

# Wandering through the exotic battle zone

## American journalists' travel accounts of Indonesia during the Dutch-Indonesian war

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### ABSTRACT

This study analyses rarely examined English-language reportage and travel accounts on Indonesia created by two American journalists, Johnny Florea (*Life*) and Robert Sherrod (*Time*), after their visits to Indonesia between late-1945 and early-1946. The study finds that the travel accounts deliver a commentary on the course of the Dutch-Indonesian war and reveal the journalists' fascination with Indonesian society and nature as well as their sympathy with Indonesians' struggle for independence. However, the accounts also show that, as Westerners, they are guilty of various inaccuracies, a lack of knowledge, and cultural judgements rooted in the colonial past. It contributes to a new perspective on travel writing on Indonesia: war-zone travel writing, by explaining how foreign journalists' travel accounts to war-torn Indonesia played a role as channels for foreigners, especially Americans, to understand Indonesia as a recently born alien "Other" in the midst of the raging war and binary division of West and East.

### KEYWORDS

Travel accounts, war correspondent, cross-cultural encounters, Dutch-Indonesian war, postcolonial Indonesia.

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## INTRODUCTION

The history of the Dutch-Indonesian war, also known as the Indonesian Revolution, has recently been attracting great interest in Indonesia, the Netherlands, and beyond. This includes a large-scale research project involving Dutch and Indonesian historians, as well as dissertations and numerous journal articles and books published about the conflict (for instance, but not limited to: Bart Luttikhuis and A. Dirk Moses (eds) 2014; Gert Oostindie 2015; Muhammad Yuanda Zara 2015, 2016, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b; Remy Limpach 2016; Bart Luttikhuis and C.H.C. Harinck 2017; Julianto Ibrahim 2017; and books which are the result of the joint research programme of the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies /KITLV, the Netherlands Institute for Military History /NIMH, and the Netherlands Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies /NIOD entitled “Independence, decolonization, violence and war in Indonesia, 1945-1950”, like Eveline Buchheim et al. 2022 and Bambang Purwanto et al. 2023). Researchers have examined the political history of the birth of the Indonesian nation-state, the course taken by the nascent government of the Republic of Indonesia, the military conflicts waged by Indonesia against the Netherlands and Britain (and the various types of violence which occurred in these conflicts) and the efforts made to achieve a diplomatic settlement for the Indonesian-Dutch conflict. Most of these major themes have been reconstructed from primary historical sources produced by military and civilian officials on both the Dutch and Indonesian sides.

Historians of the Dutch-Indonesian war have made scant use of travel accounts as objects of historical study. The most abandoned are those written by foreign journalists who visited Indonesia during the conflict. Undeniably, press reports have been widely used by historians as historical sources, but this use has been limited to the position of newspapers and magazines as references to current events like information about people, events, and dates of events. Several other studies have also made newspapers and magazines the focus of their research, but the emphasis has tended to focus on the background of the press institutions and the representation of violence conveyed by journalists (Andi Suwirta 2000; Zara 2014, 2015, 2016, 2021a, 2022a, 2022b).<sup>1</sup> In fact, journalists, especially foreign war correspondents, have a crucial role in reconstructing and disseminating narratives about the countries they

<sup>1</sup> The work of Frances Gouda and Thijs Brocades Zaalberg (2002) on US foreign policy towards Indonesia in the late-colonial and early-Independence eras provides a glimpse of the attitudes of some American journalists towards Indonesia but tends to focus on the late-colonial period and the years 1947 and after, and is placed within the framework of the Second World War and the Cold War respectively. See Gouda and Zaalberg (2002: 39, 46, 98, 104), and others. Meanwhile, Madelon de Keizer has also been studying foreign journalists and Indonesian Independence, but focuses on the role of a Dutch socialist journalist and Labour Party politician, Frans Goedhart, as a mediator in the Dutch-Indonesian war between 1946-1947. See De Keizer (1993). See also the article by the Dutch historian Coen van 't Veer in this issue of *Wacana*. Previously, Van 't Veer (2022), researched how violence during the early phase of the Indonesian Revolution was reported in a travel report of a Dutch journalist Johan Fabricius. Fabricius worked for the BBC and *The Times* and visited Indonesia in the last months of 1945.

visit, especially to audiences abroad. Besides having been assigned by their editor-in-chief, many of them are willing to go to distant parts of the world because, to borrow the words of Mary W. Helms (1988: 3) for “the security of home or the challenge of adventure; the centrality of *axis mundi* or the lure of the distant horizon where the arching sky dips down to touch the earth”.

Unlike military officers who are more interested in documenting issues related to war and civilian officials who focus on recording topics related to the course of government and diplomacy between states, journalists display a much more diverse curiosity. Soldiers and war correspondents both go to the battlefield, but with different goals. War correspondents are expected to be eyewitnesses to the war and report their testimony either through texts or images (Kevin Williams 2020: 13). They meet people from different social classes, travel to places to which military or civilian officials might not have access, elaborate on sensory details about the places they visit, tend to write from a humane perspective, and place significant place on the daily lives of ordinary people. They do share the latest developments in the areas they visit, but they also build and disseminate knowledge about people, cultures, and nature which are unique and rarely known to their readers, while still providing the bigger picture of what is going on. Although visits to distant, exotic places might seem exciting at first glance, their task is not easy because too many pressures on war correspondents can seriously affect their personal lives, including the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Howard Tumber and Marina Prentoulis 2003: 220).

This study helps to fill this gap in the literature by analysing the knowledge produced by American journalists who visited Indonesia in late-1945-early-1946 through their reportage-travel accounts. Throughout most of the twentieth century, there were between 200 and 300 hundred US foreign correspondents, most of whom were white, male, highly educated, and stationed in Europe (Giovanna Dell’Orto 2016: 7). There were also some Western journalists, especially from the US, Europe, and Australia, who visited Indonesia in 1945-1946, but I have chosen two journalists whose reporting appeared in popular, reputable print media in the US: Johnny Florea (*Life*) and Robert Sherrod (*Time*). Both journals were the most influential media in shaping public opinion in the USA at that time. *Life* was a weekly picture magazine and *Time* still is a weekly news magazine. There are three focuses in this study: first, the background of the travel account authors; second, the themes they considered interesting and how these themes are displayed both textually and visually; and third, the function of the travel account as a form of West-East encounter, especially the way Americans saw and reconstructed Indonesia’s identity as a newly independent former colonial nation-state.

In this article, I argue that, after the end of the Second World War, the American media and public paid great attention to nationalism and the birth of the Republic of Indonesia, as is evident from the visits of a number of American war correspondents to Indonesia and the reports of their experiences which were later published in their media in the US. Their reports show the great

curiosity – of course also important to the media revenue – they had about Indonesian people, politics, culture, and nature, which was very different and new to their American readers. These journalists were the primary channel through Indonesia and the aspirations of the Indonesians were conveyed to American society and other English-speaking countries, albeit packaged in stereotypes, anecdotes, and sometimes errors.

#### THE BEGINNING OF US PRESS INTEREST IN INDONESIAN INDEPENDENCE

The defeat of Japan and the declaration of Indonesian Independence in August 1945 attracted the attention, albeit to varying degrees, of the US government, public, and press. While Japan's defeat was widely reported in the American press, Indonesian Independence attracted much less attention. Frances Gouda and Thijs Brocades Zaalberg (2002: 127) suggest that the American press at that time was most concerned with covering the activities of American soldiers in other parts of the world. Indonesia was not in the limelight because this region was not included as an area in which American troops were to take part in disarming the Japanese, freeing prisoners-of-war, and other post-war duties.

The news about Indonesia published by the American press in the first months after Indonesian Independence was rare, irregular, and mostly obtained from American international news agencies such as the Florida-based United Press International (UPI) and the New York-based Associated Press (AP). Hampered by the lack of reliable sources and the shortage of news supply from Indonesia, the American press made mistakes when reporting on Indonesia. Indonesian names, which were generally foreign to American ears, were incorrectly spelled by the American press. For example, the renowned *The New York Times* newspaper spelled the name of the Chairman of the Central Indonesian National Committee (KNIP), Soetan Sjahrir, as "Sultan Charir" in its 13 November 1945 edition, while President Soekarno's name was written using a variety of spellings, all incorrect: Mr Achmed Soekarno, Mr So Ekarno, and Mr Soe Ekardo. However, the newspaper did spell Indonesian Vice-President Mohammad Hatta's name accurately (Gouda and Zaalberg 2002: 128).

Despite some initial mistakes, American press interest in Indonesia continued to grow in late 1945 and beyond. Americans take great pride in their history of anti-colonialism, and since colonial times they have criticized European colonialism, including Dutch colonialism in the Netherlands East Indies (Robert J. McMahon 1981; Gouda and Zaalberg 2002). In August 1941, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt (in office 1933-1945) and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (in office 1940-1945) agreed on a statement called the Atlantic Charter, of which one item was devoted to the importance of the right of self-determination for every nation. The Charter was warmly welcomed by Indonesian Nationalists who considered that it also applied to Indonesians who wanted their independence from the Dutch. A sympathetic tone for the struggle of the Indonesians was already discernible in the American press by the end of 1945. The *New York Herald Tribune*, for example,

in its 1 December 1945 edition, called on the American government to try to stop violence in Indonesia (Gouda and Zaalberg 2002: 148).

