The German menace

During the Russo-Japanese War, the Netherlands Indies had run the risk of becoming a base of operations for one of the belligerents. The same happened, albeit somewhat differently, in the initial years of the Great War. Berlin did all it could to exploit its alliance with Turkey. One of the results was the combined effort of the German government and Indian revolutionaries to subvert colonial rule in the British colonies and protectorates. The scheme had its origin in San Francisco with the Ghadr (Mutiny) movement. The Ghadr movement had been founded in 1913 by an Indian exile, Har Dayal, a twenty-three-year-old former Oxford student. Its name recalled the Indian Mutiny of 1857 and explained the aims of the movement. Members fanned out over the world from the United States to accomplish what Ghadr stood for. Before the war, Indian refugees in San Francisco had already put out feelers to find out whether Berlin was prepared to support an insurrection in British India with weapons and money once war between Germany and Great Britain had been declared. The initiative had come from Har Dayal. Berlin responded positively. Both the Kaiser and General H.J.L. von Moltke, the chief of the German General Staff at the beginning of the war, had no difficulty imagining what could be accomplished by inciting Muslims in India and the Near East to rise up against Great Britain once Great Britain and Germany were at war (Ferguson 2001:213). In Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, New York and other American cities, German diplomats, other German citizens, and people of German descent started to cooperate with Indians to plan an uprising in the British colonies.

Soon after the first contacts had been made Har Dayal was arrested by the American authorities. He broke bail and fled to Switzerland, then the refuge of all kinds of agitators from all over the world (Hopkirk 1994:48-50). Geneva was the home of the Club of Egyptian Patriots, a group of anti-British Egyptians meeting once a week in the house of Rifat. Others were active in Zurich. Here a group styling itself Pro India, which had chosen ‘India without the English, India for the Hindus’ as its motto, had been founded in 1912. Its members included E.F.E. Douwes Dekker’s old acquaintances Walter Strickland and Shiyamaji Krishnavarma. Pro India published a magazine under the same name.
The idea of hurting Great Britain, France, and Russia by instigating unrest among their Muslim and Hindu subjects gained new momentum after July 1914. The scheme was enthusiastically supported by the Kaiser and Von Moltke. No time was lost effectuating a plan. The combined force of anti-colonial propaganda, calls for a holy war, feelings of religious solidarity, and agitation by agents recruited by the Germano-Indian conspiracy was a powerful factor in undermining British rule. After Turkey had entered the war it assumed even greater proportions. Coupled with rumours about Allied setbacks in Europe and the reports of the enormous number of soldiers who died on the battlefields, the Germano-Indian plot created plenty of unrest in British colonies. France was also not spared the effects of the anti-Allied propaganda. In Madagascar people inspired by ‘fallacious literature’ tried to poison the officers and non-commissioned officers of the French troops stationed in the island. They failed.¹

With the Ottoman Empire as its enemy Great Britain had to exercise great prudence in employing Indian and other Asian soldiers abroad. Anti-British propaganda made the task all the more urgent. Revolutionary Indians set out to foment unrest among Indian soldiers specifically and among the Indian population at large. Rebellion was the ultimate aim. In Asia Ghadr agents targeted Indian units in India, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Burma, Penang, and Singapore (Sareen 1995:10). In France and Belgium the British Army had to be on its guard against activities of agitators intent on dissuading Indian soldiers from fighting against Germany.

In India and the Malay peninsula some of the Muslims soldiers were already reluctant to fight the Turkish army. If given a choice, they would have preferred to fight on the side of the sultan, the symbol of their religion. As a consequence the loyalty of a number of Muslim units could not be trusted. The officers commanding the Indian troops were well aware of this. They distributed their own translations of the statement by the British government published in the Gazette of India, underlined the British position in speeches to the troops and in private conversations with Indian officers, and gave their troops numerous assurances that the war had nothing to do with religion (Sareen 1995:286, 496, 579).

At a higher level, army command made assiduous efforts to ensure that units known for the strong Islamic disposition of their soldiers were not ordered to battlefields where they might have to fight Turkish troops close to the holy places of Islam (Smurthwaite 1997:165-6). Special care was taken with regiments recruited among the Muslim frontier tribes. The Viceroy of British India, Lord Charles Hardinge, reported to London that these troops were ‘so

¹ De Locomotief, 21-2-1916.
far fanatical’ that, in contrast to Muslim soldiers from elsewhere, they did not ‘like fighting against the Turks.’

At times marching orders created unrest among Indian soldiers who did not want to fight Turkish troops. In Singapore, the Malay States Guides, made up of Sikhs and Muslim soldiers from India, were stirred up by anti-British propaganda by civilian compatriots in the city (Shennan 2000:89). They initially refused to go to East Africa and fight for Great Britain at the front in December 1914. Army command did not want to utter the word mutiny and spread the word that fear had inspired the soldiers, not Ghadr propaganda (Sareen 1995:11). Despite downplaying the incident army command considered the incident serious enough to send an ‘India Agent’ to Singapore. His mission was ‘to probe the state of native feeling’ in the city (Sareen 1995:691). The following month a corporal from the mule battery of the Malay States Guides sent a letter to the Turkish Consul in Rangoon. He vowed that he and other soldiers were ready to fight for Turkey and asked the Turkish government to send a warship to Singapore to fetch them. The letter was intercepted by British intelligence in Burma. The corporal was hanged. In Rangoon, a Ghadr-inspired mutiny could only be prevented at the last moment in January 1915. The incident was frightening enough for the British to institute a new ‘citizen-force’. In Basra, in present-day Iraq, soldiers of the 15th Lancers who ‘refused to fight fellow Muslims (Turks) in the Holy Land of Islam, although they were prepared to fight them anywhere else’ mutinied in February 1916 (Menezes 1997:117).

The most impressive act of disobedience fuelled by a combination of German propaganda and religious feelings took place in Singapore in February 1915. Indian Muslim soldiers of the 5th Light Infantry Battalion rose in rebellion on 15 February. They were among those Indian troops the British were most hesitant to send to the Middle East or even to station in predominantly Muslim surroundings. Earl Kitchener, the British secretary of State for War, had considered the battalion ‘too Mohamedan for service in Egypt.’ Many of its soldiers, as did those of the Malay States Guides, attended the Kampong Java mosque, which was one of the centres of anti-British and pro-Turkish propaganda; and where the statements of loyalty to British rule had made no impression. Afterwards the British described the imam of the mosque as ‘a well-known and most dangerous character’ (Sareen 1995:40).

German prisoners of war also did their bit. Until two days before the mutiny, soldiers of the 5th Light Infantry had guarded the Tanglin Camp where the

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2 Hardinge to Nicholson, 1-3-1915, PRO FO 800 377.
4 Report from Brigadier-General Ridout, General Officer Commanding, Singapore, with remarks on proceedings of Court of Enquiry (Sareen 1995:691).
German prisoners of war and civilians were held. It was clear to the Germans that the loyalty to the British of the soldiers of the 5th Light Infantry and of the Malay States Guides who had initially guarded them was questionable. In one of the barracks a picture of Kaiser Wilhelm was displayed prominently which the ‘Corporal of the Guard used to salute’ (Shennan 2000:93). Lauterbach, the detained Emden officer, related how they had called out to him ‘Emden officer, Emperor Wilhelm, Enver-Bei, Islam, hurrah!’ after Turkey had joined the war (Lauterbach 1918:20). The prisoners did their best to exploit such feelings. Ridout recalled how ‘about the middle of January [...] German Prisoners [...] were in the habit of saying prayers at sundown in Mahommedan fashion, and pretended to recite the Koran’ (Sareen 1995:699). Such acts had convinced the mutineers that the Germans in the camp were Muslims. Stories that Germans had converted to Islam, and that the Kaiser’s daughter would marry the sultan’s eldest son circulated (Sareen 1995:122). The Germans also fuelled tales of ‘German ascendancy and loss of British prestige’ (Sareen 1995:4). There was talk among the soldiers that the days of the British Empire were numbered. Soon there would be ‘a German Raj instead of a British Raj’ (Sareen 1995:79).

Pro-Turkish propaganda fell in willing ears. For various reasons discipline in the 5th Light Infantry was slack. Discontentment was high. On the top of this after the outbreak of the war rumours ‘of the most lurid character’ had begun to circulate. The Governor of the Straits Settlements, Sir Arthur Henderson Young, blamed British ‘panic-mongers’, who had spread tales of ‘ruthless warfare’, of British failures, and of ‘long lists of casualties’. The stories had reached the ears of ‘the ignorant and discontented’. Another observation Young made was that discipline ‘lax for sometime, had crumbled away completely under the influence of pessimists, alarmists, rumour-mongers, and preachers of fanaticism’. Afterwards the chairman of a Court of Enquiry, E.C. Ellis, concluded that German propaganda had also played a role. He stated that German influences had been at work among the men of the 5th Light Infantry, as they have been throughout the whole of the Far East, including India, with the object of ‘stirring up dissension and alienating our native subjects from their true allegiance to His Majesty the KING’.  

Events came to a head when the soldiers received orders to be ready to be transported overseas. A pep talk by Ridout had a negative effect on the soldiers. Young explained later that ‘credulous, pessimistic and suspicious, they misinterpreted everything’. Afraid that they would have to fight Turkish soldiers in the Middle East or would be sent to Europe, where they were sure

5 *Proceedings* 1916:C 169.  
6 *Proceedings* 1916:C 170.  
7 *Proceedings* 1916:B 47-8.  
8 *Proceedings* 1916:C 170; Ban Kah Choon 2001:3.
that he ‘who does not fall in battle will die from the cold’, part of the 5th Light Infantry rebelled (Lauterbach 1918:21). In actual fact, they were to be transferred on the troop ship Nore to Hong Kong out of harm’s way. The soldiers had been informed about this, but the news had not quenched the confusion about their destination. It was now of little account. Some of the soldiers had become convinced that while Germany was winning the war, Great Britain no longer had any use for them. The British ‘would send them away and sink them’ (Sareen 1995:79).

