

Radical Journalism and Press Persecution in Java: 1914 - 1918

AHMAT ADAM

The rise of the Sarekat Islam¹ and the Indische Partij², the forerunners of political parties in Indonesia, in 1912, generated an unprecedented wave of political and nationalistic awareness among Indonesians who, for over a decade or so, had been exposed to the effects of intense modernization. Exposure to a Western form of education and socio-economic changes brought about by the colonial policies of the Dutch since the middle of the nineteenth century had, by the turn of this century, led to the emergence of a modern Indonesian consciousness, a process that was very much a part of the native Indonesians themselves. Intertwined with this development, since about 1900, was the rise and growth of the Indonesian-owned press.

Indigenous participation in vernacular journalism began at the turn of the century when R. M. Tirta Adhi Soerjo in Java, Abdul Rivai at Amsterdam, Datoek St. Maharadja and Dja Endar Moeda in Sumatra appeared as editors of Malay-language newspapers and periodicals.³ A common theme shared by all Indonesian editors and correspondents in their writings about this time was the way *kemajuan* or progress should be interpreted and how it should be pursued. Throughout the first two decades of this century, "*kemajuan*" became the central issue in the polemics and writings of the literati. Around it revolved the terminologies, *kaum muda* - *kaum kuno* (the younger generation as opposed to the older generation) and *bangsawan fikiran* - *bangsawan usul* (the aristocrats of the mind as opposed to the aristocrats by birth) - conceptual terms coined by the Sumatran Abdul Rivai and which he popularized through the Amsterdam-based periodical, *Bintang Hindia* [Indies Star]. Rivai, who believed that the modernization of Indonesian society through a Western secular education was prerequisite to the attainment of *kemajuan*, noted that Western society had become *maju* or *beschaafd* (civilized) because its leadership was in the hands of the "aristocrats of the mind" (the intellectuals) and less in those of the "aristocrats by birth". Rivai asserted that the position of the aristocrats of the mind could be achieved by all those who were willing to equip themselves with education and mastery of the sciences (*ilmu pengetahuan*). Rivai termed the pursuers of modern knowledge "*kaum muda*" while naming the traditional aristocrats (in reference to the *priyayis* and *rajas*), "*kaum tua*" or older generation. The latter,

Rivai asserted, was generally slow to change. Its members were too obsessed by the glory of the ancient times and they craved for adoration; hence their insistence on the continuance of the cumbersome *adat* (customs) and of doing obeisance (*sembah dan jongkok*).⁴

At the time the Sarekat Islam was founded, the vernacular press had undergone a history of slightly more than half a century. However, the characteristics of the press that was started by the Eurasians since 1855 and developed in the last quarter of the century with the entry of the *peranakan* Chinese were undergoing changes by the first decade of this century. Firstly, the emergence of Indonesians in the press business had gradually polarised the readership into racial groupings: indigenous and Chinese. With the emergence of the Budi Utomo and later the Sarekat Islam, the influence of the Eurasian-run newspapers over indigenous readership continued to erode which forced quite a few newspapers to fold up due to the pressure of competition. By around 1914 the contents of the vernacular newspapers and periodicals had also become more political in the sense that the tone of the writings which appeared, especially in the Indonesian-edited and Indonesian-owned press, was very much anti-Dutch even though most of the writings were done in the form of sarcasm or veiled criticism.

The year 1914 was a watershed in the history of the vernacular press in Indonesia. It also marked a turning point in the political history of the archipelago, for on May 9th of that year, the Indies Social Democratic Association or **Indische Sociaal-Democratische Vereeniging** was founded on the initiative of Hendrik Sneevliet.⁵ The ISDV (which later in 1920 became the Partai Komunis Indonesia) and its leaders were to play a very significant role in the political war against colonialism since the time of its inception until the outbreak of the revolt launched by the Indonesian Communist Party in 1926.⁶ In the context of the development of the Indonesian press, the emergence of a socialist movement in 1914 accelerated the growth of a radical and strongly anti-colonial vernacular press.

The role of the newspaper as a political tool to mobilize public opinion was first realized by the *peranakan* Chinese of Java when Chinese-run newspapers and periodicals claiming to be 'organs' of the pan-Chinese organization, *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan*⁷ began appearing in Sukabumi, Surakarta, Semarang, Surabaya and Batavia at the beginning of this century. However, it was not until 1912 that indigenous Indonesians began to have their own political organs. Both the *Darmo Kondo* (organ of the Budi Utomo) and the *Sarotomo* (organ of the Sarekat Islam) appeared in that year at Surakarta. But it was only in 1913 that the colonial authorities' attention was drawn to the role of the press for the Indonesian organizations and its potential danger to the government if a closer supervision and proper control were not instituted.