As interest grew, many American print media no longer relied too much on news about Indonesia from UPI and AP, but dispatched their journalists directly to Indonesia to witness the situation there, make first-hand reports, and provide information, both textual and photographic, about the course of the conflict in Indonesia to the American public and beyond. Two of these were *Life* magazine, which sent Johnny Florea, and *Time* magazine, which sent Robert Sherrod, to Indonesia, between late 1945 and early 1946.

#### JOHNNY FLORAE: VISUALIZING HOPE AND HORROR IN INDONESIA

Johnny Florea (1916-2000) was one of the leading photojournalists in the US, especially during the Second World War. He is best known for his photographs in the picture magazine *Life*, a weekly photographic magazine published by Time Inc. *Life* magazine's headquarters are located in New York City, USA.<sup>2</sup> In 1946, the managing editor of *Life* was Daniel Longwell, and the general manager was Andrew Heiskell, while Florea was one of the magazine's staff photographers.<sup>3</sup>

Born to parents who were immigrants from Romania, Florea was originally a photographer of American celebrities.<sup>4</sup> By the end of 1941, however, he had a new interest sparked by the outbreak of war in the Pacific. The bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japanese forces on 7 December 1941, encouraged him to become a war photographer. As a photographer, he took part in a number of battles in the Pacific theatre of the Second World War, such as the Battle of Rabaul (January-February 1942), the Battle of Tarawa (November 1943), and the Battle of the Bulge (this was in the Ardennes in Belgium, it also named the Ardennes Offensive, December 1944-January 1945). In addition to witnessing and recording the war, he also saw its aftermath, including observing the release of prisoners-of-war from the Japanese camps. In 1949 he quit his job with *Life* magazine and chose to pursue a successful career in television.<sup>5</sup>

In late 1945, *Life* sent Florea to Indonesia to create a photo essay. He spent two months in Java. On one occasion, he travelled for ten days journeying around Java non-stop, covering a distance of about 800 miles. His route took him from Jakarta (Batavia) – Bekasi (West Java) – Cirebon (West Java) – Purwokerto (Central Java) – Yogyakarta (capital of the Republic of Indonesia since early 1946) – Surakarta (Central Java) – Kediri (East Java) – Blitar (East Java) – Pujon (East Java) – Madiun (East Java) – Tegal (Central Java) – Pekalongan (Central Java) – Tegal back to Jakarta.<sup>6</sup> On this route, Jakarta was the only city in which British troops were in control. *Life* published Florea's photo essays in Volume 20, Number 4, 28 January 1946, on pages 77-85.

<sup>2</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Life* (n.d.).

<sup>5</sup> *Life* (n.d.).

<sup>6</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 80.

*Life* readers would already have had a good impression of Indonesia from the very first page. On the Contents page (p. 25), there is a special column entitled “*Life’s Pictures*”, displaying a photograph showing Florea, holding his camera, with the Prime Minister of Indonesia (mistakenly referred to as the “Javanese Prime Minister”), Sjahrir, in front of a house. The two look serious but close to each other. Their conversation seems to be relaxed and warm, even though they were from different nations and cultures. They even shared a joke. Sjahrir was said to have been so impressed by Florea’s photos and reportage that he “gave Florea the four-square-mile island of Banda off Java’s northern coast”. Florea, according to *Life*, responded wittily: “Florea thinks he can call himself the Sultan of Banda.” But his title might not have lasted long if Sjahrir’s government, *Life* writes, “does away with all sultans”.<sup>7</sup>

In that edition, no mention was made of exactly when Florea travelled in Java. However, from the testimony of an Indonesian journalist who worked on the daily *Merdeka* (founded in Jakarta on 1 October, 1945), Rosihan Anwar, the journey undertaken by President Soekarno, Vice-President Mohamad Hatta, Premier Sjahrir, and a group of foreign journalists, including Florea, to the interior of Central and East Java, began on 17 December 1945, at Manggarai Station, Jakarta (Anwar 2009: 115). Therefore, Florea toured Java between 17-27 December, 1945. He made a very good and lasting impression on many Indonesians. Rosihan recalled Florea as “a chubby photographer for *Life* magazine, a very active, hilarious person who was always the centre of attention every time he got off the train” (Anwar 1997: 175).

*Life* published Florea’s travel account in the form of photo essays. Florea’s journeys and experiences in Indonesia are represented in twenty-two photos and one map. The images were inserted in the first essay entitled “Revolt in Java; The richest East Indies colony tries to throw off Dutch rule”.<sup>8</sup> The size of the photos varies, with the smallest being about a sixth of a page and the largest a full page. Florea put a caption under each photo announcing its title and context.

The photo essay as a whole can be categorized into several themes. The first essay, the main essay, talks about the rebellion in Java against the Dutch, who, before the Second World War, were the colonizers in the island. To introduce Java to his American readers, Florea stated that Java was equivalent in size to the US state of Alabama. Java is also referred to as one of the most resource-rich colonies in the world and as the most densely populated island in the Netherlands East Indies.

The essay is imbued with a sympathetic tone for Indonesia’s struggle for Independence and is appreciative of the progress Indonesians had made in managing their new state. Its main argument states that: “Clearly afoot in that rich island colony was a well-led, enthusiastically followed revolt of nearly all Javanese against their Dutch masters and Eurasian submasters.” The uprising

<sup>7</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 77-85 (see: <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=mUgEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>).

in Java, Florea continues, sent a serious message to the imperial white nations about the importance of seeing and bearing in mind the political aspirations for independence of the native people. The moderate nature of the Indonesian Nationalists was exemplified by their desire to consider “Dutch commercial interests and a United Nations trusteeship”.<sup>9</sup>

However, there are also inaccurate passages in the essay, including a statement that the Indonesian fighters were “the Japanese armed natives”. Distancing themselves from all Japanese influence was one of the priorities of Indonesian Nationalists in the early post-independence months (Zara 2016) – and they succeeded to a certain degree – so the emphasis on Japanese influence on, even control over, Indonesian fighters in early 1946 was a misjudgement by Florea.

Florea’s travels were restricted to Java, which meant that his analysis of a general map of Nationalist forces in Indonesia is less accurate. His essay describes Java as almost 100 per cent Nationalist, while Sumatra “is still led by a moderate prince”, and other islands, like Kalimantan and Sulawesi, were loyal to the Dutch. What about Bali and Lombok? Both, he claimed, “are still, ironically, held by the Japs”.<sup>10</sup> The Sumatra referred to here seems to refer only to East Sumatra, home to a number of Malay sultanates, which until early 1946 did not demonstrate unequivocal support to the Republic of Indonesia. In fact, Indonesian Independence had gained rapid, widespread support in Sumatra since the early days after the Independence, particularly in areas with a long history of anti-colonialism, such as Aceh, West Sumatra, and South Sumatra.

Florea continues by explaining the history of the birth of the Nationalist movement in Java. The Javanese are said to “have revolted against the Dutch 70 times in 300 years”, even though they were known as a gentle society.<sup>11</sup> In addition, when discussing the history of the first national organization in Java, Florea begins with the founding of Boedi Oetomo, “with Dutch encouragement”,<sup>12</sup> in 1908, and ignores the first, Islamic-based indigenous nationalist organization, the Sarekat Dagang Islam (SDI, established in 1905). In 1912 the SDI transformed into Sarekat Islam, an organization which became known as the largest mass nationalist movement in the Netherlands East Indies in the 1920s. Florea seems to have believed that the first Nationalist organization in Indonesia was a product of the Western education provided to the natives by the Dutch, when in fact Islam, which took root long before Western influence, was certainly another main factor encouraging the natives

<sup>9</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 77.

<sup>10</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 77.

<sup>11</sup> This 300-year figure probably refers to the attacks by the Mataram Sultanate in Central Java on Batavia in 1628 and 1629. However, if traced back, Javanese resistance to foreigners from Europe (in this case the Portuguese) could actually be traced back to 1512 or 1513, when Javanese troops led by Admiral Paté Unus, ruler of Jepara affiliated with the Kingdom of Demak, attacked Malacca (which fell to the Portuguese in 1511), although they eventually lost (Theodore G. Th. Pigeaud and H.J. de Graaf 1976: 7).