The rebels took control of part of the city. British men, women, and children took refuge on the P&O Lines steamer the Nile. Dutch people fled to KPM ships in port. The British found themselves in a precarious position. The 5th Light Infantry, which had transferred to Singapore less than a year before, was the main military force on the island. Those Europeans eligible for military service had left to fight in Europe. For that same reason the number of soldiers stationed in Singapore had been greatly reduced. Law and order was in the hands of Malay and Sikh policemen. They remained loyal.

Twenty-seven British were killed by the mutineers. The rebellion could only be put down three days later, after a Russian, a French, and a Japanese cruiser, alerted by wireless, had come to lend assistance. The sultan of Johore with his own personal army also made his contribution. Forty-seven mutineers were sentenced to death and shot. Some ninety were banished to the British penal colony in the Andaman Islands (Stockwell 1988:46). The trials were conducted in public. Ridout wanted to make sure that everyone realized that ‘the men were being tried for mutiny [...] and not, as alleged for refusal to go to Turkey’ (Sareen 1995:17). Those soldiers of the 5th Light Infantry, who had remained loyal were given the choice between imprisonment or service at the front. In July 1915 they were sent first to West and then to East Africa to fight the Germans. The Malay States Guides ‘renewed’ their offer to fight at the front. In September Young could mention that they were ‘proceeding gladly on active service’. Later they were sent to the front in Aden. The German prisoners were moved to Sydney. The Muslim community of Singapore pledged its loyalty to the British rule. One of the lasting consequences of the mutiny was that plans were drawn up for the creation of the Special Branch in Singapore (Ban Kah Choon 2001:8).

The inquest into the mutiny indicated that all the British had attempted to assure the loyalty of their subjects in their colonies had had at the most limited effects. The conclusion was that ‘Singapore, together with the neighbouring States enjoy[ed] a wide-spread and unenviable notoriety as being a focus for

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Indian seditionists’ and harboured ‘many rank seditionists of Indian nationality among its Residents’ (Sareen 1995:39). The mutiny had weakened British prestige on the Malay Peninsula. Convinced that Great Britain was being defeated in Europe and that all British troops had left for Europe, the scene was considered to be ripe for a rebellion against British rule (Ban Kah Choon 2001:48, 53). Insecurity assailed the British. The Singapore mutiny stirred up older feelings of British insecurity, stretching back the Indian Mutiny. Some of the soldiers of the 5th Light Infantry were ‘Hindustani Mohammedans [...] indeed of the same breed exactly that was the worst for cruelties to our women and children during the great mutiny of 1857’.¹¹ The realization dawned that ‘natives [were active] throughout the whole of India, throughout the whole of the Far East, [...] paid by German gold’.¹² The governor of the Straits Settlements, Young, had to admit that feelings in the local Muslim community ‘were stirred deeply’. A ‘vast majority’ remained loyal, but ‘there were also a few fanatics who preached extreme doctrines of religious hate’.¹³

The mutiny made a great impression in the Netherlands Indies, where people feared that the rebellion might form a source of inspiration to Muslims on the opposite side of the Straits of Malacca to rise up (Bauduin 1920:84-5). A new foe also had made its appearance: mutinous native soldiers. The composition of the colonial army, with its core of Indonesian soldiers, occasioned some people enormous concern. Others realized that none of the larger cities any longer had fortresses in which the whole European population could take shelter if native troops were to mutiny.¹⁴ The developments in Singapore also were grist to the mill of those Dutch people who opposed the setting up of a native militia. News about the rising disquieted the population of Pulau Tujuh, where food was again boarded.

Initial reports about what had happened in Singapore tended to be confusing. They spoke about riots between Japanese and Chinese, and about Indian soldiers who had risen in mutiny because they had not been sent to the front. The idea that Dutch people might have been killed aroused anxiety. Batavia was blamed for remaining silent and giving no information about the fate of the Dutch community in Singapore.¹⁵ Initially Idenburg and Pinke decided to concentrate the fleet at Tanjung Priok (without the Tromp, which was having her periodic overhaul). When the seriousness of the situation in Singapore was realized, the whole squadron was ordered to the Riau Archipelago to be able to act immediately if Dutch lives had to be protected.

¹⁴ De Locomotief, 16-3-1915.
Another consequence of the mutiny was the Dutch Navy had to patrol the waters between Singapore and Sumatra in attempts to capture Germans who might be fleeing from Singapore. This, was the ‘courteous’ way Pinke, sure that there would be no legal reasons to imprison the Germans after questioning, had suggested Idenburg should react to a telegram from the governor of the Straits Settlements asking for their internment of the Germans (Teitler 1986:127). In February, the Germans had already almost completed an escape tunnel in Tanglin Prison, but did not have to use it. The mutiny gave them the opportunity to escape by boat. British ships were also searching for the fugitives. They stopped Dutch merchantmen and inquired whether their crew had spotted a fishing boat manned by Europeans. In their efforts the British also distributed pamphlets promising a reward of $1,000 per person for the capture of the escaped Germans in the Malay Peninsula and Netherlands Indies. Anti-climactically the only Europeans briefly arrested were three Dutchmen from Medan on holiday in Penang, whose Dutch was taken for German.

The mutineers had been confident that the German prisoners would join their rising. One of the first acts of the mutinous soldiers had been to march to the prison camp to set the Germans free. Most German prisoners were more scared to death by the mutineers than that they be inclined to sympathize with their action. They hid the British in the camp, tended to the wounded, and preferred to stay where they were. Afterwards the British praised these Germans for their ‘correct behaviour’ (Sareen 1995:41). One exception was a small group of eleven Germans, formed of crew members of the Emden and some leading businessmen. One of them was Lauterbach. According to Lauterbach’s own account, the Indian soldiers had asked him to become their leader. Rating the chances of success low, he had refused. The Germans fled to Karimun. In Sumatra the group split. Lauterbach and two other Germans went to Padang, where they were welcomed by the German Consul. Others went to Medan. They also were not arrested. Unarmed, they were not considered a threat. A report of the escape was published in the Deutsche Wacht.

Lauterbach, whose name by this time had been mentioned by some of the mutineers as the person who had incited them to rise (the reward for his capture dead or alive had consequently been raised to $5,000) and his companions travelled on to Batavia. They boarded a Dutch steamer. To escape arrest should the ship be stopped by the British Navy they assumed Belgian and Danish nationalities. From Batavia Lauterbach went to Surabaya. On one of the German ships in port he met Möller of the Hörde. Möller had been moved on to Java as a precaution on one of the warships which returned to there after
the mutiny in Singapore in early March. He had been interned on parole in Bandung, a city with a large, patriotic German community. Undetected by the Dutch authorities he had made his way to Surabaya. Lauterbach and Möller managed to flee the Netherlands Indies. One of the persons who helped them to escape was an Arab. To the horror of the Dutch, Oetoesan Hindia praised the man as a person who wanted to fight for the Caliphate. Möller was killed by Bedouins in the Arabian Peninsula. Lauterbach reached Germany (Lauterbach 1918:51).

The Straits Settlements and the Malay Peninsula were one target for Germano-Indian agitation. India was another and more important one. In India in the early months of the war popular opinion expected that Germany certainly would defeat Russia first, and thereupon also perhaps Great Britain and France. Commenting on the mood among the population of India, Lord Hardinge confessed that this ‘is the sort of theory widespread in the bazaars and amongst the uneducated native classes, and [that] it does a lot of harm for it creates a feeling of uncertainty and unrest’. The plotters aimed at staging an armed uprising in Calcutta on Christmas Day 1915. They expected that the rest of India would follow. A second uprising was planned to take place in Burma. Arms were to reach the rebels in Burma via Thailand (Hopkirk 1994:179). The Netherlands Indies played a central role in these plans. Arms which had been bought in the United States had to be smuggled into India via the Netherlands Indies. To eschew the British censor, the Netherlands Indies was selected as a distribution centre for seditious literature. Inflammatory pamphlets which had been printed in San Francisco, Germany, and the Middle East reached British India and the Malay Peninsula via the Netherlands Indies. Sometimes crews of merchantmen and mail boats were bribed to smuggle such literature to the Netherlands Indies. In other instances, they were asked to mail them in the ports their ships called at along the way. It was also not unheard of for pamphlets to be sent directly from the United States by mail. Initially pamphlets, some of them written by Rifat, actually reached Java and Sumatra by ordinary British and Dutch mails. Pamphlets printed in Germany were sent to the German consulate in Amsterdam or the German Embassy in The Hague. Readdressed to Windels or members of his staff in Batavia, they were thereupon posted at Dutch post offices. Some of these parcel-post packages escaped the attention of the colonial censor. It was quite beyond the bounds of the imagination of postal officials that parcels

19 Note Schrieke, 30-4-1917, NA, Kol. Openbaar, Vb. 14-2-1918 38.
20 Hardinge to Nicholson, 8-7-1915, PRO FO 800 378.
from Holland might contain seditious literature and should be checked. Often, pamphlets were deliberately printed on very thin paper so that they could be sent in bulk in innocent looking packages. Yet other pamphlets were sent first to the United States by Dutch mail. From there they were forwarded to the Netherlands Indies.

Such surreptitious activities were carried out under the direction of the General Staff of the German Army in Berlin. The Military Attaché at the German Embassy in Washington, Captain Franz von Papen, also in charge of other acts of German sabotage and espionage in the United States, coordinated the procurement of weapons in the United States. Headquarters in Asia were in Shanghai. Both he and a second Military Attaché were also responsible for planning attempts on British ships in United States and Canadian harbours and on munition factories. The German operations in the Unites States succeeded in generating so much fear that in 1916 policemen had to guard the bridges in New York to prevent bombs being thrown from them.\(^{21}\) To assist in the planning and running of subversive activities in the British possessions in Asia, three departments were established: one in the Netherlands Indies, one in Siam, and one in Persia. All three were headed by members of German diplomatic or consular staffs who, when necessary could call upon the help of employees of German firms in the region and other German Residents.

