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Satyawati Suleiman

*Indonesia*, Vol. 28. (Oct., 1979), pp. 55-64.

Stable URL:

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## THE LAST DAYS OF BATAVIA\*

Satyawati Suleiman

December 7th, 1941. I hurried to our lecture room in the law school building at the "Koningsplein," the big square in the heart of Batavia, capital of the Dutch East Indies. It was 7 o'clock in the morning, so I was still in time for our Islam class, which was to start at 7:15.

I was surprised to meet only a few friends in front of our lecture room, as the gallery was usually crowded by that time. Our friends were arriving on their bicycles one by one. When I asked Sophie, one of my best girl-friends, what had happened, she answered: "I was stopped in the street by policemen. Haven't you heard that Pearl Harbor has been attacked by the Japanese air force?"

The news came as a shock to all of us. Indeed, over the past months the situation in the Pacific had grown worse. The Dutch East Indies army had also been preparing for war: coastal defenses had been reinforced; war materiel had been shipped to the archipelago from abroad; and the war ships the Volksraad (People's Council) had asked for, had also arrived. But there was as yet no militia. The Dutch were still deploying the professional soldiers who had always been used to restore law and order in the interior, to fight their own brothers.

Yet to us war had always appeared to be something happening far away. War was something horrible you read about in newspapers or heard about from refugees telling their sad experiences over the radio. War was still something between the Allied forces and the Axis in Europe. To the Dutch East Indies war meant: "Spitfire-funds" and "bazaars"--big charity parties, where the European high society of Batavia or other cities danced and contributed money to that fund, money used to buy "Spitfires" for the Dutch air force in Europe.

Only a very few people realized that somber clouds were gathering in the clear tropical skies, for the bulk of the population was not interested in politics.

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\*This article gives the impressions of one young Indonesian college student in Batavia as the Japanese invading forces approached the city in early 1942. For readers interested in reactions in other parts of the archipelago, published memoirs by other Indonesians recalling the Japanese entry include: Sukarno's account of the situation in Padang in *Sukarno: An Autobiography as Told to Cindy Adams* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), pp. 148-72; Ali Sastroamidjojo (Surabaya), *Tonggak-Tonggak di Perjalananku* (Jakarta: Kinta, 1974), pp. 126-28; S. M. Gandasubrata, *An Account of the Japanese Occupation of Banjumas Residency, Java, March 1942 to August 1945* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Data Paper Number 10, 1953); Hamka (Medan), *Kenang2-an Hidup*, 3 (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1974), pp. 18-46; Abu Hanifah (Tanjung Priok, Jakarta), *Tales of a Revolution* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1972), pp. 114-20; Ganis Harsono (Bandung), *Recollections of an Indonesian Diplomat in the Sukarno Era* (St. Lucia, Qd.: University of Queensland Press, 1977), pp. 25-30; Tjamboek Berdoeri [pseud.] (Malang), *Indonesia dalem api dan bara* (Malang: n.p., 1947).

So they shrugged their shoulders when they read about the negotiations going on between the Dutch East Indies government and the Japanese. But when all the Japanese shops began to close down many people began to understand that the political situation was becoming serious. Of course, they rushed to the enormous clearance sales, where one could get everything cheaper than usual. It was rumored that when many Japanese shopkeepers parted from their Indonesian friends, they promised that they would be back in a few months. And indeed they did come back, many of them in the uniforms of majors and colonels in the victorious Japanese army.

Now the bomb had burst in the Pacific. The Japanese were the first to start the war.

The questions arising in our minds were: What is the United States going to do now? What are the plans of the Dutch East Indies government? In the Indies, the first thing the government did was to arrest all the Germans and Italians and all those who were pro-Japanese. They started early in the morning, hence the activity of the police force in the streets, when everybody was busy going to work or school.

Our professor in Islamic studies, Prof. Dr. Pijper, gave his lecture as if nothing had happened. But later on you saw many professors and lecturers lost in excited conversations in the galleries. The students kept relatively calm, but many citizens of Batavia, especially the housewives, got panicky. They tried to store away as much food as possible, and also textiles, as far as they could afford it. Canned goods in particular were much in demand. Others were busy forming or improving organizations like the COVIM [Corps Vrouwen in Mobilisatietijd] and the Luchtbeschermingsdienst [air raid precautions department], while many ladies also took first-aid lessons.