<sup>12</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 77.

to seek progress and resist the domination of foreigners in Indonesia in the early-twentieth century (Chiara Formichi 2012: 20-21). In fact, Islam had already become an important motivating factor for indigenous resistance against the Dutch in the nineteenth century, as seen in the Java War, 1825-1830 (Peter Carey 2007) and the Aceh War, 1873-1912 (Ibrahim Alfian 1987). From this point, the essay turns to the contemporary era, explaining the Dutch-Indonesian conflict and the British intervention.<sup>13</sup>

The essay is accompanied by a number of photographs. The first photo is captioned "Javanese revolutionaries, armed mostly with bamboo spears, meet to demand independence. The few rifles in foreground came from the Japs". The two-thirds of a page photograph shows the scene at a rally, with hundreds, if not thousands, of Indonesians, mostly young men, listening to their leader's speech. Many of the young Indonesians carry a pointed bamboo staff, a weapon readily available at that time and a symbol of the struggle for Indonesian Independence. Featuring Indonesian youth as the main focus in this photo was an attempt to build the belief that, as in the colonial and Japanese occupation periods, young Indonesian men were again playing an important role in political change in Indonesia. The caption, which says the weapon "came from the Japs", indicates that the Japanese surrendered the weapon voluntarily. This is not entirely true because in many cases young Indonesians had to force the Japanese to hand over their weapons, for example, the efforts of Indonesian youth in Surabaya, Semarang, and Yogyakarta to disarm and confiscate Japanese troops in October 1945. The Indonesians in the photo carry various placards bearing numerous Nationalist slogans, with one of them reading: "*Lasjkar rakjat bertempoer, moesoeh hantjoer*" (If the people's army joins the fight, the enemy will be destroyed).<sup>14</sup> The most important message of this photo is that Indonesian Independence was the aspiration of the Indonesian people and they are willing to defend that Independence. They are also shown as people who obeyed their leader.

The photographs which follow show key individuals in Indonesia's conflict with the Dutch and British, accompanied by Florea's views about them.<sup>15</sup> The first is a photo of the Acting-Governor-General of the Netherlands East Indies 1942-1948, Hubertus J. van Mook, standing in front of his palace in Jakarta. In another photo published on the same page, the British commander, General Philip Christison, is having his hair shaved by one of his subordinates, an Indian soldier. While Van Mook is depicted looking very serious, Christison is shown smiling casually, sending a message about how good he was feeling.

The next photos are of influential Indonesians at that time. One photo shows Soekarno delivering a speech in front of a packed crowd at a rally in Kediri, East Java. In the caption, Soekarno is defined as president (without quotes which might indicate doubt or reluctance), thereby demonstrating Florea's recognition of his executive position (which also meant recognizing

<sup>13</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 77.

<sup>14</sup> *Life*, 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 77.

<sup>15</sup> *Life*, 20/4, 28-1-1946, pp. 78-79.

Indonesia's existence as a sovereign state) and not just placing Soekarno as a Nationalist leader. The end of the caption underlines that Indonesia was a multireligious country and that Soekarno's supporters were drawn from various religious groups, even though Indonesia was a Muslim-majority nation. The emphasis on the PBI (Partai Buruh Indonesia, 'Indonesian Labor Party') indicates that Indonesia was a democratic state; not a fascist state whose birth could be attributed to Japan, as often emphasized by Dutch propaganda in late 1945. In the photo, Soekarno is depicted as a great orator who made convincing gestures, while the Indonesian people in front of him listen to him cheerfully, even in the scorching sun.

The next three photos show three influential figures in the Indonesian Independence movement according to their respective capacities, with a large caption marking an important position and high standing shared by the three persons: "Leaders of the revolution address meeting at Madioen". The first is a photo of Soekarno giving a speech. The caption reads: "Soekarno (above), a Moslem, graduated from a technical science school, made a fortune in the construction business, founded a national party in 1927, was exiled by the Dutch". The phrase "made a fortune" is a bit exaggerated, because, although Soekarno had designed several structures after he graduated, he did not make a large amount of money as the phrase implies. The second is a photo of the Prime Minister of Indonesia, Sjahrir. He is shown in a similar pose to Soekarno, giving a speech with gusto. The caption beneath the photo explains who Sjahrir was. Some of the information conveyed in this caption is accurate: that he was a prime minister, thirty-six years old, a friend of Van Mook (which seems to refer to the fact that the Dutch were finally willing to negotiate with Sjahrir but not with Soekarno), a Dutch-educated man, a moderate, and a leader of the youth movement. However, one piece of information given after the fact about his position and age is erroneous, which is that he is "a Christian". Sjahrir was a Muslim from Minangkabau, where Islam had a very strong foothold, even though did not have a reputation for being devout. This mistake might have been because of his less obviously Arabic name compared to his fellow Minangkabau (Sjahrir's parents drew inspiration from Scheherazade, a Persian-based character from the old Middle Eastern tale, *The Arabian nights*) (Rudolf Mrázek 1994: 8). On the other hand, Sjahrir was also often seen as very secular and highly westernized, even compared to other Nationalist leaders of Minangkabau origin, like Mohamad Hatta (Robert W. Hefner 2000: 73).

The third photo is a photo of Soekarno's wife, Fatmawati, delivering her speech in front of the crowd at a rally in Madiun, East Java. This photo was proof that in Indonesia, which was then known as a traditional and patriarchal society, women did have a place as pioneers in the struggle, even though the caption of the photo states that only a few women attended the rally.

Florea also photographed a meeting between members of the previous cabinet and new cabinet members at Soekarno's house in Jakarta on 23 November, 1945. The caption is quite long and explains the context of the photo. It says the Dutch refused to cooperate with "the Javanese who

had collaborated with the Japs". Therefore, the previous cabinet had been dissolved, and a new cabinet was formed, chaired by Sjahrir. Florea praises Sjahrir mentioning that most Javanese politicians except wily Sjahrir fell for Jap propaganda of "Asia for Asiatics". Given that, in that era, people were often identified by their ethnicity, the use of the term "Javanese" here is inaccurate considering that Sjahrir, as well as other figures in the photo, like Hatta, were ethnically Minangkabau. As a foreigner, Florea seemed most familiar with Java – which in colonial times, under the Japanese occupation, and in independent Indonesia was known as the seat of government for the entire Archipelago – and ignored Indonesia's very complex cultural landscape.

The third photo essay is entitled "Tide of revolution sweeps all the interior of Java".<sup>16</sup> The main argument is that "Java's revolution is genuine and close to unanimous". It is reported that in the cities in which the train carrying Soekarno's and Sjahrir's entourages (including Florea) arrived, large crowds of Indonesians, "sometimes 60,000 strong", welcomed them. According to the article, in meetings with the people of Indonesia there was no anti-white or anti-Dutch feeling; there was "simply pro-independence". Florea's travels allowed him to identify various other forms of support for Indonesian Independence, including the establishment of Independence committees in each town and hamlet, alongside the support for Indonesian independence of wealthy sultans. The unity of Indonesia was visible in the participation of people from various cultural backgrounds, such as Javanese, Madurese, and Sundanese (the article incorrectly refers to these groups as "Java's many races"). After this, the article explains the current military situation in Indonesia, with the British controlling only a few important cities in Java, while most of the interior was controlled by Indonesians.

The photo essay is supplemented by one map and five photos. The map traces Florea's long route from Jakarta in the western part of Java to Pujon in the east, and his return journey to Jakarta. In all Florea's essays and photographs, Jakarta is always referred to as "Batavia", an indication that politically, Florea, as a Westerner, still saw it as a colonial city. The map shows that the major coastal cities of Java (Jakarta, Semarang, and Surabaya) were controlled by the British, while smaller coastal cities, like Cirebon, Tegal, and Pekalongan, as well as the hinterland, including the capital of the Republic of Indonesia, Yogyakarta, were controlled by the Indonesians. Florea refers to Indonesian leaders by the names of the positions by which they wished to be called: "President Soekarno", "Premier Sjahrir", and "Vice-President Hatta". Florea portrays them as "nationalists", not fascists or extremists as the Dutch tended to do in their propaganda (Benedict R. O'G. Anderson 1972; Zara 2016).

There are five photos in the photo essay. The first photo, "On tour of interior", is a lunch scene in an observation car (also known as sightseer lounges in the US). Three Indonesian officials are having lunch. Through the rear window, a train station (not stated where), train lines, and crowds of people lined up gazing at the train can be seen. In the colonial period, it

<sup>16</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, pp. 80-81.

would have been difficult to imagine this observation car filled by natives. This photo indicates that the old colonial order had collapsed, with Indonesians now ruling their own country. Cogently, this photo also underlines that the situation in Republican-controlled areas was calm and peaceful, and that there was social bonding between both fellow Indonesian officials and between Indonesian officials and the Indonesian people.

The second photo shows a crowd of Indonesians at Taloen Station (Blitar, East Java) waving at a moving train. Florea took this photo through the train window. In the caption he, again mistakenly, mentions that the crowd was “giving the Nationalist Javanese salute of *Merdeka* (freedom)”, while in fact, this patriotic greeting had also been used by fellow Nationalists in other parts of Indonesia, like Sumatra. One part of the caption indicates the involvement of children in the Indonesian Independence movement.

