to use the KNIL. KNIL leaders believed the colonial army was the most suitable option for restoration of the Dutch rule, due to its long experience with internal violence and war. The possibility to use the colonial army for this would also mean restoration of the KNIL's honour, which had been severely damaged because of the defeat by Japan in 1942.¹⁰⁴ The KNIL started to make plans to increase its number of soldiers. After the Netherlands was liberated, around 5,500 men would be trained in Australia, by the Australian army, and then sent to the Indies, to serve as a liberation force there together with the Americans.¹⁰⁵ The Australian offer would be withdrawn just before the Japanese surrender, as will be discussed in chapter 3.

Plans from January 1945 until 15 August 1945

Preparations for a Dutch return to the archipelago continued in 1945. Several issues, that are discussed in the previous chapter, turned out to be difficult. First, the American plans to reconquer the Netherlands East Indies as a part of the island-hopping strategy up to Japan was cancelled. Second, the borders of SEAC and SWPA were changed. And third, the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the highest Allied war command, in Washington decided against

¹⁰²Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 46.

¹⁰³Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 17, 39, 44-45.

¹⁰⁴Idem, 39; 47.

¹⁰⁵NL-HaNA, Navy representative Washington, 2.12.36, inv.no. 37: Documents on organisation and armature of 'gezagsbataljons' in Australia.

many Dutch wishes during the war, such as the request to the Americans to train all Dutch armed forces.¹⁰⁶

The Dutch government decided that the Marine Corps would be established, in order to fight against Japan alongside American troops. The Americans, although anti-colonial, did not oppose re-establishment of Dutch colonial rule in the Netherlands East Indies and thus approved of this idea.¹⁰⁷ The United States were willing to train Dutch Marines in their U.S. Marine Corps *Camp Lejeune* in North Carolina. A total of around 4,500 soldiers and 200 officers were trained by Americans into an American system, using American equipment. They were professional soldiers from the Netherlands, who managed to avoid capture by the Germans, soldiers from the Caribbean colonies, and war volunteers recruited in the Netherlands from 1944. This plan was partly developed by the Dutch representative at the CCS, General-Major A.H.Q. Dijkhoorn.¹⁰⁸ Plans for restoration of the KNIL continued to be developed at the same time. In general, the Dutch were very focused on how they could deploy as many armed forces as quickly as possible in the Netherlands East Indies. Different organisations had been erected to help realising this idea, which consisted of different parts: recovery of POWs, and the erection of different organisations to facilitate this, recruiting new soldiers, and calling conscripts to the front.

First, plans to erect a civil-military authority were carried out: the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration was established. It was supposed to become the organisation that followed the American troops when they had liberated the Netherlands East Indies island to island and it would re-establish Dutch rule on those islands.¹⁰⁹ Some kind of competition had developed between KNIL and NICA. A memorandum, dated 24 June 1945, in which it is analysed how military authorities managed Dutch troops, partly focused on this competition and which roles KNIL and NICA would play in the colonial liberation and reconquest. The Allied commanders expected the Dutch to provide operational forces for the battle against Japan, while the Dutch thought to use these available soldiers as troops for peace and order. Also, internal differences of opinion about the type of forces that should be developed are mentioned. Navy captain J.J.L. Willinge, author of this memorandum, criticised Spoor's plan to institute Military Authority, since that would

¹⁰⁶Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 70-75.

¹⁰⁷As is already demonstrated in chapter 1, the United States did not oppose Dutch rule in the archipelago until 1948. See also: Gouda and Brocades Zaalberg, *American visions*, 29.

¹⁰⁸Gouda and Brocades Zaalberg, *American visions*, 173; Schoonoord, *Mariniersbrigade*, 77-78; Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 31-32.

¹⁰⁹National Archive, *Afscheid van Indië*. See: <http://www.afscheidvanindie.nl/archieven-onderwerpen-nica.aspx>. Consulted on 3 January 2015.

decrease power of the colonial government.¹¹⁰ This memorandum thus did not solve these Dutch internal differences.

Second, another main project on how to enlarge the Allied presence in the liberated areas was planning on how to recover Allied POWs, among them also KNIL soldiers. The Dutch expected to be able to deploy these soldiers shortly after recovery. The first action came from SEAC's side, this was the establishment of RAPWI. This was erected to provide physical care to POWs and other internees. From Spring 1945, the CCS also seriously started to put thought in how captured people would be cared for after they were liberated. *Romusha* were only then included in the plans. In RAPWI documents, no reference was made however to the *romusha*'s situation or the number of *romusha*. For people from the Netherlands East Indies, the division between SEAC and SWPA meant that most POWs and civilian internees would be taken care of by RAPWI. RAPWI was responsible for multiple tasks: recovery of POWs, intelligence gathering about POWs, informing POWs when the war was over and what they had to do and what they could expect using leaflets that were dropped from airplanes.¹¹¹

The Dutch themselves discussed the issue of recovery from January 1945. One of the organisations erected for this purpose was the *Leger Organisatie Centrum* (LOC, Army Organisation Centre) which only consisted of 37 employees in April 1945, whereby it was not very powerful. It was hoped that fit-for-duty former POWs would fill the gaps on the spot.¹¹² Only on 12 June, the *Kantoor Displaced Persons* was erected as a part of NICA, and its establishment was finalised by endorsement of the Lieutenant-Governor-General on 28 July 1945. KDP's main tasks were to co-ordinate different administrations, maintain contact with other organisations, supply goods, evacuation and repatriation. Contact with RAPWI was vital for KDP, as was keeping in touch with the Red Cross. Civilians, especially women, were asked to work for the (Australian) Red Cross in hospitals and do other welfare work. The Dutch also sent a KDP liaison officer to RAPWI, Navy Lieutenant first class W.E. van Genderen.¹¹³

110NL-HaNA, Helfrich, 2.12.44, inv.no. 6: Memorandum about the command of the armed forces in the East and Military Authority by Navy Captain J.J.L. Willinge [24 June 1945].

111NL-HaNA, Liaison Officie HQ New Delhi and South East Asia, 2.13.130, inv.no. 48: Top secret RAPWI plans concerning how to inform POWs and how many POWs were present in which countries [13 August 1945].

112Touwen-Bouwsma and Groen, "Van Banzai tot Bersiap", 18-19.

113C. Schouten, *RAPWI. Geschiedkundig overzicht* (s.l., 1947) 3; National Archive, The Hague, Ministry of the Navy: Navy Commander Australia, until 1943 also Deputy BSO Australië, 1942-1947, entry number 2.12.26, inventory number 53: Netherlands Indies Civil Administration, Kantoor Displaced Persons, "Tasks of the Kantoor Displaced Persons" [12 June 1945]. Van Genderen had previously worked as military liaison officer at the General Headquarters in New Delhi. NL-HaNA, Commander in chief of the armed forces in the East, 2.12.37, inv.no. 372: document 31/28

Planning of more armed forces

In June 1945, Buurman van Vreeden published a memorandum on the role of the army in the reconquest of the Netherlands East Indies. Then, the idea still existed that the Netherlands would also provide soldiers for the war against Japan and colonial restoration. He assumed that around 5.000 KNIL soldiers would be available, in addition to about 15.000 KL conscript soldiers, distributed over three divisions. The purpose of these soldiers was to use them for maintaining and/or recovering order in the colony, participating in a small war against Japan, and participate in other Allied fighting. Whether the Dutch would participate in all these tasks depended on decisions made by the Minister of Colonies and the army leaders. Although it is unclear from this memorandum whether the KNIL was supposed to grow in number, it is clearly stated which soldiers would form the new KNIL: volunteers from the Caribbean colonies, Australian KNIL, former POWs and newly recruited troops from liberated parts of the Netherlands East Indies. Buurman van Vreeden clearly stated that the peace and order troops, that would be trained in Australia, were unsuitable for fighting against Japanese forces. His statement, that restoration of military rule would come before maintenance of peace and order, corresponds with Van Mook's judgment that the Allies would liberate the Netherlands East Indies, and that the Dutch would only have to follow them and restore Dutch colonial rule.¹¹⁴

The Dutch encountered another problem in their aspiration to increase military forces: the motherland was liberated 'too late'. It had been the expectation that many soldiers could be recruited from the liberated motherland and that they could be trained there, and then sent to the Netherlands East Indies to participate in fighting against Japan. Because of the late liberation in May 1945, there were not enough Dutch soldiers recruited yet, and they were untrained.¹¹⁵ Plans for a change of constitution, in order to send conscript soldiers overseas, were made in 1943.¹¹⁶ In spring 1946, the change to the constitution was finalised. Around 100.000 conscript soldiers would be deployed in the Netherlands East Indies between 1946 and 1950. The first conscript battalions arrived in

about the appointment of W.E. van Genderen as military liaison officer on 10 June 1944, who had to report directly to the BSO.

114NL-HaNA, Buurman van Vreeden, 2.21.036.02, inv.no. 8: Memorandum written by Buurman van Vreeden "Ground forces for the reconquest of the Netherlands East Indies" [14 June 1945]; Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 44-45.

115NL-HaNA, Helfrich, 2.12.44, inv.no. 5: Documents on collaboration with the Allies. Telegram from J.M. de Booy, Minister of Shipping and Fishery, to Van Kleffens, Minister of Foreign Affairs, about the deployment of Marines during the planned American liberation of the Netherlands East Indies [15 April 1945].

116National Archive, The Hague, Ministry of War and Defence in London, 1941-1947, entry number 2.13.71, inventory number 140: No. 13: Draft decision on sending conscripts overseas [1943].

