

# Professional Blindness And Missing The Mark ~ The Year 1948 And The Madiun Affairs - A Year Of Cheat And Rumors



*“The Reorganisation-Rationalization (Re-Ra) was the detonator of the explosion that struck the TNI and Indonesia and was abused by the Dutch and the PKI for their own aims” (Nasution II a: 5).*

The year 1948 and the *Madiun Affair* were of decisive importance for both the existence of the young Republic of Indonesia, and the military career of Lieutenant General Abdul Haris Nasution. He devoted several publications to the major events of that year, among them *Book IIa* of his *Memoirs*. I will use that book to present his view of the events, since he had a pivotal role in both their genesis as well as their aftermath. My interest in Nasution developed during my work in Indonesia, where my Chinese bookseller Liem regularly provided me with books that stemmed from libraries of former regional government officials and military who spent their retirement in Malang, East Java. Among these books were Mahmillub court martial notes and books that Nasution wrote during and about his military career, and the events he encountered. Back in the Netherlands, I began reading Nasution's books, as well as books about him. His history fascinated me, since he was a man who continuously had trouble with authorities and interest groups, but always managed to come back stronger than before, until his companion and opponent President Sukarno finally had to leave the political scene mid-1960s. In discussions with Wertheim, he objected to my

fascination with the man, since he saw him as a liar and a cheat. In August 1993, I interviewed Nasution for a biography about him and met a charming and inspiring man who, just like Wertheim, had a photographic memory for people, events and books. Again, Wertheim condemned the effort and predicted a tremendous task in separating fact from fiction. I never had any inclination to adhere to his point of view, and started working on the biography. Gradually, and by checking Nasution's data and insights with existing and authoritative literature on the events he participated in, I realized that he had something important to say. His memories are relevant and his insights worthwhile to report to a larger public. In this chapter, I will use his memories of the year 1948; one of Indonesia's many Years of Living Dangerously. They are taken from Volume IIA of his *Memoirs*, called *Memenuhi Panggilan Tugas*, i.e. "Doing My Duty". Despite Wertheim's objections against my work on Nasution, he nevertheless remained interested in my work and supported me when and wherever feasible; for which I am grateful.

#### *Appeasement and its political problems*

In [the preceding chapter](#) we have seen that Sukarno's policy of appeasement vis-à-vis the Allied Forces was intended to be positive for the former Eurasian prisoners of Japanese camps, and was even facilitated by *pemoeda* support. It served Sukarno's goal of appeasing the Western Allies by showing his good intentions regarding victims of the Japanese occupation. However, the political history of the year 1948 shows the growing dissatisfaction within the Indonesian army, among the village militia and the political parties with the other facets of the appeasement policy. It is probably this history of dissatisfaction and mistrust, and its dramatic end in civil war and coup accusations, which has blinded subsequent Indonesian and foreign historiographers to the two sides of Sukarno's appeasement policies. In essence Sukarno was a Jacobin, which means that he changed camp whenever it served his interests. Before the Second World War Sukarno took the non-cooperative side of Indonesian nationalism, and continued that line during the Japanese occupation when he chose to side with Japan. After the Independence Declaration of 17 August 1945 he chose, for tactical reasons, to co-operate with the Allied Forces, whose support he needed in the Independence war against the Dutch. After the Republic and the Netherlands parted ways for good in 1956 after fruitless negotiations about the division of mutual interests in the archipelago and repayment of war damage caused by Indonesian military, Sukarno used the Western Allies once again in a campaign aimed at making the

Netherlands stick to its 1949 promise of handing over New Guinea to the Republic of Indonesia. Without any clear reasons from the Dutch for doing so, that issue had been excluded from the Round Table Agreement. From 1964 on, and forced by Indonesia's miserable international financial debt, Sukarno relied heavily on support from Communist China. After October 1965, appeasement was not as important, and was replaced by Suharto's balancing act of looking inward and outward.

### *An independent analysis of the 1948 affairs*

For an interesting Indonesian analysis of the 1948 events, I will use Part 8 of Nasution's 10 volume Publication on the Indonesian Independence War. The analysis is based on Nasution's personal memories and notes about his stay in Yogyakarta in 1948. At that time he was chief of staff of Commander in Chief General Sudirman and worked with him on an encompassing strategy plan that served two goals. On the one hand, a proper solution was needed for the relentless Dutch effort to destroy the Indonesian army after its infamous defeat against the first Dutch Aggression of July and August 1947. On the other hand, they were in search of a way to covertly rebuild a new and combat ready Indonesian army that would be able to conduct mobile strike operations at the regional and national level, and guerilla war at the local level. Nasution's analysis of the Madiun Affairs regard this effort and its complicated political context.