The third photo shows a Japanese camp in Poedjon (Pujon), East Java, established by the Japanese troops soon after they were told that Japan had lost to the Allies. The caption of the photo explains that two divisions of Japanese troops built the camp to try to secure themselves there when British troops arrived. However, since the photo was taken by Florea, the British troops had not yet arrived. It seems that Florea was directed to this Japanese camp by Indonesian Nationalists in Pujon to prove to the Allies that Indonesian troops had successfully assisted the Allies in carrying out one of their post-war duties: disarming Japanese troops. Importantly, this photo also confirms that the Indonesian government was the ruling authority in East Java.

The theme of children recurs in the fourth photo. Florea took this photo of seven Indonesian boys, whom he describes as “revolutionary soldiers”. They are standing in front of a white-walled building. On the wall are words from which it can be surmised that the complete phrase is “Indonesia Merdeka”. The children are dressed very modestly, and each of them holds a wooden weapon. Some of them smile, conveying the impression of how happy they are to play the war game despite the difficult situation in which they find themselves.

A theme much different to that of the photos above appears in the fifth photo. A full page in size, it is one of the largest photos in the report. Although the main theme is far removed from war and politics, its sheer size indicates its significance and draws readers’ attention to aspects of life other than politics which were no less crucial in Indonesia: the daily life of Indonesians in the countryside. The photo conjures up an idyllic image of Indonesia to the eyes of westerners, reminiscent of the *Mooi Indië* (beautiful Indies)-themed visual arts in colonial times, through which the Dutch legitimized their colonialism over Indonesian lands, landscapes, and society (Susie Protschky 2011). In the background is a rice-field, in the right foreground are a tray, kettle, and two glasses. In the middle is a thin, young male farmer who is shirtless and wearing a bamboo farmer’s hat. He is guiding two zebu which are ploughing a wet rice-field, preparing it for the transplanting of seedlings. In the background lie other rice-fields and clumps of coconut palms. In this photo Florea is trying

to invite his audience to focus on the tropical natural beauty of Indonesia, an attraction which had encouraged many westerners to visit the Indies in the colonial period.

The traditional characteristics of Indonesian farmers in 1945/1946 are emphasized in the caption of the photo, which points out that agriculture in Indonesia still uses “water buffalo and antique plow”.<sup>17</sup> Although the dominant feature of the photo is the life of an agrarian community, the caption links the rice-fields and the political field, emphasizing that the tranquility of village life as seen in the photo had been disturbed by the commotion erupting in the surrounding towns. Using British and Dutch sources, Florea was hinting at the possibility of a partial famine in Indonesia. The idea of encroaching hunger in Indonesia was also widely propagated by the Dutch, to emphasize the incompetence of the Indonesian government. Nevertheless, in its various statements, especially after April 1946, the Indonesian government stated that rice stocks in Indonesia were safe, even abundant, and Indonesia could even offer to supply rice to famine-stricken India (Zara 2021b).

The third photo essay is entitled “Wealthy sultans back Nationalists”.<sup>18</sup> In this short article, Florea underlines that one of the greatest achievements of Soekarno and Sjahrir was their success in gaining support from the “three wealthy sultans in Soerakarta and Jogjakarta”. The names of the three sultans are not mentioned with any precision but, judging from the context, they refer to Hamengkubuwono IX, Pakubuwono XII, and Mangkunegara VIII. Florea himself mistakes the title of one of these sultans, writing “Pakoe Boewono XI” (it should be Pakubuwono XII, as Pakubuwono XI died on June 1, 1945). Florea says that the three sultans did not exercise great political power, but they “became generals in the Nationalist army”, showing that the Indonesian government reciprocated the sultans’ support by according them the rank of senior army officers, despite their youth. In this photo essay, Florea refers to the Republic of Indonesia as “a Javanese republic”.

The article also presents the history of the birth of sultanates in Java, commencing with how the ancestors of these sultans recognized Dutch rule in 1755 before splitting traditional authority in Java into two major states (Kasunanan of Surakarta and Kasultanan of Yogyakarta, which was then followed by the formation of two smaller kingdoms, Mangkunegaran in Surakarta and Paku Alaman in Yogyakarta), the connections between the Javanese sultans and the Dutch colonial regime, and the Japanese ruler’s underestimation of the Javanese rulers during their occupation. The first photo in this section is full-page, showing a meeting between the leader of the Republic and the Mangkunegara in the main pavilion of the Mangkunegara Palace (under the princely kingdom of Mangkunegara) in Surakarta.<sup>19</sup>

The caption describes who was present: “one of the two sultans of Soerakarta, receives (on his right) Soekarno, Vice President Hatta, Sjahrir”

<sup>17</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 81.

<sup>18</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 83.

<sup>19</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 82.

and who was absent: “no women were present”. It then covers the course of the meeting: “Everybody just sat and talked. Nobody moved around”, the beverage: “lemonade”, the very substance to induce a relaxed social situation: “cigars”, and the rulers’ resources: “the local tobacco, coffee, sugar”. The upper background shows the ceiling of the pavilion decorated with beautiful geometric drawings and large, luxurious chandeliers, confirming the exquisite artistic taste and extraordinary wealth of the ruler. This photo sent a message that one wealthy ruler in Surakarta was supporting the Republic. The fact that Javanese rulers now sat on a par with other natives who were not from the nobility indicates that both sides indirectly agreed that, in an independent Indonesia, egalitarianism would prevail between fellow Indonesians, something which would have been difficult to imagine happening in the early royal era or in the colonial era.

Some other photos also indicate relations between the traditional rulers of Java and the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>20</sup> First, a half-page photo showing the scene at night in the main reception hall in the palace of the Kasunanan Kingdom of Surakarta, the major court in Surakarta. The darkness of the night contrasts starkly with the luxurious chandeliers brightly illuminating the hall. The caption gives the impression that this ruler of Surakarta was a very rich sultan, to which his historic, spacious, luxurious, artistic, modern palace, which is taken care of by at least 5,000 courtiers, bears witness.

The next photo, which is smaller in size, shows the scene at a dinner in the Kasunanan palace. The courtiers are clustered in the background. The focus are the individuals in the middle of the photo: President Soekarno, who is talking with the ruler of Surakarta watched by the Mangkunegara. Here Florea made yet another mistake because in the caption he wrote the title of the ruler as “Pakoe Boewono XI” when it should have been Pakubuwono XII. Perhaps Florea misunderstood the genealogy of Javanese rulers, or it could be because the memory of the late Pakubuwono XI, who had recently died, was still alive in the memories of many people in Surakarta at that time. Pakubuwono XI died on 1 June 1945, and Pakubuwono XII ascended the throne ten days later at the age of twenty.

The next photo shows unknown individuals but captures a beautifully relaxed atmosphere into the strongly political nuances enveloping Java at that time. Four Javanese female dancers are dancing the Serimpi, a classical Javanese dance which is only performed at important events in Javanese palaces. Interestingly, in addition to mentioning the type of dance, the caption also conveys a fact which might have surprised conservative Javanese but conveyed the masculinity of the ruler and served as a bridge between himself and American popular culture: “Sultan told Florea he had long enjoyed drawings of harem women in *Esquire* magazine.” Founded in Chicago in 1933, *Esquire* was originally known as “an oversized magazine for men that featured a slick, sophisticated style and drawings of scantily clad young women”.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 83.

<sup>21</sup> Britannica (n.d.).

It became one of the most popular lifestyle magazines for young American men. Florea's choice featuring his conversation about *Esquire* with the ruler was a way of showing that, to a certain degree, the ruler was open-minded and American-oriented, bringing out the closeness between him and *Life's* American readers.

The last photo essay is entitled "The revolt has brought murder, massacre and reprisal".<sup>22</sup> This section presents the gloomy, bloody side of the Dutch-Indonesian war. A paragraph in this section emphasizes that the revolution in Java gave rise to "the ugly violence", ranging from kidnappings, detentions, and killings, which victimized people of various nationalities, be they Dutch, Eurasians, British, and Javanese.

Florea presents a specific example of how violence could spiral out of control, as every act of violence would trigger retaliation. He underlines that, by far, one of the worst cases of violence in the British-Indonesian conflict needed to be recorded: the killing of twenty British Gurkha soldiers and four British Royal Air Force (RAF) crewmen in Bekasi. The perpetrators are described as "Javanese extremists", who killed and then dismembered them. In retaliation, British troops bombarded a village in Bekasi in an act of retaliation, which, the British claimed, would produce a "salutary effect".

Five photographs by Florea are a visual testament to the devastating impact of the conflict in Indonesia.<sup>23</sup> Firstly, a photo of fighting in the streets in Semarang (Central Java). Five Indian soldiers from Hyderabad, British India, fully armed and wearing steel helmets, are crouched down on the lower part of the road. The caption says the Indian soldiers were confronting Indonesian snipers, who appeared to be hiding in buildings across the street. The true impact of this photo should be understood by comparing it with the next photo, as will be discussed below.

