



Those Who Defected: Japanese Soldiers in Malang Who Defended The Republic

Annisaa Khansa Labibah¹

¹ Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia
annisaa.labibah.fis@um.ac.id

Abstract. In the early days of Indonesian independence, many heroic events occurred to defend Indonesian independence carried out by the Indonesian people. There is a part that is rarely seen in the events of defending Indonesian autonomy, namely the condition of the Japanese army or Japanese people who were still in Indonesia—seeing that 1945 was the early days of Indonesian independence. There must still be many remnants of Japanese rule in Indonesia including the presence of its soldiers. This article will describe a small part of the fate of the Japanese soldiers who were still in Indonesia, especially in the city of Malang who defected and joined the republican army to help defend Indonesia's independence.

Keywords: Japanese soldiers, Malang, war of independence

1 Introduction

The Pacific War broke out on December 8, 1941. Japan had long prepared itself to control East Asia and the West Pacific, as well as to control Indonesia, which was a rich archipelago. The efforts made by Japan to seize Indonesia from Dutch rule were carried out by controlling air bases such as Banjarmasin, Makassar, Kendari, Palembang, and Tanjung Karang. In a short time, Japan could control Batavia as the center of occupation [1].

On March 5, 1942, Japan had successfully controlled the Tangerang area, Major General Schilling withdrew all KNIL (Koninklijk Nederland Indie Leger) troops to Bandung as its last defense area. After Japan completely controlled the entire territory of Indonesia, a military government began to be formed. The Japanese government is more appropriately called an occupation government than a colonial one because the government formed was a military one. The Japanese army government organization in Java was called Gunseibu and its officials were called Gunseikan, the central government office was called Gunseinkanbu, where Batavia became the center of government. The name Batavia was then changed by Japan to Jakarta on the celebration of the Greater East Asia War Day on December 8, 1942, with the special title Jakarta Tokubetu-si [1].

After surrendering at the Battle of Midway in June 1942, Japan suffered a series of strategic setbacks, including defeats at Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands campaign, which demonstrated their inability to maintain their position in the Pacific [2]. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 put tremendous

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pressure on the Japanese government, forcing them to finally surrender on September 2, 1945, officially ending World War II [3]. The overall defeat of Japan can be seen as the result of a combination of the effectiveness of the Allied military strategy and their ability to aggressively deploy industrial and technological resources in the face of Japanese aggression [4].

At the time Japan declared its surrender and defeat to the Allies, there were still many Japanese military troops in Indonesia. Although there were efforts to transport Japanese military troops back to Japan by the Allies, in reality, there were still 1000 soldiers in Indonesia. Until finally they remained and settled in Indonesia [5]. The author's big question is, what drove the Japanese soldiers to remain in Indonesia? Why did they choose to help the struggle to defend Indonesia's independence?

2 Method

The research method used is historiography which has four stages in the research process, namely heuristics, criticism, interpretation and historiography [6]. The author uses a literature study approach where library data collection is done by reading and processing research materials in the form of texts, which are secondary sources [7]. The relevance of the source to the theme to be studied must be under the temporal research and is the most important thing. Researchers interpret sources, this is done by analyzing sources that are by the research. After being analyzed, the author will combine the results of the analysis into historical facts.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Indonesia Early Independence

On August 17, 1945, the Indonesian people declared their independence. Through this proclamation, Indonesia declared itself as an independent and sovereign country. The struggle towards the recognition of Indonesian independence lasted for several years and involved various conflicts, including the War of Independence [8]. The Indonesian War of Independence, which lasted from 1945 to 1949, was a crucial period in the Indonesian people's struggle to maintain their newly proclaimed independence. After the proclamation of independence on August 17, 1945, armed conflict immediately erupted between the forces of the Republic of Indonesia and the Dutch forces, who were trying to regain control of their former colony. These clashes involved some significant battles, including the Battle of Surabaya in November 1945, which is known as one of the bloodiest and most symbolic battles in the struggle for independence [9].

The Battle of Surabaya, fought from 27 October to 22 November 1945, was one of the most significant battles in the Indonesian independence struggle against Dutch colonial rule after World War II. The conflict began after the Dutch, who had regained control of Indonesia after the defeat of Japan, attempted to capture the city of Surabaya, which was one of the main centers of resistance for the Republic of

Indonesia. The battle was sparked by tensions between Dutch troops and Indonesian youth and freedom fighters, who refused to surrender their weapons and recognize Dutch rule [9].

The Linggadjati negotiations in November 1946, were one of the first attempts to resolve tensions between the Republic of Indonesia and the Netherlands after World War II. Held in November 1946 in Linggadjati, near Bogor, the negotiations resulted in an agreement known as the "Linggadjati Agreement." In this agreement, the Netherlands and the Republic of Indonesia agreed to recognize the de facto existence of the Republic of Indonesia in the regions of Java and Bali and to regulate the form of a federation that would include the Republic of Indonesia as one of the states in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia Serikat (NKRI). However, this agreement was not fully accepted by all parties and experienced various obstacles in its implementation, which contributed to the tensions that eventually led to military aggression [9].