Batavia on 23 October 1946, and the last army unit of conscript soldiers left Indonesia on 20 February 1951.¹¹⁷

A problem that the KNIL in specific encountered, was recruitment of new soldiers. Before the Second World War, the KNIL was used to recruit European soldiers in the Netherlands, and Indonesian forces joined from all over the archipelago. During the war, this recruitment was impossible and the government prohibited the army to recruit new soldiers in liberated or free areas of the Dutch empire, contrary to the Marine Corps, that was allowed to recruit new members. When the KNIL finally agreed to the establishment of Naval Forces, like the Marine Corps, together with the Royal Army, this army withdrew its objections against the KNIL recruiting soldiers in the Netherlands, and the colonial army was again allowed to recruit new soldiers.¹¹⁸

Another solution the Dutch had for their shortage of military forces, was to recruit new soldiers in the Netherlands out of resistance members. In summer 1944, the anti-Nazi resistance was united in the *Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten* (BS, Home Army), but these members were hardly allowed to play a role in liberation of the Netherlands. When the war in the Netherlands was over, but still going on in the Pacific, members of the BS were asked to join the armed forces that were sent overseas in order to liberate the Netherlands East Indies from the Japanese. These *war volunteers* would serve within the KL. They were organised into regional battalions as they were during their resistance time, in for example 'Bataljon Zeeland' and the 'Fries Bataljon'.¹¹⁹ Before they could be sent overseas, the war in the Pacific ended. Liberation of the colony was no longer needed, but due to the political and military changes in the Netherlands East Indies, the war volunteers were needed to carry out a different task, next to the re-established KNIL: restore peace and order in the colony. Originally, the plan was to deploy these war volunteers for a year, but that changed into two years or more. Most of them served in the Netherlands East Indies until 1948.¹²⁰

Conclusion

Between 1942 and 15 August 1945, the Dutch government and the colonial administration,

117Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië*, 22; "Infanteriebataljons KL", on website *Indië 1945-1950*. Consulted on 13 March 2016. See: <http://www.indie-1945-1950.nl/web/zoek/zoek.htm>.

118Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 88-93.

119Romijn, "Learning on 'the job'", 320-321.

120NL-HaNA, Armed forces Netherlands East Indies, 2.13.132, inv.no. 1448: letter from Lieutenant-General Spoor to the Lieutenant-Governor-General, about the replacement of war volunteers and KNIL soldiers [15 December 1947].

both in exile, made different plans for the Dutch participation in the Second World War, and for how to restore colonial rule in the Netherlands East Indies. It is now clear that many of the preparations that were made towards the end of the Second World War were developed too late to be effective immediately after the Japanese surrender. At that time, the Dutch prepared for a return without a fight, which could be considered naive or hubristic. The largest problem between 1942 and 1945 for the Dutch was that they were forced to adjust their plans because of international decisions about plans for the Pacific war, made by Americans and the CCS. The Dutch could do little to influence these decisions. Military and civil colonial leaders, and Dutch politicians, who continued to make plans for restoration of colonial rule, were anything but unanimous about how to do this. Military commanders disagreed with colonial administrators on how restoration should be carried out, using NICA – preferred by the colonial administrators – or using armed forces like the KNIL and Navy, which was preferred by the military commanders. Usually, it was the Dutch government in exile in London or in The Hague that made the final decisions about what strategy to use. All colonial leaders, both civil and military, disliked this decision-making from the other side of the world. This was a problem that continued to exist during the Independence War.

Chapter 3: Outcomes and adjustments. 15 August 1945 until March 1946

Introduction

Because of a number of considerable changes that took place during the Second World War, after the Japanese surrender and during autumn 1945, the Dutch had to adjust the plans they had made for restoration of colonial rule and the colonial army. Colonial rule could not be restored immediately, and expectations how fast the colonial army could be restored had to be adjusted. In the archipelago, the nationalist movement had proclaimed the *Republik Indonesia*. British forces, that arrived late September due to the changes in SEAC, were unable to control the violent situation in Java and Sumatra. The estimated number of armed forces needed for restoration of 'peace and order' had to be adjusted. Also, the number of POWs was higher than expected, and the British military force was weaker than expected. In this chapter, it is discussed how the Dutch adapted to these problems between 15 August 1945 and March 1946. From that month, the British allowed KNIL soldiers, whose physical and mental fitness was worse than the Dutch had hoped, and war volunteers, to enter the Netherlands East Indies.

Problems for the Dutch

In the Netherlands East Indies, a nationalist movement that existed since the early twentieth century had grown during the war. The Japanese occupation had further encouraged these nationalist feelings with the Indonesian people. Japanese forces that occupied the Netherlands East Indies allowed Indonesians to build an army during the war. Also, when the end of the war approached, the Japanese military authorities invited Sukarno, Hatta and others who were active in the independence movement to travel to Singapore to discuss options for the possibility of Indonesian independence. This meeting took place on 9 August 1945.¹²¹ This resulted in the situation where Indonesian nationalists not only could access trained armed forces, but also that they possessed many arms at the time of the independence proclamation.¹²² The Japanese military authorities however did not support the independence proclamation that was made by Sukarno and Hatta on

¹²¹Anderson, *Java in a time of revolution*, 63.

¹²²H. Bing Siong, "The Indonesian need of arms after the proclamation of independence", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 157/4 (2001) 799-830, there 799; NL-HaNA, Liaison Officie HQ New Delhi and South East Asia, 2.13.130, inv.no. 47: Memorandum about the end of the Second World War in the Netherlands East Indies, mainly about the military situation with Indonesian forces [s.d., 1945].

17 August 1945.¹²³ Later, the Dutch accused the Japanese army of infringement of the surrender conditions because they had the idea that the Japanese army collaborated with the 'Sukarno movement'.¹²⁴

The Netherlands, Great Britain and the United States knew little about these changes in the archipelago. NEFIS had failed during the war, as is discussed in chapter 2. Because of this failure, Great Britain and the United States also did not have access to correct intelligence in regard to the nationalist movement in the Netherlands East Indies.¹²⁵ The Netherlands continued to have a paternalistic view on the colonial empire. The Dutch wanted their colony back to restore faith in themselves, but above all to restore their economy after the Second World War. That is why the First Police Action in 1947 would be named 'Operation Product': the Dutch needed their colony for economic purposes.¹²⁶ These superior feelings are visible in a letter that Van Mook sent to the Dutch Ministers of Colonies, Warfare and Foreign Affairs on 5 October. He reported his thought about that most Indonesians longed back to the 'old days', especially those in rural areas. He did recognise that the situation was different than the Dutch had expected. He still thought that farmers would like the Dutch to return, and that there were more active nationalists among townsfolk on Java and Sumatra.¹²⁷ In the first month after the proclamation of independence, most Dutchmen were blind for the changes that had taken place during the Second World War, not only in nationalism but also in governmental structure that changed during the Japanese occupation.¹²⁸

Another problem for the Dutch was that no one had reconquered the Netherlands East Indies, as would happen in a 'normal' war, and thus there were no Allied forces present in the archipelago at all. Hence, they had no idea how the Indonesians reacted to the Japanese who were no longer in power. The possibility of a power vacuum had been considered, and it was thought that KNIL and/or NICA would be able fill in this gap.¹²⁹ In communication between ALFSEA, Lord Mountbatten and the Japanese commander of Java, the commander denied that the Japanese forces helped Indonesian nationalists proclaim independence. ALFSEA considered the possibility of internal unrest when the

¹²³McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism*, 136-137.

¹²⁴NL-HaNA, Helfrich, 2.12.44, inv.no. 27: Telegram 45/46/47 from Helfrich to the Minister of Warfare [s.d., 1945].

¹²⁵Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*, 75-77; De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 162-163.

¹²⁶L. Allen, *The end of the war in Asia* (New York 1979) 82.

¹²⁷NL-HaNA, Helfrich, 2.12.44, inv.no. 27: Telegram from Van Mook to Ministers Logemann, Schermerhorn and Van Kleffens, Batavia [5 October 1945].

¹²⁸Rinzema-Admiraal, *Romusha van Java*, 84.

¹²⁹Groen, *Marsroutes*, 18; McMillan, *The British occupation of Indonesia*, 11; De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 19; Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 46.

British would try to control the situation too efficiently.¹³⁰ The Dutch, in the person of Van Mook, accused the Japanese soon that they helped the nationalists in their declaration of independence.

The third problem that the Dutch encountered was the change of war theatre borders. It had been earlier decided that SEAC would expand to include the rest of the Netherlands East Indies and the southern part of Indochina. This expansion was initially not seen as a negative one by most Dutch officials. The Dutch military leaders like Helfrich and Buurman van Vreeden preferred to work with the British, as is mentioned in chapter 2. Van Mook however wanted to continue working with the Americans, but the Dutch government ignored his protests and did not do anything to prevent the transfer to SEAC.¹³¹ The Dutch military considered the British a fine ally because they were also an imperial power, and they were not the anti-colonials the Americans seemed to be. Despite objections from Van Mook, the actual difficulty did not lie in the fact that the change was made, but more in the fact that they were only notified shortly before the actual transfer. The Japanese capitulation came 'too soon' for the Dutch government to prepare for.¹³² Also, the Americans had a more powerful army and had better equipment than the British.¹³³ The idea had been that NICA would follow the American army when they liberated the Netherlands East Indies. Since the British were now assigned the task of taking over authority from the surrendered Japanese, the Dutch had to change their plans. Liberation was not necessary anymore after the surrender, hence the idea that NICA would play the role of temporary civil-military authority had to be altered. That changed into the idea that the KNIL and the Marine Corps, already shortly discussed in chapter 2, would carry out the tasks of re-establishing colonial rule.¹³⁴

The fourth problem that became clear in fall 1945, was the existence of the so-called Allied shipping pool and mainly shortages in this shared shipping pool. This problem first occurred in April 1945 and became clear during another problematic situation, namely one with training and transport of new troops that were recruited in the liberated parts of the Netherlands. Since 1943, the Dutch had been planning to establish *gezagsbataljons* (peace and order battalions). These would be formed in the Netherlands out of men that

130NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 32: Letter from ALFSEA to SACSEA, [s.d., September 1945].

131Bussemaker, *Bersiap!*, 65.

132Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 98-99; De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 159; NL-HaNA, Helfrich, 2.12.44, inv.no. 5: Memorandum by Helfrich [30 October 1944].

133De Jong, *Diplomatie of Strijd*, 427.

134Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 106.

were recruited from the anti-Nazi resistance. After liberation of the Netherlands, they would be sent to Australia and trained there, an offer the Australian government had made in 1943. In 1943-1944, the Dutch were convinced that they could send between 5,000 and 6,000 soldiers to participate in defeating Japan, after Germany was knocked out.¹³⁵ When the Dutch were midst of actually making these plans to ship *gezagsbataljons* to Australia, the Combined Chiefs of Staff announced that there were no ships available for such Dutch troop transports.¹³⁶ To make matters even worse, the newly appointed Labour government in Australia pulled back the previous offer to train these Dutch troops in July 1945.¹³⁷ In September 1945, the Australian government also did not interfere in strikes that Australian labour unions organised to support Indonesian workers who sympathised with the independence movement. Because of the support of the Waterside Workers Federation, one of the most important unions, a full blockade of Dutch ships enlarged the problems for the re-establishment of the KNIL. Australian support for the Indonesian cause commenced during this time, while the support for the Dutch colonial attitude diminished.¹³⁸

These problems created a difficult situation for the Dutch, before they even arrived in the Netherlands East Indies in early September. The political situation on Java and Sumatra above all formed the main problem, that was increased due to the absence of Allied forces in the Netherlands East Indies during the surrender. The change to SEAC and the Australian refusal to train Dutch troops caused Dutch feelings of being counterworked in their attempts to restore colonial rule. Dutch troops were largely unavailable due to their imprisonment in Asia, shipping for their repatriation to the Netherlands East Indies was impeded due to the Allied shipping pool, nor was shipping new troops from the Netherlands possible in that early stage.

