CHAPTER XXI

November 1918

Revolutionary fervour reached an unprecedented intensity in the Netherlands Indies in 1918. In Holland in retrospect the Ministry of the Colonies spoke in its annual report for 1918 about ‘a certain restlessness’ in the colony as a result of the activities of Sneevliet and others. This was an understatement. Unrest had been widespread.\(^1\) Again taking a backward glance the editor of *De Indische Gids*, E.A.A. van Heekeren, noted ‘serious happenings’. One was ‘a progressive spirit of resistance in native society, which manifested itself in a mounting insecurity of persons and goods, in attempts made on Europeans’. The other was that the army was ‘affected by a spirit of disobedience’ (Van Heekeren 1919b:13). In the Netherlands Indies the question of whether or not the indigenous population, and the other population groups perhaps as well, had lost faith in the government had emerged as an earnest subject of debate. In the People’s Council various members – J.J.E. Teeuwen, Achmad Djadjadiningrat, Sastrowidjono, and Abdoel Rivai – repeatedly pointed out that large segments of the population from the highest level to the lowest echelon distrusted the government. A ‘spirit of discontent’ reigned. They argued that the anti-Dutch mood had been exacerbated by the poor economic conditions and by the high-handed and conservative way in which Dutch people, civil servants, and staff of the estate in the vanguard, continued to treat Indonesians.\(^2\) Spokesmen for the colonial government denied that this was indeed the case.

The mood thus discerned coupled with doubts about the capability or even willingness of the colonial army to suppress large-scale popular unrest engendered renewed reservations about the creation of a native militia among Europeans. Arming natives under such circumstances might be dangerous (Van Heekeren 1919b:142). Cogently, many of the nationalist leaders continued to oppose a militia. Attacking Indië Weerbaar had become one of the ways for the ISDV activists to wrest control of the Sarekat Islam from Tjokroaminoto, Abdoel Moeis and other moderate leaders. To achieve their

\(^1\) *Koloniaal verslag* 1919:47-8.

purpose they hammered away at the argument that a militia was only of benefit to no one but the capitalists, and that the Javanese population did not have much to fear if the Netherlands Indies were conquered by a foreign nation. Only the Dutch would lose their jobs, one of the ISDV members, B. Coster, a schoolteacher in Malang, for instance, stated at an ISDV meeting in Semarang in early September.3

Indië Weerbaar assumed the shape of the catalyst for a confrontation between the left and the right, which also set people in the European community at odds. Indië Weerbaar was intensely promoted by the colonial government and part of the white establishment. They did so with a certain urgency, afraid that it might not be long before war would be declared on the Netherlands because of the complications about the Dutch position which had arisen in Europe. A new Indië Weerbaar Association had been formed on 31 August 1917. It united local Indië Weerbaar branches which were still extant or had been newly formed. A telegram was sent to Queen Wilhelmina to congratulate her on her birthday and to inform her about the founding of the new association. The chairman was K.A.R. Bosscha. Among the other members of the board were G.J.C.A. Pop, one of the driving forces behind the new association, Koning of the KPM, and Muurling.4 A number of Indonesians also joined the board: R.A.A. Achmad Djajadiningrat, J.A. Soselisa, Pangeran Raden Soerio Atmodjo, Raden Temenggoeng Sosrowerdojo, and Raden A.A. Tirtokoesoemo. Lieutenant General H.N.A. Swart, adjutant to the Queen and Civil and Military Governor of Aceh, became honorary chairman. An Orgaan der Vereeniging ‘Indië Weerbaar’ (Organ of the Association The Resistant Indies) began to be published in February 1918. Initially Malay and Javanese translations of some of the articles were included. Later it would become a fully bilingual Malay-Dutch journal. A few months later a march, the Indië Weerbaar Marsch was composed by F.H. Belloni. A postage stamp was designed as well.

Initially the aim of the founders had been ‘military defence’. When this caused opposition – a few people wanted to do away with the term completely – the goal was changed to ‘economic and military defence’. Branches took the non-military part of the drive seriously, linking it with the development of the indigenous population. One example was the Banyuwangi branch. It funded a ‘domestic science school for native girls’ and a seedling farm for rice and ‘native crops’. The human body was not forgotten. As Bosscha said: ‘the labourer and the soldier should be physically strong and possessed of the

3 IPO 1917 no. 36, citing Kaoem Moeda, 6-9-1917.
4 When a general meeting was held in August 1918, the KPM promised a reduction in the fare for people who wanted to attend.
stamina to be able to maintain our nationality’.\textsuperscript{5} Physical education should be promoted. True to this spirit, one of the many committees the board founded was a hygiene or health committee. What ‘use is the battle cry of the last few years “Indië Weerbaar” if it is not proceeded by “Indië gezond”’ (the Indies healthy), it was stated in an article about hookworm disease in 1919.\textsuperscript{6}

The association claimed to have twenty-seven branches spread over the Archipelago in early 1918, with the promise of the founding of twenty-eight other branches. Not much later it was said that the association had 14,000 members. A great deal of emphasis was placed on the fact that Indonesians had also joined and that in many places it had been they who had taken the initiative to found branches. It was too rosy a picture. An Indië Weerbaar meeting held in Yogyakarta in July 1918 was a failure. Almost nobody turned up and none of those who did come wanted to sit on the board of the local branch.\textsuperscript{7}

The main objective of the new association was fund-raising. One of the suggestions made at the foundation meeting was to raise money especially for ‘a submarine for the Indies’. Opponents were of the opinion that the aim was unrealistic. The coastline of the Netherlands Indies was vast. One submarine would cost at least two million guilders. Presenting only one was a mere trifle, as good as admitting the level of incapacity. If a gesture were to be made at least six or twelve submarines should be given. This would require an enormous amount of money. ‘Machine guns, for instance, would only cost a few thousand guilders’ or ‘aeroplanes which cost about Dfl. 40,000 a machine’ would be a much better proposition.\textsuperscript{8} Twenty-five aeroplanes would be a nice gift. Others suggested raising money for the defence of ports or for wireless communication with Holland. Money should also go to ‘volunteer motorbike- or bicycle-riders, and defence corps, shooting clubs, etc.’ and to the organization of first-aid courses. The men who had founded the association seemed to have thought about almost everything, even about ‘the planning of factories and industries, which are suitable to be turned into munition factories within a short space of time in the event of war’.\textsuperscript{9}

One of the achievements the new association did make was the organization of an Indië Weerbaar Week in September 1918. The idea had come from the Batavia branch. This time there was no talk of buying armaments. The national board had rejected this option. It also had come to the conclusion that armaments were difficult to purchase. Instead, money should be raised to

\textsuperscript{5} Orgaan der Vereeniging ‘Indië Weerbaar’ 1-2:5.
\textsuperscript{6} Orgaan der Vereeniging ‘Indië Weerbaar’ 2-1:5.
\textsuperscript{7} Neratja, 27-7-1918.
\textsuperscript{8} Orgaan der Vereeniging ‘Indië Weerbaar’ 1-1:6.
\textsuperscript{9} Orgaan der Vereeniging ‘Indië Weerbaar’ 1-1:2-4.
improve the social position of the ordinary soldier and to build up a ‘central cash point’ to support the activities of local branches and other organizations with similar aims. The disruption of sea traffic had left its mark. In presenting the plans special emphasis was put on the fact that the present circumstances had shown how important it was that the Netherlands Indies made itself less dependent on imports, especially food. Economic development should be the catchword. True to this conviction, the Orgaan held articles about improving stock and other economic subjects. Industry, agriculture, and animal husbandry should be promoted to increase the self-sufficiency of the Netherlands Indies. One of the offshoots of the stress on economic development was the founding of a Nederlandsch-Indische Tentoonstelling Vereeniging (Netherlands Indies Fair Association).

The association had done its utmost to make the week a grand manifestation. Planning had started in April. In May a special committee had been formed to organize the festivities. Among its members were Koning, Muurling, J.A. Soselisa, and the patih of Batavia. Honorary chairman was A.C.D. de Graeff, the Deputy Chairman of the Council of the Indies. Other honorary members were Bron, Van Rietschoten, J.C. Koningsberger (chairman of the People’s Council), and Swart.