Meanwhile the police became more and more severe towards those who kept up relations with the Japanese. An uncle of ours, who was a doctor, was arrested and taken to Garut. His wife and two daughters, Herawati and Saptarita, were put under house arrest. They were accused of harboring sympathy for the Japanese because they had a son in Formosa and a son-in-law in Japan. So when we passed our uncle's home in Kramat street, we always saw a police guard sitting in front. After some time the family was taken to a camp at Cibadak, a hill station in the interior. Uncle Latip was later released and took up his doctor's practice again as so many suffering people needed him. But the police kept all his movements under constant observation.

My parents remained calm. My father, who worked as an architect in the municipality, went to work as usual in his old Nash. My mother did not even try to store goods, as she disapproved of food hoarding. She had done plenty of social work, and considered hoarding an antisocial act. So our storeroom stayed empty, and became, instead, the place where we put a big shelter-table of teak, under which the whole family crept during air raids. We also had a shelter dug in the garden, where the male members of our household could go--my younger brother, Luke, a friend of his, Said, who was a medical intern, and a male servant. My father had to stay with us under the table to comfort the frightened women. And there we stayed with scared eyes and pieces of rubber clenched between our lips.

My mother planted cucumbers and Mexican sunflowers, and, after the Japanese arrived, we could eat the vegetables and cut the flowers to brighten the house. She took first-aid lessons with the other ladies from our small lane; they gathered in the house of a neighbor and Said was their instructor. My younger brother

went to the medical college as usual and I to the faculty of letters as if nothing serious had happened.

But changes were visible in my faculty and in the law faculty. First of all, many Dutch professors had changed clothes and were seen wearing uniforms of the Stadswacht [Town Guard] and Landwacht [Home Guard]--emergency corps of the army. So we had to attend lectures given by martial looking men, who entered the rooms stamping their boots and with helmets in their hands. Some lecture-rooms were made bombproof. Room F, which was the biggest, had a place under the staircase where the chairs were put. There we crept when there was an air raid alert. Emergency walls were also built on to the left side of the building to protect the outside walls of the professors' rooms.

Many students gradually disappeared, especially the girls. Their parents considered a big city like Batavia no longer safe for their daughters, now that the Japanese were approaching, for they had been told horrible stories about cities in China where Japanese had already entered.

My parents wanted me to go to Tasikmalaya, where my mother's younger brother lived with his family. "But Tasikmalaya can also be occupied by the Japanese," I protested. "But the first blow will fall here in this city," my father told me sternly. But I, who had always been a headstrong child to the despair of my parents, stood my ground. "After all, it is your fate, whether you are safe or not," I answered. Strangely enough, because my sixth sense told me that everything would be all right, I felt peace in my heart. I felt secure because I was in well-known surroundings in Batavia. And besides, I had my boy-friend, who was tall and broad-shouldered and who really looked like a solid rock one could lean upon. So I felt safe, for he would be with me and protect me when the Japanese entered the city.

Yes, the Japanese army was advancing fast; they took Menado and Ambon and they marched into the jungles of Malaya. They bombed Balikpapan and even Surabaya. More and more people got panic-stricken. Quite a lot of high society ladies, European as well as Indonesian, evacuated to their bungalows in the hill stations. But they evacuated not only themselves, but also their earthly goods, like silver, linen and beautiful party dresses. The irony of fate! They were not safe at all. In spite of the fact that they feared the Japanese most, the soldiers were under strict discipline and did not bother them. But our own people, at least the scum of them, the thieves and murderers and robbers, got their best chance during the first days of the Japanese occupation. They robbed those high society ladies of their precious things. The people who had stayed in Batavia turned out to be the safest, as the Japanese acted severely against disturbers of law and order.

In February our faculty building was almost empty. The lectures were attended by ten students or even fewer. Fortunately I still had some girl-friends who were faithfully following the lectures with me. We stayed cheerful and looked as if nothing scared us at all. We listened to our professor's explanations of difficult Javanese grammar as if no Pacific War was going on.