Nasution's memoirs were first published in 1983 by CV Haji Masagung in Jakarta. I use the second, 1989 edition in which the original Volume II has been split up in two separate volumes, i.e. Volume II a, and Volume II b. Volume II provides Nasution's analysis of the preparations for guerrilla warfare against the expected second Dutch aggression. Chapter 2 contains the PKI Insurrection. It is a mixture of ideas, notes, and other materials from 1948, as well as personal memories, and as such it is still relevant to revisiting the 1948 crisis. Nasution sharply separates his military analysis of the 1948 events from his conclusions, in which he ventilates his anti-communist sentiments. Where necessary, I will augment his analysis with facts, documents and analyses from McTurnan Kahin's thesis on Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia. This thesis is based on Kahin's experiences as journalist and member of the Indonesian Ministry of Information during Independence War. Although his exposition has some odd misses regarding the dates and order of events, it makes some interesting points. It focuses on the political side of the 1948 events, in particular the emergence of a

strong leftist protest against President Sukarno's "sloppy" way of negotiating about peace and independence with the Dutch from February 1948 on. But it also builds on Siliwangi Intelligence which dominated the marshes of rumors circulating in and around the Ministry of Information in 1948. Solely for that reason, and despite the fact that so many years after the event it is a difficult to check these sources, as a contemporary of Nasution Kahin's study is helpful for a historical analysis of 1948 with two starting points: the objectifying analysis of Nasution and the left leaning analysis of Kahin based on Siliwangi dominated information. Since this piquant confrontation deserves a much larger and broader analysis than this chapter permits, I will primarily use Kahin's English translations of Indonesian speeches and proclamations.

Contrary to the personal success story that Dutch and foreign studies ascribe to Nasution, and the bad image cultivated by contemporary left wing 'hate literature' in and outside Indonesia, he presents a nuanced and often troubled and grim story in his memories of 1948. They cover his bumpy career at the time, including his continuing and sharp discussions about strategy and tactics with his partners in battle, i.e. representatives of the village militias, called Laskar, as well as territorial commanders and rebelling army units, and last but not least his Commander in Chief General Sudirman. Each of these parties had their professional and existential interests and perspectives, which divided them so much they could not reach a compromise. Nasution's report also relentlessly shows his failure to adequately handle the task he was given by Sudirman, namely to massage away the fears the Laskar village militias had of the policies of the much hated Hatta cabinet, and convince them to participate in a plan he conceived in 1948 while Chief of Staff. He opted for a combined attack on the enemy, whereas General Sudirman preferred an all-out guerilla war against the Dutch. Nasution's plan included the covert build-up of a small core of combat ready mobile troops and a large amount of stationary village militias. For Nasution, finding a way across all the obstacles was a painful experience but he describes his blunders and failures, as well as his final success, with candor. Despite his personal charm Nasution failed to get in contact with the Java based Laskar commanders, who revered General Sudirman. As a military man with a Western military education, he had no understanding of the emotive side of the Laskar motivation for entering the war against the Dutch, i.e. *semangat revolusi* (revolutionary fire). In the end, these failures as well as those of Sudirman, who had extensive connections with the rebelling troops and political parties,

contributed to the final explosion, which in Western terms became known as “The Madiun Affair”. The misunderstanding between the two commanders moreover enlarged the risk of what Hatta in August 1948 explicitly stated was to be prevented at all cost, i.e. a discussion about social revolution, which would not only trigger a struggle between ideologies and classes but also escalate it. For Hatta, on the eve of an expected second Dutch Aggression, national unity and strength had absolute priority over social revolution, which could only split the ranks; dissent had to be denied, and eventually suppressed. On the other hand, the PKI Musso as well as independent activist Tan Malaka, pushed the idea of class thinking. It found a willing ear with the village based Laskar units who felt confronted by Nasution who treated them, as they said, as *kelas kambing*, i.e. as peasants. Again, Nasution was quite honest about his failures and successes.

Nasution’s analysis shows that the so-called communist Madiun coup was an accident in a long-standing loyalty conflict between army units and village militias, lumped together in the inlands of Central Java, and the government and the president. For the protesters the subject of the conflict was the expected impact of the policy of appeasement with the Dutch and the Allied Forces on their professional and family life. Kahin uses the same framework but is more oriented on the side of the National Front, the PKI and other political parties. For the Laskar commanders, the price of independence paid by the government was too high, i.e. submitting to Dutch and Western imperialist powers which condemned them to a marginal position in a federated Indonesia. Nasution’s analysis shows the military side of the Independence War and approaches that as the essence of the struggle. For the military, Nasution included, the war contribution was indispensable. Without it, the government had no legs to stand on. Whereas for the Central and East Java based units that conception was the reason to resist the government and push for a policy and personnel change; for Nasution and Siliwangi it was the reason to support the government. Moreover, in Nasution’s opinion, fighting an independence war without unity of command and political leadership could never bring independence, only heroic and deadly defeat. For Sukarno, submission was the only way to get support for independence from the Allied Forces, which in its turn was the only way to reach Independence. For Nasution, the ideological difference regarding the loyalty issue between the nationalist PNI and the modernist Muslim Masyumi party which divided the KNIP parliament, and the protests from the Left Wing (*Sayap Kiri*) and the National Front of Amir Sjarifuddin, were serious mishaps. According to Nasution, the

