# Prisoners at Kota Cane

Leon Salim



**Cornell Modern Indonesia Project**

Translation Series

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# Prisoners at Kota Cane

Leon Salim

Translated by Audrey R. Kahin

Translation Series
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**Cornell Modern Indonesia Project**
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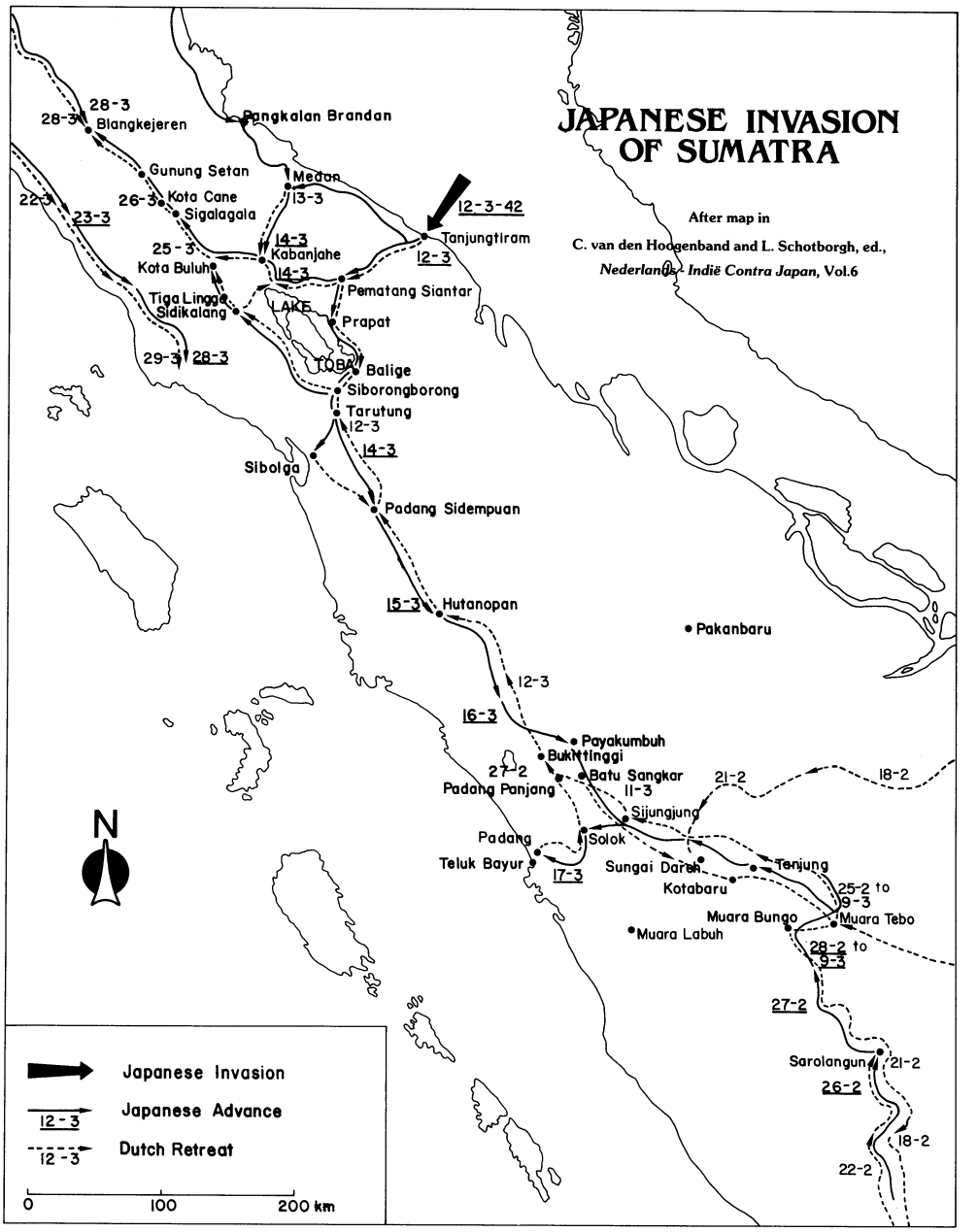



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# TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Very little has been written about the twilight of Dutch rule in the Netherlands East Indies, in the period immediately after the Japanese army swept through Java and parachuted its forces into south Sumatra. When the Commander-in-Chief of the Netherlands Indies Army, Lt. General Hein Ter Poorten, surrendered to the Japanese in Kali Jati on March 9, 1942, that incident did not mark the end of Dutch control throughout the Indies. Major elements of the colonial government on Sumatra held out for a further three weeks before finally capitulating on March 28. The following memoir, *Prisoners at Kota Cane* by Leon Salim, presents the events of these final days in Sumatra from the perspective of an Indonesian arrested by the Dutch shortly after Ter Poorten's surrender.

Leon Salim and his friend and colleague Chatib Sulaiman were attempting to hasten the end of colonial rule in West Sumatra by organizing mass demonstrations there. These, they hoped, would give the Minangkabau people a chance to determine their own future, deal directly with the Japanese, and impede the colonial government's plans to employ a scorched-earth policy in anticipation of the Japanese invasion. On February 11 the Dutch had begun to carry out these plans by blowing up the oil wells and installations at Pangkalan Brandan and Pangkalan Susu, fifty miles north of Medan. These steps were taken "partly as a precautionary measure in case of invasion and partly as a desperate attempt to dissuade the Japanese from landing by removing the chief prize in advance."[1]

The Japanese had initiated their attacks against Sumatra on December 28, 1941 when they bombed the city of Medan. By the beginning of February, according to the British vice consul there, air raids on the major Sumatran ports had succeeded "in paralysing a country twice the size of Great Britain and in depriving the Allies of vital war materials at insignificant cost to themselves [i.e. the Japanese] in aircraft. This will surely come to be regarded as the classic example of blockage from the air."[2] On February 14-15 about 9-10,000 Japanese troops, sent from Cam Ranh Bay, sailed through the Bangka Straits and landed on the east Sumatra coast near the mouth

---

1. "Notes on the General Situation in Sumatra from December 1941 to February 1942" from His Majesty's Vice Consul in Medan, attached to his letter of May 15, 1942, p. 2. (In the Public Record Office [Kew, London], Foreign Office File, F0371/31751. 77862.)

2. Ibid., p. 1.



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of the Musi River. Concurrently, Japanese forces parachuted into Palembang and rapidly occupied the city. The British vice consul reported:

> . . . the attack on Palembang and its fall actually prior to the surrender of Singapore, together with the astonishing speed of the Japanese advance in South Sumatra against what was known to be a considerable force of Imperial and Dutch troops, completed the despair of the Dutch. The fall of Singapore on February 15th, the day following the loss of Palembang, was of course a crushing blow. The occupation of South Sumatra meant that the last link [from Medan] with Java by the 2,000 kilometre-long overland route was cut.[3]

These immediate Japanese successes, however, were followed by a very slow advance toward central Sumatra. Abnormally bad weather and widespread flooding hampered their soldiers, and Dutch units under Major C. F. Hazenberg further harassed and impeded their progress. From February 28 to March 9 the Japanese forces remained stalled between Muara Bungo and Muara Tebo, still short of the West Sumatra border.[4] But when on March 9, Major Hazenberg heard of the Dutch surrender on Java, he ordered his troops to cease offensive actions. He then received instructions from the Central Sumatra Command to retreat northward and he arrived in Bukittinggi on March 10. The slowness of the enemy advance meant that for nearly three weeks Dutch and Indonesians in the Minangkabau had been fearing or anticipating the imminent arrival of Japanese troops.

Initially the Dutch envisaged mounting their major defense in the west central region of Sumatra. On landing in Medan on February 9, Col. R. T. Overakker (promptly promoted to the rank of Major General) was appointed Territorial Commander of Central Sumatra. Under an order of February 14 this command was expanded to incorporate the residencies of West and East Sumatra, Tapanuli, and the Bengkalis region of Riau,[5] and after Palembang's fall, Dutch forces from Jambi were added to it, with troops from Pakanbaru being withdrawn to Padang Panjang.[6] By March, however, a decision had

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3. Ibid., p. 2.

4. An account of these actions appears in C. van den Hoogenband & L. Schotborgh, eds., *Nederlands-Indië contra Japan*, vol. 6: De Strijd op Ambon, Timor en Sumatra (The Hague: Staatsdrukkerij- en Uitgeverijbedrijf, 1959), pp. 88-93.

5. Ibid., p. 84. The headquarters of this new Central Sumatra Command was transferred inland on February 15 to Prapat on the shores of Lake Toba. See "Notes on the General Situation in Sumatra," p. 5.

6. Hoogenband & Schotborgh, *Nederlands-Indië*, vol. 6, pp. 85-86.

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been reached to consolidate the Netherlands defense much further north, in the Alas valley of southern Aceh: General Overakker's troops were to withdraw to Kota Cane at its southern approach and the Aceh command to Bengkejeren to protect the northern flank.

Leon Salim's memoir throws light not only on the actual incidents attending the Dutch army's retreat from central Sumatra to their ultimate Acehnese stronghold, but also on more general aspects of Dutch administration of the Indies. As their prisoner and a fierce opponent of colonial rule since his schooldays, Salim naturally stresses the cruelty and arrogance of his Dutch captors. What is more striking, however, from the hindsight of more than forty years is the rigid code of conduct the colonial officials held to even as their world was collapsing around them. That in their current predicament they should have dragged these six "agitators" with them as they made their long and hazardous journey from Padang Panjang in West Sumatra to Kota Cane, merely in order to subject the accused prisoners to the legal trappings of a military trial, says much for the inflexibility of the rules governing Dutch ideas of justice. Leon Salim himself now acknowledges that he and other Republican leaders who eventually took over in West Sumatra, would never have acted in such a manner. Any similar opponents of the local regime "would have been shot straight away."

Although planning their demonstrations so that they would coincide with the Japanese crossing of the borders to West Sumatra and although their aim was then to demand that the Dutch transfer power to Indonesian hands, Chatib Sulaiman and Leon Salim apparently had no direct ties to the invading forces: "We too were anti-Japanese, we were from the Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia, Hatta-Sjahrir's party, so it is clear we were anti-military, anti-Japan, and so on. But the Dutch didn't think things out this far."[7] In fact, perhaps because of the chaotic atmosphere of those days, the Dutch seem to have

---

7. Interview with Leon Salim, Jakarta, June 1985. The Japanese did enjoy some support in West Sumatra prior to the invasion, though there were many fewer pro-Japanese activities than in north Sumatra and Aceh. Their most prominent sympathizer was A. Madjid Oesman, who had spent four years at the Meiji University in Tokyo in the early 1930s, and returned to Padang in 1936 with a Japanese wife. He became editor of the Padang newspaper *Radio* and a member of the Padang Municipal Council. (There were allegations that he bought *Dagblad Radio* with Japanese capital. See S. L. van der Wal, *De Volksraad en de Staatkundige Onwikkeling in Nederlands-Indie. Een bronnenpublicatie*, 2 vols. [Groningen: Wolters, 1964-65]; 2: 590.) According to his widow, although they were sympathetic to Japan, she and her husband were not Japanese agents. The Dutch arrested them both in late 1941 and they were interned on Java. Interview with Mrs. Oesman, Tokyo, December 1976; see also George S. Kanahele, "The Japanese Occupation of Indonesia: Prelude to Independence," Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University 1967), pp. 9, 247.

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selected their six prisoners rather arbitrarily. Only Leon Salim and Chatib Sulaiman were actually in charge of organizing the demonstrations. Another of those arrested, A. Murad Saad, was a party colleague who had been monitoring radio broadcasts for news of the Japanese advance so that the two leaders would be able to choose the most propitious moment for staging the demonstrations. Of the other three detainees, Jamaris Dt. Mandah Kayo, a member of the Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia (PSII), was arrested for raising the Red-and-White Indonesian flag over his home in Kota Baru outside Padang Panjang; the teenager, Chaidir Gazali, had been acting as courier for the demonstration organizers and was perhaps included because he resisted Dutch attempts to detain him; and the same might well have happened with M. H. St. Rajo Bujang, known for his quick temper, who played a minor part in the projected demonstrations, but was not among the leaders.[8]

* * * * *

To place this memoir in context, it is necessary to understand the role of Leon Salim and Chatib Sulaiman in the history of the nationalist movement in West Sumatra. In 1942 Salim was just thirty years old, but he had been working against the Dutch for the previous seventeen years. In February 1925, shortly before his thirteenth birthday he was expelled from the government elementary school in Dangung-Dangung, a village not far from Payakumbuh. His offense was that of helping set up in the school a branch of the "Barisan Muda" the youth organization of the Sarekat Rakyat (People's Union).[9]

After he was expelled, Salim moved to Padang Panjang and began to attend the "Sekolah Rakyat" (People's School) during the day and the Islamic modernist Diniyah School in the evening.[10] He was

---

8. A member of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) before the 1927 uprising, Rajo Bujang had, after several years in jail, joined the Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia (PSII), of which he was still a member.

9. The PKI had established the Sarekat Rakyat in 1923 for its "non-proletarian" sympathizers. See Harry J. Benda & Ruth T. McVey, eds., *The Communist Uprisings of 1926-1927 in Indonesia: Key Documents* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1960), p. 10.

10. The Padang Panjang Sekolah Rakyat had been set up in 1924, patterned on Tan Malaka's school in Semarang. Its headmaster was Alibin and among its teachers were Mahmud and Syamsuddin Musanif. Alibin disappeared before the 1927 uprising, and apparently worked in a Dutch plantation in Deli, emerging at independence in Bukittinggi as Head of the State Printing Office (Percetakan Negara). (Interview with Leon Salim, Jakarta, June 1985.) Mahmud was in the Padang Panjang section of the PKI and was a popular political writer. (See Benda & McVey, *Communist Uprisings*, pp. 106, 108.) He was arrested by the Dutch and sent to Digul in 1927, where he died.

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*People's School in Padang Panjang 1925*

(Photograph taken in front of the PMDS Building in J1. Jembatan Besi, Padang Panjang)

Leon Salim is seated 2nd from R in front row, with a peci in his lap. Standing from R: Alibin (headmaster), Damanhuri Jamil, Nazaruddin.
Standing farthest forward at L is Mahmud; and farthest back is Syamsuddin Musanif.

(This photograph appears in J. Th. Petrus Blumberger, De Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlands Indie [Haarlem: Willink, 1931], p. 108 where it is erroneously described as being a photograph of the Rakyat School in Semarang in 1917)

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appointed second secretary (Penulis II) of the executive committee of the Barisan Muda's West Sumatra branch. A few months later, the Padang Panjang Communists followed the PKI in Semarang in transforming the Barisan Muda into an "Internationale Padvinder Organisatie" (IPO, International Boyscouts' Organization), with the slogan "Youth of the World Unite." Leon Salim then became secretary of the IPO's executive council.[11]

The internal dissension in the Indonesian Communist movement over plans to mount a nationwide uprising against the Dutch in 1926 fractured Communist solidarity in West Sumatra. Consternation spread as Comintern representative Tan Malaka's orders reached the region's Communists, countermanding the decision of the PKI's Central Committee to stage the revolt. Already a legendary figure in his native Minangkabau, Tan Malaka's word carried far greater weight there than that of the other PKI leaders. Arif Fadlillah, head of the PKI's Sumatra West Coast section in Padang Panjang, followed Tan Malaka's instructions, and, opposing appeals from several subsections, prohibited PKI members from launching an insurrection.[12] Although some local officials ignored this directive, when the revolt finally broke out on January 1, 1927, it was limited largely to the area round Silungkang and was easily crushed by the Dutch authorities. Meanwhile, throughout the closing months of 1926, a stream of Tan Malaka's followers began to leave the region, crossing the Malacca Straits from Sumatra to the Malay peninsula.

In the immediate aftermath of the revolt, Communist activity was outlawed, the Rakyat School closed, and the IPO dissolved. Not yet fifteen years old, Leon Salim was not among the hundreds the Dutch then rounded up, but most of his friends either fled, were arrested, or were exiled to Boven Digul.

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Syamsuddin Musanif was also exiled to Digul, returning to Indonesia after independence. He was killed in the 1948 Communist uprising at Madiun. (Interview with Leon Salim.)

The Diniyah School, established in 1915 by the Muslim educator Zainuddin Labai El Junusiah, was the first modernist religious elementary school in West Sumatra, innovative in both curriculum and teaching methods. See Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 41-42.

11. M. Yunus Kocek, a pupil at the Diniyah and Thawalib schools had organized the IPO. Its other council members, who all attended these schools, were Amir Khan, Asasuddin Kimin, and Nazaruddin. (See photograph, p. 7.)

12. According to Leon Salim, Arif Fadlillah also taught at the Rakyat School. He was arrested by the Dutch on December 29, 1926 and exiled to Digul. On his role during these months, see Benda & McVey, *Communist Uprisings*, pp. 159-171 passim.

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*Executive Council, IPO, West Sumatra*
*Padang Panjang, November 7, 1925*

L to R.: M. Yunus Kocek (Organizer); Asanuddin Kimin (Inspector I); Amir Khan Head/Commander); Leon Salim (Secretary); Nazaruddin (Inspector II)




*Founder Members of Youth Organization El Hilaal*

L to R.: Leon Salim (Secretary); M. Yunus Kocek (Head); Mahyuddin Tonex (Commissioner)

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Leon Salim continued his studies now at the two major Islamic schools in Padang Panjang, the Sumatra Thawalib and the Diniyah.[13] He helped to revive the Diniyah's youth association PMDS (Persatuan Murid-murid Diniyah School -- Association of Diniyah School Pupils), and soon afterwards he was one of the founders of the El Hilaal (Crescent Moon), another youth organization rooted in the Diniyah Schools, which spread also to the Sumatra Thawalib. The youth leaders denied that these groups had any political aims and instead emphasized their activities in the fields of sport and music. (Thus, the PMDS's bamboo flute orchestra staged public performances, with members of both the Diniyah pupils' association and El Hilaal marching in procession in 1928 to celebrate the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina's birthday.)

Many of Leon Salim's former colleagues had by now joined Tan Malaka's Pari (Partai Rakyat Indonesia, Indonesian People's Party) founded in Bangkok in mid-1927. From Malaya his friends in Pari sent Salim copies of their magazine *Obor* (Torch), together with training manuals in French, Malay, and Arabic, but above all in English, on methods for organizing youth and boy scout movements. With no knowledge of European languages, Salim needed an associate who could use the books to train the young people now flocking to join the burgeoning El Hilaal. He sought advice from Abdullah Basa Bandaro, "a financial backer and key adviser of the Thawalib,"[14] and a prominent leader of the Padang trading community, who suggested one of his own protégés, Chatib Sulaiman. (When Chatib's father H. Sulaiman became bankrupt at the end of World War I, as a friend and colleague, Basa Bandaro took over the boy's education.) Chatib Sulaiman had had two years of Dutch education above the elementary level (at the MULO [junior high school]), but had then left school and was currently earning his living as a musician in a movie house in Padang. Although he had not previously been politically active, he nevertheless agreed to work with Salim, and in 1929 moved to Padang Panjang, where he joined him and M. Yunus Kocek, another musician and political activist.[15] Soon, Chatib Sulaiman emerged as the principal theoretician of both the El Hilaal and PMDS, the Diniyah pupils' association.

---

13. In the 1920s these were the most important modernist religious (Kaum Muda) education institutions in West Sumatra. In 1928 there were 39 Thawalib schools, with about 17,000 students. The Thawalib school in Padang Panjang had about 750 students at this time. See Taufik Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra 1927-1933* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1971), p. 61.

14. Ibid., p. 132.

15. Born in Aceh Barat, Yunus Kocek had been a student at the Diniyah and Thawalib schools and treasurer/organizer of the IPO in Padang Panjang in 1925. In 1926 he fled to Aceh, but returned in

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Their path was not smooth, for a personal rift soon divided them from some of the older leaders, particularly from H. Jalaluddin Thaib, chairman of the Sumatra Thawalib's Executive Board. At the Thawalib's May 1930 congress where the new religious nationalist party Permi (Persatuan Muslimin Indonesia, Indonesian Muslim Association) was being set up, young El Hilaal members were used as guards for the conference, and Leon Salim became resentful over how badly they were being treated. His subsequent quarrel with Jalaluddin Thaib over this issue caused a split in the El Hilaal. In this split, most students from the Sumatra Thawalib remained with the El Hilaal, which was now brought into close affiliation with the Permi party, while Chatib Sulaiman, Leon Salim, and Yunus Kocek eventually formed the Kepanduan Indonesia Muslim (KIM, Islamic Indonesian Boyscouts), which drew its membership principally from the Diniyah schools.[16]

Despite their disagreements, however, at the youth conference held in Padang Panjang where the El Hilaal members decided to form separate organizations, they "still promised to work together to strengthen the forces of the Indonesian youth movement as a whole."[17] As a sign of unity of purpose, the warring youth groups all joined a march around Padang Panjang, which ended up in front of the Assistant Resident's house. The Dutch promptly arrested a number of the young people, including Leon Salim and Yunus Kocek, for holding a demonstration without prior government permission.

Dispirited over these events, shortly after his release Leon Salim left West Sumatra, and, ignored by Dutch officials as he lay curled up on the deck of one of the trading vessels crossing the Malacca Straits, he arrived in Singapore. He spent nearly a year working with his former friends and colleagues in the Pari party in both Singapore and Kuala Lumpur before returning to West Sumatra in 1931. Chatib Sulaiman, meanwhile, remained in Padang Panjang and turned to fulltime teaching. Invited to head the Muhammadiyah HIS

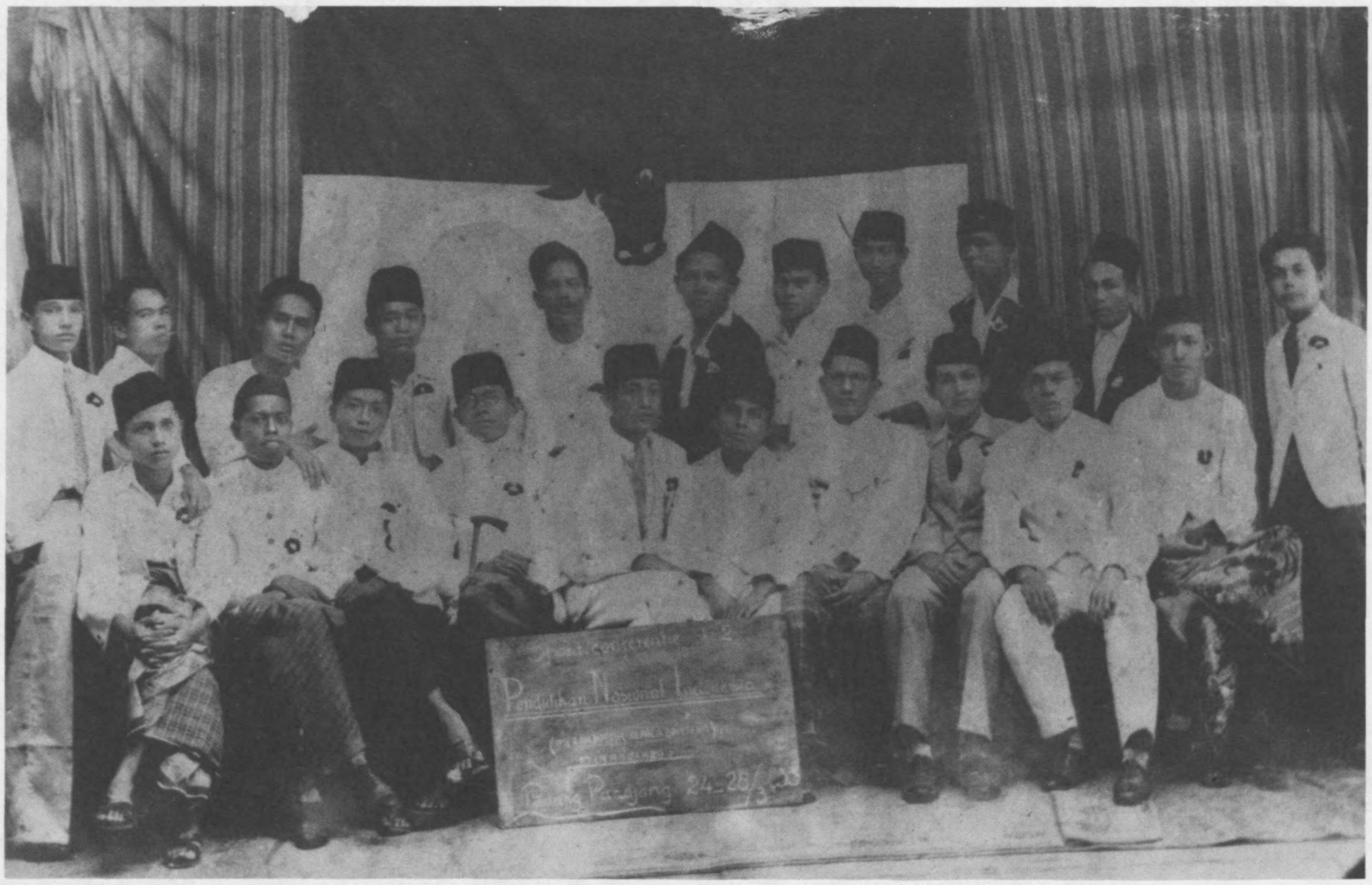
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1927 to become a leader of the PMDS and El Hilaal, and later of the Islamic Indonesian Boyscouts (KIM). He married Leon Salim's sister.

16. KIM appears to have been established in 1931. For the Dutch version of the split in El Hilaal, see Memories van Overgave [MvO] van Gouverneur G.F.E. Gonggrijp, in *Mailrapport* [henceforth *Mr.*] 360/32 (1932), pp. 34-36, in Algemeen Rijksarchief [ARA], The Hague. The report concludes that the KIM with a membership of about 600 was better organized, in that its leaders ("the former IPO leaders of El Hilaal") were more experienced than those of the residual El Hilaal.

17. Kantor Wilayah Departemen Sosial D.K.I. Jakarta, *Proyek Penulisan Riwayat Perjuangan Perintis Kemerdekaan, Tahun 1979/1980* (Disusun oleh: Leon Salim, No. Pol. 21/59/PK) (Jakarta, typescript, n.d.), p. 25.