One day when we, a group of six girls, were walking along one of the galleries of the faculty building, we met a group of male students. One of them exclaimed: "Well, here are the ladies with steel nerves." "Why not?" we answered indignantly, "we do not fear anything."

Perhaps we did not realize the dangers, as we were still young and inexperienced. The men, who were much older and sometimes already married, were more frightened as they were afraid of losing their wives to the Japanese. One day a student famous for his wit and flair looked very downcast. He told us that Menado

had fallen and that his wife and children were there. But we made jokes about the war and our steel nerves. Ida Nasution, my best friend since high school days, asked one day when we were discussing the fact that many of us got pimples on our faces: "Could they be the ends of our steel nerves?"

But in our hearts we were a little scared, especially during the alarms. I always got nervous when a siren sounded at dead of night. Then all members of the family woke up, groping for jewel cases and purses in the dark. My father then appeared sleepily with a suitcase full of money, which had been put in his care by the Kartini Association, of which he was the secretary. Sometimes it was difficult to open the back door, and we got angry and nervous for we all wanted to get out as soon as possible as we were horrified at the idea of being trapped in the house. Strangest of all, we never thought of taking our clothes along with us to the shelter; perhaps there was still much of the Eastern antimaterialist attitude in us. Clothes did not mean anything to us at such moments. Money and jewelry could be easily saved, and in case of emergency we could sell our jewelry to buy food. My mother and her friends were teaching each other the best way to hide jewels in their belts. They were always dressed in national dress, that is, a *kain*, tied with a belt at the middle, and a *kabaya*, a short coat with long sleeves. Their belts, which consisted of meters and meters of woven cloth, were ideal places to hide their jewels and money in case they had to flee.

The visits of Japanese planes to our skies became more and more frequent. The Dutch East Indies army had now been reinforced by British and Canadian soldiers and "Aussies." They were often used for the barrage. Sometimes we could witness fights between Japanese and Allied planes, if we were courageous enough to come out of our shelters. Sometimes when we were together in a bombproof room in the faculty building, we listened with our hearts in our throats to heavy bombing going on.

Yes, my friends and I looked gay and careless as ever, but we were actually a little scared. Sometimes we talked about our fears. My friend Sophie once remarked: "Perhaps it is not so bad to be killed, but it is worse to be maimed for life." We all realized this with a shudder.

One day another friend of mine, Wies, a very good-looking girl and very popular with the male students, was walking with me, not far from the (Central) Post Office. We intended to go to the Pasar Baru, the shopping street of our city. Just in front of the Post Office, we heard a siren announcing an air raid. We had to take shelter in the Post Office. There we sat on the floor with quite a lot of other people. I heard Wies saying half jokingly and half seriously: "Dear God, do not let me die! I have not yet enjoyed life enough."

As a matter of fact all these remarks were reflections of the fear growing in our hearts.

Between lecture hours we often sat at the "Coffee Table." This was a small canteen at the end of the gallery, a private enterprise of two Sundanese village girls. They sold hot tea, iced tea in tall glasses, and also some food like fried bananas, croquettes, and *gado-gado*, a vegetable salad with peanut sauce. There we always met students of all nationalities, faiths, and political opinions. There we witnessed many weighty debates on politics. Others preferred telling raw jokes which were not fit for ladies' ears. Our boy-friends disapproved of our sitting at that table. But perhaps, just because this place was considered not to be a proper place for ladies, my friends and I thought it a highly interesting spot. And besides that, we enjoyed the tea and *gado-gado* very much, as we always felt hungry after some heavy lecture. We were just like bottomless casks, because

after such a snack we became hungry again. It could not be denied that it was a nice place to relax in.

The more the Japanese advanced, the more expensive the food at the Coffee Table became, and the quality of the croquettes fell. Sophie once remarked that the croquettes used to be made out of potatoes, but later on they became a mixture of potatoes and *ketela* (cassava). In spite of the serious situation in the Pacific, we were still gay there at the Coffee Table. But sometimes our friends grew sad all of a sudden, because they were worried about someone very beloved who was living in territory already occupied by the Japanese.