The next photo reveals a young Indonesian man and a Portuguese cannon. At the rear end of the cannon appears to be a sculpture of a right hand, with the thumb between the index and middle fingers clenched into a fist, known in the West as a symbol of fertility. Alongside the cannon, a serious young Indonesian man lays his hand reverently on breech of the cannon. It seems that he had just made the cannon an offering, indicated by petals scattered along the top of the barrel. The caption to this photo emphasizes the syncretism of Indonesians, indicating that there were still Indonesians who believed in supernatural powers derived from beliefs in myths and traditional ceremonies dating to pre-Islamic times, who would fight against the Dutch equipped with modern weapons. The cannon, located in Bantam (Banten), is a counterpart to a similar cannon in Jakarta (which is believed "to make fertile anyone who touches it"). Legend had it that when the two cannon were united, "the Dutch will be cast into the sea".

These two photos and their captions, show Florea's views about the difference in military power between the Allies and Indonesia. He saw the

<sup>22</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 84.

<sup>23</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, pp. 84-85.

Allied forces as modern fully armed, trained, and battle-hardened troops. Florea paid no attention to the might of the Indonesian military. The visual resistance of Indonesians in Florea's photographs is shown not through photos of Indonesian soldiers armed with modern weapons, but through their traditional, mental resistance based on mysticism. Florea also believed Dutch propaganda which identified Indonesian fighters as "extremist". However, when assessing casualties, he tried to be fair, emphasizing that not only Dutch, Indo-Europeans, and British had been killed in the conflict, but also "Javanese" (although a more appropriate term here should be "Indonesians", considering that many Indonesians beyond Java had already fallen victim to the British and Dutch atrocities).

The third, fourth, and fifth photos reveal how the spiral of violence worked in Java. The third photo depicts eight young Indonesians digging in the ground under the watchful eye of armed Gurkha soldiers. In the section they have excavated is a brightly coloured cloth, probably the shroud or covering of the bodies buried there. The caption describes the British troops were looking for: "Butchered bodies of 20 Gurkhas and four RAF crewmen killed at Bekasi." However, after the excavation, it was established that the "pieces were unidentifiable". British troops not only ordered the exhumation of the victims but also carried out counterattacks on the Indonesians. This is the subject of the next photo, which shows the scene in one area of Bekasi which had been destroyed by the bombardment of British troops. In the background, smoke rises from burning buildings, while in the foreground, dozens of Indonesians with scared and confused faces are fleeing Bekasi. The caption explains the rationale behind the bombing: "In reprisal for the Indonesian extremists' massacres of British."

The last photo in Florea's report fills a full page. It shows the destruction in Bekasi wrought by British bombing.<sup>24</sup> In the background, a traditional bamboo-walled house burns, possibly just set on fire by Gurkha soldiers. In the foreground, two heavily armed Gurkha soldiers are crouching amid bushes opposite the burning house, which reflects the idea of Gurkha loyalty to British troops as well as their cruelty in dealing with Indonesians, although these two groups shared various similarities: they were both Asians and they both had a history of resistance to Europeans. The caption to the photo once again gives the reason for the destruction and who the perpetrators were: "British retaliate for massacre of their men by burning down the Javanese town of Bekasi."

Florea's narrative of the events in Bekasi, which Richard McMillan (2005: 70) calls "the largest set-piece retaliation by British forces against irregular Indonesian forces", allows more room for the self-defence of the British and ignores the Indonesian perspective. This seems to be connected to his closer interaction with Allied forces in Allied-controlled areas like Jakarta. Florea mentions "Javanese extremists" were responsible for the murder of twenty British Gurkha soldiers and four RAF crewmen whose plane made

<sup>24</sup> *Life* 20/4, 28-1-1946, p. 85.

an emergency landing in Bekasi. Instead of arresting and punishing the perpetrators, the Allied forces avenged the killing by burning Bekasi to the ground on 13 December 1945. Florea presents the Allied defence by quoting the Allied army communiqué (that the act of burning Bekasi would have a “salutary effect”), but offers no communiqué at all from the Indonesian side.

In fact, on 19 December 1945, the Indonesian government also issued a communiqué strongly condemning the brutal actions of the Allied forces. In it, the government stated the Allied action was *sangat melaloei batas* (out of all proportion), *melaloei batas peri kemanoesiaan* (inhuman), and in no way reflected the peace and security measures claimed by the Allies. The Indonesian government even stressed that the international community also condemned Allied forces, including equating the burning of Bekasi by the Allies with the ruthless destruction of the village of Lidice (now in the Czech Republic) by Nazi forces three years earlier. Florea’s narrative, which was based on Allied sources, suggests that the Indonesian government had failed to maintain security in Bekasi. The Indonesian government called the killings in Bekasi unjustified, but stressed that it was working hard to eradicate such incidents.<sup>25</sup>

#### ROBBERT SHERROD, *TIME*, AND TRAVEL NARRATIVE ON WAR IN INDONESIA

Robert Lee Sherrod (1909-1994) was a prominent US war correspondent, particularly associated with two widely circulated magazines: the weekly news magazine, *Time*, and the weekly picture magazine, *Life*. He was also an editor of *Time* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. He covered various battlefields, especially in the Pacific theatre during the Second World War, including the Battle of Attu (11-30 May, 1943), Saipan (15 June-9 July, 1945), Iwo Jima (19 February-26 March, 1945), and Okinawa (1 April-22 June, 1945) as a reporter for the US Marines. Later, he covered the Korean and Vietnam Wars. He shared his experiences as a journalist on the battlefield in several books: *Tarawa: the story of a battle* and *On to Westward: the battles of Saipan and Iwo Jima*. After the war, he had a career in several fields, including vice-president of the Curtis Publishing Company (1965-1966) and wrote about journalism, publishing, war, and space exploration in various journals and magazines, like the *Columbia Journalism Review*<sup>26</sup> and *Naval History*.<sup>27</sup>

At the beginning of 1946, Sherrod was in the Foreign News Service division of *Time*. He was Bureau Head for the Pacific, where he was tasked with covering developments in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific.<sup>28</sup> Sherrod covered the progress of the Indonesian Independence movement in Java. Besides Java, he also covered independence movements in several other former colonies, like India and Burma. For Sherrod, the independence movements in the three regions he visited were “real history in the making”

<sup>25</sup> “Pengoemoeman Pemerintah Repoeblik Indonesia terhadap pembakaran Bekasi”, *Berita Repoeblik Indonesia*, 1-1-1946.

<sup>26</sup> Sherrod (1970, 1973a, 1973b).

<sup>27</sup> Sherrod (1993).

<sup>28</sup> “A letter from the publisher”, *Time* 48/2, 8-7-1946, p. 17.

(Ray E. Boomhower 2017: 215). Between February and July 1946, he travelled 25,000 miles to cover recent events in the region.

Sherrod was in Jakarta from around early February 1946. His initial report on the situation in Indonesia appeared in the 4 February 1946 edition of *Time*. In an article entitled "Indonesia: The most tragic", Sherrod explains the complications of the situation in Indonesia in early 1946.<sup>29</sup> On the one hand, he and *Time* appreciated the aspirations of Indonesians to be independent of Dutch colonialism. This is evident from a photo featured in the article, taken by a *Life* magazine photographer, entitled "Soekarno and wife at Blitar, Java. Dutch humiliation was deep". It sent a message about Soekarno's immense popularity among the Indonesian people and their great support for the struggle for Indonesian Independence. In the photo, Soekarno and his wife are seen in a convertible. They smile and wave to the hundreds, if not thousands, of Indonesians, including many children, who happily encircled their car. Two motorized bodyguards escort the car, which flies an Indonesian flag on its hood. Sherrod knew that Soekarno had previously cooperated with the Japanese, but now he was witnessing the great support of Indonesians, including those who were anti-Japanese, for Soekarno. In the article accompanying the photo, Sherrod refers to Soekarno as "president" and to the aspirations of Indonesian Nationalists as "the vigorous native independence movement".

However, he was also very sympathetic to the Dutch and Eurasians who were the victims of Indonesian violence in the first year of the Revolution. He recounted his experience of seeing "the most tragic face I have seen in the war" at Koningsplein Station (now: Gambir Station) in Jakarta. There he met a Dutch woman who had just been released from a Japanese camp and had travelled more than two days from Malang (East Java) to Jakarta with hundreds of other Dutch former prisoners. Physically, the woman was very weak; psychologically, she was much worse because she had just lost her two children "when the Indonesians set fire to their evacuation truck during the street fighting at Surabaya last October". One other child was missing after being kidnapped.<sup>30</sup> From the station, the Indonesian soldiers took the group of prisoners-of-war (POWs) to evacuation camps and hospitals.

