

GALLANT BRITISH-INDIANS, VIOLENT INDONESIANS: BRITISH-INDONESIAN CONFLICT IN TWO BRITISH NEWSPAPERS, THE FIGHTING COCK AND EVENING NEWS (1945-1946)

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Abstract

No longer after Sukarno proclaimed Indonesian independence, British and Indian troops were deployed in Indonesia to disarm Japanese troops and evacuate prisoners of war and internees. British arrival was initially welcomed by nationalist Indonesians. Yet, clashes with armed Indonesians occurred when the British were considered by nationalist Indonesians as supporting the restoration of Dutch colonial power. In order to campaign their policies, British military in Jakarta published two English language newspapers, The Fighting Cock dan Evening News. This article analyzes how both newspapers were run and how they reported political and military developments in Indonesia. The main themes I explore are reports about the newspapers justification on British presence in Indonesia, violence committed by Indonesians, British and Indian troops' heroism, and the British troops' victories.

Keyword: *British, Indonesian independence, conflict, and newspapers*

GAGAH BERANINYA PASUKAN INGRIS-INDIA. KEJAMNYA EKSTRIMIS INDONESIA: KONFLIK INGRIS INDONESIA DI DUA SURAT KABAR INGRIS, THE FIGHTING COCK AND EVENING NEWS (1945-1946)

Abstrak

Tidak lama setelah Sukarno memproklamasikan kemerdekaan Indonesia, pasukan Inggris dan India dikirim ke Indonesia untuk melucuti pasukan Jepang dan menyelamatkan tawanan perang dan interniran. Awalnya kedatangan Inggris disambut baik oleh golongan nasionalis Indonesia. Namun, pertempuran dengan pihak Indonesia mulai terjadi saat Inggris dianggap mendukung kembalinya kolonialisme Belanda. Dalam rangka mengkampanyekan kebijakan-kebijakannya, militer Inggris di Jakarta menerbitkan dua surat kabar, yakni The Fighting Cock dan Evening News. Tulisan ini menganalisa bagaimana kedua surat kabar tersebut dikelola dan bagaimana mereka melaporkan berbagai perkembangan politik dan militer di Indonesia. Tema utama yang dibahas adalah bagaimana laporan mereka menjustifikasi kehadiran Inggris di Indonesia, kekerasan yang dilakukan pihak Indonesia, heroisme pasukan Inggris dan India, dan kemenangan yang diraih pasukan Inggris.

Kata kunci: *Inggris, kemerdekaan Indonesia, konflik, dan surat kabar*

I. INTRODUCTION

The birth of the Republic of Indonesia on August 17, 1945, was followed by a long and massive conflict between the Republic and its former colonizer, the Netherlands. Much have been written on the war between the two countries. The majority of the themes focuses on the fact that the conflict was fought by the two belligerents and underrates bloody clashes between Indonesians and the British.¹

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¹ See for instance George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955), Anthony Reid, *The Indonesian National Revolution 1945-1950* (Hawthorn: Longman, 1974), Benedict R.O'G. Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance 1944-1946* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), and Robert Cribb, *Gangsters and Revolutionaries: The Jakarta's People Militia and the Indonesian Revolution, 1945-1949* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991). They indeed all discuss British presence in Indonesia, but to my knowledge, there is only one published major work dealing with this issue, namely Richard MacMillan, *The British Occupation of Indonesia, 1945-1946: Britain, the Netherlands, and the Indonesian Revolution* (London: Routledge, 2005).

In addition to the lack of research on the British presence, there is also a shortage of knowledge on how the British-published newspapers framed the conflict. We are not talking about British print media published in London or Manchester, but on British newspapers issued directly from the hotspot where the hostility took place: Java. A limited number of research on newspaper reports on the Indonesian revolution focuses on the role of pro-Republic Indonesian newspaper in showing incessant support to the Republican authorities and the *merdeka* (independence), (Suwirta, 2000; Zuhdi, 1992; Zora, 2014). Most of the newspapers used in these works are Indonesian-language press.

Surprisingly, newspapers published by the British military administration in Indonesia were given scarce attention, while in fact the British were one of the *de facto* ruling authorities in Indonesia between September 1945 and the middle of 1946. In exercising their rule they published newspapers as a means to spread their policies to the Indonesians and boost the morale of the British troops and their auxiliary soldiers, the Indians, by continuously publishing news and views praising the heroic struggle of the British and Indian militarymen in Indonesia. They published two newspapers in Jakarta, *The Fighting Cock* and *Evening News*. It is surprising that how these two newspapers reported the conflict is never explored in details. In understanding British presence in Indonesia, in particular their cooperation and conflict with the Indonesians, it is undoubtedly necessary to understand the role of these newspapers in framing the conflict in a pro-British tendency.

I argue that one element that seems to have increased the British troops' negative sentiments to the Indonesians during the British presence in Indonesia was these two newspapers published by the British military in Jakarta. They were published by and for the army (although they were also sold to those outside the military, thus may have included English-speaking Indonesians and Dutch). Through dramatic reports about British military's honorable mission in Indonesia and violent responses of Indonesian 'extremists', the newspapers judged the conflict of their editors' fellow countrymen with the Indonesians as a conflict between good British knight and evil Indonesian villain. This perspective was in extreme contrast to widespread belief among the Indonesians at the time that the conflict was between nationalist Indonesians and pro-Dutch British.

