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

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Chapter 6
From national revolutionaries to national reformists
Indonesians in Europe

In this last chapter, the position of the PI within a changing political atmosphere in the LAI and the LAI-NL is analysed. In both platforms the PI struggled to preserve its own course, and to stand aloof from competition between communists and socialists. With an explicit mandate from Indonesian organisations to disseminate propaganda abroad, the PI remained much longer in the international LAI than in the LAI-NL, until its position became untenable in 1931.

On Friday 9 March 1928, the detained PI students Mohammad Hatta, Nazir Pamontjak, Ali Sastroamidjojo and Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat left the court house in The Hague as free men.629 In what was truly a media event, the world could witness a total failure of the Public Prosecutor to have the students convicted for seditious writings. It could not be determined if the articles in Indonesia Merdeka about political violence in the colony were observations or recommendations. Moreover, the Judge deemed it unconvincing that the students in the Netherlands had a direct influence on the state of affairs in the Dutch Indies. In his closing speech, the Public Prosecutor had not only referred to violent articles in Indonesia Merdeka, but also used the students’ subversive activities abroad as circumstantial evidence. He mentioned that the students had accepted money from the well-known communist Semaoen, that they had authorised Semaoen and Iwa Koesoema Soemantri to act as PI liaisons for the Comintern, and that they had established contact with several extremist organisations in Bierville and in Brussels.630 However, because they were accused of incitement to sedition, the other issues were not taken into consideration by the Judge. It seemed that the Public Prosecutor’s case was ill prepared.

In their defence, the students were assisted by three lawyers: J.E.W. Duijs, T. Mobach and L.P.A. Weber. The first two were active for the social democratic party SDAP, Duijs was even a Member of Parliament for that party. Their support only added to the political

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629 Technically, the judicial decision was confirmed on 22 March 1928.
character of the event. After the formal defence, the students had the opportunity to make a short statement. Hatta availed of this to repeat his words in *Indonesia Merdeka*:

> Sooner or later, every people will reclaim its freedom; that is an iron law in world history. Only the circumstances under which this liberation takes place are determined by the attitude of those who hold power. It depends on them if the liberation involves blood and tears, or that the process will take place peacefully.

Their half a year custody and the court case itself was a stressful experience for the students, but also a resounding victory for the Perhimpoenan Indonesia at large. For months, the Indonesian struggle had taken centre stage, not only in the Netherlands, but also in the Dutch Indies and in its international networks. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in a quick note to Liao Huanxing that he was “anxiously awaiting the decision in Mohammad Hatta’s case.” As a response to the arrests, the international LAI adopted a resolution in which it demanded the immediate release of the students and appealed to the Dutch proletariat to come to their defence by joining the Dutch LAI section.

In the Dutch Indies, rallies were organised in Bandung, Batavia and Surabaya, and a special relief campaign among former PI members and nationalist organisations raised 2300 guilders. In the Netherlands itself, the activities that were organised in the defence of the students were arguably part of the first large public mobilisation around a colonial issue after the Second Boer War in 1899-1902. It had always been difficult to arouse the interest of the Dutch public for the Indonesian movement, but the arrests of the students brought the anticolonial struggle closer to home, and demonstrated that the PI was part and parcel of the Indonesian movement at large.

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632 J.E.W. Duijs, *De vervolging tegen de Indonésische Studenten* (Amsterdam: Ontwikkeling, 1928), 41; my translation, original in the appendix.
634 Nehru, *Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, 3:129.
The most active Dutch parties in organising solidarity were the SDAP with its youth organisation AJC and affiliated journals *Het Volk* and *Voorwaarts*, and the two communist parties CPH and CPH-CC with the journal *De Tribune*. Furthermore, the Dutch section of the League against Imperialism and several smaller revolutionary socialist organisations and individuals such as Henriette Roland Holst and Henk Sneevliet campaigned for the release of the students as well. Together, the Dutch left managed to elicit substantial support from their respective constituencies. Reading the newspaper reports of the various events, the geographical spread and local character of the initiatives are striking. Many local chapters of political parties organised meetings, while worker’s collectives, social clubs and individuals donated money.

Most activities concerned public meetings, petitions and fund raising to cover the legal costs and to support the Indonesian National Fund. In total, the communists and the LAI-NL collected around 550 guilders, while the SDAP organised its own campaign and raised 3100 guilders. Its youth organisation AJC collected around 5000 signatures for the immediate release of the students. In parliament, socialists and communist MPs put questions to the responsible Ministers, and condemned the “Mussolini practices” of the Dutch government.

![Figure 6.1: Article Het Volk, Oktober 14, 1927, 1.](image)

Money donations were collected from individuals from across the Netherlands.

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Free from Holland, now?
This broad mobilisation showed that the Indonesian students were less isolated on the Dutch national level than before 1927, and appealed to the sympathy of the broader left. The campaigns could give the impression that the United Front against imperialism had also taken root in the Netherlands. However, behind these public displays of solidarity of the Dutch working class with the Indonesian students, great political tensions existed between the Dutch communists and the mainstream of the much larger SDAP. One could even say that both parties used the solidarity campaign for the detained students to boost their anticolonial image, and to put the other political parties to the test.

Politically, these tensions within the left were an escalation of a more fundamental difference in opinion on the immediacy with which independence was to be attained. From 1918 onwards, the CPH used ‘Indië los van Holland’ (‘the Indies free from Holland’) as a slogan.641 The SDAP, on the other hand, initially considered this slogan too populist and adopted a much more cautious approach.642 According to the SDAP, immediate and full independence would neither benefit the Dutch nor the Indonesian proletariat. The textile industry in Twente, the harbours and warehouses in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and the Dutch shipping companies and merchant fleet would not survive a sudden separation of Indonesia from the Netherlands, leading to a severe economic crisis and mass unemployment. The Indonesian labouring classes would in the short term benefit even less from immediate independence. Complete independence could be realised on the condition that Indonesia was in the position to participate in international economic exchange independently. A hasty Dutch retreat would leave the country vulnerable to other imperial powers and to non-Dutch foreign capital and would thus not lead to true liberation. As an alternative, the socialist colonial policy was aimed towards gradual but far reaching societal restructuring and political democratisation as a necessary precondition for ultimate independence, and carefully avoided talking about terms and deadlines.643

641 Morriën, Indonesië los van Holland, 9.
642 In 1929, the SDAP decided to carry the slogan “the Indies free from Holland” as well, but it also adopted a clause in which it emphasised the necessity of a competent successor administration. As a reaction, the reunited CPH promptly changed its slogan to “Indonesia free from Holland, now!”. McVey, The Rise of Indonesian Communism, 233; Erik Hansen, “The Dutch East Indies and the Reorientation of the Dutch Social Democracy, 1929-1940,” Indonesia 23 (April 1977) 70, 73-75.
This socialist approach of state-directed independence ran counter to communist and Indonesian nationalist interpretations. As they would argue, their plea for immediate independence was not just mere demagogy, but was fostered by a bitter scepticism about promises of development and democratisation. After the broken ‘November promises’ of Governor General Van Limburg Stirum in 1918, the false dawn of self-determination of Woodrow Wilson in 1919, and the fierce opposition of the Dutch colonial community against any concession for indigenous political movements in the 1920s, the Indonesian nationalists had lost every faith in the colonial government to hand over power voluntarily and to structurally work towards its own replacement. To this, the communists added that colonialism was not a political invention, but an intrinsic part of a global capitalist economic system. In essence, the colonial state was put in place to serve the need of Dutch capital for cheap labour, raw materials and accessible markets. It was irrational to believe that the colonial state or entrepreneurs would break with this compelling system and voluntarily share the market with others. Complete independence, through revolutionary means, was the only possible basis for social and economic progress for all. This also implied that a social democratic appeal to the colonial authorities for increased efforts in development and governance was not only raising false expectations, but actually prolonged the colonial capitalist project and was as such reactionary.