Police control had become more and more severe. We had to be very careful in our conversations, lest we be accused of sympathizing with the Japanese. Not long after the outbreak of the Pacific War several students' associations signed a declaration of sympathy with the Dutch East Indies government. The only students' association which refused to sign was the Perhimpunan Peladjar-Peladjar Indonesia which was abbreviated to PPPI. This association was a political club, whereas the USI, the Unitas Studiosorum Indonesiensis, was one which stressed contacts among the students. Most of us, of course, were nationalists at heart at that time, but not so many students were actively working or were actively interested in politics. As a matter of fact, the USI members were more Westernized in their behavior; they danced European ballroom dancing which was disapproved of by the bulk of the PPPI members. Then the USI, after the European pattern, also had an initiation period whereas the PPPI did not. Both dancing and the initiation period were elements of Western civilization which were not considered proper for good nationalist students, although in the final years before the war some very modern friends of ours also became members of the PPPI.

There was also a Bataviaas Studenten Corps, consisting of many Europeans (Dutch) and Eurasians, and a few Indonesians. This club was regarded as a *Belanda* (Dutch) club, although its aim was to bring together all students of Batavia, regardless of their nationality, religion, or political opinions. I was a member of both the USI and the Corps, whereas some of my girl-friends were members of the USI and PPPI at the same time. But being members of students' associations with different aims did not prevent us from being good friends and showing each other understanding. So when we sat at that coffee table we were as cordially treated by a USI as by a PPPI member.

But we always had to be careful, for fear of being overheard by a student who was working for the PID (Politieke Inlichtingen Dienst), the Political Information Service of the government. It was rumored that the PID paid students, especially poor ones, to spy upon their friends.

One day a fifth-year student, a member of the USI who was notorious as a very keen gambler and the inventor of many raw jokes, told me: "Sometimes I wish I were a member of the PID." We uttered cries of horror. Indifferent to our shocked faces, he continued: "Just to be well paid and to know the secrets of the PID." This same student was so daring as to criticize the bad food the COVIM ladies served to the members of the Luchtbeschermingsdienst, who were mostly Indonesians (whereas the COVIM consisted largely of European and Eurasian ladies). He said this when a fellow student of ours, a Dutch lady whose husband was a member of the Volksraad, was sitting at the coffee table. This lady had never before sat at that table, but perhaps the Dutch were becoming more democratic, the more the Japanese closed in, so she shared our snacks. I was very sorry that she heard these remarks, as I knew that she was on the board of the COVIM, and I gestured to the student to be silent, but he deliberately continued his complaints.

A girl-friend of ours with a Chinese name was also arrested because she was of Korean nationality. But when we heard the news we were no longer shocked, but only wondered how long she would be in the camp, as we were sure then that the Japanese would win. Because we knew that the Dutch East Indies air force was already exhausted, the weapons were all old-fashioned, and the army was outnumbered by the Japanese, who, moreover, according to the foreign soldiers withdrawn from Malacca, "fought like devils."

The Dutch made statements like: "Liever staande sterven dan knielend leven" (Better to die standing than to live kneeling), or "We will fight to the last man." Indonesians made of this: ". . . to the last Indonesian." The Dutch thought that the Indonesians were loyal subjects and many of the emergency organizations were mostly made up of Indonesians, but why deny that the Indonesians felt a little "Schadenfreude" that the Dutch lion was about to be ousted from Indonesia? Only they did not dare to say this aloud or write it in the newspapers for fear of being clapped into jail.

I am not far from the truth when I say that the bulk of the population watched the daily events passively, as the coming of a new master meant nothing to them at the moment.

By the middle of February, many of our friends had left and they wrote us long letters from the interior, where they were staying with uncles and brothers.

One day when I was standing in the lobby of the faculty building, a Chinese student, whom I had known since my elementary school days, came to me and said: "Why are you still here?" When I said that I had no intention at all of leaving Jakarta, he said: "You'd better evacuate now while there is still time. I have evacuated my mother and sister to a hill station. For don't you know what the Japanese did to the European ladies in the Shanghai concessions?" Then followed all kinds of horror tales about the cruelties of the Japanese soldiers.

