Behind the Banner of Unity: Nationalism and anticolonialism among Indonesian students in Europe, 1917-1931

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Chapter 5
Repression and refuge
Soebardjo in Berlin

As a follow-up of the February 1927 congress in Brussels, this chapter describes how the Indonesian students in Perhimpoenan Indonesia worked to keep Indonesia on the agenda of the League against Imperialism. The wave of state repression that hit the Indonesian student community in the Netherlands in the second half of 1927, pushed the PI further into the arms of the international LAI, which provided PI students shelter in Berlin.

Returning from his journey to Brussels in 1927, Mohammad Hatta was exhausted. In his autobiography, he recounts that he needed two full weeks of rest to completely recover from the conference. But he was very satisfied. In *Indonesia Merdeka* he wrote euphorically: “Our foreign propaganda in Brussels is the most important example of what we have done in this field so far. And thanks to the uprising in West Java and in Sumatra’s West Coast, the attention of the world community has turned towards our Fatherland.” The Perhimpoenan Indonesia had not only succeeded in making its claims heard on an international stage, he said, it had also acquired a position in the Executive Committee, and had demonstrated its relevance to Indonesian political parties as a “advanced post of the national movement in the cold North”.

The Indonesian performance at the Kongress gegen Imperialismus was the first event in a series of international meetings and conferences in the context of the League against Imperialism. In his capacity as Executive Committee member, Mohammad Hatta maintained frequent correspondence with LAI functionaries and other anticolonial activists in Europe, such as Nehru, Chattopadhyaya and Liao Huanxing. It is illustrative that the PI, on the occasion of its twentieth birthday in 1928, received numerous congratulations, not only from the Netherlands and the Dutch Indies, but also from Nehru on behalf of the INC, from Indian and Chinese socialist student associations in Berlin, from Egyptians in London and from several national LAI sections. The PI was even invited by the Indian National Congress to

516 “Lijst der ontvangen schriftelijke boodschappen en telegrammen,” *Indonesia Merdeka* 7.1 (March 1929): 2; Nehru, *Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, 4:87; IISH, League against Imperialism archives, inv. nr. 127,
join its annual convention in Calcutta at the end of 1928. The invitation was intercepted by
the authorities and never reached the PI. The integration of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia in
the circles of the LAI resulted in frequent attention to the Indonesian political situation in
meetings and resolutions, and this had not been the case before the Kongress gegen
Imperialismus. Especially after the second meeting of the Executive Committee in August
1927 the situation in the Dutch Indies was a recurrent topic at LAI meetings.

This was not yet apparent at the first Executive Committee meeting from 29 to 30
March 1927, despite the fact that it was organised in Amsterdam. The main purpose of this
first post-Brussels meeting was to discuss the organisational structure of the League against
Imperialism. Mohammad Hatta was present, as well as J. Nehru, Liao Huanxing, V.
Chattopadhyaya, W. Münzenberg, G. Lansbury, A. Marteaux, R. Bridgeman, R. Baldwin and
A. Goldschmidt. On the agenda were the financial situation of the League, the location and
staffing of its secretariat and the division of labour between the executive meeting, the
international secretariat and the national sections. The agenda left little time for political
discussions and declarations. The committee only reacted to the most pressing issues of the
moment: the French arrest of Lamine Senghor, the American invasion of Nicaragua, and the
bombardment of the Chinese city Nanjing by American and British war vessels.517

At the second executive meeting, however, which took place on 20 and 21 August
1927 in Cologne, Germany, there was more time to discuss colonial issues.518 After further
deliberations on the organisation of the LAI and after declarations on China and British India,
Hatta and Soebardjo brought up the situation in the Dutch Indies. At the Brussels conference
in February it may not yet have been clear, but in August it could no longer be denied that the
colonial authorities had ruthlessly repressed all communist and semi-communist
organisations in the Archipelago after the revolts of November 1926 and January 1927.
13,000 people were arrested and 1300 of them were deported to prison camps in New
Guinea. However, Hatta and Soebardjo wanted to emphasise that the political structure in the
Dutch Indies was not entirely destroyed. As they explained, Islamist and nationalist political
movements had stepped into the vacuum left behind by the communists. In July 1927,
nationalist activists established a new party, the Perserikatan Nasional Indonesia, which

letter by Münzenberg and Chattopadhyaya to the affiliated organisations, 22 December 1928; Poeze, Politiek-
Politioeneele Overzichten, 2:107.
517 Poeze, Politiek-Politioeneele Overzichten, 1:44; Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian
Dreamers, 154-159; Nehru, Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru, 2:316-320.
518 At this meeting were present: M. Hatta, A. Soebardjo, E. Fimmen, W. Münzenberg, S.D. Saklatvala, L.
Gibarti, V. Chattopadhyaya, F. Brockway, H. Barbusse, J. Nehru, Liao Huanxing, A. Marteaux, R. Bridgeman,
Dhuni Chand, M. Jones, J. Lefebvre, and G. Duchêne.
succeeded in uniting local nationalist study clubs and youth organisations. The organisation shared the political principles of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia but was geared more towards building a mass party than on the training of cadres. Of another political colour was the reformed Sarekat Islam, now Partai Sarekat Islam (PSI), which regained some of its strength, and which became more sympathetic towards cooperation with the nationalist movement, with ex-PI member Soekiman Wirjosandjojo on its board.519

Hatta and Soebardjo proposed to approach these organisations to arouse their interest in transnational cooperation. This proposition was accepted and on 29 August 1927 the LAI secretary Gibarti issued a message of solidarity to the PSI and the PNI, in which the LAI vowed to undertake active propaganda throughout Europe to campaign for the freedom of speech and political organisation in the Dutch colony. The LAI encouraged the Indonesian parties to communicate and exchange news and information with movements for independence abroad, such as in Indochina, the Philippines, India and China. The correspondence with these movements, then, could be facilitated by the LAI secretariat in Europe, the gateway to the international community.520

Hatta and Soebardjo also proposed to send a commission of inquiry to Java, on behalf of the LAI, to investigate the conditions and causes that had led to the 1926 revolt. A similar idea had been suggested by Münzenberg in the weeks of the revolt, and had even been the subject of a resolution at the Kongress gegen Imperialismus.521 For Münzenberg and the LAI, the plan to send delegates to the Dutch Indies was intended to provoke a reaction from the Dutch government, which could be used for subsequent anticolonial agitation. In the unlikely case that permission was granted, it would offer an opportunity to re-establish direct contacts with anticolonial activists in the Dutch Indies.522 For the Perhimpoenan Indonesia it was important to counter misrepresentations in previous reports of the Dutch Indies Government. These reports conveyed the impression that the unrest was the result of external provocation by professional communist activists and Moscow rather than the misery of the Indonesian population as a consequence of the colonial system.523 A report from January 1927 of the

519 Poëze, Politiek-Politionele Overzichten, 1:1xx-lxxiii.
520 Poëze, Politiek-Politionele Overzichten, 1:136; Kwantes, De ontwikkeling van de nationalistische beweging in Nederlandsch-Indië, 2:643-644.
521 Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers, 124, 182.
522 Poëze, Politiek-Politionele Overzichten, 2:182.
523 E. Gobée, Soemitro and J.W. Meyer Ranneft, Verslag van de Commissie voor het onderzoek naar de oorzaken van de zich in de maand November 1926 in verscheidene gedeelten van de residentie Bantam voorgedaan hebbende ongeregeldheden, ingesteld bij het Gouvernements-besluit van 26 Januari 1927 (Weltevreden: Landsdrukkerij, 1927), 16-17; “De gang der communistische beweging ter Sumatra’s Westkust,
Attorney General of the colonial government, for example, began with the words: “The actions carried out by the communist leaders in the period from July 1925 to the end of December 1926, may generally be regarded as in rigid compliance with the resolutions adopted at the Fifth World Congress of the Communist International in Moscow …” In the Volksraad, the Governor General even declared that the unrest was the work of an “immoral foreign organisation, by means of deception and terror” and that “the main cause of the communist agitation does not have its root in the Indies and certainly not in the dissatisfaction of the population”. This reading of the revolt ran counter to the interpretation of the Indonesian students, who saw the revolt as a national reaction to a colonial system and a foreign occupation. To counter the official reading, the investigative committee of the LAI intended to put emphasis on the structural causes of the revolt.

The proposal was willingly accepted by the other members of the Executive Committee. Mardy Jones, a Labour MP from Wales, Alfons Goldschmidt, a communist German professor and artist, and Henri Barbusse, the famous French communist novelist, were asked to form the delegation. They would be joined by Johan David Leo Lefebvre, a former regional governor in Sumatra and a personal friend of Mohammad Hatta, and by H. van Walree of the Dutch section of the IAH. Gatot Taroenomihardjo, who had almost finished his law study in the Netherlands and was about to return to the colony, would accompany the delegation in the Dutch Indies. As expected, the Dutch authorities refused to cooperate and denied entrance to the delegation. It would also take until 1929 before the PSI and PNI responded to the calls of the LAI. But the attempts indicate that the Dutch Indies was transformed from a colonial backwater to an area of anticolonial struggle for the League against Imperialism and the anticolonial movement at large.

