CHAPTER XXII

Peace
Missed opportunities

The armistice on the Western front on 11 November 1918 rendered some of the measures the colonial government superfluous. The ban on reporting on troop movements was lifted before the end of the month. Foreign consuls were again allowed to send telegrams in code after February 1919. Muurling’s PID, formally created to gather information about activities which might endanger neutrality, was disbanded in April 1919. During its brief existence it had acquired such notoriety that the abbreviation continued to be used in popular speech for years after to refer to the gathering of political intelligence by the colonial authorities (Poeze 1994:231).

A native militia never saw the light of day. Batavia and The Hague refused to take the final step which would have permitted it to be raised. To arm a large section of the population was too dangerous. Perhaps the only Indonesians ever called to arms were the son of the Regent of Semarang and another Javanese pupil of the HBS in Utrecht, about whose fate Soewardi reported in Het Volk. They contacted the Minister of the Colonies in their efforts to escape conscription. The only advice the latter could give was that the best course for them to take would be to arrange their passage back to Java.¹

In the Sarekat Islam the different factions continued to quarrel. During its national congress in October 1918 no decision had been taken about the question of whether the party should concentrate on its religious aims or should give preference to the economic and political emancipation of the Indonesian population. It had also not decided which tactics should be adopted: the ‘revolutionary’ road propagated by Semaoen and Darsono, or the parliamentary route advocated by Tjokroaminoto and Abdoel Moeis. When these points came up again, the contention sounded the death knell of the already troubled cooperation between the leftist and the Islamic leaders of the Sarekat Islam.

¹ Neratja, 16-11-1918.
The leftist members founded the Indonesian Communist Party in 1920 and they were gradually forced out of the Sarekat Islam between 1921 and 1923.

The sugar estates remained a major source of agitation. Events in the closing months of 1918 and early 1919 were a repeat of those at the beginning of 1918. Sugar and rice dominated the news in the press in the Netherlands Indies. Between February and December the government had still been able to import 2 million piculs of rice worth 17 million guilders, but the stock of government rice would suffice only till March, and this only if imports from abroad were not to dry up completely. Batavia did not preclude the eventuality that the moment might come at which rationing would be required. In its efforts to avert a serious food crisis, it even arranged for the import of soya beans from Manchuria in early 1919.

The upshot of the new food crisis was that the sugar estates once again became the target of an intense campaign propagated by both the radical and the more moderate wings of the nationalist movement. The Sarekat Islam wanted to ‘wage a war fought in a way which was legally permissible’ against the sugar factories. Much to the horror of the Dutch authorities, a reduction in the sugar acreage had become a subject about which leaders of the nationalist movement among them Tjokroaminoto were contemplating calling a strike. In the People’s Council, he stigmatized private sugar estates as obsolete.

As in the previous years, again there were pleas by the government to intensify the growing of alternative food crops. Estates were asked to expand their food crop acreage. Initially the response had been positive. The chairman of the Landbouw Syndicaat (Agriculture Syndicate), T. Ottolander, travelled round Java in the first weeks of November 1918, appealing to estate managers to comply. Some decided to plant rice on their land as a secondary crop. Such initiatives did not prevent the outbreak of a bitter war of words about whether or not the estates had been doing enough to assist in preventing the onset of a food crisis. In regions where water was scarce, it was intimated that estates refused to relinquish the part of the irrigation water they depended on for the growing of sugar cane, thereby preventing the growing of secondary crops on a large scale. The suspicion was also rife that rice and other secondary crops were planted only on waste land and not on the fields of farmers on their estates, who consequently also did not profit. A more serious outcome was that farmers who had listened to the exhortations of the government and had planted rice as a secondary crop saw their harvest fail through lack of irrigation water. In some places this was an additional reason why the harvest though not totally ruined was so poor. The government blamed the farmers.

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2 Neratja, 13-11-1918.
3 Oetoesan Hindia, 15-7-1918.
They had disregarded the voice of cautious warning that a shortage of irrigation water set limits on the acreage which could be planted.4 In early 1919, when the export of sugar was resumed, the sugar companies were less enthusiastic about lending a willing ear. They condemned the plan to reduce the sugar acreage as unrealistic and dangerous. Agitators who had campaigned against the sugar industry for years would reap the fruits. Batavia and the estates would be blamed for the loss of income. Theft and unrest would be rife. Some were quick to point out that experiences in 1918 had shown that not much could be expected of any efforts to turn sugar fields into rice-fields. In various places people had even asked the estates to quash the reduction of the cane acreage. Among the ‘defenders of capitalism’, as Neratja chose to describe them, who spoke out against a reduction in the sugar acreage was Rhemrev supported by his nationalist Orange Union of Law and Order.5 The ‘sugar newspaper’, the Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, calculated that Batavia’s plan would cost the state 18 million guilders in taxes. The sugar estates would forfeit 42 million guilders.6 To the indignation of politicians in The Hague, the management of the sugar companies in Holland, angry that they had not been consulted in advance, hinted that they might ignore instructions of the Governor General to reduce the area under cultivation. Simultaneously, estate managers prepared for unrest and strikes, which they feared would be organized by the Sarekat Islam if the area of production was not cut back. Apprehension even extended abroad. Sugar from the Netherlands Indies was again in great demand. Great Britain was so eager to buy it negotiations were launched to see whether, in spite of a bad harvest in British India, Rangoon rice could be supplied to Java in an amount equal to the extra harvest the authorities hoped to reap if there were a decrease in sugar production.7