My main research question deals with how these two newspapers framed the British-Indonesian armed conflict with a heavily pro-British tone. I will answer the question by examining how they were organized, how they depicted British military intervention, and how the actions of armed Indonesians were described. I used both newspapers that are now kept at National Library of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta. Since the library's collection of these newspapers were incomplete, I used a newspaper in combination with one another. They dated from as early as November 6, 1945, until May 20, 1946.

II. THE BRITISH IN INDONESIA THE BIRTH OF MILITARY RUN NEWSPAPER

A. The British's troubled arrival in Java

Shortly after Japanese surrender on August 14, 1945, the British troops were tasked to disarm Japanese troops, release prisoners of war and internees, restore order in Indonesian archipelago, and prepare the establishment of Dutch East Indies civil administration (McMillan, 2005:10). The XV Indian Corps, numbering around 45,000 fighting men, were charged to these duties. The task of rescuing the prisoners of war and internees, mainly Dutch civilians, was not easy since their total number reached more than 80,000 persons, spread in Java and Sumatra. In addition, there were 140,000 Japanese soldiers needed to be disarmed in the two islands. To make matters worse, the British troops were ill-informed and badly

prepared for the tasks since it was the American soldiers that were initially planned to be deployed in Indonesia (McMillan, 2009).

The British and Indian troops arrived in Java in the second week of September, 1945, about a month after the Republic of Indonesia was declared by Sukarno in Jakarta. In addition to Jakarta, they landed in port cities of Surabaya and Semarang. They cooperated with the Dutch to ensure that the Dutch take over the archipelago immediately. In many parts of Java clashes began to occur between armed Indonesians against the retreating Japanese troops and against newly freed Dutch prisoners and Dutch colonial army, KNIL.

At first, the British and officials of the Republic of Indonesia had a constructive relationship. But, the British should face the armed Indonesians, including many armed youth organizations working beyond Indonesian state's authority. The British act of disarming the Japanese and evacuating thousands of Dutch and Eurasians were met by fierce resistance by these paramilitaries. Clashes broke out in Magelang, Ambarawa, Bandung, Jakarta, Semarang dan Surabaya in October and November, 1945. The bloodiest fight was undoubtedly the battle of Surabaya and related incidents in October and November, 1945. During the course of the bloody clashes in Surabaya, thousands of Indonesians and hundreds of British and Indian troops died in an all out war involving strikes from land, air, and sea. One of the clashes saw the infamous, but hitherto remains mysterious case of the death of a British Indian Army officer, Brigadier General A.W.S. Mallaby (McMillan, 2005:46-52).

Before and along the clashes, the British military administration reiterated their position as the *de facto* authority in Java through various media, but mostly using newspapers, radio and dropped leaflets. In the following part I will explain how two British newspapers portrayed the presence of the British in Indonesia and many clashes they experienced.

B. *The Fighting Cock*, a division's newspaper

Published by 23rd Indian Division of the British Armed Forces, *The Fighting Cock* firstly appeared on October 23, 1945, or around a month after the first British landing in Jakarta. The newspaper was named after the name of the division, The Fighting Cock, which consisted of soldiers from Nepal, India, and the British Isles. It was then a famous division, having successfully prevented the Japanese forces to invade India through the so-called Burma Campaign in 1944 (Luto, 1951).

The tagline of the newspaper was 'A daily newspaper for troops of the 23 IND. DIV.' As the tagline suggests, it was available everyday, even during weekend and holidays like Christmas. The newspaper was primarily intended as, in the editors' language, a 'press for members of the armed forces' (*The Fighting Cock*, 1945). The newspaper's logo of the newspaper whose editorial office situated on the 23 Indian Division HQ in Jakarta was the symbol of the division, a fighting cock. This symbol represented three major elements in the division: the English, Hindu and Muslim troops (Jeffreys, 2003:62).

As of November 6, 1945, *The Fighting Cock* expanded its reach, not just in Java, but also to the United Kingdom, by the sending of its copies home, although only for soldiers' family and former members of the Division. The Division members who had interesting news from home were encouraged to publish them via *The Fighting Cock* (*The Fighting Cock*, 1945). This involvement of people outside the fighting men made the newspaper's reach went beyond just the military men. A.J.F. Doulton, one member of the division, described the newspaper as a 'pot-pourri of world-wide news and articles as the troubles in Java simmered down below boiling point' (*The Fighting Cock*, 1945:291).

The Fighting Cock's official policy claimed that it was not a newspaper for propaganda

purposes. Its core guiding principle was 'to present news in an unbiased light, with so far as possible, intelligent comment' (*The Fighting Cock*, 1946). Nevertheless, as I will show below, this seemingly neutral principle was difficult to keep when it came into practice. Just like many Indonesian newspapers which openly supported Republican authorities through their reports, British newspapers in fact backed British policies in Indonesia, despite the fact that both Indonesian and British newspapers claimed a certain level of objectivity.