The further integration of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia in transnational anticolonial networks via the LAI also brought them in contact with alternative circles and networks. Hatta was, for instance, invited to attend the summer meeting of the transnational Ligue...
Internationale des Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté in Gland, near Geneva, through its chair Gabrielle Duchène. This women’s league was established in 1915 as an independent leftist and feminist organisation. In 1927, it counted over 7000 members and chapters in several European countries that came together in an annual summer school. Duchène had just replaced Lamine Senghor in the Executive Committee of the LAI, who left for health reasons. She had invited a few anticolonial activists to come to a hired Quaker school on the shores of Lake Geneva from 25 August to 8 September 1927. Many familiar faces of the LAI were present, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Romain Rolland, Roger Baldwin, and some unknown Chinese and Malagasy members. Together with Henriette Roland Holst, the Dutch poet and well-known independent socialist, Hatta discussed the situation in his fatherland and strongly attacked the economic exploitation, racial inequality and educational underdevelopment of the Dutch Indies. Interestingly enough, he did not discuss women’s issues even once in a speech of 20 pages, indicating that these did not occupy an important role in the politics of the PI.527

Dutch section of the LAI: reluctant collaboration
The PI also continued its political work with new fervour in the Netherlands as well. In Brussels and Cologne, it was decided that national sections of the League against Imperialism would be established in the main colonial centres of Europe and the United States. In April 1927, Edo Fimmen and Mohammad Hatta initiated informal talks between Dutch organisations that had been present at the Kongress gegen Imperialismus in Brussels. They approached the Dutch chapter of the Guomindang Party, consisting of Chinese sailors in the harbours of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the peranakan Chinese students of Chung Hwa Hui, and independent socialists and leftist social democrats such as Henriette Roland Holst, Piet Schmidt, Edo Fimmen and Johan Lefebvre. The SDAP and the CPH were not approached as parties, but the involvement of communist organisations such as the Comité voor Indonesische Bannelingen (‘Committee for Indonesian Exiles’), the Dutch chapter of the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (‘Internationale Arbeidershulp’) and the Dutch chapter of the Internationale Rote Hilfe (‘Internationale Roode Hulp’) suggests strong communist

involvement as well. On 25 July 1927, the Dutch section of the League against Imperialism (LAI-NL) was established, and from September onwards it issued a bimonthly journal, Recht en Vrijheid (‘Justice and Freedom’). The secretariat of the organisation was in the hands of the PI.528

While the PI was happy to cooperate with communist, socialist, feminist and pacifist initiatives abroad, not all members of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia were equally convinced of the necessity to collaborate with similar Dutch organisations in the LAI-NL. The students considered international networking as very important, but the LAI-NL was essentially a deviation from the non-cooperation principle. In a remarkably frank letter from Hatta to Darsono in Moscow in May 1928, the former described how Nazir Pamontjak, Soebardjo and he himself had to persuade the “large majority” of the association to join forces with Dutch political organisations. Even Gatot Taroenomihardjo, who according to the Raadsman voor

528 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 294, 20 June 1927 W9; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Mohammad Hatta, 8 November 1927, p. 28; IISH, Archief Chung Hwa Hui, inv. nr. 13, sent and received correspondence 22 March 1927, 31 March 1927, 16 July 1927, and 21 July 1927; Poeze, Politiek-Politionele Overzichten, 1:90, 136-137; Poeze, In het land van de overheerzer, 1:213-214.
Studeerenden was a communist himself, had resisted collaboration with Dutch communists.\textsuperscript{529} As Hatta paraphrased him: “Dutchmen, although they are communists, remain Dutchmen, which means that they are individualists and only work in their own interests.”\textsuperscript{530}

The scepticism of Gatot Taroenomihardjo and other PI members resonated with the nationalist PI line, and also echoed the stance of Semaoen, who preferred collaboration with Indonesian students to subordination to the CPH. For the same reasons, Semaoen and Hatta had raised objections when the Dutch CPH member Piet Bergsma, who was the colonial expert of the Party, had claimed to represent the PKI at the Kongress gegen Imperialismus. The distrust among the Indonesian students of Dutch political parties was profound, and they did not accept a Dutchman taking what they felt to be their rightful place.\textsuperscript{531} An additional reason for their hostile attitude was the fact that the Communist Party in this period experienced a severe crisis and was split between the old CPH under formal leadership of Louis de Visser, and a second communist party, the CPH-Central Committee (CPH-CC), which was led by David Wijnkoop. The students preferred to keep aloof from this factional struggle and to determine their own agenda.\textsuperscript{532}

In the end, Hatta, Pamontjak and Soebardjo seem to have convinced their fellow PI members to engage with the LAI-NL, perhaps with the assurance that the PI would secure the day-to-day management of the organisation. Furthermore, the PI sought to enhance its position vis-à-vis the Dutch organisations through Pan-Asian cooperation. In accordance with earlier policies in Bierville and Brussels Hatta and Soebardjo lobbied with the Chung Hwa Hui and the Dutch section of the Guomindang to form an Asian bloc within the LAI-NL.\textsuperscript{533} Thus, they hoped to prioritise the anticolonial character of the new organisation over its leftist orientation, and to prevent possible internal discord between socialists and communists, and communists among themselves. This Asian bloc never came about, because the CHH members were even less inclined to join the League against Imperialism than some of the PI members. The organisation could not reach consensus and decided to leave it to its individual needs.

\textsuperscript{529} NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 280, 2 July 1926 S10; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 291, 8 March 1927 G4.

\textsuperscript{530} IISH, Archief Komintern - Partai Komunis Indonesia, inv. nr. 23, letter from Hatta to ‘D’, 14 May 1928.

\textsuperscript{531} NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 296, 28 June 1927 M10, bijlage II, letter from Hatta to Semaoen, 10 March 1927; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Mohammad Hatta, 8 November 1927, p. 2, 34.

\textsuperscript{532} Morriën, Indonesië los van Holland, 73-81; Mellink, “Wijnkoop, David Jozef,” 155-159; Poeze, Politieke Overzichten, 1:114, 268, 460; Voerman, De meridiaan van Moskou, 355-373.

\textsuperscript{533} IISH, Archief Chung Hwa Hui, inv. nr. 13, letter from Mohammad Hatta, 22 March 1927; IISH, Archief Chung Hwa Hui, inv. nr. 13, letter from Edo Fimmen, 16 July 1927.
members to decide whether to join the LAI-NL or not. Only two students seemed to have been attracted.534

The difference in attitude of the PI towards foreign organisations and Dutch political parties is remarkable, and will be further discussed in chapter six. What is important here, is that the complex debates on whether to engage with other organisations or not were temporarily side-lined in the face of an unprecedented wave of state repression against the Perhimpoenan Indonesia in the summer of 1927.

Criminalisation and repression
The new successes of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia inevitably drew the attention of the authorities, also because they seemed to coincide with the communist revolts of November 1926 and January 1927. Although the unrest had been quelled in a matter of days, and had nowhere lead to existential threats, it had greatly embarrassed the colonial government and the security services. Years of ‘benevolent rule’, aimed towards cultural emancipation and economic development under the ethical policy, had not won the hearts and minds of the Indonesian population. And despite repressive measures against communist parties and unions from 1925 onwards, they had succeeded in starting a rebellion which caught the world’s attention.

In the public debate on the causes and effects of the revolt, the authorities refused to believe that it had been the result of discontent of the local population. As mentioned above, it was underlined in several governmental reports that the unrest had been the work of external agitation. The Indies press, as well as official declarations by Governor General A.C.D. De Graeff, also conveyed the idea that local farmers and small traders had been lured into a communist rebellion by external propagandists. As the conservative ex-Prime Minister

534 The peranakan Chinese students were not only hesitant to be associated with international communism, which could get them into trouble with the Dutch authorities. Ironically enough, they were also unsure as to whether their interests were best served with Indonesian nationalism. An important tendency in the peranakan association feared that full and immediate independence of the Dutch Indies would unleash anti-Chinese sentiments. This group saw the Dutch colonial authorities as the best guarantors of their modest political rights, commercial interests and safety as a minority. See Stutje, “The Complex World of the Chung Hwa Hui,” 534-535; IISH, Archief Chung Hwa Hui, inv. nr. 13, letter to Edo Fimmen, 21 July 1927. The two students were Tung Tieng Hiang and Han Tiauw Kie. Tung Tieng Hiang was leftist CHH member who studied at the Agricultural University in Wageningen. He was very interested in his Chinese cultural background and even travelled to China to learn Mandarin. After this trip he studied philosophy in Berlin, and in 1923 he returned to Wageningen where he became a teaching assistant. In Secret Service reports he was described as an ‘idealist with radical inclinations’: NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 294, 20 June 1927 W9. Han Tiauw Kie was an electrical engineer student from Delft and had represented the CHH at several international events. He described the Kongress gegen Imperialismus in Brussels as ‘magnificent and informative’, and was a strong proponent within the CHH for involvement in the LAI: Van Galen, “Geschiedenis van de Chung Hwa Hui,” 186.
and aspiring Governor General Hendrikus Colijn wrote in 1928, communism in the Dutch Indies “as a political current or movement” was “of very modest significance”, and could only exist by preying on other movements.535

This led to the question of who these outside agitators were, and where the instructions for rebellion originated. Unsurprisingly, most suspicion was cast on Moscow. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, PKI leaders Alimin and Musso did not succeed in securing Moscow’s support for the rebellion, but this was not yet known by the Dutch authorities. The first official government report, written by the Attorney General in the Dutch Indies, already mentioned that the rebellion was in line with resolutions of the Fifth World Congress of the Comintern. It observed that from mid-1924 onwards, the Comintern and the Profintern, had attempted to establish “a chain of connections” from Moscow to the Dutch Indies.536 Dutch and colonial secret services assumed that connections were mostly established via Singapore, Manila, and Shanghai, and some even feared that instructions were coming via Muslim pilgrims from Djeddah and Mecca.537 But with the news that the Perhimpoenan Indonesia engaged in transnational activities within the League against Imperialism, the “Dutch connection” deserved particular attention. It was again Colijn who was most outspoken about the direct communist manipulation of the Indonesian political landscape via the Netherlands. Commenting on the newly established PNI, he warned: “One should not forget […], that the PNI systematically applies the working programme of the PI in the Netherlands, *in accordance with the current politics of Moscow.*”538