In a reaction, in an article headed ‘A refined, intellectual pack of murderers’, the editors of Sinar Hindia had no compunction in calling the sugar planters ‘cold blooded murderers’ because they refused to decrease the sugar acreage in January 1919.8 In February 1919 such articles prompted the Sugar Syndicate to ask the colonial administration to check the inflammatory rhetoric in the Malay press.9 Inevitably, the recalcitrant attitude of the sugar industry resulted in protests from the nationalist movement. The issue was important enough to unite Sarekat Islam, Boedi Oetomo, and ISDV, which staged joint mass meetings. Confidence among Indonesian nationalists and

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5 Neratja, 20-2-1919.
6 Regering 1919:4-5.
7 De Indische Gids 1919, I:759.
leftist Dutchmen that Batavia was in earnest its intention to have estates reduce their cane acreage was not boosted by the appointment of J. Sibinga Mulder as Director of Agriculture in December 1918. He replaced Lovink who had not been averse to a reduction in the sugar acreage or to the promotion of an indigenous industry. Sibinga Mulder was cut from different cloth. He was generally known as a _loean goela_, a sugar lord, a ‘sugar fanatic’, as _De Locomotief_ called him, or, as Cramer expressed it a protagonist à _tort en à travers_ of the sugar industry. He was, a speaker at the Sarekat-Islam Congress concluded, an unvarnished capitalist.\(^\text{10}\) Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo predicted that as far as Sibinga Mulder was concerned the native could be no more than a ‘rough worker destined to produce a dividend for the shareholders in Holland’.\(^\text{11}\) Talma let it indirectly be known that Van Limburg Stirum was far from happy with the choice, taking pains to stress that Sibinga Mulder’s appointment was solely the responsibility of The Hague.\(^\text{12}\)

By March it had become clear Batavia would not enforce a reduction in the sugar acreage. The harvest of maize and other of secondary crops had been excellent and a normal rice harvest was expected.

Initially, after the uncertainty of the first months of the World War, the colonial export economy had done well. The export of a number of colonial products exceeded that of previous years and excellent prices were fetched. Sugar especially was in great demand. Contributing to the success was the accident in disguise that wartime conditions had forced exporters to find new export markets and that the war had also opened these up when long-established international trading relations between the warring powers and other countries were cut off. New-found trade with the United States and Japan more than compensated for a drop in trade with Europe. In the closing months of 1916 conditions deteriorated. By 1917 the picture had changed drastically. The economic war fought by the Allied Powers, the perils of the sea in wartime, the decrease in shipping opportunities, aggravated by the Allied and later the Associated Powers’ demand for tonnage, brought the colony to the brink of economic disaster. A concomitant factor was that in South Asia Allied colonies were also confronted with the Associated Powers hunger for ships to sustain the war effort in Europe. In British India the lack of shipping opportunities, compounded by the danger U-boats and mines posed, affected sea trade and sea traffic with the motherland. Life was affected in a similar way to that in the Netherlands Indies. The well-off colonial élite, for instance, could no longer send their sons home for education at prestigious schools in Great Britain as

\(^\text{10}\) _Sarekat-Islam Congres_ 1919:7; _De Indische Gids_ 1918, II:1493; _Volksraad_ 1918-19:212.
\(^\text{11}\) _Volksraad_ 1918-19:160.
\(^\text{12}\) _Volksraad_ 1918-19:442.
its members had been used to doing, but had to enrol them at ‘war schools’ in India (Buettner 2004:105-6). The British Indian need of ships threw weight behind the demands to put Dutch tonnage at the disposal of the Associated Powers.

Disruption of international sea traffic hurt not only the colonial export and import sector in the Netherlands Indies. Throughout the war, but especially towards the end, the colonial authorities were greatly worried by the fact that the Netherlands Indies was not self-sufficient in the production of rice. For adequate supplies of its staple, it needed imports from Burma, Indochina and Thailand. Disruption of sea traffic and export bans abroad raised the spectre of food shortages, famine, and social unrest, forcing the Governor General and his staff to contemplate a reduction in the acreage planted by the sugar factories to allow a concomitant increase in the production of food crops.