The Fighting Cock's daily publication consisted of several columns. Main columns that almost always appeared were editorial, news from Indonesia and abroad, information from home, and photographs showing people or countryside of the UK and Indonesia. The editorial, titled 'Cock Crow', talked about various things, from ferocious military conflict to seemingly trivial story, like the presence of a goat on British army post. News from Indonesia reported political developments in Indonesia, among other skirmishes with the British and youth rally. As for news from abroad, they were mainly coming from war-affected regions, like the UK, Germany, and China.

Interestingly, the newspaper had a column containing language lesson which introduced the British and Indian troops to Malay/Indonesian and Dutch idioms and their pronunciation (for instance *postoffice-postkantoor-kantor pos* and *first class-eerste klas-klas satoe*). Around two or three photographs appeared daily on the newspaper. The photographs can be classified into four category: pictures of British army officers, of natural beauty of England, and of everyday life of Indonesians as well as the landscape of tropical Indonesia. Given that the division consisted of British troops of Indian origin, *The Fighting Cock* on daily basis provided a page containing news in Hindustani language.

C. *Evening News*, the publication of the Allies HQ

Evening News was firstly published on November 9, 1945, and intended as an official mouthpiece of the Allies HQ in Jakarta in responding to rapidly increasing clashes between British troops and armed Indonesians. The newspaper's office was, understandably, in the Allies HQ in Jakarta. Like *The Fighting Cock*, no holidays for the editors of *Evening News* since it also appeared on weekend and Christmas.

The daily consisted of only two pages. Given that it was priced 30 cents, it was very likely that the newspaper was sold to the public as well. Indeed, many of the headlines were the Allies HQ's official announcements regarding British policies correlated to the Indonesians.

Unlike *The Fighting Cock*, on each publication *Evening News* published no editorial. But for other features both newspapers shared similar elements. *Evening News* covered such features as clashes between British troops and armed Indonesians, recent political developments in Europe, Japan, China and former British colonies like Hong Kong and Singapore, and lonely mood felt by soldiers in a place far from home.

As for photographs, while *The Fighting Cock* usually published pictures on people and picturesque scenes of the landscapes of Indonesia and the UK, *Evening News's* photographs were more varied. They contained pictures such as British village during Christmas, daily activities of average Indonesians, a crowd cheering the arrival of British forces in Andaman Island, and those pictures of a more serious nature, like a meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations and a hungry kid representing the shortage of food in postwar Europe. Other things that *Evening News* had and *The Fighting Cock* had not were crossword and funny, though sometimes ironic, caricatures. An example for the latter was a caricature on a day before Christmas which illustrated a shocked man saying 'Wot! No Snow?' (*Evening News*, 1945). This depicted disappointment of the British troops that they must skip White Christmas in the tropical islands of Indonesia.

Indonesian newspapers, which largely relied on Indonesian news agency *Antara* and Indonesian Ministry of Information for getting news, sometimes faced tension with such news sources, who wanted to control the news based on their own interests. *The Fighting Cock* and *Evening News*, however, had the advantages that the Indonesian newspapers had not: the journalists were the soldiers themselves, who were involved in the armed clashes and were parts of the British military administration. So, the newspapers could get first-hand and abundant reports about the recent situation without the fear of miscommunication and pressure with their news sources because the print media were run by those who made news: the military.

III. BRITISH NEWS PAPER AND INDONESIAN UNDERPENDENCE

Justifying British presence in postwar Indonesia

Among many themes published by both newspapers, the earliest and foremost theme that was always given great attention was on the aim of the British arrival in Indonesia. The newspapers reiterated the view voiced by British military officers that British mission in Indonesia was solely to disarm the Japanese troops and to save Allied prisoners of war and civilian internees from Japanese camps.

Reports concerning the notions above were frequently published by *Evening News* as the official messenger of the Allies HQ in Jakarta. For instance, on November 1945 British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin delivered a speech before the House of Commons in a session about Foreign Policy Debate. Although the speech took place in England, *Evening News* published parts of the speech which had relation to the current situation in Indonesia. Bevin, according to the *Evening News*, talked about at least two things, namely the role of the United Nations in world problems and the British presence in Indonesia. Bevin believed that the UN had constructed tool to preserve peace in the postwar world. As for British mission in Indonesia, Bevin declared that 'We are there to wind up war with Japan, and in doing this Adm Mountbatten is carrying out the job allocated to us under surrender arrangements made by Gen Mac Arthur' (*Evening News*, 1945). Bevin continued that after such military objectives were achieved, and the authority was fully handled by civil administration, the British troops would be withdrawn.

On December 13, 1945, *Evening News* quoted the British Minister of State Noel Baker who answered questions posed by the House of Commons regarding British policy in Far East, including Indonesia. Baker restated Bevin's statement by emphasizing that the British soldiers came to Indonesia to disarm Japanese troops and save prisoners of war and civilian internees. The British considered their presence as an evidence of their attention to the prisoners and internees because 'nobody would urge that we should turn our back on these people and say that their fate was no concern of ours' (*Evening News*, 1945). But he added that such honorable task was hampered by the Indonesians who he thought were responsible for 'disorders and atrocities'. Therefore, he demanded both Indonesia and the Netherlands to appoint representatives and hold negotiation based on concrete proposals.

In addition to war-related mission, British assignment in Indonesia was labeled by the British press as an altruistic mission. *Evening News* illustrated the British as a savior of war-torn Indonesia, just like what they did in other parts of Asia and Pacific. The press described British and Allies' helps in the context of problems faced by postwar Indonesia. Despite the fact that their main tasks were only related to the Japanese and Europeans, the British were declared as soldiers who were kind enough to the problems faced by the native population.