I turned pale and felt very scared. When I told my boy-friend what I had just learned from Lie, the Chinese friend, he said: "You need not be frightened. When the Japanese enter Batavia, they will find all kinds of 'bad women' here. So they will not even look at the girls of the 'better families.' And besides, I am here with you," he said reassuringly.

I told my girl-friends the stories and they too got scared. We were all a little nervous at the time, for the tension in the air made itself felt on all of us, and the air raids and alerts also contributed to our getting off balance. We often did not dare to go by bicycle to our first-aid lessons, as we were afraid of being forced to look for a shelter if we were in the street during an alert. Some of our friends told us that their mothers wanted them to come home. But still they stayed on.

We had a club of ten girl students, which we called the "Fang So" for some strange reason or other, and we pronounced it like a Chinese name. We used to celebrate our birthdays together without boy-friends, for it was always a "for ladies only" party.

On the 15th of February we attended Nellie's birthday. She was the daughter of the regent of Bandung and lived in a small lane with her divorced mother. They had a very nice garden with many papaya and some other big trees. Her party was an afternoon garden party, because we all wanted to be home before dark. We were not as gay as usual, as we were wondering whether it would be the last time we had a party together. A male friend of hers took some pictures of the group. And when it was seven o'clock we went home with the fear in our hearts that we would be forced to stop in the road during an alarm.

We all felt that our destiny was now uncertain. One could not properly make plans for the future. What would happen to us, tomorrow, next week, or next month?

An uncle of mine who had a job as a technician at some dam in the interior of the Indramayu regency suddenly turned up one day and came to stay with us. His family was left in his home village. He was posted to Kemayoran airfield, to extend the airstrip. One day the Kemayoran airfield was bombed and strafed by Japanese planes. We heard the bombing and afterwards the radio announcer told us that the target had been Kemayoran. We were all worried about our uncle.

At about four o'clock he came home, very excited, and dirty with mud. He told us that the airfield had been bombed and machine-gunned and that he had just enough time to jump into a gutter. He produced an empty bullet-case from his pocket as evidence. It had been a narrow escape.

The Koning Willem III school, which had been our high school and which was near our lane, was now the British soldiers' garrison. So we too were in immediate danger during an air raid, as it could now become a military target. But strangely enough, we had finally grown a little apathetic and indifferent to danger.

Our girl-friend Wies disappeared, taking one of the last trains to Central Java. Not long after that, the bridges were blown up by special groups of the Dutch East Indies army. My cousin Jo Abdurrachman, who was also a member of our ten-girl students' group and belonged to the Red Cross, was ordered to go to Bandung immediately. It was possible that she would have to go to Australia, where many European families from all over Southeast Asia had already gone.

We celebrated her birthday on the 28th of February at her home in Meester Cornelis, the sister-town of Batavia. We were escorted by our boy-friends. It was a Sunday and very fine weather. The sun was shining brightly. We had our lunch there, and afterwards Sophie and I, along with our boy-friends, stepped into a *deleman*, a horsecart, to go home together. We had said goodbye to Jo, who had to leave for Bandung within a few days. We all thought her a very courageous girl, who was willing to go to dangerous places with the Red Cross.

One night I walked to her home with my mother, who wanted to see her before she left. It was very funny. Jo and I settled financial matters for I still had to pay her back some money which I had borrowed from her at the Coffee Table. I remember there was a cent she could not give me, and she said: "But I must find a cent, because I do not want a matter unsettled before I go." I shivered a little when I heard her say that, as if she meant that perhaps we would not meet each other again. Mother and I went home in a somber mood.

We learned from the newspapers and the radio that the Dutch East Indies government, led by van Mook, was going to leave us. We felt deserted. I do not think that our Indonesian nationalists approved of that idea. Not that we liked the government so much, but we felt like helpless children, deserted by our protector. We could not protect ourselves, as we had no compulsory army. The professional soldiers had always fought for the Dutch and against our own brothers, so how could we defend ourselves when the Japanese came? However clever this decision of the Dutch East Indies government would later appear from the viewpoint of the Allied powers, we did not like it at all.

The Governor General, Tjarda van Starkenborgh Stachouwer, had decided to stay, and we respected him for this decision, although as he was the head of the colony we could not love him. His life in prison camps and also the life of his wife



and daughter turned out to be very hard during the Japanese occupation, as we heard later, so personally he had made the worst choice.