Figure 6.2: A poster of the LAI-NL, “The alliance of white and brown will liberate humanity.”

Source: International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

644 Ingleson, Road to Exile, 40-42.
Anticolonial competition

This fundamentally different strategy towards liberation often led to clashes in the Dutch parliament between communists and social democrats when it came to support Indonesian political movements, and this was continuously played out in the leftist press. Thus, the invitation at the end of 1926 to join the United Front against imperialism through the League against Imperialism, was interpreted by the social democratic mainstream as a provocative challenge and was rejected from the beginning. Indeed, some SDAP members wholeheartedly joined the LAI, such as Edo Fimmen, Johan Lefebvre, Piet Schmidt and Jef Last, but they operated from a leftist minority position within their own party. Ideologically, they were closer to independent socialists such as Henriette Roland Holst and Henk Sneevliet, and the British Independent Labour Party, than with the SDAP itself. In fact, the mainstream of the SDAP, through the newspapers Het Volk and Voorwaarts, expressed severe criticism on the League against Imperialism from the moment of its inception. On the opening day of the Brussels Kongress gegen Imperialismus in February 1927, Voorwaarts wrote venomously: “There is every indication, that we are confronted with a new attempt of the Russians to manipulate the West European labour movement to serve the interests of Russian imperialism in the Far East.” Five days later, Het Volk wrote: “Many attendants [of the Kongress gegen Imperialismus], had no objective other than the expansion of the sphere of influence of the Communist International, if they had a political objective at all.”

This hostile stance of the SDAP towards the LAI further aggravated in October 1927, when the Labour and Socialist International (LSI) published an analysis of the history of the League against Imperialism. This brochure of the international umbrella organisation of social democratic parties intended to expose the ideological, organisational and financial structure of the LAI, and emphasise that it was a Münzenberg set-up and “yet another United Front tactic of the Bolsheviks”. Following this official LSI-statement, Het Volk began to publish a series of articles in which the communists were strongly attacked. In these articles, the League against Imperialism was castigated as a “communist manoeuvre”, a “planet” in the solar system of Moscow “dancing to the tune of the Comintern”. The journal wrote:

646 See also Menno Eekman and Herman Pieterson, Linkssocialisme tussen de wereldoorlogen: Twee studies (Amsterdam, Stichting Beheer IISH, 1987), 61-63, 121.
649 Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers, 189-190, 194.
“While the social democrats strive after the true liberation of the Eastern peoples and their development towards autonomy and independence, the communists only use the Eastern peoples as tools for their own Russian politics.” With regard to the Dutch Indies, Het Volk even wrote:

The immorality of [the communist line] is revealed by the Moscow-incited adventure in the Netherlands Indies, where righteous nationalism and justified bitterness were used by Moscow for a bloody uproar [in November 1926], which yielded nothing good, and which left the social democrats with a lot of work to alleviate the evil inflicted by it.\(^\text{651}\)

The brochure of the LSI and the articles in the social democratic press provoked indignant reactions with LAI supporters. For Soebardjo, it had been a reason to strongly criticise the social democrats at the LAI meeting in Brussels in December.\(^\text{652}\) Recht en Vrijheid, the journal of the LAI-NL, also reacted with bitterness, refuting the accusations as worthless and even treasonous:

At the moment that four members of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia are in prison, the world organisation with which they are affiliated is called a ‘communist association’, and those who are part of it ‘puppets of Moscow’. The members of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia have, without exception, considered this a stab in the back.\(^\text{653}\)

This was confirmed by Soebardjo, who described the “oblique assault” of the SDAP as “very painful” for the PI.\(^\text{654}\) The communist daily De Tribune chose to let dissident SDAP members and independent socialists speak for themselves, and published statements of Schmidt, Lefebvre, Roland Holst and Fimmen at public meetings. As non-CPH members they declared that the League against Imperialism was not a satellite of Moscow and welcomed different ideological denominations in its midst.\(^\text{655}\)

These articles in Tribune and Recht en Vrijheid did little to improve the vulnerable political position of the dissident SDAP members, and they stood under great pressure to re-evaluate their membership of either of the two organisations. In December, Lefebvre resigned as a chair of the LAI-NL and was replaced by Schmidt (fig. 5.1). The communist G.J. van

\(^\text{651}\) “De Liga; naar Moskou’s pijpen,” Het Volk, October 11, 1927, 2; my translation, original in the appendix.

\(^\text{652}\) “De Liga; De eene dwaasheid na de andere,” Bataviasch Nieuwsblad, December 12, 1927, 1.

\(^\text{653}\) P.J. Schmidt, “De SDAP en de Liga,” Recht en Vrijheid, November 5, 1927, 2; my translation, original emphasis, original in the appendix.


Munster became secretary, also relieving Soebardjo from his duties while he was in Berlin. Finally in April 1928, the SDAP declared membership of its own party incompatible with the LAI-NL as a Comintern organisation, and three LAI-NL chair members Schmidt, Kiës and Last resigned from the LAI. They considered anticolonial and leftist opposition within the large SDAP more valuable than political isolation in the shadow of the Communist Party.

To fight for independence: the PI withdraws

It is against the backdrop of this intense polemic, that the solidarity campaign for the Indonesian students has to be reassessed. Instead of a successful display of solidarity of the united left, it was actually a propagandistic competition over the question of which leftist political party was most ready to defend the interests of the Indonesian movement. For the SDAP, the court case against the PI provided a great opportunity to show that they were passionately on the side of the anticolonialists. Their generosity, providing lawyers and money, served to defend themselves against accusations of the communists to the contrary. It also explains why the SDAP refused to join the fund raising campaign of the Dutch section of the League against Imperialism, and established a campaign of its own. The Tribune on the other hand accused the SDAP of hypocrisy and making false propaganda, pointing to the lack of protest of the social democrats in other colonial issues, such as the extrajudicial banishments of Indonesian activists to Upper Digul.