politicians involved missed any understanding of the disastrous impact that political dissent would have on the military defense against the forthcoming second Dutch aggression. The commanders that understood the backgrounds of the dissent, drew their lessons for the next two decades, i.e. do not let politics get a hold on military affairs. Local people are the army's only and basic ally, not the government. However, for tactical reasons Nasution maintained the connections with the government since they were needed to keep his Siliwangi Division upright and combat ready. The government had the money he needed to achieve that goal. The Central and East Javanese units were left behind in poverty, working with untrained and unqualified troops, because they did not have that link. They stigmatized Nasution as a traitor, a party pooper who sucked up to the government for his own private and Western interests.

#### *Sukarno's accusation and the name of the event*

The name "Madiun Affairs" was born when President Sukarno gave his 19 September 1948 speech of about the battle between loyal and disloyal troops in Solo Central Java and the presumed coup attempt in Madiun East Java, one day earlier. He opened his speech by stating:

*"Yesterday morning the Communist Party of Musso staged a coup in Madiun and formed a Soviet government there under the leadership of Musso. They consider this seizure of power by force as a preliminary step in the seizure of the entire government of the Republic of Indonesia. From this fact, it is obvious that the Solo and Madiun incidents are not isolated events but are constituent parts of an over-all pattern of action designed to overthrow the government of the Republic of Indonesia. To achieve this end, the rebels have used units of the Twenty Ninth Brigade, the former irregular force commanded by Lt. Col. Dahlan. By so doing, Dahlan has betrayed the country and has violated the oath of the army. Therefore I hereby dismiss Dahlan from the army."* (McTurnan Kahin 1970: 292).

The event he is referring to is the message that the Pesindo garrison commander Soemarsono of Madiun broadcasted in the night of 18 September with the headline "In Madiun starts the victory." One hour and a half after Sukarno's speech PKI leader Musso replied with a speech that was born out of despair, since according to McTurnan Kahin the events of September 18<sup>th</sup> had completely surprised Musso and had neither been planned and prepared by him, nor been ordered. Musso started his speech with the sentence:

*"On September 18, 1948, the citizens of Madiun seized the authority of state in*

*their own hands. With that the citizens of Madiun have done their duty in our national revolution, which as a matter of fact must be led by the people and not by any other class!"* (McTurnan Kahin 1970: 293).

Musso continued by accusing those people in government and army who during the Japanese occupation had manned Japanese organizations (Sudirman) or had been Romusha slave dealers (Sukarno and Hatta), of selling out the country to the former colonizer; and so on and so forth. He talked about how the middle class nature of the cabinet and government was not very different from the bourgeois rule of the colonial time, and commented that only the labor class could wage an effective war against the aggressors. Musso ended his speech with a call on the Indonesian people to follow the example of the Madiun citizens and take their fate in their own hands.

Already on that first day, dissent arose over the question of what had happened in Madiun, which still continues today. Was it a coup? In the night of 18 September a local Pesindo commander named Sumarsono did broadcast a message titled "From Madiun victory starts". According to the papers and Antara, the message called for a change of government by the people. In 2002, Sumarsono denied Sukarno's accusation in an interview with Radio Netherlands. He denied having performed a coup but admitted to having taken measures against eventualities. These measures included the creation of a regional branch of the National Front (Front Nasional Daerah/PNI) that appointed him military governor of Madiun. Contrary to what newspapers in Yogyakarta stated, there were no pro-PKI mass demonstrations in Madiun and no red flags. The Indonesian flag was not removed from government buildings. No commanders and town officials had been arrested or killed.

Sumarsono said that Commander in Chief Sudirman sent Lieutenant Colonel Suharto to Madiun to have a look and discuss the rumors. He arrived at night and accompanied Sumarsono on a tour through the town the next morning. After that tour, Sumarsono asked Suharto for his opinion and, when he agreed with Sumarsono about the real state of affairs, asked Suharto to write a letter to the president about his findings. It was important that the president should know what really happened, and not believe the Siliwangi controlled newspapers in Yogyakarta. Suharto replied that he indeed had seen nothing to worry about and Sumarsono should write the letter and he would sign it. Sumarsono wrote the letter, which Suharto indeed signed. Sumarsono also talked about a letter from

Amir Sjarifuddin to the president, regarding the same issue. The Radio Netherlands reporter did not ask him about which letter Suharto took with him. Anyway, Suharto took a letter home, and later replied that on his way back he had been arrested by Siliwangi troops; the letter never reached the president who consequently went with the news as reported in the Jogjakarta newspapers (Kolom Ibrahim Isa in *Milis Nasional*).