By the autumn of 1918, confidence in the economic future of the Netherlands Indies had been somewhat restored. One reason for hope had first been perceptible in September when the prospect of peace was in the air. This was indeed followed by the armistice, and then the peace talks. Each of these events had stimulated trade and speculation in rubber, copra and a few other commodities produced in the Netherlands Indies. Thanks to this recovery in prices, the Cultuur-Hulpbank did not have to come to the assistance of any estate.13

What the economic future would bring nobody knew in 1918. Some were optimistic. They expected old markets to be restored and foreign trade to accelerate to satisfy pent-up demand. Others were pessimistic. Peace might also mean that a belligerent mentality might come to dominate international economic relations. The prospect of trade-blocks loomed. As 1918 wore on, many had predicted an intensification in the economic war once the military battle had been won by the Associated Powers. In the People’s Council in June 1918 D. Birnie warned that the Netherlands Indies was especially vulnerable to this because it was so heavily dependent on foreign trade.14 The greatest cause for apprehension was uncertainty about how the United States and Great Britain would enforce their economic interests. Germany was also left out of the equation. The German economic threat was considered even more real because the German merchant Navy was thought to have survived the war almost undamaged, safely sheltered in German and neutral ports. Early in 1918 Loudon had confided to Parliament that, during negotiations with Germany, it had emerged that Berlin was highly interested in the economic state of affairs in the Netherlands Indies. Loudon had gained the impression Germany wanted to make Dutch shipping subservient to post-war German

13 Kolonial verslag 1919:201-2.
14 Volksraad 1918:323.
interests.\textsuperscript{15} The defeat of Germany banished all such fears. To compensate for the damage German U-boats had inflicted, Germany was forced to surrender all German merchant ships of 1,600 tons and more, half of its ships of between 1,000 and 1,600 tons, and a quarter of all other ships to the Allies (Van der Mandere n.d.:85).

As of the beginning of February 1919, the Dutch ships held in British and American ports were gradually released. London and Washington even promised to assist in their return to sea by facilitating their intake of coal and provisions. In the same month, Nederland, Rotterdamsche Lloyd, and Oceaan decided to lower their freight tariffs by 30 per cent. In May the first ship to sail the usual route through the Suez Canal left Tanjung Priok. Shipping restrictions imposed by the Associated Powers were not lifted immediately. The mail service to Europe was restored, but initially letters and parcels still had to be sent by British Mail. The first Dutch ships which sailed from the Netherlands Indies to Europe in December 1918 – the \textit{Noordam} and the \textit{Tabanan} – still had no Dutch mail on board. In July 1919 the censorship Great Britain had imposed on telegraphic communications was ended. A transmission station for wireless messages to replace the provisional one was sent to Java in 1919. The station became operational in 1922.\textsuperscript{16}

Trade with the motherland was not liberalized immediately. The sea blockade had remained in force after the armistice. In an economic agreement concluded with the Associated Powers by The Hague, a new quota system was proposed, which limited the volume of exports from the Netherlands Indies to Holland between October 1918 and October 1919. In return, The Hague promised to lend the United States 120 million guilders (including the proceeds of confiscated and sold freight), Great Britain 75 million guilders, France 30 million guilders, and Italy 11 million guilders. The shipments of colonial wares to the Netherlands had to be addressed to the NOT, which had lost much of its influence when shipping to and from the Netherlands had dwindled. The trust had to decide which portion was allowed to be exported to the motherland in the first half of the period and which in the second one. The agreement covered about twenty-five products including tea, coffee, tobacco, rice, sago, maize (including maize for fodder), kapok, cotton, oil, and tin. Once more the NOT appeared all powerful. In the Netherlands Indies a Ladies Aid Committee, made up of women who were worried by reports about hunger in Holland, collected food to be shipped to the motherland. Idenburg was grateful for the gesture, but pointed out that the NOT had to be consulted before the aid could be shipped.\textsuperscript{17} The NOT was disbanded before the end of the year.

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\item[15] De Locomotief, 13-6-1918.
\item[17] Neratja, 22-1-1919.
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Bringing to an end what the Ministry of the Colonies reporting on the event chose to call the NOT ‘tutelage’.

The black list was abolished in April 1919. The Associated Powers also gradually began to lift their import restrictions. In the Netherlands Indies itself export bans were lifted in 1919: those on kapok, wood, tobacco, sugar, and rubber in June, those on tin, tea, coffee, and copra in August, that on pepper in September, and that on synthetic dyes in October. Export products would fetch spectacular prices in the course of 1919, the only exception being tobacco. Prospects seemed bright. In its annual report over 1919 the Ministry of the Colonies wrote about ‘relief and recovery’ and of a ‘lively demand for almost all colonial products in Europe and elsewhere which made prices jump and reach a level never known before.’ The assessment was too optimistic. Also 1920 started well but by the middle of the year an economic crisis loomed. It turned out that it took the Netherlands Indies and the world longer to recover than people had foreseen. Poverty in Europe, a depression in Japan, and Washington fighting inflation caused prices and demand drop. Stocks were piling up again. The high prices fetched earlier had been mainly attributable to speculation. Worst affected were rubber, sugar and tea. It was not before the end of 1922 that the situation changed for the better for colonial export trade.