In Batavia, where the plotters probably had received their latest instructions and information when the Choising arrived in Tanjung Priok on 5 August, suspicion focused on Emil and Theodor Helfferich (Shennan 2000:79). The Helfferich brothers were pillars of the German community in the Netherlands Indies. Owing to their position and their jobs, they had contacts all over the Archipelago. Emil Helfferich had started his career in Asia as an employee of Behn, Meyer and Co. in Singapore. A few years later he became Director of the Straits und Sunda Syndikat, a company founded in 1910 with German and Belgian capital which controlled tea, rubber, and coffee estates in Java and Sumatra. The relationship between the syndicate and Behn, Meyer and Co. was ‘friendly’ (Helfferich 1967:120). At the start of the war Emil Helfferich had been stationed in Singapore. He had been among a group of fifty Germans, men and women, including the German Deputy Consul and the manager of the famous Grand-Hotel de l’Europe, who had boarded the Dutch steamer the Rumphius on 6 August. Before the Rumphius could set sail, a British army patrol came aboard and forced them to disembark. All German men were declared prisoners-of-war. In the beginning of their captivity they were allowed to resume their pre-war life. If they signed a declaration in which they promised not to take up arms against Great Britain, and would not try to travel

\(^{21}\) De Locomotief, 12-2-1916.
to German territory, they would not be interned. Their only obligation was to report once a day. Emil Helfferich was one of the Germans who had signed the declaration. After the actions of the *Emden* had occasioned a vehement anti-German mood in the city, he was again arrested. He had been imprisoned in the Tanglin camp but had managed to escape. In Batavia he soon became one of the leading figures in the German community, which he was to remain till he left the Netherlands Indies in 1928. He is said to have been the person who, after his arrival, had succeeded in forging unity in the divided German community (Mohr 1948:275).

Emil’s younger brother, Theodor, was Director of the Batavia branch of Behn, Meyer and Co. To prevent any possibility that the British would seize the Behn, Meyer and Co. assets in the Netherlands Indies through the Singapore head-office, the branch was transformed into an independent limited company after the outbreak of the war (Helfferich 1967:143-4). Theodor Helfferich was also *kaufmännischer Berater* (commercial councillor) of the German Consulate General. In this capacity he was destined to take the place of Windels when something would happen to the Acting Consul General. As commercial councillor, Theodor Helfferich had access to the German code; though he still needed Windels assistance to decode messages. The Helfferich brothers were supposed to have such a prominent role in the German community in the Netherlands Indies that the story went among its members that when war broke out between Germany and the Netherlands one of them would become Governor General of a German Indies (Bijl de Vroe 1980:52).

The Germano-Indian scheme made the Netherlands Indies a hub of anti-British agitation in Asia. All sorts of schemes were hatched by the plotters. One plan, the brainchild of the German Consul General in San Francisco, was to send two British Indians to Batavia to start a newspaper to ‘supply false war news to British India’ and to set up an illegal radio station to communicate with partisans in the Straits Settlements. Anti-British literature, and occasionally anti-French printed matter such as the one entitled *Les Musulmans de l’Afrique du Nord et le ‘Djéhad’,* which was sent to the Netherlands Indies was a more concrete problem to be tackled. The Dutch authorities in Holland and in the Netherlands Indies did all they could to prevent such shipments from reaching their destination; though no action was taken against Malay-language newspaper which published excerpts of seditious pamphlets. Import bans were instituted.

One major reason to take some sort of immediate action was the desire to avoid complications with London. However, there were other reasons for the Dutch authorities not to sit still. Batavia was inspired by a sense of solidarity

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between the European Colonial Powers which felt they had to help each other if they were confronted with insurrections by the peoples they ruled. The Dutch colonial authorities were also not free of their own concrete fears in this direction. One was the concern that unrest in British India or the Malay peninsula would spread to the Netherlands Indies. Another was that the contents of the pamphlets, usually not of a very subtle nature, was quite shocking to the early twentieth-century European mind. There was no beating about the bush. In calls for the massacre of the British in British India sentences like ‘arise in wrath and slay them!’ were freely deployed. While most pamphlets directed appeals to Muslims, Hindus had their fair share. One of the documents seized, which had been sent from San Francisco to a member of the German Consulate General in Batavia, was written in Sanskrit and held a picture of Kali, the Goddess of Destruction.\footnote{San Francisco Examiner, 10-7-1917.}

Another disquieting fact was that Arabs and other Muslims in Java and Sumatra were among those to whom such pamphlets were addressed. In March 1916 the Soerabaiasch Handelsblad observed that scores of anti-British pamphlets had been distributed among the native population.\footnote{Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, 9-3-1916, cited in De Indische Gids 1916, I:786.} In next to no time the words Dutch and the Netherlands could be substituted where the text spoke of British and Great Britain. Sometimes the link was made directly, such as when the struggle of the British Indians against Great Britain was equated with the war the Acehnese fought against the Dutch. Some pamphlets were in Arabic, which only some Indonesian Muslims could read. Others were in Malay. One of those in Malay was entitled Seroean Party Nasional Hindia, The Appeal of the Indian Nationalist Party, maybe the reason why Arabs called it the ‘letter of Douwes Dekker’. The appeal drew attention to the wars Great Britain had waged to acquire new territory, including the Boer War, and announced that the moment to take revenge had arrived. To the alarm of the authorities, it was sent in large quantities to the Netherlands Indies by mail in 1915 and 1916. Among the addressees were local branches of the Sarekat Islam and training institutions for Indonesians. Copies of the appeal had been received by the Colleges for Native Civil Servants in Magelang and Madiun and the School for Native Teachers in Probolinggo. The pamphlet never reached the students. The parcels had been addressed to the school boards. Nevertheless, just in case the students might have read the appeal, the deputy Director of Education and Religion asked the heads of such schools ‘to neutralize the undesirable influence which the piece might elicit without making a fuss about the matter through a discussion with the students at a fitting moment.’\footnote{Acting Director of Education and Religion to Idenburg, 14-2-1916, NA, Kol. Openbaar, Vb. 12-5-1916 37.}
Some of the pamphlets were even penned in Dutch. A shipment to Windels from Holland was confiscated in early 1916. It contained about three hundred booklets originally published by the Indian National Party entitled *Is Indië loyaal?, Is India loyal?* (and a much smaller number of the French edition *La fidélité de l’Inde envers l’Angleterre*).²⁶

The colonial authorities acted, fearing both German and Japanese intent, when they could. In July 1916 the rules for entering military buildings and installations were tightened in an effort to combat espionage. Two months earlier an even more important step had been taken. In May 1916 the Politieke Inlichtingendienst (PID, Political Intelligence Service), was established to coordinate the gathering and evaluation of information from various sources about activities dangerous to the state reaching the government. The PID started modestly with a head, a deputy-head, and a clerk (as a suitable candidate for a higher administrative function could not be found). Its first head, Captain (of the General Staff) W. Muurling, revealed two years later that the PID had been founded to collect information about activities which posed a threat to neutrality.²⁷ Though the service was first and foremost meant to keep track of foreign spies, an additional bonus was that domestic developments could be watched as well. Nevertheless, spokesmen of the government continued to stress that keeping an eye on the foreign enemy was the main object of the PID. Pleyte said this as late as February 1918, while a few months later the Director of the Justice Department stated that the PID did not concern itself with the nationalist movements, as long as these were not set on overthrowing the colonial government.²⁸

The British were not impressed by the measures taken to prevent the Netherlands Indies becoming a hotbed of anti-British agitation. In February 1917 a letter from the British Foreign Office to the Dutch Envoy in London stated that it was

indeed notorious that in spite of the efforts of the Netherlands government, the Dutch East Indies have been a centre of intrigue and propaganda directed by the enemies of this country against British possessions in the Far East, and the object of the transmission of such seditious matter to the Dutch Islands is obviously that stores of such dangerous material may be accumulated at points in the East Asian Archipelago, whence they may be introduced into British possessions themselves by different hands and in quantities small enough to escape detection.²⁹

The plot to use the territory of the Netherlands Indies as the intermediate

²⁷ Volksraad 1918:286.
²⁹ British Foreign Office to Dutch Envoy, 10-2-1917, NA, Kol. Openbaar, Vb. 14-3-1917 49.
station for gun-running and the smuggling of pamphlets placed the German community in the Netherlands Indies in the limelight. The then British Consul General in Batavia, W.R.D. Beckett, informed the colonial authorities in October 1915 that the German consuls in Surabaya, Padang, and Celebes, former army officers who had found employment on estates, and members of the mercantile community were implicated. A missionary in Nias, who Pinke was sure was ‘technically very skilled’ and who had been seen in Padang in the company of officers of the Kleist, also attracted the attention of the authorities. Once again Batavia had to consider the prospect of German radio broadcasts.

Though he was the recipient of shipments of seditious pamphlets, Acting Consul General Windels did not play a key role in the department’s activities. He attended some meetings, but did not greatly favour the Germano-Indian scheme. He considered the plans developed unrealistic and criticized the plot for its lack of proper organization and planning. Windels’s subordinate role was acknowledged by the British. In their evaluation the Helfferich brothers, not Windels, played the leading role in the Germano-Indian complot in the Netherlands Indies. Windels was depicted as weak and spineless. In cooperation with the German Consul in Surabaya, the brothers had also planned Lauterbach’s escape. They had arranged for him to be able to flee the Netherlands Indies undetected by British spies. In return for their assistance, they had asked Lauterbach to pass on a message in Shanghai, a port Lauterbach did indeed call at.

Another person accused by the British of playing a leading role in the Ghadr scheme was August Diehn, a German businessman. Before the war Diehn had been manager and chairman of directors of the Singapore branch of Behn, Meyer and Co. In Singapore the British had arrested him on suspicion of having been the mastermind behind the exploits of the Emden. Imprisoned in Tanglin Camp Diehn had become one of the ringleaders of the patriotic German prisoners who had planned an escape and used the mutiny of the 5th Light Infantry to seize their opportunity (Ban Kah Choon 2001:18). To tease the governor of the Straits Settlements, he had wired to Young ‘arrived safely’ when he reached the Netherlands Indies (Harper and Miller 1984:70; Helfferich 1967:139). The British described Diehn as ‘a man of ability and influence in Singapore, [who] had money at his command’ (Sareen 1995:40).