A good example of the depiction above was starvation. On November 12, 1945, *Evening News* wrote with capital letters: 'FAMINE THREATENS JAVA' (*Evening News*, 1945). The report stated that one of the most difficult challenges to solve in postwar Java was famine. The main cause was 'scant supplies from abroad, stocks declining, poor harvest prospects, little new planting'. Of no less importance was the fact that, according to the article, the planting was seriously hampered by 'disturbance', 'fear', and 'riots'. These terms apparently referred to actions committed Indonesians. But, next to this saddening news about starvation was a pleasing news: '3,000 TON SUPP(L)IES FOR INDONESIA'. The news stated that the Allies managed to collect tons of supplies of rice, sugar, flour, etc., in Australia and these supplies were ready to be delivered to Indonesia. The act of contrasting the possibility of famine in Java and Allies effort to acquire staple food and other daily needs for Indonesians was obviously a means to convince readers about British's good mission and the British ability to fulfill it.

When the British then encountered challenges from Indonesians to their mission, the *Evening News* made a chronology of event which put the British on the right side. For instance, a few skirmishes happened in Surabaya in the second week of November 1945. *Evening News*, which quoted no Indonesian sources as a means to balance the report, stated that the British troops entered Surabaya in order 'to clear the town of disorderly elements' (*Evening News*, 1945). Given the whole context of the reports, it was easy to understand that such element was the Indonesian 'extremists' fighting the British. The same also took place in Semarang, where the British troops were 'restoring order' and met by fierce resistance by armed Indonesians (*Evening News*, 1945).

Evening News provided extensive spaces for Dutch views in comparison to space for Indonesians. Concerning the involvement of the Dutch in the conflict, *Evening News* gave the Dutch more opportunity to speak than the Indonesians. An instance is the failure of a conference between representatives of Indonesia and the Netherlands planned on November 22, 1945. Lieutenant Governor General of Dutch East Indies, H. Van Mook, was interviewed at length. He strongly defended the Dutch stance and exposed the bad side of the Indonesians. He said that the Dutch only wanted to discuss the current situation, that the Indonesians should have initiative and constructive solution, that 'bad propaganda' and 'terroristic cloud over Java' should be removed, and that Dutch and Ambonese troops had displayed 'restraint almost beyond human power' in protecting the Dutch people in Java (*Evening News*, 1945). Despite this long interview, no Republic's spokespersons were given similar chance to be interviewed to counter Van Mook's argument. As a consequence, the Dutch were completely depicted in *Evening News* as the victim of terror launched by armed Indonesian elements.

The alliance between the British and the Dutch during the Second World War was definitely one of the main reasons of the British's pro-Dutch stance. But, one should also consider another essential factor, namely British's perception concerning the roots of Dutch presence in Indonesia. Interestingly, while the story of Dutch presence in Indonesian archipelago published in Indonesian newspapers tended to condemn the Dutch as foreign colonizer exploiting the natural resources of the archipelago for hundreds of years, British newspapers framed Dutch presence as a story of successful foreigners (the Dutch) in doing overseas trade and in excellently transforming a relatively remote Java, in particular Jakarta (or 'Batavia' in the newspapers' term) into a hub of world trade. The title of an article about the history of Dutch presence in Jakarta explained it all: 'From village to city: Batavia goes back 300 years'. In it, the sole heroes were Europeans, from Jan Pieterzoon Coen, who modernized the city, to Daendels, who improved the quality of the health of the city's population, as well as the Portuguese and the British. The most important hero was Coen, once Governor General of Batavia, and 'the founder of Batavia', as *Evening News* put it. His portrait took almost one fourth of a page in the *Evening News*, thus emphasizing major role he had played. The role of

the natives in the city's development was hardly mentioned. More importantly, the accounts of the sufferings they experienced under Dutch colonialism, which became one of the major reasons of the anti-Dutch sentiment in postwar Indonesia, were entirely absent. This means that for the British press, the role of the Dutch as the founder and developer of the city was unquestionable and now they have the right to continue such roles (*Evening News*, 1946).

B. On Indonesian independence and Republican authorities

Many of *Evening News*' reports promoted the British as the rescuer of oppressed people in Asia and the Pacific. But, while for many Indonesians oppression meant colonial oppression under the Dutch rule and oppression under Japanese occupation forces, *Evening News* only referred to the latter oppression. Months after the Japanese surrender, *Evening News* published news about natives in the Far East happily welcoming the Allied troops who, according to *Evening News*, liberated them from the Japanese. In an article on December 13, 1945, titled 'ANDAMANS FREED', *Evening News* testified: 'Cheering natives lined the beaches when British troops came ashore by landing craft to liberate the Andaman Islands early in October'. A photograph was added, showing hundreds of people smiling and waving their hand to the camera. The photo's title was 'HOORAY....! THE BRITISH HAVE ARRIVED!' (*Evening News*, 1945).