By 1913 the meteoric rise of the Sarekat Islam and the volatile outburst

it produced in the racial clashes between Indonesians and Chinese brought nervousness to many quarters, above all the colonial government itself. Added to that, the emergence of the Indische Partij which, by early 1913, had used its organ, *De Expres*, to propagandize its demand for political reform and self-government for the Indies had also caused alarm to the government so much so that it felt justified to reject the party's request for legal recognition in March of that year. But the danger of giving what the government perceived as "too much freedom" of the press to the Indonesians became evident, and a matter of serious concern, when in July 1913 the **Comite Boemipoetra** (Native-Committee)⁸ which was headed by Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, Soewardi Soerjaningrat and Abdoel Moeis issued a pamphlet entitled "Als Ik eens Nederlander was" (If I were once a Dutchman). The article, which was authored by Soewardi Soerjaningrat, also appeared in Dutch in *De Expres* on July 19, but was quickly translated into Malay and published and disseminated by the newspaper, *Kaoem Moeda*. The Committee's action was actually an attempt to protest against the government's sponsorship of colony-wide celebrations to commemorate the centenary of the 'national liberation' of Holland from French imperialism. The said article irritated the government by its sarcasm:

Indeed I would like the coming independence celebration to be observed as widely as possible, but I would not permit the population of this country to join in the celebration. I would curb desire for festivities, even more I would prefer the ceremony to be closed to them so that none of the natives would be able to see our happiness while we are celebrating our independence. In my opinion, there is something out of place - something indecent - if we (I still being a Dutchman in my imagination) ask the natives to join the festivities which celebrate our independence. Firstly, we will hurt their sensitive feelings because we are here celebrating our own independence in their native country which we colonize. At the moment we are very happy because a hundred years ago we liberated ourselves from foreign domination; and all of this is occurring in front of the eyes of those who are still under our domination. Does it not occur to us that these poor fellows are also longing for such a moment as this, when they like us will be able to celebrate their independence? Or do we perhaps feel that because of our soul-destroying policy we regard all human souls as dead? If that is so, then we are deluding ourselves, because no matter how primitive a community is, it is against any type of oppression. If I were a Dutchman, I would not organize an independence celebration in a country where the independence of the people is stolen ...⁹

The above caustic article from the pen of an *inlander* (native) was perceived as a veiled attempt to incite hatred towards the Government and the authorities were quick to take swift action against all those responsible. Both Soewardi and Tjipto, the latter being an editorial board member of *De Expres* and fellow-member of the *Comite Boemipoetra*, were arrested. On August 18, the two Indonesians and the man the government regarded as the evil genius of such insubordination, Douwes Dekker,¹⁰ were ordered to be exiled to the Outer Islands; however, the triumverate chose to go to the Netherlands instead. The latest furore, not unexpectedly, alarmed the authorities. The birth of political organs and the rising tide of indigenous political and socio-economic awareness that had found a voice in the native press were now seen as threatening the *rust en orde* (tranquility and order) of the Netherlands Indies. The example shown by Dekker, Soewardi and Tjipto had opened the eyes of the government to the danger of press 'freedom' provided for by the amendment made in 1906 of the Press Act of 1856.¹¹ Now, in the light of the events taking place in 1912 and 1913, the colonial government saw the urgency of overcoming the inadequacy of the existing press laws to act as a deterrence to the newly emerging nationalist journalists. The authorities also felt that the contents of the vernacular press needed a much closer scrutiny by the General Secretary's office as well as by the Department of Native Affairs.

It was therefore proposed that the British Press Act in India be used as a model in the effort to revise the Press Laws in the Netherlands Indies. Concurrently, it was also proposed that the provisions of Articles 124a and 153a in the British Penal Code in India be adopted to introduce provisions for a Penal Code for Europeans and a Penal Law for Natives which would lead towards tightening the existing provisions in the Press Act. The revision resulted in the introduction in 1914 of Articles 63a and b and 66a and b, the former being for the Europeans and the latter for Natives. Article 66a of the Penal Law for Indonesians stipulated that whosoever

by words or signs or displays or in other ways arouses or fosters animosity, hate or contempt against the government of the Netherlands or the Netherlands Indies, would be punished with hard labour, in chain, from five to ten years;

and Article 66b provided that whosoever

by words or signs or displays or in other ways arouses or fosters animosity, hate or contempt between the different groups of the Netherlands' subjects or the inhabitants of the Netherlands Indies would be punished with imprisonment of six days to five years. An attempt towards this offence is punishable with hard labour, outside the chain, for a period of not exceeding five years.