536 *Politieke nota over de Partij Kommunist Indonesia*, 1, 7; Marieke Bloembergen, “Koloniale staat, politiestaat? Politieke politie en het rode fantoorn in Nederlands-Indië, 1918-1927,” *Leidschrift* 21.2 (September 2006): 88; Bloembergen, *De geschiedenis van de politie in Nederlands-Indië*, 264-265. The narrative of the ARD is followed in the first historical account of this period by J.Th. Petrus Blumberger. In his book on the communist movement in the Dutch East Indies, he wrote that Moscow had established a chain of connections with the Indonesian PKI, and had stimulated the growth but also the ‘denaturalisation’ of the Indonesian national movement: Petrus Blumberger, *De communistische beweging*, 154. Relevant in this context is the fact that Petrus Blumberger, who was a colonial government official himself, published this book with the Nationale Bond tegen Revolutie (“National Union against Revolution”), which was an anti-communist and right-wing patriotic organisation established in 1920: “De Communistische Beweging,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, June 21, 1928, 14; “Los van het Fascisme?,” *Het Volk*, December 4, 1933, 5.
537 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 287, 22 December 1926 V19; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 289, 31 January 1927 C2; NL-HaNA, Commissariaat Indische Zaken, 2.10.49, inv. nr. 2692, jaarverslag 1926, p. 13; inv. nr. 2693, Jaarverslag 1933, Bijlage B Geheim, p. 47.
The Raadsman voor Studeerenden and increasing surveillance of the PI
 Thus, the League against Imperialism not only marked the integration of the Indonesians on
the international anticolonial stage, it also gave impetus to a renewed campaign of the Dutch
authorities to frustrate the work of anticolonial Indonesian activists in the Netherlands. The
first functionary responsible was the Raadsman voor Studeerenden Westenenk, as he was
entrusted with the supervision and assistance of students from the colonies. As mentioned in
previous chapters, the Perhimpoenan Indonesia was not new on his radar, and he had
observed the gradual politicisation of the PI with increasing anxiety. The Raadsman’s policy
mainly rested on two pillars. Firstly, he wanted to better prepare aspiring students and their
families for their journey to the Netherlands and make them aware of the dangers and
challenges of studying overseas. Secondly, he wanted to discourage and isolate those students
who misbehaved or radicalised politically. A well-tried method with regard to the latter
category, especially against students without a grant but with a monthly allowance from their
family, was to put pressure on the parents in the Dutch Indies, who were often in service of
the colonial government. Fathers were told that they would lose their positions if they did not
curb their sons in Europe or withhold their financial support. Not only Mononutu suffered
from this parental blackmailing, as described in chapter four, but also other prominent
students such as Soebardjo, Nazir Pamontjak, Gatot Taroenomihardjo, Iwa Koesoema
Soemantri and at least five others.539 This put the students concerned in a difficult position,
and many of those who refused to submit were feverishly in search of money and loans.

However, the combination of the revolts in Java and Sumatra and the appearance of
the students at the Kongress gegen Imperialismus confirmed the Raadsman in his opinion that
these indirect administrative measures were insufficient, and that criminal prosecution was
needed. From February 1927 onwards, only days after the Brussels conference, the Raadsman
voor Studeerenden began to request the Ministry of Colonies, under which he resorted, for
extra financial means and assistance to prepare for “measures against the extremist students
in the Netherlands”.540

539 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 273, 31 December 1925
V18; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 280, 2 July 1926 S10;
NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 291, 8 March 1927 G4; NL-
HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 296, 28 June 1927 M10; 301, 9
Augustus 1927 G13, Bh, Bk, Bii; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv.
nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Abdulmadjid Djoioadiningrat, 29 September 1927, p.
1. See also Rivai, Student Indonesia di Eropa, 41-44.
540 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 291, 24 March 1927 B5,
letter of Raadsman voor Studeerenden to Minister of Colonies 12 March 1927; Kwantes, De ontwikkeling van
de nationalistische beweging, 2:573-577.
Two facts in particular caused concern. Firstly, Westenenk possessed intelligence that Hatta and Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat had burned documents in the latter’s garden in The Hague in the days after the outbreak of the November 1926 revolt. This raised suspicion that the PI had possessed prior knowledge about the revolts.\(^{541}\) Secondly, the Raadsman had laid hands on the earlier mentioned ‘organisation plan for our national movement’, which Semaoen had proposed to Mohammad Hatta on 23 November 1926. It is unclear how the Raadsman had managed to get hold of this document, which, as he said, was filed in the private archive of the PI in the home of secretary Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat in The Hague.\(^{542}\) Either via a high-positioned PI informant or through unauthorised house searches, the document found its way to the Raadman’s office, sometime between November 1926 and 23 February 1927.\(^{543}\) As described in the previous chapter, Hatta never signed this plan, which envisioned building a semi-clandestine revolutionary organisation in the colony. Hatta only concluded a much shorter agreement with Semaoen, confirming the leadership of the PI over the national movement and the authority of the nationalist organisation over the PKI in the Dutch Indies. However, the existence of the last agreement was unknown to the Raadsman, and he assumed that Semaoen’s plan was the basis of a new subversive and clandestine movement. As he wrote to the Minister of Colonies, it demonstrated that a “sharp contrast between nationalism and communism” could not be made, and that it was necessary to increase the surveillance of the students in the Netherlands.\(^{544}\)

In gathering more incriminating evidence, the Raadsman voor Studeerenden received intelligence from various parties, such as the Indies Security Service ARD, the Ministry of Colonies, the Dutch Centrale Inlichtingendienst (‘Central Intelligence Service’, CID), and various local police services. On top of this, archival sources also reveal that many individual Dutch citizens provided the Raadsman with information as well. An examination of the files of the Ministry of Colonies from the year 1926 and 1927, for example, shows how Westenenk obtained information from landlords, journalists, shop owners, bank employees, students, professors and shipping companies. Illustrative is a 1926 report about the behaviour

\(^{541}\) NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 291, 8 March 1927 G4, file about the “organisatieplan voor onze nationale beweging”.

\(^{542}\) NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 291, 8 March 1927 G4, file about the “organisatieplan voor onze nationale beweging”.

\(^{543}\) In November 1927, when Hatta and three other students were arrested and interrogated by the police, he ensured that only Semaoen, Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat and he himself had known of the existence of both plans. However, it is not unlikely that Hatta tried to protect his fellow students from prosecution by taking the responsibility upon himself. This makes Hatta’s statement unreliable: NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Mohammad Hatta, 8 November 1927, p. 5.

\(^{544}\) Kwantes, *De ontwikkeling van de nationalistische beweging*, 2:577.
of the explicitly communist Gatot Taroenomihardjo, who lived in the Heerenstraat in The Hague from 1922 to 1924. On request of the Raadsman, Gatot Taroenomihardjo’s landlord mentioned that the student was indeed a fanatical revolutionary who received a monthly parental allowance of 200 guilders via the Amsterdamsche Bank, which he also used to support a few friends. When he moved to the Witte Rozenstraat in Leiden in 1925, his new landlady told the Raadsman that he had a lot of communist literature in his room and that he slept with a revolver under his pillow. A few months later, when Gatot Taroenomihardjo went to live with fellow students in Langebrug in Leiden, a third landlady provided the Raadsman with information again. On request, she copied the sender’s addresses and names from letters to her tenant. Thus, even in their homes the students were under surveillance.

Other examples include a lawyer from Leiden who had heard Henriette Roland Holst and Bergsma talk on the train about the PI during their return trip from the Brussels conference, and reported it to the police in The Hague upon arrival. This was also done by a Dutch Indology student who recorded an anti-Dutch train conversation between three Indonesian students, while a Dutch journalist in Berlin gave information about Soebardjo in that city to the Dutch Ambassador. There are no indications that there was pressure involved from the side of the authorities, or financial rewards to bring information to the police. Apparently, these individuals saw it as their duty to share information with the authorities.

Via official routes, the Raadsman secured information from university professors such as C. Snouck Hurgronje, J.Ph. Duijvendak and C. van Vollenhoven – who, by the way, were not in favour of harsh repression of the students – from bursary institutions such as the Tjandi Stichting and the Van Deventer Stichting, and from shipping companies that briefed the Raadsman when radical students planned to return home. The combination of sources gives the impression that the students, despite their new political partnerships with Dutch communists and socialists, operated in an increasingly inhospitable political environment. It informed their decision to relocate part of their activities abroad.

545 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 280, 2 July 1926 S10.
546 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 291, 8 March 1927 G4, file about the “organisatieplan voor onze nationale beweging”; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 306, 10 November 1927 T17, letter of the Dutch ambassador in Berlin to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 11 October 1927.
547 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 307, 12 nov 1928 J18, report of a meeting of Leiden professors, 8 October 1927; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 212, 10 Augustus 1920 E7 and 10 September 1920 E8; NL-HaNA, Commissariaat Indische Zaken, 2.10.49, inv. nr. 2692.
Countermeasures by the students

The Indonesian students were well aware of the fact that they were being monitored and threatened by the Dutch authorities. In an attempt to evade the strict surveillance, the students took various precautions and security measures of their own. From 1926 onwards, the students decided not to sign their articles in *Indonesia Merdeka* any more, and to attend public meetings under a pseudonym.\(^{548}\) The PI began to work with an official board consisting of non-bursary students who did not aspire to a career in the colonial government, such as Mohammad Hatta, and a shadow board that managed the day-to-day affairs behind the scenes. The PI also relocated its official address from the house of the secretary to an anonymous postbox in Leiden.\(^{549}\) These measures would make it more complicated for the government to single out individual students.

Another way to preserve autonomy and to create more distance from supervising institutions was to enhance mutual aid and build self-help structures. Among the students there was a lively practice of sharing, borrowing, and redistributing money. To keep down the costs of living, many students lived and dined together, and the costs were covered according to ability to pay.\(^{550}\) In order to raise more money and to give it an official and regulated character, the PI started a National Fund in the summer of 1926. This fund was created to provide financial support to students abroad and to those who had financial difficulties due to government interference. To make this possible, the National Fund was filled with PI membership dues and money collected among former PI students in the Dutch Indies.\(^{551}\)

Finally, many of the students refused to talk to the Raadsman voor Studeerenden any longer and evaded contact with university professors.\(^{552}\) The relations between the Indonesian

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548 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2,10.36.51, inv. nr. 309, 26 January 1928 T1, journalist report of the LAI meeting in Brussels in December 1927; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2,10.36.51, inv. nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Ali Sastroamidjojo, 23 September 1927, p. 2-3.

549 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2,10.36.51, inv. nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Ali Sastroamidjojo, 24 November 1927, p. 10; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2,10.36.51, inv. nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Mohammad Hatta, 8 November 1927, p. 38; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2,10.36.51, inv. nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat, 28 November 1927, p. 1, 8.


551 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2,10.36.51, inv. nr. 296, 28 June 1927 M10; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2,10.36.51, inv. nr. 301, 9 August 1927 G13, Bk; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2,10.36.51, inv. nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Mohammad Hatta, 8 November 1927, p. 38; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2,10.36.51, inv. nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat, 28 November 1927, 8.