For one reason or another festivities started in Sumedang. Here the Indië Weerbaar week was held as early as the middle of July. In Sumedang Rhemrev, ‘the father’ of the Indië Weerbaar movement, as the local Assistent-Resident
chose to address him, played an active role. Rhemrev seemed to have undergone a volte-face. In the speech he gave he said that the new movement was different to the one first founded. It was no longer ‘purely militaristic’ but aimed especially at building up the economic resilience of the colony. Consequently an exhibition arranged in Sumedang stressed industry, agriculture, and stock-breeding. The military aspect was confined to a demonstration with a military carrier pigeon.\textsuperscript{10}

In the first week of September other cities followed Sumedang’s example. All kinds of economic fairs were organized which highlighted agriculture, animal husbandry, and domestic production. Among the items prominently featured were such dire necessities as tinned food, cigars, soap, and products of the indigenous industry such as \textit{wajang} puppets, textiles, and pottery. To add to the festive atmosphere, houses and vehicles were adorned with Dutch flags. During the festivities no population group was forgotten. There were attractions for everybody. In a great many cities in Java and elsewhere, the Indië Weerbaar week was the occasion for the usual festive events which had also coloured the independence celebrations: parades; military tattoos; early morning musical interludes by schoolchildren; all kinds of balls, open-air film showings; and European, Javanese and Sundanese theatre. The Javanese were entertained by wayang shows, and \textit{ronggeng} and \textit{serimpi} performances. People could also watch egg-and-spoon races on bicycles, soccer games for natives and Europeans, sack races, and fireworks. As in 1913, members of all population groups flocked to the events. In Saparua, the Indië Weerbaar Week even turned out to be an almost exclusively indigenous feast. Only five Europeans lived on the island, and two of them did not participate. One of the events on Saparua contemporaries deemed worth mentioning was the singing of an Indië Weerbaar song composed by a ‘native schoolteacher’\textsuperscript{11}.

In Java the Regents’ houses were a favourite venue to organize festivities for the indigenous Indonesians. Barracks held open days. Near Bandung soldiers acted out a mock battle. Before battle commenced, the audience could have a look at the weapons used, the mobile canteen, the wireless system, and the trenches that had been dug. Money was raised by asking entrance fees to events and by selling flags and cockades. The proceeds went to Indië Weerbaar, and also to charity. Patriotic speeches were held, the national anthem was sung, and telegrams were drafted to be sent to the Governor General or to Holland.

The festivities in Batavia formed the climax. They lasted for eleven days. During the Indië Weerbaar week in Batavia ‘the sweetest of young ladies’, as

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Orgaan der Vereeniging ‘Indië Weerbaar’} 1-3:19.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Orgaan der Vereeniging ‘Indië Weerbaar’} 1-4/6:12.
De Locomotief described them, sold Dutch pea soup, which also was a favourite treat in other cities, and, again according to De Locomotief, expensive little Indië Weerbaar flags.\textsuperscript{12} How many were sold is not mentioned. The number may not have been staggering. To commemorate the Indië Weerbaar week, 44,040 poster-stamps had been distributed, but of these only 5,527 were sold, bringing in 276.34 guilders.\textsuperscript{13}

There were many activities in Batavia. People could admire a gymnastic display by soldiers, figure cycling, and a gymkhana, and attend all kinds of martial demonstrations. Among the latter were a military tattoo, flying shows, and demonstrations of the assembling of a mountain cannon and a mortar, and in loading machine guns. Van Limburg Stirum attended all these martial events. The public cheered. For the colonial elite there was a formal ball in the military club Concordia, a rare occasion because Van Limburg Stirum had continued the policy of his predecessor, Idenburg, of not holding such festive events at his palaces. It would only be on 4 March 1919 that the first ball was held at the Governor General’s palace in Buitenzorg, though this would still be a chaste occasion as ‘Steps’ were considered slightly immoral and thus were not allowed (Bijl de Vroe 1980:166). Ordinary soldiers were placated with leave or a Sunday duty roster.

Opponents of Indië Weerbaar were equally passionately busy. Among them were the members of the Batavia SDAP. Cramer called the Indië Weerbaar movement the ‘Indies Junker Party’.\textsuperscript{14} He and other antagonists had likewise done their best to make the Indië Weerbaar week a memorable occasion. Everywhere in the city posters formulating the demands of the soldiers had been pasted up: better food, a better legal position, no more corporal punishments, and leave in Europe. Pamphlets were distributed and demonstrations planned. The reaction of the military authorities was uncompromising. One of the victims was the chairman of the Batavia Branch of the Soldaten Bond (Soldiers’ Union). He was held responsible for one of the pamphlets which drew attention to the soldiers’ demands. His punishment was demotion from bombardier to ordinary gunman. He was also transferred from his relatively comfortable job at the warehouses of the Department of Defence to active military service. To make the punishment more provoking he was not allowed to leave the barracks, which made it impossible for him to continue his job on the side (many soldiers had such an additional source of income) as a cobbler. Cramer pointed out in the People’s Council that this punishment was made even more callous as the person in question suffered from ‘severe chronic rheumatism’ which made it

\textsuperscript{12} De Indische Gids 1918, I:93.
\textsuperscript{13} Koloniaal verslag 1919:76.
\textsuperscript{14} Volksraad 1918-19:210
impossible for him to participate in military exercises.\textsuperscript{15}

Another pamphlet which attracted plenty attention was a call in Malay by the Batavia SDAP to attend a protest meeting organized in conjunction with Insulinde and the Sarekat Islam in the Deca Park on 1 September, the first day of the Indië Weerbaar Week. The pamphlet began by reminding Indonesians of earlier occasions on which the government had made them part with their money: Princess Juliana’s birth, the celebration of the Netherlands’ Independence, and the Onze Vloot drive. It was pointed out that people had obeyed a \textit{perintah haloes}, a gentle order, not to mention less gentle hints, had ‘stifled their curses’, and had donated. This time once again they were asked to sweat cash. Indië Weerbaar wanted the people’s money to finance the training of soldiers and to buy rifles. In the pamphlet it was suggested that it was the Indonesians who had to pay for these soldiers and rifles and that it was these very same Indonesians against whom the weapons would be used:

Will it strike you that the projectile, bought with your money, hit you or your brother in the body? Make your wife a widow, your children orphans? But what more do you black wretches want to have than the honour of being a loyal subject. The people of Indië Weerbaar will toast your loyalty with champagne.\textsuperscript{16}

The message was clear. Not a farthing should be given. The fine talk of Indië Weerbaar advocates about the development of the colony would only serve to ensure the continuation of Dutch rule. They did not bother themselves about the real needs of the population. The small Dutch flags which could be bought were but symbols of bondage. During the meeting itself the ISDV was conspicuously absent, though Alimin addressed the crowd. The soldiers were also absent. They had been forbidden to attend. Those who had disregarded the order were ejected by the police. In spite of these precautions European soldiers, the authorities estimated about one hundred, staged protest marches on 1 and 2 September. Fearing more protests the military authorities decided to act. Instead of enjoying leave or a Sunday duty roster soldiers and NCOs were confined to the barracks. Dutch officers kept watch to prevent any mischief. Armed patrols were out on the street.

Much went wrong in Batavia during the Indië Weerbaar Week. Cavalrymen, machine-gunners and other soldiers had trained for two days for a military tattoo on 2 September. \textit{De Locomotief} described the parade which passed the palace of the Governor General as ‘marvellous’. Nevertheless, it was not ‘the buglers, drummers, staff music, battalion music, fife players’ who were the cynosure of all eyes and excited colonial society.\textsuperscript{17} Demonstrating soldiers

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Volksraad} 1918-19:464.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{De Indische Gids} 1919, I:89-90.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{De Indische Gids} 1918, I:93
singing the *Internationale* who preceded the tattoo stole the show. The cavalry had to disperse them.

Not everything that happened could be ascribed to the machinations of the anarchists and *ellendelingen*, wretches, to borrow the words Bijl de Vroe used to describe people like Baars, Sneevliet, Brandsteder, and Schotman (one of the organizers of the meeting in the Deca Park), whom he held responsible for the protests. Two flying shows were held in the mornings of 1 and 2 September at the Koningsplein, the present Medan Merdeka, on the northern side of which the palace of the Governor General was located. During the second, the engine of one of the aircraft failed. The plane crashed. The pilot was seriously wounded and died a few days later. The accident had consequences for the defence of the colony. As Bijl de Vroe noted: with one more plane down, half the colonial air-force of four planes was out of action (Bijl de Vroe 1980:162).\(^{18}\) *Neratja* drew a different lesson from the incident: it was a clear indication that ‘Nature’ did not want the Indië Weerbaar movement in the Netherlands Indies

\(^{18}\) Little more than a week later yet another plane crashed.
to continue in its present militaristic form. Economic development and education should come first.\textsuperscript{19} Among the restless soldiers, the accident almost led to a fight between Moluccan or Manadonese soldiers (the source was unable to make up its mind which of the two groups was involved) and the police. It started when policemen stopped the soldiers who were running into the direction of the plane wreck. One of the soldiers protested. This was followed by an exchange of abuse and him being hit on the head by a mounted policeman. His friends joined a verbal ‘attack’. Policemen had to draw their pistols to keep the soldiers at a distance. The soldiers vented their anger by pelting the policemen with stones.\textsuperscript{20}