31 Kindermann to civilian and military authorities of Atjeh, Sumatra’s West Coast, Tapanuli, 6-1-1916, NA, Kol. Openbaar, Vb. 9-12-1918 38.
33 Note Department A1 of the Ministry of the Colonies, 15-12-1916, NA, Kol. Geheim, Vb. 18-12-1916 Z16.
After his escape, the British called Diehn ‘one of the principal agents in Sumatra for fomenting trouble among British Indians’ who had a leading role in the gun-running scheme (Sareen 1995:699). They were sure that Diehn and the Helfferich brothers, with Theodor in the role of the prime conspirator, had drawn up concrete plans to smuggle weapons and literature into British India from the Netherlands Indies. They were also suspected of playing a vital role in providing agents in India with money.34

Initially the Dutch colonial authorities found it hard to believe that the Netherlands Indies was being used as a base to subvert British rule in India and the Malay peninsula. The efforts to supply the *Emden* with coal had taught them that Germany had prepared well for war, and that German consuls and other German residents in the Netherlands Indies had played a part in this, which only made Batavia all the more anxious about possible German anti-Dutch activities in the colony. But this was a different matter. Nevertheless, Batavia felt compelled to follow up all the information provided by Great Britain about the plot. One of the persons about whom British intelligence alerted the Dutch authorities was a British Indian, Abdul Salam Rafiqi, or Abdul Selam, the name under which he became known in Java. The Dutch were told that one of his tasks was to act as a contact man between Theodor Helfferich and British Indians visiting Batavia to discuss the sending of arms and money to India. Abdul Selam had arrived in Tanjung Priok from Japan in October 1914. At first he had not attracted the attention of either the Dutch or the British. This changed within weeks of his arrival after Abdul Selam had sent a pamphlet to an Indian in Pahang in the Malay Peninsula by ordinary mail. The pamphlet called for self-government and appealed to Hindus and Muslims to rise up. One of the conditions which Great Britain had to meet to prevent an uprising of its Indian subjects was ‘to hand over to Turkey the battleships which if done would end any further trouble between the English and the Turks’ (Ban Kah Choon 2001:26). This pamphlet was Abdul Selam’s downfall. The British censor intercepted the letter. The postmark launched a British investigation. Abdul Selam was traced. The colonial authorities were informed and had Abdul Selam put under surveillance. A number of times, Abdul Selam was seen entering the German consulate. He was arrested in March after it had been discovered that he ordered the printing of an anti-British pamphlet at the press of *Pantjaran Warta*, a Batavian Sarekat Islam newspaper.

No charges could be brought against Abdul Selam. There was no legislation which dealt with plotting the overthrow of the government of a friendly nation (nor was there any such charge, the staff of the Ministry of the Colonies in The Hague pointed out, in British law). The writing, printing, and distribu-

tion of anti-Allied pamphlets could not be tackled judicially as the *haatzaai* articles referred specifically to the domestic situation in the Netherlands Indies. As long as it could not be proved that words had actually been put into practice and that plotters had concretely helped one of the belligerents, a person also could not be prosecuted for breaching Dutch neutrality. Nor could Abdul Selam be expelled. He had sufficient funds at his disposal. The Resident of Batavia, Rijfsnijder, suspected that the money came from German sources, but this was no crime either. Abdul Selam’s presence put the authorities in a dilemma. Though Abdul Selam had not broken any law, Idenburg ordered his deportation. The decision was taken after the Attorney-General, G. André de la Porte, had alerted Idenburg to the implicit danger Abdul Selam posed: Great Britain would not stand idly by if people conspired against British rule in Asia on Dutch territory. The consequences could be so serious that Abdul Selam should be considered a danger to public law and order in the Netherlands Indies. Such a line of reasoning provided sufficient grounds to allow the Governor General to use his extraordinary power to ban aliens from the colony.

The verdict threw Abdul Selam into a panic. Being put on a boat to a British colony meant being arrested on arrival, and, he feared, the death sentence. Even should he succeed in boarding a steamer to the United States which stayed clear of any British port – a very unlikely prospect – he would not escape arrest. The British Consulate General would inform the British Navy of his departure. The ship would certainly be stopped after she had left Tanjung Priok. In a last desperate effort to make Idenburg change his mind, Abdul Selam called on the help of Rinkes. When Abdul Selam met Rinkes, he made no secret of the fact that he had been engaged in anti-British activities. In spite of this Rinkes was sensitive to Abdul Selam’s predicament. He wrote to Idenburg that European Colonial Powers had to help each other, but that in the case of Abdul Selam ‘political detention’ could be considered. Rinkes did not overlook the possibility that Abdul Selam might resort to theft, arson, or other crimes to provoke imprisonment and escape deportation. Presenting himself as ‘just one of the many proclaimers of progressive ideas in British India’, Abdul Selam also personally wrote two petitions to Idenburg. He pledged that if he was interned in the Netherlands Indies, he would cease his agitation against the British and Dutch governments. His appeal was successful. Abdul Selam was transported to Timor in August 1915.

Around the time that Idenburg had to decide on Abdul Selam’s fate, the

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35 André de la Porte to Idenburg, 14-7-1915, NA, Kol. Openbaar, Vb. 8-9-1915 22.
36 André de la Porte to Idenburg, 14-7-1915, NA, Kol. Openbaar, Vb. 8-9-1915 22.
37 Rinkes to Idenburg 29-7-1915, Selam to Idenburg, 30-7-1915, 9-8-1915, NA, Kol. Openbaar, Vb. 4-10-1915 24.
British Consul General, he himself alerted by the British Deputy Consul in Medan, Arthur Law Mathewson, asked the colonial authorities to put an end to agitation among British Indians on Sumatra’s East Coast. Copies of inflammatory pamphlets, which called for a holy war and contained sentences like ‘Rise Indians rise’, had been sent from San Francisco to Sumatra by mail. The same had happened with issues of Ghadr, the organ of the Ghadr movement, of which the first number had appeared in November 1913. Printed in San Francisco, it ‘aimed at instigating Indians to revolt, […] to inform public opinion in America about the situation in India and to neutralise British propaganda in the United States and elsewhere’ (Sareen 1995:6). At that moment none of the senior Dutch colonial civil servants, not even Rinkes, had any inkling of what Ghadr was. They had never heard of the movement.

Response was swift. On the instructions of Idenburg, the entrance of British Indian migrants and visitors was temporarily restricted. The local authorities were asked to act with prudence when Residence permits came up for renewal. As an additional measure the Dutch Resident instructed that British Indians who were returning to Sumatra from abroad had to undergo a body search. Their luggage should be checked carefully and the Indians themselves had to be kept under surveillance. To the delight of the Dutch authorities, it turned out Ghadr had been sent to Sumatra by British mail. The Indians who had received the newspaper turned out to be innocent. The investigation concluded that their disposition was strongly anti-British, but that they all were fairly well-to-do, peaceful residents. The Dutch civil servants could not imagine that they had been transformed into agitators.

The investigation into the distribution of Ghadr in the territory of Sumatra’s East Coast was not completely fruitless. Cotton cloth printed with the portrait of the German Kaiser and pictures of German warships were confiscated. It had been bought in Batavia by an Indian shopkeeper. The Dutch civil servant who reported on the case considered the cloth quite harmless. Two Sikhs were also arrested. They had collected money ostensibly for religious and educational purposes, but there was a strong suspicion that their real intention had been not so innocent. The ‘Lieutenant of the Klingalese’, that is the head of the local Indian community, had alerted the local Dutch civil servant to the anti-British agitation pursued by the two. One of them, it turned out later, had visited Singapore at the end of 1914, where he had met soldiers of the 5th Light Infantry who had later risen in mutiny. From Singapore he had travelled on to

Kedah to incite the population in the Sultanate against British rule. The British authorities were informed when the two were put on a ship to Penang.\textsuperscript{41}

In the meantime more serious business was brewing. At the end of June 1915 the Navy in the Netherlands Indies was put on full alert after Beckett had informed Batavia about the movement of an oil-tanker, the \textit{Maverick}. The \textit{Maverick} was owned by the Maverick Steamship Co. which used Behn, Meyer and Co. as its agent in Batavia. Beckett revealed that the \textit{Maverick} was on her way to the Netherlands Indies and probably carried ‘large quantities of rifles and ammunition’ as her cargo. Her destination was Anyer on the Javanese side of the Sunda Strait.\textsuperscript{42} Beckett also transmitted the contents of an anonymous letter he had received from Bandung: ‘Is a steamer loaded with rifles and ammunitions worth f 500,000 (five hundred thousand) for you to pay me?’ Additional information which, as it was suggested, might enable the British to avert a general rising would be provided for free. The sender recommended Beckett place an advertisement in \textit{Het Nieuws van den Dag} for an experienced rubber planter for Perak when he had interest.\textsuperscript{43} Beckett did not take up the suggestion. Idenburg was against it. A few days later Beckett alerted the Dutch authorities to a second ship which might have weapons as her cargo: the schooner \textit{Henry S}. She was on her way from Manila to Pontianak.

Beckett urged resolute action. This was indeed taken, not least because Idenburg and his staff did not preclude the chance that the weapons might be used to arm Germans in the Netherlands Indies.\textsuperscript{44} This issue had already come up in May 1915 when Beckett had transmitted news that information had reached him from ‘official, unofficial and anonymous sources’ regarding a scheme of Germans in West Java to arm the \textit{Roon} and other German merchantmen to the colonial authorities. The ringleaders at whom he had pointed a finger were the captain of the \textit{Roon} and two estate managers: Freiherr Hans von Devevere, a former officer in the German infantry, and Curt Opolski, a former German naval officer. Beckett had confessed at that time that the aim was not altogether clear to him. The intention was probably to enable German, Austrian, and Turkish nationals in the Netherlands Indies to escape to a German or Turkish port.\textsuperscript{45} The colonial administration had reacted quickly. Within days, an instruction had been sent out to the \textit{Resident} of Banyumas to observe ‘the highest possible vigilance’. Other civil servants in whose territories German steamers had sought shelter had also been informed. For a

\textsuperscript{41} Obdeyn to Van der Brandhof, 31-8-1915, Obdeyn to Van der Brandhof, 13-9-1915, NA, Kol. Openbaar, Vb. 13-11-1915 35.
\textsuperscript{42} Beckett to Hulshoff Pol, 29-6-1915, NA, Kol. Geheim, Vb. 17-8-1915 F11.
\textsuperscript{43} Beckett to Hulshoff Pol, 29-6-1915, NA, Kol. Geheim, Vb. 17-8-1915 F11.
\textsuperscript{44} Pinke to Idenburg, 18-8-1915, NA, Kol. Geheim, Vb. 4-10-1915 H12.
moment, Pinke had toyed with the idea of stationing a warship at Cilacap. He decided not to. Sending a warship might alert the Germans involved that the authorities were on to them.⁴⁶

This time, armed with the information about ships with a cargo of arms sailing in the direction of the Netherlands Indies, the naval squadron put to sea to search for the *Henry S.* and the *Maverick*. The search was hampered somewhat because one of the larger Dutch warships, the *Tromp*, had to remain moored in the roads of Makassar. She had to be ready to be deployed against the ‘internal enemy’, who kept the Dutch forces in the island busy. As an additional precaution, Dutch civil servants stationed along the route the *Maverick* was supposed to take were alerted. Civil servants in ports where German steamers had anchored were asked to keep a close watch on these ships. Idenburg and Pinke feared that the weapons might be transhipped to these German merchantmen; also not excluding the possibility that the weapons were intended to arm Germans living in the Netherlands Indies in anticipation of a possible declaration of war between the Netherlands and Germany.