Although Sumarsono did not specify the precise reason for his seizing power in Madiun, his actions come across as a local martial law proclamation in order to defend the town against the Siliwangi's hunt for disloyal troops and FDR and PKI officials. McTurnan Kahin did not commit himself fully to what he had heard about the coup message broadcasted by Sumarsono in Madiun on September 18<sup>th</sup>, because he could not find an authorized copy of the radio message, only a second hand version (Kahin p. 291 note 66). Hence, just like the public in 1948, we still depend on hearsay, and do not know for sure if there was a coup attempt. It looks as if Sukarno, in view of the rumors about risks and threats, and the Siliwangi Intelligence reports, decided to make a pre-emptive strike against the PKI Musso in order to prevent the man from exploiting the opportunity, and damage the defense against the expected second Dutch aggression by creating civil war. Whatever the case; in the 1950s and after, Sukarno refused to call 1948 the year of the PKI coup. He always referred to "the Madiun affairs", since he needed the PKI as his personal apparatus for spreading the message of Indonesian socialism to the peasants and laborers.

### *Nasution on the prologue*

Survivors of the Madiun affairs who were part of the rebelling troops, still accuse Siliwangi and Nasution of having been traitors of the military and leftist resistance against the scandalous demobilization and reorganization of the Indonesian troops ordered and implemented by the Hatta cabinet. Within that framework, it is important to also get the view from the other side of the hill, i.e. Nasution's report about 1948. What was his view of the events, then and afterwards?

From Nasution's description of the events of 1948, it is quite clear that the source of all the fuzz was not the threat of a communist coup. During the preceding Amir Sjarifuddin cabinet, the PKI had supported the reorganization. But the Hatta cabinet triggered a change of course in the PKI. Hence, Nasution's focus is the serious dissent in the army about the government's demobilization and



reorganization policies, because that was the problem with which he wrestled. He shows that the route to the Madiun explosion was much longer than the tensions of August and September 1948 between Siliwangi units present in Central Java and local and East Javanese units that had gathered in Central Java after the demobilization. Dutch and American studies usually focus on these tensions. However, Nasution shows that the Madiun explosion was the result of structural issues. The events in Solo were only the powder barrel of a fire that subsequently spread fast to other towns. The threat of disappearance as a result of the implementation of the first Hatta cabinet's plans, was cause for dissent among the militias. An important intensifying factor of dissent was the Siliwangi stand, which was loyal to the president, but also strived to move up in the ranks as an elite unit. This division was rewarded when Sukarno created a mobile strategic reserve brigade in 1948, which became the president's security force for the time being, and included Siliwangi. One outcome of this policy was that Siliwangi was spared a reduction of its manpower. The effort raised suspicion and jealousy among the Central and East Javanese units that apparently were not favorites of the president and Hatta.

The ReRa plans implemented the lessons learned by the General Defense Staff from the republican defeat against the first Dutch Aggression in August 1947, and the Dutch exigencies presented by the strangling Renville Agreement. Nasution had good relations with that staff, thanks to the former Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant General Oerip Soemohardjo. Both had a common KNIL background and when in private, enjoyed common memories of their pre-war time in Bandung. However, both were also completely dedicated to the ideal of a professional, non-ideological oriented and combat ready Indonesian army. Though Oerip resigned after the defeat in 1947, he had accepted Sukarno's offer of becoming his military adviser. Unfortunately, Oerip died in November 1948, leaving Nasution in despair over how to close the gap to the president.

The Renville agreement which finalized the first Dutch aggression of July 1947 stipulated, just like the earlier Linggadjati Agreement did, a complete disarmament and demobilization of the Indonesian armed forces in the territories occupied by the Dutch. However, this time the Dutch forces would execute and guide the demobilization themselves. Second, the territory of the Republic was reduced to the inlands of Central Java and Sumatra. In its turn, the Indonesian defense staff reflected on the chances that the defeat offered for a new approach,

for example abandoning the enormous but rather unorganized mass of lightly armed combat units that served before August 1947. It had proved to be only effective in some places and only at the *desa*-village level; as an army, it did not work. Within this framework, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Amir Sjarifuddin had already made preparations for a plan of reorganization and rationalization of the armed forces in October and November 1947. It would make use of Dutch finances intended for the disarmament and demobilization operation, in particular pensions and social insurance, as well as Indonesian sources such as the textile industry and agriculture. Sjarifuddin thought that the design and implementation of these ideas should take place with the full support of the political parties in the appointed KNIP parliament, which since Proclamation had direct relations with armed units. His Biro Perdjungan would play a prominent coordinating role in these relations. In their turn, the army commanders regrouped their forces in Central Java, including Nasution who ordered the members of his Siliwangi Division to find their way individually and in small groups via the southern mountain areas of West and Central Java to Yogyakarta. He called it Siliwangi *hidjrah* (evacuation, reference to Mohammed's departure from Mecca).