This was the state of affairs when Hatta and the others were released from custody. Of course, the campaigns of both CPHs, the SDAP and the LAI-NL had brought him great fame, and had arguably put pressure on the Judge to decide in his favour. But what was explained as a victory had paradoxically also diminished the prospects of continued cooperation on the left. For Hatta, the SDAP had disqualified itself by attacking the LAI, while the communists had chosen to escalate their argument with the SDAP at the expense of the interests of the

658 We have to keep in mind that in this period the SDAP was much larger than both CPH-parties combined, and had the second largest electorate of the Netherlands: 12 times higher than the communists. In the parliamentary elections of 1929, the SDAP got more than 800,000 votes, against only 38,000 for CPH-De Visser and 30,000 for CPH-Centraal Comité, both just enough for one parliamentary seat. The Revolutionair-Socialistische Partij of Henk Sneevliet received 22,000 votes, which was not enough for a seat.
Indonesian movement. The precondition on founding the LAI-NL, that the PI would have the upper hand in the organisation, was not respected.

Therefore, in April 1928 the Perhimpoenan Indonesia decided to abandon the LAI-NL, after which the organisation would soon cease to exist.\textsuperscript{660} In \textit{Indonesia Merdeka}, the students mainly accused the SDAP of a cowardly retreat from the anti-imperialist camp.\textsuperscript{661} But in a long letter to Darsono in Moscow, who had probably tried to persuade him to return to the LAI-NL, Hatta displayed a more fundamental scepticism towards Dutch politicians and party politics in general.\textsuperscript{662} In this letter Hatta mentioned that the PI, even its communist members, had always been reluctant to cooperate with Dutch parties. Dutchmen, Hatta remarked, were individualist by character and in the end always followed their own interests. According to Hatta, the Dutch communists “had attempted to dominate the League” in his absence, and had tried to present the PI with a \textit{fait accompli}. In dramatic terms, Hatta declared: “the Perhimpoenan Indonesia […] will not be a vehicle ['Reitpferd’, stalking horse] [of the CPH] […] The active politics that we have to pursue implies no close cooperation with any of the Dutch organisations, except when the occasion is favourable enough to use them as our vehicle. Nothing more.”\textsuperscript{663}

The principled stance of Hatta in his letter to Darsono indicates that Soebardjo’s rapprochements with the communist movement in his Berlin period were not extended to the Dutch political terrain when Hatta retook the stage. For the next three years the organisation remained aloof from Dutch party politics, and focussed more on the Dutch Indies. There, promising new steps were taken to revive the national movement with the establishment of the nationalist party PNI and the formation of a political federation of Islamist and nationalist parties in the PPPKI. In the Netherlands, informal relations continued only with independent activists and a few individual leftist socialists within the SDAP, mainly by Mohammad Hatta and the newly arrived student Soetan Sjahrir with the group around the journals ‘De Socialist’, and ‘De Vlam’.\textsuperscript{664} In April 1929, there was a short-lived attempt to revive the LAI-NL, at the strong insistence of the international LAI. Hatta had just resigned as PI chairman

\textsuperscript{660} Compare Hering, \textit{Soekarno}, 174.


\textsuperscript{662} IISH, Archief Komintern - Partai Komunis Indonesia, inv. nr. 23, letter from Hatta to ‘D’, 14 May 1928, p. 20-21.

\textsuperscript{663} IISH, Archief Komintern - Partai Komunis Indonesia, inv. nr. 23, letter from Hatta to ‘D’, 14 May 1928, p. 21-22. Also Petersson, \textit{We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers}, 226-227.

to devote more time to his neglected studies. With the new PI chair Abdul Soekoer, the PI agreed to give it a second chance on the condition that the Indonesians would have absolute dominance over the section. It negotiated the right to appoint the chairman and secretary, and 5 out of 10 members of the board. The communists would have the right to nominate three board members, and the antimilitarist organisation IAMV two. Ominously, the PI board wrote in *Indonesia Merdeka*: “The success of this attempt will for the major part depend on the attitude of the Dutch elements and their willingness to respect the non-partisan character of the LAI. If we fail, we wish to never engage with the ‘Dutch question’ again!” It would not be a success. This time, the PI was afraid to be engaged in the internal quarrels and “sectarianism” between the CPH and the CPH-Centraal Comité. Within a year, the Indonesians left the LAI-NL for a second time, and Abdul Soekoer resigned as chairman of the PI.

**PI on the international stage**

In other words, while chapter five demonstrated that the arrests of the most prominent PI members in September 1927 forced the Indonesian students to rely on their international contacts, its aftermath – despite the solidarity campaign – resulted in a dampening of relations with Dutch political parties. This situation of foreign collaboration and Dutch isolation continued in the years to come. In the same letter to Darsono in which Hatta elucidated the PI stance towards Dutch parties, he assured that: “On the international stage we can cooperate with the white organisations on the same footing as we currently do in the international league with communists and revolutionary pacifists.” On 28 and 29 April 1928, Achmad Soebardjo and Nazir Pamontjak represented the PI at the LAI executive gathering in Brussels. Two months later, Hatta went to an International Secretariat meeting in Berlin, followed by a meeting of the Executive Committee in August 1928 in that same city. Subsequently, he attended assemblies in Cologne on 15 and 16 January 1929, and in Amsterdam on 13 to 14 April 1929. While Achmad Soebardjo chose to concentrate on his

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667 IIISH, Archief Komintern - Partai Komunis Indonesia, inv. nr. 23, letter from Hatta to ‘D’, 14 May 1928, p. 22. It is interesting that Hatta used the Bolshevik catch-all term ‘White Organisations’, which normally referred to the loosely organised anti-Bolshevik armies and movements during the Russian Civil War (1917-1923), but later indicated anti-communist forces in general. It seems, however, that Hatta used the term as a synonym for non-communist movements, rather than counter-revolutionaries.
studies, and kept a low political profile after his return to the Netherlands, it was Hatta who was the prime international functionary of the PI after March 1928. At the International Secretariat meeting in June, he announced that the PI had left the LAI-NL, and that it wished to maintain relations with the secretariat and Chattopadhyaya directly. Even after Hatta resigned from his post as chair of the PI, in February 1929, he continued to be the first representative of the PI on the international stage. From his address in the Swiss town of Locarno, where he had moved to circumvent police supervision and to join his sponsor Abdul Rivai, Hatta was the pivotal figure between the Indonesian students in the Netherlands and the international networks in Europe.669

The decision of Hatta and the students to remain connected to the larger movement in Europe was informed by the moral support and practical assistance they had received from the LAI during the months of detention, but politically the continued international collaboration is more difficult to assess. Many of the ideological antagonisms and political machinations that existed between leftist parties in the Netherlands also affected collaboration on the international stage. As described above, the hostile political stance of the SDAP was to a large extent informed by instructions of the international social democratic LSI, and the LAI was from its inception subject to more or less covert Comintern strategies of influence. The PI was well aware of accusations that the LAI was a communist front organisation, but had always dismissed them as the “whining and stirring” of the “imperialist press”.670 While it saw SDAP-CPH confrontations about the LAI-NL as obstructive to its own interests, it chose to uphold the banner of unity and not respond to increasing tensions between the Comintern and the LSI within the LAI.