The British and Dutch would soon discover how the political situation actually was in the Netherlands East Indies. Since Lord Mountbatten was not allowed to enter the Netherlands East Indies before the official surrender was signed on 2 September, the first arrival of British officers was on 8 September, when a RAPWI team of four men was dropped in the Batavia area. This team reported to Mountbatten that they did not foresee any problems in re-establishing colonial rule.¹³⁹ This corresponds with intelligence that

135NL-HaNA, Navy representative Washington, 2.12.36, inv.no. 37: Planning of the 'gezagsbataljons' made in 1943; NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 23: About the 'gezagsbataljons' that would be trained according to British methods and with British equipment.

136De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 157;

137NIB I, 3.

138Bussemaker, *Bersiap!*, 65-66.

139Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*, 83.

Mountbatten received from the Dutch in Brisbane. He was informed that there might be some opposition to the Dutch return by around 40,000 armed nationalists on Java, but that besides this group, nationalist feelings were not strong or widespread. Also, he had not received any intelligence from SWPA, on which he could base his strategies.¹⁴⁰

This view changed soon. A week later, on 15 September, RAPWI staff arrived on board HMS Cumberland in Tandjoeng Priok, Batavia's port. Slowly, more RAPWI teams were dropped in Javanese cities during September.¹⁴¹ Since RAPWI teams were not intended for intelligence gathering on the nationalist movement, military personnel that arrived from 15 September only then realised how the situation was different than they had expected: Japan seemed to have surrendered to the Indonesian Republic, not to the Allies.¹⁴² When the end of September approached, the British started to realise the severity of the situation and the political and military problems that existed on Java and Sumatra. New information came on the 28 September from Lady Edwina Mountbatten, who had made a tour along recovery camps in Sumatra and Java, and informed her husband about the immense changes that had taken place in the Netherlands East Indies in the past four years. The Dutch however brushed these objections aside.¹⁴³ In general, the Dutch strongly underestimated the severity of the situation.¹⁴⁴ Later, General Philip Christison, commander of British forces in the Netherlands East Indies, blamed Helfrich, Van der Plas and Van Oyen for providing him wrong intelligence on the nationalist movement.¹⁴⁵ It was not until the end of October 1945 before the Dutch realised that the political situation was different than they expected, and discussions with the Indonesians were necessary, which is discussed below.

KNIL soldiers re-organised themselves

When the colonial government had gone into exile in 1942, the number of KNIL soldiers that went to Australia was around 1,000. In the summer of 1945, this number had grown to around 5,000, due to additions from the Dutch Caribbean colonies, new recruits from Surinam, and some female volunteers.¹⁴⁶ The first KNIL battalion assisted Australian forces in their reconquest of Balikpapan, Borneo. This took place in June and July 1945.¹⁴⁷ The

¹⁴⁰Allen, *The end of the war*, 83-84.

¹⁴¹McMillan, *The British occupation*, 3-13.

¹⁴²Groen, *Marsroutes*, 23-24.

¹⁴³McMillan, *The British occupation*, 17-20.

¹⁴⁴Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*, 73-76.

¹⁴⁵De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 178.

¹⁴⁶Zwitzer, "Het KNIL in Australië", 80-81, 85.

¹⁴⁷Zwitzer and Heshusius, *Het KNIL*, 154-155.

KNIL itself played a very minor role in the liberation of the Netherlands East Indies, but would play a large role in the Indonesian Independence War. The Dutch colonial leaders also put thought in how the KNIL would be different after the Second World War. Buurman van Vreeden dedicated several memoranda to what choices the colonial army should make in case of a new war. This included the choice for British armature, and also included major changes in the army command. Wartime developments like imprisonment of a large number of soldiers have changed the KNIL heavily, but that was not considered.¹⁴⁸

In anticipation of the post-war situation, the Dutch in Australia had not only established NICA, but also LOC and KDP, as are mentioned in the second chapter. LOC's task was to take care, train and re-organise POWs as soon as possible after their liberation. For this purpose, it opened offices in liberated areas around Asia.¹⁴⁹ Civilian internees would be taken care of by KDP. This office was responsible for all war internees except personnel from KNIL or Navy, since LOC had to take care of them.¹⁵⁰ Zwitzer assumes LOC was a busy organisation, due to the large numbers of POWs around Asia, but Touwen-Bouwsma and Groen criticise the small number of personnel these organisations had. During the war, the colonial government had the expectation that these organisations could recruit more employees from the former POWs and civilian internees. The actual situation turned out to be very different, since most Dutch internees and POWs were in no physical condition to work after the war. Therefore, these organisations 'competed' over the healthy people that they wanted to recruit as new staff members.¹⁵¹

Shortly after the Japanese surrender, authority of the prisoner camps around Asia was overtaken by the POWs themselves. Allies reached them via leaflets that were dropped from airplanes. The POWs received food packages from the Red Cross in the same way.¹⁵² Quickly, these POWs organised themselves into interest groups, with a 'commander', usually the senior officer in command. Also, they contacted Allied powers to inform them where they were located and that they wanted to be rescued. In these camps,

148NL-HaNA, Buurman van Vreeden, 2.21.036.02, inv.no. 8: Memorandum written by Buurman van Vreeden "Choice for new armature and weaponry for the armed forces" [12 June 1945]; idem, inv.no. 9: Memorandum written by Buurman van Vreeden "Reorganisation of the army command of the Kingdom of the Netherlands" [26 October 1945].

149Zwitzer, "Het KNIL in Australië", 80-81, 84.

150NL-HaNA, Navy Commander Australia, 2.12.26, inv.no. 53: Netherlands Indies Civil Administration, Kantoort Displaced Persons [12 June 1945].

151Touwen-Bouwsma and Groen, "Van Banzai tot Bersiap", 19.

152National Archive, The Hague, Ministry of Colonies in London, entry number 2.10.45, inventory number 279: Correspondence with the Red Cross about food relief to prison camps [9 April 1945]; NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions at GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 48: Aid to the Allied Prisoners of War and Internees on the capitulation of Japan. Published by the SEAC Headquarters [13 August 1945].

these interest groups turned into provisional army units.¹⁵³ Some groups of KNIL even announced that they were ready to repatriate and fight.¹⁵⁴ More about this topic will be discussed in chapter 4.

The first group of POWs that caught the eye of Dutch officials is a medium-sized group of former POWs that gathered in Singapore already in September 1945. This group was repeatedly the topic of telegrams, as it was the first large group to collectively decide that it wanted to form an army unit again. In an undated telegram, probably sent early September, Buurman van Vreeden requested his colleagues in Singapore and Bangkok, who recently arrived there, to allow former POWs who are "physically and mentally fit" to be organised in infantry units and to exercise.¹⁵⁵ Around 1.000 Dutch KNIL soldiers were considered fit for duty and organised into some military structure in Singapore from 15 September 1945 onwards.¹⁵⁶ Admiral Helfrich, then present in Melbourne, suggested to Lord Mountbatten that these soldiers could be transferred to Java, not to do RAPWI work but to be used as regular military or police personnel. NICA chief staff officer F.G.L. Weijerman supported this request, as did Lieutenant-General L.H. van Oyen, commander of the colonial army in Australia. Officers and NCO's would be appointed from the group itself.¹⁵⁷ Buurman van Vreeden added to this the request whether SEAC could give permission to this group of Dutch KNIL soldiers in Singapore to officially form a battalion and be allowed to carry firearms.¹⁵⁸

This group from Singapore eventually arrived near Batavia in October 1945, where it would soon form into the *Doorman* battalion.¹⁵⁹ According to sources that McMillan studied, all units south of Batavia were commanded by KNIL Major-General W. Schilling, who arrived in Batavia with the first British troops. The British allowed three KNIL battalions to land in early October 1945, which would be deployed in Batavia. It is unclear how these forces had been reconstituted, but it is likely that Schilling collected former POWs himself in Batavia, and others came from outside Java, and arrived with the British. The British however accused these reconstituted forces of being 'trigger happy' due to numerous

153H.Th. Bussemaker, *Indisch verdriet. De strijd om erkenning* (Amsterdam 2014) 17.

154NL-HaNA, Armed forces Netherlands East Indies, 2.13.132, inv.no. 12: Statement from the Army information service [s.d., September 1945].

155NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 47: Telegram 5444 from Buurman van Vreeden to the local NICA officers in Singapore and Bangkok, [s.d. early September 1945].

156Groen, "Prisoners of war, prisoners of peace", 46.

157NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 60: letter from Van Oyen to SACSEA [21 September 1945].

158NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 60: letter B 146 from Netherlands Staff Section, Buurman van Vreeden [2 October 1945].

159Zwitzer and Heshusius, *Het KNIL*, 143.

shooting incidents between KNIL soldiers, British and Indonesian troops.¹⁶⁰

On the other side of Asia, the Americans recovered a large number of Dutch former POWs in Japan and gathered them in Manila. Early September, the Dutch were already planning how to repatriate this group as quickly as possible. Helfrich suggested to repatriate medical personnel to Java by Catalina planes, because their presence was much required on Java.¹⁶¹ Weijerman informed the Dutch government in Brisbane on 25 September about around 6,700 former POWs that were available for shipping to Java midst October. This shipping was provided by Lord Mountbatten, with whom he apparently had been in touch with, since he emphasised that the Dutch were in no position to negotiate about this offer. Lord Mountbatten warned Weijerman that the Dutch must accept this chance for shipping, because otherwise repatriation could last a long time, and space on ships would be wasted. The Dutch originally did not want unfit KNIL soldiers to repatriate yet, but were thus pressured by the British to decide otherwise. In the same telegram, Weijerman also mentioned shipping from Saigon to the Netherlands East Indies for 1742 Dutch POWs, which could be possible on 14 October.¹⁶² Van Oyen replied positively on this message on 7 October, and requested his colleagues to arrange welcome for these POWs in Batavia.¹⁶³ This is in contrast to the later British opinion about repatriation from former POWs, when the British decided in November 1945 that no more Dutch soldiers were allowed to arrive in the Netherlands East Indies.