The establishment of the People’s Council with twenty-one European, fifteen Indonesian, two Chinese and one Arab member had not made the opposition to Indië Weerbaar less vehement among Indonesians. Batavia and The Hague were well pleased with the quasi-parliament they had bestowed on the colony and never ceased speaking about the new political relationship that had taken shape. In a telegram to Van Limburg Stirum Pleyte called the opening of the People’s Council on 18 May 1918 ‘the most memorable day’ of his ministerial life.\textsuperscript{21} Van Limburg Stirum had sent an equally jubilant telegram to The Hague. Nationalist leaders likewise welcomed the creation of the People’s Council. \textit{Neratja} even launched a campaign for a People’s Council Monument.\textsuperscript{22} Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, critical as ever, concluded that by establishing the People’s Council ‘the government got so many feathers in its cap’ that it resembled an Indian with his cock’s feathers as head-dress’.\textsuperscript{23} Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo was exaggerating. From the start, and this for a variety of reasons, the People’s Council met with fierce opposition from within all population groups. One of the major points of criticism, also shared by its members, was that the powers of the People’s Council were limited, even too limited for some Dutch people who wanted greater independence for the colony. Consequently it had garnered all kind of nicknames. \textit{Volksraad palsoe}, False People’s Council, \textit{Barnum and Bailey People’s Council}, \textit{couveusekindje}, premature baby, are just of few of these (Van Heutsz 1917b:23). It was a real representative parliament with real powers, which even the more moderate faction in the Sarekat Islam argued, whose task it was to decide on the institution of a militia.\textsuperscript{24}

If anything, Abdoel Moeis and others who had initially supported Indië

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Neratja}, 1-9-1918.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Neratja}, 3-9-1918.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{De Locomotief}, 29-5-1918.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Neratja}, 8-12-1917.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Volksraad} 1918-19:159.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Oetoesan Hindia}, 2-10-1918.
Weerbaar had sharpened their critical faculties. Probably they were also disillusioned by the fact that their earlier campaign to obtain concessions from The Hague in return for a militia had borne no fruits. Though less radically than the opponents from the left, Abdoel Moeis began to stress that he could not consent as long as the Indonesians had nothing worthwhile to defend, in short had no ‘fatherland’. To show how little was done for the development of the Indonesian population, he pointed out that expenditures on defence accounted for between 20 and 30 per cent of the colonial budget, that for education only between 2.5 and 5 per cent.25

Diminishing support for Indië Weerbaar went hand in hand with deteriorating relations in the Sarekat Islam between its Islamic and leftist wings. In October 1917 Sneevliet had stated that the members of the central board of the Sarekat Islam had turned away from the masses and had destroyed the ‘fresh, young movement’ the Sarekat Islam once had been. They should forsake their policy of ‘no action, no agitation’, a course of action Rinkes had asked them to follow, and should no longer rely only on consultation with colonial government and the submission of requests.26 In their turn in Oetoesan Hindia Sneevliet and the other Dutch radical propagandists of the ISDV were accused of having sown discord in the Sarekat Islam by their relentless agitation against the Indië Weerbaar movement. They were said to have succeeded in convincing the ‘stupid and less educated element among the Natives’ that their leaders were ‘traitors to the people’; a qualification Baars denied as ever having used.27 Neratja spoke about the rotten influence – boesoek was the word that was used – of Sneevliet and Baars on the Sarekat Islam.28 Aversion in the Boedi Oetomo was perhaps even stronger. During a debate in Surakarta with Dwidjosewojo in September 1918 Baars accused the Boedi Oetomo of being supported by the capitalists so that they could continue to exploit the people. One of the members of Boedi Oetomo responded to this insult in Darmo Kondo. He ended his article with the Dutch words: ‘Leave us alone! Leave all that concerns our land and people completely to us, we ourselves will carry the ups and downs of our own future in the name of God.’29

Since then the antagonism in the Sarekat Islam had only increased. The moderate leaders refused to let control slip from their hands. They could still count on plenty of support. Members made it clear where their loyalty lay by shouting ‘Follow the Sarekat Islam! Follow the Sarekat Islam!’ when presented with the choice between the Sarekat Islam and ISDV. Briefly it appeared that

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25 Volksraad 1918:148, 543.
26 Het Vrije Woord, 20-10-1917 (Tichelman 1985:672).
28 Neratja, 13-11-1918.
29 Neratja, 26-10-1918.
unity had been restored. This happened at the third national Sarekat-Islam Congress which was held in Surabaya at the end of September and the beginning of October 1918. It was deliberately convened just in advance of the next session of the People’s Council, so as to be prepared if the native militia were to come up for discussion. Behind closed doors a truce was reached between Abdoel Moeis, who had been attacked even more vehemently by the European and Indonesian members of the ISDV after his debate with Baars in September 1917. Even the fact that Abdoel Moeis owned a motor car was used as a powerful argument against him. Abdoel Moeis’s Neratja, in turn, questioned Sneevliet’s, using his past employment by the Soerabaiaisch Handelsblad and the Semarangsche Handelsvereeniging to argue that Sneevliet had always been a tool of the capitalists.\(^{30}\) The immediate cause to talk matters over had been that Neratja had called Sneevliet and Baars divisive elements in the indigenous movement. In reaction the Semarang branch of the Sarekat Islam called for Abdoel Moeis’s resignation. After Abdoel Moeis had defended himself spiritedly, a compromise was reached. Abdoel Moeis, Darsono, and Semaoen, all three pledged to uphold the principles of the Sarekat Islam. They also promised not to fight out their differences in the press but to try to talk it out in the board of the Sarekat Islam. They would refrain from personal attacks and would criticize only one another’s deeds.

It was the congress which afterwards was so much hated by Idenburg for its radicalism. The leftist members as usual lashed out against the Indië Weerbaar movement. They gained some success. As late as October 1917 Tjokroaminoto had still threatened to step down if the Sarekat Islam would condemn the Indië Weerbaar movement. A year later a motion rejecting a militia was accepted by the congress. Abdoel Moeis supported it.\(^{31}\) Tjokroaminoto assumed a more radical tone. Provoked by Semaoen, he indicated that if the government was not prepared to carry out political reforms, the Sarekat Islam itself would institute representative bodies. Not much later, in a speech in the People’s Council, he would accuse the government of having misunderstood the pro-Indië Weerbaar motion of the Sarekat Islam of August 1916 and of having started preparations for a militia without granting the population more rights.\(^{32}\) On top of all this, Semaoen gained a seat in the central board of the Sarekat Islam. He became commissioner for the northern part of Central Java.

Baars was jubilant about the congress’s outcomes. He concluded in Het Vrije Woord, predicting turbulent times when hunger or a ‘sugar debacle’ would come about, that Tjokroaminoto’s words meant that Tjokroaminoto, though he might not have realised this, had threatened with a Soviet government.

\(^{30}\) Neratja, 28-3-1918.

\(^{31}\) Neratja, 8-10-1918.

\(^{32}\) Volksraad 1918-19:546.
According to Baars what had transpired at the congress showed that the Sarekat Islam had become a revolutionary organization, prepared to act, and much more revolutionary than its counterparts in British India. Proudly he claimed that all this had been brought about by the Indonesian members of the ISDV. Baars concluded that the Sarekat Islam had made an important step forward in becoming a ‘class-organization of labourers and farmers’. Less radical Europeans drew a similar conclusion: Tjokroaminoto had come under the spell of the ISDV leaders and the Sarekat Islam would in future follow the course of action propagated in Het Vrije Woord and in the radical indigenous press.

Semaoen was also pleased. He concluded that his inclusion in the board and the other decisions taken were proof that his revolutionary socialist opinions prevailed in the Sarekat Islam and were highly appreciated by the board. Indeed, the central board announced at the end of the month that strikes which aimed at improving the circumstances of labourers, or started to

33 Sarekat-Islam Congres 1919:71.
34 Oetoesan Hindia, 18-10-1918.
fight for their rights or to combat arbitrary treatment should be endorsed.\(^{35}\)

Within days the unity achieved at the congress broke up. Trouble started
when *Neratja* published an editorial ‘To Canossa’ on 2 October. The author
probably was the newspaper’s other editor R. Djioosodeiro. It certainly was
not Abdoel Moeis, who was still in Surabaya. Later Abdoel Moeis apologized
for what had been written and pledged that all articles in *Neratja* about the
Sarekat Islam in future would be signed.\(^{36}\) In ‘To Canossa’ Semaoen was called
a *splijtzwam*, a divisive element, and a person influenced by Sneevliet and
Baars. Triumphant it was observed that by accepting the agreement with
Abdoel Moeis Semaoen had backed down. Semaoen reacted by writing ‘Tidak
berubah’ (Unchanged) published in *Soecara Ra’jat* on 12 October. In it Semaoen
wrote that his ideas were *lakoe*, popular, while *Neratja* was not. He asserted
that the course of the Sarekat Islam was much closer to his own one than that
of Abdoel Moeis and that it was easy for revolutionary socialists to strive for
the principles of the Sarekat Islam. Again he stressed that he was not under
the influence of Sneevliet and Baars. Such an assessment was an insult to the
Javanese. It suggested that they were more stupid than Europeans.