Centrifugal forces

And these tensions were indeed rising. The League against Imperialism became one of the arenas where the clash between the Second and Third International was most intense between 1927 and 1931. As many scholars have recognised, the political change of course of the Comintern after its Executive Council meeting in February 1928 and its Sixth World


Congress in July and August 1928 had a heavy impact on the atmosphere in the LAI. The establishment of the LAI had been in line with Comintern objectives to build connections and alliances with workers within the labour movements in the West and nationalist liberation movements in the colonised world. In broad international umbrella organisations across national borders and political divisions, such as the League against Imperialism, the Anti-Fascist League (1923) or the Friends of the Soviet Union (1927), non-communist popular support for the existence of the Soviet Union had to be secured and its political isolation broken.

However, domestically and internationally, this strategy of cooperation with bourgeois parties had come under attack, both within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and in the Comintern itself. In 1928, after a turbulent power struggle within the CPSU, Stalin had succeeded in outmanoeuvring the rightist and leftist opposition and in assuming control over the Party. In his analysis the modernisation and industrialisation of the Soviet Union, for instance in the important agricultural sector, had stagnated due to resistance and sabotage of vested interests and remnants of the Ancien Régime. Internationally, the political isolation of the Soviet Union had not been broken, and in many Western countries the Communist Parties were split between Bolshevik and non-Bolshevik factions. Moreover, the Soviet alliance with the Guomindang Party had ended in a disastrous failure, and relations with the Indian National Congress were problematic as well. Finally, according to Stalin’s analysis global capitalism was on the brink of a period of deep economic crises and renewed confrontations between the old imperialist powers and new economic giants such as Germany and the United States. Time was ripe for militant proletarian action. Via the CPSU, a new tendency within the Comintern gained the upper hand from 1928 onwards, often referred to as the ‘Third Period’, which tried to bring communist parties, unions and organisations, and sympathising political platforms under stronger political control. The result was a ‘Stalinisation’ and ‘Bolshevisation’ of the existing political umbrella organisations and platforms of cooperation such as the LAI, and an increasing hostility towards ‘bourgeois’ and ‘reformist’ political parties.

672 Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers, 48-50; Duncan Hallas, The Comintern, a History of the Third International (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008), 66-73; Worley, “Courting disaster?”, 6-7.
The diminishing political space within the LAI cannot be ascribed to changed Comintern tactics alone. Actually, the space for cooperation on the left was narrowing from social democratic and anticolonial sides as well. With regard to the first, leftist social democrats within the LAI came under increasing pressure from their respective Social Democratic Parties to end flirtations with communists. Many Western Social Democratic Parties experienced an electoral breakthrough in the 1920s, and participated in, or had prospects of, government coalitions. In the UK, Ramsay MacDonald formed the first ever Labour government in 1924, which was short-lived but showed that the party was an eligible candidate to govern. In 1929 this would result in a second Labour government, which remained in office for two years. In Belgium, the Belgische Werklieden Partij (‘Belgian Labour Party’) had participated in a few governments of national unity after the First World War, and in 1925 again assumed office for two years. In France, the position of the SFIO was not as strong, but they joined the Left Cartel that won the general elections of 1924. In Germany, the SPD, which was the most powerful party in the LSI, also participated in governments of national unity after the First World War and remained in office in 9 out of 17 cabinets between 1918 and 1930.

In other words, leftist social democrats in the LAI were attacked from two sides. Not only did they have to reckon with increasingly aggressive assaults from Comintern-affiliated members, but they were also pressured by their own parties and by the international LSI to cease their involvement with Bolshevik agitators and subversive anticolonial movements. Dutch SDAP members were not the only ones to fall victim to this pressure. In October 1927, the Independent Labour Party politician Fenner Brockway was forced to give up his chairmanship of the international LAI under heavy pressure from the LSI as well, as George Lansbury had done before him.674

Even in colonial circles, involvement in the League against Imperialism became increasingly problematic. Most eye-catching was of course the withdrawal of the largest colonial group in Brussels, the Chinese delegation of the Guomindang Party. As argued in chapter four, this delegation mainly consisted of European residents and “communists in disguise” such as Liao Huanxing. Despite the geographical distance, they were heavily affected by developments in China. After the fragile alliance between the nationalist Guomindang Party and the Chinese Communist Party had been stifled in blood with the

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674 Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers, 189-195, 224; Saville, “Bridgeman,” 42-43.
Shanghai massacre of April 1927, the Chinese political scene in Europe fell apart in nationalist and communist factions as well. Most Chinese activists withdrew from the LAI or chose to work from within the French and German Communist Parties. For the most prominent Chinese LAI member, Liao Huanxing, this implied that he came to work at the International Secretariat in Berlin, until he turned away from the LAI, disillusioned with the Comintern’s policy vis-à-vis China.675

Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian National Congress Party, another important colonial pillar under the LAI, also moved away. Upon return to British India, Nehru had reported favourably on the LAI at the annual INC meeting. He even had succeeded in convincing the INC to associate with the LAI. He argued that the LAI provided a unique opportunity to get in touch with other nationalist organisations. With regard to the Comintern he held a pragmatic view similar to that of the PI: cooperation and coordination was fine as long as it suited the interests of the INC itself.676 However, his moves were soon countered by Gandhi and the conservative old guard of the party, who repudiated any affiliation with the Comintern or other communist offshoots. They rendered Nehru’s resolutions meaningless. Although Nehru continued to advocate an uncompromising anticcolonial line within the Congress Party against a dominant stream which was in favour of a dominion status, he was unable to rally the Party behind his ideas. This also weakened his position within the LAI. In his contact with Chattopadhyaya and Roy in Berlin and Moscow he was severely criticised for his refusal to break with the INC.677

In other words, the international LAI was as much a snake pit as the LAI-NL, and non-communists with a minority position within their own constituencies were most vulnerable. As Petersson describes, the initial “euphoria” around the first congress of the League against Imperialism in Brussels soon gave way to complicated debates around the location of the secretariat, its staffing, its financial backing, and the political loyalty of its affiliated organisations. These were the symptoms of a gradually diminishing political space for cooperation on the left, and an increasing fear of being compromised by other political forces.678

675 Levine, The Found Generation, 192-202; Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers, 169-172, 196-200, 209-211.
676 Nehru, Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, 2:325-326.
678 Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers, 153, 215.
The Comintern and the PI

This new atmosphere on the international political stage did not leave the PI unaffected. Most important for the PI was that the Comintern changed its attitude towards the Indonesian movement radically. As described above, in December 1926, in the darkest days of Dutch repression of the PKI, Hatta and Semaoen had signed a convention in which they agreed that the PI would assume leadership over the future national movement. Semaoen, who had led the PKI a few years before and who held a high position in the Comintern, likely had signed this agreement to save the remains of the PKI. Moreover, just like the PI itself, he preferred to entrust the inheritance of the PKI to an Indonesian organisation rather than to an internally divided party of Dutchmen. Thus, the PI was invited as the sole representative of the national movement at the Kongress gegen Imperialismus in Brussels.