Dr. van Mook took two Indonesian officials with him: Mr. Soejono and Mr. Lukman Djajadiningrat. Mr. Soejono was a member of the Raad van Indië, the highest council in the country, and had been the regent of Pasuruan in the eastern part of Java before he was appointed to the council. He had been famous as a very daring and outspoken regent who was not afraid to say what was on his mind to the Dutch authorities, so that he was even called "the red regent." He had to leave his wife and daughters in Indonesia, whereas his two sons were still students in Holland.

Mr. Lukman Djajadiningrat was the secretary of the Department of Education. He was a member of the famous Djajadiningrat family, which hailed from Serang in Bantam regency, in the province of West Java. His brother, Pangeran Achmad Djajadiningrat, who had been a member of the Raad van Indië, had already died. Now his other brother, Professor Dr. Husein Djajadiningrat, the first Indonesian philologist and professor of Islamic studies, was a member of that council. It was rumored that Dr. van Mook wanted one of the two Djajadiningrat brothers to go with him, and he left the choice to them. So Lukman decided to go as he was the younger. Neither of the two Indonesians who went with Dr. van Mook came back to Indonesia, as they both died before the war was over.

I often heard my parents discussing the political situation when we were having lunch or dinner together. "Why can't the Dutch be generous?" said my father. "Our politicians, like Sukarno and Hatta, are still in exile; why can't they release them?" My mother said: "It seems that the Dutch begrudge our having their factories and bridges. Why do they want to destroy them? Do they want to imitate the Russians when the Germans invaded Russia? But the Russians took all their people along with them, whereas we Indonesians have to stay here when the Dutch go away. Those who will suffer most are the Indonesians, because the people on those burnt estates will be without employment and will starve." My father added: "We have asked for a compulsory army since 1913, but they never trusted us. Now it is too late."

I do not think that my parents' opinion was much different from what the average Indonesian intellectual thought. My parents belonged to the moderate group who wanted freedom for Indonesia by the peaceful way of evolution and parliament. My father had been a member of the Budi Utomo party in the past, and he had now joined the moderate Parindra party. My mother, who came from a progressive family, had been sent as a girl to the Dutch Koning Willem III high school in Batavia, and later became a member of the women's movement. She was the first chairman of the ladies' division of the Indonesia Muda club, a club of young Indonesian nationalists formed in 1928, and she had made speeches at many women's congresses. Both my parents had struggled for women's emancipation and coeducation, as I saw in a periodical they published in 1916, called the "Puteri Merdeka."

That my parents expressed their disapproval of the steps taken by the Dutch East Indies government did not mean that they disliked the Dutch. Personally they had many Dutch and Eurasian friends, but they did not like the Dutch political behavior towards our country. My parents were very careful not to show their disapproval in public, and we were always told while still small children not to say things which the Dutch did not like to hear, for fear of the PID.

My father had had a bad experience with the PID in 1927, when, at a campfire for the boyscouts of "Jong Java," he had to give a speech to commemorate our

hero, Prince Diponegoro, the leader in the Java War (1825-1830). My father had called this hero a good example for our youth and finished the speech with "Freedom, Freedom." I had witnessed this event and, although only a girl of seven allowed to sit in the grass somewhere where I would not disturb the meeting, I was very much touched by my father's words. I had seen some young men dressed in Javanese costume sitting not far from me. Those men turned out to be members of the PID.

One day after that speech my father was called to the police station for interrogation. He was accused of cherishing rebellious thoughts against the government, and I saw him leave in a horsecart with a policeman. My mother was frightened to death. She gathered us children around her chair at home, while my father was being questioned by the police. She feared that he would be regarded as a rebel, and that he would have to share the fate of so many Indonesians who had already been entered on the black list: be imprisoned and afterwards sent to Digul in New Guinea.

But fortunately the Dutch mayor, Meiroos, intervened and said that my father was a loyal servant of the government, and afterwards father was no longer bothered by the police. But from then on my parents were careful in their speech and even forbade us to sing the "Indonesia Raya" too loudly when we were at home.