These former POWs indeed never reached the Netherlands East Indies in October. On Java, tensions between Indonesian forces and KNIL troops had broken out. Moluccan KNIL soldiers are blamed for these violent outbursts, although Dutch KNIL soldiers were involved in these skirmishes too.¹⁶⁴ Numerous shooting incidents between on the one hand British and British Indian soldiers, and on the other hand Indonesians, took place. British and British Indian forces found themselves in an 'urban guerrilla war' as McMillan analyses.¹⁶⁵ This time period from 29 September 1945 was very violent, especially for

¹⁶⁰McMillan, *The British occupation*, 85-86.

¹⁶¹NL-HaNA, Navy Ministry: BSO entry number 2.12.37, inv.no. 237: Helfrich's instructions for Lieutenant first class Den Hollander in Japan [5 September 1945].

¹⁶²NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 60: Letter from Weijerman, NICA, to Headquarters of Dislocated Persons, part of the Netherlands East Indies government, Brisbane, Australia [25 September 1945].

¹⁶³NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 67: Letter from Van Oyen to commander Den Hollander [7 October 1945].

¹⁶⁴Groen, *Marsroutes*, 25-27; McMillan, *The British occupation*, 86; National Archive, The Hague, General Secretariat of the Netherlands East Indies government, entry number 2.10.14, inventory number 3702: Letter from Van der Plas to Van Mook about the banishment of native KNIL troops from Batavia [23 November 1945].

¹⁶⁵McMillan, *The British occupation*, 21-22.

(Indo-)Dutch civilians, but also for the several different armed forces present in the area. SEAC decided, in an attempt to prevent escalation, to prohibit more Dutch soldiers to enter the Netherlands East Indies.¹⁶⁶ The 1,742 former POWs from Saigon were thus not transferred to Batavia, but arrived in Singapore on 16 October. The same change applied to the POWs from Manila. They were collected by Australian forces on Borneo, to where they were transferred between 7 November and 6 December. On Borneo, 4,400 KNIL soldiers were deployed again, with Japanese and Australian materiel, others went into Navy service again.¹⁶⁷ Other KNIL soldiers, whose physical condition was very bad, were given time to recover in the Netherlands or in Australia. They were redeployed halfway through 1946.¹⁶⁸

The largest number of former POWs was in Burma and Siam. In December 1945, around 11,000 Dutch POWs were situated in the Bangkok area. They were situated in old military training camps, that used to be used by the Independent Indian Army. Their officers were stationed in hotels in the same area. Captain J.B. Egelie of the KNIL General Staff wrote a note about the situation in the camps around the end of November. He wrote this in reaction to a news message from Aneta about the bad situation in these camps. He claims that the leisure and training possibilities were fairly good, including military training. Egelie's epistle is fairly positive. The only misfortune he describes is the fact that the Dutch soldiers are still paid as former POWs, and thus receive less salary than nearby British troops.¹⁶⁹ As it is described in this letter, the former POWs were taken care of well. Egelie however wrote this letter in response to a news post from a reporter in Singapore. It is unclear whether Egelie had visited the Bangkok camps himself. He wrote his letter from Batavia, but he could have been reported about the situation through NICA channels. A letter that was sent much later, in May 1946, clearly shows a different image of how the former POWs experienced the camps in Bangkok. According to Lieutenant-Colonel H.L. Hoornweg, from the KNIL General Staff, it was promised to these former POWs that they could quickly return to Java, if they joined the *stoottroepen*. Most soldiers wanted to return home to their families and thus joined this unit, because they thought this would be the fastest way. The army could however not fulfil this promise, and the (poorly) trained soldiers were transferred to Makassar, Celebes. Among the soldiers, there was general

166Elands, "Strijd, opheffing en erfenis", 28-29; Gouda and Brocades Zaalberg, *American visions*, 178; Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*, 68-70; McMillan, *The British occupation*, 27-28; 86.

167Groen, "Prisoners of war, prisoners of peace", 49-50 and 53.

168Brocades Zaalberg and Willems, "Onmacht, ontkenning en onderschatting", 233-235.

169NL-HaNA, NEFIS and CMI, entry number 2.10.62, inv.no. 2300: letter from Captain Egelie, HQ Batavia [4 December 1945].

dissatisfaction about their salary and the fact that they did not go to Java, as was promised.¹⁷⁰ The colonial government had estimated that these former POWs would have been better, hence the plans that were made for them.

In southern Sumatra, problems for former POWs were different than in Burma, Siam and the Philippines. In the Palembang area, the Dutch and Indonesian population was dominated by terrorist behaviour, which was not stopped by the Japanese. The senior officer in command (*Oudst aanwezend officier*) reached out to Helfrich with the request to send weapons and ammunition to the Dutch former POWs in the region. His first request, dated 24 September 1945, did not have any effect, but his second request on 6 October was forwarded to the Netherlands Staff Section in Kandy, for consultation with SEAC. Helfrich requested SEAC to send arms to Palembang, and to allow these KNIL soldiers to stay in Palembang. The Allied Land Forces in Sumatra approved of this, provided that they were equipped with British arms, not with Japanese, and that they would report to the Allied Land Forces in Sumatra, not to NICA. In this way, the British could still control the activities of these former POWs.¹⁷¹

These examples of KNIL groups from the Philippines, Thailand, Sumatra and Singapore are not the only ones, but the ones who stand out in archival sources because of their size and level of activity. Some groups were effective in their attempts to re-militarise, others were not. British forces in Java later considered some re-militarised groups as 'trigger happy', like the *Doorman* battalion.¹⁷² For this matter, one can reconsider whether it was useful for the Dutch government to form army units that consisted of Moluccan and Dutch former POWs this quickly, and let them participate in the fight against nationalist Indonesians. Already in 1945, the units that consisted of mostly Moluccan soldiers had the image of intimidating, seasoned soldiers that used extreme force.¹⁷³ During the following Independence War, this image had not changed. Indonesian KNIL soldiers were still seen, by their KL colleagues, as soldiers that could be leaned on, and that were not hesitant to use violence.¹⁷⁴

170NL-HaNA, NEFIS and CMI, access number 2.10.62, inv.no. 2306: Letter from NEFIS to Spoor on soldiers' moods in Makassar [9 May 1946].

171NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 47: Senior officer in command in Palembang to BSO [6 October 1945] and ALF Sumatra to ALFSEA [12 October 1945]; Ibidem, inv.no. 60: Letter with request for arms for former POWs from BSO to Netherlands Staff Section, Kandy [15 October 1945].

172McMillan, *The British occupation*, 86.

173Bussemaker, *Bersiap!*, 87.

174Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië*, 132, 140.

Changes and adjustments in autumn 1945

The analysis above of the changes took place in Southeast Asia after the Japanese surrender provides insight in what problems the Dutch colonial officials and army commanders encountered. They had to adapt to decisions that were made by SEAC and the British occupational force in the Netherlands East Indies, and they were affected by American and Australian decisions as well, mainly about the recovery of POWs. The Dutch tried to negotiate with the British about the options they had to repatriate former POWs to the Netherlands East Indies. During those first months after the surrender, the British made several miscalculations about the situation for the IFTUs on Java and Sumatra. On 29 September, Lord Mountbatten decided that the British forces would only occupy certain key areas in major cities, and gather IFTUs in those cities. This decision was followed by the development of a revolutionary situation, exactly what Lord Mountbatten had tried to avoid.¹⁷⁵ Between late October until early November, the situation worsened in Surabaya. British and British Indian soldiers fought with Indonesian nationalists in order to reoccupy the city. This led to immense fighting and thousands of casualties on both sides.¹⁷⁶ After the Battle of Surabaya, the British were determined to not let the situation escalate any more, and decided to not allow Dutch forces to enter the Netherlands East Indies. Because of this decision, Dutch former POWs around Southeast Asia were forced to stay in transit camps. Their living conditions will be discussed in the next chapter. In SWPA areas, the Americans wanted the Dutch POWs to leave Manila, where they had gathered around 6,700 Dutch POWs. The Americans came up with a solution that the Australians also approved of: these former POWs would be deployed in outer regions of the archipelago, like Borneo, where they would serve under Australian supervision. These KNIL troops were later moved to Java and Sumatra, when the Dutch army command was fully re-established there in 1946.

The emergence of the nationalist movement caused disagreements between the British and the Dutch about what strategy to use. The British aimed for a political agreement, while the Dutch had internal differences what to do. The government did not allow Van Mook to talk to Indonesian nationalists. In particular, it ruled out the option that it would negotiate with Indonesian nationalists like Sukarno, whom they regarded as a collaborator.¹⁷⁷ He was however convinced by Lord Mountbatten in early October to talk to

¹⁷⁵De Jong, *De terugtocht*, 25-27.

¹⁷⁶McMillan, *The British occupation*, 38-54.

¹⁷⁷De Jong, *Koninkrijk 11c*, 634.

some Republican representatives. Helfrich and Van Oyen opposed this idea.¹⁷⁸ They were convinced that the Dutch armed forces would be able to fight and defeat the nationalists. Spoor, who was optimistic about the strength of the Dutch troops, agreed with them.¹⁷⁹ Spoor's optimism contradicted with Schilling's cautious perception that around 100,000 soldiers would be needed for at least three years to reconquer the entire archipelago.¹⁸⁰ Historians have considered the theory that the Dutch government choose Spoor to become the next army commander because of his optimistic view on the strength of the Dutch army in the Netherlands East Indies.

In the post-war period, many debates were conducted about the subject whether the Dutch wanted to (gradually) decolonise the Netherlands East Indies, or did they want to fight against Indonesian nationalists to continue colonial rule?¹⁸¹ De Jong thinks that Van Mook changed his opinion from November 1945, about the idea that he wanted to restore colonial rule, to the idea that he preferred decolonisation in a federal state.¹⁸² Van den Berge agrees with De Jong on this point: Van Mook would have considered that a political solution would be the best solution.¹⁸³ Both pathways, fighting and negotiating, were chosen by the Dutch: between April 1946 and November 1949, multiple conferences were held and several agreements were made, of which only the last one, the Round Table Conference in 1949, would be effective. Shortly after the end of this conference, recognition of Indonesian independence followed on 27 December 1949.