In the first months of 1927, the Comintern seemed to have tolerated this line, perhaps in a state of disorientation with regard to the condition of the communist movement in the Dutch Indies. At meetings of the ‘National Secretariat for Great Britain and Holland’, at which the official Comintern response to the crackdown on the communist movement was discussed, the central question was whether it was still possible to rebuild the PKI, or whether it would be better to continue the work from within other movements. In March 1927, Semaoen made the case “to try to put up a revolutionary national movement outside the existing national organisations which are not so revolutionary, and to do everything to keep connections between our members in Indonesia”. The Comintern agreed and tried to conceal the communist character of the November 1926 revolt by emphasising the fact that the Indonesian revolution was a hunger insurrection.

Three and a half months later, the Comintern seemed to have changed its position and wanted to bring the Indonesian issue in tune with its broader Asian policy after the collapse of the GMD-CCP alliance. It advised its constituent members that: “[i]n the analysis of the insurrection the first thing which should be explained and emphasised is the fact that it was the first insurrection in the Asiatic countries led by the communists”, and “to include as a special point the treacherous role of the Dutch social democrats, who were very active in helping to suppress the insurrection.” On 23 November 1927, La Correspondence Internationale, the bulletin of the Executive Committee of the Comintern published a

679 Ingleson, Road to Exile, 28.
680 McVey, The Rise of Indonesian Communism, 240-241, 243-244.
682 IISH, Archief Komintern – Partai Komunis Indonesia, inv. nr. 3, minutes 27 June 1927.
directive article, in which it made the desired attitude of communists in Indonesia abundantly clear. Among others, it read:

During the insurrection and the entire period of repression, the Dutch Social Democrats (section of the Second International) have played an explicit role as defenders of Dutch imperialism. […] It is the most essential task of the Malay Communists to reconstruct the Party as a fully independent organisation, even at the costs of heavy sacrifice.683

This was a very irrational plan, but it explains that the convention of Semaoen and Hatta, in which the PKI was officially subordinated to the PI, had become undesirable to the Comintern. On 19 December 1927 – and not 19 December 1926, as some scholars suggest – Semaoen was forced to publish a statement in the Dutch communist journal De Tribune in which he repealed the agreement with Hatta as a mistake:

I wish to confirm that I have signed the concerned agreement, but after careful consideration I have come to the realisation that I made a mistake. I signed the agreement under force of an enormous regime of terror in Indonesia at the time. [...] The events have shown, however, that the communists in Indonesia, in spite of all the persecutions and repression continue to struggle and fight bravely. [...] We have to stress our independence under all circumstances […].684

This new Comintern line was further confirmed at the Sixth World Congress in July and August 1928 in which Islamists and conservative nationalists were blamed for betraying the insurrectionaries.685

The PI and the Comintern
The new official reading of the November 1926 revolt and the termination of the Hatta-Semaoen-convention provoked no public reaction at all from the side of the PI. The association which was normally very outspoken in political matters concerning Indonesia, and often attacked the social democrats for their “treacherous” colonial policy, seemed to ignore the changed position of the Comintern. Most likely, it did not want to draw attention to its involvement in the League against Imperialism. In fact, the PI was one of the few organisations within the LAI that continued to see its existence and well-being as a

683 Cited in Petrus Blumberger, De communistische beweging, 146-147; my translation, original in the appendix. See also Enrica Collotti Pischel and Chiara Robertazzi, L’internationale communiste et les problèmes coloniaux, 1919-1935 (Paris: Mouton, 1968), 266, nr. 1350.
684 “De verklaring van Semaoen,” De Tribune, December 19, 1927, 3; my translation, original in the appendix.
685 Morriën, Indonesië los van Holland, 76-77.
fundamental pillar in its political strategy. There are two reasons which help to explain why the Indonesians remained largely unresponsive to the tensions within the LAI and to the challenges of the Comintern at its address.

First of all, the PI was fundamentally different from the other organisations involved in the LAI (fig. 4.6). It claimed close connections with the movement in the Dutch Indies, but after all it remained an unaffiliated, small student organisation in the Netherlands. Unlike Jawaharlal Nehru in the INC, Fenner Brockway in the ILP, or even Willi Münzenberg in the international communist world, the PI was accountable to no-one but itself, and it did not have to deal with critique from oppositional tendencies in its constituency in the Dutch Indies. This eased Hatta’s position, but also implied that the organisation could not fall back on any other structure than on the League against Imperialism. For the Indonesians, the LAI was not a difficult, politically risky and above all expensive endeavour, but rather a unique platform, a possible hide-out and a crucial source of money.

Despite the fact that the LAI was a financial disaster from the start – the organisation of the Brussels Congress in February 1927 had left a deficit of over 7000 dollars – it supported its affiliated members with money. The financial turnover of the LAI was much bigger than the annual budget and the financial needs of the PI, and Hatta received an allowance each time he attended a LAI meeting. Moreover, at several occasions the Indonesian students seem to have received substantial donations from Indonesian communists in Moscow via the channels of the LAI. In chapter five a secret money transfer was discussed of “one-and-a-half pages” (1500 dollars) from Semaoen to the PI via Nazif and Soebardjo in Paris – reason for the authorities to crack down on the students. In February 1928, Iwa Koesoema Soemantri brokered another remittance of 2900 guilders to the LAI-NL via Soebardjo in Berlin. This time, under undisclosed circumstances 750 guilders were lost along the way. LAI-NL members Schmidt and Fimmen accused Soebardjo of embezzling the money. This was not at all unlikely given the latter’s dramatic lack of resources in Berlin, but Soebardjo denied it, and for him it was an additional reason to break with the LAI-NL. For obvious reasons, it is difficult to get a grip on the exact origin, size and regularity of this financial flow, but it seems that the Dutch authorities were right in suspecting substantial money transfers from Moscow to the Netherlands.

686 Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers, 132-133, 159.
687 Poeze, Politiek-Politioneele Overzichten, 1:378; Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers, 133, 160, 427.
688 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 312, 11 April 1928 G6; Poeze, Politiek-Politioneele Overzichten, 1:267.
Adding to this financial dependency on its international partners, a second important consideration for the PI to remain active within the LAI was the realisation that a withdrawal would effectively render the Perhimpoenan Indonesia redundant. With the establishment of a secular nationalist organisation in the Dutch Indies, Soekarno’s PNI, and a national political federation with the PPPKI, it had become clear that the PI was no longer a guiding organisation within the Indonesian political landscape, but had become subservient to the real struggle back home.\(^689\) Also in the Netherlands, the PI had lost a field of activity after the failed LAI-NL initiative had demonstrated that there was nothing to expect from Dutch parties in terms of cooperation and negotiation. The only functional task of the PI was to constitute the link between the political organisations in the Dutch Indies and the international political scene, as long as the Dutch authorities obstructed direct relations between the two. From its political transformation in 1922 onwards, there had always been an awareness within the PI that it had to make propaganda for the Indonesian cause abroad, and that it had to counter false Dutch propaganda. After the experiences within the LAI, this task had only become more concrete.