Although in many cases the British, through *Evening News*, defended the Dutch and blamed Indonesians for widespread insecurity in Java, there were also moments when the British considered Republican authorities as the *de facto* authorities in Java. When the Dutch almost always refuted the efficacy of the Republican government by pointing ruthless actions committed by armed Indonesians targetting the Dutch, Eurasians, and Chinese population, the British had rather vague stance because occasionally they blamed Indonesians while under other circumstances they considered various Indonesians' helps were inevitable and even necessary. On December 12, 1945, for instance, from Jakarta there was a British's relief train carrying RAPWI (Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees) supplies. While British's previous convoys were recurrently hampered by Indonesian attacks, this time the relief train went undisturbed and undamaged, mainly because of Indonesian helps. *Evening News* put the story about the train as headline: 'SUPPLIES ARRIVE: BANDOENG TRAIN UNMOLESTED'. The article was full of appreciation to the Republican authorities and army. Why did the train securely arrive in Bandung? It was because, according to the daily, it 'was manned and policed by fifty one specially picked Indonesians of TKR' (*Evening News*, 1945).

Many of British convoy-related articles in *Evening News* described the attacks of the convoy by armed Indonesians. But now, the article was filled with gratitude and possibility to further cooperation in the future:

This is the first train for several weeks carrying food supplies, mainly for internees, which has completed this journey without incident.

On its arrival at Bandoeng the train was delivered intact to Allied authorities.

It is possible that the British authorities may make use of Indonesian help to send further food convoys for the relief of the people of Bandoen (*Evening News*, 1945).

The indebtedness was repeated on the next day, when the train was safely returned to Jakarta. *Evening News* reported: 'The TKR leaders in Bandoeng are co-operating extremely well with the British authorities' (*Evening News*, 1945).

But what about the accusation from the Indonesian side that the British supported the restoration of Dutch colonial power? From media point of view, this accusation was understandable considering large portion given to the Dutch in British media, including *Evening News*. British justification towards their seemingly pro-Dutch policy appeared

publicly on December 14, 1945. The statement was said to also represent the policy of both *Evening News* and Allied Forces Radio. The British justified their action by stressing that they defended the freedom of speech as one of four freedoms in making a good society. This also applied for opposing views because 'if people with opposing political views are allowed to speak their mind freely they are less likely to resort to kidnapping and hand grenades' (*Evening News*, 1945). Based on this, the British acknowledged the right of the Dutch to express their views, although they were in contrast to the Indonesian stance.

The only thing the British would never allow was 'the purely inflammatory incitement to violence and terrorist actions' (*Evening News*, 1945). The British refused such speeches which consisted of 'merely emotional and hysterical calls for bloodshed'. Such speeches resembled to 'Hitler at his worst'. Examples of this type of view was 'so many of the radio stations in Central and East Java'. This statement definitely referred to Indonesian-run radio stations in the two main strongholds of the Republic in Java. As for British publication and broadcast, all were run by basing on 'accuracy and truth'. The British through the reports they published and broadcast tried 'to give an honest and a balanced picture of the state of the world in general and Java in particular' (*Evening News*, 1945).

On January 7, 1946, *Evening News* on a very rare occasion gave a substantial space for Sukarno's radio speech on page 2. However, in the same newspaper the editor put the radio speech of Van Mook as a headline in the first page (*Evening News*, 1946), despite the fact that Van Mook delivered the speech from Hilversum, the Netherlands, which was more than 10,000 kilometres from Jakarta while Sukarno conveyed his message from Yogyakarta, less than 500 kilometres from Jakarta. Thus, Sukarno's speech occupied minor position compared to the Dutch. This once again showed British perspective that the current political problems in Indonesia could only be solved through the Dutch intervention. Indonesians' aspiration to be independent was only slightly taken into consideration.

Although with regards to Indonesian-British clashes *Evening News* tended to be totally pro-British, it positioned itself as a mediator of the Dutch-Indonesian conflict through their reports. The newspaper constantly presented the Dutch as a responsible nation who wanted to reconstruct the war-affected Indonesia. The newspaper reported the good intention of the Dutch that the Indonesians should welcome. The newspaper quoted Van Mook as saying, 'when once the bridge between the Dutch and the Indonesians is built, we will be able to get together to end confusion and start the work of reconstruction'.²

In order to present a balanced view the newspaper in the same date of publication also presented the aspiration of independence among Indonesians, by publishing the speech of Sukarno. Sukarno was reported to appeal the world to find a just solution to the Dutch-Indonesian conflict. He demanded the world to grant Indonesia an 'absolute equality', meaning that Indonesia should be treated equally with other countries in international relations. Sukarno further stressed the woe felt by the Indonesians under Dutch colonialism and Japanese occupation. He was sure that now Indonesians were willing to sacrifice everything to reach their goal as an independent nation (*Evening News*, 1946).