The provisions for Europeans as stipulated by Articles 63a and b were similar in content except that the words 'in chain' in (a) and the phrase 'with hard labour outside the chain for a period of not exceeding five years' in (b) were omitted.

Apart from the above articles, the colonial government also introduced Articles 154 - 157 in the Penal Code.¹² Known popularly as the 'hatred-sowing' articles (*haatzaai-artikelen*), they were meant to further equip the provisions of the Printing Press Regulations. With these provisions the government felt confident to prevent anyone or any party from arousing hatred and contempt (*haat en minachting*) towards the government and to arouse hatred and disdain (*haat en verachting*) between different groups of the population.

The period beginning 1914 was one of proliferation for the politically-oriented Indonesian-owned vernacular press. As political awareness expanded, the number of newspapers and periodicals claiming to be the voice of a variety of associations also increased. Surabaya, Semarang, Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Bandung and Weltevreden continued to be the principal centres of the vernacular press in Java. But the motive of founding newspapers or periodicals by Indonesians was no longer confined to the purpose of commercial pursuits, but rather was propelled by a desire to provide a voice for the newly emerging leaders of the *pergerakan* (nationalist movement) - ranging from political leaders, journalists and reformists to organizers of trade unions. In the words of one journalist, the press wanted to speak out in order to elevate the dignity of the people (*mengangkat deradjatnja bangsa*).¹³

It was in the light of this spirit that Mas Marco Kartodikromo launched the weekly, *Doenia Bergerak* (World in Motion), on January 31, 1914 with the cooperation of fellow-members of the provisional committee of the proposed Native Journalists' Union (**Inlandsche Journalisten Bond**). The publication of the periodical and the announcement of the formation of the journalists' union in its maiden issue appeared to coincide with the implementation of the amendments to the Penal Code and the repressive implications they brought to the Indies press. In view of the attempt to curb the freedom to express in print, Marco saw the urgency of establishing a native journalists' union.

*... The **World in Motion** will seek to assist an IJU member who falls prey to the peril of sedition. We therefore implore upon **Boemipoetras** [natives] of all walks of life: journalists; progressives; patriots. Please support this movement of ours; remember that **TIME IS MONEY**. If we delay in setting our people, the **Boemipoetras**, in motion, they will, as time passes, probably become weaker because our force will ultimately dissipate. If we wait until every **Boemipoetra***

has become learned, it will take decades to happen. May be, in ten years to come there will be large numbers of Javanese going over to the *tanah seberang* [across the straits] to become contract coolies, while the arrival of foreigners to our country will keep on increasing. Even if later on, by the next ten years, many **Boemipoetras** would have become educated we nevertheless feel that we would still be lagging behind the other races in ingenuity. When that really happens, dare the **Boemipoetras** compete with the immigrant races? Surely not, don't you agree? And so, as time goes, we the **Boemipoetras** will be increasingly deprived, that is, this land of ours will be sold to others. But if from now we attend to this land of ours dutifully, it will not be impossible that our land will not be lost from our grips ...¹⁴

The publication of the *Doenia Bergerak* as the voice of the Native Journalists' Union marked the beginning of Marco's daring involvement in radical journalism which was to lead him eventually to a direct collision with the government. It was precisely because of articles published in the weekly periodical that Marco Kartodikromo was persecuted by the colonial authorities, accused of transgressing Articles 66a and b of the Penal Code for Natives.

Marco's apprehension of the suppressive Articles 66a and b was not without foundation. On November 10, 1913 the journal, *Sarotomo* had published Marco's writing criticizing the composition of the **Welvaart Commissie** [Welfare Commission] which was made up of European officials and Javanese *bupatis*. Marco especially directed his criticism against Dr. D. A. Rinkes, Advisor of Native Affairs and Chairman of the Commission. This aroused Rinkes' displeasure and through a letter addressed to Hadji Samanhoedi, Chairman of the Sarekat Islam at Solo, he warned that the contents of the *Sarotomo* should be the responsibility of the Central Committee of the S.I. and not be left in the hands of "editors who were paid by the Central Committee". Rinkes also expressed his regret that the *Sarotomo* had printed a report that was a complete lie (*kabar jang bohong belaka*).