When the KNIP parliament subsequently sent Amir's cabinet home in December, the Indonesian government had accepted the Renville Agreement, which reduced the republic to the inland areas of Sumatra and Central Java, cutting off the seaports. The constitution of a new cabinet that would implement the Renville Agreement appeared to be difficult and as a result Sukarno appointed a presidential cabinet. Vice President Mohammad Hatta became Prime Minister and Minister of Defense. This new cabinet started work on February 22nd 1948. As for the reorganization, it was executed through the Defense or Baharuddin Law, based on the Baharuddin motion accepted by the KNIP parliament in December 1947, which was a call for government action. Based on that law, the reorganization pertained to a coup de frappe by the government, which gave operational and administrative command of the army to the government in order to fully control the military budget. Hatta based his policy on the plans of the preceding Amir Sjarifuddin cabinet but dropped the role of the political parties in the operational command designed by his predecessor. Regarding the military side of the reorganization, Hatta's concept used Nasution's design, created after the 1947 defeat and pertaining to the creation of a small core unit of well-trained and educated professional soldiers paid from Dutch and Indonesian sources, and

the abandonment of the mass of unarmed or badly armed non-regular units. The core unit could function as the start of republican and federal armies, whereas the village militias would be functional in both. For Hatta, the rather chaotic collection of Laskar peasant militias and the multitude of other non-regular units which emerged since the Bersiap Time (1945-1946) was on the list for rationalization. Hatta's ReRa plans rendered Sukarno's 1947 Law on the TNI useless. That law regulated the creation of the concept of Tentara Negara Indonesia and the terms of TNI membership, and included the Laskar as regular part of the TNI. However, Renville stipulated that the TNI be disarmed and demobilized. Hence, the Hatta government took the Renville terms as an opportunity to get rid of all the non-professional units, which according to the defense staff had to take place anyway. This move was the main reason for the mistrust and disloyalty which haunted the Hatta cabinet. The implementation of Renville and the abolition of direct party political influence in the combat units made the ReRa effort a highly abject affair. It robbed the remnants of the TNI, and other combat units like the Laskar peasant militias, of the opportunity to seek support from parliament which until then had been an option for all Indonesian armed forces.



The start of the Siliwangi hidjrah from West Java, (in Pierre Heijboer: 105).

After the fall of his cabinet, former Minister Amir Sjarifuddin constituted in response to the emerging fear, anger and unrest among the troops and the militias, an additional parliamentary lobby of mostly Left Wing parties in parliament plus other organizations like his own Biro Perjuangan. This lobby was called Front Demokrasi Rakyat (FDR, People's Democratic Front). It had the

explicit aim to support individual military and groups, and to put continued political pressure on the Hatta cabinet under to stop its ReRa policies. Hatta's scrapping of party political control of the reorganization as well as his creation of a support lobby split the parliament in a left wing of PKI, PSI, Murba and other groups, and a right wing consisting of PNI and the modernist Muslim Masyumi party. Whereas before Renville these wings cooperated on legislation and motions, from then on they went separate and increasingly opposite ways. According to Nasution, it created the climate for agitation against him and Hatta, which triggered the escalation that resulted in the Solo and Madiun affairs.

A further escalating factor was the cabinet's trouble with creating the financial and fiscal frame needed for the planned massive demobilization and pensioning of soldiers and officers. The Dutch mobilization funds were too small to cover all the expenses. Moreover, government had to create or find new jobs for the demobilized military, which in most cases failed. Disarmament became a very controversial affair. Paying for it from Dutch funds aroused anger and made the cabinet look even worse.

In July 1948, when it became clear that Hatta would not give in to pressure to stop the ReRa operation, Amir made a plan B that provided for the mobilization of military pressure against the government plans in case further political pressure would fail. It remained unclear for a long time what he meant by that. Moreover, the idea of mobilizing military pressure appeared dangerous and might trigger civil war. This was not in the interest of the Independence war and many commanders were suspicious of the idea, in particular Siliwangi and Police units.

Sjarifuddin made a list of units and commanders that might support military pressure. It was Amir's Plan B that caused Moscow to send pre-war PKI leader Musso to Java with the instruction to take over the FDR, bring it under the roof of the PKI and develop PKI into a people's party that would be able to attract mass popular support and take the lead in republican politics and military. Musso arrived in August 1948 and immediately took action by performing a coup within the party organization, with internal support from the Polit Bureaus younger generation. Aidit, Lukman and Sudisman constituted the new PKI top. The PKI had to be rebuilt from a small and old-fashioned Stalinist urban elite party to a large and popular party with a significant role in bourgeois democracy and the ability to solve Amir's dilemma regarding Plan B, namely the danger of civil war. Hatta's acceleration of the ReRa operation irritated Commander in Chief General

Sudirman immensely. The policy ignored his design of a total popular war against the Dutch. Following long consultations with his commanders, Sudirman was ready for his famous STOP Order No 1 of June 6<sup>th</sup> 1948. The order was designed and edited by his Chief of Staff Nasution, and redressed all Hatta's schedules and implementations. It solidified Sudirman's position as Commander in Chief, by also making him Chief of the General Defense Staff of the ministry of Defense. It put him in charge of both the army and the ministry of defense. The order was a cunning Coup de Frappe with Sukarno's silent support.