The effect of the imminent peace on consumer behaviour had been the opposite to what trade in export products initially experienced. In the expectation that retail prices would soon drop, consumers postponed purchases. In January 1919 the Associated Powers benevolently promised that they would not hinder the import of goods of which they themselves had enough into the Netherlands Indies, providing that the latter did not restrict the export of goods needed by the Associated Powers. Despite such promises imports remained expensive, not least because cargo space was still at a premium. At first shortages appeared to have become more acute. As at other times of economic depression and high prices, people noted the increase in beggars and vagrants. The economic decline experienced by the population, which had already caused the authorities alarm before the war, would continue well into the 1920s (Carpentier Alting and De Cock Buning 1928:96-8).

After the armistice one cause for anxiety was that the Dutch had the impression that elsewhere in Associated countries a misconception about the Dutch role during the war reigned. The Netherlands might have to pay for its neutrality. The new Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.A. van Karnebeek, tried to make a confident impression at the end of 1918. Addressing Parliament,

\[18\] Koloniaal verslag 1920:291.

\[19\] Koloniaal verslag 1920:291.

\[20\] Koloniaal verslag 1921:251.
he said that the behaviour of the Netherlands between 1914 and 1918 had been so impeccable that the Dutch could be confident about the outcome of the negotiations with the Associates.\(^{21}\) Privately Van Karnebeek must have had misgivings. He requested Idenburg to ask Van Limburg Stirum for an assessment of the damage caused by the war and about the measures the colonial government had been forced to take. The picture entertained of the Netherlands by the Associates should be put right. Van Karnebeek wrote that abroad it was ‘generally not sufficiently realized what great sacrifices the war has demanded’ from the Netherlands. It was ‘even not infrequently thought that the Netherlands had profited economically from the war’.\(^{22}\) He need not have bothered. In Paris, the leaders of the Associated Powers had too much on their minds, worrying about the rampant unrest in Europe, trying to create new states, redrawing boundaries, and dividing up German colonies and part of the Ottoman Empire, under heavy fire from all the protests and violent reactions this elicited, to worry about the Netherlands.

When the Peace Conference, to which the Netherlands was not a party, commenced in Paris in January 1919, new fears loomed. For a long time, at least since 1916, there had already been talk that Belgium would claim part of Dutch Limburg and Zeeland Flanders at the peace conferences. Some rumours went even further and stated that Belgium would also demand parts of the Netherlands Indies. As it happened, the Dutch did not have any reason to worry. The leaders of the Associated Powers were not greatly concerned with a small and powerless country like Belgium. Belgian interests and wishes, including those with regard to the border with the Netherlands, were paid so little attention that at one point the Belgian delegation in Paris even threatened that it would not sign the peace treaty (Macmillan 2001:285-6).

Another rumour was somewhat embarrassing. Some anxiety had been caused by the vague references the American President, Woodrow Wilson, had made about the right to self-determination of nations and the development of backward regions under colonial rule for the good of the international community. Wilson might well want to press such issues at the peace conference. Fearing that this might indeed be so, and that a Colonial Power might be forced to develop certain regions, and even worse, to accept the participation of the contemporary World Powers in the People’s Council, s’Jacob pressed for the development of the non-Javanese part of the Netherlands Indies, in order to forestall foreign countries using yet another excuse for interference in Dutch colonial affairs.\(^{23}\)

An additional cause for discomfort was the prospect, that as the rumour

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\(^{21}\) Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1918-19:786.

\(^{22}\) Van Karnebeek to Idenburg 4-2-1919, NA, Kol. Geheim, Vb. 21-2-1919 G1.

\(^{23}\) Volksraad 1918:314.
had it, Chinese in the Netherlands Indies wanted to seize the opportunity of the peace talks to have the representative of the Chinese government draw attention to the discrimination against Chinese in the Netherlands Indies. It was hinted he had been given the task of achieving a decision by which Chinese who had settled in the Netherlands Indies would be treated as subjects of China and no longer as Dutch subjects. Since 1911 restrictions on travel and residence had gradually been lifted, only to be abolished completely in November 1918, but since 1910 a new source of discontent had presented itself. A new act on citizenship made Chinese born in the Netherlands Indies of parents who had settled there Dutch subjects. The Chinese government had protested in 1910. It had recalled its Ambassador from The Hague (Han Tiauw Tjong 1919:952). In the Netherlands Indies the new act had not been well accepted. Protests peaked at the time of the peace talks in Paris. Instrumental in mobilizing Chinese discontent was *Sin Po*. This newspaper launched a campaign coupling a rejection of compulsory service with a rejection of Dutch nationality. The *Sumatra Post* claimed that 28,789 Chinese families and 300 Chinese associations had rejected the idea of becoming Dutch subjects (Oei Kiauw Pik 1919:960). In the end it was not the Chinese but the Japanese who were to raise the point of racial discrimination. The Japanese delegation gained wide support for insisting on the inclusion of a clause on racial equality in the Preamble to the Covenant of the League of Nations, but it ran up against a brick wall of opposition erected by the Americans and British, afraid of losing political support at home and, in the British case, especially in Australia and New Zealand which like the United States wanted to bar Japanese immigrants (MacMillan 2001:329).