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*Conference of the West Sumatra Branch of Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia*
*Padang Panjang, March 24-28, 1933*

L to R.: Seated: Janaid Samad; Kasim; Moh. Said; Dt. Tumanggung Nan Putih; Chatib Sulaiman; Marzuki Said; Dt. Majolelo; Darwis Thaib; Syamsuddin Dt. Bandaro; Ali Umar.
Standing: Leon Salim; unknown; Mukhtar; Ahmad Ks; unknown; Jamaluddin St. T. Emas; Mahyuddin Tonex; Bustaman; S. Samik; Harun; Bakhtiar Latief

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there, he also taught at Adam B.B.'s Madrasah Irsyadun-Nas (MIN).[18]

The young men's quarrel with the Permi leaders was probably one of the reasons they were now attracted to the Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Education) or PNI Baru (New PNI) the political party being established as a successor to Sukarno's Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI). Two prominent Minangkabau nationalists, Mohammad Hatta and Sutan Sjahrir, headed this new party. After returning from the Netherlands in late 1932 Hatta presided at the founding meeting of the New PNI's West Sumatra branch held on November 11, 1932 at the Diniyah Pupils' Association (PMDS) office in Padang Panjang. Chatib Sulaiman was appointed the West Sumatran representative on the PNI Baru's General Leadership Council and Leon Salim, secretary of its Regional Commissariat.

At this time there was no inconsistency in being followers of Hatta/Sjahrir and, at the same time, of Tan Malaka. There were many similarities between the Pari and New PNI parties: both were nationalist, anticolonialist, and socialist; both emphasized cadre organization, and neither paid any allegiance to Moscow. In these early years, too, there was mutual respect among the leaders of the two parties. All three top leaders were from West Sumatra, and as Leon Salim recently expressed it: "Before independence they respected each other; because Tan Malaka was the oldest, all respected him. Hatta himself respected him; Sjahrir too respected him."[19] In West Sumatra personal and family ties among the leaders of the two parties were also close: Jazir, younger brother of Tan Malaka's principal lieutenant, Jamaluddin Tamin, was chairman of the Padang Panjang section of the Pendidikan Nasional (New PNI); and the Bukittinggi businessman Anwar Sutan Saidi, one of Hatta's closest friends in West Sumatra, was younger brother of Jamaluddin Ibrahim, the main Pari contact between Singapore and Java.[20]

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18. The Muhammadiyah's HIS (Hollandsch-Inlandsche School, Dutch-Native school) offering primary education in Dutch, had been established in Padang Panjang in 1927. On Adam B.B., see below, p. 24, n. 7.

19. Interview with Leon Salim, Jakarta, June 1985. Hatta in his memoirs does recall a meeting with Tan Malaka in Holland in 1922, and his discussions a decade later with Tan Malaka's emissary Kandur St. R. Basa in Bukittinggi at the time the Pendidikan Nasional was formed. See Hatta, *Memoir* (Jakarta: Tintamas, 1979), pp. 136-38, 272. Kandur was the Pari's main contact between Sumatra and Singapore. His father was an important merchant in Karimun, Riau, so Kandur had a trader's passport. He was arrested by the Dutch in June 1933 and sent to Digul in 1934. See *Mr.* 109/33 (June & July 1933) ARA for a note of his arrest.

20. This information comes from interviews with Anwar St. Saidi's son, Roestam Anwar (Padang, June 1985) and with Leon Salim; also

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In August 1933, the Dutch banned political gatherings (Vergader Verbod), and moved to crack down on all nationalist political activity in Indonesia, imprisoning and exiling leaders of the Permi and PSII in West Sumatra, and arresting Hatta and Sjahrir in Jakarta. Because of its character as a cadre party and the cautious policies its local leaders had been pursuing, the Pendidikan Nasional in West Sumatra was initially able to avoid government reprisals,[21] but it had to restrict any openly political activities. Party leaders at the national level sent out instructions to their Minangkabau branches that: (1) meetings of three or more persons should be avoided; (2) each member should join a social or economic association, and there pursue his activities to the best of his ability; (3) if in his home village there was no social or economic association he should establish one and lead and guide it in accordance with the party's program. Further guidelines laid down how members should educate their friends and colleagues according to the courses that had been issued by the Pendidikan Nasional in Bandung on January 6, 1933.[22]

By early 1935 as Dutch harassment intensified, Chatib Sulaiman withdrew from leadership of the party and Leon Salim took his place.[23] Initially, Chatib continued to head the Muhammadiyah's HIS but in 1935, after a disagreement with the Muhammadiyah leadership, he founded his own Merapi Institute in Padang Panjang. He also became increasingly active in the trading community in association with Anwar St. Saidi, founder of the National Bank in Bukittinggi. Leon Salim, now officially at the head of the West Sumatra Pendidikan Nasional, became the target of Dutch intelligence forces. Police raided and searched his house in May 1935, and he was repeatedly detained for questioning, until finally in January 1936 he was sentenced to a year's imprisonment.[24]

Although his months in jail were harsh and debilitating, Leon Salim thinks that in many ways he was fortunate to be arrested then.

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from *Mr.* 877/34 (June 1934) ARA. Jamaluddin Ibrahim had been secretary of the Padang Panjang Section Executive of the PKI in 1926 (Benda & McVey, *Communist Uprisings*, p. 146), and had fled to the Malay peninsula before the 1927 uprisings.

21. *Mr.* 254, MvO B.H.F. van Heuven, December 31, 1934 (ARA).

22. *Proyek Penulisan*, p. 37.

23. According to Leon Salim, he was more expendable than Chatib Sulaiman, who was already viewed as the intellectual leader of the nationalists in West Sumatra, and if he remained free could continue to advise and guide them discreetly.

24. The search was carried out on his house, according to the Dutch report, because he had organized PMDS and Sumatra Thawalib students in singing "the extremist song, 'Marhaen March'"; *Mr.* 713/35 (May 1935); this was ostensibly also the reason for his jail sentence. *Mr.* 212/36 (January 1936).

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By the time of his release in February 1937 the political temperature in the Minangkabau was far less heated. No longer were the Dutch reacting to the slightest challenge by exiling their political opponents to Boven Digul. So Salim was at least saved such a fate. He was warned not to continue his political activities, and, crippled by rheumatics from his year's imprisonment, he returned to his home region of Payakumbuh. The following year, he was joined by a fellow prisoner from the Padang jail, Usman St. Keadilan (Uska),[25] and for a short time the two collaborated in an information bureau, "Sago." In April 1938, Rahmah El Junusiah, now heading the Diniyah schools, invited Salem back to Padang Panjang to become their administrator, while Uska became Payakumbuh editor of the newspaper *Radio*.[26]

Meanwhile, in January 1937, Chatib Sulaiman, together with Yunus Kocek and Adam B.B., set up a "Modern Islamic Seminary" in Padang Panjang to train teachers for the local Islamic schools.[27] When Yunus Kocek returned to Aceh in 1938[28] Chatib Sulaiman moved to Bukittinggi at the request of Anwar St. Saidi to work with "Inkorba," an import company founded by Anwar to try to wrest a larger share of the commerce of the region for indigenous Minangkabau traders from the hands of the Dutch and Chinese.[29] Later that same year, together with Mr. Nasrun and Marzuki Yatim, and with support from Mr. Mohammad Yamin in Jakarta, Anwar and Chatib Sulaiman founded the trading association "Bumiputera" with branches in Medan, Penang, and Singapore, as well as Bukittinggi and other West Sumatra towns. Chatib Sulaiman also began actively establishing cooperatives and tying them into the trading network.[30]

In November 1939, he and Leon Salim again worked together, publishing a political economic monthly journal *Pemberi Sinar*, while

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25. Editor of the journal *Njala*, Uska (alias Rusli, alias Hamid, alias Daud) had been a PKI propagandist in Bengkulu (though born in Payakumbuh). (See Benda & McVey, *Communist Uprisings*, p. 118.) He had spent several years in Digul. In August 1935 he was jailed for articles published in *Kebenaran*, and on his release in January 1938 returned to his home town. See *Mr.* 1027/35 (August 1935), p. 1; *Mr.* 378/38 (March 1938), p. 2, ARA.

26. *Mr.* 378/38 (March 1938); *Mr.* 470/38 (April 1938), p. 3; *Mr.* 808/38, June 1938 (ARA), p. 2.

27. *Mr.* 220/37 (January 1937) (ARA), p. 2.

28. Yunus Kocek, together with his wife, returned to Kota Raja where he became a trader. *Mr.* 1183/38 [October 1938] p. 2, ARA.

29. *Mr.* 958/38 (August 1938), p. 2, ARA.

30. These included cooperatives for fishermen (Koperasi Nelayan) in Sasak Talu, for workers in lime kilns (Koperasi Pembakaran Kapur) in Padang Panjang, and for tobacco estate workers (Koperasi Perkebunan Tembakau) in Payakumbuh. Rifai Abu & Drs. Abdullah Suhadi, *Chatib Suleman* (Jakarta: Departemen P. & K., 1976), p. 14.

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Salim was still devoting much of his energy to his work in the Diniyah schools. At this time neither man was engaging in open political activity against the Dutch. Chatib Sulaiman, however, had begun to take bolder steps to mobilize opposition to Dutch government policy in several fields. He played a leading role in organizing religious groups in opposition to the proposed repeal of a statute forbidding Christian missionaries from propagating their religion in Muslim areas. He also worked actively in Gerindo (Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia, Indonesian People's Movement), writing and speaking in support of demands for an Indonesian parliament.[31] The Dutch were not oblivious to this, remarking in their reports on Chatib Sulaiman's emergence at the forefront of all political activities in the region.[32]

Thus, by January 1942, when Chatib Sulaiman and Leon Salim tried to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the Japanese invasion to move more actively toward their aim of Indonesian independence, the Dutch reacted swiftly against them. But perhaps because of the two men's standing within West Sumatra, the colonial authorities were cautious in dealing with them. The following memoir is Leon Salim's account of their arrest and detention. Although this diary was brought together into the form of a memoir shortly after the events it describes, the Indonesian version has never been published. I am grateful to Leon Salim for letting me translate and publish it, and for checking the translation and answering queries on it, for I think the memoir is an important contribution to our understanding of this period of Indonesia's history.

Audrey Kahin
November 1985

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31. See Audrey R. Kahin, "Repression and Regroupment," *Indonesia* 38 (October 1984): 50-53.

32. *Mr.* 178/40 (November 1939), p. 2.

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# PRISONERS AT KOTA CANE

by

Leon Salim

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*Leon Salim (circa 1949)*

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# INTRODUCTION

On September 1, 1938 Germany (Hitler) attacked Poland. Thus began World War II.

On May 10, 1940 Germany attacked Holland. Within a mere five days Holland's independence was overthrown. The Dutch, who had colonized Indonesia for 350 years were now themselves to feel the bitterness of colonization.

Holland's swift subjugation made a deep impression on the people of Indonesia. It caused a hot wind to rush throughout the Indonesian fatherland. The pulse that all this time had beaten slowly as the child of a colony in chains, was now throbbing with fear, awaiting and anticipating what would happen to Indonesia, the colony of a Holland which itself had now been conquered by Germany.

Indonesia, the emerald archipelago of Khattulistiwa, the string of golden islands, had for centuries been controlled by Western capitalism and finally been dominated by the Dutch for three and a half centuries. With an iron fist the Dutch had suppressed and destroyed every independence movement that arose to oppose their authority. Thousands of victims had fallen. The Aceh War, the Bonjol war (Minangkabau), the Sriwijaya war, the Diponegoro (Java) war, the Ternate war, and the rebellions that broke out in every corner of the archipelago, were harshly put down by the Dutch. Until they completely crushed the people's rebellion in 1926-1927. The Dutch exiled the leaders still left alive to Digul, in the heart of the Papua jungles. Anyone brave enough to flee from that "hell" prison in the midst of the jungle, was to perish. Struck down by tropical malaria, or the prey of wild animals; swallowed by the wildness of the jungle, or dying as food for cannibals.

All the people's leaders were exiled there, whether or not they were of major importance, including those educated in Europe, such as Mohammad Hatta, Sjahrir, etc.

Still the struggle for independence went forward. Destroyed by the Dutch on the earth, the nationalist movement went underground. Indonesia continued to seethe. . . .

On December 7, 1941, Admiral Nagabo (Japan) attacked Pearl Harbor (United States). The War of Greater East Asia à la Japan broke out. The following day, December 8, the Dutch government-in-exile in London (England) declared war against Japan. The Dutch Indies government in Indonesia began all kinds of preparations; air raid exercises, urban defense, general military service, and so on. As the Dutch Indies government intensified its training so did



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the joy intensify in the hearts of the subjected people. They waited for the moment they had long been anticipating, the moment when the colonization of Indonesia and its people was to be overthrown. As the days passed the heartbeats of the enslaved people quickened. They were convinced that their fate was about to change. Only they were not yet certain whether the change would be towards something better or something worse. Still, while awaiting the change they were happy in the hope that their future destiny would be brighter. Their hope lay within them like a hidden flame.

Japan struck southwards like lightning. The Allied fortress of whose strength they had always boasted--that is, the mighty Singapore--was not powerful enough to withstand the Japanese assault. Singapore fell. With this, Dutch and Allied defenses in Indonesia were exposed to unfettered Japanese attacks.

Finally on March 9, 1942 the Dutch were brought to their knees and surrendered unconditionally to the Japanese. The Governor General of the Dutch Indies, Tjarda van Starkenborgh Stachouwer and Lt. Gen. Hein Ter Poorten signed the surrender declaration, capitulating unconditionally to Japan at the Kali Jati airfield in West Java. Thus ended the centuries of Dutch rule over Indonesia.

Unexpectedly, the Dutch Indies Government on Sumatra did not accept this surrender. Sumatran Governor Spits proclaimed that the struggle against the Japanese would continue to the last drop of blood.

News spread that the Minangkabau region (West Sumatra) with its strategic terrain--its hills and valleys, the curving Bukit Barisan, providing a line of defense for the world it surrounds--would become the final Dutch fortification. If Dutch defenses fell, they would then carry out a scorched-earth policy throughout the region, so that the Japanese would only inherit ashes. . . . How pleasant were these Dutch theories as they stood at the brink of the grave.

The Dutch plans to defend the region and to employ a scorched-earth policy circulated among all the Minangkabau people. Every tongue discussed the issue. From the family houses to the mosque and surau, from the stalls to the coffee shops, from the schools to the tobacco fields, old and young discussed it. Either openly or in whispers. The atmosphere in the Minangkabau became very heated, ready, given the least spark, to burst into flame. Everyone was waiting, anticipating and hoping for the spark, or at least some sign: which road would be followed?

At such a moment a group of young men emerged to shape independence and channel the people's desires. They moved to the forefront to show the way to oppose the Dutch to stop them from making of our dwelling places a battlefield for the defense of a colonialism, which if defeated would make scorched earth of the region. The Dutch as they were approaching their graves had no right to destroy the heart of these children of the Minangkabau, and even less to burn them to ashes. No one had such a right, including the Dutch.

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Spontaneously "Anti Scorched-Earth" bodies (anticolonial) sprang up. They came into being without meetings or prior consultation. Regardless of group, education, party, and so on, everywhere these Anti Scorched-Earth bodies came to life. The informed and the brave advanced to the front. Others followed and joined in. Leaders spontaneously arose in every town and village. Whether *pemuda*, *alim ulama* or *cerdik pandai*,[1] so long as they were courageous Minangs they united in the movement behind the leadership of a group of young independence fighters in Padang Panjang.

Padang Panjang is a small town in West Sumatra. At that time it formed the center of the people's struggle for the whole of Sumatra. From Aceh to Lampung, the Malay Peninsula, the Bugis region of Makassar, young Islamic students filled this little town. From it had come the great ulama, the independence struggle leaders, sons and daughters of Sumatra. Furthermore, it was Padang Panjang that had been the center of the Communist movement (i.e., revolutionary Islam) in the year 1926.

In that small town Pasar Usang street was then the street of pride for the freedom fighters. Young people came and went to one house on that street from all over the region, one after another, day and night. Several of them seemed dull and weary from lack of sleep, not eating breakfast, and not having rested. They had everything ready. They would mount huge demonstrations. Dozens of enormous red and white flags[2] were ready. Also banners, large and small. The demonstration would demand that:

1. The Dutch must surrender the Government to the Indonesian People. Thus the Dutch would not be able to pass the People and Land of Indonesia over to Japan as if they were dead objects.
2. The Dutch did not have the right to destroy the wealth and country of the Indonesian people through their scorched-earth policy.

These two demands would be presented to the local Dutch Indies Government. People from countryside and town would join in the demonstration, each carrying a red and white flag--the flag that had been forbidden throughout the Dutch colonial period.

The demonstration was to take place on March 12, 1942. The closer that date approached, the stronger beat every man's pulse. The people were waiting: what would happen???

But . . . before dawn on that March 12, the Dutch raided the headquarters of these young fighters. Everywhere there were raids

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1. *pemuda* = Youth or young people; *alim ulama* = Islamic scholars: and *cerdik pandai* = the "intelligentsia," usually those with Western education.

2. I.e., the Indonesian national flag.

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and searches. Dozens of young people and their leaders were arrested. In Padang Panjang and the surrounding area, in Bukittinggi in the district of Agam, there were arrests. In Payakumbuh and other places there were searches. In the village of Tiakar Guguk (Lima Puluh Kota district), the village where Leon Salim was born; in Bukit Batabuh (Bukittinggi) in his wife's house, searches were conducted by the Netherlands Indies Head of Police for Sumatera Barat, a Dutchman, and by Police Minister (for Agam district) Harunurrasyid and Military Policeman Nurhan.

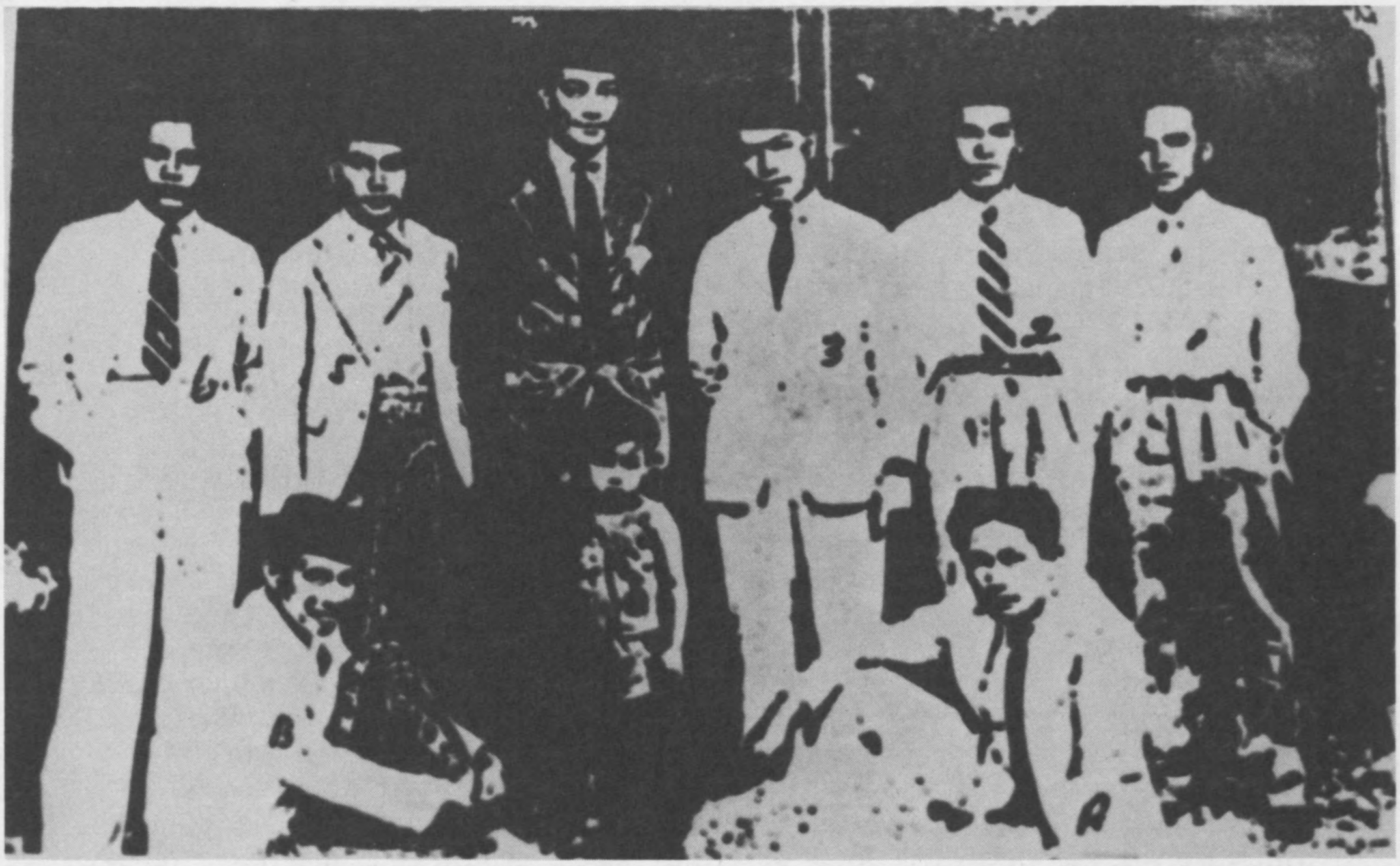
After our arrest, all the young men and leaders who had been detained in the regions of Padang Panjang, Sepuluh Kota, and Agam, were released. They had apparently only been seized as hostages. Thank God it was so. Finally only six men remained in Dutch custody. We six were sent to the last Dutch Military Court in Kota Cane, that became the final military tribunal of the three and a half centuries of Dutch colonial rule. We six were:

1. Chatib Sulaiman (36 years old) -- PNI (Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia)
2. Leon Salim (30 years old) -- PNI (Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia)
3. A. Murad Saad (28 years old) -- PNI (Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia)
4. M.H. St. Rajo Bujang (38 years old) -- PSII (Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia)
5. Jamaris Dt. Mandah Kayo (38 years old) -- PSII (Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia)
6. Chaidir Gazali (19 years old) -- Pemuda PSII (PSII Youth)

These six were hurriedly taken along by a Dutch military convoy towards north Sumatra. We cannot explain why the Dutch treated the six in this way. Only Sdr. Chatib Sulaiman and Sdr. Leon Salim, could definitely be held responsible for the demonstrations.

From day to day I noted down our experiences as follows:

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*The Political Prisoners*

L to R.: Standing: Chaidir Gazali; Sutan Rajo Bujang; Chatib Sulaiman; Murad Saad; Datuk Mandah Kayo; Leon Salim
Seated: Buyung Atik, Munir Rahimi (messengers from Minangkabau)
The child is Chatib Sulaiman's son, Sjahrir

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## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 1942

After receiving information from throughout the Minangkabau, and in view of the news concerning the atmosphere overseas that had been broadcast over the radio, the "Central Committee" decided at dawn on March 11, 1942:

> To stage large demonstrations (processions) within and outside the town of Padang Panjang, tomorrow, March 12, 1942.

The Committee quickly prepared announcements of the demonstrations which Sdr. Murad Saad typed and distributed.

In closing, these announcements declared that the Committee itself would ultimately decide whether or not the demonstrations would actually take place. It was further explained that, if a flag were raised on the hill, this would be a sign that the demonstrations were in fact to be held. But if the flag were not raised, then they had been postponed. This decision was made in the light of the prevailing uncertainty, when the whole situation could change in a moment. What seemed a good plan for half an hour in the future, by the time that half hour had passed was possibly no longer advisable or no longer necessary. This meant that everyone really had to obey the Central Committee's decisions. And in order to confront the climate that later developed, the lack of endurance, which is characteristic of most Minangkabau young people, had to be abandoned. They had to be persistent and show more self-control and not give way to narrow and thoughtless opinions.

As was the Committee's usual practice, news about staging the demonstration was passed from mouth to mouth, but with little discussion. Their behavior was similar to that of a procession of ants moving to and from their hole, who, when they passed their comrades would stop and whisper for a moment, pass something on, then continue on their way. Thus the news went out, in a steady, uninterrupted chain, until it reached all levels of the people. It rapidly spread everywhere.

But what actually happened that March 11? As the afternoon wore on, the scene became busier, and people seemed increasingly nervous. Many of them had put their affairs in order as if preparing for and expecting an event that would shake their life's foundations.

The Central Committee headquarters was bustling, as guests came from near and far. Some of these visitors suggested that the decision already reached should be put off for a while until it was



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certain that the arrival of the Japanese army was imminent. They gave many reasons for this proposal. Nevertheless, we were not bound to accept the proposal and the reasoning behind it because those who suggested it were still willing to participate in the demonstration if it were held on the predetermined date.

A radio receiver was always close by, that could catch broadcasts from all around. The other sections too had receivers, particularly one that was responsible for monitoring the radio news, especially that concerning developments in our homeland. Thus, we were aware of what was taking place at any time.

That night . . . .

We were approached by various visitors who had arrived from Bukkitinggi. They strongly urged that for the time being we postpone the demonstrations scheduled for the following day, putting forward several strong arguments.

After a searching discussion, we finally accepted the proposal that, if the next day, March 12, 1942, the Japanese army had still not reached the Minangkabau, then the demonstrations we had planned would be postponed until the day of their arrival in this area. It was very hard indeed for us to accept this proposal. When Sdr. Anwar Sutan Saidi,[3] Director of the National Bank and leader of the national economy, suggested that we should defer our decision, we violently disagreed. The same was true when Sdr. Marzuki Yatim,[4] head of Muhammadiyah, and Sdr. Sofyan, from Mr. Muhammad Yamin's staff in Jakarta,[5] put forward the same view . . . we rejected them all. We finally reluctantly gave way when Bapak Abdullah,[6] the teacher at the Adabiyah school in Padang (who through-

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3. Born in Bukittinggi in 1910, Anwar had been a leading businessman and supporter of nationalist organizations since 1930, when he founded the "Bank Nasional" to aid Minangkabau traders in their competition with Dutch and Chinese businessmen. He was close to Mohd. Hatta and Mohd. Yamin, who both supported him in his trading ventures. The most important of these were the import-export company, Bumiputera, and Inkorba, an import organization for batik. His elder brother, Jamaluddin Ibrahim, a close associate of Tan Malaka in the Pari, had died in Dutch detention while awaiting exile to Digul.