Even though Sudirman's move came late, perhaps too late to be of any political impact, it was a definite signal to politicians that in wartime the army was essentially the people's and military affair, instead of a matter of fooling around with abstract economic calculations and political schedules (Nasution II a: Lampiran II). This fact would be driven home in the prologue and epilogue of the Thirty September Movement in 1965, which had a macabre and disastrous end in the murders of tens of thousands of helpless peasants.

It is important to note that in 1948 yet another dangerous situation surfaced. One very similar in motivation to the Madiun Affair, but that got quite a different response from the government. It took place in West Java, where Muslim militias were just as angry about the government's ReRa operation and its dismissal of constitutional values and interests as their colleagues in Central and East Java were. They united in the Darul Islam movement and proclaimed Darul Islam, i.e. the Indonesian Islam state. This movement intended to replace the rotten Republic of Indonesia with a decent Indonesian Islam State. Whereas the so-called communist coup of Madiun got all the national and international attention, Indonesian and foreign parliaments as well as authors either ignored the D.I. event or treated it as a second hand affair.

In the 1950s the Darul Islam movement blocked communications with Jakarta and the surrounding areas in Java, as well as with the export areas in Celebes, and thus constituted a much larger and more sustained threat to the country's existence than the presumed coup attempt of Musso's PKI ever did. One cannot escape the notion that the Cold War climate determined domestic political and security priorities. This odd situation was made possible by the republican government's dependence on support from the Dutch and the Allied Forces, which were part of the Cold War against communism. Even Nasution mentions the Darul Islam emergency only once in his chapter on 1948, and he does not

elaborate. His chapter on ReRa gives a clue to his ignorance. After the TNIs failure to successfully stand up against the Dutch army in August 1947, he moved to Yogyakarta. At the time of the emergence of the Darul Islam movement, he was highly involved with the regrouping of his demobilized Siliwangi division in Central Java. Moreover, in 1948, his work as chief of Sudirman's Army staff confronted him with the disastrous impact of Tan Malaka's campaign against him and Hatta, and against Western educated politicians and commanders in general, on his relation with the Laskar units in Central Java. The preparations for the expected second Dutch aggression also absorbed more of his attention than the Darul Islam event did. Nasution did not elaborate on the Darul Islam as a national threat in other publications either, unless its impact on the guerrilla capacity of the army demanded his attention. He never expands on the reasons behind his attitude.

### *The Sudirman/Nasution dissent*

With the arrival of the Hatta cabinet, Hatta took Nasution's earlier plan for an independent Indonesian task force as a lead. It had to be implemented immediately and Hatta sent his orders to the commanders in the field to do the job. However, in view of the expected second Dutch aggression Nasution's plan had to be redressed. Sudirman and Nasution discussed the nature of the defense strategy. Should supreme command stick to Nasution's scenario after the defeat, constituting a small core of mobile elite troops and a solid base of stationary village militias, or should they opt for a different concept that would allow all troops and militias to have a place in the defense? This last option had Sudirman's preference. The first scenario necessitated the rationalization of all non-regular and regular troops and militias, which did not fit the plan. Sudirman considered it a threat to a unified command structure since the troops in the field rejected the option, which made them unreliable and not combat-ready. The second scenario promised a place in the fight to all troops and thus ensured obedience and rest. Nasution's felt that in the remaining few months before the Dutch aggression, such a mobilization was unfeasible, since it would not have enough military spin off. Without a strong professional military core, Indonesia would not be able to maintain mobility, cooperate with the local militias and constantly strike back from unexpected and reliably defended local edges and angles against the suspected Dutch aggression. What remained was nothing more than an enormous landscape of local trenches and foxholes without a central command and strategy. A dualist approach was unavoidable. The position of the Laskar village militias

had a central place in the debate. They had to hold on to their position against all odds, and lacked the possibility to travel around to evade Dutch aggression and strike from behind, a situation they were unhappy with. They felt victimized by Hatta's and Nasution's plans which, in their view, condemned them to exploiting their inferior class position, i.e. *kelas kambing*, the goats cabin in colonial/Indonesian trains where peasants with their livestock were forced to stay on their way to the market. Professionals had the opportunity to hit and run, the Laskar village militias had the freedom to stay behind and be bombed.