The voyages of the *Maverick* and *Henry S.* formed part of the German-Indian plan to smuggle weapons into British India. The *Maverick* was supposed to deliver 30,000 rifles and revolvers to Anyer; a destination her captain had imprudently disclosed to a local newspaper in Hawai‘i. Fishing boats chartered by German accomplices in Batavia would take the cargo from Anyer to Bengal. The *Henry S.* was to carry 5,000 rifles and 500 revolvers which had been purchased by the German Consul in the Philippines. Her destination was Siam. Two German weapon instructors, and possible also an Indian Hindu agitator, were supposed boarded (Hopkirk 1994:180; Teitler 1986:198-9).

Another way to try to smuggle weapons into the Netherlands Indies was to sent them along as cargo on Dutch ships sailing to the Netherlands Indies from New York and San Francisco. Instrumental in trying this venture was a firm called Schenker and Co., which had submitted 1,000 old Springfield rifles (they dated from 1865) to be sent to Java on Dutch vessels in 1915. The agent of the Dutch shipping line had not been happy about the business. He refused the cargo and alerted the American authorities. This was not an isolated attempt. In view of this, Great Britain urged for a complete ban on the import of arms into the Netherlands Indies, except for those arms consigned to the colonial government. The Dutch government finally complied at the end of 1916. The export and import of private arms was banned.

Theodor Helfferich was informed about the arrival of the *Maverick* by secret German code at the beginning of June 1915. It appears that this intimation of

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⁴⁶ Kindermann to Resident Banyumas, 2-6-1915, circular Kindermann, 2-6-1915, 5-6-1915, Pinke to Idenburg, 4-6-1915, NA, Kol. Geheim, Vb. 17-8-1915 F11.
arrival was all and that he had not received detailed instructions about how to proceed. His brother, Emil, chartered a motor-launch and set out in search for the *Maverick* in an attempt to meet her just outside territorial waters. In spite of the fact that the Batavian police kept a close watch on the brothers, Emil and his party managed to pass undetected. After eight days, Emil Helfferich returned to shore. The others continued the search in the Sunda Straits for another two weeks. They did not see the *Maverick*. Undetected either by the Germans on the lookout and by the Dutch warships patrolling the sea, the *Maverick* reached her destination. The *Maverick* was sighted riding at anchor at Merak on 19 July. The captain sailed on to Tanjung Priok the following day. The *Maverick* was searched but no weapons or seditious literature were found. The journey had been a complete failure. At the outset of her voyage the *Maverick* had failed to rendez-vous along the Mexican Pacific coast with a schooner from which she was supposed to load the rifles and ammunition. The seditious pamphlets she had had on board were burnt near Socorro Island after a British man-of-war had been sighted (Hopkirk 1994:180-4). The Dutch authorities did not know this. To be sure that no weapons had been stacked away on uninhabited islands in the Archipelago, the route which the *Maverick* had taken through the Celebes Sea, the Straits of Makassar and the Java Sea to Merak was retraced by Dutch warships searching for weapons hidden on shore.

The *Henry S.* was sighted near Paleleh on the north coast of Celebes on 7 August. The *Tromp* reached her three days later. The following day a Japanese cruiser, the *Akashi*, appeared on the scene. From a distance her crew observed what was transpiring. The *Henry S.* had two Germans on board. One was Alfred Wehde, an American jeweller from Chicago, who was later to be tried in Chicago for his part in the conspiracy. The other was George Böhm, also an American, the quartermaster. When officers of the *Tromp* had searched the *Henry S.* for the first time, both had been absent. The *Henry S.* had suffered engine trouble and Wehde had gone to Manado by motor sloop in search of a tow. Böhm had had an unlucky fall and had been transported to a government coaling station nearby for treatment. Later Wehde told the Dutch naval officers that he had chartered the ship to collect curiosities for an art gallery in Chicago and to conduct ethnological research.47

The voyage of the *Henry S.* had been as great a fiasco as that of the *Maverick*. No weapons were on board. The Dutch authorities were unsurprised. Information had already reached them from Manila that the arms had been removed by the American authorities and that the stated aim of the voyage was to collect ethnographica. The *Henry S.* had still set sail but after she

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had left Manila her engine had broken down a number of times. Her sailors, almost all Filipinos, made a sorry impression on the captain of the Tromp. He reported that the crew of the engine room was ‘absolutely incapable of handling the engine’, while the deck-hands ‘had little of sailors about them’. It seemed to him as if ‘they just had been fetched in from the jungle’.\textsuperscript{48} The Henry S. was stuck. Wehde’s trip to Manado to get a tow had been in vain. Pinke refused to let the Tromp tow the Henry S. to Manado. In desperation, Wehde turned to the Akashi for a tow to the Philippines. The captain of the Akashi refused. After he had convinced himself that the Henry S. was helpless and formed no threat to Allied interests, the Akashi sailed away. Wehde and Böhm were left with no option than to leave the Henry S. and to try to return to the Philippines by motor sloop to seek help. With the Maverick tied up in Tanjung Priok and the mission of the Henry S. foiled the surveillance by the Dutch Navy squadron could be discontinued in September. The Henry S. had to be kept under close watch till the end of October when she left the Archipelago. The Maverick remained moored in Tanjung Priok. Its owners were afraid that the British might seize her when she sailed. The Maverick gained the reputation of ‘a mystery ship’. Crew and officers were tight-lipped, but from what little they said it soon became clear that the Maverick had been involved in ‘one or another secret mission’ and that it had failed to rendez-vous with an American schooner.\textsuperscript{49} The crew and most of the officers were transported to Manila on another American ship. Dutch, Japanese, and British shipping companies had refused to take them on board. One officer went to Singapore, where he was arrested after a time. His lavish life-style and his requests by telegraph for more money had caught the attention of the Singaporese authorities.

The missions of the Maverick and Henry S. had failed, but this had not put an end to the Germano-Indian plan. In the remaining months of 1915, a number of people were arrested in Singapore and other British territories in Asia. They confessed to being involved in efforts to provide the rebels in British India with money from Batavia. Among them was Ong Sin Kwie, a Batavian Chinese merchant. Interrogated by the British he admitted that he had travelled to the Malay Peninsula in October to hand over 66,000 guilders to British Indians in Singapore or Penang. If he failed to meet his contacts, he had been instructed to travel on to Rangoon or Calcutta to hand over the money.\textsuperscript{50}

To convince the Dutch authorities of the dubious role played by the

\textsuperscript{49} De Locomotief, 8-9-1916.
\textsuperscript{50} Note Department A1 of the Ministry of the Colonies, 15-12-1916, NA, Kol. Geheim, Vb. 18-12-1916 Z16.
Helfferich brothers Beckett transmitted the information gathered from the interrogation of Ong Sin Kwie and others to the Governor General. In Holland Johnstone informed Loudon. He took the opportunity to add the warning that London held ‘the Netherlands government responsible for any prejudice caused to British interests by these machinations and reserve[d] the right to claim suitable compensation’.\(^{51}\)

Notwithstanding British pressure no legal action was taken against Emil and Theodor Helfferich or other Germans. Batavia instigated an inquiry but nothing unlawful was unearthed. The Attorney-General, G.W. Uhlenbeck, interrogated Theodor Helfferich and Windels personally. He had to take their word for what they were. Both refused to hand over their correspondence about the *Maverick* prior to her arrival. Both explained to Uhlenbeck that if they did British agents might be able to break the German code, which the British in fact already had. Theodor Helfferich and Windels persisted that they had done nothing that was in violation of the neutrality of the Netherlands Indies. Both claimed that Emil Helfferich had gone in search of the *Maverick* because they suspected that she carried arms and wanted to order her captain to steer clear of territorial waters.\(^{52}\) Uhlenbeck also concluded that Ong Sin Kwie was innocent and that he had gone to Singapore for legitimate business purposes. Ong Sin Kwie had been on his way to buy gunny sacks, which had become scarce in Java and of which British India virtually held a monopoly, in Calcutta. His confession in Singapore had been made under duress. Uhlenbeck’s conclusions probably suited the Dutch authorities who were hesitant to start a court case against the Germans involved. As no weapons had been found aboard the *Maverick*, there was even less reason to prosecute them.\(^{53}\)

The German community in the Netherlands Indies caused the authorities plenty of worry, of which their participation in the Germano-Indian plot was only one aspect. Germans and people of German descent were pretty ubiquitous and could be found both in the business and estate sector and in the civil service. To illustrate the potential danger Germans posed, *Het Nieuws van den Dag* pointed out that they were employed in branches of industry which were vital to the defence of Dutch rule: the railways, the naval dockyards, and the post and telegraph service.\(^{54}\) Even more menacing was that the number of German soldiers in the colonial army was fairly large, and would remain so as German soldiers whose contract had ended could not return home and


\(^{52}\) Uhlenbeck to Van Limburg Stirum, 3-9-1917, NA, Kol. Geheim, Vb. 10-1-1918 S1.

\(^{53}\) Van Limburg Stirum to Pleyte, 19-6-1917, Pleyte to Loudon, 24-9-1917, NA, Kol. Geheim, Vb. 22-6-1917 F8, Vb. 24-9-1917 Q11.