4. A businessman in Padang, a cofounder of the "Bank Nasional," and a leading member of the Muhammadiyah organization.

5. Sofyan, a secretary of Muhammad Yamin, had been sent by him to West Sumatra, where he became a director of the "Bank Nasional" and active in the Bumiputera trading company.

6. Abdullah had long been a teacher at the Adabiyah School in Padang, founded by H. Abdullah Ahmad in 1909. Shortly after Abdullah Ahmad's death in 1933, Abdullah was appointed to replace him as headmaster. The curriculum of the school was the same as that of the HIS (Hollandsch-Inlandsche Scholen) except that it also taught

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out his life was secretly an active follower of Tan Malaka [and his] Partai Republik Indonesia) expressed his opinion while unblinkingly facing up to the situation.

". . . we hope that your actions will go forward smoothly and successfully. But not tomorrow; tomorrow the Japanese army will still not have appeared at the border of West Sumatra.

"Wait until that army has clearly reached the Minangkabau. Then the Dutch agents in this region will awake and will not become mad and crush the demonstration with a rain of bullets: destroying you all. . . . There are too few of us. . . . My meaning is there are too few of us who are willing really to live for the people. And these few should not be eliminated in demonstration disturbances tomorrow. . . ."

We were moved at the way Bapak Abdullah expressed his opinion and finally agreed to his proposal. We would postpone staging the demonstration until the Japanese were on the borders of the Minangkabau. This was our ultimate decision.

We quickly transmitted this to those who we felt should know of it. Until five in the morning our friends went around the villages near Padang Panjang to pass on the information.

As we had heard from Batu Sangkar that demonstrations, similar to those planned for Padang Panjang, would also be held there, Sdr. Leon Salim was sent to inform them of the change of plans. He traveled to Batu Sangkar in the same car that had brought the visitors from Bukittinggi, and some of them accompanied him--Sdr. Anwar, Sofyan, and Marzuki Yatim.

After Sdr. Syekh H. Moh. Said in Batu Sangkar had been told that everyone should remain alert in anticipation of the arrival of the Japanese forces, then the group returned to Padang Panjang. Reaching there at about three in the morning, the Bukittinggi group continued on home.

Half an hour later, that is at about 3:30 a.m., Sdr. Injak Adam B.B.[7] told us (Chatib Sulaiman and Leon Salim), that the Dutch police were searching for us in Padang Panjang.

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the Koran. Born in Sungai Puar, Abdullah was close to Anwar St. Saidi, and had been a follower of Tan Malaka since the 1920s.

7. Adam B.B. had been a teacher and student of Haji Rasul (H. Abdul Karim Amrullah) in the 1910s, but when the Sumatra Thawalib association was formed he founded his own school, Madrasah Irsyadun-Nas (MIN) in Padang Panjang. It was at this school that Chatib Sulaiman taught after withdrawing from leadership of the Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia in West Sumatra. Adam B.B. was reputedly also a follower of Tan Malaka.

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Hearing this, we answered: "Let them search for us, we won't run away. Now we only want to sleep for a while."

Then we went to search a place to sleep, and snored away contentedly . . .

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## THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 1942

At about six o'clock after performing our morning prayers, we received news that all the orders sent out the previous night had been properly followed. We were relieved to hear this. When we had finished discussing matters concerning the external and internal affairs of the Central Committee, we slept again because we were still weary.

It was eight o'clock before we finally awoke and got up, intending to go for breakfast.

But on the way to get our breakfast, several policemen intercepted us (PID) [Politiek Inlichtingen Dienst] and we had to accompany them to the Assistant Resident's office.

When we arrived, we were amazed to see several of our friends already there, including Sdr. Munir Rahimi, Chaidir Gazali, and Murad Saad. After our initial surprise we were finally told that they had been arrested before we ourselves had been found! Various efforts had been made in different places to arrest us during the previous night.

Several fully armed policemen and several police officers from Padang now guarded us and our friends.

*Interrogation*

After waiting a while, we were summoned one by one to be interrogated by the Assistant Resident.

This took a long time, because many of us were questioned for as long as an hour and a half.

Below is an account of Leon Salim's interrogation, which followed that of Chatib Sulaiman.

Assistant Res.: Why were demonstrations being organized without first asking permission?
Leon Salim: In response to the feelings of the majority.
A.R. We searched for you until early this morning, but our men could find no one who had seen you. Your house was searched, but you were not there. Where were you last night?
L.S. Until midnight I was still here. Then on the road, at the house of Adam B.B., and so on. During the night I went to Batu Sangkar.



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A.R. It is true then that you and Anwar C.S. went to Batu Sangkar?

L.S. Yes.

A.R. Why did you need to go there?

L.S. To tell the people that today's demonstration had been postponed.

A.R. Who are T. Sofyan and T. Marzuki Yatim? Is it true that T. Sofyan is from Betawi [Jakarta] and T. Mazuki Yatim from the Padang Muhammadiyah?

L.S. Perhaps. I don't know for certain.

A.R. Yes, there is clearly the trail here of one large group. Chatib Sulaiman, Leon Salim, Anwar, Sofyan (from Mr. M. Yamin, Betawi), and Marzuki Yatim from the Muhammadiyah group.

Demang: What was the purpose of the demonstration?

L.S. The purpose of the demonstration was:

a) To urge the Dutch Government to surrender authority to the People of Indonesia and recognize the Red-White Indonesian flag. Thus the Indonesian People would be the ones who would negotiate with Japan--if the Japanese landed--concerning the status of the government that would then be in the hands of the Indonesian People; who would then not be handed over to Japan as mere articles on the inventory.

b) To stand guard so that the safety of the people's lives and possessions were protected during this critical transitional period. So that there should be no "scorched earth," no plunder (taking advantage of the shortages), that there should be no killing as a result of three and a half centuries of colonization (through the people eliminating the Dutch colonial officials), that there should be no vengeful acts of enmity in these very critical times. In this way, the Indonesian People would completely change course in order to confront the political problems and avoid being influenced by impossible sentiments.

Demang: Who was in charge of the Central Committee?

L.S. No member was actually appointed. The two of us, Chatib Sulaiman and I, knew and decided everything.

Demang: Did no one else help?

L.S. Our assistant was Sdr. M. Jusuf from Gunung. [This answer had another intention; we heard news that Jusuf was a traitor. Because of that we said this traitor was our assistant, hoping that we could thus find out whether or not the man had been arrested.]

Demang: Where did you sleep last night?

L.S. At Adam B.B.'s, in the back.

Demang: We looked for you there very early this morning, but Adam told us that you weren't there.

L.S. Perhaps he didn't know we were there. We only got back from Batu Sangkar at three in the morning, and I went

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straight away to his school house to look for a place to sleep.

Demang: Which *negeri* [extended village] were joining in the demonstrations?

L.S. All the negeri of Batipuh and Sepuluh Koto.

Police Commissioner: Do you believe that if the demonstration had been held, all would have been secure?

L.S. Indeed I do, and we can guarantee that.

A.R. What did you mean by the contents of this letter you wrote your wife? [drawing out a sheet of paper that had been written on in red pencil, which was a letter Sdr. Leon Salim had written to his wife.[8] The contents of that letter are as follows]:

Padang Panjang, 8/9 March 1942.

Adinda (dear)

This little letter rather than your husband will reach you and the family; should events prevent your husband from meeting you.

We must devote our life to the struggle. That struggle demands sacrifice, including spiritual sacrifice. Rather than live to be disgraced by fate and the situation of our people, it is better to die and reach the other side of the grave.

Adinda

We are struggling to raise our people so that they are accepted as human beings, our people now are not acknowledged by others as belonging to the human family. For that we are struggling.

In this situation, should your husband encounter danger so that you do not see him again, then see him with your spirit, not with your body just your spirit.

In the next world, in paradise we will meet again.

Should anything befall your husband, continue our struggle. Educate each child who is born to the Indonesian people, so that he himself, and his people become, "human."

Do not weep.

Weep only to see the people who are not recognized as a people, who are not acknowledged as human.

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8. Leon Salim married Zainab Abbas in March 1941.

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Once more, until we reach the place of safety.
To Allah we surrender ourselves.
Salam and maaf from your husband. Leon Salim

Remember: Pass this on to all our family. Les.

L.S. I meant to give my wife and family instructions so that should anything bad happen, they would accept it patiently. Also to express the conviction that, should I die, they must continue to carry on my struggle.

A.R. Then you had decided you were going to die?

L.S. For certain, no. But if you were to play the fool with your rifle--though I'm sure you would never do anything so stupid--I and my friends would certainly be in danger; the same if you arrested us. So, if I were to die or fall into danger, then "if and if" this was the advice and instructions that my wife and family needed to have.

So went the question and answer exchange between the leaders of the Dutch Indies administration in Padang Panjang and Sdr. Leon Salim. In addition the Police Commissioner asked many other questions concerning friends, the contents of pamphlets, and security for preparing and staging the demonstrations that did not in fact take place.

Throughout the interrogation, the Assistant Resident appeared very nervous. He would get up for a moment and talk on the telephone, then he would sit down again, then get up again and go to the next room.

After the interrogation was over, these Dutch-Indies government officials had a "closed session," that certainly concerned what they were to do with us. At a time like that, a time when the country was under martial law and everything had to accord with what was called a "state of war" [*staat van oorlog*], every action had to be taken speedily. Outside the office we heard the droning of a car, and various police officials rushing to and fro.

### *Padang Panjang, Left for a While*

Not long afterwards, we were brusquely ordered to leave the crowded room and gather together to follow some armed police agents (veld-politie). When we got outside the office, with glares and rough voices, they ordered us to get into a coupé that was standing ready for us. Seeing the car was a Bukittinggi police coupé, we knew that we were being taken to Bukittinggi. The five of us, that is, myself (Leon Salim), Sdr. Ch. Sulaiman, M. H. St. Rajo Bujang, Murad Saad, and Chaidir Gazali, got into the car. Even though none of us was armed (neither with fire arms nor even with sharp weapons such as a knife), the group of soldiers guarding us seemed to be armed from head to foot.

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At about 2:00 that afternoon we arrived in Bukittinggi, and were taken directly to the police camp there. We were ordered to stand in a line, and between us stood policemen. There we saw six or more of our friends from Balingka. But as we entered, they were taken away. Among those friends we saw Sdr. Maruhun.[9] This surprised us, and they too looked amazed. But we were not given the opportunity to question one another.

Not long afterwards, Sdr. Dt. Mandah Kayo from Padang Panjang was also brought in by several more police. He was made to join our group, and with him we were now six.

That night we slept in the camp where we were being held under very close guard. Our food was brought to us, and when we wanted to go to the W.C., someone accompanied us. We were given the freedom to choose our own place to sleep, either we could sleep sitting on the floor or could use one of the rattan chairs in the room.

It was a billiard room, big and spacious, where we spent the night. We were not allowed to talk together, and were kept far apart from each other.

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9. Sdr. Maruhun and these other five men belonged to a committee formed in Bukittinggi to stage parallel demonstrations. St. Maruhun was a former Communist who had spent some years exiled in Digul. The other members of the Bukittinggi committee, Bukhari Taman, A. Malik Salik, A. Malik Muhammad Dt. Nan Bareno, Jarjis Dt. Palembang, and Hasan Jamil Dt. Malakewi, had all been members of the Permi (Persatuan Muslimin Indonesia), the nationalist-religious party of the early 1930s.

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## FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 1942

The next morning, before becoming conscious of our situation we saw clouds of thick smoke billowing into the air on the north side of Bukittinggi. We later learned that the smoke came from oil reserves being burned by Dutch soldiers. Some time earlier these oil reserves had been collected in the horse-racing stadium of Bukit Ambacang. From this, we knew that the position of the Dutch Indies army in the Minangkabau was really being threatened, so that the "scorched-earth" policy was being hurriedly put into operation.

Aware of this, then, all kinds of thoughts crowded into our minds. Some of us speculated that we would quickly be taken to Padang to face a Dutch military court there; others believed that we would be taken immediately to Medan to confront Governor Spits; and it was possible we would be taken outside the town, where a volley of bullets would terminate our lives. . . .

But among these many speculations, the first struck us as the most likely, because if we were to be taken to Governor Spits, our preliminary interrogations would certainly have been longer than those the previous afternoon in Padang Panjang. And if, for example, we were to be quickly sentenced to be shot this would certainly have been carried out earlier whether or not the verdict had been reached illegally, because in the current situation, everything was possible.

We calmly awaited whatever would happen to us. . . .

About two in the afternoon of March 13, 1942, after we had been given lunch, two motor vehicles entered the camp's yard, one a sedan and one a bus. Two Dutch army officers sat in the sedan; perhaps one of them was a captain, for his rank insignia consisted of three stars. Apart from these signs of rank, the Dutch officer's collar bore a military emblem in the form of a "three-pronged fork," the emblem usually used by the Maréchaussée (marsose) army,[10] that is,

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10. The Korps Maréchaussée was established in April 1890 in Aceh Besar as an armed police force of Indonesians officered by Europeans. Its success led it to be expanded and used elsewhere in Aceh and in Java. (See Anthony Reid, *The Contest for North Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 253.) On January 1, 1940, there were sixty "brigades" (each numbering twenty men) of Maréchaussée in Aceh, and over the following two years they were deployed to other parts of Sumatra. On the Maréchaussée brigades and their disposition in 1940-1942, see Hoogenband & Schotborgh *Nederlands-Indië Contra Japan*, vol. 6, pp. 115-23. Most soldiers in



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the Dutch expeditionary army sent to subdue the people and region of Aceh, in their prolonged colonial war. And the army that used this "fork mark" was also the one that the Dutch Indies government used to suppress the earlier popular uprising in the Minangkabau in 1926-27.

Behind this sedan was a bus full of Dutch Indies soldiers of Indonesian race, also wearing the same emblem as the Dutch officers. The Minangkabau people in particular, the Indonesian people in general, all know the history of the cruelties carried out by the "marsose" soldiers, that is, the cruel acts they performed in accordance with the level of the reward they received.

And the soldiers confronting us that day were fully armed. Some of them had light machine guns, but most had carbines/rifles tipped with bayonets.

Our fate was to be entrusted to them, and presumably in the hands of these men our stories would be ended, because the faces now before us were apparently ones that had never smiled gently on the Indonesian people, above all on any stamped as "agitators," as were we six.

This meant that it was here that we would have to say "Indonesia, we are leaving for ever"; the phrase "Padang Panjang left for a while" had now disappeared completely from our minds.

Soon we were brusquely ordered to get on the large truck as quickly as possible. We weren't given a chance to discuss anything. They were suspicious of our slightest movement, and scolded us at once. Nor were we allowed to look to left or right.

Two of us were taken away first. After these two had disappeared completely from sight, we heard four rifle shots. We thought it certain that the two had been killed. . . . While we were still waiting apprehensively they both suddenly reappeared, and the earlier rifle shots had only been a "bluff" carried out merely to scare us. When they heard those rifle shots, these friends too thought that we four had become corpses. . . . And now, there were still the six of us.

We were pushed into the truck. To our left and right we were guarded by a soldier, a marsose.

After we each took our place, and were sitting like statues, the belongings that we had put into safekeeping in the camp during the night were thrown contemptuously up to us. The soldiers' mockery made it clear that our belongings would no longer be useful to us.

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the Korps were from Ambon, Menado, and Java. In this particular group, there was one sergeant from Sumatra, a Batak, and the remainder were from these three regions. Throughout the memoir Leon Salim refers to them as "marsose."

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. . . Then very roughly, they tugged our hands forward to make a thumbprint on a piece of paper as a sign that our possessions had been returned to us. These consisted of pencils, several pieces of paper, matches, and a little money.

One of the soldiers, a Dutchman, whom we later knew as Lt. Haremaker, came up to us, holding a piece of paper on which our names were written. Then we were called one by one. But as he held the paper and called out our names, it was very clear that he was shaking like someone who was very cold. Not only was his body shivering, but his hand was also trembling, so much so that it looked as if the paper he was holding would fall from his grasp. We didn't know why he trembled like someone full of fear. Was he afraid of the Japanese army that would soon replace the power of his people? Or had he received some unusual order concerning us? . . . Who knows.

The truck carrying us then started off in the direction of Medan. We were seated in the middle, with marsose soldiers to our left and right. Thus we had no opportunity to give a final glance to the friends we were leaving behind.

On the truck, as we set out on our journey to an unknown destination, we could only look ahead and examine each other's faces. If our eyes met, the encounter was tied to a smile on our lips.

Thanks to the steadfast purity of our thoughts, strengthened by the bonds with the hearts of all the people for whose rights and position we were struggling, not one of us was apprehensive.

Our minds were filled with problems and questions to which we ourselves could give no definite answer, concerning both our own fate, and also the events that would strike our people who at that time were in the midst of a revolutionary upheaval.

But, despite these preoccupations, not one amongst us displayed a gloomy countenance.

The truck carrying us passed along a winding road, with thick jungle to the left and right and an occasional ravine and gorge.

Observing the countryside on either side we wondered to ourselves: Where are these Dutch soldiers going to kill us? In which jungle will our corpses be thrown? Which piece of earth will "demand" our bodies. . . ? And what is going to happen to us?

Probably our desire to know the answer to these questions made other feelings of fear vanish from our minds. Such fears disappeared completely; they were peeled away as we left the town of Bukittinggi.

We were firmly convinced that:

1. We were about to meet our predestined end;

2. Thousands of our people, men and women, whether they hated or loved our struggle, would be left peacefully in their regions;

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3. We knew that our struggle was a sacred struggle, with an honest and straightforward aim blessed by God. We viewed the struggle as our duty, and for it we were willing to be sacrificed.

At one very quiet part of the road, our car stopped. We were all ordered to get down and line up at the side of the road, with several marsose guarding us.

Lt. Haremaker gave instructions to several of his men, but because they were quite a distance away, we could not hear the order. From his expression and that of his subordinates we got the impression that they were harsh orders he was giving them. And certainly they must concern us?

After exchanging a few words with his subordinate, the lieutenant seemed very fed up, and ordered us to get on the truck again. The journey continued.

Our pulse quieted down, not in that desolate place would our bodies sprawl. . . .

Under the roar of the motor, we could begin to hear the sound of our hearts' singing, touching sounds, sounds of joy and cheerful laughter. . . .

Behind us appeared several other large vehicles filled with marsose, following our truck. We were now then, the leader of a column, a military convoy.

*During the Journey*

Our driver was called Mansoer, and he came from around Payakumbuh. He knew who we were before we knew his name and birthplace. Apparently he wanted very much to talk with us, also to console us and give us whatever help he could. But he never had the opportunity to say even a single word to us, because this was strictly forbidden. In order to express his feelings, he used his assistant in the car as his channel of communication. If he spoke harshly to this assistant, it meant that his statement was addressed to us. He apparently had the sole intention--possibly one that could endanger his own life--of helping us. He reflected this with the words to Si Manan, his assistant: "Just be patient for a while, a lot can happen on his journey of ours."

After that the car no longer behaved normally. From time to time the motor seemed to collide deliberately with an iron post, with the stone walls of a bridge, and so on. Sometimes the car accelerated suddenly and sometimes it went very slowly. Also occasionally it ran over the edge of the road. But it never broke down and in a short time the journey resumed again.

We were amused as we watched Mansoer's tricks but the same was not true of the marsose guarding us. They appeared very worried and kept grumbling, particularly Sgt. Johan, an Indonesian

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Batak who headed the unit. But Mansoer took no notice whatsoever of their complaints.

In quiet isolated places, such as in the midst of the deep jungle, Mansoer would often stop the car with the excuse of adding water and so forth. This apparently alarmed Sgt. Johan and his comrades, particularly when Mansoer would sometimes remark that there would many of "the small ones" (i.e. the Japanese) in this place, and make other similar comments.

Mansoer's antics were so amusing that we occasionally burst out laughing.

At one turning, Air Kijang, there was a mishap. Our car ran into a truck that had nearly stopped on the curve of the road. Mansoer was about to go on when a shout came from behind that there had been an accident. The car stopped and we looked back, and then heard someone groaning, a sound that touched our hearts. We were able to make out "Aduh, aduh Tuhan . . . Astaghfirullah . . . yes, God have pity on me. . . ." and so on.

One of our marsose guards, a Javanese, had been seriously hurt. The accident had crushed his left hand. When his shirt was unbuttoned, it was clear that there were two wounds in his left arm. . . . His sweat was pouring like rain because of the pain. . . . We couldn't bear to look at him in this state, particularly when we heard the groans that accompanied his words. We gave whatever assistance we could.

His left hand was then bandaged between two pieces of wood. The splints had to be fastened at either end so that they did not move and become unsteady. After that we slowly continued the journey.

A short time later we arrived at Bonjol. There we first went to the doctor's house. But unfortunately he was in Talu. We went on to Lubuk Sikaping, and there surrendered the invalid to a nurse. Later the unfortunate man had to be sent to Bukittinggi for further treatment.

A local driver was to take the invalid back to Bukittinggi, and Mansoer also gave him the message that the six prisoners taken by the Dutch (that is, the six of us) were now on their way north.

From then on, the atmosphere of the journey relaxed a bit. Several marsose began to be more friendly towards us.

### *"The Malays Can Just Fast. . . "*

In Lubuk Sikaping, the marsose had their afternoon meal. But we received nothing. Our empty stomachs forced us to ask for food too. We made this request to the local Controleur, while the marsose were eating. But the Dutch official arrogantly answered: "You can just fast; Malays can always fast."

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Hearing the Controleur's words, one of the marsose said: "Their guilt is still in doubt, and already they are subjected to such treatment. . . . If we were on the battlefield I'd send a bullet into the head of that braggart." This remark certainly relieved our hunger pangs; for we became aware that some of the marsose were now siding with us. After the marsose finished their meal we resumed the journey. They with full stomachs and we with empty ones, but with light hearts. The guard kept on us was no longer as strict as before. We were now beginning to be given sufficient "room" to observe the situation around us as we went along. In talking about us among themselves we heard them say: "These men we are guarding are all *santri* (*kiyai*) [religious leaders]. Because of that be careful. Today is the 13th and also Friday. There are many spirits and devils around. . . ." We were amused at their conversation.

At about 8:00 that night we arrived at Hutanopan. Here we were given the opportunity to eat at a rice stall. The six of us sat around a table and ate greedily because we were very hungry. While we ate, we were guarded by a group of marsose with drawn swords. They stood around our dining table. Seeing this extraordinary performance, and the fact that no one was picking up the bill, crowds of people gathered around, gazing at us in astonishment.

When we finished the meal, we were ordered to pay for the food we had eaten. This was a surprise to us. But as one of us had some money, without bothering to protest, we paid straight away. As far as we knew this was the first occasion on which prisoners had themselves to pay for the cost of the food they ate while they were in custody. It's always the Dutch army that has lost power and mind. . . . This incident made each of us ask himself whether as long as we were in custody we ourselves would have to pay for our food. And whether we would also have to pay for the cost of the journey later? Or whether the Dutch government now in process of disintegration would reimburse us for the bills we had paid. Where and when should we be repaid for our losses?

### *"There Will Be No Prayer. . . ."*

Before leaving Hutanopan, we explained to the sergeant guarding us that we wanted a moment to perform our prayers, because on this endless journey we would certainly not have a chance to pray later. But we got the brusque response: "There will be no prayer, now we must leave." And we were ordered to get on the truck again immediately.

The journey resumed. The column of Dutch army vehicles roared through the quiet of the night, bearing the military forces who had lost all their enthusiasm and fighting spirit. Through that black night the long convoy crawled forward, [with the soldiers] peering forward apparently to discern the enemy's approach, but in reality to seek a place protected from assaults from those Japanese,

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who, according to the news that was passing from mouth to mouth among the Dutch soldiers, had begun landing at several points along the Sumatra coast, and were advancing rapidly to the posts on that island that were still defended by the Allied army.[11] We longed to know what was happening around us at the time, particularly news of the war. But we got no answer whatsoever to any of our questions and we heard nothing other than the roar of the truck's engines.

*Ten Minutes in a Cell at Sidempuan*

About three o'clock in the early morning of March 14, 1942, we reached Padang Sidempuan. We were directly handed over to the town's Police Commissioner. He put us in a cell at the local police station. As three of us were assigned to each cell, we occupied two cells. As soon as the door was locked from the outside, we stretched out on the floor because we were so exhausted. Relieved to have a chance to rest, and despite the stone floor we happily collapsed without even taking off our shoes first. Questions and new speculations again filled our minds, including: Will we just be left here in Padang Sidempuan until the Japanese troops enter the town? Possibly we were only considered dangerous in the Minangkabau region, so our future destiny might be surrendered to the local notables here?

As we mused over these problems, we were only shut in this cell for about ten minutes before the door again opened and several marsose appeared there. They ordered us to accompany them immediately.

They seemed to be in a great hurry. A car was already waiting in front of the police station and we were ordered to get in. We were then taken to the yard of the local Dutch Assistant Resident's house.

Scores of other vehicles were already waiting there. We saw an officer busy giving orders and instructions to his subordinates. But the officer was clearly in a panic, as he showed both by his actions and by the way he was barking out his orders.

According to what we heard, they had recently received news from Sibolga that the Japanese army had landed there and was immediately advancing in other directions.

Thus, Padang Sidempuan had to be evacuated quickly.

The news passing from mouth to mouth made the marsose become panicky and confused, even more so after they got the official information from their commander.

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11. This was true. The previous day, March 12, large Japanese forces had landed in several places on Sumatra's northeast coast, including Tanjung Tiram south of Medan, and must by this time have reached Prapat to the east of Lake Toba.

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Soon afterwards, the car carrying the unit commander started down the road. Our car followed behind and finally, one by one, the stream of other vehicles moved out.

We experienced unusual emotions during the journey through that dark night. These were accentuated by the fact that the cars' headlights had to be very dim and use of the horn was forbidden. Smoking in the car was also not allowed, for fear the glow would be seen by a Japanese army plane that could at any time be carrying out a spying mission above. The headlights of the vehicles lit only a very small section of the road we were traveling along, as nearly all of them had been covered so that only a finger of light penetrated, and even that was shaded.

In the car the atmosphere had changed considerably. We no longer heard grumbling and chatting; everyone was now quiet, busy with his own thoughts and emotions.