A painful period in the first half of 1948 was Nasution's failure to succeed in the task given to him by Sudirman - winning the acceptance of the Laskar units and commanders for his dualist planning of a mobile elite core unit and stationary village militias. The Java based Laskar units rejected the plans. After that defeat, Sudirman took the Laskar under his own wings and pushed further for Sukarno's support of his Total Guerrilla concept. He contacted the representatives of Sjarifuddin's Front Demokrasi Rakyat (FDR) and the Biro Perdjjuangan, in an effort to get them behind the concept. That connection, which was Sudirman's personal affair, was an effort to temper the anger among Laskar, FDR and PKI members over the Hatta plans, since they involved the elimination of the political parties from the reorganization. Sudirman kept his political efforts to himself and left Nasution out. Thus, several scenarios were in the pipeline at the same time, with Hatta's scenario and Nasution's plans under attack and Sudirman's scenarios being discussed with field commanders, the Laskar militias and FDR and PKI oriented troops. It created a climate of indecisiveness and division of command, which led to several deep misunderstandings and clashes between Nasution and Sudirman. The continuing tensions between the two commanders exhausted both, and in Nasution's opinion hampered the establishment of a unified command structure. Another complicating factor was that the General Defense Staff at the Ministry of Defense had its own agenda and strived after its realization on its own. The situation as a whole made Sudirman announce his famous Stop Order, created by Nasution, in which he rejected the Hatta schedule and unified supreme command and general defense staff by putting both under his command. It had Nasution's full consent. Whatever scenario would end up coming to fruition, it was clear to both commanders that it needed political support and that they would need the freedom to act. To them, government was instrumental and not the leading branch, since politicians knew nothing about the military craft. Both commanders were also completely loyal to the president, in

their eyes the only man who could keep the different interests and interest groups together. They viewed the government as an obstacle between the military and the president. This attitude remained intact until 1 October 1965, when six generals of the army top were killed at the command of Sukarno's security force, under the suspicion of preparing a coup. It meant the final blow to the military's trust in their president.

In hindsight, Nasution regretted his failure to win the Java based Laskar for his plans for a professional army core and a stationary Laskar base. In his opinion, his failure undoubtedly contributed to the clashes that eventually led to the Madiun affairs, in which the Laskar and other units under threat of rationalization considered Nasution to be part of Hatta's camp, which had to be wiped out. Nasution explained that failure as the outcome of being a Dutch educated citizen and military. He lacked an understanding of the emotive *semangat* spirit that reined Laskar militia behavior, as well as an understanding of their resistance against external top down command structures, which was not rooted in their small-scale group dynamics and did not have their approval. Sudirman in his turn understood the Laskar sentiments quite well, and met the Laskar objections appropriately. However, he could not prevent the explosion of anti-Nasution sentiments and the accusations of being NICA agents against Hatta and Nasution which emerged in August and September 1948. According to Nasution, they focused on his KNIL past, his "Dutch behavior" and his loyalty to the Hatta cabinet. In Hatta's case they focused on his Dutch past, and the arrogance of the disciplined and well-trained Siliwangi soldiers who supported the government's political horse trade with the Dutch. At least that was Nasution's feeling at the time. Hence, in his view, nationalist sentiments split the people in Java along the line of pro and contra Sukarno's dealings with the Dutch, and pro and contra against the colonial Dutch educated legacy in the nationalist movement. The dissent did not hurt Sukarno immediately. He had a colonial education and many Dutch and Western contacts, and was a necessary part of the Independence effort. No one could replace him.

### *The Solo affairs*

Nasution draws attention to the demographic and catering problems Central Java had to deal with after the regrouping of tens of thousands of demobilized troops in Central Java, which meant a multiplication of people who needed food. The problem was worsened by the fact that family members of the regrouped troops



and other fugitives also followed, adding to the number of immigrants. In the rural rice economy of Central Java, which had been ruined by the Japanese demand for small and large cattle meat, Malthusian checks developed, i.e. violent rampage, starvation and civil war. There is no doubt these problems worsened the tensions between the military units.

Nasution reports that on September 14, a number of PKI-oriented Laskar units of the irregular marine Panembahan Senopati division attacked troops of Ali Sadikin's Siliwangi Brigade in the Solo/Surakarta region. Commander in Chief Sudirman immediately ordered the fights to stop and approached Nasution to remove the Siliwangi troops from Central Java, send them to West Java and stop further escalation. Nasution was not prepared to do this. Subsequently, Sudirman went to Solo to meet with the fighting units. However, during the following days the skirmishes severed, revealing deeply rooted sentiments of mutual hatred. According to Kahin, on 17 September Sukarno ordered a first stage Martial Law in the Solo region and Semarang, i.e. the State of Danger (*Keadaan Bahaya*). Ali Sadikin's Siliwangi Brigade remained in control of Solo city, whereas the rebelling units of the marine Panembahan Senopati Division remained in position at the city's precinct. Actually, as Harry Poeze from the KITLV emailed me, Sukarno conceived the order on 16 September, and published and implemented it on 17 September.