\(^{54}\) *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, cited in Oetoesan Hindia, 1-5-1916.
were left with almost no other choice than resigning. Dutch people entertained grave doubts about the loyalty of the Germans living in the Netherlands Indies. At least one local civil servant, the Assistent-Resident of Kebumen, the son of a German officer, was questioned outright by his superior about how he would act were the Netherlands and Germany to go to war. German soldiers were distrusted even more. Dutch people were convinced that the German soldiers in the colonial army would refuse to fight in a war with Germany, if even worse they did not take the German side.

The question was how should the German soldiers be dealt with. It was a delicate subject, bristling with domestic and international implications. Plans were developed in the course of 1915 about what was dubbed in a rather veiled fashion freedom of movement of foreigners, which in the worst case meant internment. The fate of soldiers of German nationality was a controversial point between Michielsen and the General Secretariat. Michielsen suggested that if war should come, soldiers and civilian employees in the Department of War with an enemy nationality should be stationed in islands outside Java, in Timor or in the Moluccas for instance, where they could do little harm. Another possibility was to concentrate them in parts of Java where they also could not hurt Dutch defence. The civil servants in the General Secretariat disagreed. The Dutch hold over Timor and the Moluccas was not yet so strong that the foreign soldiers could be sent there without a qualm. The General Secretariat also rejected the possibility that German soldiers should all be sent to certain places in Java. Internment was the only feasible course of action. All Germans in government employment and in the army should be dismissed and interned if war with Germany broke out. Michielsen could not agree. He challenged with the proposition that soldiers would never be able to set on the population against Dutch rule. Soldiers were an ‘instrument of repression’. For this very reason the population distrusted them and hence would pay them no heed. In Michielsen’s opinion civilians were the potential hazard. They could win the trust of the people. They should be interned. Conversely soldiers should be retained in the service; if for no other reason than that otherwise after the war no foreigners would be willing to enlist in the colonial army. The staff of the General Secretariat could not stomach such a suggestion. They considered it a disgrace to accept the services of people whose homeland was at war with the Netherlands.

Nobody had to be interned, but everything was in readiness should that time ever come. In May 1916 Dutch regional civil servants were asked to compile a list of potentially dangerous foreigners in their territory; that was for-

eign males between sixteen and sixty years of age. One year later, in October 1917, the question of whether persons who were interned and who had been in government employment were entitled to receive their salary came up. Nobody, not even in Holland, could give a clear-cut answer. It was not known how such matters were arranged in the rest of Europe.57

Some Dutch people believed the whole colonial army was a bulwark of pro-German sympathies. They suspected that Germans had made good use of the ties of friendship between Germany and Turkey and had managed to win the Indonesian Muslim soldiers onto their side. During a lecture in The Hague in 1918 one Dutch captain even ventured that since the beginning of the century portraits of the German Kaiser (and of the Turkish Sultan) had adorned barracks all over the Archipelago. He warned that sympathy for Germany had been carefully cultivated among the Muslim soldiers.58

How much his statement reflected the actual situation is impossible to reconstruct. Certainly portraits of the Kaiser and his wife, of the Sultan of Turkey, and, albeit to a lesser extent, of Emperor Franz Joseph were popular among the civilian population. The Young Turks also had their admirers. In 1918 a shopkeeper used the portrait of Enver Pasha as his trade mark. In the same year Enver Bei watches were for sale. Nevertheless, there was a distinct preponderance of pictures of the German Emperor and the Turkish Sultan on display. When government officials inspected the houses in the villages in Central Java in the course of the campaign to combat the plague at the end of 1914, they discovered to their dismay that this was a very popular form of interior decoration. Concluding that the pictures of the German Emperor and the Turkish Sultan had not been distributed by ‘friends of the government’ portraits of the Dutch royal couple were at once ordered from Holland. The pictures were to be distributed as an ‘antidote’ (Bijl de Vroe 1980:71). The Ministry of the Colonies embraced the mission. An order was placed for pictures of the Queen and the royal family with a Dutch printing-firm. They had to be bright and colourful. Pictures of Wilhelmina were available in the colony, (unfortunately not, a civil servant observed, on matchboxes, which carried portraits of almost all monarchs in the world except of the Dutch sovereign) but natives did not buy them because they were too dull. At that time getting top-quality coloured prints was not an easy job. It took almost one-and-a-half years before the first shipment of 500,000 copies of a picture showing three medallions of Queen Wilhelmina, her husband, Prince Hendrik, and her daughter, Princess Juliana, was ready to be sent.59

57 De Jonge to Pleyte, 3-10-1917, NA, Kol. Geheim, Vb. 10-10-1917 F12.
58 De Locomotief, 15-5-1918.
59 Pleyte to Van Limburg Stirum, 8-11-1917, NA, Kol. Openbaar, Vb. 8-11-1917 43; De Locomotief, 25-3-1916.
In the minds of the Dutch responsible for planning of the defence of the colony, Germans could pose a much greater danger in times of war than the Frenchmen and Britons living in the Netherlands Indies. Among the reasons why the Germans especially were distrusted was the suspicion, assiduously fed by the British, that leaders of the German community were actually planning for the moment when war should break out between the Netherlands and Germany. Germans were said to have already tried to incite the Muslim population and the Arab community in the Netherlands Indies to agitate against Dutch rule in the pre-war years. To prepare for a German take-over, they were supposed to have made good use of the cordial relationship between Germany and Turkey. Germans, Arabs, and leaders of the Sarekat Islam were alleged to have held meetings before August 1914 to discuss what to do when war broke out. It was claimed that they had continued to meet after August 1914.

Apprehension about German intentions was one of the main reasons for Idenburg to reject a suggestion by Pleyte in May 1915 to allow foreign consuls in the colony to send and receive telegrams in cipher. Pleyte hoped that by allowing ciphers, London could be persuaded to lift the restriction on telegrams between him and Idenburg, which also had to be sent in plain language. Idenburg rejected the idea. He pointed out that ciphers would only be exchanged between him and The Hague if the Netherlands was a party in an international crisis. At such a moment the British cable companies would certainly not pass messages in cipher. Allowing Germany or Great Britain to use codes would give these two countries a great advantage over the Netherlands if war threatened. Their consuls in the Netherlands Indies might be better informed about the situation in Holland than he would be. Even more dangerous, here Idenburg was referring especially to Germany, was the fact that they might receive instructions freely on how to act after war had been declared. The ban on ciphers had to be accepted. It was an inescapable fate as long as the Netherlands was the weakest party in a conflict and remained dependent on British cables.\(^\text{60}\)

Misgivings about a German scheme to undermine the Dutch rule peaked at the end of 1915, early 1916. Rumours about a German conspiracy involving Arabs, Chinese and members of the Sarekat Islam, and about the arrest of Tjokroaminoto because he was one of the plotters, led to all kind of wild speculations in what Emil Helfferich called the anti-German newspapers. One of the stories which circulated was that Javanese Regents and representatives of the courts of Yogyakarta and Surakarta had schemed to establish an Islamic state, protected by Turkey and with the Sunan of Surakarta as head of state.

\(^{60}\) Idenburg to Pleyte, 5-5-1915, NA, Kol. Geheim, Vb. 9-6-1915 G9.
Queen Alexandria on the trade mark of a trading company in Amsterdam (Javasche Courant 1916 Trade mark 8166)

Queen Wilhelmina on the trade mark of a trading company in Amsterdam (Javasche Courant 1916 Trade mark 8158)
Pieces of red paper would provide the sign that the time had come for blood to flow and that people were to rise up. Such reports were also published abroad. In Tokyo the *Japan Times* maintained that the Germans involved were held largely responsible for disturbances in the Netherlands Indies. In Holland *De Telegraaf* had the same story. Other newspapers in Holland were also sure that there was a ‘German complot’.

Almost all the commotion concerned the so-called Buitenzorg affair or Buitenzorg conspiracy. The blame has to be laid at the door of the Assistent-Resident of Buitenzorg, who accused five Germans of conspiring against the colonial state in January 1916. He claimed that he acted on information provided by a number of Arabs and Javanese Muslims who had come to him voluntarily and out of their own volition. *Oetoesan Hindia* reacted indignantly to the suggestion that the Sarekat Islam was involved in an attempt to overthrow Dutch rule. True, Indonesian Muslims were pro-German, because it was the ally of Turkey, but it was ‘a lie, treason, seditious, wicked’ to suggest that they looked to German help to rebel against Dutch rule. In the prevailing critical atmosphere, the Sarekat Islam stood 100 per cent behind the Dutch government. As ‘leaders of the people’ the editors knew where their duty lay.

Implicated in the Buitenzorg affair were two former employees of the Straits und Sunda Syndikat: Freiherr August von und zu Egloffstein, and Karl Ernst Keil. They were also former officers in the colonial army, who had respectively twenty-five and twenty years service in the course of which they had been awarded medals. Emil Helfferich was said to have been the leader of the complot. Keil was alleged to have chaired meetings in the Arab quarter of Buitenzorg to prepare for an Islamic state. He was supposed to have tried to convince the conspirators that they did not have to worry about arms and medical supplies. The German government had set aside money for this sort of thing. Keil was probably the ‘fat European gentleman’, who in reports figured as the person who at one of such meetings was pointed to by some of those present as the future king of Java in Dutch-language newspapers. He himself was claimed to have reacted by saying: ‘Here is the person who will become king. Germany is the strongest.’

On the initiative of Emil Helfferich the three tried to convince the Assistent-Resident that the accusations were unfounded. When this failed, they appealed to the Governor General in a letter in the newspapers to instigate a judicial investigation. They vowed that they were loyal residents of the Netherlands

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63 *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, cited in *De Locomotief*, 1-5-1916.
Indies. Other Germans, Austrians, and Hungarians used the celebration of the Kaiser’s birthday to express their indignation about the affair in a telegram to Idenburg. They also asked for an official inquiry.