In an atmosphere of unrest and agitation, news about the socialist revolutions
in Europe sent a shockwave through the Dutch community in the Netherlands
Indies. Rumours did the rounds about ‘the proclamation of a republic of
Holland’ and about Troelstra proclaiming that ‘the socialists would have no
scruples about resorting to violence’. In their news telegrams, newspapers
frequently reported about the activities of Republican movements in Holland,
Germany and the rest of Europe, and about the many strikes which were
taking place all over Europe. One of these reports stated that in Holland the
population wanted to stage large-scale disturbances.\(^{37}\)

Some feared that something similar could happen in Java. There was plenty
to worry about. Rice prices on the international market had risen steeply since
September. One of the reasons for this was that Japan, itself threatened by a
food shortage, had been forced to make emergency purchases abroad. Siam
had to ban the export of rice in October because of a disappointing harvest.
Rice imports from French Indochina and Burma also dried up. In the Straits
Settlements the transport of rice to the Netherlands Indies was no longer
allowed.

The export bans came at an unfortunate moment. In the Netherlands Indies
the prospect of a shortage of food had re-emerged. The production of rice and
maize was threatened by an exceptionally long drought. In June in the People’s

\(^{35}\) Sarekat-Islam Congres 1919:64.

\(^{36}\) *Neratja*, 2-10-1918, 15-10-1918.

Council Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo and Tjokroaminoto had spoken about hunger in Central and East Java, West Borneo, and Sumbawa. The colonial administration prepared for the worst. The export of sago, sago products, peas and beans, and chickens from the Netherlands Indies was forbidden. In the Priangan the cassava acreage was expanded.

In retrospect the annual report of the Ministry of the Colonies concluded that the future had looked worrisome. It also noted an extraordinary rise in the price of rice in certain parts of the colony. Idenburg himself described the food situation as ‘very sad and gloomy’. Large parts of Java, as Talma was to say in the Volksraad on 2 December, had become ‘completely dependent’ on government hand-outs of rice, edible roots, and maize on the market. From 15 October part of the Priangan cassava harvest had been distributed in other parts of Java to alleviate food shortages. With the same aim in mind the government had to distribute lentils in villages near Surabaya. In Yogyakarta measures had to be taken to assure the supply of food for the workers on the estates. In Madura rice was rationed. Yet another measure taken was to change the diet of soldiers. They were expected to eat less rice and more bread and potatoes. Ambonese soldiers complained that they were no longer served bread but sago at breakfast. In order to have distribution proceed smoothly Batavia informed the railways that it intended to transport large quantities of food by rail in early November. The transportation of other commodities would have to cede priority. The advance warning could not prevent the shortage of engines and wagons delaying the distribution of food.

The trade in a number of foodstuffs was again subjected to government control. The most important of these were rice, maize, cassava, and sago. The transportation of rice was forbidden from between Residencies, except under special licence. In November 1918 the Residents in Java once again were given the authority to fix a maximum price for food, not only for staples but also for such products as tinned milk. Rice also had to be shipped to regions outside Java. In the East Coast of Sumatra the government created a special Office for Foodstuffs with branches in the subdistricts, which acted as the buyers of rice and sago and sold cheap ‘government rice’. An ordinance to force estate-owners outside Java to grow food-crops for their labourers was issued in September 1918.

Malay and European newspapers in the Netherlands Indies speculated

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38 Volksraad 1918:125, 318.
41 Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1918-19:2077.
43 Neratja, 7-1-1919.
about a pending food crisis. One of them, the Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, suggested a novel solution: the ‘native associations’ should promote the growing of rice outside Java, that is should encourage Javanese to migrate to other islands. Malay-language newspapers were full of reports about how expensive rice had become and about hunger. Sections with headings like ‘Perkara makanan’, Food cases, and ‘Lapar Hindia’, Hunger in the Indies, at times covered a page or more. When it became known that Rangoon had stopped the export of rice, Neratja announced the news under the headline ‘Moelai lagi’, It is starting again. At the end of October Kaoem Moeda wrote that ‘Kromo shouts, Kromo cries, because his stomach is empty and he is on the brink of death, but the money devils do not worry about this’. Again there was also some good news about new foodstuffs having been invented. In Buitenzorg a teacher at the secondary agricultural college invented what he called kwak, dollop, made from cassava. It could be eaten raw, could be stored for months, and was said to taste like a biscuit.

There was one difference with earlier food scares: the Spanish influenza. It climaxed in November 1918 and claimed an unprecedented toll of victims in that month. The Spanish influenza was mentioned as an additional reason for the food shortage. The rice-fields of peasants with influenza remained untilled. Others who had just recovered from the illness were still too weak to work the fields. People were disturbed by the fact that malnutrition made everybody more vulnerable to the epidemic and exacerbated the effects. People who had caught influenza were unable to work, and therefore to earn an income for themselves and their families large enough to buy adequate amounts of healthy food. A plethora of committees was formed to provide financial and food aid to influenza sufferers and to distribute medicines among them. They operated alongside others which aimed to help the poor and the hungry. The link was also perceived by the Civilian Medical Service. In a circular letter published in December 1918, the service stressed that medical treatment by itself was not enough. On its own it was not enough to combat the illness if the patients were weak or undernourished. Poor families had to be provided with food. The service suggested that Batavia should set up a network which reached down to the villages to provide care and food for the needy.

Though some peasants profited from the increasing price of food, worsening living conditions set the stage for growing agitation. In sugar-producing areas the farmers began to complain about the rent they received for their land, which, they argued, was too low in view of the high prices of almost

46 Neratja, 19-10-1918.
47 Kaum Moeda, 28-10-1918.
48 Neratja, 4-11-1918.
all the goods and foodstuff they had to buy. The rural unrest fortified some Dutchmen in their long-standing suspicion that members of the Sarekat Islam were out to kill the Europeans and Chinese. In the cities leftist soldiers and sailors, under the impression of the revolutionary developments in Europe joined in demonstrations and held meetings to voice their demands and protests. In Surabaya, Batavia, and Semarang especially the leftist movement among soldiers and sailors made its mark. Troops had to be confined to barracks. In naval circles there was talking about a mutiny. The editor of *De Indische Gids*, Van Heekeren, drew the right conclusion when he wrote that the Dutch means of exercising power were weak (Van Heekeren 1919b:140).

Because of their anti-Indië Weerbaar agitation coupled with what was happening in Europe, no socialist, even not those who had deplored the revolutionary agitation of Sneevliet in the past, was any longer trusted. Discussing

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49 *Oetoesan Hindia*, 6-6-1918.
50 *Neratja*, 26-11-1918.
51 Bijl de Vroe 1980:26; McVey 1965:32; *De Indische Gids* 1919:89-91.
the revolutions in Europe was a taboo subject at public meetings of leftist organizations. Upset by stories that socialists in the Netherlands Indies would ineluctably follow the European example, the authorities even put a close watch on their leader, Cramer. His only fault was that he was a social democrat and that he did not hide the fact that he was pleased with the turn political developments had taken in Europe. Rumours were rife that Cramer would lead a march to the palace of the Governor General to demand a transfer of power.

The political developments in Europe gave a boost to the revolutionary élan of the leaders of the Indonesian nationalist movement. Semaoen was impressed. In *Sinar Hindia*, the new name of *Sinar Djawa*, he published an article about what would happen if Batavia were to refuse to recognize the socialist government in Holland and he ventured into the possibility of a socialist government in the colony. Semaoen remarked that because the number of Indonesian socialists was small, the assistance of Sneevliet, Baars, Brandsteder and other Dutch ISDV members would still be essential. European socialist soldiers and sailors were also indispensable to the new socialist country. Their role would be to protect it against an assault by capitalist states such as Great Britain and Japan.

A Dutch translation appeared in *De Indiër*. In *Soeara Ra’jat* (Voice of the People, which had superseded *Soeara Merdika* as the Malay-language newspaper of the ISDV, and called *Soeara Baars*, the Voice of Baars, by its enemies) Darsono urged his fellow-countrymen to rise up in rebellion. ‘What can stop the common man once he rebels? Let the red flag wave!’ (McVey 1965:32.) Elsewhere, in a letter to *De Locomotief*, Darsono wrote that he and other revolutionary socialists wanted ‘action, resistance’ and that they would fan up ‘the glowing hatred, which is beginning to be kindled in the hearts of Kromo, so that our fight against capitalism, against economic oppression, grows even more bitter and the day of victory will soon be there’. Even Tjokroaminoto warned that if the ‘enemy did not change its course large-scale disturbances’ would be the result. He stressed that hurt feelings and hunger were weapons in the hands of the Sarekat Islam.

W. van Ravesteijn, a Communist member of the Dutch Parliament, concluded that the Netherlands Indies were living through ‘eventful times’. He observed among ‘the native population tremendous unrest and commotion which are the consequence of the social developments which have taken place and still are taking place all over the world’.