The story opened Sherrod's thoughts about the changing situation for whites and Eurasians compared to the colonial period and their difficulty in accepting the new realities after the defeat of Japan in Indonesia. In the late-colonial period, they "had attained a comfort of living probably unmatched elsewhere", now today they were living in misery, with thousands of Dutch and Eurasians having been taken captive by the Japanese in places known as "hell camps" in Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia. The Dutch in Java, Sherrod says, even blamed the Dutch parliament for failing to imitate the British in settling affairs in the colony. Spacious, beautiful Dutch homes in Indonesia were occupied by British officers or had been taken over by Indonesians, and

<sup>29</sup> "Indonesia: The most tragic", *Time* 47/5, 4-2-1946, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> "Indonesia: The most tragic", *Time* 47/5, 4-2-1946, p. 30.

they lacked support abroad. The British refused to approve the landing of Dutch marines in Java, and, in Australia, the waterside workers were refusing to work Dutch ships bound for Indonesia because they sympathized with Indonesian Nationalists, as shown in Joris Ivens's short documentary film, *Indonesia calling*.<sup>31</sup>

Interestingly, Sherrod mocked the Netherlands Indies army which was weak and had been easily defeated by Japan. Indonesians had lost respect for it, as shown by an Indonesian joke about the Dutch soldiers in the colonial army quoted by Sherrod: "We pitied the Dutch when the victorious Jap hordes sent Dutch soldiers fearfully fleeing in sarongs and pajamas or underwear, hurriedly throwing their equipment away." From his conversations with a number of Dutchmen, Sherrod got the impression that the Dutch had actually realized that they had lost to the Indonesians.<sup>32</sup>

For *Time* magazine, Sherrod's experiences in Indonesia were very important, and the magazine promoted them in the "A letter from the publisher" column in the 8 July 1946 issue of *Time*.<sup>33</sup> This article aims to showcase Sherrod's extraordinary dedication to bringing *Time* readers news from Asia. The author of this article was *Time* publisher James A. Linen. Linen describes Sherrod's travels to Republican enclaves and his meetings with key Indonesian figures, like Prime Minister Sjahrir and two prominent Indonesian propagandists in Surabaya, Soetomo and a Scottish-American woman named K'tut Tantri. Linen also reveals the problems faced by Sherrod when travelling by plane in Asia, which had just experienced a major war, ranging from obtaining tickets and visas to vaccination. Sherrod wittily explained that the two things which had always saved him in various regions of Asia were the English language and Chinese restaurants. Sherrod also conveyed *Time*'s popularity in Asia, which certainly made Linen proud: "most of the people in Asia who know English know *Time*."

*Time* featured three illustrations in the article. Firstly, an illustration which depicts a woman relaxing while calling Sherrod's telephone number in Jakarta, "*satuh duaw sambulan toojo*" (this number is spelled incorrectly; it should be: "*satoe doea sembilan toedjoeh*" or 1297). Secondly, the image of a man in a neat suit with a flat face standing between two smiling children. The first child is a girl carrying a rifle, ammunition, a sword, and a pistol holster. On his other side is a boy who also carrying a rifle. The man in the middle might depict Sherrod, while the two children are Indonesian children playing with toy weapons. The third image shows a man in a suitcase running while pointing at a plane in the sky, representing Sherrod struggling to get flights to different parts of Asia, a very difficult undertaking at the time given the chaotic transportation system.

Sherrod wrote about his experiences in Java in greater detail in the *Time* edition of 23 December 1946, under the title "Ir.". This report was probably

<sup>31</sup> "Indonesia: The most tragic", *Time* 47/5, 4-2-1946, p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> "Indonesia: The most tragic", *Time* 47/5, 4-2-1946, p. 30.

<sup>33</sup> "A letter from the publisher", *Time* 48/2, 8-7-1946, p. 17.

written by Sherrod himself and later reworked by the *Time* editor. There are several important points which Sherrod and *Time* emphasize in the report. Firstly, Soekarno was the key leader of the Indonesian people in their efforts to liberate themselves from foreign colonialism. *Time* featured Soekarno the cover of the edition, making him the first individual whom *Time* readers would see in that edition. Between 1945 and 1946, *Time* covers almost always featured important American personalities, like generals, politicians, authors, artists, scientists, and athletes, and, to a lesser extent, important individuals from Europe. Only five Asians appeared on the cover of *Time* in those two years: the king of Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud,<sup>34</sup> the leader of the Republic of China, Chiang Kai-Shek,<sup>35</sup> the Shah of Iran,<sup>36</sup> the president of the Philippine Republic, Manuel Roxas,<sup>37</sup> and Soekarno. Soekarno's cover was widely disseminated by the US press and became a reference for many other media outlets around the world. This helped give Soekarno global exposure and gave Western readers an insight into the long history of Indonesia's struggle for Independence, which might have given rise to American public sympathy for Indonesia.

In the caption to the cover of Soekarno's edition, *Time* is: "Indonesia's 'President' Soekarno. A roar for freedom, a reach for power".<sup>38</sup> The word "president" is given in quotation marks, indicating *Time*'s acceptance, though not completely, of Soekarno's position as president. This contrasts with the caption in the Roxas edition, for example, in which *Time* writes the word "president" without quotation marks, indicating *Time*'s full acceptance of the office and authority of the Roxas presidency.

The cover shows a half-length painting of Soekarno, wearing a black Muslim cap (*peci*) and beige shirt, who seems to be shouting excitedly. Behind him is a red-and-white flag, with several hands waving at it. This illustration shows that Soekarno was the leader of the Indonesian people and that the Indonesian people were working together under his command to defend Indonesian Independence.

Soekarno became the most discussed individual in Sherrod's account. The report praises Soekarno as one of the "few men in the postwar world to evoke the fanatic devotion of millions".<sup>39</sup> Soekarno was said have received death threats, but his guards protected him closely. Sherrod greatly appreciated Soekarno's speeches: "I have never seen an orator who held an audience in the palm of his hand so easily and confidently." In Sherrod's analysis, Soekarno's oratorical strength lay in his long speeches, convincing gestures, and the intonation of his hypnotic voice. Sherrod states that "the fascinated audience laughed with him, grew serious with him, sympathized with him."<sup>40</sup> One part of a Soekarno speech Sherrod remembered was that "our ideal

<sup>34</sup> *Time* 45/10, 5-3-1945, cover page.

<sup>35</sup> *Time* 46/10, 3-9-1945, cover page.

<sup>36</sup> *Time* 46/25, 17-12-1945, cover page.

<sup>37</sup> *Time* 48/2, 8-7-1946, cover page.

<sup>38</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, cover page.

<sup>39</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 32.

<sup>40</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 32.

is an automobile for everyone” and that “I’ve just received a letter from a young girl who wants to be an airplane pilot... That’s right, hitch your aims to the stars.”<sup>41</sup> An automobile was a symbol of the highest economic and technological achievement because, in colonial times, only the Dutch and a few native aristocrats could own a car. Orchestrating these themes, Soekarno imbued the Indonesian people who had long been left behind financially and educationally because they were colonized by foreign nations with high hopes.

So that his American and European readers could understand the symbols of Indonesian Nationalism, Sherrod used comparisons based on the US’s own history and traditions. Every time Soekarno finished his speech, the audience sang the national anthem, *Indonesia Raya*. Sherrod’s report is cynical in tone and is lacking in sufficient supporting evidence. He alleges that the tune “is almost a direct steal from *Boola, Boola*”.<sup>42</sup> This was a song famous in the US. It had been composed in 1901 by Allan M. Hirsh to raise morale among Yale University students, especially at football matches. *Boola, Boola* itself was considered to be an adapted version of an older song, *La Hoola Boola* (1898) (Tom Dalzell (ed.) 2018: 80). It seems that Sherrod considered that the melody of the refrain of *Boola, Bolla* sounded like the refrain of *Indonesia Raya*. Sherrod’s report also describes how Soekarno gave the *Merdeka* (Freedom) greeting during his speech, which was answered with the greeting of *sama* by his followers. The greeting was used by Indonesians, according to Sherrod’s report, just like “the Nazis used *Heil Hitler*”,<sup>43</sup> a comparison which appears to stem from remnants of American hatred of the Nazis, and one which Indonesian Nationalists would have certainly rejected, considering that they were trying hard to remove any remnants of fascist influence, especially from Japan, from Indonesia.

In his report, Sherrod presents a short biography of Soekarno, beginning with his higher education at the Technical Institute in Bandung, his work as an architect (and his architectural works), his interest in art (especially painting), and his turnaround from the professional world to the political world.<sup>44</sup> To bring Soekarno’s thoughts closer to *Time*’s American readers, Soekarno is described as influenced by the works of Western writers and thinkers, like Shakespeare, Lincoln, Rousseau, John Dewey, and Santayana, who “may have contributed to the confusion and indecisiveness that runs through his political career”.<sup>45</sup> As a result of his anti-colonial policies, he was exiled to Flores. The Japanese invasion of the Indies in 1941 met only modest resistance from the Indies army, and this disappointed many Indonesians who shifted their support to the Japanese.

Soekarno’s personal life is also described in Sherrod’s report. He was said to have been to his present wife (Fatmawati) because his first wife (referring

<sup>41</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 32.

<sup>42</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 32.

<sup>43</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 33.