Besides political talks with the Republic, the Netherlands also decided to continue building on a large colonial army in order to fight the Indonesian nationalists. Many Dutch leaders considered the former POWs from the KNIL unfit for military service on Java and Sumatra, because of their physical and mental unfitness, even though armed forces were much needed there. Plans for different armies were made during the Second World War, and all except one are deployed during the Independence War. At first, the Dutch had planned *gezagbataljons* (peace and order battalions). These units were sent to Southeast Asia, but were abolished in January 1946 before being put in action. The soldiers were

¹⁷⁸Groen, *Marsroutes*, 28-29, 33.

¹⁷⁹De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 56.

¹⁸⁰Idem, 180.

¹⁸¹For more scholarly work on this debate, see (among others): J.J.P. de Jong, *Diplomatie of strijd* (Meppel 1988); P.J. Drooglever, "J.J.P. de Jong, *Diplomatie of strijd*. Een analyse van het Nederlands beleid tegenover de Indonesische revolutie 1945-1947" [book review] in: *BMGN* 105:2 (1990) 308-310; J.J.P. de Jong, "Traditionalistische visie op dekolonisatie van Indië" [review essay H.W. van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië. De val van het Nederlandse imperium in Azië* (Amsterdam 2001)] in: *Internationale Spectator* January (2001) 40-44.

¹⁸²De Jong, *De terugtocht*, 44.

¹⁸³Van den Berge, *H.J. van Mook*, 210.

divided among other units.¹⁸⁴ The Marine Corps and war volunteers were only allowed to disembark in the Netherlands East Indies from March 1946. From October 1946, the Netherlands also deployed conscript soldiers overseas, after the law that prohibited deployment of conscripts outside of the Netherlands was changed. Last but not least, NICA was also deployed after the Japanese surrender, as a militarised civil organisation.

Mutual feelings of resentment between Navy (which included the Marine Corps) and KNIL were set aside, as well did Helfrich and Spoor reconcile, when they felt threatened by the powers that Van Mook, Van der Plas and other government officials assigned to NICA. This organisation was originally set up in the case the Americans liberated the Netherlands East Indies, to restore Dutch civil rule. Van Mook still thought NICA would be the organisation to carry out this task, also after the border changes to SEAC. Buurman van Vreeden, Helfrich and Spoor preferred the KNIL and Marine Corps to establish Dutch rule again. They insisted on constituting temporary Military Authority, which Van Mook opposed. He considered colonial restoration as a political matter, and preferred to keep distance from the KNIL while implementing colonial rule again.¹⁸⁵

Conclusion

The Dutch colonial rulers and army commanders had different opinions on how to re-establish colonial rule in the Netherlands East Indies. Most of the military commanders were straightforward soldiers, who preferred fighting over political discussions. They differed in opinion with the colonial politicians, of whom some preferred to negotiate with the Republicans. Generally, two sides can be distinguished: the civil approach and the military approach. Politicians like Van Mook and Van der Plas wanted to talk to Republicans, while soldiers like Helfrich, Spoor and Van Oyen had mutual differences about which strategies to use, and whether to use the colonial army or Navy and Marine Corps. Both pathways were chosen: Van Mook started to negotiate with Indonesian nationalists in October 1945, while newly recruited forces were sent overseas to join the colonial army, which was re-established in 1945 and 1946. The British occupation forces on Java had a large influence on how the political situation developed between September and November 1945, whereby the Dutch had to adjust to these changes.

Most KNIL soldiers considered the Netherlands East Indies their home. They started to form army units in their POW camps after the Japanese surrender and asked the

¹⁸⁴"Gezagbataljon Indië (GBI)", on website *Indië 1945-1950*. Consulted on 20 January 2016. See: <http://www.indie-1945-1950.nl/web/GBI.htm>.

¹⁸⁵Teitler, *De weg terug naar Indië*, 106, 119-120; De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 145-163.

government to be repatriated. However, the majority of former POWs preferred to return home over the idea of entering a new war. The only way they could return home however was to rejoin the army. As Romijn stated: "For KNIL soldiers, re-entering military service was not simply a vocation, but a survival strategy."¹⁸⁶ This is clearly visible in archival sources, like letters that KNIL soldiers in camps sent to the Dutch government and NICA, and in egodocuments that they published after the wars. These personal visions will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁸⁶Romijn, "Learning on 'the job'", 326.

Chapter 4: KNIL soldiers' opinions in letters and egodocuments

Introduction

Most Dutch former POWs of the colonial army were gathered in camps in cities around Southeast Asia, due to the difficult political and military situation in the Netherlands East Indies in autumn 1945. The Dutch government influenced how these former POWs lived and were trained again. In this chapter, the question what the soldiers themselves thought of how the government handled the situation is discussed, to demonstrate the interaction between the government and the soldiers. Historical writing used to be focused on big events and key actors. Recently, attention for common people has grown, as can be determined from the amount of egodocuments that is studied recently.¹⁸⁷ Egodocuments reveal an interesting perspective, that is not found in sources that originate from the government.

The experiences of KNIL soldiers influenced their thinking in a later time, not only when they lost their job in 1950 because of the KNIL's liquidation but also afterwards, during the remainder of the twentieth century. Many Dutch and Moluccan KNIL soldiers were thence forced to move to the Netherlands from 1950 onwards. How these people thought about this situation is important, because it adds an explanation to how the decolonisation of the Netherlands East Indies was processed in the Netherlands. Important questions that have to do with these personal opinions are the following: first, what did they say about the government's decisions for the KNIL? Second, what did the government do with these opinions? And third, how were these opinions important for the group of *Indische* people that ended up in the Netherlands after the wars? These questions add a new perspective to the general question of this thesis, how the government made plans about a certain group, how this group reacted to those plans, and how this situation was significant for what the KNIL soldiers thought about their deployment and their future with the armed forces.

Opinions of POWs

KNIL soldiers have spoken out, although not always successfully, since 1945, when the Dutch-Indische union of former POWs and internees (NIBEG, *Nederlands-Indische Bond*

187R. Dekker (ed.), *Egodocuments and history. Autobiographical writing in its social context since the Middle Ages* (Hilversum 2002).

voor *Ex-Krijgsgevangenen en Geïnterneerden*) was established in the POW camps in Siam in September 1945.¹⁸⁸ This discussion was usually about how they thought that the Dutch government mistreated them, both in moral sense and in juridical ways. This is however not loudly proclaimed. As Bussemaker states, *Indische* people were generally not the type of people that spoke out very loudly, hence the expression *Indisch zwijgen* (Indisch muteness).¹⁸⁹ Bussemaker's book on how the *Indische* community tried to receive acknowledgement after the Second World War shows the difficulties that apparently belong with decolonisation, such as legal recognition of wartime injuries, both material and physical. The first main problem was the 'backpay', the payment of wages to colonial soldiers and administrators during their imprisonment by the Japanese, a second one was about their abrupt resignation of the KNIL in 1950. There was general misunderstanding between people from the Netherlands and from the former Netherlands East Indies about experiences during Second World War and Independence War and about colonial life in general. A third point was social problems that people of mixed descent encountered, not only Indo-Dutch people after moving to the Netherlands, but also people in Indonesia with a Dutch ancestor.¹⁹⁰ All of these problems started the moment the Second World War was over: when the KNIL soldiers were remilitarised, over-deployed during the Independence War, and dismissed in 1950. After that year, many of the Dutch soldiers were sent to the Netherlands, which was not 'going home' for most of them. In particular the years 1945 and 1950 were decisive for the soldiers' opinions about decisions of the colonial government.

Egodocuments are a great source of personal information, that is not found in sources that were produced by a government. Sadly, a large-scale research into egodocuments of KNIL soldiers is not yet conducted. Many egodocuments of KNIL soldiers still lie in archives and libraries to be researched for information about warfare, military culture and war crimes. Sadly, the egodocuments from the 1940s usually cover one war, or the other, and not the time period in between, which is essential for this current research. Therefore, three egodocuments and four letters are shown here. These are not necessarily representative for the entire group of KNIL soldiers. Complemented with literature from Bussemaker and Meijer, these writings provide an example of how the KNIL soldiers thought of how their government handled the postwar situation. These opinions

188H. Meijer, *Indische rekening. Indië, Nederland en de backpay-kwestie 1945-2005* (Amsterdam 2005) 28.

189Bussemaker, *Indisch verdriet*, 7.

190A. Wietsma and S. Scagliola, *Liefde in tijden van oorlog. Onze jongens en hun verzwegen kinderen in de Oost* (Amsterdam 2013) 203-215.

can be found in both egodocuments and letters, that the soldiers wrote to the government and their family.

The first egodocument that is discussed below is Giovanni Hakkenberg's. Hakkenberg was not a KNIL soldier, but served in the Royal Navy in Surabaya when the Second World War broke out. His experiences during and after the war are nevertheless similar to those of KNIL soldiers.¹⁹¹ The second egodocument is written by Lodewijk Koppijn, who joined the colonial army after his youth in Amsterdam. Koppijn's egodocument has a bitter and sarcastic tone.¹⁹² The third egodocument is written by KNIL sergeant J. a, a *totok* who joined the KNIL as a twenty-year-old. He extensively describes the living conditions of former POWs in Siam.¹⁹³

Another interesting source of KNIL soldiers' opinions are letters they wrote to the Dutch government. The government was, as is earlier discussed, not prepared for the end of the war and although different organisations for recovery of POWs and civilians were established, these organisations were unable to do all the work they had to do. Also, the British prohibition to return to Java and Sumatra heavily influenced this situation. More than 11.000 POWs were left in camps for months, waiting for the Dutch government to recover them.¹⁹⁴ Other Allies recovered their former interned personnel and civilians much quicker. KNIL soldiers in those camps sent letters to the Queen and NICA, in order to ask for their help. A few of these letters are preserved in the National Archive, and they were also discussed during meetings of the Dutch War Council (*Raad voor Oorlogvoering*) in autumn 1945.

The division into SEAC and SWPA areas caused a great difference in the way the POWs were treated, how well they were treated, and how the communication with their country of origin was could take place. In the SEAC areas, the British provided little information to the POWs and left most work to the Dutch. Great Britain and Australia even argued on who was going to take care of Borneo and eastern regions of the Netherlands East Indies, and because of this quarrel, they arrived in these regions later, from 5 September. Americans had taken better preparations. First, they did not discuss with their Allies on how POWs were rescued, but simply decided that they were going to evacuate

191J. Bosman and R. Escher, *Giovanni Hakkenberg. Mens en marinier* (s.l. 2010).

192L. Koppijn, *Pa Koppijn. De geschiedenis van een Jordaanse jongen die naar Nederlands-Indië ging* (Zoetermeer 2012).