This self-perception of the PI as a advanced post in Europe was sanctioned in April 1929 when the PPPKI in the Dutch Indies sent a telegram to Mohammad Hatta in which it recognised the Perhimpoenan Indonesia “as her official representative [in Europe]” and the “advanced post” of the Indonesian federation in Europe.\(^690\) Good relations with the LAI were explicitly mentioned in the instructions of the PPPKI. In reaction to articles in *Indonesia Merdeka*, suggesting that with the establishment of nationalist organisations in Indonesia PI’s work was done, Soekarno encouraged the PI to continue its propaganda abroad, or to establish special propaganda bureaus in the European capitals in case the PI would indeed disband itself.\(^691\) On 1 April 1929, the newly established radical trade union Sarekat Kaoem Boeroeh Indonesia (‘Indonesian Workers’ Union’, SKBI) even decided to join the LAI directly, with the PI as functional representatives.\(^692\)

In other words, while a withdrawal from the LAI-NL could be explained as a radical and self-conscious anticolonial move, a departure from the international LAI – by lack of any viable alternative – would be nothing but a self-destructive manoeuvre for the PI and was

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\(^{692}\) Petrus Blumberger, *De nationalistische beweging*, 366-370.
against the wish of the national movement in the Dutch Indies itself. As such, it seems that the Perhimpoenan Indonesia was inclined to tolerate political tensions on the international stage, because it had become the only field on which it could be of value.

Waiting for the storm
The alignments of the PNI, PPPKI and SKBI to the LAI via PI were considered an alarming development by the colonial authorities. In the Volksraad the Governor General stated: “The government does not allow organisational contact between associations or persons in the Indies and the League or any other organisation which is under strong communist influence. As soon as such contacts appear to exist, there will be measures.” And indeed, on 26 July 1929, the police raided the houses of SKBI leaders, and arrested among others the returned PI member Iwa Koesoema Soemantri. The union itself was banned. On 29 December 1929, the same happened to the PNI, which led to the incarceration of Soekarno and hundreds of others, among whom were the former PI members, Gatot Taroenomihardjo, Ali Sastroamidjojo, Abdulkarim Pringgodigdo and Mohammad Joesoef. The connection with the LAI played an explicit role in the decision to crack down on the nationalist movement.

But also for the students themselves, the political dependence of the PI on the LAI would become problematic. The determination to remain involved in the international LAI perhaps made the PI underestimate the problems that were undermining the league. Whereas the first Kongress gegen Imperialismus in Brussels had been a clear statement of anticolonialism and a shining example of unity and solidarity, the “end of euphoria”, as Petersson calls it, followed soon after February 1927. Political tensions surfaced particularly strongly at the Executive Council meeting in Brussels in December 1927, and in Cologne in January 1929. It would, however, take until the Second International Congress against Imperialism and Colonialism, from 20 to 27 July 1929 in Frankfurt am Main in Germany, until the Indonesians were forced to admit that the foundations of the LAI were crumbling.

The first signs of an impending clash appeared already in the days before this congress. On Saturday 20 July 1929, on the eve of the event, the LSI published its second analysis of the LAI, warning all non-communists to turn away from this communist showpiece and predicting that its chair, James Maxton of the British Independent Labour

693 Cited in Petrus Blumberger, De nationalistische beweging, 369.
694 Ingleson, Road to Exile, 96, 104-105; Petrus Blumberger, De nationalistische beweging, 366, 369; See also Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, 124.
695 Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers, 200, 215, 221-222.
Party, would be a prime target for the “Bolsheviks”. On the other side, the Frankfurt congress followed shortly after the tenth Executive Committee meeting of the Comintern in Moscow, and several of the communist attendants came straight from the Soviet capital. Although Willi Münzenberg and Chattopadhyaya, as secretaries of the LAI, remained the main organisers, direct involvement of the Comintern was much greater in the preparations for Frankfurt than it had been in Brussels. Paying half of the 20,000 dollar costs, the Comintern – through the special ‘commission on the LAI’ – had a decisive say in the location of the event, its provisional programme and the preparation of its resolutions. Moreover, although official representatives of communist organisations only accounted for 33% of the attendants, their actual number was much higher as many of them were registered under non-communist organisations.

The Frankfurt congress

The opening session of the congress took place in the gigantic hall of the Hippodrome in the South of Frankfurt, and the subsequent sessions were held in a classical building in the Zoological Gardens. It was the aim to make Frankfurt an even bigger anticolonial event than Brussels. A total number of 286 guests from 41 countries was invited, of which 263 delegates from 99 organisations in 31 countries showed up. Just as had been the case in Brussels, many of the colonial attendants were actually living in Europe. A new development was the strong presence of the Latin American group, which arrived with 16 representatives. At the opening ceremony, the Nicaraguan delegate offered an American flag to the LAI, which was captured by the Nicaraguan guerrilla army of General Sandino from American occupying troops. Also, the Sub-Saharan African and Afro-American delegations were present in greater numbers than before, reflecting the new Comintern interest in these groups. With 13 people, the Indonesian group was exceptionally large. Among the colonial delegations, they were outnumbered only by the Indians. 11 of them were PI members, among whom were Hatta, Pamontjak, Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat, Soekoer and Roestam Effendi. The other

697 The other half of the costs was paid by the Internationale Arbeiterhilfe and the LAI itself: Petersson, *We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers*, 290, 296, 298, 322, 325.
699 IISH, LAI, inv. nr. 67, List of affiliated, associated and sympathising organisations; Callaghan, “Storm over Asia,” 30-31; Petersson, *We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers*, 324.
two Indonesians were the communist Darsono and Achmad Djajadiningrat, a conservative Volksraad member who was in Europe coincidentally.\footnote{The other PI members were Achmad Moestafa, Moechsin, Roesbandi, Abdoel Rachman, and Tadjoedino Noor. Achmad Djajadiningrat was in Europe to study the commercial sector and to pay a visit to the International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organisation of the League of Nations in Geneva. His autobiography includes a chapter on his trip to Europe and his impressions of Frankfurt: Djajadiningrat, 

*Herinneringen*, 354-356; Poeze, *Politiek-Politioneele Overzichten*, 2:196. Petersson remarks that the communist Moesso and the nationalist Soekarno were intent of coming, but they never arrived: Petersson, *We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers*, 309. In Brussels, members of the CHH had been part of the Guomindang group. This time, the CHH chose not to be involved with the LAI. Only the leftist student and former CHH-board member Han Tiauw Kie was present in a private capacity: Van Galen, “Geschiedenis van de Chung Hwa Hui,” 186; Petersson, *We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers*, 323.}