Despite this rather extensive space to the nationalist voices, *Evening News* editors were generally still hesitant to completely acknowledge the authority of the Republican government. The most striking evidences were the use of quotation marks to describe Republican authorities and the use of colonial spelling to specific geographical areas. While Van Mook was always labeled as Lieutenant General of Dutch East Indies, his Indonesian

² "'New Deals' plans: Van Mook's talk on Dutch radio'. In other occasion, Van Mook, as reported by *Evening News*, said that prewar colonial order would not be restored. The Dutch understood that at that time the idea of colonialism was disliked by world opinion which in the same time preferred nationalist movement. See *Evening News*, January 14, 1946.

counterpart was referred to as 'government' (government with quotation marks), showing British uncertainty about the extent of the authority of Indonesian government. *The Fighting Cock* also used quotation marks to what it called Indonesian 'cabinet', while it wrote 'British Parliament' and 'cabinet' and 'government' of the Netherlands without quotation marks (*The Fighting Cock*, 1946). When all pro-Dutch newspapers used Batavia and all pro-Republic newspapers used Jakarta, *Evening News* deliberately used Batavia, thus preferring colonial term created by the Dutch than term used by most of Indonesian nationalists. The list went further: Dutch East Indies (instead of Indonesia) and Buitenzorg (instead of Bogor).

The use of quotation marks for Republic-related authorities displayed a significant level of doubt among the British as to whether such political institutions really existed and worked effectively. The terms also seem sarcastic given the fact that their use was frequently put vis à vis accounts about disobedient Indonesians who went against the orders of their 'government' and 'cabinet', like by committing a variety of crimes, including looting and attacking civilian convoy.

In connection to the Dutch-Indonesian conflict, *Evening News* framed the British as a good mediator. In the second week of January, 1946, after various clashes involving the British, the Indonesians and the Dutch, the British military administration finally managed to build a bridge between the Indonesians and the Dutch. *Evening News* propagated this success of reconciling the belligerents. It reported that the city of Batavia would be in the second half of January supervised by a newly formed civil police force which consisted of three hundred Indonesians, three hundred Dutch, and twenty Chinese. The British would be the commander of this combined force. Furthermore, the article showed various measurements taken by the British related to the newly formed police force, including concerning equal power of arrest, district division, army uniform, problem of trials, and the presence of regular courts. What was more important: the newspaper stated that British wanted to 'make Batavia a pattern for any town in the Indies' (*Evening News*, 1946).

C. Courageous British-Indians, Traitorous Indonesians: Reporting the Fights

The armed encounters between Indonesians and British and Indian troops were reported differently in Indonesian and British newspapers. One good example was the battle in Surabaya in November 1945. Whereas the Indonesians often used such term as '*pertempuran*' (battle) in their propaganda, which implies a massive encounter between two belligerents, the British usually used the words 'skirmish', 'small scale attack', or 'duels'. These British terms all meant a minor combat, thus undervalued Indonesians' measurement of the conflict as a major military conflict between two states. Put in another way, the British saw the military engagements as solely a daily job to maintain peace and order.³

The Fighting Cock resembled to patriotic Indonesian press which reported the fight with very nationalistic tone. The most obvious example was the troubled landing of 49 Indian Infantry Brigade in Surabaya in the last week of October, 1945. In this event, thousands of armed Indonesians attacked British positions in the city, causing casualties in both sides, and led into high tension between the two parties. Instead of reporting this story in a matter-of-fact style, *The Fighting Cock* reported it as an epic struggle of the British and Indian troops. The newspaper described the role of the brigade in two terms: 'gallantry and endurance' (*The Fighting Cock*, 1945). Indonesians were once again blamed for chaos. The brigade was said to have two missions, namely to evacuate women and children of Allied nationals and restore law and order to guarantee the lives of Europeans in the city. The British had contacted local Republican leaders, who then confirmed their cooperation. But such a promise was never met

³ Check for instance 'HQ Allies Official Press Statement: Skirmishes in Surabaya', *Evening News*, November 12, 1945; 'Java duels', *Evening News*, November 24, 1945.

because 'the ineptitude of the local leaders and their Government and the deliberate and truculent obstruction of the Extremist and military organisations.'

On October 27, British Air Force dropped leaflets in Java's main cities ordering Indonesians to surrender their arms to the British and acknowledge British military as the sole authority. *The Fighting Cock* reported that Indonesian nationalist leaders had agreed with the content of the leaflets and were willing to broadcast it to the population, in addition to call the population to stay calm. But, according to the newspaper, a principal Republican leader in Surabaya, Moestopo, 'failed to do so' and 'leaving Surabaya secretly' instead (*The Fighting Cock*, 1945).

What follows were stories about Indonesian brutality, which one would never find in Indonesian press at the time. These included Radio Surabaya's propaganda calling the people 'to rise and destroy the British Forces, murder all Dutch men and women and children, and show no mercy to prisoners captured in the fighting' and 'a carefully planned and treacherous attack' on British Forces by 'some 20,000 Japanese trained and armed regular Indonesian forces, and uncontrolled mob about 120,000'. Furthermore, the Indonesians were described to attack a convoy of twenty military lorries used for evacuating Dutch women and children.

The description of the British-Indonesian conflict focused on the ruthlessness of the Indonesia, innocence of the Dutch women and children, and the bravery of the Allied troops guarding the evacuees. The description, which cited no version from Indonesian side, would undoubtedly stir intense emotions and have big psychological impact for English, Indian and Dutch readers:

A murderous fire from rifles, machine guns and grenades poured into these defenceless women and children from point blank range, riddling with shots and setting on fire the lorries with the occupants still inside. The heroic defence by the small band of Indian drivers and the Indian troops escorting these women allowed those not butchered in the first discharge to take refuge in some empty houses, where the survivors were defended by the remnants of these Ind[i]an troops for 48 hours. Accounts of dismemberments of wounded Ind[i]an troops whilst still living, burning of women and children and murder under most barbaric conditions of those falling into the hands of the mob have been received from the few survivors. No trace of the women exists and none of their defenders still live (*The Fighting Cock*, 1945).