193J. Muller, *Doorbraak naar het onvoltooid verleden. Authobiografie van een sergeant van het voormalig Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog tegen Japan* (Leiderdorp 1995).

194NL-HaNA, NEFIS and CMI, entry number 2.10.62, inv.no. 2300: letter from Captain Egelie, HQ Batavia [4 December 1945].

them to Manila, using ships and airplanes. Second, LOC teams arrived there quite soon: on 21 and 22 August, a team of 27 Dutchmen arrived in the Philippines. Around 6,700 Dutch former POWs were evacuated from Japan to the Philippines, where they received extensive medical care to recover.¹⁹⁵ The conclusion can be drawn that the Americans undertook their recovery task much better than the generally underprepared British, who did not have enough resources and manpower to carry out all the tasks they had to do.¹⁹⁶

Letters to the authorities

When Dutch soldiers noticed that they had to stay in the transit camps much longer than their fellow former POWs of other nationalities, they started to express their dissatisfaction about this. Around 6,700 KNIL soldiers from Manilla were transported relatively quickly, in november 1945, to the outer islands of the archipelago (the *Grote Oost*), where they were joined by two batallions from Bangkok in January 1946. Around 9,000 former POWs in Bangkok and 6,300 in Singapore were still waiting for repatriation in January 1946.¹⁹⁷ A few months earlier, in autumn 1945, Dutch former POWs reached out to their (colonial) government and to NICA for support. The letters they wrote were not only personal epistles on the disappointment about their living conditions, but also formal requests for permission to form an army unit and be equipped with weapons. These were mainly addressed to NICA senior officers, or on a later date, to Queen Wilhelmina. Letters that were written by former POWs in Siam were usually addressed to the head of the Dutch Military Mission in Bangkok, Colonel J.B. Haverkorn van Rijzewijk, who was the first contact for the former POWs there. Letters to NICA were handled within NICA, the letters to the Queen were discussed in the War Council meetings.¹⁹⁸ Haverkorn was repeatedly contacted by KNIL soldiers around Bangkok, with requests for reunification with their spouses, who worked as nurses for RAPWI and happened to be deployed in the same area.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵Groen, "Prisoners of war, prisoners of peace", 48-49.

¹⁹⁶Dennis, *Troubled days of peace*, 226-228.

¹⁹⁷Groen, "Prisoners of war, prisoners of peace", 54.

¹⁹⁸These letters are stored within these archives: NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 60: Letter from Major A.G. Mantel, former POW in 5-FAHRU camp in Rangoon, Burma, to General-Major Weyerman, NICA, Kandy [6 November 1945]; NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 68: Letter and appendix from Lieutenant-Colonel H.L. Scheurer, former POW in Rangoon, to General-Major Weyerman, NICA, Kandy [11 October 1945]; National Archive, The Hague, Ministry of Defence: Troop command Siam, Dutch Military Mission Bangkok, (1942) 1945-1953, entry number 2.13.108, inventory number 13: letters from different former POWs to Colonel J.B. Haverkorn van Rijzewijk, head of the Dutch Military Mission in Bangkok.

¹⁹⁹NL-HaNA, Military Mission Bangkok, 2.13.108, inv.no. 13: two letters from former POWs to Haverkorn [12 November 1945 and 15 December 1945].

The first letter to be discussed here is written by A.G. Mantel, who was an Artillery Major in the KNIL imprisoned in Burma. Mantel contacted General-Major Weyerman on 6 November 1945. He requested two things, one personal and one for the recently established army company in Rangoon, from where he was writing his letter. This handwritten, long and emotional letter to Weyerman is probably one of many, although this is so far the only one in this inventory number.²⁰⁰ Mantel had asked his *overste* Lieutenant-Colonel Scheurer, the senior officer in command, whether the bored and worried KNIL soldiers were allowed to start exercise, but RAPWI Rangoon initially refused this request. After the situation on Java worsened in October 1945, another request was forwarded to ALFSEA, and Mantel and Scheurer were permitted to form a company out of soldiers that were considered healthy by the medical officers. Mantel's personal request to Weyerman was to be transferred to a different army unit, since his prewar experience in the military was not in as a troop commanding officer, but in artillery. His experience would be more useful elsewhere.²⁰¹ Unfortunately, no response letter was found in the archives.

Another letter, with appendix, by the aforementioned Scheurer is also found in the archive. Scheurer sent a letter to Weyerman in October 1945, in which he explained the request to ALFSEA and also mentioned the approval to form a company. Scheurer offered Weyerman around 240 Dutch KNIL soldiers, former POWs, including twenty officers and two NCO's, who were ready for deployment. Scheurer also mentioned, as one of the few, the displaced Javanese persons that were not taken care of by RAPWI. Scheurer's other letter in the appendix to his letter to Weyerman was addressed to RAPWI, and contained the request to move with the group of former POWs to a camp that was more suitable for training and living, also to improve moral among the troops. Approximately half of the former POWs were, in Scheurer's eyes, fit for active service.²⁰² Scheurer's letters were more formal, and contained no personal requests. Unfortunately, no more letters about the further formation of this company in Rangoon have been found so far.

Also stored in the National Archive is a letter written by KNIL soldier Josef Crutzen, originally from Kerkrade, where his family still lived. His letter from Bangkok dates 15

200NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 60: Letter from Major A.G. Mantel, former POW in 5-FAHRU camp in Rangoon, Burma, to General-Major Weyerman, NICA, Kandy [6 November 1945].

201NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 60: Letter from Major A.G. Mantel, former POW in 5-FAHRU camp in Rangoon, Burma, to General-Major Weyerman, NICA, Kandy [6 November 1945].

202NL-HaNA, Dutch Liaison Missions to GHQ and ALFSEA, 2.13.130, inv.no. 68: Letter and appendix from Lieutenant-Colonel H.L. Scheurer, former POW in Rangoon, to General-Major Weyerman, NICA, Kandy [11 October 1945].

February 1946, a little later than the discussed letters above. Crutzen commenced his letter with the message that he now wanted to write about how the living situation in the former POW camp was, and to be truly honest about his situation. He mentioned that the situation was not better than when they were still in Japanese imprisonment, and he continued with a description of how the Dutch former POWs lived in the transit camp in Bangkok. They slept on the floor, they were mistreated by the British and American supervisors, the money they received was used for buying food since the food they received was often of a bad quality. He also indicated the differences with the Dutch officers, who were also former POWs. They were situated in better quarters, they had more spare time and received better and more food. When the soldiers complained with their officers about their living conditions, they shrugged and said "We are working on it", which clearly did not happen.²⁰³

Another interesting remark in his letter is how Crutzen and his fellows thought about the Dutch plans to let them re-enter military service. Despite their physical conditions, the Dutch commanders still had plans to deploy them on Java again. Crutzen wrote: "No, my dear father, there is no one among the boys, who feels like doing that. They, the lords superior, caused this because of their own actions. The Dutch officers agreed with everything. They do not care about the fate of their subordinates. Why not? Because they, the lords superior, are doing fine." This corresponds with Romijn's statement that most KNIL soldiers were not eager to fight, but re-entered military service as a survival strategy. They had no other option. In an egodocument that is handled below, this perspective is discussed more extensively.²⁰⁴

In his final paragraph, Crutzen asks his father to publish the letter, so that others also know about their horrible situation.²⁰⁵ Crutzen's father did not forward his son's letter to a newspaper,²⁰⁶ but his father sent the letter to the Queen directly after receiving it on 6 March 1946. It took the government over three months to answer, which it did with a general message that was not specified into Crutzen's situation. On behalf of the Queen and the Minister of Colonies, an answer was sent to Crutzen's father about his son's long stay in Siam. It contained these two points: First, a re-inspection committee had to check

203National Archive, The Hague, Commissariat for Indische Affairs, entry number 2.10.49, inventory number 3335: file with letter and decision on complaints received about the situation in Thailand [27 June 1946].

204NL-HaNA, Commissariat for Indische Affairs, 2.10.49, inv.no. 3335: file with letter and decision on complaints received about the situation in Thailand [27 June 1946]; Romijn, "Learning on 'the job'", 326.

205NL-HaNA, Commissariat for Indische Affairs, 2.10.49, inv.no. 3335: file with letter and decision on complaints received about the situation in Thailand [27 June 1946].

206At least, no relevant hits came up in Delpher. Website consulted on 26 February 2016.

all the former POWs on their fitness, and second, the highest priority for shipping is granted to those who need it the most. This response did not mention anything specific on Crutzen's case and was therefore useless for him personally.²⁰⁷ It is however interesting to see how long it took before the Dutch government decided on this matter and answered, while the War Council discussed other letters shortly after receiving. The government, and foremost Spoor, not only wanted to verify the fitness of the former POWs, it also wanted to re-check their reliability, concerning possible incorrect behaviour during the Second World War.²⁰⁸

A letter that did reach the newspapers was one written by a group of former POWs. On 12 March 1946, The Curaçaoean newspaper *Amigoe di Curaçao* published a press statement that was released through Aneta, a press agency in the Netherlands East Indies. In this statement, former POWs stated that they were the 'forgotten men' during this war. They stated that they were living in a situation that “resembles a life as a prisoner, in contrast with the American and British POWs that have already been repatriated.”²⁰⁹ This press statement, that reached Curaçao through Aneta, did not reach any other newspapers, not in the Netherlands, nor in the Netherlands East Indies.

Government reactions to these letters

It was not clear for every letter whether and how the Dutch government and NICA responded. The Dutch however were aware of the situation in Bangkok through letters from other KNIL soldiers, which were sent in autumn 1945.²¹⁰ In the Dutch War Council meeting of 31 October 1945, this was discussed for the first time when former POWs had reached out to their government about their critical living situation. Prime Minister W. Schermerhorn had received a letter from a group of KNIL soldiers that had not heard anything of the Dutch after the war, until the moment of writing on 21 October. Minister E.N. van Kleffens, of the Department for Foreign Affairs, thereat described the difficult situation in Bangkok, where the government had to improvise a Dutch mission. He criticised the British and Australians, of whom he said that they only cared for their own citizens. That this was not the situation, can be seen from a letter that is discussed the week after. The provisionally mission that had been sent to Bangkok was intended to improve the situation, while attempts to improve mail connections between the

207NL-HaNA, Commissariat for Indische Affairs, 2.10.49, inv.no. 3335: file with letter and decision on complaints received about the situation in Thailand [27 June 1946].

208De Moor, *Generaal Spoor*, 175.