<sup>45</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 33.

to Inggit Garnasih) could not bear children. Sherrod's information is wrong because Soekarno's first wife was not Inggit but Oetari, a daughter of H.O.S. Cokroaminoto, a prominent activist in the Sarekat Islam in Surabaya. Although a Muslim, Soekarno is described as not a fully practising Muslim, remarking that, when he met the former Dutch Prime Minister Willem Schermerhorn, they "discussed the situation over Scotch & soda with Soekarno, whose Mohammedanism is not so rigid that he scorns a drink".<sup>46</sup>

Sherrod's report also contains criticism of Soekarno, whom he blames for recruiting thousands of Indonesians who later died as Japanese slave labourers (*romusha*). He was accused of still expressing his support for Japan up to half a day after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Nevertheless, continued Sherrod, Indonesians still supported him when he declared Indonesian Independence on 17 August 1945, or two days after Japan had lost.

While Sherrod praises Soekarno for his popularity among Indonesians, there was another Indonesian figure on whom he heaped high praise, for different reasons: Prime Minister Sjahrir.<sup>47</sup> Sherrod's report says that Sjahrir's election as prime minister was "a move that turned out to be the smartest Soekarno ever made". The importance of Sjahrir in comparison to Soekarno was: "Smoother and brighter than Soekarno, and with a clean anti-Japanese record, Sjahrir had everything – except the adulation of the Indonesian masses." Sjahrir was also considered the central figure of the Indonesian Republic in Jakarta, whereas Soekarno had settled in the interior, Yogyakarta, where he was thought to be enjoying the tranquillity and comfort of living in the former Dutch Resident's house in that city. From his experience of the two men, Sherrod considered that Sjahrir could get along easily with Westerners, in view of his familiarity with Western culture, including the Western books he read, with his efforts to "sponsor American dancing parties for Javanese youngsters as a protest against Jap occupation", and also because he repeatedly played a typically European and US sport, tennis, with British Consul, General John MacKereth.

Sjahrir appreciated the British more than the Dutch. Sherrod's report cites Sjahrir's farewell speech on the withdrawal of British troops from Indonesia in late 1946, Van Mook's response to the speech, and Sjahrir's sharp reply to Van Mook's response:

"You introduced to our country by your personal qualities some attractive traits of Western culture that our people have rarely seen before from the white people they know. I mean your politeness, kindness, dignified self-restraint."

Asked van Mook: "What did you mean by that remark?"

Said Sjahrir: "When your troops leave Indonesia, I'll say things twice as nice about the Dutch."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 33.

<sup>47</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 33.

<sup>48</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 33.

In addition to the significance of Soekarno and Sjahrir, Sherrod also gives a bigger picture of the situation in Indonesia. He strikes a more sombre tone about the present. Based on Sherrod's experiences in Jakarta, there was stagnation in the city because of the presence of two ruling authorities, which also meant two nations which ruled, the Dutch and the Indonesians. This confused people, including, for example, no one collected electricity bills (because Dutch engineers and Indonesian accountants could not agree on who would handle the bills), the presence of a Dutch mayor and an Indonesian mayor in one city, the presence of two flags flying in that city, the existence of two currencies. Therefore, Sherrod concludes with a premonition, "two possible destinies", that is, whether the city will become "the first great Moslem colony" to be independent or will it be caught in "the first wave of Asiatic nationalism" which will lead to chaos.<sup>49</sup>

Sherrod was worried about Indonesia's future if the two sides did not immediately reconcile. He writes:

Throughout most of Asia, the white man is truly hated and the sky is black with chickens coming home to roost – probably blacker in Indonesia than anywhere except Indo-China. The natives' passions run away with their leaders' intellects. I am inclined to doubt whether whites and colored will work together in this generation.<sup>50</sup>

In Amsterdam, Sherrod's report continues, the Dutch were very worried about losing Indonesia because it was their most valuable colony. A Dutch businessman, Pieter de Jong, said that the loss of Indonesia could make the Netherlands "one of the poorest countries" in Europe.<sup>51</sup> He realized that the desire of Indonesians for Independence should be appreciated, but what he feared was that, with the departure of the Dutch from Indonesia, Indonesia could fall into the hands of the Communists or of dangerous big business.

Attempts to reconcile Indonesia and the Netherlands were not non-existent. One of the efforts cited by Sherrod in the article was that made by the Dutch Minister of Overseas Territory, Johannes A. Jonkman, to resolve the Dutch-Indonesian conflict peacefully, including his speech to the Dutch Parliament in which he outlined a proposal put to the two countries. It proposed Dutch recognition of Indonesian sovereignty over Sumatra, Java, and Madura, while Borneo and the Great East would come under Dutch control. The two countries would form a federation (with Indonesia in it) called the United States of Indonesia. It would be a dominion with the queen of the Netherlands as its head. However, this pact was not satisfactory to either side because "the Indonesians think that events are moving too slowly toward independence, and the Dutch think they are going too rapidly".<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 31.

<sup>50</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 31.

<sup>51</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 31.

<sup>52</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, pp. 31-32.

Sherrod cites Dutch criticism of Indonesians, who were considered to show “ingratitude” for Dutch efforts as “the world’s model colonizers”, to raise the status of native people, including sanitation, health care, welfare, and literacy levels. What made the Dutch disappointed and bewildered, Sherrod says, was that after all these efforts, “educated Indonesians became the worst enemies of the mother country”.<sup>53</sup>

Nevertheless, Sherrod attempts to show that Indonesians had long wanted independence from the Dutch and to be self-governing. Sherrod’s report criticizes the Dutch for ignoring the fact that native resistance to colonialism had been simmering for a long time. The Dutch tended to blame two parties for destroying their colonialism: “the Japs” and “a Jap puppet”. The latter referred to Soekarno, who, in the words of an Amsterdam cigar-shop proprietor “is just a crook and a collaborator”. This Dutchman, who alleged that Soekarno would soon turn communist, even called for Soekarno to be severely punished for his collaboration with the Japanese: “We have killed our own Mussert in Holland – we ought to shoot Soekarno too.”<sup>54</sup> Anton Adriaan Mussert (1894-1946) was a Dutch fascist leader who collaborated with the Nazis during the occupation of the Netherlands by the Germans (1940-1945) and was sentenced to death for high treason at the end of 1945. One Dutch woman even underestimated the aspirations of the Indonesians when she said that “all the natives want from this world is three things: an umbrella, a pair of slippers, and a bicycle.” Nevertheless, Shrerrod’s report also underlines that there were also Dutch individuals, including Van Mook, who had begun to think rationally, who judged that in the post-war situation the Dutch had to make substantial compromises with the Indonesians.<sup>55</sup>

Sherrod’s account provides an overview of the progress of the compromise, including the process of drafting the Indonesian-Dutch agreement in Linggarjati, West Java, in November 1946, and the truce between the armies of both sides. The Indonesian army was reportedly led by “hotheaded young General Soedirman” who was on standby to confront 92,000 Dutch soldiers. The Dutch are described as controlling only three small areas in Java, equivalent to 380 square miles out of 51,000 square miles. Dutch rule in Sumatra was even more diminished: about 76 square miles out of 164,147 square miles of Sumatran territory.<sup>56</sup>

Sherrod’s account also describes conditions in the interior of Java, saying “life goes on as if the Dutch would never come again”. Proof of this is the experience of a high-ranking Dutch civil servant, P.J. Koets, about the situation in Republican-controlled territory. There was a communal effort to consolidate rather than dissolve, and people can feel “the quiet and tranquility”.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 32.

<sup>54</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 32.

<sup>55</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 33.

<sup>56</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 34.

<sup>57</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 34.

Koets wrote that:

The farmer is busy on the farm, the women planting or harvesting, the people gather in the market-place, peddlers carry heavy loads along the roads, the dogtrot of the carrier with his load on his back, a merchant on his way to the next village.<sup>58</sup>

Koets spoke with a Republican leader he used to know in the Netherlands, from whom he was given a metaphor for what was happening in Indonesia: that consolidation in Indonesian society was like water which is in the process of freezing. That is, some of the water has frozen so hard that people can walk safely, but there was also a part on which people can walk but still hear from the sound the ice is cracked. There is also a part where the ice had not yet formed or cracked so walking on it was dangerous. Although the situation was complex, what was important was that “the progress of freezing continues, consolidation is progressing”.<sup>59</sup>

Sherrod’s account comes with several photographs and one map. The first is a photo of Soekarno giving a speech to the crowd in a field. The photo was taken by Johnny Florea and had been previously published by *Life* magazine (28 January 1946, pp. 78-79). The caption reads: “Soekarno addressing a mass meeting. An automobile for everybody”.<sup>60</sup> Second, a photo of Soekarno’s wife, Fatmawati, which was also taken by Florea. The caption reads: “Madame Soekarno (No. 2). Blood money haunted a portrait”.<sup>61</sup> The third is a photograph of Van Mook in a gala uniform taken by Thomas D. McAvoy, also from *Life* magazine. The caption reads: “The Netherlands’ Van Mook. For 72,000,000, more than umbrellas”.<sup>62</sup> Fourth, a photo of Lord Killearn in a formal shirt taken by Harris and Ewing. The caption says: “Britain’s Killearn. For a good neighbor, Scotch and soda”.<sup>63</sup> Fifth, a photo of Sjahrir and his stepson sitting on a seat in front of a house. The two are smiling at the camera.<sup>64</sup>

The only map in Sherrod’s account is one entitled “The United States of Indonesia” or the USI. In it, the USI area is divided into several states, like the Republic of Indonesia, Borneo, and the Great East. In the Bangka region in Sumatra notice is given of a plebiscite to be held shortly. Images indicating the main natural resources in various regions of Indonesia have been added to the map, for instance, coconut palms in Central Sumatra and what looks like oil refineries in South Sumatra and Central Java. The word “tin” is written on Bangka, while the word “pearls” is noted around Nusa Tenggara. At the bottom of the map are six pie charts, created by *Time* cartographer, R.M. Chapin Jr., which describe the percentage of Indonesia’s natural resources in the world, for instance, oil (3%, in pre-war times), rubber (37%), tin (17%),

<sup>58</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 34.