My father used to tell us that so many things had happened since he was young. Then an Indonesian was not allowed to sit in the same train compartment as a European; if he tried, he would be kicked out. And an Indonesian who spoke Dutch to a Dutchman was regarded as ill-mannered and arrogant. Unfortunately for the Dutch, the Indonesian intellectuals had very long memories, so it was no wonder that they often felt a grudge against the government.

Muhammad Husni Thamrin, an Indonesian nationalist, had just died while under house arrest. It was rumored that the Dutch authorities had refused him proper medical treatment when he got typhoid fever. His funeral was attended by hundreds of Indonesians. I was among the students, who all came by bicycle.

About the end of February, most of the professors had already stopped lecturing. I remember Professor Bernet Kempers' last lecture in archaeology. He showed us slides on Pompeii and Herculaneum. He pointed to a figure of a man, who was lying prostrate, surprised by the disaster. He said: "This is a nice pose for dying," and he told us other sinister jokes. And when the sirens sounded an alert, he calmly gave a hand to each one of us, saying that he hoped to meet us again. He looked so young and handsome in his Stadswacht uniform that I thought that I would be very, very sorry if he fell in battle. We left him with an ache in our hearts, because we already felt attached to him.

When we were hiding under the wooden stairs of Room F, waiting till the sirens sounded the "All Clear" again, I watched two Dutch ladies immersed in conversation. They were Mrs. Leunissen, one of our fellow students and the wife of a Volksraad member, and Mrs. Dr. de Jong, a very young and beautiful lecturer in history and Dutch. I heard the ladies discussing some historic matters and I thought: "These scholarly Europeans do not even think of the war." But afterwards Mrs. Leunissen told me that she and Dr. de Jong had made an agreement to stay together when the Japanese came to occupy the city.

Now my parents finally decided to store some rice and canned goods, in case there was no market during the first days of the occupation. My boy-friend and I accompanied my father to the Senen market to buy some rice, which cost 9 guilders a bag by then.

During the first days of March we did not hear any news of the war situation. But it was very strange because the sirens did not sound any more.

My uncle had been transferred to another airfield near Tangerang and we did not have any sign of life from him either.

Batavia had been declared an open city. The army was withdrawn to the interior. Only the Stadswacht stayed in town to protect the district where European women and children lived. The Indonesians were unprotected.

On the morning of the fifth of March I went on my bicycle to our faculty building. The streets were very quiet, and no foreign soldiers were visible. I entered the library of our faculty. The books had been moved from this room, with its matted walls not far from our Coffee Table, to a room with stone walls in the main building. I saw some friends there busy questioning each other about linguistics as they were hoping soon to take their examinations.

One of them told me that the Dutch professors had already appointed their successors from among the Indonesian lecturers, and that the fifth-year students of the faculty of law had received "emergency degrees," without doing their final examination.

I went outside and met Dr. Supomo, our Indonesian professor of adat law, one of the few professors of Indonesian birth. He was dressed in his Javanese costume, with a fine kain wrapped around him, a headdress of batik, and a European coat. So you could see he was ready to receive the first blow. He was now the only representative of the two faculties of law and letters, because all the Dutch professors were with their friends in the Stadswacht. I then heard one of my friends saying that the Japanese had invaded Bantam and were advancing on Batavia and could arrive at any moment.

Standing there in the front part of the lobby and looking into the street, we noticed a truck full of men in uniform in the square right in front of the building. We saw Professor Wertheim, who taught "Introduction to Law" and Professor Bermet Kempers among them. Then the truck moved on and that was the last we saw of our Dutch professors under colonial rule.

I quickly went home and told my mother what I had heard. She was a little scared, as my father was still at his office. But finally he came home too, as well as my younger brother and our boarder, Said.

That afternoon we listened to the radio. Again and again the announcer said that Batavia had been declared an open city, that the Japanese Imperial Forces were invited to enter the city, and that they were requested to spill no blood. In the meantime my father buried our table silver in the garden. As my parents were people with nothing to lose, they did not have to worry about their earthly goods, but their silver could eventually be exchanged for food for the family in case there was no cash. And then we prayed to God and awaited the arrival of our new masters.

Batavia had fallen.