When the Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919, on the same date in the same palace Wilhelm I had been crowned Emperor of Germany, Germany lost all its telegraph cables. Its Navy and a good part of its commercial fleet had to be handed over to Great Britain. Germany also had to part with its colonies and protectorates. Brutal German colonial rule was the justification given for such a decision. The argument was the umpteenth reason for some Dutchmen to torment themselves. Associated propaganda had contributed to this bad image of German rule, and passionate speeches in the People’s Council making the most of abuses in the Netherlands Indies might well create the impression abroad that the Dutch did not behave much better in their colony than the Germans had done in their Asian and African colonies (Van Renesse 1920:316-7).

Although the Netherlands Indies emerged intact from the Great War and the Peace Conference, it was a different colony from what it had been in 1914. In pre-war years there were signs that the mood among the population had already been changing. The Ethical Policy introduced after the turn of the
The Netherlands Indies and the Great War

The emergence of a popular nationalist movement in the early 1910s had prompted Dutch people to question the loyalty of the indigenous population were the Netherlands become involved in the Great War. To their relief Indonesians shouted ‘Long live the Queen’ and not ‘Down with the Dutch’ during meetings organized in the months following August 1914. What remained was a certain unease about the pro-German sympathies of Indonesians who clearly sided with their fellow-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, Germany’s ally, and later in the war, about a radicalization of the nationalist movement. Stimulated by the native militia discussion, the nationalist movement grew increasingly vocal and self-confident (and according to some extremist) in tone between 1914 and 1918. Nationalist and Islamic leaders called for political concessions in exchange for Indonesian conscripts to assist the Dutch in defending the colony, demanding equal treatment, a truly representative body in the colony, and better education.

Increasingly communist leaders also made their voices heard and Marxist jargon became fashionable among nationalist of all denominations. The advance of Indonesian communist leaders spelled the demise of the leaders of the pre-war Indische Partij and their disregard for racial differences. Understandably in a society in which race was one of the real and also perceived markers of social status and occupational group, racial antagonisms influenced the course of the nationalist movement. The VSTP became an almost exclusively Indonesian organization; an indication that Indo-Europeans and the Dutch language had become a liability in the nationalist movement. Indonesian members of the ISDV stressed the racial divide. The Chinese who seemed to arouse negative feelings among colonial administrators, part of the European community, and the indigenous population also suffered. Abdoel Moeis’s remarks in Europe about Chinese middlemen who exploited the small man, Semaoen’s lashing out against the Chinese after the Kudus riots and his attack on Indo-Europeans in Si Tetap testify to the significance of racial sentiments. In a sense the failure of Douwes Dekker, Tjipto Mangoenkesoemo, and Soewardi Soerjaningrat to win support for their ‘Indiër nationalism’ can be considered a missed opportunity, though now it is only possible to speculate about what the consequences for racial relations would have been had they been able to win over at least part of the nationalist leaders, especially those of the Sarekat Islam.

Taking post-war development into account, it is easier to speak about prospects which were not realized in the field of political and economic relations. In the course of the Great War, it had become increasingly difficult to communicate between motherland and colony. The regular mail and passenger services of pre-war years proved impossible to maintain. Commercial sea traffic to
and from Rotterdam and Amsterdam broke down when the dangers of war at sea intensified or when Allied pressure on tonnage became too great. Even any idea of a direct shipping link between Holland and the Netherlands Indies had to be abandoned after Berlin decided to resume an all-out submarine war in January 1917, while the requisitioning of all the Dutch ships in the ports of the Associated Powers put an end to all Dutch international sea traffic in March 1918. Such a decline in Dutch sea traffic was first and foremost an economic disaster. It also hampered communications between Holland and the Netherlands Indies, but what had been of even greater influence was that right from the outbreak of the war the Allied Powers had aimed to control the flow of mail and goods between motherland and colony. Incontrovertibly this was part of the Allied endeavour to bring down the German economy and to isolate German commercial interests in the rest of the world. Another reason for the tight control kept on Dutch mail was the fear for what might be accomplished by a Germano-Indian conspiracy to undermine British rule in Asia by inciting unrest among indigenous soldiers from the British colonies and fomenting a rebellion in India. In the schemings of the plotters, the Netherlands Indies had a vital role to play as a transit station for arms and seditious pamphlets; inevitably such suspicions necessitated close British supervision of all shipping to and from the Netherlands Indies. Telegraphic communications had also been at the mercy of the British who had even temporarily denied the Dutch access to a cable system when London instituted the British Telegram Interruption to punish the Netherlands for the way its government interpreted its duties as a neutral country in October 1917.