Death overshadowed everyone; it threatened us and it threatened the Dutch soldiers who were now acting to save themselves. The people around us were scared to death, people who didn't want to be separated from their wives and children, but people who were willing to separate us from our wives and children.

We smiled as we thought about this. And we were the only people able to smile in that situation. The others were all deathly pale and seemed to have lost their spirit.

Our car was now proceeding toward Sipirok. In front of us was the sedan carrying the unit commander, and behind us stretched an apparently endless line of vehicles.

In the darkness of the very early morning we set off. . . . What lay ahead and also what would the armed forces now in full retreat encounter. . . ?

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## SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 1942

*Danger from in Front and Behind*

Our emotions were now extraordinary. We scarcely felt the moist cool air of the early morning. The men around us were all dumb. We no longer heard the grumbling and chatting of yesterday, as if all of them had been transformed into statues and puppets.

At this moment, one of the marsose suddenly half whispered to us: "Be very careful if we later run into the Japanese. If you are not hit by a shot from a Japanese soldier's rifle, then you will be killed from behind by a Dutch soldier's bullet. . . ."

The marsose's whisper revealed to us the Dutch army leaders' underhand plans to destroy us, as well as reminding us to be on our guard against the danger of such tactics. In our hearts, we muttered thanks to the man who told us the secret.

Apart from that reminder, the marsose gave us a further message: if fighting should break out with the Japanese army later, then we must always stand beside the marsose so that they could protect us, from shots coming from both in front, and from behind. We welcomed the honest and friendly warning, thankful that at a moment when death threatened from front and back and from left and right, we still had people willing to protect us. So we now knew that we were guarded by our friends. But because we also knew we were in danger, despite the protection, we used our eyes continuously to take note of what was happening around us, as we now had the freedom to do so.

Sdr. Mansoer was still driving our car. In the current situation, he was behaving the same as on the previous day. His words always scared the Dutch soldiers in the car. More frequently now he brought up the words, "the short ones," "Nippon," "Japanese," and so on, even when only to himself. This increased the grumbling of the marsose commander, and he often rebuked Mansoer. But the driver took no notice, and just closed his ears.

We passed through Sipirok without even stopping. Our car went straight up to climb a pass. Even though we were not specialists and were not skilled at driving a car, we knew from the way Mansoer was driving that he had a hidden objective. When the gears didn't need to be changed, Mansoer changed them, and vice versa. As a result the engine often hesitated. This happened several times until the car would not move any more, its motor dead. In an angry voice, Mansoer demanded whether Si Manan, his assistant, had



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forgotten to fill the tank. The assistant responded that the tank had been filled until it overflowed. Hearing the words, "until it overflowed," Mansoer became "very angry" because with this overflow, certainly the engine had been harmed and because of that the car was now scrap metal.

Our car was on strike and did not want to go any further. The marsose commander was angry at Mansoer because the car, that was still quite new and had been paid for with government money, had after only a short journey been wrecked by Mansoer. Mansoer seemed unconcerned by the commander's anger, replying that the breakdown was not his problem; it was the problem of the car itself, and he had only been driving and carrying out the journey.

Mansoer had now achieved his aim, and had accomplished what he had been planning from the beginning, namely, to slow the car's progress until we could no longer continue. Now with our car broken down our journey could not proceed.

Tarutung was not far from there. We were transferred to one of the cars behind to take us there. The soldiers riding in it were ordered to get down and wait to be collected by another car that would arrive from Tarutung.

*Danger from the Air at Tarutung*

We reached Tarutung at midday on March 14, 1942. We were given the opportunity to eat and drink at a *warung* [food stall] there, owned by a Minangkabau, and to buy supplies to eat later on our journey. After paying for our food, we straight away returned to the car to wait for the journey to be resumed.

Now we became a popular "spectacle." People swarmed around our car, looking at us, faces full of questions to which they could get no answer. As we sat in the center of that swarm, the owner of the warung where we had eaten earlier approached us, pushing aside the crowds of people. He returned the money we had paid for our food, because now he knew that we were Dutch prisoners. To hide his intention of returning the money, he explained that we had paid more than we should and he had to give us our change. After the money was in our hands, it was clear that he hadn't taken a cent, but had returned it all to us. We had no chance to thank him as he had already disappeared.

While we were at a climax as a spectacle, we suddenly heard the wail of the air raid siren. . . . At that moment too the "audience" dissolved and scattered rapidly to search for a place to shelter. Everything now became noisy and busy. People rushed here and there, searching for a protective hole. The Dutch soldiers scattered from their cars, from the warung, and from the coffee shops, all rushing for shelter towards the holes dug along the edges of the road.

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Ordered to take shelter we got down quietly from the car, and made our way to a banana field close by, where there were also some shelters.

Shortly afterwards, the droning of several aircraft of the Dutchmen's "enemies" could be heard above. The only discernible sound was the rumbling from above; from below came no noise of gunfire, even though in that town thousands of armed troops were nesting.

About half an hour later, the siren sounded again to signal the "all clear." We returned to the car as calmly as we had left it. How obedient we were in that situation. The soldiers who had hidden in the protective holes then each started to come out. From their expressions it was very clear how scared they had been in facing and being faced with "the sign of danger from the air." What would have happened if they had really been faced with fighting an enemy in that confusion? They had no spirit left.

*Panic in the Ranks of the Dutch Army*

After the "all clear" sounded, we witnessed great panic among the Dutch soldiers. The appearance of a Japanese aircraft in the sky over Tarutung was a sign to them that before long they would have to confront the forces of the "Rising Sun."

No longer were they merely nervous and uncertain but they were obviously terrified. Members of the "volunteer" force, made up of Dutchmen who had been trained and educated as militia, were even more panicky. They huddled in small groups, whispering and muttering anxiously. Their expressions showed clearly that they felt they faced a death sentence that could not be appealed. And how different their attitude was from ours when we were being prepared by their officers to be victims of their bullets.

Lt. Haremaker, who led the unit, was acting like a man who had lost his mind. Consciously or unconsciously from his own mouth we heard that the Japanese troops were carrying out a forced march about 22 1/2 km. from Tarutung. This fact intensified his soldiers' fears. The lieutenant rushed aimlessly to and fro like a man chased by the devil. Sometimes he would halt by one of his subordinate officers and confer with him, then he would hurry away.

Most of the Indonesian soldiers sat calmly but silently. Thanks to the color of their skin, which was dark brown, no one could see how fast their hearts were beating.

The cars had long been ready to continue the journey. But Haremaker had not yet given the order to depart. We waited nervously. . . .

Finally at about 1:00 p.m. we were ordered to leave.

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*Explosives on the Truck . . .*

Before starting out we were told to change vehicles. The one now assigned to us was the kind usually used to transport supplies --there was no roof. In Minangkabau, cars of this kind are usually called "trash trucks," that is, trucks used to carry trash for several town councils in West Sumatra.

The marsose sergeant heading our guard protested to Lt. Haremaker about this switch. The officer responded to his protest with a glare, but the sergeant persisted. As a result he was replaced by another man, and we were forced to get on the truck.

Sdr. Chatib Sulaiman also voiced our own objections to riding on such a truck. Haremaker answered this protest with "Bah, that place is good enough for you."

We were forced to get on. Inside were some sacks of letters, possibly mail for the army. Apart from them there were also several other barrels and chests, and all sorts of ropes and tools as well.

We were now guarded by eight marsose. Together with them we sat down wherever we could. The best seats were the barrels and cases, and they appeared to be deliberately arranged as places to sit on.

It was only later that we learned that these barrels and cases were full of explosives such as ammunition, dynamite, grenades, and so on. We now know that we were placed on a "death car" that was eventually intended to explode and be blown up. Perhaps we were being made a target for the Japanese air raids they were so frightened of. Traveling on a roofless truck, we were certainly clearly visible from above, particularly as some of us were civilians, not wearing uniforms like all the Dutch soldiers.

The marsose accompanying us looked at us wistfully and possibly affectionately. But we continued to smile, even though we now knew the extent of the danger threatening us. If yesterday we were trapped from in front and from behind, now the snare was from above and below. Wasn't it possible that the explosives would go off by themselves through the heat of the car's engine or through our own mistake in throwing a cigarette butt or a match away, for example?

We became even more cautious.

With the heat of the sun's rays beating down on us, and inhaling the dust rising from the truck in front, we continued on our way. . . . Thanks to the quantities of dust floating through the air our black peci soon became completely white. We were not alone--our marsose guards were in the same situation. The only difference between us and them now was the different design of the clothes we were wearing. Our emotions and our hearts had become one, and we were one in our sorrow.

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*Only the Packaging Is Different. . . .*

The two groups of us riding on the truck now formed a single community, one that the Dutch army was preparing as bait for an air attack, and possibly also as a sacrifice from the bad luck that had dogged our journey. If there was to be a tremendous explosion in the Dutch army convoy, that explosion would be our truck. Such an explosion could scatter the bodies of as many as sixteen human beings (fourteen plus the chauffeur and his assistant) like fragments of porcelain, fine powder that could not be brought together again. But we, the six prisoners, who from the beginning knew we were being prepared as targets for bullets, were not too "impressed" with these new possibilities. For us they were only one way by which natural forces could speedily destroy and dissolve our bodies, relieving those we would leave behind of much of their burden. If our bodies were already shattered, as if chopped by a knife, through that appalling explosion, would it not then be unnecessary for others to bury our bodies. . . ? And furthermore, we would then have died without leaving behind a corpse or any other remains whatsoever.

We smiled at the thought.

But what of our captors? The eight marsose didn't say a word. Only coughs and clearing of throats from the dust shattered the silence. They were all busy enough with their own thoughts. At that moment perhaps their memories wandered to their wives and children and the other close relatives they had left behind, who in a moment they might leave forever.

Suffice it to say that it was useless for them to be too sad and to bewail their fate; we showed them by a gesture that the only difference between us now was the packaging of our bodies, everything else was the same. They understood our gesture and a smile on their lips reflected this.

"Do you know," said one of them in a voice loud enough for us to hear above the noise of the car's engine, "In battle, these weapons are completely useless," indicating the machine gun he was carrying.

"If we see the Japanese army, then we will pull this out and wrap it up in this," he continued, showing the civilian clothes under his uniform.

"Our fate is now the same, and what separates us is only our uniform," said another.

We smiled hearing these words. In our hearts we ridiculed the big-shots of the Dutch government and the Dutch Indies, because what they imposed in time of peace they could not make stick at the moment of stress when it needed to be implemented.

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*Dust, Rain, and Night Wind*

We continued to struggle with the dust. It could not defeat us, nor could we overcome it. To protect ourselves, we covered our noses and mouths with our own handkerchiefs and small towels.

In an effort to ease their consciences the soldiers made occasional remarks, but we sometimes could only acknowledge these with a nod or occasionally a smile. But this meant more than conversation, for our mouths were unable to speak.

The stifling heat and the swirling dust finally abated, then disappeared, and they were succeeded by drizzling rain. Apart from breaking through the Japanese army's siege, the truck in which we were riding now seemed to be "chasing" the rain so that we could more quickly become soaked. The downpour was perhaps a piece of luck for the retreating army, because it meant there was less chance for them to be taken by surprise and attacked by their enemy's army. But for us on the truck it meant increasing misery. As had been the case with the dust on the main road, the rain could now drench us as it wished, it didn't care that we got soaking wet. We had to battle the rain, a battle for which we had no weapons to defend ourselves. The farther we went the more our marsose guards grumbled and groused, and the harder it rained. They were fortunate compared with us, because they had real caps to protect their heads from the downpour. Every grumble and grouse from them we greeted with a smile. And our constant smiles gradually relieved their irritation.

In the driving rain, we arrived at Siborong-borong. We had passed the point so feared by the Dutch. They began to breathe a bit more easily, because we had been able to reach Siborong-borong and we had not been attacked by the Japanese army on the way. We stopped here a while to wait for further orders. On Haremaker's face there were signs that he was happier, and there was a faint smile on his lips.

Not long afterwards the order came to resume the journey and the long convoy began to move forward.

We were now all soaking wet from the rain. The one way for us not to get too cold as a result, was to huddle close to one another. The rain was still pouring down. And the farther we went the colder the air felt, for we were now in the midst of hilly country.

Our car crawled along, gradually cutting the distance we still had to travel along that long main road. There were a few funny incidents. Some of us thought it more important to save our pecis than protect our heads from the driving rain and the stifling heat that had preceded it.

At about five in the evening we stopped at a place where the air was very cool. They said it was called Simpang Tele. Our car stopped in front of a small resthouse, built high among the hills.

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The night breezes had arrived, further chilling our bodies that were already almost stiff with the cold. Far below us stretched the beautiful Lake Toba. Seeing it, we now knew that we were on the left [i.e. west] side of the lake. The rain had eased and the sky was clearing again, but the darkness of night was already falling.

We were surprised that thus far not one of us had caught a fever, not only fever caused by influenza, but even from the common cold; while the soldiers guarding us had all fallen sick. They coughed, sneezed, shivered from the cold, swore, grumbled and so on. We stayed calm. They were surprised and astonished at our attitude.

We were very grateful and thankful to God that thus far we had been protected and saved from the many dangers and disasters along the way. It appeared that God had made us a present of "immunity" from all kinds of ills, even though we had no previous training in how to protect ourselves from such disasters.

Not long after our truck halted there, several other cars joined us, filled with Dutch soldiers. These were not the same troops who had accompanied us on our journey from Tarutung, for they had long ago come to a stop behind our truck.

The soldiers who had just arrived were said to be fleeing from Prapat and other places around Lake Toba. From this, we realized that the Dutch army in Sumatra was already surrounded on all sides and was only awaiting the right moment to bow in unconditional surrender. The new arrivals quickly joined up with the military forces escorting us.

As time passed our soaking shirts and clothes began to dry, thanks to the heat emanating from our bodies in the cool and humid air.

As we awaited the order to set off again, several Dutch soldiers quietly began to prepare their evening meal. Seeing them so occupied, we wondered whether we would again have to fast as had been the case yesterday, for there was no sign that anything was being prepared for us.

Sgt. Matiari, one of our marsose guards, who during the journey had become one of our friends, told us we shouldn't worry but should just wait patiently. Hearing that, we were no longer anxious about our evening meal.

The large group of soldiers included many from the Minangkabau--men working as chauffeurs for the army's vehicles. At this stopping place they sat in groups and walked around together, so it was easy for us to distinguish them from the others. Unfortunately, we were unable to talk with them, and moreover they were afraid to approach us because the troop commander strictly forbade this. So we could only hold "conversations" from a distance, in the form of signs that might or might not have been understood by the two sides. Through gestures we conveyed to them that if they later

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returned safely to Minangkabau, we hoped that they would please let our friends know that at least as far as Simpang Tele we were still breathing.

Here we were given the opportunity to wash ourselves before prayers and if we liked we could also bathe. But we didn't want to bathe, as merely in washing our hands we became too cold, because the water in that place was like ice.

After finishing our prayers, we were put aboard a bus in the yard of the small resthouse. The cars around our vehicle were full of all kinds of explosive devices and bullets. Capt. Kappel's chauffeur, Sdr. Kimin prepared our food. Because of the degree of cold and the hunger in our stomachs, we ate very greedily, and very soon we had consumed all the rice and side dishes Sdr. Kimin had prepared. Now with our stomachs satisfied we could lie back and get some rest.

The marsose and soldiers around seemed kind and friendly towards us. Many of them gave us their cigarettes. Through their gifts we became flooded with cigarettes. From left and right they came--Davros, Mascot, Universal, and many other kinds.

*Preparing to Resume Our Journey. . . .*

The night was cold and dark, even though we were surrounded by large numbers of soldiers. All the flames in the hearth where the food had earlier been cooked were now extinguished so that no longer was there a single dying ember to send out a light that might be visible from above. The men could only smoke in places sheltered from above and not in any open places.

Small bushes and fields of long grass covered the ground around our resting area, a fitting place for us to be separated from the busy world. But we still could see no sign that our lives would soon be cut off. And even if such signs had appeared, we still could have done nothing but submit ourselves to God who governs all the world. Now we no longer paid heed to that problem; we used to the full the opportunity we were given to rest and recover from our exhaustion, whatever might be going to happen to us later.

While each of us was wrapped up in his own thoughts we were approached by one of our marsose guards, nearly all of whom now saw us as friends and comrades. He whispered to us that the previous night the Japanese had bombed several villages around Lake Toba, not far from where we were, and possibly the Japanese army itself was no longer very far away. He gave us this information in a whisper only, as if he was passing on a great secret, which only we were allowed to hear.

The tale of the bombing reminded us of the position we were in at that time. We were in the midst of piles of war materiel. Around

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us were objects that could easily ignite and explode, things that became both object and subject in a battle.

If the Japanese army attacked the place that night, or bombed it from the air, then we would become the prime targets, because we were surrounded by the armaments. Through these tactics, it was as if the Dutch army had given the enemy army the opportunity of destroying us completely, because they felt they were no longer in a position to do the deed themselves.

Nevertheless, we weren't greatly concerned. As long as we had a chance to rest, what happened later was not a problem we would worry about.

Observing the situation around us, we felt we would be able to have a good sleep that night. But we were clearly mistaken.

At around midnight, we were awakened. We were ordered to get back on the same vehicle, that is, the roofless truck, as we were to resume the journey immediately. Apparently the new orders were unexpected and we were hastily told to get up and move out. We obediently followed the order, although unhappily.

Just before the order came, we saw the flash of a torch that lit up our resting place for a moment. It later became clear that the flash was a "code signal" transmitting news, and it was the cause of our leaving the place in the pitch blackness.

We soon heard the roar of motors and car engines starting up, tens or perhaps hundreds of them, and we moved forward.

*Day Approaches. . . .*

We left Simpang Tele in the predawn mist. Drizzling rain had begun to fall. The chill of those hours can only be appreciated by those who experienced it, above all by us sitting on top of that roofless, open truck that had to move fairly rapidly in order to keep up with the car in front.

The route we were following was also apparently not very good. We had to keep to a road that was climbing and winding. Nor was it built up with stone and sand as ordinary roads are. To prevent skidding, it was just strengthened by small pieces of wood that criss-crossed in several places. On that "braiding" our truck now had to crawl and occasionally slide. Under these circumstances, all of us on the truck were like playthings flung here and there, and sometimes we were thrown up higher than the height of the seats we were sitting on. Because of this, the grumbling soon began again, from our marsose guards, the only sound discernible above the roar of the engine. We just kept quiet because of the cold and because we were being bounced around by the motion. The question now arose whether the explosives among which we were sitting might not blow up by themselves, thanks to the force with which they were being bounced and knocked about by the truck? Our only protection

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came from Sdr. Mansoer, our driver, who drove cautiously so that, sitting on top, we did not fall off the truck, or were not thrown out.

As the drizzle abated, we reached a quiet place and stopped. There were already military vehicles and a lot of Dutch soldiers there. We didn't know whether they were stationed there or had just arrived before us. Seeing our faces they scornfully called us "bad children" in their own language, which we didn't understand at the time. We were completely oblivious to their glances and words because we were so cold.

We didn't stop long, but soon continued the journey.

At about four in the morning, we arrived at a small village with apparently very few inhabitants. The arrival of the huge Dutch army convoy, must have startled the local people from their sleep, for after our car stopped, from one or two of the houses along the road we heard people beginning to wake up, coughing and clearing their throats.

The place was Sidikalang. Some of the soldiers jumped down from their trucks, and soon you could also hear the commotion as their boots struck against the asphalt. They roused the local shopkeepers, not one of whom was brave enough to open the door of his coffee stall or shop, apparently because they were all terrified. Only with the assistance of the Controleur and the village Chief of Police were the coffee shop owners finally persuaded to open their doors. Most of them were Chinese. On the orders of the military officers and the village big-shots, the warung owners began to prepare breakfast for the retreating army.

The morning dew had begun to fall, cooling the air. We were grumbling about the cold, and our stomachs felt very empty. Now to alleviate the chill, we on our truck were using the "worm's system," that is hugging each other, sleeping and sitting stuck together. Our eyes had no desire to sleep.

Dawn broke. We were ordered down to have breakfast. We didn't need to be told twice, as we were already intending to ask for food.

We were taken to a Chinese coffee stall, and told to breakfast there. White coffee and rice fritters had been prepared for us. How great was the pleasure experienced by our tongues in that chilly morning as we swallowed the white coffee and rice fritters. Perhaps we seemed too greedy when we were offered the food because we consumed it so lustfully. We had no further opportunity to consider whether what we were eating was allowed or forbidden, for we knew that in an emergency situation like the present one, Islam permits what normally would be proscribed. These Chinese rice fritters were so delicious that each of us ate enough for two or three people. What if the fritters were mixed with pork? What could we do. . . ?

After we had eaten the food and paid for it, Lt. Haremaker came to where we were sitting, accompanied by the Controleur still in

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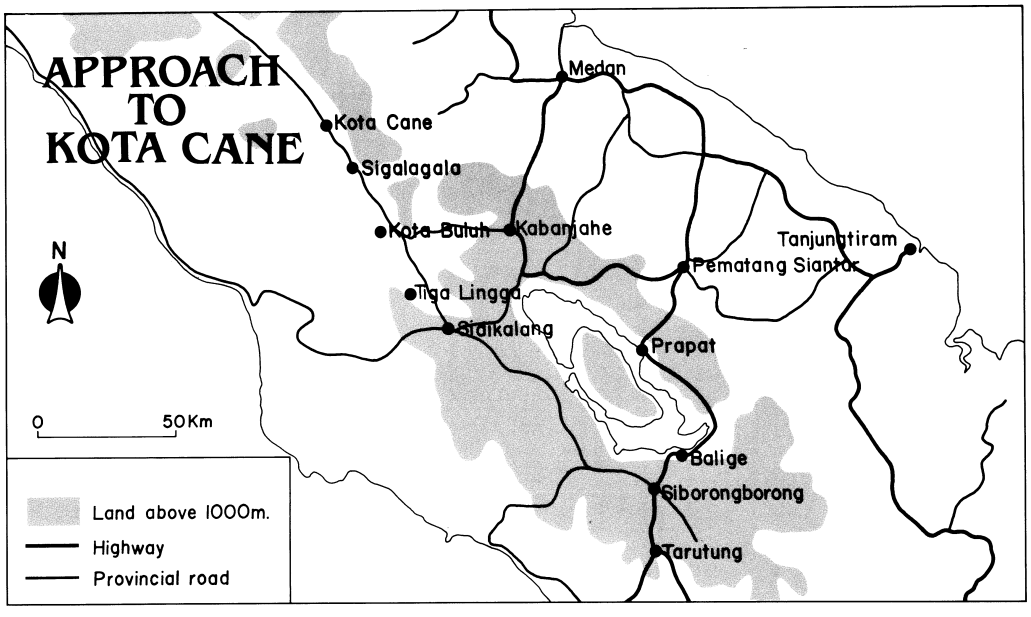
his pyjamas, and showed us off to him [the controleur]. What was the purpose of our being displayed in this fashion to a man still half asleep? Were we now to be handed over? And was our story to end here in Sidikalang? At the time we were unable to answer these questions.

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## SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 1942

The sun had risen and Sidikalang was bathed in its rays. People had begun to gather along the road. Probably they had gotten up earlier than usual in order to see the large Dutch military convoy. Several other streets in the place had also "come to life" and were apparently as busy as usual. Via the marsose we asked if we could buy a few slices of bread in preparation for the journey ahead. And before we left we were able to have another drink with some of those accompanying us on the truck.

About nine o'clock in the morning, we heard the order to resume the journey. Our car started, moved forward, following the army commander's sedan. But we only advanced a few meters, then came the order to "stop" which the driver immediately obeyed. A Dutch officer told us that at any sign of danger from the air, or if a siren was heard our truck should immediately be parked in a sheltered place.

Why should there now have been such an order? What was going to happen? Were we now actually going to face some great danger?

One of the Dutch soldiers told us that the forces had been readied to go towards Kabanjahe. But the place was under too great a threat of attack.[12] Thus he was unclear as to the direction we would be following.

Meanwhile, the scene was getting busier. Military vehicles, tanks and armored cars went back and forward, hither and thither, as if searching for shelter. Several Dutch "volunteers" who were somewhat older, were distributing cigarettes and cheroots among the crowd of soldiers. They were apparently very friendly. We also got our share.

Our vehicle moved forward: placed in "the front line," with the only vehicles preceding us one sedan and one bus full of marsose. Behind us followed tens, perhaps hundreds of other vehicles. All were filled with soldiers and weapons for waging war.

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12. In fact, Kabanjahe had been occupied by the Japanese the previous day.



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*Attacking the "Road of War"*

The war road we were now embarking on avoided Kabanjahe--the place reportedly already too dangerous to enter--and it was narrow and slippery, going in and out of the brush. Its bridges were very crude and had been built only "for the purpose of war." All these bridges were made entirely of wood. To get over them, our truck had first to retreat and advance several times, because it was apparently larger than the cars that had gone over earlier. We told Mansoer to be more careful in negotiating the road, and he promised he would. And because of the size of our truck, on the first bridge he had to "scrape" the parapet, slightly damaging it. The car behind us also couldn't go forward immediately because its load was too high. Part of the load had to be thrown off first before it could cross the emergency bridge. The process took rather a long time. The stuff that was unloaded had just to be left as it was on the side of the road, and we then continued our journey.

We had to stop repeatedly. The officers and soldiers preceding us were apparently not willing to continue if the cars behind got too far separated from us.

The Dutch in front were clearly very suspicious of the soldiers following behind, suspicious that they would desert, or would not want to proceed any further. Thus several times they would stop on the road and wait until the following vehicles came into sight. And once those cars became visible, they started forward again, and so on. This meant that we too kept on having to stop. Mansoer again resumed his "naughtiness." Sometimes our truck would stop much longer than the officer's car and when he came to a halt, Mansoer would kill the engine. This evidently made the Dutchmen in front grumble even more. But Mansoer was completely oblivious.

The road gradually became quieter and narrower as it left the villages, and the bridges became more numerous. Several of them were now damaged by our truck crossing them. We urged Mansoer to be more careful in his driving. Recalling the steepness of several of the ravines spanned by these simple, small bridges, and remembering the number of large and heavy vehicles that would be crossing them, we were doubtful that they would long remain intact. This led us to tell Mansoer that if we had to die, we didn't want it to be because of an accident on the journey, but we wanted to die as a result of facing a genuine death. Hearing our remarks, Mansoer apparently began to change his "tactics" in driving the car. He now began to be cautious.