54 *Sinar Hindia*, cited in *De Indische Gids* 1919:643.
56 *Oetoesan Hindia*, 17-11-1918, 18-11-1918.
In the People’s Council Cramer tried to impress upon the government the need for change and far-reaching reforms, including the transformation of the People’s Council into a true parliament. He and like-minded spirits in the People’s Council argued that the revolutions in Austria, Germany, Hungary and elsewhere in Europe had demonstrated that repression did not work and in the end would only begin a revolution. Reforms were all the more necessary because the Netherlands Indies might be teetering on the threshold of a food crisis. Cramer warned that the government should not think that matter would not come to this pass:

We live in a time of great events, in which all the thrones in Europe are tottering, in which militarism, we hope, is finished, in which nobody can say in advance whether we are standing on the threshold of a social revolution. [...] It is certain that among soldiers as well as among the general population the revolutionary spirit is not lacking.\(^{58}\)

These were ‘stirring times’. Asia would not remain unscathed by the political developments in Europe.\(^ {59}\)

Speaking in the People’s Council on 16 November, Cramer announced that the present circumstances necessitated a ‘concentration of the pronounced democratic Native and European elements’ to strive for reforms which were ‘necessitated by the events which had taken place in Europe’.\(^ {60}\)

Five members of the People’s Council – Cramer, who had taken the initiative, Tjokroaminoto of the Sarekat Islam, A. Sastrowidjono of Boedi Oetomo, and Tjipto Mangoenkesoemo and J.E.E. Teeuwen of Insulinde – met to discuss how to use the occasion to press for political reforms. Promising that they would do all they could to keep their followers under control, they urged for the establishment of a real parliament.

Van Limburg Stirum was among those Dutch people in the Netherlands Indies who thought it very likely that Holland might go the way of Germany and Russia. He had even discussed about how to proceed should a socialist revolution succeed in Holland with his advisers. It would mean a break with the fatherland. The Netherlands Indies would continue on its own (Locher-Scholten 1981:87). Van Limburg Stirum could relax somewhat after he was informed about developments in Holland by Idenburg in a wire of 15 November. The telegram contained some alarming news. It spoke about ‘[w]idespread nervousness caused by Troelstra’s speeches [...] urging immediate transfer government to socialists following German example’. The telegram also explained that the new Dutch Prime Minister, C.J.M. Ruijs de


\(^{59}\) Volksraad 1918-19:216.

\(^{60}\) Volksraad 1918-19:211.
Beerenbrouck, had declared that the government ‘will resist all violence and attempts overthrow constitutional powers’ and that ‘this declaration was followed by general movement [in] all quarters to resolutely resist revolutionary movement’. Fortunately, the telegram ended on a reassuring note: ‘Yesterday nervousness considerably allayed Troelstra declared no intention use violence’. The telegram was received in Batavia on 17 November with much relief. Its contents were published immediately. Nevertheless, newspapers still contained reports about Troelstra’s demand that as in Germany a socialist government should be formed in Holland (and that women’s suffrage should be introduced) on 18 November.

No revolution took place in Holland and Queen Wilhelmina had not abdicated as was rumoured in Batavia (Locher Scholten 1981:87-8). This reality did nothing to dissuade Cramer, Stokvis, and Teeuwen from pleading for fundamental changes. Teeuwen expressed the hope that Batavia and The Hague would learn a lesson from the collapse of governments in Europe which ‘relied on the power of the military, relied on censorship, on the restriction of associations, on the imprisonment and banishment of political enemies and so on. Mr Chairman! Where are these governments now? Does one want to go the same way here?’ Oppression was dangerous. Only a policy based on justice and cooperation with all population groups could save colonial rule. Tjipto Mangoenkeesemo, other Indonesian nationalists, and the vernacular newspapers also continued to give dissertations about a revolution and what changes were needed to prevent this.

The news from Holland was, of course with some exceptions, greeted with delight by the Dutch community. When Koningsberger opened the new session of the People’s Council at nine o’clock in the morning of the 18 November, he started by expressing his gratitude that ‘no turn about of affairs has taken place of such an abrupt nature as would make it difficult to reconcile with the well-understood, permanent and true interest of the Mother Country’.

Talma made a surprise appearance in the same session. His words mirrored the relief with which the authorities had received Idenburg’s first telegram. Talma began by saying that the reports received from the Netherlands were a source of gratitude, especially so because they clearly showed that the people in Holland did not intend ‘to be robbed by violence of their national treasure of constitutional institutions by a minority’. He also called it gratifying that the government in The Hague wanted to ‘implement with full speed

61 Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1918-19:2086.
62 Neratja, 18-11-1918.
63 Volksraad 1918-19:239.
64 Volksraad 1918-19:235.
social reforms, following the legal road, and maintaining order’.

Evidently international developments and the domestic threats of a severe food shortage, an unruly labour force and mutinous soldiers and sailors, and growing discontent among the population had upset the Governor General and his advisers. They showed themselves prepared to make far-reaching concessions to gain broadly based support in society in an effort to avert the danger of a break-down in law and order. After his opening remarks Talma added that the ‘new direction which the most recent world-shattering affairs have prescribed also laid down the course which also has to be followed here’. Having said this, he added the qualification that what Batavia had in mind was ‘less a change of course than an acceleration of tempo’. Nevertheless, he mentioned new relationships and shifts in powers between the colonial government and the People’s Council. Talma announced that ‘in these tense days’ the government desired closer contacts with the People’s Council, and intended to discuss with its members how this could be achieved; all this to secure ‘domestic peace’ and to ‘keep the spectre of a bitter food shortage outside the door’.

Another reason Talma adduced to explain why Batavia strove for ‘hearty cooperation’ with the People’s Council was its effort ‘to raise the general level of prosperity’. Because this implied the removal of ‘abuses’ in the sugar industry, Talma announced the establishment of a committee of inquiry into such evils. Tjokroaminoto had been invited to sit on it. (Among its members would also be J. Schmutzer, who had spoken out in defence of the estate industry in the People’s Council.) While denying that there was ‘general discontent’ in the army, Talma also promised improvements in the living conditions of the soldiers and in the military criminal code. And he had more good news: Van Limburg Stirum had asked The Hague for a Royal Decree to specify the existing general ban on associations and meetings of a political nature.

On the day Talma made his speech in the People’s Council, Idenburg could wire still more reassuring news from Holland: ‘Today enormous crowd demonstrating against revolution cheered queen royal family Malieveld Hague’. The telegram referred to a huge manifestation in the afternoon of the same day on the Malieveld in The Hague. At the entrance to the park soldiers had unharnessed the horses from the royal carriage in which Queen Wilhelmina, her husband, and Princess Juliana were seated. Amidst the cheers of a large crowd they had pulled the carriage along. Idenburg’s telegram was received in Batavia on 20 November (Van Miert 1995:144). Following the news from Holland, reports quoting from Dutch appeared in newspapers in the Netherlands Indies recounting the failure of any revolutionary plan the social-

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ists in Holland might have had. They stated that ‘the danger of a revolution had passed’, that ‘Holland was safe again’, and informed their readers about massive demonstrations of loyalty to the Queen in Holland.67

Talma had not voiced a totally new opinion about the future of the People’s Council on 18 November. In May, at the opening of the People’s Council, Van Limburg Stirum had already alluded to a semi-independent colony governed by his administration in cooperation with the People’s Council. At that time Van Limburg Stirum had spoken about an ‘unwritten constitutional law’ which would develop and about the shifting of competence from the motherland to the colony.68 The crux of the matter was how long it would take before the population was considered mature enough to take such a step in his eyes and in those of the policy-makers in Holland. A second indication that Van Limburg Stirum was in favour of at least some political reform had come in June 1918. Talma had noted that the discussion of the colonial budget had given the government the strong impression that the ‘development process’ of the People’s Council had gone faster than expected. He indicated that political concessions, albeit modest ones, might be made, though he refused to state what form these would take. He had said that the government deemed a ‘development process’ desirable, and had coupled this with the caution that matters should not be rushed. Efforts should be concentrated on developing the People’s Council within the legal boundaries set.69

In his 18 November speech Talma elaborated on the same theme. He did not promise the People’s Council full parliamentary powers in the near future, but this did not matter. From all sides this was how his words were interpreted. What Talma had said was grist to the mill of Indonesians and Europeans dreaming of the greater independence of the colony. Neratja, of which Abdoel Moeis was no longer an editor since 14 November, even wrote that Van Limburg Stirum had promised self-government. It concluded that developments in Europe had induced a turn to a more democratic political structure all over the world and that the colonial government did not want to lag behind and therefore intended to follow the same course.70

European and Indonesian members of the People’s Council jumped at Talma’s suggestions, and asked for significant reforms in the near future. In the morning of 20 November, members of the People’s Council met in a closed session to discuss Talma’s speech. The answer they formulated was accepted on 25 November. The People’s Council promised to cooperate in the efforts to avert the ‘spectre of bitter food shortage’. The members of the People’s Council

68 Volksraad 1918:1.
69 Volksraad 1918:550.
70 Neratja, 21-11-1918.
clearly also wanted to seize the opportunity presented. They asked to be informed as quickly as possible about the reforms Van Limburg Stirum would suggest to The Hague and inquired whether these reforms also concerned the relationship between the colonial administration and the People’s Council. To make it all the more clear what they had in mind, at the end of the reply it was observed that Batavia should be given the power to decide on measures taken to improve the political and economic situation in the Netherlands Indies independently of The Hague.