The break-down in communications between colony and motherland which had been the result of the problems encountered in keeping shipping, the mail service, and telegraphic connections functioning smoothly had given the colonial administration and the business community the chance to act with some independence (and at certain moments with complete independence) from directives from the Netherlands. Pessimism that the end of the war might see the restoration of the pre-war economic relations and make the mother country all powerful once again had persisted throughout the war. This would halt the modest steps the colony had set on the road to industrialization. After the war company headquarters in Europe and politicians in The Hague indeed again took control. Company headquarters tried to regain lost ground. The ‘old battle’ between the economic interests and status considerations of those in Holland and those in the Netherlands Indies was resumed (Ligthart 1923:432). The first indication of this had already emerged to the full light of day in August 1918 when the sugar companies in Holland had founded their own organization to regulate trade, the United Java Sugar Producers Association, and the Advisory Committee on Sugar and consequently the Association of Java Sugar Producers and Exporters had to be dissolved a few months later.
Some companies even succeeded in having Holland once again become the place where the colonial export products were traded and have such wares shipped to Holland on consignment (Ligthart 1923:432). It was an outcome much deplored in the colony and one which even made Emil Helfferich conclude that the Netherlands Indies had more freedom in the political than in the economic field (Taselaar 1998:1-2). Companies based in Holland even regarded with distrust trade missions abroad sent by the government to stimulate the sale of colonial products, afraid that such missions could result in direct trade relations with the Netherlands Indies bypassing the Netherlands.24 Despite being assailed by such threats, the new system which had taken shape during the war was too practical and too cost-effective to be abolished completely. The sugar market remained located in Java (but the United Java Sugar Producers Association was firmly in control) and the sale of Bangka tin still took place in Batavia. Tea was sold in Amsterdam and Batavia (and in London).25

Any thought about the political autonomy of the Netherlands Indies or a certain degree of self-rule remained a dream. The prospect of a famine in 1919 had been one of the motives for Van Limburg Stirum to have Talma call for unity and cooperation in his speeches to the People's Council. Talma had addressed himself specifically to the ‘native associations’ in his speech of 2 December 1918. He had asked for the assistance of their leaders in attempts to explain the measures taken by the government to avert a food crisis to the population. Significantly, he also asked them to help in ‘urging the population to spare the crops, already in the ground, so that they could be used to benefit society’.

On the same occasion and true to the spirit of the day, Talma had announced the establishment of local advisory councils on food production. The members were to be drawn from all population groups, but not from the civil service. By adopting this course Batavia hoped to make good use of the expertise of the population. Talma promised that the members of such committees could turn to the Head of the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Industry if they had the impression that their suggestions were being ignored or were not being properly implemented. It all fizzled out.

In May 1919, when he opened a new year of sessions of the People’s Council Van Limburg Stirum spoke of ‘the transfer of powers to representative bodies’ but left no doubt he was talking about a long-term project: ‘Where an abrupt transformation from a bureaucratic form of government to its antipode, the modern Western one, would only give a semblance of reality, what is called for is to pave the way for a gradual transfer’.27 His speech made it clear that

24 De Indische Gids 1922, I:160.
26 Volksraad 1918-19:441.
27 De Indische Gids 1919, II:993.
the development of local representative bodies was what the government had in mind, not a change in the political relationship between colony and motherland. Consequently, the motions submitted in the People’s Council on 25 November and 3 December calling for far-reaching political reform came to nought. First, discussion was postponed till the Herzieningscommissie (Commission of Inquiry) had submitted its report, which it did in June 1920. One of its proposals was to change the name the Netherlands Indies to the Indies. This was suggested to do justice to the fact that the colony was ‘a separate, as much autonomous as possible part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands’ (Carpentier Alting 1920:144). Another was to give the People’s Council (for which it invented the awful name Landsstaten, National Council) the status of a real co-legislative body, and virtually to remove the authority of Parliament in The Hague in matters concerning the Netherlands Indies. The Committee also suggested that in The Hague when important decisions concerning the Indies were to be made a deputation of Members of the People’s Council and of the colonial administration could travel to Holland where its members would have ‘a consultative voice’ in the deliberations in the States General (Carpentier Alting 1920:73). Yet another suggestion was that Queen Wilhelmina should visit the Indies: ‘no other personal deed of Her Majesty could so strengthen the tie between the Indies and the Netherlands as a visit to these territories’ (Carpentier Alting 1920:286).

Such recommendations were too outlandish for Dutch politicians to accept them. In the Netherlands Indies no discussion of the 25 November and 3 December motions in the People’s Council followed the publication of the Commission’s bulky, over 600 page-thick report. The deadline set by the Members of the People’s Council who had proposed the November motion, 1921, passed. The appointment of a new Governor General, D. Fock, in September 1920 did not inspire hope either. As Chairman of Parliament he had reacted angrily to the November promises and had praised the sugar industry in the same breath. Moreover, before being appointed Governor General he had left no doubt that ‘retention of the Dutch authority in the Indies would be the basis of his policy’ (Van Anrooij 2001:135). It is no surprise that at the end of 1921 De Locomotief concluded that Fock was less a proponent of political reform than Van Limburg Stirum had been.28

The reluctance of Batavia and The Hague to act prompted the founding of a Comité voor de Autonomie voor Indië (Committee for Autonomy for the Indies).29 Its aim was, to quote its secretary A.F. Fokersma, to create ‘an