The road we were on was the only route by which the Dutch soldiers could evacuate and save themselves as they opposed the Japanese forces, of whom there was as yet still no sign. It was the most dangerous road we had ever traversed. Many of the river banks were steep, as were the chasms that lay in wait beneath the road. Each time we overcame a danger that could have felled us, we congratulated each other, and also the marsose accompanying us.

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Thus, full of trepidation, we traversed the road that had been cleared and cut through for the "war" needs of the Dutch army. We had to overcome many small obstacles on the road and, so far, God continued to protect us.

*Experiences at Tiga Lingga*

Our truck could no longer continue, nor could the vehicle in front of us. We had now arrived in the middle of a peaceful forest. Our road was blocked and apparently petered out there. So Lt. Haremaker issued his orders, and places were prepared for all the vehicles to park.

We were now in Tiga Lingga, a place in the middle of the jungle. There was only a single coffee shop here, a warung that had become a stopover for the various peddlars from around the region. We were now really exhausted, and were ordered to get off the truck and wait under a clump of banana trees growing not far from our stopping place. We followed the order obediently and sluggishly.

The place became more and more crowded as military vehicles continued to arrive. Because the clearing was small and the road narrow, most of the big army trucks had to be backed here and there along the edge of the road, to allow the smaller cars to move forward.

Lt. Haremaker divided his forces in two. One group he ordered to prepare to clear a new road. This work was to be done by the Indonesian soldiers. The others were told to set up camp on a plateau at one side. This easy light work was to be done by *totok* Dutch and Indos.

Under our cluster of banana trees at the edge of the road, we were guarded by two Dutch soldiers. They were apparently reservists, who most people called "militia" soldiers. Both were armed with carbines and drawn bayonets. They looked at us scornfully. Talking among themselves in their own language they were certainly saying that we were men who had no hope of living and were only awaiting a few bullets to end our story. Their words echoed only in our minds as we did not understand them.

When several tents had been set up, we realized that the army would be resting or spending the night there, even though the sun had only just begun to slide towards the west, and the heat was still stifling. As we were in a direct line of the sun's rays, we asked our guards if we could move to a more shady place. They agreed, while threatening to shoot us with their rifles if we dared to run. We smiled at these threats, because there was no use our running and no chance of our getting away.

Soon after, it started to rain heavily. The six of us were ordered to move under the roof of the one coffee stall in the place and our guards stood to our left. Inside and behind the stall it was

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crowded with soldiers and marsose most of whom were exclusively Dutch. They were doing various things then. Some were lying back and chatting, some were playing cards, and others were drinking tea and eating bread.

But not the Indonesian soldiers. In the teeming rain they had to carry out their assigned duties, setting up tents for the comfort of their masters, the Dutch, and clearing the road to simplify the escape route for their masters too. They had to withstand and suffer the heat and rain. How sad was their fate, the fate of our compatriots. . . .

Our guards had changed three times. Each group was assigned to guard us for just one hour. The third group was made up exclusively of Dutch, totok or Indo. As the guard was changed each time, they hurled only insults at us, as if this were the behavior of all that race. They stuck many titles and labels on us. There were those who called us "the fifth column," "traitors," "people whose sin could not be forgiven and who did not deserve to live," "people who wanted to become generals and should just be nailed to the wall of the warung," and so on. Who knew how many accusations would later be brought against us by the military court, if we were taken there and if these men were to act as prosecutors. We were forced to smile at the thought.

Despite the amount of rain that day, the insults directed against us made us very thirsty, as if the degree of their derision increased the dryness of our throats. So we asked our guards for some drinking water. But our request was answered merely by "just wait" accompanied by more of the insults mentioned above.

So our throats were feeling parched and bitter and our stomachs were very hungry as for a long time they had not been filled, but all of this we had to bear with patience.

So it went on until night approached. . . .

*Plan to Kill Us*

The rain had still not abated. It was already five-thirty in the evening and our guards were now Indonesian marsose--men who had become our friends in the course of the journey from Bukittinggi. They had barely taken over their guard duties, when they asked us if we had eaten. We answered firmly "not yet."

"They're ill behaved," grumbled Pak Haji (one of the marsose) when he heard our answer. "These Dutch no longer have brains or humanity. They'd let people die of hunger," he continued, looking very annoyed. Even if we were to get no rice until the next day, our stomachs felt satisfied hearing Pak Haji's complaints--complaints that concealed a clear sympathy for us. But he left at once. Not long after, he returned carrying several dinner baskets filled with food and drinking water and gave them to us, inviting us to eat. We

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accepted his gift with joy, and expressed our heartfelt thanks. Perhaps because we were too hungry, we couldn't eat much of the rice and side dishes. It was the water that rapidly disappeared.

After our meal, we went to face Lt. Haremaker to ask where we would be staying, as night was falling. Before Haremaker assigned us a place, several of the Dutch militia who had been guarding us came forward, to propose that they should immediately be given the duty of guarding us, and they would later be the ones to decide where we would pass the night. A quarrel arose over this proposal, because the Indonesian marsose were not willing to release us from their protection. It was evident to us that their "tempers were rising," because some of the marsose raised their weapons and grasped the handles of their swords.

To solve these "problems" Lt. Haremaker let the marsose keep custody of us, perhaps because their energies were more needed in battle, than were those of the Dutch who were still very green in the military world. The Dutch soldiers grumbled when they heard the lieutenant's decision.

At our request, we spent the night on one of the many buses, and Pak Haji and his companions agreed to this. We now felt more secure because we were guarded by men who possibly could guarantee our safety.

Night fell. The tents on the plateau across from us became full. There the Dutch soldiers and the marsose passed the night with their minds full of thousands of images of the fates that could strike them and their families. And we stretched out on the bus, packed together, each with his own thoughts, once we had finished our prayers.

The Dutch militia who took turns in guarding us that afternoon had made plans to kill us that night. Together, they had reached an agreement on the tactics for carrying out the killing, an agreement they thought we didn't understand because they spoke in their own language. The plan was very simple and was easy to carry out. According to their decision, in the middle of that night several of them would shout out, loudly and clearly, the word "Rebellion." The noise they made and the word they were shouting would certainly cause a commotion in their camp, and we six would also be startled when we heard it. In response to the ensuing commotion we would be certain to jump out of bed or at least stick our heads out to see what was going on. At that moment bullets would be directed at each of our heads. In this way our lives would end simply and without incident.

Thus ran the plan that they had concocted and agreed on--the plan they were to carry out that night, the moment that had almost come. After discussing it, we informed our comrades in the marsose, particularly Pak Haji, of these Dutch soldiers' bad intentions.

"Just wait, and don't worry," they ordered us with red eyes, biting their lips in anger, as they listened to what we said. They

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too discussed the tactics they should follow to prevent the planned incident from taking place.

They told us what they decided. The guard over us would not be rotated, and they would stay on duty until the next morning. If there were later signs that the Dutch were beginning to carry out their wicked plans, they would knock once on the side of our bus. This would be a signal for us all to be on our guard and to watch our actions. And if the knock was repeated many times, then we should seek a place of shelter up the steep hillside to our left, behind the marsose. There would be an exchange of fire between them and the Dutch militia, should the cry of "rebellion" be heard from them. In that way we would be protected from any danger whatever.

Furthermore, they explained that, if nothing happened, we would be informed by two knocks on the side of the bus. Those two knocks would be a sign that we need not worry, and could joke, chat, and so on.

We were very moved to hear and see the honest hearts of these Indonesians--hearts embedded in bodies clothed and wrapped in uniforms. Our hatred of these uniforms was not because of their green color, but because by wearing them, the spirit of independence and nationalism of our people was suppressed and paralyzed by the Dutch reactionary group. We were moved by the honesty hidden in the hearts of several of the men who were compelled to wear such a uniform, pure hearts and spirits encased in clothing that symbolized confusion and shame. But what could be said? Fate and the current situation compelled them to wear those uniforms.

It is easy to guess that we did not sleep deeply that night, because we had to listen for the "code" on which our safety depended. Even though, for example, our guards were changed, not one among us could close his eyes at such a time. Calmly we awaited whatever was to happen. . . .

That particular night was the only one of many that seemed to last forever. The calm quiet atmosphere around us made us even more weary and restless. Because of that, we would sometimes wish that the outbursts would occur quickly, or that daylight would come. Indeed we had already been evading death ever since we had taken our first steps out of Padang Panjang several days ago, but the death we had avoided was one that would come from in front and in a clear open space, not from behind and in complete darkness as that night. In an atmosphere full of deceit we could only wait and submit ourselves to whatever destiny awaited us, with complete faith that our fate was predestined by the will of God, as well as that it was only through God's help that we could be saved.

Thus we endured that long night, the night that finally eliminated and destroyed the dangers threatening us.

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## MONDAY, MARCH 16, 1942

Dawn came. We poked our heads out of the bus, and breathed in the cool, fresh air of the approaching morning. Our anxieties had disappeared, and our breasts were again unburdened. We smiled like men who had just gained a victory and we congratulated one another. The marsose who were still on guard were also smiling, and they stretched out their hands to us. It was at that moment as if we were freed from every pressure.

Weary and exhausted by the previous day's journey, we had had no opportunity to sleep that night. And our wakefulness throughout the night had increased our weariness. So, after we had given thanks to God who up to that time had kept us alive, we stretched out wherever it was possible to lie down. Soon afterwards, we were all asleep. The marsose still stood guard over us.

The sun was already high when we woke. Our bodies were somewhat refreshed. After washing our faces and performing our prayers, we were given breakfast. We ate the food greedily.

The Dutch army whose retreat route had disappeared began to busy themselves with their jobs. Most of them were called on to improve (read: clear and make) the road, so that the long convoy could continue its journey. They did not only use soldiers for this task but they also on the local people. Several soldiers went to the surrounding villages and forcefully mobilized the village people for the work, not only grown youths but also young children. Yes, the work forces they collected from the villages numbered scores of people, and amongst them many were mere children. Several incidents struck us in that mobilization. Sometimes the villagers, who were still quite primitive, were treated inhumanely. Not only were they abused with crude words that wounded one's ears, but several of the children were kicked and trampled on. We were saddened to hear the children's screams as they were kicked with those hobnail boots, screams for mercy. Our hearts were angered to witness the harsh arbitrary behavior and the incidents taking place before our eyes. If we had not been in the situation we were, we would certainly have stopped those inhumane acts. Unfortunately, we were now prisoners, men whose every movement was strictly watched, men who at any time would become the target for bullets. So we could only restrain our feeling, holding them back in our hearts, hearts in which a deep hatred was sprouting.

That day was one when ferocity and acts of cruelty were directed against us, apparently intentionally, similar to those that had been aimed against the whole Indonesian race from century to century



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to ensure the prosperity of the Dutch race. That day was only one example from the thousands of days that the Dutch race had spent in enhancing their grandeur in the Indonesian archipelago, a grandeur that had to be paid for by the Indonesian people with sweat and blood, with torture and suffering.

Somewhere, somewhat distant from our stopping place, we heard the sound of detonations and explosions, dynamite explosions to break up the rocks. Everywhere the troops were very busy. This bustle was occasionally interspersed with several small incidents that broke out among the soldiers. One of the "small" incidents we witnessed was as follows. Because the day was very hot, one of the Indonesian marsose went to the army mess to ask for water as he was very thirsty. But, who knows why, a Dutch soldier who was one of the cooks in the mess, sprayed the face of the marsose with hot water. His face scalded, the marsose roared with pain. As a result, a number of his companions rushed in, and a commotion broke out. Fortunately the cook quickly ran away to seek refuge, and the other Dutchmen apparently kept quiet. If the cook had not fled so quickly, or if any of the other Dutchmen had protected him, then a fight could not have been avoided.

From that moment the air in the camp became increasingly heated, and the atmosphere more tense. We didn't know how that so-called "small" incident would end, and we could only tend to the burns of the Indonesian marsose. Truly this Indonesian race is very patient, we thought. Or hadn't there perhaps crawled into that patience some small desire to defend oneself. We didn't know for sure.

The above incident served to increase the gap separating the two racial groups combined in this one military force. The Indonesian soldiers apparently became braver and increasingly free in overstepping the regulations. On the other hand, the Dutch soldiers yielded more often. Probably they knew that in such a situation, they had to "give in" a lot because their numbers were so much fewer than those of the Indonesians, especially as the Indonesians too were armed.

For three days and three nights we had to rest in Tiga Lingga. During that time it was as if we were being entertained, but sometimes as if no more attention was being paid to us. Our guards gave us far more freedom of movement than usual. We were allowed to bathe and wash our clothes as we wished, even though still supervised and guarded. Our food and drink were well prepared, particularly because we had been able to "gain the affection" of the marsose whose duty was to guard us.

So things went on until the day of

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## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 1942

Early that morning all the Indonesian drivers were ordered to assemble. At first we thought that they were certainly going to be told to get everything ready to resume the journey. But our guess was apparently wide of the mark. They were not ordered to get ready, but rather to join in the work of constructing the road they were later to drive along. Their disgruntlement was obvious. But they were weak and lacked the power to defend themselves.

### *". . . It's Here that the Earth is Asking [for our mortal remains]"*[13]

Before we knew what was going to happen with the Indonesian drivers, we too were told to get ready. After the six of us got down from our truck, we were then ordered to follow several fully armed marsose. We weren't told where we were being taken. In front of us walked two marsose, and behind followed five others. All seven were Indonesians, but they weren't people we knew.

As we left, we had to pass the group of drivers still gathered there. Several of them seemed very apprehensive and looked at us wistfully. Mansoer, above all, watched us as if he were weeping. Indistinctly, while passing in front of him we heard him say sadly: "Sorry sirs, probably it is here that the earth is asking [for your remains]." The statement was very short, but clearly issued from sadness and a heavy heart.

We greeted Mansoer's words with a smile, though we had no reason to smile.

The troops guarding and surrounding us were headed by an Indonesian sergeant who seemed a rather rough character. Perhaps in order to "advance" in the eyes of his commander, he glared at us and brusquely ordered us to walk smartly along the road that was still being constructed. We had to walk two by two, and couldn't look to left or right. As we went along a Dutch soldier standing on an embankment watched us attentively. With arms akimbo he spoke arrogantly, to whom I do not know, saying: "If I was charged with guarding them, I guarantee they wouldn't arrive at their destination. That would be taken care of." After that he smiled. Certainly he was not concerned that we had overheard his words. We continued on our way.

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13. The Indonesian is "disinilah tanah meminta," of which there is no approximate translation in English that is not very awkward.



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From their behavior towards us, we knew where we were going. We were not being led to a safer place, but to one where we could be eliminated completely. Death was waiting ahead, and the Dutch troops now accompanying us were the forces that would assume the duty that God surrendered to Gabriel.

Having left the large group of workers behind, we were now walking along a quiet path. To our left and right everything was mountainous, with here and there some farmers' dry rice fields. Leaving the hilly region, the narrow path crossed *lalang* fields.[14] The path was winding. Since our departure the heat had intensified. The sun's rays grew stronger, and we felt them more as we continued our journey through the field of lalang. Because our stomachs had not been filled since morning, our strength was failing. We were not allowed to take the smallest scrap of provisions with us.

We didn't know where we were being taken nor why we were going so far. Only . . . that now the moment had arrived when we would meet our death. But where we would encounter it was not clear to us.

We walked along for several hours under the hot sun through the quiet countryside. The supervision and pressures on us at the beginning of the journey were gradually relaxed, for the harshness and glares directed at us at first had really only been a way to "get ahead." Now we were fairly free to talk. Now too we could see the faces of the marsose escorting us. And it became evident that not all of them were unknown to us. Pak Haji, our "closest" acquaintance was in the group. Seeing this, our hearts lightened a bit. But we didn't want to ask him where we were being taken. The guard was led by an Indonesian sergeant who also came from Sumatra. His adat was clearly a little rough and his behavior, as had been evident when we first set out, demonstrated his liking for praise and flattery. His attitude towards us differed little from that of other Dutchmen we met in the unit and was in sharp contrast to our other friends. His desire for flattery clearly made him unpopular among his colleagues and sometimes he became the butt of jokes behind his back.

We were compelled to bear the weariness and hunger. Our only relief was our remaining cigarettes.

After walking for some time, we reached a valley that was not too deep for us to hear a small stream running along the bottom. Soon afterwards, we came to a small wooden bridge that was already very rotten. Several Dutch soldiers were guarding and overseeing the repair work on the bridge. They were at the time in the middle of cooking their meal. Among them were two Indonesians who were still very young, two privates who were then called "*landstrom*" or "*prajurit negeri*." The name "landstrom" was then given to those Indonesians who had to bear arms and fight on the side of the Dutch

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14. *Lalang* = A tall grasslike weed that spreads over previously cultivated areas.

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army. Most of them, so it was said, were people who had not been able to pay their taxes at the beginning of 1942. Contrary to the usual custom, those who were in arrears did not have their possessions seized to pay their debts, but instead they were pushed into becoming "prajurit negeri." In practice they were not recruited to fire at enemy forces but their energy was used as forced labor to serve the [Dutch] soldiers' needs. So, they were present in that quiet place not to guard, search, or defend, but to repair the broken bridge. Looking at their faces, still so young, and their expressions that showed their fear, we had to feel sorry for them. But what else could they do except obey.

We stopped there a while. The Dutch passed hot water around for the marsose to drink, but nothing at all was given to us. Looking at us, one of the Dutchmen pointed at the little stream running far below the bridge, as if to say, "If you are thirsty, you can go there to drink."

While they were drinking they discussed us. One of them apparently had been born and brought up in Padang Panjang. His friends asked him if he knew who we were. As a result he scrutinized us carefully for a while, then bowed his head. What he remembered at that moment we did not know, but his expression was gloomy. Perhaps his wife and children were still living in Padang Panjang? The two "prajurit negeri" looked at us with expressions of pity. But they could do nothing.

After the marsose had finished their drink, we resumed the journey. The Dutchman who had earlier told us to go down and drink at the stream instructed our guards that if we made the slightest suspicious movement, then we should just be shot. Hearing that order, we realized that we were not yet being taken to our graves, but possibly were being withdrawn to some distant place. This caused a surge of our earlier energy, and despite our failing strength, our feet felt a little lighter each time we raised them. For the time being sufficient hope would be alive to relieve our hunger and thirst.

*The Dutch Army's Defense Fortifications*

In view of the length of time we walked and our loss of energy during the journey, we could not have traveled less than 20 kms that morning. With our remaining strength, we had to force our legs to continue walking through that silent region.

Finally, we reached a shady, flat area. Scattered around were the rinds of many young coconuts. Our weakness and fatigue made us stop there. Not far away we could see several coconut trees, with their fruit still young. A great longing arose in us to drink the milk of the young coconuts. We told the sergeant in command of our wish. But unfortunately there wasn't anyone in our group who was able to climb the coconut tree to pick its fruit, and there were no

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signs of any way of getting them by other means. So we had to be patient again for the time being and bear our thirst. We continued our journey again but with faltering steps.

We had not walked very far when we came upon a large bus halted at the side of the road, with its driver sitting behind the steering wheel. Presumably he was waiting for someone. The commander of our escort approached the driver directly and asked who owned the vehicle. The driver answered that he had been ordered to wait for the return of "tuan letnan" who had gone off on foot not long ago to a place not far away.

Hearing this, our commander half ordered the driver to take us to Kota Buluh which he said was quite near. Grumbling, the driver obeyed the request that was more like an order as if he had no alternative but to do so.

We got on board cheerfully. Soon the vehicle moved forward in the direction of Kota Buluh, along a mountainous, narrow, and twisting road.

As we drove along we passed many Dutch army camps on either side of the road. In front of them were many Netherland soldiers, both Dutch and Indonesian. And many light and heavy weapons had been gathered and stacked in front of them. Most of the soldiers weren't working at anything. They were joking and chatting and so forth among themselves, as if they had forgotten (or were trying to forget) that their lives were in danger. Several times our vehicle stopped in front of those camps and our commander got down to ask where the captain was. He received various answers. There were those who said that the captain was "down there," there were those who said he was "up there" and there were those who carelessly answered "don't know," "look for him yourself," and so on. Our commander grumbled mightily when he got these replies. While he was inquiring about his captain, we had the chance to quench our thirst with tea that Pak Haji requested from the camp kitchen. So our weariness gradually disappeared and we were no longer so conscious of our hunger.

Approaching Kota Buluh we stopped again in front of a large, crowded Dutch army camp. Our commander ordered the cook at the camp to prepare food to take along with us. The food he asked for was soon ready, and not long afterwards baskets filled with rice and vegetables were put in our hands. Because of our hunger our share of the rice had very soon completely disappeared into our stomachs. We did not worry that, while we were eating, several pigs kept by the local people were loafing near by. And only after we had finished eating, did we become aware of what was happening around us.

We were now in the middle of a village, where the Dutch troops had set up their defenses. Here and there they had put up tents made of various kinds and shapes of sailcloth. The Dutch soldiers wandered up and down, sometimes in groups, sometimes in ones and

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twos. Apparently we were not a focus of their interest, and they didn't seem to notice us. Thus we were able to look at everything quite freely.

Apart from the armed soldiers we also saw ones who acted as "prajurit negeri." The majority of them were working as cooks and servants for the middle- and higher-ranking officers. Many were also washing the soldiers' clothes. Clearly a lot of the local villagers' property had been destroyed to meet the needs of war, because some of the tents had been erected on cultivated land, vegetable gardens, and so on. And possibly they had just seized many of the peoples' other possessions, pigs, chickens, cattle, and so on. But they all looked like men who had lost their spirit and enthusiasm. They seemed listless and discouraged, even though they had abundant food and enough tools and materials to meet their needs. In a situation like the present, position, rank, and sufficient livelihood brought no feelings of joy and success.

After we had smoked a cigarette or two, we resumed our journey. We again got on the bus that our commander had "confiscated" earlier, together with its driver. Outside the village, our vehicle was forced to stop again because it was impossible to continue. Another vehicle was halted at the edge of the road down which we had to pass. Because ours was rather large, and the road we were on rather narrow, the two vehicles could not pass each other, so we were told to get off, and then ordered to climb on the vehicle in front.

We then continued our journey to Kota Buluh packed inside that smaller vehicle.

Finally we arrived at Kota Buluh, a small and rather simple place. There were not many houses and shops, but a lot of Dutch soldiers were camped there. It formed one of the most forward posts, where a Dutch army headquarters headed by a major had also been set up.

We didn't stay long, only long enough for our commander to report to the senior officer at the headquarters. Then our car started off again. We were now approaching Kota Cane, the final and reportedly strongest Dutch army fortification, where the Dutch armed forces would put up a struggle, "to the last drop of blood" to fight and block the advance of the Japanese army. . . .

*Where the Dutch Armed Strength Was Hidden. . . .*

During our three days at Tiga Lingga, we had witnessed events that were "foreign" and "strange" in our experience. These events sometimes brought tears to our eyes, and sometimes were very "amusing," so that we couldn't help smiling to ourselves. But whatever their nature, these events and experiences formed material to enrich our spirit, and from them we received useful lessons.

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What we saw in Tiga Lingga, in addition to what we experienced on the rest of the journey to Kota Cane, provided us with a series of perspectives from which to know from close to where the "force and strength of the Dutch army" were hidden as they confronted the struggle that would decide whether most of them would stand or fall in the days ahead.

Each child of Indonesia, who had reached maturity by the year the Japanese army invaded Indonesia in the first quarter of 1942, had experienced or knew to some extent the most important mistakes the Dutch colonial government had made at the moment when it needed the Indonesian people's energies to protect its interests and defend its future position.

The Japanese occupation of Indonesia was not only a great loss for the Dutch kingdom, but the Indonesian people would also not profit from it. Because of that, the Indonesian people themselves initially demanded that the Netherlands Indies government give them too the opportunity to defend their country from the attacks and assaults of foreign forces, irrespective of the race of those who were carrying out these attacks. To this end, Indonesian leaders urged that Indonesian youths should also be given the responsibility of military service (*militieplicht*) so that they would be capable of bearing arms to defend their country. They made this demand at the beginning of 1940 at the time that the tremendous conflict was beginning on the continent of Europe.

But, as had been the case with the demands put forward by GAPI[15] that "Indonesia have a parliament" and those made by Sdr. Soetardjo in the Volksraad in 1939[16] that the words and name of "Indonesia" be used for the territory, people, and language of Indonesia by the Dutch government and the Netherlands Indies, the demands for the right to bear arms too were neither acceded to nor granted.

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15. Gapi (Gabungan Politiek Indonesia), a federation of Indonesian nationalist political organizations, was formed in May 1939. Among the points in its Manifesto of September 20, 1939, was a call for "a parliament elected by and from the people" in order to effect cooperation between the Indonesian and Dutch peoples in facing fascism. This call was rejected by the Minister of the Colonies on February 13, 1941.

16. The Soetardjo Petition (passed in the Volksraad in mid-1936) called for the convening of a conference of representatives of the Netherlands and Netherlands Indies to discuss plans for the evolutionary development of Indonesia over a ten-year period toward self-government "within the limits of the existing Dutch Constitution." It had actually been formally rejected by the government on November 16, 1938. (George McT. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), pp. 96-97.) The Volksraad (People's Council) was established in 1917, and was chiefly an advisory body, though in 1927 it had been officially granted co-legislative powers with the Governor-General.

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Actually this denial did not necessarily cause the Indonesian people to be discouraged, because it was hoped that the era of Dutch colonial rule would not last much longer.

And when the sequence of this history extended a bit further, people had to recognize honestly that at the beginning of 1940 the Indonesian people had shown fairness in their struggle by demanding to fight for the ideals of their independence. The Nazi German army's occupation of the Netherlands and the evacuation of the kingdom's government to London was greeted with spontaneous sympathy by the Indonesians, so that it was even proposed that the Dutch government that had withdrawn should make its home in Indonesia. But because of the size and depth of the chasm that the Dutch government itself deliberately dug in facing the Indonesian people, and the complete lack of understanding it showed towards the proposals and demands of the Indonesians, suspicion rather than mutual understanding arose.