In Brussels, the communist delegations had tried to remain in the background to avoid the impression of an orchestrated event, but their behaviour at the Frankfurt congress was much more aggressive.\footnote{Petersson, *We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers*, 320, 327-331; IISH, LAI, inv. nr.78, *Manifesto of the Second World Congress of the League against Imperialism*; Poeze, *Politiek-Politioneele Overzichten*, 2:197; “Tweede Wereldcongres van de Liga tegen Imperialisme,” *De Tribune*, July 26, 1929, 2. Garveyism was a black nationalist movement inspired by the beliefs of Marcus Garvey.} As predicted by the LSI, communist speakers launched continuous attacks on the Scottish LAI chairman James Maxton from the opening session on. He repeatedly stressed that he acted in his private capacity, but his party, the Independent Labour Party, was formally part of the governing Labour Party in Great Britain, and therefore he was taken as the embodiment of the betrayal of social democracy. Other victims of communist assaults were the official delegate of the INC, Shivaprasad Gupta, Garveyism in the Pan-African movement and the “fascist” Chinese Guomindang Party.\footnote{Hatta, *Memoir*, 231-232.}

“The storm” continued for days, and it seems that the non-communist delegations were somewhat caught by surprise. Only at the last day of the congress, at a session that was chaired by Hatta, Münzenberg, who had opened the barrage on Maxton and the “social and national reformists”, moderated his tone and argued for renewed unity, and proletarian and anticolonial brotherhood. Hatta himself remembered that he had to do everything to prevent renewed attacks on Maxton by the communists J.W. Ford and Lu Ki, in order to close the congress on a more positive note.\footnote{Poeze, *Politiek-Politioneele Overzichten*, 2:197-198.}

As was the case in Brussels, most attention was paid to the situation in China and British India. The Indonesian contribution was one of many colonial declarations and speeches at the conference, and was not particularly different from previous events. With Hatta in the presiding committee, no less than four other PI members were given the opportunity to give a speech. The first was Pamontjak, who greeted the youth conference preceding the main sessions. In a much shorter speech than in Brussels, he apologised for the
nationalist leaders in the Dutch Indies who had planned to come to Europe but were withheld by the colonial authorities. In a session on the Indian struggle, Abdulmadjid Djojoadiningrat conveyed a message of solidarity to the Indian fighters for independence, arguing that colonialism in Indonesia was, next to India and China, the most important pillar of global imperialism. The main PI contribution came from chairman Abdul Soekoer in a plenum meeting for smaller colonised areas. He described the bloody terror of Dutch imperialism and the indiscriminate banishments of activists to prison camps in New Guinea. He also mentioned the growing support for the nationalist movement PNI. Roestam Effendi took the opportunity to make a strong appeal for cooperation between the Indonesian people and the European labour movement in the LAI. He could not have known that a day later, on 26 July 1929, the police in the Dutch Indies would raid the homes and offices of SKBI leaders, the only Indonesian organisation that was officially associated with the LAI.

The most interesting Indonesian contribution came perhaps from Darsono in a general plenum on imperialism and the labour movement. In an intervention, he described the horrors of imperialism in Indonesia, the betrayal of the SDAP, but also of Wijnkoop’s CPH-CC, which had prevented the first Indonesian from gaining a seat in the Dutch parliament. In the Dutch general elections of 1929, the main CPH and the CPH-CC had both waged their own campaign, resulting in one seat per party: Wijnkoop for the CPH-CC and De Visser for CPH. The number two on list of the CPH was Darsono himself, and he blamed it to Wijnkoop’s manoeuvre that he was not elected. This culminated in a barrage of abuse between De Visser and Wijnkoop, which escalated further when Darsono called the latter a traitor.

Hatta reports back
The incident with Darsono was illustrative of the general atmosphere of the Frankfurt Congress. Hatta was proud to have helped to avert a split in the League against Imperialism, but in August he published a very negative report in Indonesia Merdeka about the Frankfurt Congress. In a remarkably short article, Hatta lamented the irreconcilable tone and fanaticism.

705 Poeze, Politiek-Politieke Overzichten, 2:197.
707 IISH, LAI, inv. nr. 67, List of affiliated, associated and sympathising organisations; “De ‘Sarekat Kaoem Boeroeh Indonesia’,” Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië, July 27, 1929, 2. The association of the SKBI with the LAI clearly triggered the police intervention, but it cannot be confirmed whether the Frankfurt Congress itself informed the decision to act.
with which political differences were played out, especially by the communist factions. “A tidal wave of fanaticism from the side of the strongly present communists has surged, which threatens to swallow everything that does not feel, think or act in a communist way”. He continued:

[W]e saw how the irreconcilable ones among the communists tried everything to win the League for Moscow entirely. They succeeded in creating the public impression that the League is just a vehicle of the Soviet state, instead of [an organisation] primarily at the service of the suppressed peoples. 709

Apparently, PI members had made objections to communist reproaches of “national reformists” and the “indigenous bourgeoisie”, and they had presented themselves explicitly as representatives of the Indonesian national movement as a whole. In *Indonesia Merdeka*, Hatta wrote: “The fact that the PI repeatedly referred to its responsibilities to the Indonesian national movement provoked many spiteful remarks at the margins of the congress such as: ‘Oh, ils sont des nationalistes avec beaucoup de responsabilité’.” 710 It is remarkable that Hatta did not condemn the communist polemics as such. He acknowledged that the Soviet Union was beleaguered from all sides. But he also remarked that it was foolish to expect that the colonised peoples would passively comply. “The history of the past decades has made it abundantly clear that the suppressed peoples do want to make use of Moscow, but vice versa are not prepared to be used by Moscow”. He continued:

As far as the Perhimpoenan Indonesia is concerned, its opinion should not be misunderstood by anyone. For more than a year, it has demonstrated that it considers it undesirable from a tactical and practical point of view, to form the League with only communists. […] If the League against Imperialism succumbs under the current crisis, a new league will arise on its ruins which can only be carried by the suppressed and coloured races. Because if the current League collapses under its own weight, it will be difficult to establish a similar union of whites and coloureds again. 711

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710 “Een nabetrachting van het Tweede congres der Liga tegen imperialisme en voor nationale onafhankelijkheid te Frankfurt,” *Indonesia Merdeka* 7.4-5 (August-September 1929): 84: “Oh, they are the nationalists with so many responsibilities”.

711 “Een nabetrachting van het Tweede congres der Liga tegen imperialisme en voor nationale onafhankelijkheid te Frankfurt,” *Indonesia Merdeka* 7.4-5 (August-September 1929): 87-88; my translation, original in the appendix.
Many non-communist delegations responded in a similar fashion to the Frankfurt debacle. Nehru, who did not have the opportunity to travel to Frankfurt, received letters from the American antimilitarist and civil rights activist Roger Baldwin and the Dutch socialist trade unionist Edo Fimmen. They both described how unpleasant the event had been.\footnote{Nehru, \textit{Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru}, 3:312.} Having heard a very negative report from the INC representative Shivaprasad Gupta, who advised withdrawing from the LAI, Nehru wrote a furious letter to the LAI secretariat that further insults to Gandhi and the INC would not be tolerated.\footnote{Nehru, \textit{Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru}, 3:236.}