Members of the People’s Council wanted to move fast. Tjokroaminoto, Sastrowidjono, Dwidjosewojo, Radjiman, Cramer, Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, Abdoel Moeis, Teeuwen, and Thajeb proposed a motion urging for a ‘parliament elected from and by the People, with full, legislative power and the establishment of a government accountable to this parliament’ on 25 November. The new constellation should be realized before the mandate of the People’s Council expired in 1921. When the motion was submitted Koningsberger revealed that he knew that Batavia was ‘spontaneously’ preparing measures which were in concert with the motion, and that a special committee would be formed headed by J.H. Carpentier Alting, President of the Supreme Court.

Batavia’s answer came on 2 December. Talma, clearly satisfied with what he was to say and with the impression his November speech had made, reaffirmed Van Limburg Stirum’s intention. Once again Talma drew attention to the impact of the political developments in Holland and the rest of Europe: ‘Everywhere radical reforms of Public Institutions on the basis of new principles are deemed essential, or – when these had already been accepted – in a faster tempo’. This time Talma recalled how the People’s Council, envisaged as a ‘mere advisory body [...] with a very limited task’, had grown in importance ‘at very vast tempo’ in the previous six months. ‘Unwritten constitutional law’ had developed much faster than expected. Talma agreed that this achievement could partly be attributed to the People’s Council itself, but Batavia also took some credit. It had consciously tried to stimulate this development. Talma used this observation to deny the opinion that Batavia had watched the growing influence of the People’s Council with alarm. He also said that Batavia regretted the doubts voiced about its sincerity when it spoke about reforms. Mutual trust and cooperation was what the Netherlands Indies needed, and this applied to the government and the People’s Council. To stimulate this, a special government commissioner would be appointed to serve as a liaison officer between the colonial administration and the People’s Council. From Talma’s speech it became clear that Batavia considered the tone...
of part of the European and Malay press a threat to the unity of all groups; a condition it deemed essential to be able to weather the difficult times ahead. Talma even called what he said about the press a warning. He revealed that a number of times Batavia had considered sterner regulations to act upon stirrings of agitation in the press. In the end, it had decided against pursuing these. The reasons Talma gave were that Batavia did not want to impede the development of the indigenous society and that the remedy would be worse than the disease, and would only result in bitterness.

Talma promised that more reforms were in store. These would be realized soon, ‘now that the general political current is running in a direction which places in the vanguard, as the number one demand, a greater say of those ruled in the government of the country’. The ultimate goal was ‘a central government with participation by and accountability to the native population’. Observing that reforms were impossible without a ‘substantial extension of the competence of the People’s Council’, Talma announced the formation of a Commissie tot Herziening van de Grondslagen van den Staatsinrichting van Nederlandsch-Indië (Commission of Inquiry into the Form of Government of the Netherlands Indies). It would be chaired by Carpentier Alting. Among the persons invited to sit on the Herzieningscommissie were s’Jacob, H.H. Kan, R.M.T.A. Koesoemo Oetoyo, W.M.G. Schumann, Teeuwen, and A.L. Waworoentoe. The commission was installed on 0 December. This time it was Van Limburg Stirum himself who spoke about the changed relationship between the People’s Council and the colonial administration, and the need for legal reform (Van Helsdingen 1926:6).

There were even more goodies in store. Talma’s speech was laden with promises. Local councils would be given more responsibilities. The relationship between mother country and colony would have to change ‘possibly with a shift in centre of gravity’. When the People’s Council wanted to use the right of inquiry, Batavia would do all it could to assist. All legal or administrative discrimination based on religion and race would be abolished. Only on rare occasions in future would the government resort to detention on remanding in future. Batavia also intended to mitigate the ban on political organizations and meetings, and considered it a ‘painful deficiency’ that because of difficulty in communicating with Holland, no new rules had yet been promulgated. Talma also announced a committee, headed by Schumann, which would have to study working conditions and labour relations in the Netherlands Indies. Refining on this, Talma said that it was the duty of the government to draft labour legislation to protect the economically weak.

As a word of caution Talma took up the familiar theme that the population was not yet mature enough for a true democracy. The political reform Batavia had in mind could only be realized if there was ‘a broad population group with sufficient development and moral strength to call its own leaders
to account for the policy they pursued as representatives of the population’. To reach this stage, a schooling in ‘the responsible exercise of authority’ would be necessary. The government was prepared to provide this through ontvoogding, decreasing the role of the Dutch as the voogd, guardian, of Indonesian society, giving the Indonesians a greater share in regulating their own lives and society. Another way would be through the creation of provincial councils to act as bodies of indigenous authority.

The following day Achmad Djajadiningrat and five others submitted a new motion. One of their points was that there should be a Rijksraad (Empire council) in which all parts of the empire, each with its own government should be fairly represented. All members of the People’s Council had to be elected. The People’s Council itself should be given legislative power and should decide on the budget of the Netherlands Indies, and no longer have merely an advisory function.

Van Limburg Stirum had yet even more surprises in store. On 28 November Koningsberger had adjourned the debate in the People’s Council to allow R. de Kat, Director of the Department of Government Enterprises, to make a statement. De Kat announced that the government intended to establish a ‘Bureau for Social Affairs in State Enterprises’. It would be headed by someone with practical experience in the field, ‘who has sympathized with the social progress in Western countries’. To attract such a person, the government was prepared to pay a high salary. The task of the bureau was to promote good industrial relations, especially in such vital government enterprises as the public railways and the post, telephone, and telegraph services. It should formulate proposals about working hours, pensions, health services, and other financial support for people in temporary appointment. De Kat also announced that by improving conditions of employment in the state mines Batavia hoped that the labour force of contract labourers and convicts could be replaced by one consisting of professional miners in permanent employment.74

Soldiers were not forgotten in this orgy of promises. In November Batavia established a committee of advice to look into their pay. Van Rietschoten, while still stressing that there was nothing wrong with the morale in the colonial army was suddenly prepared to make some concessions when he addressed the People’s Council on 3 December. He promised better food, better housing, and an amendment of the military penal code. Teeuwen saw this not only as an opportunity to stress once again that the Netherlands Indies did not need soldiers from Europe. He hammered home that Indonesians and Indo-Europeans could do the job perfectly well, providing that they had something to defend.75

75 Volksraad 1918-19:470-1.
The aversion of the socialist danger was also the moment to stage a show of loyalty in the Netherlands Indies. Impressed by the massive display of royalism in Holland, influential figures in the Dutch community organized a petition among Dutch citizens in the Netherlands Indies and the Straits Settlements to express their loyalty to and love for the Queen at the end of November. The initiative for what the Malay press called the Comite Memoeliakan Radja (Committee for the Glorification of the Queen) had been taken by J. Schaap, editor-in-chief of the Java-Bode. Koning, Berretty of ANETA, Zaalberg (who had left the Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad in June), E.A. Zeilinga (President of the Javasche Bank), and J.H. Houtsma of the NHM were among the persons who backed the initiative. Support was also pledged by R.A.A. Achmad Djajadiningrat, S. Ismail bin Abdoellah Alatas (an Arab), J.A. Soselisa (an Ambonese), Waworoentoe (from the Minahassa), and O.H. Kouw (a Chinese).

The movement was well planned. Agents of the NHM, KPM, and the Javasche Bank were instructed to assist in the drive to collect signatures. The cooperation of European and Indonesian civil servants was also enlisted. Newspapers were asked to promote the drive for signatures. Lists circulated in government offices, European schools, cinemas, and restaurants. Even in the Zoological Garden of Batavia people could sign a list to testify to their loyalty to the Queen. Within days the committee could wire to Van Limburg Stirum that the number of people who had signed was ‘enormous’. The European Dutch reacted with enthusiasm. The will to sign tapered off among the indigenous population and could not be compared with the wave of the declaration of loyalty in the closing months of 1914. The Minahassa, parts of North Sumatra and other Christian regions formed an exception. At times – in East Sumatra and in Penang in the Malay Peninsula – the expression of loyalty was coupled with the demand that Troelstra should be banished from Holland.

Batavia was not fated to bathe in total, uncritical glory. Some Indonesian nationalists received the November promise with scepticism. Indonesian members of the People’s Council were upset that Van Limburg Stirum had extended his hand to them individually, but had not made any gesture of goodwill towards the organizations they headed, which were still treated with distrust. People were also aware that politicians and the business community in Holland would never agree to fundamental reforms. The Indonesian members would not refrain from expressing their surprise about the reforms suggested. They rightly surmised the reasons for the sudden change in policy. Abdoel Moeis concluded that fear had once again been effective. Nevertheless, he
observed that if he read the intentions of the colonial government correctly, independence might only be gained in ‘the far, far distant future’. He also expressed the worry that what Van Limburg Stirum might have in mind was the independence of the colony and not independence of the autochthonous population. Abdoel Moeis and others were fully conscious of the fact that the colonial authorities suddenly no longer considered them too ‘unripe’ to have a share in the governing of the colony. Batavia even gave the impression that it appreciated their nationalist activities, which not so long before it had roundly condemned.