209*Amigoe di Curaçao*, 12 March 1946.

210These letters were discussed in the War Council meetings, but are not included in the *NIB*.

Netherlands and Batavia were halfway there.²¹¹

The following week during the War Council meeting, Schermerhorn again mentioned lots of letters he received from former POWs in Siam. These letters all reported the same situation: former POWs had a total lack of attention from the Dutch side, but received more than enough care from the British. Van Kleffens' criticism that the British did not take care of the Dutch POWs was possibly intended in the case of help to the Dutch government, not to the Dutch POWs. Irritation between the governments existed since the transfer of responsibilities about the Netherlands East Indies to SEAC. Schermerhorn wanted this situation about these POWs to change, and asked his Minister for Colonies to provide more possibilities for relaxing and recreation. Again, the difficult mail connection with Batavia was put forward. Two things were considered necessary for the former POWs: physical and mental care, and re-formation into army units, for which they would need arms and other equipment. The War Council decided on asking the British War Office for armature and equipment for around 12.000 soldiers.²¹² Getting equipment and weaponry was of course a necessary step, but the Dutch politicians did not hesitate to directly think of asking their Allies for this, instead of reflecting whether they could have done something themselves. Also, it now looks like nothing about the physical and mental care for the POWs is discussed, which would have been the first logical step in attempting to re-establish the army. Another topic that was not discussed is whether these former POWs, who had been imprisoned and forced to work for the past three and a half years, were willing to fight again. That they were not eager to take up arms, is clear from their personal statements in egodocuments.

Egodocuments

It seems that there is a tradition of publishing one's personal letters or diaries from the time someone spent in the Netherlands East Indies. From the nineteenth century, these were mainly documents written by missionaries and employees of the *Binnenlands Bestuur* (BB, the colonial administration), and soldiers reporting on the Aceh war. For the twentieth century, many egodocuments from the Second World War reported on internment and forced labour, and also lots of soldiers published their egodocuments on the time they spent in Indonesia during the Independence War.²¹³ In egodocuments on both these wars,

²¹¹NIB I, no. 274.

²¹²NIB I, no. 316.

²¹³Heijmans-Van Bruggen, *De Japanse bezetting in dagboeken*; Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië*; Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog*.

KNIL soldiers also reported on their experiences directly after the Japanese surrender, when the Second World War had ended but when they had not returned to the Netherlands East Indies yet. This situation was similar for soldiers from KNIL and Navy, and of course for civil internees. It is therefore insignificant with which armed forces the POWs served, since their experiences were more or less the same when they were captured and imprisoned at the same place and time.

The first egodocument that is discussed here is from Giovanni Hakkenberg. *Mens en marinier* is a biography based on Hakkenberg's personal memoirs and testimonies. Hakkenberg served in the Navy but his wartime experiences were similar to those of KNIL soldiers. After the completion of the Burma-Siam railway, Hakkenberg had been transported to Japan to continue his forced labour. He was later liberated there by the Americans, and was transported to recover in Manila. From there, other POWs from Great Britain, Australia and the United States could be repatriated quickly, but Dutch former POWs were left waiting. The situation that no one could provide information about his family back in the Netherlands East Indies, is described comprehensively in his memoirs. Only scarce rumours on the political situation reached the transit camps in the Philippines. In particular Hakkenberg's fellow Indo-Dutch POWs, who had families in Java and Sumatra, were worried sick about the hopeless situation at home.²¹⁴

A KNIL soldier who wrote extensively about his experiences in the period after the surrender was Lodewijk Koppijn, who compares the situation of the Dutch former POWs with his fellow POWs from Australia and Great Britain. The Australians who worked in the kitchens of the POWs camps after the Japanese surrender still had their payment books, and were weekly paid for their work. The Dutch, in Koppijn's words, did not receive any salary: "*Wij kregen geen barst.*"²¹⁵ Koppijn was ordered to train Dutch troops in Singapore until August 1946, whereafter he was allowed to return home on his own.²¹⁶ He was not supported by the colonial government with how to contact his family in Ambon, where his spouse and children apparently had fallen sick, as he was not supported with returning home.

Sergeant J. Muller was another soldier who published about his experiences during the Second World War. In his autobiography, he describes how the Japanese were ordered to gather the former POWs in Changi, near Singapore. A few hours after arrival

²¹⁴Bosman and Escher, *Giovanni Hakkenberg*, 105-108.

²¹⁵Koppijn, *Pa Koppijn*, 184.

²¹⁶Koppijn, *Pa Koppijn*, 190-191.

there, the Americans already collected some their own by airplane.²¹⁷ It took the Dutch however much more time to repatriate their soldiers, who were impatient to return home: "The former POWs felt abandoned by their own government. All the other nations had left. It was to cry about, which many did!!"²¹⁸ Muller wrote how new army units were formed in Singapore. Only very sick men were spared, the others were summoned: "One could count on being deployed again in the new war. There was no other possibility. There were no fresh troops. Every manpower that we had during the war, was made prisoner of war by the Japs, and civilians were interned."²¹⁹ Muller also expresses his feelings about the British temporary authority over the Netherlands East Indies. He thinks it is ridiculous that the Dutch had to ask permission to the British before they could re-enter their colony again. He blames the Dutch government for its weak attitude on a political level.²²⁰

Significance of these opinions

It is very difficult to deduce a conclusion from a small number of personal testimonies such as analysed in this research. Scholars should act carefully with these personal information, however in large amounts and combined with other sources, they can be used for historical research. The ideas that KNIL soldiers sketched in egodocuments however reflect thoughts that can be found in existing literature.²²¹ Personal opinions about the actions of the Dutch government were not positive, neither are they very different from each other. In general, KNIL soldiers missed home, family, clothing and other aspects to create a slightly more comfortable living situation and to improve their physical condition after three years of internment and forced labour. Also, lack of attention and information from the government is an important and recurrent complaint. As Josef Crutzen wrote in the letter to his father, many KNIL soldiers did not want to return into military service after their mistreatment. The statement in Hakkenberg's egodocument, that most soldiers primarily wanted to return to the Netherlands East Indies to be reunited with their families, not to fight against Indonesian nationalists, is supported by archival sources that are used in chapter 3. Initially, most Indo-Dutch colleagues of Hakkenberg were not against the establishment of an independent republic instead of Dutch rule in the archipelago.²²² Other soldiers criticised the weak attitude of the Dutch government, especially concerning the

²¹⁷Muller, *Doorbraak*, 142-143.

²¹⁸Idem, 146.

²¹⁹Muller, *Doorbraak*, 1148-149.

²²⁰Idem, 149.

²²¹Bussemaker, *Indisch verdriet*.

²²²Bosman and Escher, *Giovanni Hakkenberg*, 107.

British occupation.²²³

These personal testimonies are important since they demonstrate the differences between the ideas the Dutch (colonial) government had about re-establishment of the KNIL, and the reasons the KNIL soldiers themselves had for why they wanted to return to the Netherlands East Indies. The soldiers' physical and mental situation in fall 1945 was bad, and the government not only highly underestimated this, but also choose to ignore it. These soldiers were necessary in order to fight. This becomes clear from the War Council meeting reports and archival reports.²²⁴ Most KNIL soldiers had not seen their families for years and many of them did not know whether their families were safe. Most soldiers were considered fit for duty due to the high need of experienced soldiers. Even though they were not fit, most soldiers wanted to return to their families and thus did not oppose this decision, since this was the only way they could return to their families as soon as possible. Most KNIL soldiers subsequently had to serve until December 1947 or January 1948 before they were allowed to go on a longer leave. Some war volunteers, who were in service since the summer of 1945 and were on active duty since March 1946, were even allowed to return to the Netherlands before the KNIL soldiers were allowed to go on leave. The reason why the government hesitated to send these soldiers on a leave earlier, was because of their knowledge about the colonial society and thus their value for the armed forces.²²⁵ These differences demonstrate the recurring misunderstanding between The Hague government and the people in the Netherlands East Indies who were subject of everything that was decided for them, and also shows the need for experienced soldiers in the Independence War. Between 70,000 and 80,000 soldiers were deployed in a newly reformed KNIL between 1945 and 1950. Their knowledge about colonial warfare was indispensable. Their attitude was often seen as violent, which was both respected and feared.²²⁶

Aftermath and decolonisation

After the recognition of the Indonesian Republic and the subsequent liquidation of the

²²³Muller, *Doorbraak*, 149.

²²⁴*NIB* I, no. 316; NL-HaNA, Armed forces Netherlands East Indies, 2.13.132, inv.no. 1448: letter from Lieutenant-General Spoor to the Lieutenant-Governor-General, about the replacement of war volunteers and KNIL soldiers [15 December 1947].

²²⁵NL-HaNA, Armed forces Netherlands East Indies, 2.13.132, inv.no. 1448: letter from Lieutenant-General Spoor to the Lieutenant-Governor-General, about the replacement of war volunteers and KNIL soldiers [15 December 1947]; H. Meijer and T. Brocades Zaalberg, "De verloren slag om het moederland. De ervaringen van KNIL-militairen 1944-1951", in: H. Piersma, *Mensenheugenis. Terugkeer en opvang na de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Getuigenissen* (Amsterdam 2001) 229-256, there 233-234 and 237.

²²⁶Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië*, 19, 128-129.

colonial army on 26 July 1950, its soldiers were no longer needed in Indonesia. Most Dutch soldiers went (back) to the Netherlands, but for Indonesians in the colonial army, an uncertain period began. Besides the option to demobilise, they were offered a transfer to the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI, the army of the Indonesian Republic). Most Moluccan soldiers did not want to transfer since they felt a stronger connection with the Moluccas, and saw Republicans as their opponent. In 1950, a group of Moluccans proclaimed the Republic of South Moluccas (Republik Maluku Selatan, RMS), that led to a revolt that was knocked down by the Indonesian government in November 1950. After these events, many Moluccan soldiers refused to demobilise in the Moluccas and the Dutch government decided to transport these KNIL soldiers and their families to the Netherlands in 1951, where they originally would stay for 6 months at most and thereafter would return to Indonesia. Around 12,500 Moluccans ended up in the Netherlands, where they were housed in army barracks and former German internment camps that were not temporary in the end. The government decided to dismiss the Moluccans from the KNIL, which was against agreements made earlier. The presence of Moluccans in the Netherlands continued to be problematic. Moluccan violence reached its climax during the train hijacking at De Punt in 1977. After this, the Moluccan dispute would go on until 1986, when relations between the Dutch government and Moluccans were normalised. The majority of the Moluccans in the Netherlands lived in closed communities or special neighbourhoods during the twentieth century.²²⁷

Another lingering problem that was only settled recently, in January 2016, is the so-called backpay affair.²²⁸ The Dutch government argued that they were not required to pay wages to their employers and soldiers during the Japanese occupation. Formally-legally the government was right about this, but in every other aspect, the government had a weak position.²²⁹ Meijer's book about this question demonstrates the difficulties Indische and Moluccan veterans encountered in their struggle with the Dutch government to finally receive recognition. The decolonisation of the Netherlands East Indies and some of its problems were in particular significant for the soldiers of the colonial army, of all different origins, and for (Indo-)Dutch civilians that used to live in the Netherlands East Indies and

²²⁷Bussemaker, *Indisch verdriet*, 54; Meijer and Brocades Zaalberg, "De verloren slag om het moederland", 253-254; F. Steijlen, "In and out of uniform. Moluccan soldiers in the Dutch colonial army", in: E. Storm and A. Al Tuma, *Colonial soldiers in Europe 1914-1945. 'Aliens in uniform' in wartime societies* (2015) 229-248, there 238-244.