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28 De Locomotief, 31-12-1921.
29 Chairman of the committee was H.C. Kerkkamp, a member of the People’s Council. Among the other members of the People’s Council who sat on the committee were M.Ng. Dwidjosewojo and A.L. Waworoentoe.
autonomous Indies, in accordance with the principles of the Commission of Inquiry. The Sarekat Islam, Boedi Oetomo, the Regents’ Union, the Indische Sociaal-Democratische Partij, and the National Indische Partij (National Indies Party, the new name borne by the Indische Partij since 1919) were among the organizations the Committee could count on for support. In the opinion of some, the Committee did not go far enough. It did not, as communists were inclined to do, champion the more radical Los van Holland (Separated from Holland) demand. Another not satisfied with mere autonomy was Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo. At an Autonomy Meeting in Bandung he demanded that the colony should become lepas dari Nederland. In all probability taking the militia campaign as an example, the Committee organized meetings all over the Netherlands Indies on 29 January 1922. It also considered the sending to Holland of a deputation to be chaired by Achmad Djajadiningrat, Regent of Serang. There was one big stumbling block. In contrast to the militia campaign the aims of the Committee could not count on any sympathy from the colonial administration. It was intimated to the Regents that Fock did not want them to support the campaign. This spelled the end of any idea of Achmad Djajadiningrat heading the deputation. The Regents’ Union distanced itself from the Committee, while the three Regents who had been members of the Committee resigned (Stokvis 1922).

The political participation of Indonesians in the running of the colony and even the freedom to manoeuvre of the nationalist movement suffered a commensurate if not worse fate. November 1918 had made the difference. There had been no revolution in Holland or the Netherlands Indies, and the matter of involvement of Indonesians in the defence of the colony had lost its urgency. In Parliament in April 1919 Wijnkoop stated that after November 1918 ‘the most rampant reaction’ reigned supreme in the Netherlands Indies. Yet other Dutch people showed themselves pleased with the harsher policy embarked upon by the colonial authorities. In his survey of developments in the Netherlands Indies in 1919, the editor of De Indische Gids, Van Heekeren, exclaimed that ‘[f]inally the government of the Netherlands Indies has discarded its lenient attitude and has taken very rigorous action against the zealots who tried to set the population against the legal authorities with their wild theories’ (Van Heekeren 1920:96). Grossly misjudging the actual situation, another Dutch person observed in the Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad that the indigenous movement was quiet. He attributed this to the fact that ‘the iron had entered the soul’ of its leaders. The implication of the actions taken by

30 De Indische Gids 1922, I:355.
31 De Indische Gids 1922, I:433.
32 Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1918-19:2069.
33 De Indische Gids 1922, I:48.
Batavia was that the thriving political climate of the 1910s gradually faded away. In keeping with the new policy the Malay-language press also was brought under control. With the Press Ordinance of 1931, popular known as the Press Curb Ordinance, Batavia appropriated the power to deal directly with newspapers which had displeased it, bypassing the judiciary. The ordinance was issued, as is stated in its text, to safeguard public order against undesirable periodicals.

It was not just political repression. The opinions and advice of Indonesians, which Batavia not so long before had explicitly said it welcomed, seemed no longer to count. This new course of action assumed a firmer outline during the term in office of Governor General Fock from March 1921 until September 1926. Fock was well aware of the aversion his policy had aroused in nationalist circles. At the end of his term, he observed that some of the Indonesian intelligentsia had gained the impression that they were no longer taken seriously, that their contribution to the development of the Netherlands Indies was rejected, and that consequently they distrusted the colonial administration (Van Anrooij 2001:1). The final straw which broke the camel’s back presented itself just after Fock’s term had ended: the ill-fated communist rebellions of November 1926 in West Java and January 1927 in West Sumatra. In spite of the name under which they have gone down in history, they were inspired as much by religious as by communist sympathies. These ushered in the end of what M.C. Ricklefs has called the ‘first stage of national revival’ (Ricklefs 1981:170). In reaction to the rebellions, the notorious prison camp Boven-Digul was constructed in an inaccessible and insanitary part of Papua. Any tendency to emerge as a key figure in the nationalist movement became dangerous. Douwes Dekker, Tjipto Mangoen Koesoemo, and Soewardi Soerjaningrat had been banned and ‘irresponsible’ journalists had been punished, but at times the colonial authorities – the senior ones at least – had regretted that such steps had to be taken and, at least till the middle of 1917, had looked upon the emancipation movement growing among the indigenous population with a certain degree of sympathy. The Governors General and their staff may well have agreed with what Sir Edward Grey, the then British Foreign Secretary, wrote in 1908 to his Envoy in Istanbul, Sir Gerard Lowther: ‘Hitherto, wherever we have had Mahometan subjects, we have been able to tell them that the subjects in the countries ruled by the head of their religion were under a despotism which was not a benevolent one; while our Mahometan subjects were under a despotism that was benevolent’.34 After the Great War, the tolerance and understanding had evaporated. The new leader of the nationalist movement who entered the stage in the 1920s, Soekarno, was arrested in 1929.

34 Grey to Lowther, 31-8-1908, PRO FO 800 79.
He was sentenced to four years’ imprisonment in 1930. In December 1931 he was released, only to be re-arrested again in August 1933 and exiled first to Flores and then to Bengkulu. Two other important leaders, Mohammad Hatta and Soetan Sjahrir, were banned to Boven-Digul in February 1934, from where they were moved to Banda in 1936.