A similar case evolved in Sumatra. K. Bäumer, editor of the *Sumatra-bode* in Padang asked for a formal investigation into accusations that Germans held secret meetings in Sumatra and incited the local population and Arabs against Dutch rule. Germans were also said to be mapping strategic spots. Especially offensive to Bäumer, a German who lived for thirty years already in the Netherlands Indies, were insinuations about newspaper editors who tried to persuade Indonesian Muslims to side with Germany ‘when time had come’, because Germany was an ally of Turkey.64

The reports about German plots were grist to the mill of the anti-German press. For J.G. Boon, editor-in-chief of the *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* since April 1915, the affair formed the occasion to launch a campaign calling attention to the stirring by Germans among indigenous Indonesians, Arabs, and Chinese. He claimed that in every large city there was ‘great intimacy between the Arabs and our German guests’, which could not be attributed to interests of trade or ‘les beaux yeux des Arabes’ alone. Boon thought the logical explanation was the existence of a German organization spreading anti-Dutch propaganda among Arabs and other Muslims. He appealed to the Dutch in the Netherlands Indies to assist in keeping track of Germans and noting their behaviour. The government should forbid contacts between Germans and Arabs, or Chinese and indigenous Indonesians hostile to Dutch rule. Another suggestion Boon made was to dismiss some of the German soldiers. He generously added that they could retain their pensions. Other German soldiers should be posted to faraway corners of the Archipelago where they could do no harm.65 The editor-in-chief of *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, W.K.S. van Haastert, hinted that the Sarekat Islam had been able to grow because German support and that its board had a secret ‘Young Turks’ agenda. The editors of *Oetoesan Hindia* reacted furiously. They denied that there was any truth in the allegations. Van Haastert was called a liar, a falsifier of facts, and a person full of sound and fury signifying nothing. *Oetoesan Hindia* suggested that Van Haastert should be arraigned for his deliberate attempt to sow hatred against the Javanese. By acting as he did, he formed a much greater threat to Dutch rule than either Germany or Japan.66 Because the colonial administration shared the suspicion that Germans cooperated with the Sarekat Islam no legal

64 *De Locomotief*, 2-6-1916.
66 *Oetoesan Hindia*, 29-4-1916, 1-5-1916.
A conservative view of how the Sarikat Islam should behave seeking guidance from the Dutch Virgin and ignoring the voice of agitators.
action was taken against Van Haastert.\footnote{See NA, Kol. Geheim, Mr. 1917/16x.}

The Soerabaiasch Handelsblad and Het Nieuws van den Dag were not alone in their condemnation. Abusive anti-German articles in the Dutch-language press now reached a peak. Windels spoke about a Pressefeldzug and about the almost daily disgraceful and libellous remarks in which all Germans were depicted as spies and traitors. He claimed that because of such pieces most Dutchmen had started to shun Germans. The argument suited him well. Windels’s point was that Germans had become an isolated, distinct group in the Netherlands Indies. This opened the possibility to use the haatzaai articles to bring a prosecution against Het Nieuws van den Dag, the Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, and other anti-German newspapers.\footnote{Windels to 1st Government Secretary, 12-5-1916, NA, Kol. Openbaar, Vb. 9-12-1918 45.}

The Buitenzorg Affair proved a hoax. It was an act of revenge against Keil, known as a ‘stern landlord’ and absolutely no friend of the Sarekat Islam, by Arabs who had been evicted from his estate and who had gained the cooperation of a number of Indonesians who shared their hatred of Keil. In December 1916 the Court of Batavia ruled that there was absolutely no ground for a prosecution. There was no shred of evidence. The Germans had never been near any Sarekat Islam meeting. The Attorney-General decided to appeal. Not because he did not agree with the ruling, but to undo the damage done and to have an opportunity to lecture the press and praise the Germans who had been implicated. In his closing speech before the High Court the Attorney-General concluded that he deemed a ruling by the highest court necessary because the affair had ‘produced turmoil throughout the whole country, completely disproportionate to the facts [...] caused by the foolhardy undertaking of a few daily papers, which [...] had no scruples about giving a totally untrue picture [...] on the basis of worthless evidence’.\footnote{De Locomotief, 9-12-1916.} He also accused the press of having published reports on secret meetings of Germans elsewhere in the Netherlands Indies to create the impression that Germans were also plotting there against Dutch rule, ‘reports usually so absurd that – would not the mind of many readers have been poisoned by prejudice – nobody would give any credence to them’.\footnote{De Locomotief, 9-12-1916.} The Attorney-General praised the Germans who had been implicated (the name of one Schün had also been mentioned) as decent, quiet persons, whose service and loyalty to colonial society were without doubt. He did not forget to mention that the Arabs in Buitenzorg were equally quiet, decent persons, and that the local Sarekat Islam was unquestionable.

Distrust of German intentions remained. The Governor General and his closest advisors knew about the Germano-Indian complot, other civil serv-
ants and the general public who were unaware of it had been confronted with the pamphlets sent from abroad, and had probably also heard some rumours about meetings which would have been held. The Resident of Batavia, Rijfsnijder, continued to deem it necessary to remain on the alert for such German attempts as late as August 1918. The general public also continued to be suspicious. In its attack on De Locomotief in August 1916 Het Nieuws van den Dag did not fail to mention that it was strange that a newspaper which followed the ideas of Pleyte, who till he became Minister of the Colonies had been a commissioner of De Locomotief so completely had become an instrument of people who wanted the natives to rise in rebellion against Dutch rule.

An additional source of embarrassment to the colonial authorities was that Dutch Indo-Europeans had been recruited as agents by the Germano-Indian conspirators. This was one of the reasons Idenburg distrusted the German community. He was not only sure that was tried to incite the Muslim population and discontented Indo-Europeans against Dutch rule in the Netherlands Indies by Germans in anticipation of war between Germany and the Netherlands, he was convinced that they had especially tried to involve members of the Indische Partij and other Indo-Europeans in the plan to subvert British rule in Asia (Bijl de Vroe 1980:44, 83). In January 1916 he confided to his adjutant in January 1916 that Germans used members of the Indische Partij to smuggle revolutionary pamphlets into India (Bijl de Vroe 1980:83).

One of the reasons for Idenburg to draw this conclusion was that he had learned about the adventures of Douwes Dekker. Douwes Dekker had met leaders of the Ghadr Movement during his trip to Europe in 1910 and 1911. He had kept in touch with them and had asked them to contribute to Het Tijdschrift. With the support he still had in the Netherlands Indies Douwes Dekker was an attractive asset to the movement. Within days of the outbreak of the war, Ghadr leaders had made their first move to recruit Douwes Dekker as an agent. His old acquaintance Krishnavarma, who had likewise moved to Geneva, had sent him a postcard and had suggested a meeting. Before Douwes Dekker had made up his mind, Krishnavarma had called at his house. He brought along Har Dayal, who had likewise moved to Geneva, had sent him a postcard and had suggested a meeting. Before Douwes Dekker had made up his mind, Krishnavarma had called at his house. He brought along Har Dayal, who had also been one of the contributors to Het Tijdschrift. The three talked about the war. Douwes Dekker later confessed he had liked the initiator of the Germano-Indian scheme to undermine the British position in Asia. Har Dayal had struck him as ‘a man with a well-developed intellect’. More meetings with Har Dayal followed. They had long chats, often in Douwes Dekker’s house. These were homely meetings during which Har Dayal played with Douwes Dekker’s children. At first Har Dayal had held his

71 NA, Memorie van Overgave Rijfsnijder, 2-8-1914.
72 De Locomotief, 11-8-1916.
tongue about the Germano-Indian conspiracy. He had only left no doubt that he would leave no stone unturned to gain independence for India (Van der Veur 2006:314, 322-3).

After Turkey had entered the war, efforts to court Douwes Dekker were stepped up. A number of Indians, who all came with letters of introduction from Har Dayal, contacted him. Among them were Chattopadhyaya and Champakaraman Pillai, chairman and secretary of a National Committee of Indians Living in Berlin. They visited Douwes Dekker in December. Pillai, who was an editor of Pro India, told Douwes Dekker about the existence of a secret organization in Berlin which had been set up to stir up anti-British feelings in British colonies. He asked Douwes Dekker to join and to become the movement’s representative in Zurich, the city to which Douwes Dekker had moved shortly before. Douwes Dekker’s task would be to distribute pamphlets from their committee in Zurich. Later, after the British had arrested him, Douwes Dekker claimed that he had refused. Whatever the truth, Douwes Dekker became more deeply involved when he received a telegram from Germany at the end of January 1915 inviting him to Berlin. He asked his wife what he should do. She was unhappy about it, but Douwes Dekker decided to accept. He later told his British interrogators that his main motivation had been his deplorable financial situation: ‘At the time I got the wire we were in the last straits of wretchedness. My wife and children were about to leave me, and return to Java, chiefly because of our poverty and the absence of any means of livelihood in Europe.’

Another task Douwes Dekker was asked to perform was to assist in acquiring Dutch passports from the Dutch consulate in Zurich for Indian and other agents of the conspiracy ordered to travel to the Netherlands Indies. Pillai and his friends had found out that the Consul spoke no Dutch or Malay. This would make it the easier for agents sent to the Netherlands Indies to pass as residents of the Netherlands Indies. In May Douwes Dekker helped to arrange the journey to the Netherlands Indies of a Batavia-born man of German origin by the name of C.F. Vincent Kraft. At the request of Pillai he also provided Kraft with a letter of introduction to a friend of his in Java. After his arrest Douwes Dekker claimed that he had added a note of caution in a secret code. He had not trusted Kraft and had not even been sure that Kraft was not a Dutch spy sent to report on him (Van der Veur 2006:323, 325).

Kraft boarded a Dutch mail boat in Genoa in May 1915. After arriving in

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73 After she had returned to Java Douwes Dekker’s wife would still be supported by the Tado Fund. In April 1916 she informed Insulinde that she was able to support herself and her children and no longer needed financial assistance (De Locomotief, 15-6-1916).  
Batavia he travelled on to Sumatra in the company of Douwes Dekker’s friend. Convinced that Kraft was a German secret agent, the latter left Kraft on his own in Medan. Without realizing this, Douwes Dekker had sealed his own fate by assisting Kraft to reach the Netherlands Indies. The British suspected Kraft and kept him under surveillance while he was in the Netherlands Indies. Kraft was arrested when he tried to enter Singapore the following month. He made a full confession and revealed all he knew about the Germano-Indian plot. Kraft was turned into a double agent. Under the guidance of British intelligence, he continued to communicate with Berlin. He even returned to the Netherlands Indies as a British spy (Hopkirk 1994:188-9).