Various skirmishes between armed Indonesians and Allied troops in the last week of October caused a large number of casualties among the Allies. It was reported that 217 were killed, 138 injured, and 45 missing. The newspaper called them 'gallant comrades', mourned for their death, and praised their contribution. The troops were said to have 'heroic qualities' who 'died most gallantly at their posts'. Indonesians, on the other hands, were reported to committ only 'obstructionism', 'truculence', 'non-cooperation', and 'treachery' (*The Fighting Cock*, 1945).

The Fighting Cock also frequently quoted civilian victims in the hands of the Indonesians. Indonesian attacks on military convoy or RAPWI camp, for example, were said to not just injure the British and Indian troops, but more importantly children and women (*The Fighting Cock*, 1945).

Amidst a large number of reports about heroic struggle they carried out in Java, there was also the moment when the British felt that enough was enough. They had fought for years in the Second World War, felt tired and longed for home, but in fact they were trapped into the bloody conflict in postwar Indonesia. When they were contemplating on this situation, they were not expecting anything except the war was over and they shall return home. The perfect time to think deeply this unhappy situation was on Christmas Day. On December 25, 1945, the Commander of 23rd Indian Division Major General D.C. Hawthorn wrote a Christmas

message, which was then published on the front page of *The Fighting Cock*. He stated:

This time last year, how many of us thought we should be spending Christmas 1945 in Java. We have travelled far and fast in the last 12 months, through Burma, Malaya and now we are in this troubled land where strife and bloodshed are the order of the day. This is the Division's fourth Christmas and in many ways it will be the saddest when we think of all the good comrades who came to Java with us, thinking the war was over, and now are dead or wounded.

In addition to conveying Christmas greeting to the Division, Hawthorn closed his statement by saying: 'let us hope by Christmas 1946 that peace and goodwill will prevail in Java and that once again we shall be spending Christmas at Home'. As proved later, peace and goodwill had not been fully established in Indonesia by 1946. But, another Hawthorn's dream came true: the British finally returned home in the middle of 1946.

D. Small Victories: a Tale of how the British won the War

For the British, the measurement of victory in a fight was not solely based on the fact that the enemy has been defeated. More importantly, as seen on the British newspaper reports, the measurement included both victory in and outside the battlefield. One example of the latter was patrol and search. Patrol and search referred to the tasks of observation and reconnaissance on certain zones with the aim to find unusual situation as well as to confiscate arms and arrest suspected persons. Reports depicting British victories in Indonesia were frequently identical to reports on British's successful patrol and search in the native kampongs.

Reports on Allies victory in doing patrol can be categorized into two elements. First, news on British ability to carry out the patrol, both to achieve the assigned tasks and get cooperation from the inhabitants of the target areas. Patrol tactics of the Allies were described to be well-planned and well-executed. These descriptions were important for the morale of the British and Indian troops because a patrol inside areas occupied by Indonesians (both armed and not) was a dangerous task; it was not uncommon for them to be ambushed by pro-Republic paramilitaries. It was also relevant for readers outside the military to know the patrol procedure that they would be ready for the coming patrol.

The Fighting Cock reported the procedure of the patrol and search by framing it as 'routine' activities of British troops which were willingly welcomed by Indonesians of all ages and genders. This type of report was a counterpropaganda to Indonesian press and propagandists which repeatedly condemned British patrol and search as causing fear among the population and destruction of their belongings. Moreover, while British press reported Indonesians taken away for further questioning as an effort to find truth, Indonesian press often decried this as an act of intimidation and kidnapping. The British even claimed that their patrol and search activities were intended for the sake of the common people. An article entitled 'Kampong search. How it is done', published on January 5, 1946, stated that the success of British patrol and search was determined by, inter alia, the troops' good conduct and low profile attitude. The article reported:

Quietly, unobtrusively, almost without being noticed by the people of Batavia going about their affairs, Batavian kampongs are being thoroughly and systematically combed by British troops, for the good of Batavia and of the people of the kampongs themselves. Unauthorised arms are being collected, suspected persons are being interrogated, and elements of fear and suspicion are being removed (*The Fighting Cock*, 1946).

In such search, Indonesians were reported to be cooperative with the British. All men between the ages of fifteen and fifty years were obedient to follow any order from the British, while children were 'enjoying the rare privilege of turning the contents of their room upside down with official approval, the young girls smile and giggle', and 'the women stand at the

doorways of their huts holding their children and watching the proceedings with wide-eyed curiosity.' What helped the search easier? According to *The Fighting Cock*, it was 'the usual good humour and light badinage never absent from the British soldier.'

A report about Allies patrol in a few kampongs in Batavia in early January, 1946, for instance stated:

In the early hours of this morning troops of 5 Parachute Brigade carried out another kampong serach near Tanah Abang. Under command of Lt.Col. Darling, D.S.O. the troops, now quite accustomed to the job, quickly threw a cordon round the kampong, which was then searched for arms, while men between the ages of fifteen and about fifty were taken outside the kampong gates for interrogation. A few requiring further investigation were detained, the remainder returning to their homes. The while job is carried out with the easy good nature never absent from the British soldire, and the inhabitants of the kampongs show willingness to cooperate in every way (*The Fighting Cock*, 1946).

