

Survey by Jan Willem Meijer Ranneft on Dutch policy in Indonesia (23 February 1948)

Caption: On 23 February 1948, Jan Willem Meijer Ranneft, one of the leaders of the National Committee for the Maintenance of Unity of the Kingdom (Comité tot Handhaving van de Rijkseenheid), publishes a report in which he strongly criticises the policy pursued by the Dutch Government in Indonesia.

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231
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SURVEY REGARDING INDONESIA
at the beginning of February 1948.

The trend of events in INDONESIA is running against us. Since the defeat of Japan thousands of people have been killed, hundreds of thousands have been starved to death, billions of guilders worth of goods have been destroyed, and hate has grown where once good relationship prevailed. Communist influence has made vast stride. Things have not improved since the Linggadjati-agreement concluded in December 1946. The Netherlands were prevented from halting this process by the Security-Council putting an end to the police action. At present the Renville-agreement unfortunately allows things to continue as before.

There is a truce - this means the other party keeps on shooting. There is an agreement consisting of a complicated set of terms to which both parties attribute a different meaning. As a result scores of difficulties have arisen. In all these negotiations the Netherlands are at a disadvantage, because it is Dutch sovereignty and Dutch rights which are constantly being disputed and reduced. The Republic has been promised the future; it is they that are allowed to maintain armed forces, while Dutch troops are to be withdrawn. There is great danger that this will dominate the elections and votes in the forthcoming plebiscite. Mr. Graham's slogan: "from bullet to ballot" is senseless when the bullets of the Republic threaten the electors. (In 1938 the Saar elected Hitler.) Finally the Republic has seized the opportunity to sow dissension between the Committee of Three and the Netherlands.

The principal thing is that the Republic with its strongly communist influence continues proclaiming that it will not desist from its political wishes and that it will maintain its armed forces. This means either an anti-Dutch authority or according to Emery Reve's metaphor "cancer" in society. Indonesia will become a second Balkans, or at any rate a second Greece.

The situation now reached may possibly give satisfaction to Indonesian republican potentates, to Australians, Russians; to Asiatic powers that feel their racial prejudices gratified, to English and Chinese merchants at Singapore and other businessmen that wish to make a profit like the Martin Behrman owners, and even to some Dutchmen.

The situation will be detrimental to the interests of the population of Indonesia; they will remain deprived of the four Roosevelt freedoms which they did enjoy in the past; and also to the interests of the Netherlands which will see many rights of and opportunities for Dutch citizens disappear. The Netherlands will suffer a severe blow; still more dead and still more losses.

In THE NETHERLANDS the left-wing government bears the blame for this calamity. With regard to its Indonesian policy it is supported only by a minority of the people. Despite the fact that the government policy has brought by far the greatest part of the press into the hands of the left wing, the continually growing number of those disapproving of the Indonesian policy is greater than that of those supporting it.

Figures given by the Netherlands Gallup pool enquiry show that even in November 1947 a majority of the people were against the Indonesian policy of the government.

But the government, -"left" as in the case of the postwar governments of England and France - deems itself compelled to follow its disastrous policy, because it wishes to maintain the position of the parties upon which it depends. It deems itself compelled to do this for fear of the communists: the social democ-

rats as well as the Roman-Catholics are afraid that the electorate will slide to the left, and they try not to lose these electors by carrying on a left-wing liquidation policy in the Indies. The whole of it is a remarkable example of how the Russian threat by its mere existence manages to paralyse and weaken one of the healthiest West European countries.

A strong opposition accuses the Government not only of taking inefficient measures, but also of violating the Constitution and the Laws. In that opposition similar thoughts and feelings are being expressed as in the right-wing movements in France, England, Switzerland, Finland and other West European countries. It is indeed particularly painful that a left-wing policy manages to maintain itself at exactly the moment that the Marshall-plan renders it absolutely necessary, that the Netherlands should raise herself economically and that she should embrace a more anti-communist policy.

In AMERICA we fear there is no true understanding of the real and deeper background and of the meaning of the catastrophe afflicting the Netherlands and Indonesia. We fear that American anti-colonial feelings do not take sufficient account of the fact that Dutch authority formerly brought the four Roosevelt freedoms in a measure, not even half of which the Indonesian leaders will be able to reach. Neither is it known in America, that the right-wing opposition in the Netherlands also wishes to meet the nationalist desires of the many peoples in Indonesia and wishes to give them freedom, but that it demands a guarantee against mass-bloodshed and abuse of power by evil and incompetent forces, bent upon making Indonesia a second Balkans. What we, the right-wing opposition, ask is some understanding on the side of the American government and of the American representatives in the Security Council of these simple wishes, wishes that coincide with the demands of decency, equity, sound economy and good international relations.

One word should be added with regard to words as "colonial" and "anti-colonial feelings". It may be useful to ponder for a moment on the significance of these words.

"Colonial", properly speaking, appears to have no other meaning than "exercising influence elsewhere". That influence, however, is something which has always been present and which will remain so in all times, and which moreover does not need to be a disadvantage but may prove a necessary condition. In the world of to-day it is of course necessary that the word "colonial" should be avoided. But let us acknowledge as honest men, that "influence" is necessary. For that is something most important. At present there are two opposite powers in this world. For America it will be a matter of "to be or not to be" whether it will be able to exercise its influence in a sufficiently extensive sphere. In other words, America must exercise that influence or it must perish and thereby allow Russia to be the only "colonial" power.

That is how the problem lies.

The Netherlands Indies are a country totally different from India. Different in this respect that the European part of the population is of very great importance to the Indonesian society. Large sums of Dutch and other Western capital have been invested there. For us the question is whether Indonesia will remain linked to the Netherlands and with the Netherlands will side with America, or whether a few new rulers in the Archipelago will become entitled to colonise a great many other peoples in that same Archipelago and subsequently will choose the side of Russia with that new "free country", which then will bear an obviously communist hall-mark.

H.M. the Queen's broadcast speech on February 3rd has not altered the facts as stated in the preceding survey nor the feelings of the opposition against government policy. The opposition deems it highly regrettable that, contrary to the Netherlands democratic traditions, H.M. the Queen has been induced to abandon her high and impartial position and to express the views of the political parties of the left wing. The opposition no less regrets that H.M. the Queen has been induced to present a picture of the situation which in no way responds to reality. In the third place the opposition regrets that contrary to the constitution of this country in this way by aspect of the Queen some big changes de facto are made in the constitution which cannot be taken back.

We maintain with the utmost vigour that the situation in Indonesia is bad, that the Republican troops continue shooting and that no word of what has been said in our preceding survey can be withdrawn.

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