On that last date, Sukarno also appointed Colonel Gatot Subroto, Commander of the Corps Military Police, as military governor of Surakarta and Semarang. In that authority, Subroto issued his Decree No. 1, which mentioned and condemned the skirmishes in Surakarta, and ordered the fighting units to cease their fighting as soon as possible, ultimately at September 20, 12.00 hrs. He ordered all commanders to report to him in the Residency Office, in order to explain their position vis-à-vis the government and receive orders on how to restore order. According to Nasution, it was this decree that triggered the start of the Madiun affair the next day, 18 September 1948 (Nasution II a, 86). The final explosion came on 18 September, just as Siliwangi Intelligence had predicted. On that day, TNI units of Amir Sjarifuddin's Biro Perdjungan seized power in Madiun and arrested the Chief of the Defense Staff of East Java, as well as staff officers, District Commanders, and the regional commanders of Military Police and others, and killed several of them. They were replaced by FDR officers and administrators (Nasution II a: 81- 85). According to a 2005 interview with PSI commander Soemarsono, no killings had taken place. He had led the seize power of Madiun and it had no communist background, just a local defensive one against

Siliwangi.

According to McTurnan Kahin the TNI units were PKI oriented Pesindo units. Nasution does not mention the background of the units. The rebellion showed how dangerous the construction of troops was under party political control and command. It split the army in a TNI part and a party political part, which in light of Amir Sjarifudin's plans to escalate the pressure on the Hatta cabinet by mobilizing the military units under the Biro Perjuangan, increased the danger of local civil war. Musso fed the public's fear of civil war, as well as Nasution's and the government's, by incorporating Amir's Plan B in his own plan of action. McTurnan Kahin reports that almost immediately, the Hatta cabinet started removing FDR and PKI oriented field commanders from their post by moving them to less dangerous positions or retiring them.

At the request of President Sukarno, in the night of 18 September, Nasution conceived a 'plan de campagne' for taking out the rebels and the communist party. In Yogyakarta, Colonel Suharto also did an efficient job. While the whole campaign lasted about two and a half months, in one night, he had abandoned and arrested the local branch of the communist party. Sudirman did what he had to do, and commanded the strike units that crushed the rebelling troops that allied with FDR and PKI, but God heard him mourn. However, his call for a peoples' war was not heard again until 1 October 1965. Nasution took a breather and then restarted his work on his dualist strategy. In December 1948 the long expected second Dutch Aggression began. The Indonesian troops operated according to Nasution's plan of local flexible assaults, based on village militias and mobile units, cutting enemy lines and attacking from behind. Contrary to the first Aggression, the Indonesian forces operated in a more disciplined manner and according to plan, but they never reached the level of an army with a central command organization.

### *Conclusion*

The Solo and Madiun affairs were immediate outcomes of the ReRa issue raised by the Hatta cabinet policy of bringing army command under total government control. It was the second time a large-scale conflict erupted between army and government; the coup attempt of 1946 which I did not discuss in this chapter, being the first. The 1950s would bring new conflicts, such as 17 October 1952, the 1955 affairs and the 1957 affairs. Whereas Western literature on the early republic focuses on the analysis of the 1948 events and in later years on the

competition between army and PKI over political power, Nasution presents a different picture that shows the birth convulsions of the TNI and the inability of the Sukarno government to get permanent grip on those dynamics. He viewed that encounter as more serious than the competition between Army and PKI, because the 1948 situation concerned the rebuilding of a combat ready army as the one and only guarantee of defense against Dutch imperialism and retaliation. The 1 October 1965 affair was the last time army and government openly opposed each other. Under Suharto, any conflicts remained more or less invisible to the public. According to Nasution, quibbling between army and government about military matters was characteristic for the first two decades of the republic, as was the army command's fear of the PKI infiltrating the battleground again, like it did in 1948.

Nasution's reconstruction gives no answer to the question whether 1948 was a political or a military affair. Before 1948, politics and military command were heavily interwoven as far as planning and operations went. The political parties had direct access to the units and vice versa. However, Hatta's coup de frappe of making the military budget a cabinet matter and excluding the political parties from control over any military command, appeared to make army reorganization an exclusive matter of cabinet and government. On the other hand, Sudirman's Stop Order of 12 July 1948 was another coup de frappe, bringing ministerial planning, financing and operational command under his personal leadership. This made the planning and countering of military action once again a primarily military affair. However, his move came too late to get a grip on both the growing unrest between loyal and disloyal troops, as well as the formation of a left wing front headed by the PKI, set up to support the protest of the disloyal troops against the ReRa plan. As mentioned above, the power struggle between army and government continued during the whole of Nasution's career. In the 1950s, and based on the experiences of the Independence War, army command was of the opinion that the army was the prime people's representative, standing beside and above the government, serving as watchdog. It followed Sudirman's line of taking initiative whenever needed. According to Nasution, the main problems were the birth convulsions of the TNI, which had great difficulty accepting government authority and a central military command. Consisting of a bunch of undisciplined units with bossy commanders, most of them without military academic qualifications, the army lacked the basic characteristics of a real army, and remained stuck in the legacy of the Independence War - a free military

enterprise with a direct relation to the president. Nasution considered it his task to overcome the convulsions and build a proper combat ready republican army that could manage any foreign and domestic threat.

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