552 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2,10.36.51, inv. nr. 263, 17 April 1925 D5, letter of the Raadsman voor Studeerenden to the Minister of Colonies 3 April 1925; NL-HaNA, Koloniën /
students and the Dutch supervising institutions deteriorated sharply around 1926 and 1927, and the repressive atmosphere in the Netherlands provoked a gradual process of isolation, secrecy, and anti-authoritarianism among Indonesian students vis-à-vis the Dutch authorities and Dutch society as a whole.

Crackdown

These precautions did not avert – indeed they accelerated – the decision of the Minister of Justice, in consultation with the Raadsman voor Studeerenden and Minister of Colonies, to increase surveillance of the PI. On Friday 10 June 1927, after months of observation and investigation, the police in The Hague and Leiden raided four houses of Indonesian students, and seized large quantities of papers and documents. In The Hague, the houses of chairman Mohammad Hatta and secretary Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat were ransacked. In Leiden, Wasstraat 1 was raided: one of the central meeting points of the students and home to Ali Sastroamidjojo’s family and four other students. The police confiscated boxes full of documents, two typewriters, and even five revolvers. In newspapers, rumours circulated about opium possession and bombs hidden in old pianos, but this was denied by the police. Over the following two weeks the situation remained tense, with an additional house search in Delft, the shadowing of individual students and the authorised interception of all correspondence to and from Indonesian addresses.

On 16 July, the Minister of Justice stated that there were strong suspicions that the students were participating in a conspiracy against the Dutch and colonial authorities, and that they belonged to a criminal organisation. To assist the Public Prosecutor, a committee of experts was established, consisting of three police functionaries with colonial experience. The PI reacted furiously to the house searches and the allegations. In a manifesto to the Dutch people, they called upon intellectuals, workers and the nation at large...

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Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 280, 2 July 1926 S10, letter Westenenk to Raden Toemenggoeng Ario Soeriadi, 30 March 1926; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 307, 12 nov 1928 J18, report of a meeting of Leiden professors, 8 October 1927; NL-HaNA, Commissariaat Indische Zaken, 2.10.49, inv. nr. 2692, jaarverslag 1926, p. 19 and jaarverslag 1927.

553 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 294, 20 June 1927 W9; Sastroamijoyo, Milestones on my Journey, 30-31; “De inval te Leiden; Indische nationalisten; geen communisten,” Het Volk, June 11, 1927, 2. It is remarkable that although the discovery of weapons was confirmed by a police inspector to the press, it did not play a role in the further judicial process.


555 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 294, 20 June 1927 W9.
to strenuously protest the repressions.\textsuperscript{557} It did not help. On 23 September, the criminal investigation resulted in a second raid of PI houses. This time, the police arrested four students: Mohammad Hatta, Ali Sastroamidjojo, Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat and Mohamed Nazir Datoek Pamontjak. They were transferred to a prison in The Hague, and in March 1928, after six months imprisonment and many interrogations, they were brought to trial. Apparently, the prosecutors were not sure of their case, as they changed the indictment from membership of a criminal organisation to a charge of seditious writing in \textit{Indonesia Merdeka}, for which they demanded two to three years imprisonment. After a widely reported trial, the judge acquitted the students and ordered their immediate release.\textsuperscript{558}

The house searches, arrests and the court case against the students of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia received a lot of attention from contemporary journalists and later scholars.\textsuperscript{559} The acquittal was a crushing defeat for the Public Prosecutor, and it would even result in the forced resignation of the Raadsman voor Studeerenden, Westenenk. For Hatta and the three other students, the imprisonment and the trial ensured them of continuous media attention, not only from the Dutch and Indies press, but also from abroad. The 80-page brochure that Mohammad Hatta wrote in his cell, ‘Indonesië Vrij’ (‘Indonesia Free’), was to become a central document in the history of the Indonesian nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{560}

Discovery of the French connection

Yet, less is known about the fact that the criminal prosecution of the PI not only targeted its activities in the Netherlands, but also its agitation beyond the Dutch borders. Apart from the detention of Mohammad Hatta, Ali Sastroamidjojo, Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat and Nazir Pamontjak, the Public Prosecutor also warranted the arrest of Achmad Soebardjo, Arnold Mononutu and Gatot Taroenomihardjo. The three men were all PI board members in 1927, but – and this was likely part of the PI policy to evade government surveillance – they resided

\textsuperscript{557} Cited in Poeze, \textit{In het land van de overheerser}, 1:212.
\textsuperscript{558} Poeze, \textit{In het land van de overheerser}, 1:211-214; Rose, \textit{Indonesia Free}, 38.

In the months prior to the police raids in June, the CID intercepted mysterious correspondence between Semaoen, who had travelled to Moscow after the Brussels conference in February, Hatta, who lived in the Netherlands, Nazif, who studied law in Paris, and Soebardjo and Gatot Taroenomihardjo, who travelled frequently between Paris and the Netherlands. Among the seized documents was a cryptic letter from Semaoen to Hatta and Gatot Taroenomihardjo, dated 7 March 1927, in which Semaoen said that “Kijaj” had sent “one-and-a-half pages” to “over there”, where Hatta and Gatot Taroenomihardjo could collect it. The message was encrypted to counter the Dutch authorities, but in the course of further investigation, and supplemented with other letters, the authorities deciphered that “Kijaj” – an honorary epithet for an Islamic scholar in Indonesia – was a pseudonym for Darsono, who held a high position in the Comintern. One-and-a-half pages was a code term for 1500 dollars, and “over there” was a certain “Brother Loesak” who resided in Paris, and turned out to be Mohamad Nazif, living on Rue Gay Lussac. The plan, as outlined by Semaoen in several letters to Soebardjo and Hatta, was to send 1500 dollars to Nazif, who was at that moment the only Indonesian with a reliable and permanent address in Paris. Soebardjo would collect the money there, and reserve 500 dollars for the National Fund of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia, and give the rest to Gatot Taroenomihardjo. The latter, who had almost finished his law studies in the Netherlands and was about to return home, would deliver Semaoen’s money partly to the organisation of a national congress of anticolonial parties in the Dutch Indies, and partly to remaining Indonesian communists in hiding. These communists who had escaped government repression after the 1926 revolt would be contacted through an encrypted advertisement in the Chinese newspaper Sin Po.

The key to the code language of Semaoen’s plan was revealed by Hatta during intense interrogations in November 1927, but it is my impression that the Dutch secret service had succeeded in breaking this code before the house raids of 10 June. A letter from the Raadsman voor Studeerenden to a civil servant at the Ministry of Colonies of 23 June, notes

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561 Poeze, Politiek-Politionele Overzichten, 1:44-45. In 1927, Mohammad Hatta was chairman, Achmad Soebardjo secretary, Mohamad Nazif treasurer, while Nazir Pamontjak and Arnold Mononutu were members. 562 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Mohammad Hatta, 8 November 1927, p. 14. 563 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Mohammad Hatta, 8 November 1927, p. 6-20.
that the transfer of money from Moscow to the PI via Paris was “now confirmed”, indicating that there had been suspicions before the raids. The fact that the raids took place just two days after Semaoen sent a revealing message on 8 June 1927, which was intercepted, also suggests that the discovery of the Parisian connection was an immediate cause to crack down on the students in the Netherlands and to frustrate the transfer of money to the Dutch Indies via Paris. This impression is further confirmed in an article in *Algemeen Handelsblad* in which the Parisian connection was highlighted (fig. 5.1). It suggests that the foreign activities of the Indonesians greatly alarmed the Dutch authorities, and it explains why inspector J.W.G. Nieuwenhuys, who was one of the three police officers charged with the PI investigation, departed for Paris within days after the raid.

In Paris, Nieuwenhuys was assisted by the Dutch ambassador J. Loudon, who had good contacts with the French authorities. Between 10 June and 12 July, Nieuwenhuys and Loudon investigated the Indonesian circle in Paris, leading them to various French institutions. Firstly, they went to the central Parisian post office to request insight into who had signed for the registered mail of Semaoen from Moscow.

Figure 5.1: Article *Algemeen Handelsblad*, September 5, 1927, 1. About the PI, Moscow and the Parisian connection.

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564 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 296, 28 June 1927 M10, letter of the Raadsman voor Studeerenden to the Gecommitteerde voor Indische Zaken, 23 June 1927, p. 2.
565 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Mohammad Hatta, 8 November 1927, p. 14.
They were refused permission, but after an intervention of G.E.A. Renard, the director of the Sûreté Générale, they gained access nonetheless. Next, Nieuwenhuys and Loudon requested information from professor Van Vollenhoven, about Nazif who had most likely received letters from Moscow. This Leiden law professor, who stayed in the United States at the time of writing, supervised Nazif’s dissertation about Madagascar, but he had never noticed any suspicious political activities.567 Nieuwenhuys and Loudon also visited the Managing Director of the Centre d’Études Franco-Hollandaises, F. Vreede, who had provided detailed information about Mononutu to the Raadsman voor Studeerenden a few months earlier.568

The collaboration between the Dutch authorities and the French Sûreté Générale was quite good. The Sûreté provided the Dutch police inspector with intelligence about Indonesian students in Paris, and it promised to arrest and transfer the Indonesian students, if the Dutch authorities desired to prosecute them. Moreover, as Fredrik Petersson mentions, cordial relations also existed with the British Secret Intelligence Service. Both the British Political Intelligence Department in Amsterdam and the British consulate in Batavia were gathering intelligence about the PI from July 1927 onwards. This information was also shared with the Dutch authorities and was likely to be used in the criminal investigation of the students.569 It does not seem, as Petersson suggests, that the British information led to the arrests of the students in September. The Dutch authorities were already gathering information months before. It does demonstrate, however, that the Western intelligence services mirrored the increased transnational activities of the anticolonial activists they had to monitor.

All in all, the findings of Nieuwenhuys in Paris do not appear to have led to a breakthrough in the investigation. Most information about the activities in Paris was derived from the intense interrogations of the students in jail in September and November. Nonetheless, the house raids in the Netherlands and the investigations in Paris greatly disturbed the small Indonesian colony in Paris and effectively led to the dissolution of the group.