Thus, it is not surprising that at the moment that Indonesian strength was most needed--above all in confronting the attacks from the Japanese armies--the Indonesian people paid little attention and would not give enough help. The Japanese army's advance, that proceeded so swiftly that the Allied defenses in Singapore were not able to check it, sparked intense panic among the Dutch soldiers. The occupation of the whole island of Java on March 9, 1942, and the unconditional surrender of all the forces of the Netherlands Indies government by Ter Poorten and Tjarda van Starkenburgh on March 12, 1942, in Kali Jati to the Japanese military leaders, actually meant that all fighting on the part of Dutch and Allied forces throughout the Indonesian archipelago should have halted, including the headquarters of the Allied army (ABCD front),[17] with all their goods and equipment moved to Australia.

Perhaps impelled by the desire not to lose hope, or because he wished to witness with his own eyes the spirit with which the Dutch Indies army would oppose the Japanese attacks, the Dutch Indies Governor for Sumatra [A.I.] Spits, decided to demonstrate his "stub-

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17. ABCD was a short-hand term frequently used by Indonesians in the 1940s to denote the Allied forces = Australian, British, Chinese, Dutch, though at the end of the war the "A" more often referred to American than Australian forces, at least when used in Sumatra. The Allied command, formed in late 1941, was actually called the ABDA (American, British, Dutch, Australian) Command. For an account of its formation, dimensions, and responsibilities, see H. P. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance: Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies to April 1943* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1982), pp. 262-64.

It should be noted that, according to George Kanahele, "Ter Poorten's surrender order was not binding on units outside Java, for there was a standing order to this effect." See his "The Japanese Occupation of Indonesia: Prelude to Independence" (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1967), p. 255, n. 35.

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bornness." Governor Spits did not approve of Tjarda and Ter Poorten's surrender of Dutch sovereignty over Indonesia, and for that reason the fighting and struggle were to continue, even though it was his soldiers who finally lost their last drop of blood. . . .

Since the time of our arrest in Padang Panjang the island of Sumatra had actually stood alone and had fought according to its own tactics and strategy. How great was the spirit and enthusiasm for the struggle that we witnessed during our journey in Tiga Lingga and in Kota Cane?

Possibly only Governor Spits himself, or perhaps also a few of his comrades who never participated directly in the fighting, actually possessed any enthusiasm for continuing the fight to defend Sumatra from the Japanese assault. This was reflected in the appearance and countenances of all the Dutch soldiers we saw during these several days, both among the officers and in the lower ranks. Sometimes the white skinned soldiers showed pride and arrogance, but in our opinion this pride and arrogance merely appeared because it was the habitual attitude they adopted in belittling and looking down on others, particularly all those who had the shape and form of Indonesians. It was difficult for them to discard this unpleasant attitude, even though they themselves realized that in such a situation it should be abandoned.

Throughout our journey, the white soldiers' behavior toward us which in our opinion, sometimes overstepped the bounds of courtesy, but which we had to accept, although with difficulty, because of our position and situation at the time, apparently had become a common problem in the ranks of the army in general.

Racial discrimination developed tremendously and rapidly, and this distinction on the basis of skin could be found in all fields. The heavy jobs had to be performed by soldiers, and the soldiers had to be those of Indonesian race, even if that work involved responsibility or confronting death. And if any danger arose, those who first had to be saved were those with a white skin. If it had not been his duty as the highest officer in his unit, a commander probably would not have been willing to ride in the leading vehicle of the convoy.

These differences in duties and responsibilities, together with those in position, had probably become merely routine matters in the ranks of the army, attracting no attention whatever from the Indonesian soldiers. Only for us was it an oddity, and we were very unhappy when at times it became very obvious.

Above, we have reflected on the events that became evident to us on that journey. And in order to penetrate the fighting spirit of the Dutch in particular at that time, and to know where that spirit was stored, we will lay out below one or two other incidents. There is no need for us to comment; people can later make their own judgments.

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Several of the Indonesian militia related these incidents to us, that is men who at some time or other formed part of our guard while we were at Tiga Lingga. Not one of these four men had undergone military training for longer than three months. Throughout this three-month training, most of the time was spent studying drill. Tactics for attacking, assaulting, and defending almost never formed part of the instruction, the only exception being that they were shown the way to use the weapons they were given.

Not one of the four men had voluntarily, of his own free will, joined the militia. As young men, in the village of their birth (all four came from Central Java), they had been students, traders, farmers, and one of them had been spoiled by his parents who were quite well off. While each of them was busy in his own field, "Mr. Policeman" approached them and they were dragged from their jobs. Not for a single moment were they given the opportunity to meet with their families before they were compelled to don their military uniforms colored leaf green. Then they were forced to march and bear arms. After less than three months in their barracks they were sent to various regions throughout the Indonesian archipelago to fight the Japanese attacks. In these regions, which were still very new to them, they more frequently wept than laughed. And relating this to us they were again in tears. For many reasons they had become very dejected, because not a single promise they had received had yet been fulfilled. They were treated very badly both at the front and in the camp, perhaps because they were still viewed as "green," the more so as they were only "militia." Thus they more often had to work for the officers than work for the purposes of war.

The situation was different with the "*stadswacht*," "landwacht," "landstrom," "*hulp-politie*," and so on, all of whom became part of the armed forces' strength of the Dutch Indies as they faced the Japanese attacks. The majority of them had only had two or three weeks' training, and some had not yet had the chance of any training at all before they were turned over to the battlefield. It did not seem strange to our eyes that a "town guard" [stadswacht] should be thus stationed in the middle of the jungle, because the town he should have been guarding had long since been occupied by the Japanese, and because of that these town guards had been brought to the front lines to face Japanese bullets, even though they had no idea of how to protect themselves. The "lightning training" that had been given to many of these soldiers now became the backbone of the battle.

And what of those select, long-time troops? The marsose and ordinary soldiers, who for years had been on contract with some section of the Dutch Indies army, and even included men who had been born in some barracks or other, those soldiers who were viewed as the "essence" or "core" of Dutch strength in Sumatra at that time? Most of them were Indonesians from a variety of ethnic groups. Even though they shared a single responsibility, the attitude towards them varied in accordance with their ethnic identity. Soldiers from one

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group were prized more highly than those from another, even when they were of the same rank. Because of the differences in how they were viewed and appraised, there then developed various divisions within the unit. As one can imagine, tensions rose between one group and another. And because of this there was never a close brotherly atmosphere in any unit.

There was no visible sign among them that they would fully carry out their responsibility of confronting the enemy--even those who called themselves "black Dutch."[18] This was clear in that practically all the Indonesian soldiers wore ordinary clothes under their uniforms. Thus, they could transform themselves into "civilians," when their military uniforms no longer gave them a guarantee of safety. And whenever wearing civilian clothes under their uniforms might cause their superior officers to become suspicious, they would put those clothes into their haversacks. And if that too was not feasible, then these clothes were put into the case intended for their gas-mask, for everyone was supposed to have one of these masks. They threw out the mask, and in its place the case was now filled with a complete set of civilian clothes--shirt, sarung, kupiah, pyjamas, and sometimes also a pair of sandals.

Our digression concerning what we witnessed and experienced in Tinga Lingga would be very long if we were to consider every incident individually. But this story would also not be complete if we did not explain as briefly as possible what we encountered among the ranks of the Dutch soldiers themselves.

That some of the Dutch soldiers were not able to shoot and make use of their weapons is evident from the following incident.

One soldier--white, pure-blooded--lightly armed approached us. In his behavior and appearance there was no sign that he was suspicious of us. In his hands he held a half-cocked rifle. Earnestly he asked us if we could explain to him how one could insert the bullets into the rifle, and from a distance of how many meters one could fire with a rifle like this. Initially, we thought that he was feigning ignorance, and was just mocking us, or letting us know in an indirect way that our lives would be ended with that gun. But seeing his earnest manner, we then asked him, why he didn't ask one of the other soldiers, as they were much more skilled than we. His response was that if he were to put this question to his fellow soldiers he was ashamed lest they would laugh at him. After we told him that we didn't know the slightest thing about firearms, he left us, perhaps feeling disappointed and ashamed of himself. After that he never showed us his face again. It's easy to guess why.

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18. This refers to the Ambonese soldiers, who had the reputation of being the fiercest fighters. Their identification with the Dutch was often so complete that they referred to themselves as "Black Dutchmen" and to their islands as the "Twelfth Province of Holland." See Dieter Bartels, "Can the Train be ever Stopped Again" (*Indonesia*, forthcoming).

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That is one example from many that we witnessed ourselves during our three days at Tiga Lingga. And there were certainly many others that provided us with valuable data. Apart from signs of the narrowness of mind and opinion within Dutch military ranks in that tense situation, there were also indications of a change in spirit. Several soldiers acted as if they did not want to disturb the situation that was developing around them, and possibly didn't feel worried about what was about to strike them. These men were very diligent with their bibles. Wherever they went they carried the Holy Book with them. They used their spare time to study the gospels, and caress the crucifix that hung around their necks.

*Kota Cane, Stronghold and Graveyard*

From Kota Buluh we were taken directly to Kota Cane, the Dutch army's final stronghold in all Indonesia. To get there we had to cover a distance of 125 kms.[19] The main road we were now following was among the very best, because this was the one economic artery between Kota Cane-Kabanjahe-Medan. Even though the road was mountainous and twisting, the scenery was beautiful. The hills and mountains surrounding the place formed a natural bulwark bestowed by God, fortifications that were the reason the Dutch army had chosen this region for their final stronghold. From here they could put up strong resistance, and from here too the victory and fusion of Dutch power over all the Indonesian archipelago would be decided in the future.

Approaching both Kota Buluh and Kota Cane we saw many Dutch military camps along the road. Belimbing, Kota Binanga, and Kali Batak were villages that had been transformed into army camps, villages that since their founding had known only security and peace.

Sigalagala, located between Kota Buluh and Kota Cane, also formed a "military hideout" that was of great significance too for the defense of Kota Cane. At Sigalagala, supposedly, a large Dutch barracks had been built, complete with military hospital, and here too were a large portion of the Germans whom the Dutch had earlier interned. We stopped here briefly to report to the senior Dutch officer there, Major Hazenberg. While our commander was making his report, Pak Haji, one of our marsose escorts, brought young coconuts and oranges for us. This touched us, because at a moment like that, a gift that is given sincerely, however small, is of greater value than an expensive gift in normal times.

Here too we met an old friend from Lubuk Alung, who was working as a driver for Major Hazenberg. But unfortunately we weren't able to exchange greetings with him, perhaps because he was too afraid of his boss, as we were then prisoners. Unlike the local

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19. This must be a miscalculation, for the distance does not seem to exceed about 70 kms.

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people, that old friend of ours was apparently very reluctant to meet us, even merely to ask after our health.

Not long afterwards, Major Hazenberg came out of his headquarters. After studying our faces for a moment one by one, he then got into his car and drove off. Apparently we were now to accompany him to Kota Cane because our car followed behind.

Apart from Sigalagala, we went through many other small villages that resembled those we had already passed, in that they were now camps for the Dutch troops, including Ulubalang.

Twilight was falling, about 5:00 in the evening, when we arrived at Kota Cane, the main town of the Alas region in the southern part of Aceh.

Before arriving at our destination, the commander instructed his subordinates on their behavior. Among his instructions were that, if later we entered the yard of "tuan jendral's" house, all the marsose escorting us had to get out, and surround the car with drawn swords. Our friends greeted this order with nods of their heads, but each face reflected scorn and mockery.

### *Sergeant John--A Stupid and Arrogant Commander*

Before entering the yard of "tuan jendral's" house, the top Dutch commander who was leading this final stand, our car stopped for a moment, and all the marsose jumped out and stood three men on each side of the car. But not one of them drew his sword. Commander John (by his friends called "Bas John") had no chance to control them, because the car immediately entered the courtyard of the large house.

A moment later, a Dutch officer, with the rank of lieutenant, came out of the house, and Sergeant John greeted him with respect. In Dutch the officer ordered John to take us to "gevangis," or jail. John responded to this order with "Ja, Meneer," the first Dutch we had heard him speak and possibly the only words he knew. Our friends hid their smiles, hearing Bas John's "Ja, Meneer."

"He's pretending to know Dutch, the braggart," grumbled Pak Haji. "We'll see later how he'll behave," said his friend after they got into the car again.

Pak Haji spoke the truth. Not long after we left the general's house, we saw on our left the prison that the lieutenant meant when he gave the earlier order, with a large sign "*huis van bewaring*," that even for us who were not acquainted with "*boter*" and "*kaas*" was still equivalent to "gevangis."

Seeing the situation, one of the marsose said, "It's as we said earlier Bas John knows how to talk Dutch but doesn't know the Dutch language." Sergeant John didn't hear this as he was standing close

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to the driver to show him the way. We joined in the laughter that greeted the remark.

Probably because he didn't know where the prison was located, Bas John finally took us to the Dutch army barracks. Arriving there, he told us all to get out. John tried to hand us over to a lieutenant on guard there. The lieutenant refused to take us, saying that there was no room for us, as the place was already full of soldiers.

"But I was ordered to bring them here," said John. Hearing that, we had to smother our smiles. "These men aren't just ordinary prisoners," he continued.

The lieutenant then got on the telephone and spoke with headquarters (the general's house).

"The order wasn't to bring these men here, but for them to be taken to jail," the lieutenant snapped at John.

Our marsose escort couldn't restrain their laughter, and we were forced to laugh too.

"Get up again," John ordered us. "To gevangis," he told the driver. The truck retraced its path.

Again we passed the "huis van bewaring" but our truck didn't stop. "We'll beat him up," said Pak Haji. We all laughed. Probably because he still couldn't see the name "gevangis," we rode around the place several times. Night had already fallen and it was getting dark. Finally our truck stopped somewhere. Our commander jumped down and asked one of the soldiers who were on guard where the "gevangis" was. He responded by indicating the place we had just left.

"It's not there," answered John.

"What do you mean, it isn't there--look at the sign," the soldier replied.

"Why do they make the sign so small?" asked John.

"That's not my business. Complain to the local authorities," grumbled the soldier.

Again we had to suppress our laughter, as we listened to the exchange.

When he returned we heard John order the driver to go back to the earlier place.

"Now he knows," said Pak Haji then, and we all laughed.

After one of our friends announced our arrival, then our vehicle entered the yard of the Kota Cane jail, a "State School" that was big enough to serve as a jail.

We were handed over to the warder, Sdr. Gindo, who came from Minangkabau.

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After Saudara Gindo had received us, the marsose all shook our hands. We now bade farewell to those who had accompanied and guarded us all the way to Kota Cane from Bukittinggi. Our farewells were so affectionate that many of them wept. Pak Haji himself was weeping as he shook hands with us and asked us in behalf of his friends to forgive any behavior that had been rough or unseemly. And he also expressed the hope that we would meet again in a different atmosphere.

We were moved as we listened to his words of farewell.

"God will surely protect us all, and we will meet again," we responded hopefully, even though at that time such a hope was very slim for us because both groups were being readied as targets for bullets, even though in a different fashion.

*In the Kota Cane Jail*

Sdr. Gindo received us jovially, greeting us with cheerful words. Such a welcome provided a good start for our stay in the jail.

We were all put into a single large room, and were not separated from one another. Our treatment was more than adequate and very satisfying. We had not been in the room long when Sdr. Adam, the jail's clerk came in. After he had noted down our names one by one, together with the date and place of our births, we could finally ease our weariness.

We performed our prayers, ate dinner, and now we could roll over and go to sleep as we wished.

We were soon fast asleep, the best sleep we had had since being taken from Padang Panjang on March 12, 1942. On this night of March 18, we could get rid of all the tiredness from our dangerous and eventful journey.

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## THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 1942

When we awoke this morning, our bodies felt more refreshed, and our minds were clearer than usual. Our breakfast, brought by a prison inmate, also tasted good to us.

*New Acquaintances in the Jail*

This morning we learned that the jail at Kota Cane had many inmates. We had actually been assigned to a single large room because there was no space in the regular quarters.

As we were classed as political prisoners, the attitude towards us differed somewhat from that towards the others. We were "freer" to move around inside the jail, the more so in that most officials there came from the Minangkabau. The history of our arrest, was also more or less beneficial to us in the jail, earning us respect.

We used much of our free time that day and in the days that followed getting to know the other prisoners, and from them we got much new information about what was happening around us.

We won't introduce the characters and personalities of our fellow inmates, because they were so many and varied. What attracted our attention were the reasons for their being sentenced to jail and the crimes they had committed to be so condemned. Below we note a few of these.

As we have already said, Kota Cane was the capital town of the Alas district, the region of one of the ethnic groups of Aceh residency. This region was ruled by a "raja bumiputera" [native raja] who, it was said, was greatly feared by the people. But this "raja" had no power at all over the land and its people. All power was in the hands of the B.B. Controleur.[20]

This Controleur's power was so great that the "raja" had to submit to him. Perhaps with the aim of paralyzing any spirit of opposition among the local people towards the Dutch Company,[21] and for

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20. B.B. = Binnenlands Bestuur, the colonial government service. The Controleur was the lowest rank in the European branch of this service, usually heading a district.

21. Either this name is being used anachronistically, in that the Netherlands East India Company ceased to exist at the end of the 18th century, or it refers to a local Dutch manufacturing company or estate.



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his own benefit, the Controleur in everything he did behaved in a very despotic way. None of his orders could be contradicted and no one wanted, or was brave enough, to oppose them.

This despotic character was evident in the way he judged and condemned those men who, in his opinion, had to be sentenced. None of the sentences was imposed by a court, nor after the case had a prior hearing. For example, if he [the Controleur] were walking along and on the way met a man that he didn't like or of whom he felt suspicious, then he would just order the man's arrest, and he would be jailed for a month or so. The victim was completely ignorant as to what crime he had committed or what law he had broken.

One prisoner told us that he had been sent to jail for two years because he was accused of having stolen the sum of 45 cents. Another told us that he had been sentenced to three months' imprisonment because his crime was viewed as very serious--he had deliberately looked at the face of the Controleur's wife. One tailor was in jail because he had strongly objected to being forced to pay a tax as high as f12.50 for his simple job, and had therefore been sentenced to 1 1/2 years in prison. He strongly protested such an unjust sentence. And because he was brave enough to protest to the Controleur, the sentence was doubled to three years, with the declaration that if he protested again, this three year sentence would become six years. It was this form of multiple punishment that had caused many people in the region to spend many years in jail.

These were the men who became our new friends in the Kota Cane prison. It is not possible that they were lying to us because we also got the same information from their guards.

And regarding Kota Cane itself, according to the explanation we got, it had at that time been deserted by its civilian population. The whole town had become a Dutch army camp. There was not a single house in which they were not quartered. Thus, the inhabitants had had to evacuate the town.

The country around Kota Cane was well suited to a defense strategy, thanks to the hills and mountains which resembled certain parts of the Minangkabau. Because they had failed to make use of West Sumatra and the Anai valley, they said, this Alas region was to become their final fortress, and Kota Cane formed its center. This was their headquarters, because here were stationed the armed forces' general staff. And now here too, for certain, would the final Dutch military court be set up, because everywhere else had been occupied by the Japanese army. For this reason we had been brought to this place.

*The Young Singer in the Jail*

It is rather "romantic" to hear the word "singer" in a jail, where men were gathered whose characters were viewed as damaged and broken.

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But it was indeed thus in the jail we now had to occupy, who knows for how long. We first heard the singer's voice the moment we entered the jail. The sound of his song was pleasing and sweet. Perhaps because everybody enjoyed listening to him, and his voice constituted the only entertainment for all the jail's inmates, no ban was placed on his making a "noise" even far into the night. Not only was our loneliness relieved by the jail singer's voice, but so was that of the soldiers stationed around the prison. We felt this in the nights that followed.

This "jail singer" was an Indonesian Batak who was still very young, and whom we in our group usually called "Washington." As he explained later, he was still a student at a MULO[22] school in Pematang Siantar. He had been arrested a few days before we arrived. The reason he became an inmate of the prison was because of a good deed he performed for a Dutch fugitive, namely the wife of the Controleur of Pematang Siantar. The story goes thus:

Some time before the Japanese army occupied the town of Pematang Siantar, the Controleur there, together with his child and his wife, withdrew to search for protection elsewhere. As a government official, he should not have left his district, whatever happened. But perhaps because he was in too great a panic, he did not obey these laws. Together with his family, he abandoned his post and responsibilities and left with no fixed destination in mind, so long as he could save himself.

The Controleur's fear and panic were so great that he was no longer able to take his wife along with him, where he was going. So the husband and wife, together with their two children, were forced to separate, or more exactly, the wife together with her children had to be left behind.

Because of his pity for this woman and her children, and moreover because the Dutch lady pleaded with him, Sdr. Washington felt it was his duty to accompany them in searching for her husband.

At a certain place, the Dutch army arrested the group. Washington was sent to Kota Cane, and what happened to the Controleur's wife, he didn't know. Why the Dutch army officers repaid his kind act by imprisoning him, he didn't know, and this was still a riddle for him.

One way he could relax, when his thoughts could fly far away to his father and mother, and his home village, was through the harmonica that he took with him wherever he went. When he became tired of playing the instrument, he would sing. In our opinion he was very skilled in both these branches of "art." He could not only sing the songs of his home region, although these were certainly famous, but he was also skilled in Western singing. When he played a

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22. MULO = Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs (More Extended Lower Instruction School), more or less equivalent to junior high school.

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song on his harmonica, silence fell all around, and everyone's attention was fixed on the sound alone. And when it stopped, you could hear clapping from inside and outside the jail (from the soldiers stationed outside), and raucous shouts of encore, encore (bis . . . bis . . .). We joined in the clapping. This was even more so when he sang the Toba songs that were so popular. His music touched the hearts of everyone.

Thanks to his skill, Washington, this young Indonesian Batak, became a focus of affection for the prisoners. We established very strong ties with him because among us there was a skilled musician (Sdr. Chatib Sulaiman), particularly on the viola. It was a pity he hadn't brought his instrument with him. . . .

*Before the Military Court*

Before midday on March 19, 1942, a low-ranking Dutch officer, escorted by the jail warden, came to our room. The officer was holding a piece of paper, and he asked us, which of the six of us was called Anwar. As none of us was named Anwar, we responded, "No one." He then went off again accompanied by the warden.

After his departure, several questions arose in our minds: whether the person he was asking about was Anwar, our comrade in the struggle, the Director of the National Bank, the person who was also known by the military and Dutch civilian leaders as "anti-scorched earth." And if it was indeed that Anwar, then he too certainly must be in detention. But where he had been put, and if he would be brought here, were questions it was difficult for us to answer, and there was no one in the place we were to whom we could put the question.

About half an hour later, the same Dutch officer returned with a piece of paper on which was written the name of Sdr. Chatib Sulaiman. Sdr. Chatib Sulaiman was taken from the jail, escorted by the man who had summoned him. We now knew that our investigation was continuing, and we too would soon be sentenced.

It was a long time before Chatib Sulaiman was brought back to the prison, about two hours after he left. Before there was an opportunity to find out the course of his interrogation, Leon Salim was also ordered to accompany this lower officer. About two hours later, Leon Salim was returned to the jail, and Sdr. A. Murad Saad was taken away. Thus three of us were interrogated that day.

So we were questioned one by one outside the jail. These three interrogations were carried out by a Dutch lieutenant, who was said to have previously lived for a long time in Bukittinggi. It was he who acted as the Army's Public Prosecutor.

The course of the interrogation is summarized below, in the conversation of Sdr. Leon Salim with the Dutch officer:

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Letnan: Sir, you are named Leon Salim? Where were you born, how old are you, and what is your work?

Leon Salim: True, I am Leo Salim. I was born at Tiakar, Payakumbuh. My age is 30, and I work as an administrator at the Sekolah Diniyah in Padang Panjang.

Letnan: Are you married, and do you have children?

Les: I'm married and don't yet have children.

Letnan: How many teachers are there at the Diniyah school, and what does it cost for each student?

Les: There are 38 men and women teachers. There are 700 students. The cost for each student is F7.50 a month, all told, for food, lodging, and other schooling needs.

Letnan: Has this school got a permit from the government?

Les: No.

Letnan: Why not? Was one not requested?

Les: It was never requested and there was no need to ask for one. Such was the opinion of the school management.

Letnan: It wanted to stand by itself?

Les: Yes.

Letnan: What groups have you belonged to since you were a child[?]

Les: Youth movements were: Persatuan Murid2 Diniyah School (PMDS) in 1926, El Hilaal in 1928, and Kepanduan Indonesia Muslim (KIM) in 1931. The political party was the Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia (PNI) in 1933.

Letnan: Have you ever been sentenced to jail?

Les: Yes.

Letnan: How many times?

Les: Three times.

Letnan: Which was the longest, and for what?

Les: One year. For writing.

Letnan: Is it true that on March 12, 1942 you were planning a demonstration in Padang Panjang and the surrounding areas?

Les: True.

Letnan: And that on that day you and several of your friends were arrested?

Les: Yes.

Letnan: What was the reason for that demonstration?

Les: It was to guide the spirit of the people towards higher and more perfect ideals--political ideals. At that time the souls and spirits of the people were being affected by all sorts of currents of understanding that could have harmed them, currents wishing to do ill (plundering etc.), currents wanting revenge, to kill all Dutch officials etc. Because of this, in order to prevent these influences from harming the people, and so that they did not deviate from the fundamental goals, we guided them into political channels. Each person had to be more attentive to the fate of his people and country, not to fall asleep so that he was deceived by materialism and profit, together with his own selfish interests. By our demonstration we intended to awake and raise the spirit of unity that had long been buried. And we de-

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manded that the Red-and-White flag and our homeland of Indonesia be recognized as ours. We wanted group differences to disappear, together with differences of rank and status.

Letnan: If the government head in Padang Panjang at that time had not wanted to recognize and consent to your request, what attitude would you have taken?

Les: There was no other attitude for us to take. We had expressed the feelings and desires of the people. And if the government did not recognize and approve them, that was up to them.

Letnan: In order to raise your flag, would you have lowered the Dutch flag?

Les: No.

Letnan: In a tense situation like the present when the head of the regional government lacks the power to carry out his duties adequately, if he were to ask you to participate in governing the region, what would be your thoughts and opinion on this?