Among Indonesian organisations, both in the Dutch Indies and in the Netherlands, there was much unease as well as to whether further involvement was desirable.\footnote{Poeze, \textit{Politiek-Politiooneele Overzichten}, 2:173, 266, 316; Mrázek, \textit{Sjahri}, 76.} The nationalist tendency within the PI, Mohammad Hatta most notably, steered towards a renewed split from the LAI-NL. We have to remember that the Frankfurt Congress took place during the short interval of renewed involvement of the PI in the LAI-NL under the leadership of the new chair Abdul Soekoer. After Frankfurt, Hatta did not show up at joint meetings of the LAI-NL and the PI, and within the association he put pressure on Soekoer to step down, which he did in January 1930. In April, the PI left the LAI-NL for a second time.\footnote{Poeze, \textit{Politiek-Politiooneele Overzichten}, 2:317, 335-336.}

However, this apparent estrangement of the PI from the LAI and the LAI-NL obscures the fact that the student organisation underwent decisive changes within its own ranks, and that the nationalist tendency was losing ground within the association. The arrival in the summer of 1929 of Soetan Sjahri, a young and ambitious socialist student and new friend and confidant of Mohammad Hatta, could not conceal the fact that the number of members had dwindled over the years to a critical low. Due to better education facilities in the Dutch Indies, continuing government repression of PI members, and the politically controversial behaviour of its leadership, the active core of the association was reduced to perhaps 15 active members. Moreover, while some prominent students and activists repatriated after graduation, such as Arnold Mononutu, Iwa Koesoema Soemantri, Gatot Taroenomihardjo and Mohamad Nazif, others decided to focus on their studies, such as Mohammad Hatta, Achmad Soebardjo and Nazir Pamontjak. The PI was internally weak, attendance at meetings was low, and the association was in need of new energy and initiatives.\footnote{Poeze, \textit{Politiek-Politiooneele Overzichten}, 2:403, 3:lxvi; Ingleson, \textit{Perhimpunan Indonesia}, 64-65, 68-69.}
Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat and Roestam Effendi stepped into this vacuum. The former was a long-standing member of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia and had been a secretary in one of the boards of Mohammad Hatta. He was among the students that were detained in 1927, which perhaps contributed to the fact that his political views had shifted from nationalism to communism. Roestam Effendi arrived in 1927 after a turbulent political career in the Dutch Indies. His father had been a propagandist for the Indische Partij and he himself had been active for the Jong Sumatranen Bond and later for the Partai Komunis Indonesia. He managed to escape prosecution by travelling to the Netherlands for academic education, but unsurprisingly he assumed contact with the CPH as soon as he arrived.

In April 1931, only a year after the PI had abandoned the LAI-NL, Abdulmadjid Djojoadhineringrat was elected to succeed Roesbandi and become president of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia. With the help and advice of Roestam Effendi and Achmad Soebardjo, he manoeuvred the ailing association onto a communist course and strengthened the ties with the CPH and related organisations. It was clear that the primacy of Mohammad Hatta and Nazir Pamontjak had been broken, and that a new communist tendency around Abdulmadjid Djojoadhineringrat, Roestam Effendi, Setiadjit Soegondo and Achmad Soebardjo gained the upperhand.717

Hatta expelled

The new generation of PI leaders was to the liking of the Comintern. It can even be argued that the organisation had an active hand in transforming the PI to a communist organisation. Petersson describes how the Czechoslovak communist Bohumil Smeral was appointed by the Comintern to supervise the reorganisation of the LAI and its International Secretariat in the aftermath of Frankfurt 1929. After a thorough investigation, he recommended linking the LAI more closely to the Comintern. The main obstacle he envisioned was the likely hostility of Maxton, Nehru, Fimmen and Hatta.718 Probably to get an idea of Hatta’s support base in the Perhimpoenan Indonesia, Soebardjo was invited in December 1930 and January 1931 by Comintern functionary Bekar Ferdi and his old friend Chattopadhyaya to discuss the political course of the PI and the prospects of further collaboration. A month later, Soebardjo and Abdulmadjid Djojoadhineringrat were mentioned as suitable candidates for the new LAI executive council in an internal report of the Comintern. With a proper replacement the road

717 Poeze, In het land van de overheerser, 1:216-217, 219, 244-247.
718 Petersson, We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers, 353-354, 359, 391.
was clear to purge Hatta, along with the other “prominente Persönlichkeiten” Nehru, Fimmen and Maxton from the League against Imperialism.719

Thus, Hatta’s mandate to represent the PI at the LAI and to communicate on its behalf was repealed in March 1931. In May, at the Executive Committee meeting at the International Secretariat of the LAI in Berlin he was also expelled from the LAI, because he had “deserted from the battle front and had shown to be a direct helper and agent of imperialism”. At the same meeting, Abdulmadjid Djooadhiningrat was elected to be his successor.720

The expulsion of Hatta was a dramatic experience for someone who had been a strong advocate of the League against Imperialism from its inception. However, he was certainly not the only one. In September 1929, Maxton, the main target of communist aggression in Frankfurt, was expelled, and in April 1930 Nehru could read in the newspaper that he was ousted as well. In October 1930 it was Edo Fimmen’s turn to leave the LAI, followed by Roger Nash Baldwin in the spring of 1931.721 More remarkable, and revealing with regard to the Comintern’s attitude towards the Perhimpoenan Indonesia, was the expulsion of Darsono from the Executive Council of the Comintern in the same month that Hatta’s LAI mandate was lifted. In its news bulletin the Comintern stated that Darsono had adopted an openly “opportunist attitude” and had continuously steered towards collaboration with the national reformist students. Against the directives he had refused to criticise and attack the PI delegation in Frankfurt, and had instead fuelled the argument between the Dutch Communist

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719 Petersson, *We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers*, 359, 414: “prominent personalities”.
720 Poeze, *Politiek-Politionele Overzichten*, 3:82; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Kabinet-Geheim Archief, 1901-1940, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 381, 1 September 1932 H17, Internationale Presse Korrespondenz van de Liga tegen Imperialisme, 9 June 1931; Petersson, *We are neither Visionaries, nor Utopian Dreamers*, 405, 432-439.
Parties of Wijnkoop and De Visser. Semaoen, by the way, had already been side tracked by the Comintern after he was forced to repeal his convention with Mohammad Hatta in December 1927.

This hostile atmosphere did not leave the PI itself unaffected. While chairman Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat visited one communist meeting after the other in which he passionately praised the Soviet Union, Hatta and Sjahrir decided to abandon the Perhimpoenan Indonesia in November 1931. A week later, this was confirmed by the association with the verdict that Hatta had sowed confusion and discord in the ranks of the national movement. In December, two students attempted to establish a new nationalist Indonesian association, but this was prevented by communist PI members in the preparatory meetings. Instead, the PI agreed to establish the LAI-NL for a third time, but this time there was no attempt to secure an Asian bloc or nationalist dominance. Its members would enrol individually, which implied the firm control of the communist leadership. In short, the PI had become an orthodox communist organisation and a vehicle of the CPH.

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723 Poeze, Politiek-Politieenele Overzichten, 3:lxvii, 83, 97, 104, 111.
724 Tas, “Souvenirs of Sjahrir,” 142.