Students on the run

The student who had the best alibi and was least impressed by the measures was probably Mohamad Nazif, who was primarily preoccupied with the preparations for his dissertation at

567 NL-HaNA, Ambassade Frankrijk, 2.05.57, inv. nr. 1350.
568 NL-HaNA, Ambassade Frankrijk, 2.05.57, inv. nr. 1350; “De Indische Studenten,” Algemeen Handelsblad, September 5, 1927, 1.
569 Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers, 181-182.
the Sorbonne. He kept a low political profile, although his flat at Rue Gay Lussac had been an important refuge for the PI. He also provided Soebardjo and Mononutu with money from Semaoen in May 1927. Despite his alibi, he probably felt unsafe: before 29 June, and likely after the raids of 10 June, he asked his supervisor Van Vollenhoven to allow him to leave Europe and to send him enough money to return home as soon as possible. Van Vollenhoven gave him 50 dollars and urged him to seek contact with the Dutch authorities. Whether Nazif responded to the appeal is unknown but he seems to have left Paris in the summer of 1927. Eventually, in April 1928 he returned to the Dutch Indies and in August of that year he was the first Indonesian to obtain a law doctorate at the recently established law school in Batavia.  

The departure of Nazif had immediate consequences for Mononutu as well, because Nazif supported him with a little money, just enough for one meal per day. Mononutu left Paris in June as well. On 12 July, the director of the Centre d’Études Franco-Hollandaises, in response to a query from inspector Nieuwenhuys, stated that he had not seen Mononutu in weeks, and that mutual friends also had no idea of his whereabouts. Between June and August 1927 – the exact dates are unknown – Mononutu stayed in the Netherlands in the house of Ali Sastroamidjojo and his family, waiting for money from his father to return home. On 19 September 1927, a few days before the arrests of the PI members he arrived in the Dutch Indies after a journey of about a month. To his political friends in Paris Mononutu had said that he returned home because his father was ill, but the actual reason was an acute lack of money caused by direct intervention of the Raadsman voor Studeerenden.

Gatot Taroenomihardjo’s escape went less smoothly. He had lived in Paris from November 1926 onwards, during the final stages of his law studies, but around June 1927 he departed to the Netherlands for his final exams. This turned out to be bad timing. During the house searches of 10 June, Gatot Taroenomihardjo was the only Indonesian student who was arrested, perhaps because he had not reported for a mandatory medical examination for military service. He was transferred to the military authorities and released within a few days, probably because the authorities questioned his loyalty and judged him unfit for military service. On 27 June 1927 he finished his law studies in the Netherlands. Not much is

570 Poeze, Politiek-Politieele Overzichten, 1:307.
571 Nalenan, Arnold Mononutu, 69-70. It is likely that Abdul Rivai wrote about Mononutu when he described a desperately poor Indonesian student in Paris: Rivai, Student Indonesia di Eropa, 41-44.
572 Poeze, Politiek-Politieele Overzichten, 1:123-124.
known about his whereabouts after June, but on 15 August 1927 he published an article in the Parisian Vietnamese journal of Duong Van Giao, *La Tribune Indochinoise*, which conveyed a strong communist tone, arguing that the class consciousness of the Indonesian population had only grown after the revolt of 1926.\(^{575}\) He seems to have resided for some time in Berlin before returning to the Dutch Indies in November 1927, via Moscow and Singapore, with Iwa Koesoema Soemantri.\(^{576}\)

Thus, within months after the house raids, three out of four prominent PI students had left Paris and eventually Europe. The last active PI student, Achmad Soebardjo, chose to stay in Europe and continue his activities for the Perhimpoenan Indonesia from another place. It is interesting to devote more attention to him, because he not only managed to save the Perhimpoenan Indonesia in the months of distress after September, when the other board members in the Netherlands were arrested, but he also shifted the PI in a leftist direction in Hatta’s absence.

**Achmad Soebardjo**

Achmad Soebardjo is also known as Abdul Manaf – an Arabic name referring to his Acehnese ancestry. In his student years, Soebardjo seems to have used both names interchangeably, probably preferring his Acehnese name at political events and Soebardjo in personal and official correspondence.\(^{577}\) This has led to great confusion with the authorities as well as among later scholars.

Soebardjo’s social background and school career was typical for the Indonesian students in the Netherlands. Although he seems to suggest in his 1978 autobiography that he came from a modest family – his father being a pensioned *mantri* police officer lacking education to make further promotion\(^{578}\) – Soebardjo followed the regular educational path of this fellow students. Born on 23 March 1896, in Teluk Jambe, a little hamlet in West Java, he was raised by his grandparents. At school age, he was sent to a European primary school in Batavia, and later he enrolled in the HBS Koning Willem III. He attended the same school as Mononutu, Pamontjak and Maramis. After graduation he made a similar choice to continue higher education in the Netherlands.\(^{579}\)

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\(^{576}\) NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 312, 11 April 1928 G6.

\(^{577}\) Subardjo, *Kesadaran nasional*, 34.

\(^{578}\) Subardjo, *Kesadaran nasional*, 35-36.

\(^{579}\) Subardjo, *Kesadaran nasional*, 41-47.
In his autobiography, Soebardjo recalls that he had attended rallies of Tjokroaminoto, the chairman of the Sarekat Islam, and that he was present at the founding conference of Jong Java in June 1918 as a journalist. It was a source of inspiration, but he does not seem to have been very politically active before his journey to the Netherlands. He was more attracted to the Theosophical Society, which tried to find philosophical and spiritual answers in all world religions and which had a considerable following in the Dutch Indies. Another passion that he developed in his younger years was the violin, which he learned to play in his high school years with his friend Maramis.

Together, Soebardjo, Maramis and Pamontjak after graduation in 1917 decided to go to study law in the Netherlands. But because of the naval blockades of the First World War, Soebardjo was forced to wait until June 1919 before he could set foot on Dutch soil. After a year of preparatory classes he enrolled in law studies at the University of Leiden in 1920. Being the first of a new post-First World War cohort of students, Soebardjo, Maramis and Pamontjak were invited at a meeting of the Indische Vereeniging within months of their arrival. The chairman Goenawan MangoenKoesoemo put pressure on the three students to form the nucleus of the new board, because the IV had become almost inactive during the war years. As such, as the new chairman for 1919-1920, Soebardjo had to revive the association with new ideas and insights from the colony. With the help of a few experienced students he succeeded in breathing new life into the association, but it was not yet the political machine into which it would evolve a few years later.

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From the few sources and memoirs that survived, Soebardjo comes to the fore as a proud and somewhat pedantic man. He took pride in inventing the national Indonesian flag, which he derived from the ancient banner of the legendary Majapahit kingdom, and claimed that he had introduced the Muslim *peci* – the characteristic fez-like hat of Soekarno – as a symbol for Indonesian secular nationalists and as a way to distinguish themselves from Chinese and Japanese migrants in Paris, Berlin or London. In his autobiography, he also mentions that he was asked to become a chairman of the PI in 1925, but that he convinced the association to select Hatta in his place, thus paving the way for the latter’s political career. These and other statements give the impression that Soebardjo liked to be the centre of attention.

It cannot be denied, however, that he occupied a central position in the association. His fellow students confirm that the house of Soebardjo, first at Noordeinde 23 and from 1925 onwards Langebrug 7 in Leiden, functioned as a social centre, where students gathered and where the new official banner of the PI was displayed. This red and white flag with the head of a buffalo had a prominent place on the mantelpiece, and became an altar of Indonesian national pride. Although Soebardjo resigned as a chairman of IV in 1920, he remained active in the background. He was the first editor of the renamed *Indonesia Merdeka* and the coordinator of the anniversary issue of the association in 1924. Furthermore, he was influential in selecting new board members, and he joined Mononutu at the earlier mentioned Académie du Droit International in The Hague.

**Soebardjo in Paris**

Just as had been the case with other students, Soebardjo used his stay in the Netherlands to visit other parts of Europe. He was one of the students present at the conference in Brussels in February 1927, and he was a strong proponent within the association to establish a LAI section in the Netherlands. Just like Mononutu, Soebardjo had difficulties finishing his law studies in France.

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studies in Leiden, and instead of concentrating on his studies or returning to the Indies, he decided to take additional courses in Paris at the École Libre des Sciences Politiques. This was the same institute which Mononutu falsely claimed to have attended, but there are no indications to doubt Soebardjo’s enrolment. Soebardjo rented a room in Hôtel Soufflot in Rue Toullier. According to a French Secret Service report his room again became a social centre for Indonesian and other colonial students. There is less information about Soebardjo’s sojourn in Paris than about Mononutu’s first months. However, sources reveal that Soebardjo, less than a month after his attendance at the Brussels conference, was a guest speaker at a commemorative meeting in Paris on 11 March 1927, on the occasion of the second dying day of Sun Yat-sen, the iconic national leader of independent China. The meeting was held in a large hall of the communist trade union federation CGTU on the Rue de la Grange-aux-Belles in the North of Paris, and was sponsored by the PCF and the leftist section of the European Guomindang Party in Paris. It was attended by 2,500 people, of whom 500 to 600 were Chinese, Vietnamese and North African migrants. Among the speakers were a number of guests of the Kongress gegen Imperialismus, such as the French communist Jacques Ventadour, the South African unionist Daniel Colraine, Chadli Ben Mustapha of the Tunisian Destour Party, and Xia Ting, who belonged to the communist wing of the European Guomindang Party in Paris.  

In his speech, Soebardjo reminded the audience of the recent revolt in Java and Sumatra, and assured that the example set by China was a “great and perhaps single hope for economic and political liberation”. He continued to say that a triumph of the Chinese Revolution would, after the Russian Revolution, herald the second phase in the global liberation from the yoke of capitalism. Soebardjo’s speech fitted well into the general atmosphere at the conference. The meeting in Paris was clearly a communist event. Xia Ting, a communist activist and also a founding member of Mononutu’s AECO, emphasised that the late Sun Yat-sen had been a great supporter of the united front of communists and nationalists in China, and that he had called Lenin, days before Sun Yat-sen passed away, a “promesse de libération pour tous les peuples du monde”. In the light of the pending clash between Chiang Kai-shek and communist militias in Shanghai, less than a month later, this was a provocative statement. After Soebardjo, the head of the PCF Pierre Semard sharply attacked

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584 “5.000 ouvriers salient la mémoire de Sun Yat Sen,” *L’Humanité*, March 12, 1927, 2.
585 “5.000 ouvriers salient la mémoire de Sun Yat Sen,” *L’Humanité*, March 12, 1927, 1: “promise of liberation for all the peoples of the world”.

the French social democratic SFIO and exclaimed: “Pour la défense de la Russie Soviétique, pour la défense de la Jeune Chine, groupons-nous!”  