Les: I will work to save my country and people, the Indonesian people. But I do not yet intend to "join" the government.

Letnan: If the police had forbidden the demonstration, what would you have done?

Les: We would have stopped.

Letnan: Do you know, that we are now in a time of war?

Les: Yes, I know.

Letnan: Should the Japanese later come and occupy your country and they too are not willing to acknowledge your flag and people, what would be your attitude towards the Japanese government that also refused this recognition?

Les: I will thank any people whatsoever who are willing to appreciate my people.

Letnan: About how many would have taken part in the demonstrations and where would they have been held?

Les: According to our calculations there would have been no fewer than 10,000 people from Padang Panjang and the surrounding areas. Similar demonstrations would have taken place throughout the Minangkabau region.

So, the conversation between the Dutch officer and Sdr. Leon Salim continued. And its course was very similar with the other two comrades.

By the time Sdr. A. Murad Saad's interrogation was over, it was almost night. Meanwhile, the six of us discussed the course of the questioning. From this we realized that there had been a unity of "spirit" among the three of us in the answers each of us had given.

Night had almost fallen. The young singer in the jail, our friend Washington Damanik, began to play his harmonica. Sad and happy songs alternated with one another.

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During the night the atmosphere in Kota Cane jail was rather different from that in the other prisons where I'd been interned. Even though we were separated from the outside world by the strong, high, thick walls of the prison, it was as if there was a tie between us. This was channeled through the song of Sdr. Washington Damanik. Because of that we almost never felt isolated. And whenever feelings of isolation began to rise, we would just ask him to entertain us. And if we asked, he never refused.

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## FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 1942

Very early this morning, the low-ranking military officers from yesterday came back to the jail. We guessed that they had come to summon our three friends who had not yet been interrogated. And we were right.

### *Trap and Snare*

Sdr. Chaidir Gazali went first. Our youngest friend's interrogation didn't take long, and the problems he faced were not too difficult. About half an hour after he had been summoned, he was brought back to the jail. Probably his interrogation was so short because of his youth, as he was not yet twenty years old.

Then came the turn of Sdr. Jamaris glr. Datuk Mandah Kayo. It appears that this second interview must have gone quite smoothly because it too didn't take long. Finally Sdr. Moh. Husni glr. St. Rajo Bujang was called.

These three friends of ours were questioned in a somewhat different manner from those of us interrogated the previous afternoon. And their interrogations were also not the same.

And because different men were conducting the investigation, their methods were different. The questioning was very harsh. This was very harmful to the three of us who had been interrogated the previous day. For although they were unaware of it, the answers our friends gave were to cause the six of us to pay more dearly.

We were now in a trap and only had to wait for its door to be closed. The reason for our now being snared lay in our two friends' responses to the questions regarding our aims towards the government then still in power and whether we were willing to change the current government.

The previous day we three had answered that we had no intention either of violating the current government or of becoming government officials. The planned demonstrations were only intended to express the desires and wishes of the people.

But this did not accord with our two friends' responses today. They said that, if the Dutch government handed over governmental affairs to us, we were willing to accept them, and that we had already chosen the people who would occupy the important positions in this government.



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Even though these two friends gave such answers on their own responsibility, the emergence of these two currents within our group was in itself very lucky for the Dutch military government. We guessed that this issue would trip us up further.

Automatically worry and disappointment now rose among us. It was certain that we, except probably Sdr. Chaidir Gazali who was still too young, were about to be caught in the trap we had walked into.

The only way out still open was for the two of us, that is Sdr. Leon Salim and Chatib Sulaiman, to make clear if we were interrogated a second time, that full responsibility regarding the charges brought against us all fell on the shoulders of only the two of us; our other friend were only involved as our assistants. In this way, our friends' mistakes could perhaps be rectified.

That evening, as we had expected, a summons came for Sdr. Chatib Sulaiman. An hour later he was brought back to the jail. Then it was the turn of Sdr. Leon Salim.

Our interrogation that day was conducted by the lieutenant who had questioned Sdr. St. Rajo Bujang and Dt. Mandah Kayo the previous morning.

Below is a summary of the course of Leon Salim's interrogation, which went more or less as follows:

Letnan: Is it true that you were organizing demonstrations on March 12, 1942?
Les: True.
Letnan: (reads the text of the answers and admissions of Sdr. Ch. Sulaiman regarding the contents of the pamphlet we distributed before March 12 concerning the demonstrations that were to be held). Is this correct?
Les: Correct.
Letnan: Who were the leading members of that Committee?
Les: Sdr. Chatib Sulaiman and myself.
Letnan: No one else?
Les: As far as I know only the two of us. The others only carried out our decisions.
Letnan: Is it true that the projected demonstrations were aimed at changing the legal Dutch authorities in Padang Panjang at that time?
Les: No.
Letnan: Your friends have admitted that this was indeed the case. Therefore you have to answer correctly and not play games.
Les: I am answering honestly and not playing games.
Letnan: Then who is lying in this matter, you or your friends?
Les: The correct answer is the answer I have given and the answer of my other friends is not correct. And as I said before, I and Sdr. Chatib Sulaiman were the members of the

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Committee. So it is our answers and confessions that you should believe.

Letnan: You know that the Dutch Indies is now in a state of war with Japan. From this, are you willing and ready to work with and help the government?

Les: I know that the Dutch Indies government is now at war with the Japanese army. But it is not my intention to help or support either side.

Letnan: So you are anti-government in this time of war?

Les: I do not like war, and I don't wish to assist.

Letnan: Would you not like to show the Dutch Indies army how to advance and win?

Les: No.

Letnan: If the Japanese army enters this region, would you be willing to carry out sabotage and other forms of assistance to the Dutch, Americans, and English?

Les: I do not want to do anything, because I do not like war.

Letnan: According to the explanation of Tuan Chatib Sulaiman those pamphlets had to be typed by Tuan Murad Saad. Is that true?

Les: I know nothing of that. But with regard to the contents of the pamphlet it was indeed the two of us who decided that. I don't know who Sdr. Chatib Sulaiman told to type them.

Letnan: How many copies of the pamphlet were distributed?

Les: About fifteen.

After he finished answering these questions, Sdr. Leon Salim was returned to the jail and it was again Murad Saad's turn.

The course of all our interrogations was almost the same.

That evening there was another change in how we were treated. We were now divided into two groups, the first consisting of Sdr. Chatib Sulaiman, Leon Salim, and Murad Saad, the other made up of Sdr. Dt. Mandah Kayo, St. Rajo Bujang, and Chaidir Gazali.

When we were divided in this way, we knew that there was to be a division in the charges brought against us. And with this too would come a difference in the sentences we would later receive. Nevertheless, we were still encouraged, because these actions meant that we would not be subjected to equal danger but only in accord with our individual responsibility. Possibly we would have to undergo the death sentence, but our three comrades, particularly Sdr. Chaidir Gazali according to our guess, would certainly be freed from prosecution and would be able to tell our other friends in the Minangkabau what had happened to us.

Thus, we passed that night lost in our own thoughts. It's impossible to express the remorse and inner burden felt by Dt. Mandah and St. R. Bujang, for they were the ones responsible for what was now happening. And their remorse was even greater in that they would not share our fate.

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## SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 1942

*Kota Cane Attacked from the Air*

Today, for the first time, Kota Cane was attacked from the air by the Japanese. Warnings and sirens wailed throughout the prison town, before the airplane appeared in the sky. Everywhere, in both the town and the jail, there was an uproar. The jail inmates, numbering more or less fifty men, all sought somewhere to shelter, as did the officers, from the warder to the prison attendants. They hid themselves wherever they could feel secure. The holes for shelter in the jail were chock full, and many hid under their beds.

We sheltered under the beds in our cell, because that was the only protected place to which we had access.

We don't know how many Japanese planes came to attack. We only heard the sound of the planes as they roared out of the sky and the sound of machine gun explosions. But it wasn't clear to us where the shooting came from. But if we were correct in our guess, the shooting was coming not from the air, but from the Dutch army's defensive positions which were located all over the town and the surrounding area, because the noise seemed to come from all sides.

Indeed, we were not mistaken in our guess, for later we learned that not a bomb nor a single bullet was fired from those planes that were said to be attacking us. The violent and overwhelming bursts of firing came only from below, shots at an unknown target. And because the Dutch defenses were everywhere, so it was that the firing of the machine guns came in so many forms and sizes from all sides. So, it is not really correct to call this an air raid by enemy planes.

The Japanese planes were carrying out not an attack, but only a surveillance mission, during which they scattered pamphlets and letters from A. I. Spits, the Sumatra governor who had now surrendered to the Japanese army. One of the thousands of pamphlets the Japanese forces scattered that day fell into our hands. It contained an order written in Indonesian, Dutch, and English, with the following message:

*Order*

1) All soldiers, and civilians, who have left their homes, must return immediately and resume their normal occupations;



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2) In the towns and villages we must now live peacefully and quietly as before under the good protection of the Japanese Empire.

Former Governor of Sumatra.

Two days later, that is on March 23, 1942, the sound of the siren again warned of danger from the air. Pieces of rubber had earlier been distributed for us to chew on if there was an air-raid, to stop our teeth chattering and causing concussion from bomb explosions, one of the theories the Dutch military leaders told the people at this time, as well as distributing cotton wool for them to plug their ears.

That day the ground fire was far more terrifying than on the previous day. The noise was further increased by the sound of bomb explosions rocking the surrounding areas. But apparently the Japanese bombs were not aimed at wiping out the town and the Dutch army's defenses there, because they were dropped on places well outside. Perhaps the attack this time was a message that the Japanese forces were on their way towards Kota Cane, so that it would be better to surrender than to put any pointless resistance.

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## SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 1942

We three were again called before the military authorities. Facing us now was Lieutenant W. J. Botterman, an officer who was actually also the military prosecutor. After being given an opportunity to sit down for a while, each of us was handed a two-page letter containing the charge against us, the proses verbal [sic] that we had to sign. This was written in Dutch, and in it the accusations and charges against us were laid out. We were accused of having violated various provisions, something that cannot be done in a "staat van oorlog" and a "staat van beleg," [state of war and siege]. Because of that we had to be sentenced before a military court. And before being told to sign we were allowed to analyze and consider what was written down.

Because the best thing to do at the time was to sign those letters several moments later we did so.

It was now perfectly clear that we three would be sentenced, while our three friends would be freed of all charges. Perhaps our three friends would be produced as witnesses against us.[23] Nevertheless, we faced the situation happily and with determination. Rather we were encouraged because not all of us would be convicted.

After we told our three friends what had happened, they said they would not return home without us. If they were freed, then we too had to be free, and if we were sentenced to death, they had to receive the same sentence. They didn't want to taste freedom if we were not free as well.

Their protestations moved us even more. They did not want us to suffer anything that they also did not suffer in the present situation. But they did not want to heed our words.

We passed that day with deep emotions.

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23. According to Leon Salim, "in order to sentence anyone there had to be witnesses that the accused had committed a crime . . . so finally these friends were the ones to become witnesses. We three became the accused." (Interview, Jakarta, June 1985).



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## MONDAY, MARCH 23, 1942

Today the three of us who signed the proses verbal were to be brought before the military tribunal; so we were told by the officer who came for us. At first, we too thought that our fate would be decided that day, and we even thought that we were now to be separated from everything around us.

Contrary to these expectations, we were not brought before a full-fledged military tribunal.

We were only brought before a high-ranking Dutch military officer, Captain E. C. Hart de Reijter, who acted as a commissioner for the military court.

Before he asked us anything, we had the opportunity of noting his behavior and appearance. His panic was obvious. He was apparently very restless, and could not sit calmly. Sometimes he got up from his chair, taking no notice of us whatsoever. After wandering around aimlessly for a while he would sit down again. He took out a cigarette, drew on it for a moment, then threw it away.

The next moment he directed his attention to us. One by one we were questioned as to whether we fully acknowledged the charges against us, as laid out in the proses verbal we had signed.

He wrote our answers down on a piece of paper.

He didn't ask much and we did not have much to explain to him.

Without giving any reason, he then told a sergeant to take us back to the jail.

### *Retreat before Fighting*

With this brief interrogation soon over, we passed the rest of the day with various unanswered questions in our minds. This was because of the cloud of uncertainty that had hovered over our journey. It was not only Captain de Reijter who seemed nervous. All the officers from the highest to the lowest, even the ordinary soldiers appeared restless.

We had no idea what happened after that. We had no communication with the people and events outside the jail.

On the next day, Tuesday, March 24, 1942, nothing important occurred that we needed to note down. In the jail there was nothing



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for us to do but to amuse ourselves. Only the singing of Washington Damanik entertained us. Even though now divided into two groups, we still had sufficient freedom to joke and chat.

As evening fell, from our jail we could hear noises coming from the Dutch troops who were stationed around its walls. We heard the sound of orders, harsh, even sometimes abusive. The engines of lorries, tanks and armor-plated cars droned here and there. Although we couldn't see what was happening, we could guess what was going on. We became convinced that the Dutch army was beginning to evacuate Kota Cane. Whether this retreat was because the Japanese army was now too close, or only in order to "consolidate their position" at that time, we did not know. Whatever the case, we guessed that it was for the first reason that they were withdrawing their headquarters and all their remaining forces. And what about us? Was there still a chance that they would think of us, their prisoners whom they considered so dangerous? At the beginning we thought it certain that we too would be taken along as they retreated. Thus, throughout the night we stayed alert, without waiting for any prior orders.

That night the atmosphere outside the prison was busy and chaotic. We could no longer hear the sound of Sdr. Washington's harmonica or of his voice. Everything was overshadowed by the roar of engines outside the jail.

That was the climate that night. It was far into the night before we finally closed our eyes. We were now sure that we were just to be left behind. And if that was indeed the case, then we were about to experience another change in our fortunes.

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## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 1942

That morning when we awoke, the prison guards told us that the Dutch army had already fled to Gunung Setan, about 30 km. to the north of Kota Cane. Not a single one still remained. Thus we now knew we had in fact been left behind. This raised our spirits tremendously. The first change we experienced then, was that the six of us, once more united, were moved to better quarters. Despite this, we still could not really believe that we had been left behind and forgotten. At any time they could come back and take us from the jail, particularly before the Japanese army entered Kota Cane.

From the prison gate we could witness the stillness outside. Not a single Dutch soldier passed along the main road.

Then we saw the local children begin to raid each army camp that the Dutch had evacuated. As time passed the noise increased. They raced with each other to carry everything from inside each camp and barracks and soldiers' house to their individual homes. There were people carrying cupboards, typewriters, rice, milk, cigarettes, blankets, mattresses, and thousands of other kinds of things. There were even those who were bearing Dutch weapons that they had abandoned when they fled during the night.

March 25 was a "carried earth" day for the people of Kota Cane, a day of carrying and moving all the remaining possessions of the Dutch soldiers, which had now become the property of each of them. From our jail, we smiled as we watched all this. We guessed that however valuable the possessions the Dutch army had left behind, and which were now being "lifted" by the people, they still would not equal the value of the people's belongings that had been seized during the occupation of their country.

We also guessed that very soon the Japanese army would enter Kota Cane to replace the Dutch occupying forces who had now fled.

Throughout the day, we were in a state of "awaiting" the arrival of the military forces of that "elder brother." When they came we would certainly automatically be freed from prosecution by the Dutch military court and would be liberated from this jail. If possible, through the mediation of the army officers who would arrive later, we might be able to return to our home regions. This was our guess. But for the present, whatever we "awaited" still had not become reality, and it was now almost evening.



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*The Japanese Army Occupies Kota Cane*

The jail door was again closed and we had entered the room assigned to us. We chatted there about what we would later do when the Japanese soldiers entered the town, and what means we should use in order to get home as soon as possible. There were many other additional problems we had to discuss and decide about.

While we were talking, we suddenly heard from a distance the sound of loud cheering. Almost with one voice we said "the Japanese army." And almost in one movement too, as if activated by a single wheel, we leapt to the cell window to see through the bars what was happening outside. As the barred window overlooked the main road, we had an unobstructed view of places that were some distance away.

Indeed, it was not really very far away that we saw a unit of Japanese soldiers, all of whose bodies were covered with grass and weeds, looking very strange at first sight. The group was made up of about fifty soldiers, each riding a bicycle. Indeed, in our eyes the behavior and transportation of the advancing army seemed very different and rather strange.

They acknowledged the yells and shouts of the people greeting their arrival with a smile and a wave of their hands.

They continued to pedal along on their bicycles. As they reached the front of the jail, right in front of us, one of us shouted "Banzai" in a loud voice.

Hearing that, one of them, an officer, got off his bicycle, and approached the prison. The jailer opened the gate.

Soon afterwards, we were face to face with the officer.

*Freed from Jail*

That evening all the prisoners were freed, including us. Most of the inmates left Kota Cane the same day for their own homes. But we had to stay and spend the night there because we had no other place to "perch."

That night the prison gate was not locked as usual. We used the opportunity to see what was happening around the town. Not long after the arrival of the first group of Japanese soldiers (about fifty men), they were followed by a force that was large and noisy. As they took over the town, they settled in the places previously occupied by the Dutch army. They were very busy, and groups of them could be seen everywhere. Events in Kota Cane that evening really seemed strange to us.

An ex-Dutch driver came up to us. With tears streaming down his face he greeted us. He said: The Dutch officer said that the prisoners from West Sumatra had been shot to death. But before that they had been tortured. Their fingers were cut off until they confessed. And the military court sentenced them to death.

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As night was falling we returned to the jail. Sdr. Gindo had lit a lamp for us. He had also prepared cigarettes, tobacco, and other things to meet our needs. Together with him and our other friends, we passed that night with thoughts that were relieved and with joyful hearts. It was far into the night before we slept. That night we thought and planned by what means we could send news of our situation to Padang Panjang, so that the friends and family we had left behind would not be worried for too long. Earlier that evening outside the jail we had asked about the possibilities for sending a letter, or, better, for returning home. But all avenues seemed closed. Communications, other than to Medan, had been completely severed. But for someone who was not a soldier to get to Medan, was very difficult indeed.

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## THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 1942

Today we left the jail. We were the very last to be imprisoned and we were also the very last to leave, even though we had only spent a few days there. We were very grateful for what Sdr. Gindo and his friends had done for us and in parting we thanked them sincerely.

We moved to a small restaurant owned by a Minangkabau. There we stayed for a while, eating and drinking. Now we had the complete freedom of Kota Cane. No one would stop us from moving around wherever we wanted to go and observing whatever we wanted to see. So we saw and learned a lot. The former Dutch military headquarters, their last in Indonesia, had now changed hands without the slightest struggle. Wherever one looked only the Japanese army was visible. They outnumbered everyone else, including the regular townspeople. This was because most of the inhabitants, so it was said, had withdrawn from the town because their homes had been taken over first by the Dutch and now by the Japanese army. All the places formerly occupied by Dutch soldiers now housed Japanese.

We witnessed many "funny" and "sad" incidents that day. The "funny" ones included the way the Japanese soldiers "spoke" with the people, when neither side could understand what the other was saying. They spoke in sign language that was sometimes misunderstood by the other side. If mistakes arose, then small "incidents" broke out, in which the Japanese was always on the side that was "good" and right. And for the first time we heard the word "bagero"[24] that became very popular, as well as other words which at that time the Japanese soldiers often used towards Kota Cane's Chinese population. Many Indonesians too were abused in these terms.

Also here we heard for the first time "Indonesia Nippon sama sama."[25] The "sad" incidents we witnessed that day were ones that had begun when the Dutch army left Kota Cane. Who knows whether the people had "gone berserk" or whether it had become a "matter of pride" for them, but it was as if they were competitors in carrying and moving the remnants of the Dutch army to their houses, no matter what kind of things these were. Even though it was forbidden

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24. *Bagero* = *bakayarō*, a strong term of abuse frequently used by Japanese soldiers towards the Chinese and others they considered their inferiors. The meaning is something like "you stupid oaf."

25. "Indonesians and Japanese united."



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by the Japanese army, they continued the looting. And as a result, it was not surprising that undesirable incidents frequently occurred.

We had to regret this behavior, because in our view most Indonesians there at that time were acting shamefully. But, yet, what can you do? The colonial rule which had lasted for centuries had made them view themselves as lower than other races.

Apparently the Japanese army that day was to continue its advance to Gunung Setan, where the Dutch army still had its hide-out. But they did not actually attack it, because it was said that the Dutch soldiers themselves had blown up and destroyed the bridges between there and Kota Cane.

*Meeting a Japanese Military Officer*

That day, we also realized our wish to meet and talk with a Japanese army officer. Perhaps just by chance, a lower-ranking officer came to ask us to help plane a piece of board. We gladly did so. Then, while he waited for us to finish the job, we told him in English of our wish to meet with his superior officer.

Immediately on hearing this, he asked us to get in his car and took us straight to a building, which was perhaps their headquarters. There he brought us to another officer who introduced himself as T. Hukata.

Contrary to what we expected, Hukata was very fluent in English. Thus, we were easily able to explain our reason for coming to him. He then promised to take us to one of his superiors, and asking us to wait a moment, he went off to get him.

Shortly afterwards, he returned and asked us to accompany him to a room, which was very simply furnished. We were invited to sit down, and soon a Japanese officer came in, who we later learned had the rank of captain. Before taking his seat, he extended his hand to us, with a smile. He seemed very friendly.

In our subsequent conversation, Tuan T. Hukata acted as interpreter; we spoke in Indonesian and he in Japanese. After Hukata had completed our story, he questioned us as follows:

Question: Did the Dutch bring you here in the clothes you are now wearing?

Answer: Yes, just these clothes. And throughout the journey we were placed at the very front of the convoy.

Question: You were very fortunate not to run into danger on the journey. If you had met the Japanese army, it is uncertain whether you would still be alive. The Dutch behavior was very wrong. Civilians are not allowed to accompany a war convoy. In the Japanese forces, too, civilians are used as drivers. But about 30 kms from the front, the soldiers are ordered to leave the trucks and continue their

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journey by bicycle. But how are your clothes still clean and still apparently in good condition?

Answer: Because throughout our imprisonment we had the opportunity to wash our clothes. Our jail is situated not far from here.

Question: When did you arrive here in Kota Cane?

Answer: At dusk on Wednesday, March 18, 1942.

Question: Were you with the nine Japanese that the Dutch also brought here?

Answer: No. But we did hear that nine Japanese were taken by the Dutch army to Blangkejeren about 100 kms. away.[26]

Question: According to your estimate, about how many thousand men made up the Dutch forces who fled from here to Gunung Setan?

Answer: We don't know. The groups and lines of trucks criss-crossed many times, and it was difficult for us to estimate, as we were prisoners.

Question: According to your story, you were brought by the Dutch from Padang Panjang. Where is that Padang Panjang?

Answer: In the region called Minangkabau or West Sumatra.

Question: By what roads did you come to get here?

Answer: The roads Siborong-borong, Tele, Tiga Lingga (entering the jungle), Kota Buluh, and then straight here.

Question: Exactly the roads we followed.

"And now what do you intend to do?" the Japanese officer then asked. We explained our wishes, and asked his help so that we could return quickly to Padang Panjang.

In reply, he explained that he was very sad not to be able to grant our request immediately because there was no army vehicle that was about to leave for West Sumatra. The Dutch army had deliberately damaged and destroyed the vehicles they did not need for their flight, and the ones that remained now had to be used to attack Gunung Setan. According to the report from the airforce spy planes, many cars had been hidden by the Dutch in sheltered places, but for the moment we would have to wait for them to be collected and repaired.

From this we realized that we would still have to be patient for a few more days.

Hearing the Japanese officer's answer, we asked how much longer we would have to wait. He thought it would be for about a week more. Then he continued, as they were the vanguard troops they too would possibly soon have to leave the town. But he expected that the soldiers replacing them would help us as much as possible.

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26. North of Gunung Setan.

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Then we spoke further, asking what his opinion would be if we were just to fulfill our wish by traveling on foot. He replied by saying that to go on foot to Medan alone would take as much as about eight days. According to him, such a journey would be safe for an Indonesian.

Then we asked if he could give us a letter of authority so that, if necessary, we could use it on the journey. He replied that he did not think such a letter would be useful, because in the course of his duties, his direct communications were only with his general staff and not with other units. So a letter of authority from him would be no help to us. Thus neither of our requests was granted.

Our conversation continued like this for some time.

Finally he related his soldiers' bitter experiences on their journey to Kota Cane and the cruelty of the Dutch army, both from what he heard from his own men and what he heard from the local people.

Nor did he fail to explain the "sacred ideals of Dai Nippon" in carrying out this Dai Toa warfare, that is to "liberate" Asia from the colonialism of foreigners. It was also certain that what the Japanese had done was for the future "happiness" of Indonesian people. He hoped that we would willingly give them all our help in achieving this "sacred" goal.

We heard too many stories from the lips of those two officers.

When we were to return to our lodging, Tuan Hukata told us to take with us rice and oil that was then stored there. We respectfully refused this gift but to make sure that he did not think badly of us, we took a little rice, enough to be carried in a handkerchief.

Then we took our leave, after we had given the officer our address.

*While "Resting" in Kota Cane*

There was nothing else to restrain us any longer from going wherever we wished. But we had had to curb temporarily our desire to return immediately to our birthplace because of the lack of transportation. Good! Several of us proposed to go on foot to Medan and from there many cars would surely be going, for example to Bukittinggi; but after we worked this out as well as possible, particularly after investigating the situation on the roads we would have to travel, we felt we should be patient for a while longer.

Apart from the six of us, also staying at Pakih Baringin's eating shop were several former Dutch army drivers from Minangkabau, who had been left behind by the Dutch forces when they fled to Gunung Setan.

In our lodging that night, we wrote a few short letters containing the same message, which we intended to send to various addresses in Medan, asking that the recipients should let people in

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Padang Panjang know that we were safe and sound and were only awaiting a vehicle to take us home. We sent such letters to Sdr. Adinegoro, Kasuma, Hamka, Asbitan Jacoub, A. Z. Ahmad, Jakob Siregar,[27] and others in Medan.

Bearing in mind the difficulties and breaks in postal communications at that time we hoped that out of so many letters one would arrive at its destination.

The next day we sent off our letters to Medan with some of the men traveling there, especially the Indonesian driver who would be taking Japanese army's cars to that town.