Second, reports on British aptitude in putting the situation under control. How to measure it: by looking at general security situation in specific area as seen by the return of most of the population into their normal life. In the beginning of January, 1946 for instance, the British patrolled some parts of Jakarta. The patrol was seen succesful in obtaining the expected results, as reported on *The Fighting Cock* on January 2, 1946:

The extensive plan by 23 Indian Division for bringing order to Batavia are proceeding smoothly and efficiently. Everyday sees more sections of the town combed for arms and suspected persons, and a sense of security is already noticeable, with more shops opening in hitherto disturbed quarters, and many more street vendors selling fruit and vegetables brought in from the country.⁴

The story above implied that the patrol went very well. The British military unit moved into a hostile enemy area (kampong, which was then often used as a safe haven for many Indonesian fighters after attacking the British), searched the kampong unimpeded, captured several suspects, got no ambush, and successfully return to their base.

It was often reported that after the patrol and cordon conducted by the British in the target areas, the overal condition of security was relatively good. In Batavia, on January 4, *The Fighting Cock* reported that the security situation of Batavia 'is one of less tension' after the lifting of military cordon in the city. Furthermore, 'the streets of the city are noticeably more full of people' [sic] (*The Fighting Cock*, 1946).

In January 1946, *The Fighting Cock* quite frequently used the word 'quiet' to describe considerable absence of troubles of any kind in the areas under British rule. The tranquility, according to the newspaper, was due to British security measures, including cordon, search, and arrest. On January 4, the newspaper wrote that 'the town [of Bogor] has been reported quiet' and that 'here [Bandung] too the town has been generally quiet' (*The Fighting Cock*, 1946). On the next day, the situation of unobtrusiveness was not just in a few cities in Java, but in the whole of Java. 'Situation in Java quiet', was the main headline of *The Fighting Cock* on January 5, 1946 (*The Fighting Cock*, 1945).

The newspaper even had full confidence in ensuring that such quietness was felt by anybody in the city of Batavia: 'another example of the improvement in the general atmosphere in Batavia was the very succesful football match which took place yesterday on the Deca Park ground.' Put another way, the ultimate proof of the quietness of the city was when everybody was having a joyful leisure time, as if no war at all. The match itself, which ended in a 2-2 draw, was between the British and Indonesians. From the *Fighting Cock's* report

⁴ 'Batavia kampongs cleared'.

⁵ 'Situation in Java quiet'.

it was obvious that all players and spectators were really enjoying the game and that they had no security concerns. The involvement of Indonesian players and possibly also spectators, showed a considerable trust the British got from ordinary Indonesians, which was then campaigned as British succes in winning heart and mind of the Indonesians.⁵

IV. CONCLUSION

The story of *The Fighting Cock* and *Evening News* is a story of the difficulties faced by the newspapers to be objective in a war that involved its editors, journalists and readers. Their editors and column writers were not distanced with the ambush or killing on the street involving the British, Indians, and Indonesians; they were part of such happenings. This distinctive background is the main difference between these two newspapers with the majority of Indonesian and Dutch newspapers at that time whose editors and journalists were professional reporters who worked beyond the state and military.

Despite the fact that both newspapers claimed their principle to publish only accurate and true news, patriotic and solidarity feeling among the soldiers tend to dictate the direction of the news. Both newspapers made no attempt to hide their stance as a strong supporters of British policy in Indonesia. They, by heavily relying on British military officers as news sources, regularly emphasized that the British troops arrived in Indonesia to carry out their task of disarming Japanese troops and evacuate prisoners of war and internees. They had no political aims with regards to their presence in Indonesia. When the Indonesian-Dutch conflict peaked, both newspapers described the British as an active mediator of the conflict rather than supporter of the Dutch as many Indonesians saw.

In framing the ideas mentioned above, both newspapers over and over again condemned powerless Indonesian nationalist leaders and violent Indonesian 'extremists' as the main obstacles of British's military and humanitarian mission in Indonesia. The newspapers editors were reluctant to acknowledge the authority of the Republic, but they did not want to openly express their support to the Dutch for the fear of harsh response of anti-Dutch Indonesians. This reluctance was also caused by the fact that the British needed helps from Indonesians in completing their jobs.

From a number of articles published by both newspapers we know that they categorized Indonesians into several types. First, cooperative, but incapable Indonesian nationalist leaders who wanted to manage the newly born state but were unable to control paramilitary groups outside the state. Second, Indonesian extremists. The newspapers rarely provided detailed explanation on who the extremists really were or from which organizations they came from, let alone gave the opportunity for these extremists to voice their objectives or defend their actions. The term 'extremists' appeared to be a label for those Indonesians who disliked the British through either committing crimes (especially looting) or ambushing British and Indian patrols.

Overall, the role played by *The Fighting Cock* and *Evening News* during the British-Indonesian conflict shows a dilemma as to objectivity and patriotism of military-published newspapers in a conflict area, the problem a country faced in justifying the presence of its military in a war they did not wage, and the failure of foreign language media in representing aspirations of native of the country where the media were published.

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