Kraft’s information would lead to Douwes Dekker’s arrest. When he was interrogated by the British authorities, Douwes Dekker remained vague about his involvement in the Germano-Indian plot. At first he admitted that he had discussed the smuggling of 30,000 rifles into British India with Pillai, but claimed that he had only gone along with this to see what financial gain it might bring him. He said that he even had suggested that when he provided with one million German marks he would buy rifles in Japan or the United States and arrange for them to be shipped to British India aboard a Dutch merchantman under a false bill of loading. Douwes Dekker stressed that the plan had never been executed. He also denied ever having played any part in the attempts to smuggle arms into Burma or India. The Berlin committee had only asked him to become an intermediary in the smuggling of seditious literature into India. He explained that the only reason he had agreed was his desperate need of money. He had no qualms about accepting the money. He knew that the schemers were financed by the German state. He claimed that he had had no intention at all of fulfilling his assignment. He had destroyed the pamphlets.

Despite his denials, there can be no denying that Douwes Dekker was thrilled by some of the schemes suggested by the Indians. When they told him that they wanted to send a Javanese Muslim to Turkey to receive a fatwa, a religious ruling, ‘calling upon Moslems to remain loyal to their faith, and to do nothing which would act against the “Khalifa”’, Douwes Dekker, had been elated. Before his exile in De Expres in 1912 there had been a report that some Muslims considered him the reincarnation of Muhammad (Glissenaar 1999:85). A fatwa would raise his standing among members of the Sarekat Islam and other Muslims in the Netherlands Indies even more. Imagining how such a fatwa could boost his ‘democratic propaganda’, Douwes Dekker

75 Spakler to Idenburg, 22-12-1915, NA, Kol. Geheim, Vb. 11-2-1916 W1.
had suggested that he himself should go to Istanbul. Pillai had been quick to point out that such a journey would not be of much use. Douwes Dekker was not a Muslim. Unable to perform the mission himself, Douwes Dekker wrote to a Javanese friend. He asked him to come to Holland as soon as possible. He could collect his travelling expenses at Douwes Dekker's father's house. Pillai never seemed to have posted the letter, nor to have remitted any money to Douwes Dekker's father. Douwes Dekker was arrested at the end of the year, after he had embarked on a journey to the Far East financed by the Germans. Around the time of Kraft's arrest, Pillai and Chattopadhyaya had visited Douwes Dekker in Zurich and had asked him to become their agent in Bangkok (Ban Kah Choon 2001:69). Douwes Dekker had agreed. As by now it was well known even in the Netherlands Indies, he had become fed up with life in Europe and wanted to return to Asia. Insulinde even contemplated sending him the proceeds of cinema shows to allow him to take up residence in Singapore.78

Before travelling to Bangkok, Douwes Dekker visited the United States and Japan. In connection with plans for his journey, he went to Berlin once more in July 1915. In Berlin he received his instructions and a code book from the German Foreign Office (Van der Veur 2006:318-9). The code book would allow him to keep in contact with the committee in Berlin by telegrams of which the contents at first glance looked like information about commercial transactions. The Dutch Deputy Consul in Hong Kong, W.J. Quist, was to report a few months later that the code was a very clever one. Simple sentences had a completely different meaning to that which an innocent reader would make of it.79 The British were not fooled. Kraft had given them the code. Douwes Dekker, who by now had been studying at the University of Zurich for a year and had passed his exams with flying colours – he was known as a diligent and energetic, albeit somewhat lonely person80 – left Rotterdam for New York in early September. He travelled in the guise of a commercial traveller. To explain his departure he wrote to his landlord in Zurich that he had tried to be rehabilitated in Holland, that he had failed, and that he was tired of Europe. He wanted to go back to the Netherlands Indies.81 At the end of the month, Douwes Dekker arrived in San Francisco, still the centre of Indian dissidents. Here he met Rham Chandra Kanta Chakravarti, who was considered by the British to have become the leader of the conspiracy in the United States after Har Dayal had fled the country.82

78 De Locomotief, 21-12-1914.
79 Quist to Ruempol, 17-12-1915, NA, Kol. Openbaar, Vb. 22-4-1916 5.
Dekker sailed on to Japan, where he visited one of the leaders of the Indian Revolutionary Party in Japan, Heramba (Hermeba) Lal Gupta. Another of his contacts in Japan was Yusaburo Takekoshi, the author of the fiercely anti-Dutch article which had so shocked the Dutch (Van der Veur 2006:322-3).

From Japan Douwes Dekker travelled on to Shanghai. By now, he was regarded as a highly suspicious character by the Dutch and the British government. Both were aware of his schedule. In Batavia the colonial authorities suspected him of continuing his anti-colonial Indische Partij activities from abroad. To find out more, the Dutch Consul General in Shanghai was instructed to investigate who Douwes Dekker’s contacts were. He had to investigate more thoroughly if these persons were Germans, British Indians, Turks, or Arabs. Batavia was also very eager to know to whom Douwes Dekker sent letters in the Netherlands Indies. The British, knowing about Douwes Dekker’s part in the Germano-Indian plot, were so eager to arrest him that even a namesake of his was detained when he entered Great Britain.

Douwes Dekker’s next stop was Hong Kong. Here he was detained. Douwes Dekker fell ill and had to be admitted to hospital. He had syphilis, but the Dutch authorities were so well-bred they kept this a secret and had not corrected newspaper reports in Java that Douwes Dekker was suffering from dysentery (Van der Veur 2006:319-21). To prevent his escape, the head of the Hong Kong police had Douwes Dekker outer clothing removed. In an interview with a journalist on the Sumatra Post who visited him in hospital, Douwes Dekker blamed British reprisals for his pro-German articles in the Dutch press for his arrest. That during his interrogations he had revealed everything about his contacts with the Indian conspirators, he attributed to his poor health. He said he had consumption. The journalist was struck by the ‘terribly emaciated face’ of ‘the father of the Indische Partij’. When he had recovered somewhat, Douwes Dekker was put on a ship to Singapore, where, still weak from his illness, he was arrested by the military authorities on arrival on 21 December 1915. In the Netherlands Indies newspapers reporting on his arrest said that Douwes Dekker’s role in the smuggling of inflammatory pamphlets was punishable by British martial law with twenty years’ imprisonment.

Batavia welcomed Douwes Dekker’s arrest. The Dutch Consul General in Singapore who, had alerted the Singapore authorities to the fact that Douwes Dekker was a ‘dangerous agitator’ as early as October, made it clear that the Dutch authorities ‘had no desire that Douwes Dekker should be released, in fact they hoped that the British authorities would detain him as long as they

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83 Ruempol to Dutch Consul General in Shanghai, 8-11-1915, NA, Kol., Vb. 22-4-1916 5.
84 De Locomotief, 24-1-1916, Oetoesan Hindia, 1-2-1916.
85 De Locomotief, 11-1-1916.
possibly could'.86 This they did. Douwes Dekker remained in the Tanglin Prison till 1917 (Van der Veur 2006:334-51), when he was sent to San Francisco to testify in the ‘Hindoo cases’, the trials of eight Indian conspirators, including ‘his friend’ Rham Chandra Kanta Chakravarti, as the latter was described by the San Francisco Examiner.87

In San Francisco thirty Germans, Americans, and Indians were sentenced for breaching American neutrality. The court case resulted in new embarrassments for the Dutch government. Testimonies implicated Theodor and Emil Helfferich. As far as London was concerned what was disclosed at the trial was reason enough to remind The Hague in August 1918 of the accusations it had made in 1916. It was pointed out that there could no longer be any doubt that Dutch territory had been used as a base for German conspiracies against India.88 An accompanying memorandum stated that had the Helfferich brothers been brought to trial, they would certainly have been convicted ‘for the evidence in the case proved clearly that Batavia was one of the principal scenes of the conspiracy and that Theodor Helfferich was the chief German agent at that place’.89 Especially Theodor’s remark to her supercargo shortly after the arrival of Maverick in which ‘he expressed regret that the cargo had not come and his disgust that the Maverick had arrived without it’, was seen by the British authorities (and by the Dutch counterparts when they learned about it) as proof of his complicity. The British government could also point to evidence that Theodor Helfferich had met representatives of the revolutionary movement in India in his house and had discussed the dropping of arms along the coast of India with them. It was also noted that such persons had simply found Helfferich’s address by looking it up in a telephone directory. In one case, one of them who should have been introduced to Theodor Helfferich by Abdul Selam (who at that time had been under arrest), had been directed to Helfferich by a ‘couple of Java gentlemen’. They had been waiting for a guest from India in the lobby of the hotel where Abdul Selam had been staying.90 The evidence also showed that Ong Sin Kwie might not have been as innocent as the Attorney-General in Batavia had taken him to be. A telegram exchanged between the United States and Berlin had referred to the arrest of a Chinese friend of Theodor Helfferich.91

Likewise unpleasant was that the German plot provided Takekoshi and

86 Spakler to Colonial Secretary Singapore, 7-10-1915, Beckett to Hulshoff Pol, 10-5-1916, NA, Kol. Geheim, Vb. 11-2-1916 W1, Vb. 27-7-1916 25.
87 San Francisco Examiner, 10-6-1917. Van der Veur 2006:351-71
other expansionist Japanese with yet another argument for the Japanese government to do something about the Netherlands Indies. It became one of the many arguments wielded by Takekoshi to demonstrate that Japan should somehow acquire Java and Sumatra. He presented a range of reasons: the failure to maintain neutrality during the Russo-Japanese War; the exploits of the *Emden* and the role of Germans in the Netherlands Indies in stirring up unrest in British India, which showed that the failure to maintain neutrality harmed other nations; the fact that the problems the Allied blockade posed to Germany showed that Japan as an industrialized nation also needed a colony in the tropics to supply the motherland with food and natural resources; and the possibility that after the war the Netherlands Indies could become a base for Japan’s enemies.\(^92\)

After the trial, Douwes Dekker returned to Singapore, where on the promise to refrain from political activities he took up residence in a modest hotel, the Hotel Van Wijk.

\(^{92}\) *De Locomotief*, 6-10-1916.