Many Dutch people were outraged. Talma’s suggestions occasioned a storm of protests in the Netherlands Indies, where the Dutch-language press in its usual savage style lashed out against Van Limburg Stirum, and this action was repeated in Holland after the news had reached Europe. The Dutch people in the Netherlands Indies were usually not averse to greater political independence. Some even dreamed of a dominion status. Van Limburg Stirum (or his principal advisers, who according to some were most to blame), however, had gone too far, even in the eyes of some who viewed the nationalist movement with some degree of sympathy. De Locomotief commented that the population was not yet mature enough for political change. Motivated by the ‘revolutionary epidemic’ in Europe, Batavia had embarked on an ‘abnormal passion for reform’.

In Holland there was yet a second reason to tear a strip off Van Limburg Stirum. Talma had also announced the intention to decrease the acreage planted with sugar and tobacco on European estates in 1919. Talma said that Batavia was prepared to go as far in this as the food situation demanded. Van Limburg Stirum, who earlier in 1918 when he had issued the exports bans had been praised for his determination, came under attack for the way he handled the situation. His critics accused him of having bowed to the pressure exerted by the nationalist movement. In Holland, the Netherlands Indies, and abroad the opinion was voiced that Van Limburg Stirum had panicked. Especially the promise to reduce the production of sugar in 1919 – if necessary by 30 per cent – in anticipation of a possible shortage of food did not go down well. The conclusion was that Van Limburg Stirum had succumbed to ‘a few hot-headed members of the People’s Council’, to the ‘wild demands of a revolutionary party’. He had shown excessive lenience towards ‘a few Native fanatics’.

D. Fock, the chairman of Parliament, and from 1905 to 1908 Minister of the

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79 Volksraad 1918-19:520.
80 De Locomotief, 23-11-1918.
81 Volksraad 1918-19:440.
82 Regeering 1919:3, 8; De Indische Gids 1919, I:393.
Colonies described Van Limburg Stirum’s stand as very peculiar, inexplicable, and incomprehensible. He was angry. Van Limburg Stirum had acted on his own initiative without informing Idenburg in advance about his intention to set political reforms in motion. Discussing the powers of People’s Council was a prerogative of Parliament in Holland. A Governor General should never on his own initiative publicly air his personal opinions on the subject. The time had not yet come for fundamental changes. Idenburg reassured Fock. The Dutch government might consider some minor changes in the functioning of the People’s Council, but no significant extensions of its powers were foreseen. Later, the announcement about a possible reduction in the sugar acreage was enough reason for Fock to take an almost unprecedented step. In April 1919, when it had finally become clear what had transpired in Batavia in November, he addressed Parliament about Van Limburg Stirum’s mistakes and the blessings brought by the sugar industry to Java and attacked the crude political campaign against the estates. It was the first time in forty years that a chairman of Parliament had taken the floor to speak. Fock’s criticism and the way he expressed ‘deeply wounded’ Van Limburg Stirum’s feelings (Van Anrooij 2001:16).

In Holland the independence the Netherlands Indies had raised some heckles. The Algemeen Handelsblad commented that the expectations Van Limburg Stirum had created with his headstrong and weak policy could lead only to bitter disillusionment. It would make Holland’s heavy task even more burdensome. Van Limburg Stirum had lost his head, even the communist D.J. Wijnkoop concurred. Yet others depicted Van Limburg Stirum as spineless. Both in Holland and in the Netherlands Indies people called for Van Limburg Stirum’s resignation. Advanced as a good candidate to replace him was Colijn, who had made no secret of the fact that he thought the People’s Council with its ‘tribunes of the people’ could best be abolished, and that no time should be wasted in reacting to ‘hyper-criticism’. The harsh judgements passed on Van Limburg Stirum annoyed Idenburg. He explained that Van Limburg Stirum had acted for economic reasons, not because he had felt pressured by demonstrations and protests: ‘This Governor General is not a man to be cowed. He is not under the thumb of the capitalists, nor is he under the thumb of the leaders of the people.’

The political developments in Holland allowed the authorities in the colony to breathe more easily. With the wind out of the sails, the fine words

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84 Algemeen Handelsblad, cited in De Indische Gids 1919, I:607.
85 Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1918-19:2070.
86 De Indische Gids 1919, I:632-3.
87 Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1918-19:2078.
and the promises of reform did not bring about any lasting changes. It was even denied that there had ever been any such intention. Repression now set in. The first victims were the ISDV activists. Up to then the authorities had done no more than keep Sneevliet and Baars under close surveillance. As late as the middle of November Cramer had still praised the government because it had informed the People’s Council that it did not intend to banish Sneevliet and Baars. The reason, Batavia had explained on 16 November, was that it ‘did not want to hamper the exposure of abuses, nor the organizing of actions to obtain better living conditions’.

Two days later, in his 18 November speech Talma announced the decision to ban Sneevliet; though he did not mention him by name, simply referring to a person who ‘in spite of serious warnings even in such days as these tries to paralyse the organs of public authority’. Talma said that the colonial government had acted with regret. His words may well have been mere window-dressing. The decision to banish Sneevliet probably would have been taken earlier had shipping between Holland and the Netherlands Indies not come to a standstill. The arrival of the Noordam and Tabanan had now opened the opportunity to get rid of Sneevliet. In Augustus 1918 Sneevliet's friend, J.C. Stam, one of the ISDV members who had been active in organizing soldiers and sailors, had already reported from Java to De Tribune in Holland that such a step was being prepared by the colonial authorities.

On 18 November, in one and the same breath, Talma suggested that similar measures might well be taken against ‘persons stepping into the limelight who are playing with fire by flirting with extreme elements’. A few days later Brandsteder was detained in the military prison in Batavia. In Het Vrije Woord he had exposed the cruelty and arbitrariness of military punishments and had urged soldiers to refuse to administer corporal punishment, or, as Neratja chose to phrase this, to beat up their fellow-soldiers. Brandsteder was accused of inciting wilful disobedience. The Court of Surabaya had sentenced him to three months’ imprisonment, nine months fewer than had been demanded. At the hearing Brandsteder had brought along the heavy metal ball prisoners had to carry and the iron fetters and manacles used for kromsluiten. When his appeal was turned down Brandsteder was arrested without any advance warning, when he happened to be in Batavia to advise the local Soldiers’ Union. Soldiers and sailors protested. One of their actions drew tremendous public attention. Enraged about the arrest of Brandsteder, probably

88 Handelingen Volksraad 1918-19:213.
90 Volksraad 1918-19:433.
92 Neratja, 21-5-1918.
no more than twenty-five soldiers and sailors met in the building of the Bond van Minder Marine-Personeel on the evening of 20 November. They decided to strike in protest of Brandsteder’s arrest. The participants in the meeting were arrested, but the following day a small group of soldiers did indeed go on strike. They walked out of the gate of the barracks and roamed through the city. Some returned to the barracks in the course of the day. The diehards assembled in the union building. Carried away by revolutionary fervour they discussed taking the city by force. Eighteen soldiers were arrested and immediately transported to the punishment detachment in Ngawi.\textsuperscript{93}

Once again it was one of his articles which ultimately prompted Batavia to take action against Sneevliet. Het Vrije Woord published ‘Honger en machtsvertoon’ (Hunger and displays of power) on 16 November. In it Sneevliet addressed himself to the soldiers of the colonial army. Recalling the display of force used to suppress unrest in Java, he wondered whose power the soldiers were representing. His conclusion could be foreseen. It was that of the government which was acting in the interests of the ruling class, the owners of banks, factories, and estates; persons who were strangers to hunger and lived a life of luxury; people, who

using all kinds of subterfuges seized control of the land for their sugar factories, diverted the irrigation water that makes the land fertile to it, who even in times of imminent food shortage preferred to grow sugar instead of returning the sawahs to the people for the planting of rice.

Sneevliet urged European soldiers, who themselves came from urban working class and poor farmers’ families, to show the same understanding for the Javanese they were ordered to suppress as soldiers in Holland had displayed towards the riots by the members of their own class. Referring to the Indonesian soldiers, Sneevliet noted that they were extremely capable of understanding why Kromo refused to take it any longer. Soldiers from Ambon and the Minahasssa should understand that ‘Kromo does not ask for bullets and death, but that he has every right to stand up for his life’. Soldiers who were aware of the conditions in the Netherlands Indies – ‘hunger, disease, deprivation, the burden of taxation, unfathomable misery, luxury, flashiness, making a profit at all costs’ – should execrate the task they were ordered to perform. In Europe soldiers showed their solidarity with the people. This should guide them when orders were given which could make them the murderers of their own brothers, whose only crime it was that they did not want to die silently of starvation, that they longed for a little more freedom, a little more happiness in life. In conclusion Sneevliet suggested the soldiers turn to

\textsuperscript{93} Neratja, 23-11-1918; Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, cited in De Indische Gids 1919, I:258.
the Soldiers’ Union, the Sarekat Islam, and the ISDV to contrive the means to ensure themselves a decent existence.\footnote{Het Vrije Woord, 16-11-1918.}