The First Dutch Military Aggression, which occurred from 21 July to 4 August 1947, was a large-scale military attack launched by the Dutch with the aim of re-occupying the territories newly proclaimed as the Republic of Indonesia. This operation was known as "Operatie Product" and was aimed at destroying the Republic's military power and controlling strategic areas, especially in Java and Sumatra. This attack resulted in fierce fighting in various locations, including in the area around Malang and other areas in East Java. The Dutch attempted to separate the territories controlled by the Republic and strengthen their position in areas considered strategically important [9].

3.2 Conditions of Malang City in 1945-1947

The First Dutch Military Aggression was an event that occurred around 1947. The Dutch themselves called the Military Aggression a Police action. The Dutch aggression aimed to regain control of Indonesia. From East Java, it was reported that on July 21, 1947, at 06.00, a Dutch aircraft carried out a submachine gun attack on the Malang area. At 07.00 two other aircraft attacked Magetan with submachine guns. At that time two Dutch aircraft also submachine gunned the Maospati airfield near Madiun and the airfield workshop was bombed. The Panasan airfield near Solo was also bombed and submachine gunned at 07.00 [10].

During this period, Malang experienced a series of fierce battles between the TNI and Dutch forces. The city became one of the battlegrounds where the Dutch, who were trying to regain control of areas previously controlled by the Japanese, launched a massive attack. The battle in Malang demonstrated the strength of resistance of the Republic of Indonesia forces despite extremely difficult conditions. The city's residents and Indonesian troops fought hard to maintain their independence, reflecting their fighting spirit and resilience in the face of Dutch aggression [11].

The Dutch attacks not only brought physical damage but also created social and economic instability in Malang City. The tension and suffering experienced by the people of Malang during this period reflect the great challenges faced by the people of Malang City, in maintaining independence and building a newly independent country [10].

After Indonesia proclaimed its independence on August 17, 1945, the Netherlands did not immediately approve of Indonesia's independence. There were many negotiations as an effort by the Indonesian nation's diplomacy to gain recognition of independence from the Netherlands. The failure of these negotiations gave rise to events in Indonesian history called Military Aggression I on July 21, 1947, and Dutch Military Aggression II on February 21, 1948. The Dutch considered these events to be police actions, namely securing their territory from rebels. In the writing of Indonesian history according to the Netherlands, the Netherlands remains the main actor, representing enlightenment, progress, and the ability to protect the interests of the natives which are expressed as a form of the natives' inability to run their affairs [12].

The First Dutch Military Aggression event began in East Java, it was reported that on July 21, 1947, at 06.00, a Dutch aircraft launched a submachine gun attack on the Malang area. At 07.00 two other aircraft attacked Magetan with submachine guns. At that time two Dutch aircraft and submachine gunned the Maospati airfield near Madiun and the airfield workshop was bombed. The Panasan airfield near Solo was also bombed and submachine gunned at 07.00 [10]. During the First Dutch Military Aggression, Allied and Dutch troops landed in Surabaya. Many local and Chinese residents in Surabaya flee to Malang by train to seek safety and shelter in their family's homes in Malang.

3.3 Japanese Army in Malang Defending the Republic

According to data from the Friendship Citizens Foundation (YWP) in Jakarta, after World War II ended, 903 former Japanese soldiers fought to defend Indonesian independence. In the next data, around 243 of them died in the war, 288 people went missing, and 45 people returned to Japan after the war after the Indonesian War of independence ended around the 1950s. Then 324 other people chose to remain in Indonesia as Indonesian Citizens (WNI) [13].

There were various reasons for the Japanese soldiers who joined the Indonesian army. The main reason for joining the republican army was ideological reasons, to free Asia from the grip of the Western nations. Another reason was that they felt that Japan had a promise to free Indonesia. In addition, some stayed for economic reasons, where they thought that if they returned to Japan it would be difficult to find work in their country which was devastated by war. The last reason was the spread of rumors that Japanese soldiers who were sent home by the Allies by ship were thrown into the sea [5].

In the context of the First Dutch Military Aggression from 21 July to 4 August 1947, the Japanese army that had previously occupied Indonesia during World War II played an important role in the defense strategy of the Republic of Indonesia. Although Japan had surrendered in 1945 and left Indonesia, the remnants of Japanese troops located in Indonesian territory, including in Malang, became an important factor in the resistance against Dutch aggression. The remaining Japanese troops often provided logistical and intelligence support to the Republic of Indonesia army in facing Dutch attacks, although they were not directly involved in the fighting [9].