<sup>59</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 34.

<sup>60</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 31.

<sup>61</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 32.

<sup>62</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 34.

<sup>63</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 34.

<sup>64</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 34.

copra (27%), tea (19%), quinine (91%), and pepper (86%). So that *Time* readers could grasp how vast and valuable Indonesia was to the Netherlands, a map of the latter has been added to the USI map. Moreover, *Time* notes the difference in population (the Netherlands with 9,000,000 inhabitants and USI with 72,000,000 inhabitants) and the distance between the Netherlands and USI (9,900 miles by sea).<sup>65</sup>

Generally speaking, Sherrod was convinced that Indonesians could govern themselves. He gives his testimony as follows: "They have done surprisingly well, and with some assistance - Dutch or otherwise - I think they can." He even quotes the appreciative words of one of Indonesia's enemies, Van Mook, who said that "the Indonesians have matured more in the past five years than in the previous 50."<sup>66</sup>

In Jakarta there were still undeniable traces of Dutch rule, including that "The *tuan besar* (Dutch for *pukka sahibs*) sat in their white linen suits and drank fiery Bols gin on the terrace of the Harmonie Club."<sup>67</sup> The tranquillity of the Dutch there was disturbed by the whirl of bullets outside the city and the difficulties faced by the Dutch allies, in this case the local rulers in the Great East, who had begun to be disturbed by local rebellions.

Sherrod's account indicates that most of the Dutch in the Indies, and some in the Netherlands, were gradually beginning to realize that the colonial era was over and would not return and that Soekarno was trying to sever political and economic ties with the Dutch. Sherrod closes his account with Van Mook's insinuation and hope regarding the situation in Indonesia at that time and the potential future relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands: "[T]here will be shooting for a long time in Indonesia, but we hope to get it on a friendlier basis."<sup>68</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This article aims to analyse how two American journalists, Johnny Florea (*Life*) and Robert Sherrod (*Time*), imagined and represented Indonesia in their reports-travel accounts after their visits to Indonesia between late 1945 and early 1946. Based on an examination of their reports, in the form of both texts and photographs, published in the print media in which they worked, the conclusion can be reached that Florea and Sherrod paid great attention to Indonesia as one of the exciting, exotic, and must-visit war zones in the East, and reported their visit to American and world audiences. Their reports show the contradictory views they had about Indonesia where, on the one hand, they appreciated the struggle for the Independence of the Indonesians, but on the other hand, they still used the old, pejorative labels about Indonesians.

<sup>65</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 32.

<sup>66</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 34.

<sup>67</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 34. Originating from the colonial India, the term *pukka sahib* has its roots in the Hindi word *pukka*, an expression used by the Indians refer to Europeans, who were socio-politically on a higher level. The term *pukka sahib* means 'a true gentleman'. See Jeremy Butterfield (ed.) (2015: 718).

<sup>68</sup> *Time* 48/26, 23-12-1946, p. 34.

Florea and Sherrod's travelogues played an important role as a key medium in introducing Americans and international audiences at large to Indonesian culture, people, and landscapes, better known in earlier eras as a Dutch colony. In their reports, Indonesians are positioned as leading figures in post-World War II Indonesia. For *Life* and *Time* readers around the globe, they created a new narrative about how Westerners would and should see Indonesia as a new member of the international community. Their reports, supported by various illustrations, shed sympathetic light on the long history of Indonesian resistance to European colonialism, helping Western readers to understand why, in 1945/1946, Indonesians were still resisting the imposition of foreign authority in Indonesia, in this case, the Dutch and the Allies. In some cases they still irrefutably present images of Europeans as the most civilized people. However, it is not uncommon for them to portray Indonesians, although poorly educated, as independent, passionate, and optimistic about their future, and their conviction that they had the authority to rule.

Both Florea and Sherrod were prominent war journalists in the 1940s. Florea, as a *Life* photojournalist, covered various battles in the Pacific War. In late 1945, he was posted to Java, where he travelled to various cities occupied by the Indonesian Nationalists, met Indonesian leaders in Jakarta and in the hinterland, and observed the course of the war there. Meanwhile, Sherrod worked for several media outlets in the US: *Time*, *Life*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. As a reporter for the US Marines, which might have strengthened his prejudices and biases against Asians (including, for example, his accusation that Indonesian youth were armed by the Japanese), he took part in covering various battles in the Pacific. When the war was over, he was assigned to cover the situation in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific, with Java as his focus.

Florea's photo essays feature several themes designed to show *Life* audiences through photographic evidence the realities and horrors of the war in Indonesia. Firstly, describing the resistance of the Indonesian Nationalists to foreign colonialism and occupation. Florea was sympathetic to the struggle of the Indonesians, although he misrepresented them as "Javanese revolutionaries". To show the complexity of the situation in Indonesia, he presented photographs of key individuals in the Indonesian-Dutch conflict, of the increasing authority of the leaders of the Indonesian Republic in the hinterland, of the support of the two rich, influential principalities in Java, and of violence which occurred during the conflict. *Life* readers could witness battles, resistance, death, fear, and helplessness in these photographs.

To attract the attention of his readers, Florea deftly combines text, photos, and captions. His travel report took the form of a photo essay, in which he wrote pieces which briefly explain the history of European colonialism in Indonesia and Indonesia's resistance to foreign colonialism and occupation. Via the essays he also expresses his sympathy for the political aspirations of the Indonesians. Florea's photos helped *Life* readers to see and contemplate the realities of what was happening in Indonesia, whether reflecting vitality (rallies), beauty (paddy fields), or horror (village burning), while the captions

to the photos guide readers towards finding basic information about their subjects and the socio-political context of the individuals in them.

Sherrod's travel report, which aims to shed light on the development of the war from the hotspot so that *Time* readers could understand why wars were still being waged in this part of the world, focuses on a few key topics. These include his appreciation of the struggle for Indonesian Independence, of the importance of Soekarno and Sjahrir, on his sympathy for the victims of the war, and on the peace process between Indonesia and the Dutch. Sherrod was convinced that the Dutch had lost in Indonesia. Finally, his report underlines the peaceful atmosphere in Republican-controlled areas.

As journalists from the US, a country with a history of anti-colonialism – even though it still had colonies abroad in 1945 – and one of the victors in the Second World War, have both sympathy for the struggle of Indonesians for Independence. However, their reports still contain old prejudices about Indonesians built up in colonial times, including that they were irrational, traditional, myth-believers, uninventive, and their only asset was their exotic nature. Indonesia's natural resource wealth was contrasted with that of its poor people. The indigenous elite was depicted as pragmatic, nominal Muslims, who enjoyed a lavish, masculine lifestyle. The narratives of the two journalists also indicate that indigenous people still needed guidance from Western nations to make any progress. The accusation that fascist or Japanese influence still existed in late 1945 and early 1946 was unfounded. Their assertions were true, but the reports also contain misinformation.

Another important fact about these reports is the ignorance about important elements in the history of the struggle for Indonesian Independence. A notable example is the absence of the role of Sarekat Islam. The mention of Boedi Oetomo as the organization which marked the birth of the Nationalist movement betrays the emphasis on the contribution of Western education to the emancipation of native people. In addition, the reports were extremely Java-centric. Their persistence in using the toponym "Batavia" instead of "Jakarta" shows that both journalists failed to capture the sense of national identity which Indonesians attached to the city. Another oversight can be seen in the military aspect: the British army is presented as a modern and well-trained army, while the Indonesian army is considered to have no strategic strengths. It was strong only in terms of numbers.

Nevertheless, the two journalists had undertaken a dangerous assignment because they had come to Indonesia which was a dangerous battle zone, especially for white people, in a world which was generally peaceful after the Second World War. They took risks to present the realities of war to their international audiences. Their travel reports were coloured by their Western values, their experiences in Indonesia, and their direct interactions with people of different nationalities, ranging from Indonesians, British, Indians, Japanese, and Dutch to Indo-Europeans. This study shows that the travel reports of the two journalists, with an approach which combined journalism, ethnography, and tourism, show the American perspectives on Indonesia while helping to

make Indonesia, especially its struggle for Independence, known, studied, and understood by *Life* and *Time* readers in various parts of the world.

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