Soebardjo’s appearance at the Guomindang rally was remarkable, and at variance with previous PI contributions in Bierville and Brussels. Confronted with Soebardjo’s speech during the police interrogations in November, Mohammad Hatta declared that Soebardjo had no official mandate to represent the Perhimpoenan Indonesia in Paris. He even distanced himself from the Soebardjo’s address, especially his praise of the Soviet Union. “This speech is too radical for my taste, and Soebardjo has, in my opinion defended his own ideas, rather than the ideas of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia”. These remarks need to be interpreted in the light of intense interrogations. Perhaps Hatta wanted to uphold the argument that the Perhimpoenan Indonesia only joined international communist networks out of strategic considerations, and in no way bowed to the Soviet Union. However, Soebardjo belonged to the left wing of the PI and had strongly changed his political beliefs in the Netherlands. While his article in the 1924 anniversary issue of the association was still a moderately nationalist complaint against the hypocrisy of Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations, his few public interventions after 1927 reveal an anticapitalist and pro-Soviet tinge. Moreover, the fact that Soebardjo was an important link in the money transfers from Moscow to the Netherlands and the Dutch Indies indicates that he was regarded as a trusted comrade by Semaoen and other communists.

It is therefore not surprising that Soebardjo felt threatened, when the Dutch authorities began to increase their surveillance of the Indonesian students in Paris. Not much is known, about the whereabouts of Soebardjo in the period between March and June, but as the police in The Hague concluded from intercepted correspondence from Soebardjo and other students, he seemed to have departed to Berlin after the home searches in June 1927 in the Netherlands.

Soebardjo in Berlin

Berlin in these days was a popular destination for students and exiles from the Russian world and Central Asia, workers from Central and Eastern Europe, immigrants from the former Ottoman Empire, and students from China and Japan. Moreover, the city was home to around

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586 “5.000 ouvriers salient la mémoire de Sun Yat Sen,” L’Humanité, March 12, 1927, 1-2: “Let us rally around Soviet Russia, around Young China!”
587 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 310, 16 February 1928 A3, transcription interrogation Mohammad Hatta, 8 November 1927, p. 29.
588 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 312, 11 April 1928 G6; Poeze, Politiek-Politieke Overzichten, 1:163.
5000 political refugees, many of whom were anticolonial activists trying to escape French and British surveillance. There was, for instance, an influential colony of Indian activists in Berlin, centred around Virendranath Chattopadhyaya. This community belonged to a larger group of a total of 400 to 500 Indians, mostly students.\textsuperscript{589} The city was also home to an extensive network of “African agitators”, mainly from Cameroon and Western Africa.\textsuperscript{590}

A second reason why Berlin merits the predicate ‘international’, was the fact that it was an important stronghold for the Comintern and the international communist world. Although over the years Moscow increasingly became the centre of transnational communist organisations, the German Communist Party KPD was traditionally seen as the most powerful and well-organised party of the European working class. Many communist organisations, networks and bureaus were located in Berlin, such as the West European Bureau of the Comintern, the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, and the\textit{ Internationale Pressekorrespondenz}. Also the International Secretariat of the League against Imperialism was domiciled in Berlin, under the aegis of the aforementioned Willi Münzenberg.\textsuperscript{591}

Soebardjo knew Willi Münzenberg and Virendranath Chattopadhyaya from the Kongress gegen Imperialismus in Brussels. Immediately after he arrived in Berlin, he sought contact with the two, who provided him with paid work in the office of the League against Imperialism in the Wilhelmstrasse 48 (later on Montbijouplatz 10 and Friedrichstrasse 24) and with a home at the Knesebeckstrasse, near Kurfürstendamm. Soebardjo could assist the LAI office in reading smuggled Indonesian newspapers and publications, and providing information about the Dutch Indies to the other members of the LAI. Moreover, he translated foreign articles in Malay and Javanese and sent them to journals in the colony. The articles and pamphlets were smuggled in via Singapore and were mostly directed to Java and Sumatra’s West Coast, the most turbulent of the Dutch Indies’ regions.\textsuperscript{592}

The person with whom Soebardjo socialised most in his Berlin period was Chattopadhyaya. Chatto, as he was often called, belonged to an influential group of Indian exiles in Berlin. During the First World War he had been active in the Indian Independence Committee in Switzerland. This Committee was involved in an infamous plot to smuggle weapons from Germany to British India to use against the colonial authorities. Chatto’s secretive attempts to topple the British government failed, and he was arrested and sentenced

\textsuperscript{589} Kris Manjapra, \textit{Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire} (Cambridge USA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 91-93.
\textsuperscript{590} Derrick, \textit{Africa’s ‘Agitators’}, 259-262.
\textsuperscript{591} Weiss, \textit{Framing a Radical African Atlantic}, 76-77.
\textsuperscript{592} NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 306, 10 November 1927 T17, Report about Soebardjo in Berlin.
to death. But he managed to escape and lived in exile in Europe and later in the Soviet Union for the rest of his life. Throughout the 1920s, Chatto remained active in connecting the Indian and international anti-imperialist left. Initially, he resisted the communist stamp, rather referring to himself as an anti-imperialist, anarchist or a revolutionary nationalist.\textsuperscript{593} However, towards the end of the 1920s he became a loyal supporter of the Soviet Union. As such, his ideas evolved in the same direction as Soebardjo’s. Chatto was taken under Münzenberg’s wing, and thus became a central person in the League against Imperialism.\textsuperscript{594}

Soebardjo described Chatto as an intelligent, amiable and respectable person. Chatto guided Soebardjo around the city, and in evening hours he loved to recite Hindi poetry and to sing Indian songs. Chatto also introduced Soebardjo to his family in Berlin. His younger brother, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya or Harin, studied literature and stood on the threshold of a long career as a poet, actor and musician. With Harin, Soebardjo even performed at a large LAI demonstration entitled ‘Die Koloniale Welt in Flammen!’, on 4 March 1928. In the recently opened leftist avant-garde Piscator theatre, Soebardjo accompanied Harin on the violin and staged a Sumatran and a Javanese song himself.\textsuperscript{595} Soebardjo shared an apartment with Chatto’s nephew Jayasurya Naidu, who was a medical student at the University of Berlin and the son of the famous first female president of the Indian National Congress Sarojini Naidu, a sister of Chatto. Via Chatto, Soebardjo also became acquainted with the journalist A.C.N. Nambiar, who would later play a shadowy role as head of the Free India Centre in Nazi Germany. Nambiar was interested in the Indonesian movement and his name appears on the list of subscribers of \textit{Indonesia Merdeka} on behalf of the Hindustan Association of Central Europe, already before Soebardjo’s arrival in Berlin.\textsuperscript{596}

Thus, Soebardjo was introduced to the Indian exile community in Berlin, and via the International Secretariat of the League against Imperialism worked together with activists from China, Vietnam and South Africa. It is in this period that the Indonesian nationalists may have come into contact with the young Nguyen Ai Quoc, better known as Ho Chi Minh. As described in chapter three, Mononutu tried to reach out to the Parisian network around the Union Intercoloniale and the journal \textit{Le Paria}, of which Ho Chi Minh was a founder. But Ho

\textsuperscript{593} Barooah, \textit{Chatto}, 266-270.
\textsuperscript{594} Barooah, \textit{Chatto}, 246-253; Manjapra, \textit{Age of Entanglement}, 92-93; Petersson, \textit{We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers}, 238-242.
\textsuperscript{595} NL-HaNA, Kolonien / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 343, 31 mei 1930 N12; Petersson, \textit{We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers}, 217; “De stokebranden,” \textit{De Indische Courant}, March 6, 1928, 2; “De Liga, Duitschland en het Koloniale Vraagstuk,” \textit{Bataviasch Nieuwsblad}, April 4, 1928, 1.
\textsuperscript{596} Subardjo, \textit{Kesadaran nasional}, 133-137; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 301, 9 August 1927 G13, Bii.
had left Paris before Mononutu arrived. Two years later, according to biographer Sophie Quinn-Judge, Ho Chi Minh spent a few months in Berlin around the same time that Soebardjo was there, using Chattopadhyaya and the International Secretariat to stay in contact with the Comintern.\textsuperscript{597} There are, however, no further references to one another in their respective memoirs.\textsuperscript{598}

Soebardjo seems to have enjoyed his time in Berlin. Not only was it a nodal point in transnational anticolonial and communist networks, but it also provided a hospitable environment for colonial students on the run from various authorities. As Soebardjo mentions in his autobiography, the German population was suffering severely from the debt payments that were imposed on Germany with the Versailles Treaty. There was the general feeling that the German economy was effectively colonised and exploited by the Allied powers. This translated into a sense of sympathy with anticolonial liberation movements in Asia and Africa. Moreover, Soebardjo also mentioned the beauty and the nightlife of the city. With his newly acquired friends he used the evening hours to stroll along the Kurfürstendamm, with its many restaurants and bars with live entertainment. Despite all this, his stay must also have been overshadowed by his difficult financial position, and the fact that his Indonesian friends and fellow activists were prosecuted and incarcerated in the Netherlands.