Although not officially fighting for Indonesia, the remnants of the Japanese forces helped in a broader context by providing information on Dutch movements and offering support in several strategic areas. This contribution was crucial in strengthening the position of the Republic of Indonesia during this period. The involvement of Japanese forces shows the complexity of the post-war situation and its role in the struggle for independence. The Japanese army set up camp in Poedjon (Pujon), East Java after they were informed that Japan had been defeated by the Allies [14].

In July 1948, Tatsuo Ichiki, who served as an advisor at the TKR (MBT) headquarters in Yogyakarta and concurrently as an advisor to the Sungkono Division in Kediri, East Java, consulted with Colonel Soengkono. They planned to gather Japanese people who were following their respective units in the East Java region. They were planned to be made into one, and given tasks by one leader with the same goal, namely fighting the Dutch [15].

To achieve the goal of uniting the Japanese army troops under the leadership of Colonel Sungkono instructed all members of the unit under his authority, consisting of Japanese soldiers, to be withdrawn and made into one unit. From this instruction, 28 Japanese soldiers were gathered in the Wlingi area, Blitar. On the initiative of T. Yoshizumi and Tatsuo Ichiki, the Special Guerrilla Forces (PGI) were formed under the leadership of Surachmad. This unit was finally known as the "S" Brigade, with its first commander T. Yoshizumi, with his deputy commander Tatsuo Ichiki [15].



Fig. 1. Tatsuo Ichiki Commander of PGI

The formation of the PGI coincided with the ceasefire resulting from the Renville negotiations. Even in a ceasefire, the guerrilla forces remained vigilant and made new strategic steps, one of which was by dividing the troop members into three parts. So that by the end of August 1948, the PGI troop preparations were mature, so they were divided into the following parts:

- a. 17 PGI members were assigned to guerrilla warfare in the Dampit area;
- b. 9 PGI members were assigned to Central Java;
- c. and 11 others were assigned to Kediri

The PGI on duty in Dampit, Malang, was the parent force. They were tasked with entering the Kertodol plantation and using the former plantation office as a headquarters. In this plantation headquarters, the PGI soldiers made strategic plans to attack the Dutch posts in Wajak, Malang. There were several main tasks of the PGI troops in Dampit, including [15]:

- a. conducting attacks on several enemy posts in the South Malang area;
- b. investigating and opening roads and planning to enter the enemy's defense area;
- c. assisting troops entering the enemy's defense area;
- d. making secret war goods or materials for sabotage purposes and providing weapons to troops entering the enemy's defense areas;
- e. setting up a news network to enemy areas;
- f. conducting propaganda and information to residents in the Malang area;
- g. forming people's guerrilla troops and carrying out sabotage in enemy areas.

The battles carried out by the PGI other than in Dampit were, the attack on the Dutch Post in Pajaran, where the attack was successful. Next was the attack on the Dutch Post in Poncokusumo, precisely on September 16, 1948, in this attack, there were many casualties from the Dutch side, and all PGI troops survived. On October 3, 1948, PGI troops carried out another attack on the Dutch Post in the Tumpang area, this attack was assisted by the community from the Wajak area, this attack caused the Dutch army barracks in Tumpang to burn down. On December 19, 1948, there was a fairly fierce battle between the PGI army and the Dutch troops in the Arjosari-Wajak area. PGI Commander Tatsuo Ichiki died in the war, precisely on January 3, 1949 [16].



Fig. 2. N. Sugiyama Commander of PUS 18

To strengthen the republican troops after the PGI Commander was killed, an additional guerrilla force was formed called the Untung Suropati 18 Troops (PUS 18). The Untung Suropati 18 Troops were led by a Commander who was also Japanese, named N. Sugiyama. PUS 18 continued the struggle of the PGI to continue to defend the Malang region from Dutch attacks. PUS 18 began its duties as a territorial force

directly under the command of the Malang regional military, and had the task of guarding the IV Brigade Command and STC Malang, they had an operational area in South Semeru [16].

4 Conclusion

There were several reasons underlying the Japanese soldiers who chose to settle in Indonesia and help the war in defending Indonesia's independence. Among the reasons were ideological reasons, freeing Asia from the grip of the Western nations. Another reason was that they felt that Japan had a promise to free Indonesia. In addition, some settled for economic reasons, where they thought that if they returned to Japan it would be difficult to find work in their country which was devastated by war. The last reason was the spread of rumors that Japanese soldiers who were sent home by the Allies by ship were thrown into the sea.

The Japanese soldiers were spread out and helped the army troops in Indonesia who were fighting against the Dutch to defend their independence. Among them was helping the struggle in the Malang area. The Japanese soldiers who were in Malang were given orders to become guerrilla troops by forming the PGI which was commanded by Tatsuo Ichiki. After Tatsuo Ichiki died, to strengthen the guerrilla troops, the Untung Suropati 18 Troops were formed, led by Commander N. Sugiyama. They continued to fight against Dutch troops in the South Malang and South Semeru areas, to defend Indonesian territory, especially to retake the city of Malang from Dutch rule.

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