

Letter from the British Consulate General in Batavia on the situation in Indonesia (Batavia, 16 December 1949)

Caption: In a letter dated 16 December 1949, the British Consulate General in Batavia informs R. H. Scott, Head of the Foreign Office's South East Asia Department, of the situation in Indonesia after the signing of the Round Table Conference Agreement on 2 November 1949, which provided for the transfer by the Netherlands of sovereignty of the former Dutch East Indies (excluding Netherlands New Guinea) to the Republic of the United States of Indonesia.

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BRITISH CONSULATE GENERAL,
BATAVIA.

16th December, 1949.

Dear Lett,

Yesterday was a fairly active day in the political field. The Hague Agreement was approved by 266 votes to 62 with 32 abstentions. The Draft Constitution was approved and signed and Sukarno made a broadcast to the Dutch stressing that Indonesia wished for friendly co-operation with the Dutch and emphasising that there would be no discrimination against the Dutch or foreigners and generally endeavouring to calm misgivings as to what might happen in the first weeks of the transfer. On the whole, it was a sensible and well-timed broadcast which should help to allay the anxieties, not only of the Dutch but of Europeans in general, as to the will if not the ability of the Republican Army (T.N.I.) to maintain law and order.

2. The next stage is the election of the President and the members of the Inner Cabinet. This is scheduled to take place some time between the 17th and 20th December. The candidates are all fairly obvious and their election should not, I think, provide any surprises. What will be more difficult will be the appointment of the lesser members of the Cabinet and senior department officials. It is essential that these posts should be filled by the best men available but there is a great deal of Party lobbying and job-seeking going on and I gather that Hatta, as the almost universally accepted future Premier, is already under strong pressure to nominate entirely unsuitable candidates to important posts purely with a view to placating the Opposition. It is greatly to be hoped that he will be able to withstand this pressure since much, if not all, will depend on the ability of the leaders. There are, unfortunately, already signs that he will not. So far as events in the military sphere are concerned, opinions fluctuate not only from day to day but almost from hour to hour. On the whole, however, it can be safely said that the Military Committee is making slow but satisfactory progress. And I understand that Andrew Fockema is returning to The Hague fairly satisfied that provided there is no upset in the ratification of the agreement by the Upper Chamber at The Hague all will be well. His view is not, however, shared by General Buurman Van Vreeden and General Engels with whom I recently had a long talk about the security of the P. & T. Lands estates and British subjects in the Bandung area. He continued to be pessimistic as to the ability of the T.N.I. to deal with the Darul Islam (D.I.) as well as maintain order in the towns. Here again, however, the person most concerned, P. & T. Lands, feel reasonably secure and decided to reject the offer Engels made to station an extra battalion of Dutch troops in Soebang, their headquarters, on the grounds that the presence of

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additional Dutch troops would be more likely to foment rather than allay trouble.

3. My weekly talks with selected heads of British firms have, as I rather feared they might, come up against the snag that while I must obviously keep the meetings to reasonable proportions as regards numbers, those not invited to attend feel left out. By and large, however, I think that my difficulties in this respect are understood and I hope and believe that the meetings are not only proving useful in giving myself and the business community an opportunity to exchange views on the present situation but may eventually provide a basis on which to build up a close and permanent liaison between the Consulate or Legation and commercial interests.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Gage at The Hague, Murray at Singapore, Roberts at Medan and Reeves at Sourabaya.

Yours

sincerely

(A.C. Stewart).