\textbf{Moving the PI seat to Berlin}

Soebardjo was well aware that he was one of the few leading members of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia with a considerable degree of safety and freedom. He felt the responsibility to manage the association as long as political manoeuvring in the Netherlands was impossible. But although he received a small allowance for his work in the International Secretariat of the LAI, he lacked structural funding to support the association and individual students in despair. In this context, a former PI student by the name of Abdul Rivai was of great importance.\textsuperscript{599}

This doctor and journalist from West Sumatra had been among the first cohorts of Indonesian students in the Netherlands himself, and played an important role in the first year of the Indische Vereeniging. He was editor of \textit{Bintang Hindia}, which had a large readership among the indigenous elite. In 1909 he graduated and he returned to become a doctor in the Dutch Indies. From 1918 to 1924 he occupied a seat in the Volksraad, and over the years he

\textsuperscript{597} Sophie Quinn-Judge, \textit{Ho Chi Minh: The Missing Years 1919-1941} (London: Hurst, 2003), 119.
\textsuperscript{598} Ho Chi Minh, \textit{Oeuvres Choisiies}, vol. 1; Subardjo, \textit{Kesadaran nasional}.
\textsuperscript{599} NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 306, 10 November 1927 T17, Report about Soebardjo in Berlin.
had acquired wealth as a doctor and a journalist. However, he had also become increasingly critical of the Dutch colonial system. In November 1926, now 55 years old, Abdul Rivai returned to Europe for health reasons, and he used his time as a foreign correspondent writing articles for Indonesian newspapers. He travelled widely, spending time in Paris, Berlin, Brussels and Locarno. Moreover, he established contact with the new cohorts of Indonesian students in the Perhimpoenan Indonesia. In previous articles in *Bintang Timoeer*, published before the arrests in September 1927, Rivai had severely criticised the strict surveillance of the Indonesian students.\(^{600}\) After the arrests, he was especially worried that the four detained students would have to cease their political activities upon release. “If the imprisoned friends leave jail as ex-convicts, they will need means of sustenance. Most likely, they do not want to stay in Holland, but they will not return to the Indies either. The struggle must continue. They will have to stay abroad.”\(^{601}\) In April 1927, Pamontjak sent Soebardjo a letter in which he urged the latter to get in contact with Rivai. According to him Rivai was sympathetic to the cause of the PI, and was planning to create a political fund for Indonesian students who found themselves in financial troubles due to government intervention.\(^{602}\) This offer was obviously very welcome in times of financial distress. A meeting between Soebardjo and Rivai was not immediately possible but in October, the two finally talked with each other in Berlin.\(^{603}\)

There is some unclarity, with regard to Rivai’s political ideas and willingness to engage with radical anticolonial movements. According to reports of the Dutch embassy, he showed reluctance to lend his full support to Soebardjo’s work in Berlin. He feared that close collaboration with the LAI would make the Perhimpoenan Indonesia overly dependent on communist structures and aid. Soebardjo’s engagement with the LAI could not only be harmful to the PI itself, but would also give the authorities a reason to crack down on all Indonesian political initiatives on the pretext of suspected Bolshevist infiltration. Rivai was only willing to give support under the proviso of absolute discretion.\(^{604}\) A Dutch journalist on the other hand, with high contacts within the LAI, reported to the Dutch embassy that Rivai

\(^{600}\) A selection of articles written by Rivai during his time in Europe is published in Rivai, *Student Indonesia di Eropa; Poeze, In het land van de overheerser*, 1:211, 227.

\(^{601}\) Poeze, *Politiek-Politioneele Overzichten*, 1:266; original emphasis.

\(^{602}\) NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 301, 9 August 1927 G13, Bk.

\(^{603}\) NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 306, 10 November 1927 T17, Report about Soebardjo in Berlin.

\(^{604}\) NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 306, 10 November 1927 T17, letter of the Dutch ambassador in Berlin to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 11 October 1927; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 312, 11 April 1928 G6, letter of the Raadsman voor Studeerenden to the Gecommitteerde voor Indische Zaken, 15 March 1928; Poeze, *Politiek-Politioneele Overzichten*, 1:266-267.
was not hesitant at all, and that Soebardjo and Rivai negotiated directly with Münzenberg in the presence of members of the Soviet embassy. In the same letter, it was suggested that Rivai was a special envoy of the Partai Sarekat Islam sent to support the work of the young students in the Netherlands and to forge contacts with international anticolonial circles. If this is true, this mission could be a direct answer to the aforementioned invitation of LAI secretary Gibarti to the PSI and the PNI, to get in contact with the LAI in Europe.605 There is no further information on Rivai’s position towards Soebardjo and the purpose of his visit to Europe, but there can be no doubt that Soebardjo – most likely helped by Semaoen who travelled frequently between Berlin and Moscow – convinced Rivai to support the students financially.

With the financial guarantees of Rivai, and with a reliable address in Berlin, the necessary conditions were secured to temporarily move the PI secretariat to Berlin, to escape from the Dutch surveillance. In the absence of Mohammad Hatta, Ali Sastroamidjojo, Nazir Pamontjak and Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat, Achmad Soebardjo became the unofficial president in exile for the PI in the Europe.606 Furthermore, it was also decided that correspondence from Berlin, Moscow or elsewhere could no longer be sent to postal addresses in the Netherlands directly, knowing that it was intercepted by the authorities along the way. Therefore, in September 1927, most likely after the arrests of the students in The Hague and Leiden, Soeleiman, an oriental languages student in Leiden, travelled to Brussels to open a postbox under a fake address in that same city. This postbox, which was emptied by Soeleiman on a weekly basis, served as a cover for correspondence between Indonesian activists in Moscow, Berlin and the Netherlands.607

PI in communist waters

Soebardjo’s stay in Berlin was relatively short: from August or September 1927 until April 1928. However, for two reasons, this period was significant for the PI at large. Firstly, the location of its informal secretariat in Berlin aligned the PI more closely with the strong communist undercurrent in the League against Imperialism. Secondly, the personal

605 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 306, 10 November 1927 T17, letter of the Dutch ambassador in Berlin to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 11 October 1927.
606 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 269, 16 September 1925 R12; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 312, 11 April 1928 G6, letter of the Raadsman voor Studeerenden to the Gecommitteerde voor Indische Zaken, 15 March 1928; Poeze, Politiek-Politieenle Overzichten, 1:163.
607 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 312, 11 April 1928 G6.
convictions of Soebardjo brought the Indonesian association into the communist environment as well.

With regard to the first issue, we have to consider the geographical embedding of the LAI. As mentioned above, the League against Imperialism was only established at the last session of the Kongress gegen Imperialismus in Brussels. An Executive Committee was formed, which would determine the shape and structure of the new organisation. For the time being, the secretariat of the LAI was located in Berlin, with Münzenberg, Chattopadhyaya, the Hungarian communist Gibarti and the Chinese communist Liao Huanxing running the daily affairs. This set-up of the LAI’s secretariat reveals the essence of a sympathising organisation, which was presented as a broad platform of movements and ideological streams, while its day-to-day affairs were being managed by high-ranking communists.

At subsequent LAI meetings in March in Amsterdam, and in August in Cologne, non-communist members began to question this communist dominance. Especially in Cologne, the internal organisation of the LAI led to heated debates in which social democrats, pacifists and nationalists wanted to create political distance between the LAI and Moscow to guarantee its pluralistic character. As a compromise, the Executive Committee decided to establish two secretariats, one in Berlin under control of Münzenberg and Chattopadhyaya, and the other in Paris, managed by Gibarti and Ventadour (fig. 4.6). These two secretariats symbolised the growing rift within the LAI between a tendency that was wary of too much influence of Moscow, and another group of organisations and parties that stressed the importance of the United Front policy under tacit guidance of Moscow. The first group centred around Paris, attracted prominent personalities such as the American antimilitarist and civil rights activist Roger Nash Baldwin of the American Civil Liberties Union, the French author Henri Barbusse and the Dutch socialist trade unionist Edo Fimmen, as well as parties and individuals from Northern Africa and Egypt. The second ‘communist’ group in Berlin was dominated by Münzenberg, Chatto and Liao Huanxing, and attracted German, Russian, Syrian, Chinese and British Indian parties and individuals.

608 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 306, 10 November 1927 T17, Report about Soebardjo in Berlin.
609 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 306, 4 November 1927 J17, Memorie betreffende de Liga tegen Imperialisme en koloniale overheersing; NL-HaNA, Kolonieën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, 10 November 1927 T17, letter of the Dutch ambassador in Berlin to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 11 October 1927; Poeze, Politiek-Politioneele Overzichten, 1:185; See also Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers, 194; Robert C. Cottrell, Roger Nash Baldwin and the American Civil Liberties Union (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 194; Nehru, Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru, 2:321, 3:125.
As most of the money for the LAI was coming directly or indirectly from the Comintern, especially after the Chinese GMD Party had turned away from the LAI, the Parisian secretariat was operating under difficult financial circumstances and dwindled within a matter of months.\textsuperscript{610} In Berlin, however, the International Secretariat of the LAI came under the strong control of Willi Münzenberg, who fostered a large communist network of individuals, organisations and structures. Under his management, the LAI secretariat itself became a gathering place for Indian, Chinese and other Asian revolutionaries, as well as for Hungarians, Italians, Mexicans and Moroccans.\textsuperscript{611} One of these activists was, as we have seen, Soebardjo. It may be clear that he did not opt for the Berlin secretariat deliberately – his departure from Paris was involuntary – but the choice to come to the German capital was politically motivated. With his strong reliance on communist LAI structures, Soebardjo, and the PI along with him, were encapsulated by the communist tendency within the LAI.

Secondly, Soebardjo most likely did not resist this communist encapsulation. We must remember that Soebardjo’s own political convictions were much in line with those of Münzenberg and Chattopadhyaya. On 5 November 1927, he published an article with the title ‘Dutch Imperialism in Indonesia’ – produced at the LAI secretariat and distributed through its networks – in the journal \textit{Forward} in New Delhi. In this article, “the author”, according to the editors, “[drew] a lurid picture of Indonesia groaning under the heels of Dutch Imperialists”, but also stated that hopeful signs of resistance against the Dutch were discernible. Soebardjo described that the PI had helped to establish several study and debating clubs that would take the place of destroyed PKI cells and would function as new revolutionary centres for revolt. According to Soebardjo: “The movement for freedom in Indonesia is strongly proletarian because of the following three facts: 1. The utmost exploitation of the masses of peasants and workers; 2. a proletarianised class of intellectuals; 3. the absence of a strong national middle class.”\textsuperscript{612}

This class interpretation of the Indonesian society ran counter to prior PI analyses, which stressed the national, and essentially non-class character of the Indonesian movement. The fact that he described the intellectuals as proletarianised, and not as an aspiring bourgeoisie echoed the ideas of Semaoen about the value of the students in the PI themselves. By law and by reality, Semaoen and Soebardjo argued, the Indonesian upper class had no chance of competing against ‘foreign’ capitalists, and thus they were essentially on the side

\textsuperscript{610} Petersson, \textit{We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers}, 156-159.
\textsuperscript{611} Manjapra, \textit{Age of Entanglement}, 93; Petersson, \textit{We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers}, 150;
Poeze, \textit{Politiek-Politioneele Overzichten}, 1:266.
\textsuperscript{612} Poeze, \textit{Politiek-Politioneele Overzichten}, 1:186.
of the Indonesian exploited masses. A similarly Marxian argumentation was used in an earlier published article in the Dutch LAI journal *Recht en Vrijheid*. In this journal Soebardjo wrote: “The experience of three centuries of political subjugation and economic exploitation brings about the awareness that true freedom does not only demand a simple removal of Dutch rule, but also that economic liberation of the people based on social justice has to be the aim of the national liberation struggle.”