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27. The three best known of these were Jamaluddin Adinegoro, Hamka (H. Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah), and Jakob Siregar. Adinegoro, a journalist, was born in West Sumatra in 1904; he had received legal training and also education in Holland and Germany, and was editor of the newspaper *Pewarta Deli*. Hamka, son of the Minangkabau ulama Haji Rasul, was born in Maninjau in 1908. He was a novelist and journalist, and was at this time managing editor of the *Majalah Masyarakat* in Medan. Jakob Siregar was the son of a Mandailing businessman and publisher. He joined Partindo in 1932 and was active in Gerindo in the late 1930s.

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## FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 1942

After sending off our letters this morning, we moved from Pakih Baringin's restaurant to the home of Sdr. A. Salam Raoef, a teacher, the head of an Islamiyah school in Kota Cane.

Here we were able to move around more freely as the house was pretty big, and Sdr. Raoef willingly gave us full use of it because his wife was still out of town after having been evacuated. We were accompanied by Sdr. Washington Damanik, the jail singer, and also several former Dutch army drivers. Thus, many of us lived in that one house. We cooked our own food and the former drivers also cooked what they liked.

The house where we were staying now began to have frequent visitors, friends who came to ask advice and guidance from us. It became an "information office" [sic] an office where one could get advice, guidance, and information.

We also heard that rumors were going round that we were Bung Karno and Bung Hatta, and their followers whom the Dutch army on Java had arrested and then left here. We found this very amusing. We explained to our guests that we were not Sukarno-Hatta, but only followers of Sukarno-Hatta!



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## SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 1942

*The Dutch Army Surrenders*

Contrary to what we had anticipated, at noon, we suddenly got the news that the Dutch army had surrendered before its position had come under attack from the Japanese army.

We were immediately able to witness with our own eyes the reality of that news. Under the protection of a large white flag and a Dutch flag, Major General Overakker, commander of the last Dutch army division that was "defending" the Dutch Indies, together with his assistants, came to surrender himself at Kota Cane, after the three days in hiding at Gunung Setan.

With the surrender of that "courageous" army officer, the story of Dutch colonial rule ended, a story that had lasted for centuries in Indonesia, and which was brought to a conclusion with this unconditional surrender in Aceh, which itself had been the very last area of Indonesia to be colonized by the Dutch.[28] Even though the high commander and representative of the Dutch crown in Indonesia had previously made a complete surrender of its power and sovereignty, this act of Overakker was the final stage of that earlier surrender.

Events that day possibly constituted the most serious blow ever delivered on the Dutch people.

And that same day we witnessed the rapid changes occurring in the ranks of the Dutch army and its leaders. If when we arrived in Kota Cane they had formed "the honored group" whose every order had to be obeyed, now they had to obey the decisions of the Japanese army leaders. We saw the "kontler" (Controleur) of that place with his hands bound in the same way as the Dutch had earlier bound their prisoners. Feeling those bonds, in my opinion, that Controleur would certain recall how he had previously treated the Indonesian people who in his view had behaved badly, even though in fact they had not done so. We saw his pale face and his body shaking with fear, even though he was not being tortured as the Indonesians had been tortured several days ago.

There were also a number of incidents among the Dutch officers who came to surrender that were occasionally amusing to the on-

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28. After a war that lasted for thirty years, Acehnese Sultan Muhammad Daud finally surrendered to the Dutch in 1903, but warfare against the Dutch continued in many parts of Aceh even after that date.



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lookers. The Dutchmen's faces were pale, their mouths tight shut and they walked with bowed heads. Their movements were very sluggish as if they had lost their energy.

We were that day able to see many things we had never seen before in the ranks of the defeated army. The officers who came to surrender no longer sat in their handsome shiny sedans, but they traveled in broken-down cars and large trucks that they drove themselves. Occasionally the tires on these cars would suddenly burst, and thus have to be repaired. And it was they who did the work now--no longer could they force it on others and supervise the work usually performed by laborers.

Among these Dutch officers we saw Haremaker sitting with bowed head in the damaged car in which we had previously traveled.

Kota Cane was again crowded, this time with the victorious Japanese, and the defeated Dutch army that had just surrendered. And packed too with the evacuees who were returning from the places where they had fled.

The atmosphere in the town that day, was one of defeat and acceptance, and we were onlookers.

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## MONDAY, MARCH 30, 1942

The defeated Dutch army continued to flood the town. Most were Indonesians from various ethnic groups.

Here and there you could see piles of weapons of all kinds and sizes, weapons surrendered by the defeated army. It was not only weapons that were given up, but all kinds of war materiel. So, not only were there huge piles of weapons, there were also heaps of gas masks, shoes, knapsacks, and so on. But many cars could still not get through, because the bridges destroyed by the Dutch during their retreat were not yet repaired. The Japanese sent Dutch soldiers to do this repair work on the broken bridges, relieving Indonesian soldiers of the duty. The Indonesian soldiers who had evacuated now became ordinary "civilians." Those who remained Dutch soldiers were arrested together with their "masters" as prisoners of war.

And from then on, hundreds of former soldiers in the Dutch Indies army began to leave Kota Cane, as well as some Chinese who for some reason had moved there.

The defeated Dutch soldiers began to be transported to a new place of exile, first it was said, to be concentrated in Medan, where they were now being taken. From morning to night without a break they moved out of the town. But it was clear that there were not enough vehicles to carry the huge number of prisoners.

We were hoping to accompany one of the groups being sent to Medan, but so far no opportunity had opened up.

In this task, the Indonesian drivers were again in demand. They took advantage of the opportunity, because they wanted to return to their homes as quickly as possible. Sdr. Washington Damanik also had the chance of a lift on one of the many vehicles.

Thus we began to feel lonely amidst this restless community, lonely because most of our friends had already left.



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## TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 1942

After eating breakfast this morning, with nothing else to do we went off on our usual walk. The place that drew us was obviously the one where the vehicles stood waiting to transport the prisoners of war, where we could find out if there was any chance of our accompanying them to Medan, or at least as far as Kabanjahe.

*Leaving Kota Cane*

The long-awaited opportunity presented itself suddenly. We got on one of the vehicles that was getting ready to leave, merely as an "experiment" as we hadn't even bothered to make any preparations for the journey. Several people in the car were wearing civilian clothes, in addition to the various former Dutch soldiers who were being transferred. One of the Dutch army officers in the group glanced at us. I don't know whether it was because he knew who we were, but he ordered us off the vehicle. To avoid an incident that would benefit no one, we got down and moved to the vehicle behind.

As we were descending we saw Mr. T. Hukata standing beside us with another Japanese officer. He smiled at us and we returned his smile.

Our comrade, Tuan Hukata, invited us to get aboard a nearby truck. This vehicle was still empty and pretty big, with boards around it, a truck for carrying former possessions of the D.S.M. But we were happy to get permission to go along as passengers, with the one condition that we should find a chauffeur to drive the truck. This was not a difficult task, as not far away stood two former Dutch drivers whom we knew.

We told the two of them to get on the truck and asked them if they would like to drive it. We didn't need to repeat our request, because this was indeed what they had been hoping for. In addition to these two drivers we were also able to take along five Buginese, former members of the Dutch army. The truck was apparently being turned over to us completely, and we had the opportunity of picking up other Indonesians wishing to go to Medan whom we met later along the road.

We expressed our heartfelt thanks to him.

The vehicles leaving for Medan that day had to form a group, a convoy. Thus there was a fixed time of departure and that time had now arrived. We then had no opportunity to say good bye and shake



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hands with the friends we were leaving behind, above all with Sdr. A. Raoef, Pakih Baringin and his wife, Gindo, and the others who had done so much for us. Nor did we have the chance of collecting our belongings and these had to be left behind, such as books and other small possessions. Let them become souvenirs for the people that remained. Each of us in our hearts said a prayer for those who had been so good to us, that their kindness towards us should later form a good deed in their favor in the eyes of God. In our hearts we said good bye and in our hearts too we said "until we meet again."

*On the Road Home*

Our truck moved forward, behind the vehicles that had already started out. We left Kota Cane and its inhabitants behind. In front and behind were vehicles filled with Dutch prisoners of war. Even though we were again in a convoy, the situation was very different from when we were brought here earlier. We were now no longer their prisoners, but the opposite, even though we had not become their guards.

Not long after leaving Kota Cane, we passed many people standing at the side of the road. Only when we got closer were we able to see that some of them were women. One group was carrying young children, and another was bearing various kinds of bundles and other packages in their arms or on their shoulders. The line of women was quite long. Their eyes scrutinized each vehicle as it passed them. It was clear that these were Indonesian women who had become victims of the Dutch war. Perhaps they were the wives of the common soldiers or of the Indonesian marsose who served here. With the Dutch army's surrender the previous day, they were hoping to meet their men again and resume their life as a family.

That was what they were searching for now. They carefully inspected each vehicle that passed in front of them, to see if among the passengers was the man they were hoping to see. But they never met the men they were looking for. Even if their husband or father were indeed on one of the passing trucks, they would certainly not be allowed to accompany him, because they were not soldiers under arrest. . . .

It was very sad to observe them. We could only share their pain, thinking of the fate of these women, unknowing and innocent, who had to endure such a sad and bitter harvest. How cruel is war, and how great the suffering inflicted on our people, the weak Indonesian people.

Unhappily, we could not give any help or assistance whatsoever.

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*Along the Former Battle Front*

We passed Sigalagala. The situation in this town was no different from that in the other places we passed through. Along the road we were traveling stood women with their children in their arms, all looking carefully at the passing vehicles. Here had been situated the camp previously housing German prisoners[29] and now apparently occupied by the prisoners of war taken by the Japanese, in other words Dutch soldiers and officers.

Now we were crossing an area that had been the former "battlefield." Here "violent" battles had taken place between the Japanese forces and the Dutch army. Traces were still clearly visible. Many ruins and burnt-out remains along the edge of the road were signs of the warfare.

As we entered Kota Buluh, we had to hold our noses with our handkerchiefs or anything we had with us, because of the awful stench carried by the wind from the countryside around. That terrible smell was the smell of the corpses, the victims of the warfare still scattered about, as there had as yet been no chance for them to be collected and buried.

Not long after leaving Kota Buluh, our truck had a small mishap and ran out of water. While they were filling it up, the vehicles following behind passed us. All the time we waited we never once took our handkerchiefs from our noses, and we even tied them behind so that they should not slip off.

The Buginese youths accompanying us on the truck, perhaps just through curiosity, walked along by the small bushes bordering the road, saying they wanted to see the corpses of the Dutch soldiers. They pushed aside the undergrowth with the blade of their canes. When they came across the body of a Dutch soldier, they would shout out, "Here he is, a real Dutchman," to their friends. "Here there's just a hand, but it is white," another would cry. "I have his head," another called out.

This is only one example of what we saw as we crossed the former battlefield.

Our truck repaired, we continued the journey. But the ride was not as smooth as before. The engine kept on stalling.

It was now 3:00 in the afternoon and our stomachs were feeling rather empty. Since leaving Kota Cane we had only eaten a few bananas which we had bought on the road.

We had to make frequent stops because our truck's engine kept giving out. In one place, a Japanese soldier on top of a goods truck hailed us from behind. It was clear that his vehicle was full of swords surrendered by the defeated Dutch army.

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29. The Dutch had interned German civilians living in Indonesia in the early months of the war in Europe.

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The Japanese soldier who had just hailed us with the word "driver" [sic] (English = *supir*) jumped down from his truck and pointed at one of his vehicle's tires. While pointing at it he was talking in Japanese, of which we couldn't understand a single word. But we could see that the tire he indicated was flat, and that he was asking us to take it apart and mend the damage.

Initially we told him in English that we were not the "driver" [sic] as he thought. But he clearly did not understand what we were saying, and kept ordering us to repair the damage to his car. Whether or not we wanted to we had to respond.

Thanks to help from the three drivers in our group, the work was soon completed, even though we had to wipe off our sweat, as this was the first time we had ever done this kind of work. After we had pumped up his tire and put it on again, he left us, shouting out various things that we couldn't understand. Perhaps he was expressing his thanks or praising our work.

Once that was over, we resumed our journey but not very fast, as we were afraid lest our car would break down again.

About 8 kms. from Kabanjahe, we had to cross a river, the Kali Batak. The bridge over this river had been destroyed and had still not been repaired. So our truck couldn't cross, and as we arrived, the rain began to fall.

It was said that a tremendous battle had raged on both sides of that river. Many Dutch soldiers had met their end there, and also many Japanese. The terrible smell blown by the wind from all directions gave us the feeling that some of the corpses of the battle victims had also not been buried.

In order to cross the river it was necessary to make one's way over a narrow bridge that had been slung across from one side to the other.

The place was naturally very crowded, because all of the vehicles wanting to go to Kabanjahe had to stop there, and only one man at a time could cross. All the bags had to be carried over too.

Hundreds of Dutch soldiers were carrying their baggage over. Here we saw Dutch officers who previously had been so proud now having to work like ordinary coolies, with their insignia of rank still decorating their collars and shoulders. We felt sorry for them as they performed tasks they had never previously had to do. But what can be said; they had to accept their destiny from God with open hands. Indeed we also felt pity for those people who in the blink of an eye had to surrender all their wealth to another. Our hatred all this time had been directed not at them as human beings but at their character as colonizers.

We were able to go ahead of most of those prisoners, even though they had arrived earlier. They had to carry over all their baggage while we were only eight pieces of skin and bone.

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It was almost night. We were still in the front line of the battlefield. Many sights screamed at us from either side of the road, even though they could only be dimly perceived through the dusk.

Hungry and thirsty, we stopped at a booth by the roadside, a Batak farmer's hut. We asked for drinking water from the friendly farmer. He respectfully and kindly granted our request, also giving us bananas which for the time being were enough to stay our hunger. After thanking him we resumed our journey toward Kabanjahe, which he said was not far away.

Just behind us, were several Japanese soldiers on bicycles. They stopped near us and spoke to us in their own language. We responded courteously, even though we couldn't understand what they were saying.

Night had now fallen and we were very tired. We now faced the problem of where to spend the night or where to stay if we reached Kabanjahe.

*Messengers from the Minangkabau Meet Us*

Without realizing it, we were already in the town of Kabanjahe. The town was packed with refugees from the war and Japanese prisoners.

Tired and hungry our first priority then was to find a place to spend the night. Not one of us had any "spirit" left. Thus we paid no attention to what was happening around us. We were like people who had just awoken from a very deep sleep, while our eyes still wanted to close again.

Suddenly we heard someone calling our names in a hopeful voice. We turned in the direction of the sound. . . . In front of us stood Sdr. Munir Rahimi. At first we did not believe our eyes, because it was impossible that in that situation Sdr. Munir should be there.

He gripped our hands and embraced us one by one. . . . Only then did we believe what we saw--that it was in fact Sdr. Munir Rahimi in front of us, not his ghost.

Before we could utter a single word, from a rice stall nearby Sdr. Bujung Atik suddenly appeared and he immediately embraced us too. . . .

Our eyes were full of tears and we had lumps in our throats because we were so moved by the unexpected meeting. Before we were really aware of what was going on, we were taken into the rice stall from which he had emerged. As soon as we entered, we saw there Sdr. Majid and Manan. It's impossible to say how we felt then.

"We were sent to Kota Cane to search for you," said Sdr. Munir Rahimi. "Thank God we came across you here. We were about

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to leave for home. Our car is all ready, even with your own clothes. You have to be in Minangkabau as soon as possible," he added.

"We meant to go to Medan first," one of us answered.

"Later to Medan, if you have some free time. Now Minangkabau calls you, and you must get there as soon as possible," responded Sdr. Munir.

Our four new friends had been sent to search for us, with the message that if we were still alive we had to return at once to Padang Panjang.

Questions and answers were brief then because we were very tired, despite the unexpected meeting which had lightened our spirits. And the friends we now met realized how weary we were, so they didn't ask us many questions. Later on our journey there would certainly be plenty of opportunity for conversation.

Only with Sdr. Nagakasi Brahmana, an Indonesian who was working as a Japanese policeman and had for a long time worked with the Japanese in Japan, did we talk rather extensively. We explained to him briefly our experiences as prisoners of the Dutch army in Kota Cane and the course of the interrogations they had conducted of us.

*Return to the Minangkabau Region*

After we had bathed, eaten and drunk, and changed our clothes, that same night we continued our journey to West Sumatra, returning to the region where we had been arrested and taken from on March 12 last.

We were now traveling to Padang Panjang in the car that had been sent to meet us, a Buick sedan of most recent model from the Japanese headquarters for all Sumatra.

Obviously all of us could not fit into such a car--that is, the six former Dutch army prisoners in addition to the four men who had met us. But as there was no alternative, everyone had to pack in. Even though there wasn't sufficient room, we had to manage. Thus some of us in the car had to carry on our laps those who were a bit lighter.

Unfortunately we could not take along the former Dutch army drivers we had met in Kota Cane who also wanted to go to Bukittinggi. We also regretted not being able to take Sdr. Washington Damanik, whom we had met again in Kota Jahe. Had there been room, we would certainly have fitted him in, even though in that car we were like sardines in a can.

That night at nine o'clock we left for Pematang Siantar, following a road round the banks of Lake Toba. But because it was already night, we couldn't see the beauty of the lake stretching from the side of the road.

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*Return from Kota Cane*

In the center from L to R.: Leon Salim (wearing a tie); St. Rajo Bujang; A. Murad Saad; Chatib Sulaiman; Dt. Mandah Kayo. (Chaidir Gazali is not visible)

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The cool, fresh night air reinvigorated our bodies, making our thoughts wander to the times we had passed. We didn't talk much or discuss anything as we journeyed through the night.

At two in the morning we entered Pematang Siantar, which at that hour was deathly quiet. Everything was blacked out in the town and not a single gleam of light was visible.

The police stopped our car and asked for our identification papers. These papers of ours were apparently "special" and more than adequate, so we were allowed through as soon as we gave the necessary explanation.

It was very difficult to find somewhere to sleep, particularly because no owner wanted to open the door of his boarding house on such a night. Possibly they were afraid that they would be robbed. And in addition, because many had fled here from the dangers of the fighting, the lodging places were all full.

After looking round for some time, we were finally put up by a local Chinese.

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## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1 1942

We woke up very late from a deep sleep. After bathing and eating breakfast, we strolled around the town of Pematang Siantar.

Here we met many of our former marsose guards. They swarmed around us, seizing our hands as if we were intimate friends. At first it was rather difficult to realize who they were, because they had now become "civilians," no longer wearing their "impressive," "frightening" uniforms. We talked and chatted for some time, with them asking us questions and relating their own experiences since they had separated from us.

They were now in the process of returning to their homes in different parts of Java, North Sulawesi, and other regions of Indonesia.

We were sorry not to be able to help them, particularly "Pak Haji" and his friends who had done so much for us and been so good to us. All we could do was ask them to stop later in Padang Panjang on their journey. They happily accepted our invitation and promised to stop by.

It was mid-day before we left Pematang Siantar. The road we were now on still ran along the edge of Lake Toba, through areas where many signs of battle were still visible. Here the Dutch soldiers had destroyed many roads to impede the advance of the Japanese army. But these roads had now been repaired.

We had now in the course of the twenty days since our capture by the Dutch army gone right round Lake Toba: as we went [north] we had gone up its left bank and now going home we followed its right bank.

Only now did we learn from the messengers who had met us how busy our friends in the Minangkabau had been since our departure. The six of us who had disappeared without a trace[30] for so long had become the focus of attention not only for our comrades in the struggle, but also for Bung Karno, who at that time was in Padang, and who initiated investigations and searches for us.[31]

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30. Salim uses the Minangkabau saying, "hilang tidak berimba dan hanjut tidak berlubuk."

31. Sukarno had been in internal exile in Bengkulu since 1938. When Japanese forces landed in south Sumatra in mid-February 1942 the Dutch took Sukarno via Muko-Muko, by truck and foot to Padang.



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As explained in a newspaper clipping published in Padang on April 1, 1942, Ir. Sukarno, as General Head of the Komite Rakyat Sumatera Barat,[32] had several days earlier come to visit the top leadership of the Japanese Army for all Sumatra in Padang. This meeting arranged by Bung Karno was to discuss several problems and put forward various demands from the people. Among the problems discussed was our situation. With reference to us, the newspaper explained as follows:

> The problem concerning Tuan Chatib Soelaiman and his friends received very great attention from the Japanese troop commander after his meeting with p.t. Ir. Soekarno. After the meeting was over, Lt. Gen. Sakaguchi that same day ordered Tuan Haroen Algamar to act as intermediary to investigate all Dutch authorities and search for Tuan Chatib Soelaiman Cs.
>
> In this connection if it becomes clear that Tuan Chatib Soelaiman Cs (and his friends) are still alive, they have to free them as soon as possible, and if dead, to indicate where they have been buried.
>
> Let us be patient while we wait the results of Sakaguchi's efforts.

Thus ran part of the item in the newspaper of April 1 about us.

During our journey they also explained at length what had happened in the Minangkabau since we left. Even though there was still a lot we did not hear, we learned from their conversation that the people's leaders in the Minangkabau were feeling worried because of the actions and measures being taken by the Japanese army leaders.

Thus we did not focus much on what was happening along the road we were traveling. But from an occasional glance we could see that large numbers of houses on the road between Balige and Tarutung had been completely wiped out as a result of the warfare. At the edges of the road were piled heaps of wood and furniture, things that had been damaged or completely destroyed. Most of these piles were said to consist of equipment from various government offices that had been deliberately destroyed by the Dutch army's "vernielingscorps" so that it should not be used by the government

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For his own account of this journey from Bengkulu see *Sukarno: an Autobiography, as told to Cindy Adams* (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1965), pp. 148-55. Sukarno was still in Padang when the Japanese forces arrived on March 17.

32. These "People's Committees" were set up in the early days of the Japanese occupation by Indonesian leaders in many parts of West and East Sumatra, to function as an interim government and to maintain order. Sukarno was active in sponsoring them. See Kanahele, "Japanese Occupation of Indonesia," pp. 28, 259.

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that succeeded them. Also the local people themselves had smashed some, in order to wreak vengeance against the Dutch leaders for their tyrannical actions against the Indonesian people. Thus attacks had been directed not just against Dutch offices, but the houses of the B.B. officials had also been destroyed.

From Tarutung we took the Sipirok road. Along the way we met many groups of returning evacuees. Perhaps these included many former Dutch soldiers. Among them too were people who seemed unable any longer to lift their own feet. Unfortunately we had no chance to offer help to those who had been so mistreated.

Approaching Sipirok, our car got a flat tire. So we all had to get out and help with the work, while many groups on foot passed close by.

After our car started off again, as we were climbing an incline, we were hailed by a young man who was dragging his feet along with great difficulty. When we reached a flat place, we waited for him. He told us that four of his comrades had left in a car that had passed by not long ago. He had been unable to accompany his friends, and asked us to take him as a passenger. According to what he said, he had formerly been in the Dutch militia. His feet were swollen because of the distance he had walked, and he was now finding it really very difficult and felt he could no longer continue his journey. Even though the size of our car really could not permit it, we felt sympathy for him, so told him to get in, although he would just have to stand. As we were entering Sipirok, we came across the car carrying the youth's friends, a big car, and he was able to transfer to it and sit more comfortably.

In Sipirok we stopped a while at the Komite Rakyat's office. They welcomed us joyfully, because for some time, this committee had participated in the investigation and had even organized a widespread search for us.

We talked happily for some time, while we had tea, and then continued our journey. As evening fell we were approaching Padang Sidempuan. It was dusk before we arrived in the town where we had previously spent just a few minutes in the prison cell.

After eating dinner, and searching for benzine which was difficult to find in that place, we set off again. Before leaving, several of the friends we encountered told us we would be greatly disappointed with what we would find in Minangkabau. What we had longed for and struggled for for so long, still gave no sign of being realized, even though the Dutch colonization had disappeared.

Various explanations were given for what was described as so disappointing. Nevertheless, we ourselves would soon witness and experience the situation.

Before we reached Bukittinggi our car had another minor breakdown, at a place a few dozen kilometers from Hutanopan. We arrived at Hutanopan at about two in the morning. And because we were so tired spent the night there.

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With help from several policemen, we got the parts our car needed to continue the journey. Here twenty days ago we had been given food while being guarded by drawn swords, and now we were being joyfully welcomed.

We soon left Hutanopan. There is not much to record about this final day of our journey. Everything went smoothly and not a single danger impeded us.

*Arriving at Our Destination*

If our car had not broken down en route we should have arrived in Bukittinggi around eight on the morning of April 2. But because we had to stay overnight at Hutanopan, it was not until three in the afternoon that, with hearts thumping with happiness, we entered Bukittinggi. As we approached the town, we had already decided that not one of us would be allowed to stop there, even though some of us came from the region and their families would perhaps be waiting hopefully and anxiously. Padang Panjang had to be our first destination because it was from there that we had been arrested and taken to Kota Cane.

After stopping for a moment at the office of the Persatuan Saudagar (Merchants Association) and N. V. Bumiputera in 31. Tembok, just to shake hands with the friends who had been awaiting our return for so long, we went directly to Padang Panjang.

At almost four in the afternoon our car entered the town of Padang Panjang. Here now ended the story of our journey that had lasted twenty days.

We returned to Padang Panjang with bodies that were still breathing. We had not left it forever but only for a while. Now we returned home as free men, not guarded by marsose and police who would conduct us to our graves.

We were greeted warmly, and with resounding cries of "hidup" [long life].

It felt as if our hands would fall off because of the enthusiasm with which they were seized by all the people welcoming our return. Among the friends greeting us some were weeping with emotion, to meet us again in such an atmosphere.



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After the twenty one days separation we now received a welcome so warm that we would be unable to forget it for as long as we lived.

Though tired and exhausted by the long journey, our weariness disappeared as a result of our welcome. Not till an hour later were we able to return to our own homes, where too scores of family members and relatives were waiting, together with close friends.

Now ended the apprehension; here were presented greater opportunities to contribute our services to our land and people. The struggles that we now faced would form a new phase demanding far greater care and sacrifice, because what we had earlier hoped would result from the arrival of the Japanese forces, in no way came about, but rather the opposite.

Our homeland, Indonesia, freed from the mouth of the tiger was in the jaws of the lion. . . .

We continued the struggle towards a truly free Indonesia to achieve eternal and everlasting happiness.

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