²²⁸See: <http://nos.nl/artikel/2080073-staat-keert-eerste-geld-uit-aan-indische-ambtenaren-en-militairen.html>. Consulted on 5 February 2016.

²²⁹Meijer, *Indische rekening*, 45-46.

moved to the Netherlands in the 1940s and 1950s.

Conclusion

Personal testimonies from letters, found in archives, and published egodocuments demonstrate how KNIL soldiers thought the Dutch government handled the post-war situation. It is researched how these opinions were significant for what the KNIL soldiers, and with them other Indische people, thought of the actions of the Dutch government during the decolonisation period and its aftermath during in twentieth century. The attitude that the government had concerning the KNIL problems was crucial for how the veterans reflected on the colonial period. They felt disrespected and not taken seriously, as is shown in the backpay affair. In 1945, they reached out for help through letters to the Queen and NICA. These letters show a picture of a spineless government. During War Council meetings, Dutch politicians also did not seem willing and capable to solve the problems that were addressed in these letters. Like the letters, the egodocuments complement the bigger picture, which is more extensively demonstrated in books by Bussemaker and Meijer. This shows how the colonial government miscalculated the capacities of the KNIL after the Second World War, how KNIL soldiers were over-deployed during the Independence War, and how the Dutch government disrespected its soldiers after the liquidation of the colonial army.

Conclusion

Between 1942 and 1949, two successive wars took place in the Netherlands East Indies. First, the Second World War resulted in the Japanese occupation, that started on 8 March 1942. Shortly after the surrender of the Japanese army on 15 August, Indonesian nationalists proclaimed the independent *Republik Indonesia* on 17 August 1945. The Netherlands did not want to give up its colony and this resulted in the Indonesian Independence War, which endured until 27 December 1949. On that date, the Netherlands recognised Indonesian independence. Dutch troops withdrew in the course of 1950. The colonial army played a significant role in both wars. The KNIL was established in 1830 and had fought, and won, several conflicts before it was defeated by the Japanese army in 1942. During the Second World War, the colonial government and army leaders who had gone into exile, made plans for re-establishment of the KNIL after the war. This thesis researches these plans and the outcomes and adjustments to these plans. More specific, this research is first about the plans that were made during the Second World War, second, about the adjustments to these plans, that had to be made between 15 August 1945 and March 1946, due to changes that took place in autumn 1945, and third, what the KNIL soldiers themselves thought about how the colonial government handled the situation. This thesis research focuses on expectations that both sides, the government and the soldiers, had about the re-establishment of the colonial army. These expectations often were mismanaged, when plans had to be adjusted again to new situations.

During the Japanese occupation, the Dutch colonial leaders started planning their return to the colony. They had different opinions about whether they wanted to participate in fighting against Japan. This choice was also associated with the idea that the Dutch had to choose between the United States or Great Britain as their main ally. Helfrich wanted the KNIL and Royal Navy to participate in the war, in co-operation with the British. Spoor also preferred a strong KNIL, but wanted to leave the fighting to the Americans. Van Mook wanted to leave the fighting to the Americans as well, but preferred NICA to take up the task of restoring colonial rule, since he considered that a civil-political task, not a military one. In a typical Dutch tradition, the final solution was a compromise: different new armed forces were set up, as well as the civil organisation NICA. Plans for a Marine Corps, that was trained in the United States, were carried out. War volunteers were recruited in the Netherlands from 1944 and partly trained in Great Britain. Soldiers joined these armed forces with the idea

that they would participate in fighting against Japan, but the purpose of their deployment changed into restoring 'peace and order' and fighting against Indonesian nationalists after 17 August 1945. The Dutch had assumed that former POWs could return to work for recovery organisations and the KNIL after their imprisonment, but their physical and mental condition did not allow them to work. Other plans were adjusted, such as the cancellation of the Australian offer to house and train Dutch forces, and the changes in American strategy in how to defeat the Japanese. These international developments heavily influenced the Dutch planning for restoration of colonial rule.

After the start of the Japanese occupation, soldiers of the KNIL were captured. Some of them, mostly Javanese, were released after a few months, while most Dutch soldiers were used as forced labourers during the entire war. After the Second World War ended, the Americans and British recovered the POWs. In SWPA areas, the Americans gathered them in Manila, where they stayed until the Americans and Australians decided to move these troops to Borneo. In British areas, the former POWs were recovered and brought to central cities, where they were forced to wait for months until they were allowed onto Java and Sumatra. There, they joined interest groups, that served as provisional army units as well.

The Indonesian independence proclamation was followed by a violent revolutionary period, that aggravated after the arrival of British forces and Dutch NICA members late September 1945. The presence of newly formed KNIL groups, that consisted of Moluccans and Dutch former POWs, British and British Indian soldiers, provoked violence with Indonesian nationalists. The Indonesian nationalist movement was supported by *pemuda* that did not hesitate to use violence against these newly established army units, but also against civilians inside and outside Japanese internment camps. British forces were unable to control the situation and decided to only occupy key areas on Java and Sumatra. This failed strategy and the severe outcomes of the Battle of Surabaya made the British decide to not allow more Dutch troops to repatriate to Java and Sumatra, since their presence could provoke more violence. This decision meant that KNIL soldiers were forced to stay in camps around Southeast Asia, some of them even until the summer of 1946. For this reason, re-establishment of the KNIL was impeded. Dutch plans had to be adjusted to the political situation in the Netherlands East Indies and the subsequent British decisions.

British and Dutch leaders disagreed on the strategy that they wanted to use in restoration of colonial rule. Army leaders preferred to fight the armed nationalists, while

colonial politicians Van Mook and Van der Plas eventually admitted to talking with the republican leaders. During the remaining time of the Indonesian Independence War, this difference of opinion between army and politicians would exist. Disagreements between colonial leaders and Hague politicians whether to negotiate with Republicans also remained: 'The Hague' wanted to decide on colonial policy, while colonial leaders claimed to know more about the local situation, and thus wanted to decide themselves.

After the Japanese surrender, colonial leaders had false expectations about the condition of the former POWs. They assumed that these men could recover quickly and be deployed again soon. Most former POWs however were war-weary and wanted to return home to the Netherlands East Indies to be united with their families again. They described their living conditions during and after the Second World War in their egodocuments, and reached out for help about their miserable post-war situation in letters to the Queen and organisations like NICA. Between the army command and colonial government on the one side, and the KNIL soldiers on the other side, expectations about the possibilities of the KNIL were thus very different. Many former POWs continued to experience mental and physical difficulties after re-establishment of the colonial army, although they had been considered fit for duty.

Between 1945 and 1950, the KNIL was able to redeem some of its pre-war honour. For the around 130,000 newly arrived soldiers, war volunteers and conscripts, from the Netherlands, the knowledge and experience of KNIL soldiers in fighting colonial wars was indispensable. After the recognition of independence in 1949, the KNIL was liquidated on 26 July 1950. Its soldiers were demobilised or transferred to the KL or TNI. After failed tries to find a solution for Moluccan KNIL soldiers, who did not want to transfer to the Indonesian Republic's army, it was decided that they would be transported to the Netherlands. The government's attitude about the KNIL soldiers in 1945 influenced the soldiers' thinking in 1950 and during the aftermath of decolonisation. KNIL soldiers felt disrespected, as is also clear from the backpay affair. This standoff was only settled in early 2016, when the Dutch government decided to pay the last salaries of former POWs. It did not do this for legal obligations, but because of 'moral responsibilities'. The feelings of disrespect and undervaluation that KNIL soldiers had, seem to have never disappeared.

Dutch colonial leaders had several expectations for restoration of colonial rule and re-establishment of the KNIL in the Netherlands East Indies, of which many were mismanaged. The colonial government could not live up to prior promises it had made to

its colonial soldiers, due to international developments and changes. The colonial leaders' hubristic attitude made them ignorant for changes that had developed, while at the same time they were unable to influence many international decisions that were made about the Netherlands East Indies. The colonial government underestimated the strength of the nationalist movement, both in dispersion of ideas and in military power. Also underestimated was the severity of the Japanese occupation and forced labour that the POWs experienced. The Dutch were dependent on the Allies, who took many decisions that influenced the Netherlands East Indies. It seems that the Dutch were incapable and unwilling to change this situation. This however could be subject of more research, that both addresses international problems and developments, as well as Dutch reactions to it. This thesis research aims to provide insight in a difficult and 'forgotten' period in history, which was very important for the course of the Independence War and thus for the decolonisation of the Netherlands East Indies and the end of the Dutch Empire.

List of abbreviations

ALFSEA	Allied Land Forces Southeast Asia
BB	Binnenlands Bestuur
BS	Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten
BSO	Bevelhebber Strijdkrachten in het Oosten
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
IFTU	Inhabitants friendly to us
KDP	Kantoor Displaced Persons
KL	Koninklijke Landmacht
KNIL	Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger
KM	Koninklijke Marine
LOC	Leger Organisatie Centrum
NA	National Archive, The Hague
NEFIS	Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service
NIBEG	Nederlands-Indische Bond voor Ex-Krijgsgevangenen en Geïnterneerden
NICA	Netherlands Indies Civil Administration
POW	Prisoner of war
RAPWI	Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees
SACSEA	Supreme Allied Commander Southeast Asia
SEAC	Southeast Asia Command
SWPA	Southwest Pacific Area
TNI	Tentara Nasional Indonesia

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