Also within the LAI, Soebardjo positioned the PI to the left of what was the usual line under the leadership of Hatta. This became apparent at the LAI’s general council meeting of 9 and 10 December, which took place in Brussels, in a luxurious seventeenth-century guild hall at the Grote Markt square. The Indonesian situation attracted much attention, as it was the first LAI meeting after the arrests. Consequently, most Indonesian students concealed their names, and registered mythical names such as Diponegoro, and Soedara – meaning ‘brother’ or ‘comrade’. Soebardjo, “deliberately and in excellent English”, started out with a common indictment of the post-1926 repression of opposition in the colony, suppressing every aspiration of the Indonesian people as communist intrigues. He described how innocent people were jailed without process, and that women were being tortured to reveal the hiding places of their husbands. Even students in the Netherlands were not safe when they criticised colonial rule. What was new, however, was that Soebardjo attacked the social democratic SDAP and the socialist counterpart of the Comintern, the Labour and Socialist International (LSI). They had maligned the LAI and the Indonesian nationalists in their journals, accusing them of acceding to Moscow, and they had undermined efforts to organise effective international solidarity. Thus Soebardjo joined the growing choir of communist LAI members who began to criticise the social democratic members of the LAI for their colonial policy.

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613 McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, 240-241, 244.
615 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 312, 11 April 1928 G6, report intelligence service nr. 1595. The Indonesian delegation consisted of six to eight people, among whom only Soebardjo, Semaoen and Soeleiman are confirmed. These pseudonyms are probably also cause to the mistaken assumption that Soekarno was among those present at the LAI Brussels conference of December 1927: Compare Petersson, *We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers*, 205; Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 21.
Soebardjo in Moscow

Soebardjo’s new sympathies did not remain unnoticed in the higher echelons of the communist world. In November 1927, the Secretariat for Indonesia of the Comintern decided to reach out to the students who had “escaped from Holland” after the arrests of Hatta and the others, and to persuade them to come to Moscow to study at the Eastern University.\(^{617}\) Iwa Koesoema Soemantri and a handful of other students had already been trained at another university, the University of the Toilers of the East, and had developed into valuable propagandists supplementing the old guard of Semaoen, Darsono, Musso and Alimin.

In this context, Soebardjo’s new orientation towards the communist world was symbolically endorsed with an invitation by Chattopadhyaya and Münzenberg to be present at the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution in Moscow, from 6 to 8 November 1927. This occasion was used to show the strength and prosperity of the Soviet Union, but also served the purpose of establishing and reinforcing contacts with sympathetic activists from aligned movements. Jawaharlal Nehru and his father Motilal were present in Moscow, as well as the Pan-Islamist organiser Shakib Arslan, the South African ANC activist Josiah Tshangana Gumede and Virendranath Chattopadhyaya.\(^{618}\) A total number of 1150 guests were invited through the most important communist structures and networks.\(^{619}\) Soebardjo was allowed to take one friend as a companion, and he asked Soeleiman as one of the last PI students to remain active after the arrests of Hatta and the others. In the second half of October 1927, the two left Berlin and departed for the Soviet Union.

In his autobiography, Soebardjo recalls how he and Soeleiman were welcomed by an official committee in Leningrad, and treated like guests of honour. During their stay in Leningrad and Moscow they were hosted in luxurious hotels and nice restaurants. The programme was overloaded, and they were constantly accompanied by Russians who Soebardjo suspected to be secret agents. They went to opera plays in the Bolshoi theatre, and were guided to important revolutionary places and state-of-the-art factories. Moreover, they were introduced to dignitaries, among them a high official of foreign affairs, Georgy Chicherin, and the revolutionary heroin and Soviet diplomat, Alexandra Kollontai. On 7

\(^{617}\) IISH, Archief Komintern - Partai Komunis Indonesia, inv. nr. 4, minutes 18 November 1927.
\(^{619}\) Poeze, *Politiek-Politioneele Overzichten*, 1:159.
November, Soebardjo and Soeleiman attended the big parade of the Soviet Army on Red Square. For Soebardjo, this was “an unforgettable experience”.620

At the guided tours, the foreign guests were divided into groups. As such, Soebardjo and Soeleiman got acquainted with Shakib Arslan and a Tunisian national, probably Ahmed Essafi. An animated conversation took place between the four, and during their trip they would travel together. Soebardjo and Soeleiman were greatly impressed by Shakib Arslan. This Druze politician from Lebanon was a vigorous propagandist for pan-Islamic unity. Exiled from his homeland by the French authorities, Arslan spent most of the interwar years in Geneva, from where he fostered an extensive network of Muslim activists in Europe. In the Arab world he was part of the circles around Muhammad Rashid Rida and Mohammed Amin al-Husseini. When Shakib Arslan gave a speech in the famous Bolshoi theatre in Moscow on the Islamic conception of redistributing wealth among the toiling masses, Soebardjo and Soeleiman were greatly inspired.621

It is remarkable that the trip of Soebardjo and Soeleiman completely escaped the attention of the Dutch authorities. Nowhere in the regular security reports of the Dutch or Indies security apparatuses was this voyage mentioned.622 The fact that Soebardjo operated from Berlin certainly helped in this respect. Consequently, the only information at the disposal of historians are the memoirs of Soebardjo himself, in which he proudly wrote about his journey to the centre of the communist world.623 In itself, this is remarkable enough, as his memoirs were written in 1978 at the heyday of the fiercely anti-communist Soeharto era, but it also indicates that we have to allow for the fact that Soebardjo was economical with the truth. For example, the autobiography of Soebardjo does not mention official rapprochement of Comintern officials or of plans to study in Moscow. In itself that proves nothing, but after approximately three weeks, Soebardjo and Soeleiman returned to Berlin by train. Probably, a permanent stay in Moscow was one bridge too far. The students were back in time to be present at the aforementioned general council meeting of the LAI of 9 and 10 December in Brussels, just as was, by the way, Shakib Arslan.

620 Subardjo, Kesadaran nasional, 146-147.
622 See for example: Poeze, Politiek-Politieke Overzichten, 1:159, 182-183.
623 Subardjo, Kesadaran nasional, 139-149.
Soebardjo Returns

It seems that Soebardjo was prepared for prolonged illegality in Europe. In case the PI would be declared an illegal organisation in the Netherlands, Soebardjo was planning to set up more permanent structures in Brussels. However, it would not be necessary. In March 1928, Hatta, Pamontjak, Ali Sastroamidjojo and Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat were acquitted of all charges and released from prison. For Soebardjo, this implied that the coast was clear to return to the Netherlands as well and resume his neglected studies. While Hatta made his comeback as a nationalist martyr and the most prominent Indonesian student in the Netherlands, Soebardjo again returned to a back-seat position in the association. In 1931 he briefly returned to the Dutch Indies for family reasons, and in 1933 he finally got his law degree and left Europe for good.

Soebardjo’s departure from Berlin in 1928 was not the end of PI activities in the German capital. Abdul Soekoer, a young law student in Leiden and a promising candidate to succeed Hatta as chair of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia, was stationed in Berlin for a few months to be introduced in international politics and to “undergo a practice school” under the guidance of Chattopadhyaya. Through direct mediation of Hatta, Soekoer worked at the International Secretariat between January 1928 and February 1929. He was succeeded by Setiadjit Soegondo, who stayed in Berlin between 1929 and the middle of 1931. Not much is known about these students, but their journeys help to explain that Indonesian newspapers continued to publish translated manifestos and articles of the League against Imperialism on a regular basis after April 1928.

All in all, it seems that the foreign orientation of the PI and the anxious reaction of the Dutch authorities were strongly interrelated. The continuation of engagements of the PI within the LAI and international communism was an immediate reason for the authorities to crack down on the students. The measures also explicitly concerned the foreign branches of the PI. Conversely, the government interventions were the prime reason for Soebardjo to seek

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624 Poeze, Politiek-Politieke Overzichten, 1:267, 297; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 312, 11 April 1928 G6, report intelligence service nr. 1595.
625 “Naar Europa terug; bekend PI voorman,” De Sumatra Post, May 11, 1932, 2; “Mr. Achmad Soebardjo; bekend inheemsche nationalist,” De Sumatra Post, February 1, 1934, 3.
626 Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers, 243; Poeze, Politiek-Politieke Overzichten, 2:58; Kwantes, De ontwikkeling van de nationalistische beweging, 4:821.
627 Poeze, In het land van de overheerder, 1:250; Poeze, Politiek-Politieke Overzichten, 3:lxvii; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 531, 14 November 1938 F37, Nota betreffende de Perhimpoenan Indonesia te Leiden, 14 November 1938.
628 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 346, 6 August 1930 B18, interrogation Iwa Koeseoema Soemantri, 20 March 1930; Poeze, Politiek-Politieke Overzichten, 1:296, 460; Poeze, Politiek-Politieke Overzichten, 2:26-27, 107, 126, 153.
refuge in Berlin and align more closely to the communist circles around Münzenberg and Chattopadhyaya. As he was the only prominent PI member left, this shifted the entire association in a communist direction. As such, the repressive measures were counterproductive. In the next chapter, the PI’s quest for autonomy will be re-examined but this time with regard to other political forces in Europe.