Sarekat Islam leaders also found to their cost that the wind was changing. At the end of 1918 Abdoel Moeis was prosecuted. The crux of the charge against him was a speech he had given during a Sarekat Islam meeting in Ciawi earlier in the year. The Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, quoting from a report said to have been made by the Sundanese District Chief of Ciawi, claimed that Abdoel Moeis had made an appeal for civil disobedience. He is alleged to have urged people not to appear when summoned to court. Abdoel Moeis was furious. He called the district chief ‘one of those stupid priyayi who think that he serves the government by libel’. Abdoel Moeis apologized in Neratja after the district chief had written to him saying that his report had differed...
from the version published in the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*. Nevertheless, the district chief took Abdoel Moeis to court for slander. The result was that Abdoel Moeis was arrested in December. He was accused of contempt of court for refusing to answer a summons. Abdoel Moeis blamed his failure to appear on a misunderstanding. He had asked for the postponement of the court session because he had to address the People’s Council. Abdoel Moeis had been sure that his request had been granted, but it turned out that the session had not been adjourned. The court in Buitenzorg sentenced Abdoel Moeis to two months’ imprisonment. As so often happened, the Indonesian nationalists had a good case to show how racially biased the administration of justice in the Netherlands Indies was. They contrasted the judicial sentences in the cases against Semaonen, Abdoel Moeis and others against that of one Van Metz van Enghuizen, a planter, who had ordered the binding with barbed wire and the flogging with the same material of a female employee. Van Metz van Enghuizen was sentenced to a mere one month’s imprisonment.

Soon Abdoel Moeis got in trouble again. He was once more arrested after a Dutch civil servant was murdered in Toli-Toli in North Sulawesi shortly after Abdoel Moeis had visited the region on a propaganda tour in May 1919 (Ricklefs 1981:165). In 1923 he abandoned national politics and moved to West Sumatra, his native region, where he continued his nationalist campaign. The colonial administration acted promptly and displayed its unforgiving memory. In January 1924 Abdoel Moeis was banned from Sumatra and was not allowed to live anywhere other than in Java and Madura. His ‘agitation’ in Toli-Toli was one of the reasons adduced by Batavia for taking this decision (Petrus Blumberger 1931:79-80). Abdoel Moeis chose Garut as his residence. He died in 1959.

The other key Sarekat Islam leader, Tjokroaminoto, found himself into trouble a few weeks after the Toli-Toli disturbances when violence erupted in Garut and rumours flew thick and fast that a secret B department of the Sarekat Islam was planning a rebellion. He was arrested for perjury when being cross-examined as a witness in the Garut court cases in August 1921, preventing him from attending an important Sarekat-Islam Congress in Surabaya in October. Tjokroaminoto was released in April 1922 and acquitted in May of that same year. In 1927 he refused an appointment to the People’s Council; an indication of the growing rift between the colonial government and the nationalist movement (Petrus Blumberger 1931:75, 312). Tjokroaminoto remained the most important leader of the Sarekat Islam till his death in 1934.

Of the three Indische Partij leaders, Tjipto Mangoenkosoesoemo was banned from living in Central and East Java in 1919. Worse was to come for him. After
the Communist rebellion in Java he was arrested and subsequently was exiled to Banda in 1927, and from there, just before World War Two, to Makassar. In 1940 he was allowed to move to Sukabumi in West Java for health reasons. Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo died in 1943. Soewardi Soerjaningrat was finally given permission to return to Java in 1919. In 1922 he acquired new fame as the founder of a nationalist school system, Taman Siswa or Garden of Pupils. He also changed his name in Ki Hadjar Dewantara. He died in April 1959, after having served among other functions as the first Indonesian Minister of Education. Douwes Dekker assumed the Indonesian name of Danudirdjo Setiabudhi. Shortly before the Japanese invasion he was arrested on suspicion of being a Japanese spy and was transported to Suriname. He returned to Indonesia in 1946 and died in 1950.

Of the other persons who played such an important role in nationalist movement in the Netherlands Indies during World War One, Semaoen was exiled in mid-1923. He went first to Holland and thereafter moved to Russia. He was active in the Executive Committee of the Communist International. Semaoen returned to Indonesia in 1956, where he died in 1971. Darsono was exiled from the Netherlands Indies in 1926, after which he went to live in Russia, where he became an alternate member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. In 1935 he moved to Holland. Darsono returned in Indonesia in 1950, He died in 1975. Mas Marco Kartodikromo was arrested again in 1926. He was sent to Boven-Digul where he died in 1932 (Chambert-Loir 1974:205).

The whirligig of time has taken its revenge. The Dutch persons who figure in this book have largely faded like thin air from the consciousness of Indonesia but the merits of the once unsung heroes have been recognized in Indonesia. Abdoel Moeis, Soewardi Soerjaningrat, Tjokroaminoto, Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, and Douwes Dekker have been declared national heroes by the Indonesian government. For various reasons communists have never made it to National Heroes in Indonesia.