The authorities considered ‘Honger en machtsvertoon’ a blatant appeal to refuse to undertake military duties. They saw it as an outright attempt to sow hatred. Sneevliet’s appeals to join soldiers and sailors unions, or soviets as these were sometimes also referred to in the vernacular press, were considered subversive. As could be expected the announcement that Sneevliet was to be banned was highly acclaimed in European circles. For months people in Holland and the Netherlands Indies had been demanding Sneevliet’s expulsion. Among those who made such a plea was the editor of \textit{De Locomotief} who was alarmed by the strikes and the unruly behaviour of the soldiers. Vowing to respect human rights, he argued that the rights of an individual were constrained by public interest. This was all the more true under present conditions. Only a ‘strong regime’ could safely guide the Netherlands Indies ‘through a period in world history of which not many realize the tremendous gravity’.\footnote{De Locomotief, 12-4-1918.} Sneevliet and other agitators should not be allowed to sow disorder. It did not matter that no crimes had been committed. What counted was that they resorted to dangerous methods to incite ‘a primitive population’.\footnote{De Locomotief, 13-4-1918.} Some went even further. Recalling the fate of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, it was hinted in \textit{Jahns Advertentieblad}, published in Malang, that if the government did not act ‘the citizens will be ready to give the instigator to murder, arson and rape what is coming to him’.\footnote{Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1918-19:070.}

Abdoel Moeis and other Indonesians had voiced the same demand. Some leaders of the Sarekat Islam condemned the actions of Sneevliet and Baars as detrimental to the interests of the Indonesian population. They wondered why the colonial authorities had not yet taken any action. There was even more reason to banish Sneevliet and Baars than there had been in the case of Douwes Dekker. In the same breath they accused not only a number of European newspapers, which still wrote in the same insulting tone as they always had done about the natives and the nationalist movement, but also \textit{Het Vrije Woord}, \textit{Soeara Ra’jat}, and \textit{Sinar Hindia} of sowing hatred. Some added the Chinese newspaper \textit{Djawa Tengah}, and curiously enough also \textit{Oetoesan Hindia} to the list.\footnote{Neratja, 5-11-1918, 13-11-1918.} The compromise that had been reached between the Islamic and leftist factions at the party congress had temporarily put an end to the calls within the Sarekat Islam to banish Sneevliet. True to this spirit, in the People’s Council in November Tjokroaminoto stated categorically that the Sarekat...
Islam was against the expulsion of Sneevliet and Baars.99

Nevertheless, after the decision to ban Sneevliet had been announced, some Indonesians could not conceal their delight. Neratja welcomed the news. In an editorial printed in larger type Neratja stigmatized Sneevliet as an anarchist who had set up Indonesian organizations against one another to serve the interests of his own small group, and who had planted the seeds of discord and mutual resentment in the nationalist movement. Praising him for his ability to expose abuses, Neratja pointed out that of late Sneevliet had done so without taking the interests of the indigenous population into account and without accomplishing a change for the better.100

Support for Sneevliet from within the nationalist movement seems to have been more widespread. There were letters to the editor of European newspapers and other forms of protest. The secretary of the Sarekat Islam sent an address to Parliament in The Hague to protest about the decision to banish Sneevliet. A number of local branches of the Sarekat Islam — Semarang, Salatiga, Surabaya, Gondong, Demak, Babat, Cirebon, and Tegal — sent telegrams to the People's Council. The Union of Rail- and Tramway Personnel in Semarang, Pekalongan, and Surakarta did the same. The Sarekat Islam branch in Surabaya set up a fund for organizing financial assistance to victims of government repression. Sneevliet was to be the first recipient of its benefactions (Van Heekeren 1919b:138). The Semarang branch sent Van Limburg Stirum a telegram informing him that Sneevliet's banishment had caused so much frustration, the word used was sakti hati, that people had been poised on the brink of a riot, but that the board had succeeded in calming down emotions, thereby preventing disturbances. Such words caused perturbations in the European community. A number of European newspapers perceived the telegram as a threat. Leaders who could calm people down could also incite them.101 Naturally ISDV branches protested.

Some Dutchmen also disagreed. In the People's Council Teeuwen said that the government 'should allow this man to stay in the Indies. He makes a good living here and he is not dangerous enough to ruin.'102 Yet another argument was advanced in the Nieuwe Courant in Semarang. What Sneevliet really wanted was a revolution in Europe. Banning him from the Netherlands Indies meant that he could return to Holland on the first available shipping opportunity, and would not have to wait for months like others.103 Another daily, the Sumatra Post, suggested Sneevliet's banishment was a sign of weak-

100 Neratja, 18-11-1918.
102 Volksraad 1918-19:246.
103 Nieuwe Courant and Sumatra Post, cited in De Indische Gids 1919, I:381.
ness. Sneevliet should be allowed to continue with his rash actions and wild-cat strikes. In the end ‘the masses’ would realize that such a course only hurt them. Van Heekeren, the editor of De Indische Gids, was appalled by such reactions. He himself applauded the banishment and mildly criticized Batavia for waiting too long. In a colony with a still largely uneducated population, Van Heekeren argued, actions against Sneevliet and other demagogues were a matter of self-preservation. From Van Heekeren’s perspective, Sneevliet and his political associates had shown sure aim. They had targeted ‘the pillar of our rule in those extensive territories: the army’ (Van Heekeren 1919a:67).

The authorities were determined to put an end to the ISDV agitation once and for all. ISDV branches were so frequently refused permission to hold meetings, that even a political adversary like Teeuwen protested. Teeuwen had an additional point to make. He wondered why the ISDV meekly submitted to the government’s power to forbid meetings. It made the ISDV ‘a placid, legal association, in its acts completely non-revolutionary’.104 Such an attitude contrasted sharply with what the Indische Party had done in the past. European members of the ISDV and soldiers who distributed ‘Honger en machtsvertoon’ and other pamphlets among soldiers and sailors were apprehended. Those who were found guilty were sentenced to three months’ imprisonment instead of the six months demanded. Semaoen, who had made a Malay translation, was given two weeks. Repression seemed to work. A lecture by Baars on 22 November on ‘Bolshevikisme’ had to be cancelled because almost nobody turned up.105

Investigations were also started against authors of both recent and older articles in Sinar Hindia, Soeara Ra’jat and other leftist publications. In the eyes of both Dutch people and Indonesians these investigations were clearly linked to the ‘Sneevliet press offence’. Quizzed were Semaoen, Mas Marco, Darsono and other Indonesians. Semaoen was sentenced to four months’ imprisonment in 1919. He used the opportunity to write a novel: Hikayat Kadiroen (Semaoen 2000:ix). Another victim of the harsher mood among the Europeans was Tirtodanoedjo, an editor of Oetoesan Hindia. He was accused of having incited its readers to resist the police; that is policemen who acted incorrectly. He was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment.106

Sneevliet, Brandsteder, and Baars all were externed and left the Netherlands Indies. Sneevliet demanded to be brought before the court instead of being expelled. It was to no avail. He was questioned by the Resident of Semarang, who was especially interested in his appeals to establish soldiers’ and sailors’ unions. After the court had allowed this, Sneevliet was arrested, put on the

104 Volksraad 1918-19:248.
105 Neratja, 23-11-1918.
106 Neratja, 9-12-1918.
train to Batavia, and shut in the military prison. Sneevliet was served with the decision of the Governor General to exile him on 5 December 1918. He left the Netherlands Indies aboard the Noordam on 20 December. In the early 1920s he acquired fame as a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and founder of the Chinese Communist Party. In April 1942 he was executed by a German firing-squad in Amsterdam (see Tichelman 1974). Baars was determined to leave the Netherlands Indies. The Mayor of Semarang had offered him a job as municipal engineer, but he refused. Baars left for Holland in the spring of 1919. The following year he returned to the Netherlands Indies and was employed as an engineer by the municipality of Semarang, only to be banished in May 1921 (Tichelman 1985:228). Brandsteder served his three month’s prison sentence. Remembering Sneevliet’s reception in April the previous year, the authorities had a military guard at the railway station when he returned to Surabaya after he had been released in February 1919. As it was only a few sailors turned up to meet him. A welcoming party was organized in the building of the Sailors’ Union. Brandsteder was banned from the Netherlands Indies in September 1919. The main stated reason to expel him was his articles in the Soldaten- en Matrozenkrant. He left the Netherlands Indies the following month and moved to Russia. In 1927 Baars returned to Holland. He died in Auschwitz in 1944.107 Brandsteder, who was also sacked by the headquarters of the Union of Lower-Ranking Naval Personnel in 1919, went to live in Holland. He died in 1986.108

Members of the ISDV who were in government service were transferred to outposts. Van Limburg Stirum had concluded a few months earlier that expelling all the social democrat teachers, some of whom had made no secret of the fact that they sympathized with the protesting soldiers and sailors, would have been impossible.109 One of the first victims had been G. van Burink, a teacher at the Dutch-Chinese School in Semarang. To punish him for his agitation among the soldiers he was transferred in June 1918. The government had planned to post him in Gorontalo. When Van Burink protested Batavia decided on the small island of Banda Neira in the Moluccas. Van Burink resigned to become a private teacher.110

110 Neratja, 5-6-1918, 15-6-1918.