In response to the letter, which was published by *Doenia Bergerak* and *Sinar Djawa* [Ray of Java], Marco again attacked the Advisor of Native Affairs in the *Doenia Bergerak* (which article was also printed by the *Sinar Djawa* of February 10, 1914). In the said article Marco stated:

... As I have mentioned in No. 1 above, the Hon. Dr. Rinkes knows more about the fate of the natives than I do. Has Dr. Rinkes or have members of the Welfare Commission together witnessed themselves when the livelihood of the little people is in good stead? Which kind of livelihood is said to be easy; happy; secure; and without any

shortage whatsoever? Often do I ask the village people, what is their condition of living like? My question is answered thus:

“The little people are mostly living by eating once a day; those who could afford a little more are able to eat rice; but those who cannot eat only yam and maize; as for fish they don’t even think of it; as long as there are salt and chillies it is already sufficient. With regard to clothings, the village people seldom have up to three or even two pairs ... Can a human being who lives in such a manner be said to be: happy and without shortage? ...

But I dare say with certainty that the Hon. Dr. Rinkes and members of the W.C. [Welvaart Commissie] who hold the rank of Regent seldom or perhaps even never - mingle with the village people (the common people). Probably the members of the W.C. only inquired from the priyayis who hold the rank of Wedono down to the village loerah. Can the information from the Wedono downwards be the truth ...?

By criticizing Rinkes and the Welfare Commission which was an embodiment of the Colonial Ethical Policy itself, Marco was demonstrating his *kesatriyaan*, the mythological knight-errant, who was waging a *perang soeara* (war of voice) against the colonial government. His brush with Rinkes appeared to leave him open to further confrontation with the authorities. On January 26, 1915 Marco was levelled with charges of *persdelict* (press offences) for four articles which appeared in the *Doenia Bergerak* in late 1914.¹⁵ On March 4, he was again interrogated by the Assistant Resident of Surakarta pertaining to an article by Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo entitled “Onze Beweging” (Our Movement) which first appeared in *De Indische Gids* but was translated and published by Marco in the forty third issue of *Doenia Bergerak*.

The authorities found Marco’s translation objectionable, and more so the annotation he made:¹⁶

We feel there is a difference in the government’s action. Whereas the I [ndische]P[artij] received condemnation from the government on account of its members being only 6 to 7 thousand in number, the senior sister organization, S.I.= Sarekat Islam, which has a membership of half a million is given a favourable treatment. Tjokroaminoto is a close partner of Dr. Rinkes; hence both gentlemen will secure benefits. This should be made known; that the scheme (politics) of the government is exceedingly fine = good; bravo. Editor of D.B.

However, before the Public Prosecutors’s office could fix a date for his

hearing Marco was already planning to visit Singapore.¹⁷ He left on April 25, purportedly as a “travelling assistant editor” of the *Goentoer Bergerak* [Thunder in Motion], the weekly that succeeded the *Doenia Bergerak* following the latter’s merger with another radical weekly, *Goentoer* [Thunder], which was edited by Darna Koesoema,¹⁸ an activist from the organization, Insulinde.

No sooner had Marco left for Singapore, Darna Koesoema himself was accused of having allowed a seditious article entitled “The place of the Chinese in Indies Society”, written under the pseudonym, “Djojobojo”, to appear in *Goentoer Bergerak* of March 13, 1915. Darna’s crime was his refusal to disclose the identity of the author. A similar crime was committed by J.H, Soeharijo, chief editor of the *Selompret Hindia* [Indies Trumpet].¹⁹ But of all the cases of press offences, it was Marco’s *persdelict* that was to shock many an Indonesian journalist in the Indies. Marco’s trial began on July 1, 1915. His stay in Singapore was apparently shortened both by the holding of his trial and by the rough treatment he received while in the British colony. In Singapore Marco was detained together with M. A. Hamid, the chief editor of the *Islamic Review* for twenty four hours on suspicion of carrying out subversive activities.²⁰ Following an interrogation at a police station, he was subsequently asked by the British authorities to leave Singapore immediately.

Marco’s trial took place in Semarang. Unable to afford a lawyer, Marco put up his own defence. But faced by the prosecution that wanted to make an example of the seriousness of Articles 66a and b of the Penal Code, Marco obviously stood very little chance. On July 8, the court found him guilty and sentenced him to nine months’ imprisonment.²¹ The trial, however, had drawn an unusual interest from many quarters, particularly from the *pergerakan* leaders namely those from the Sarekat Islam of Solo, the Indies Social Democratic Association and the Eurasian-led Insulinde. The Sarekat Islam at Solo held a meeting on July 4, which was also attended by the committee members of the Native Journalists’ Union. The discussion centred on a resolution urging the government to withdraw the obnoxious Articles 63a and b and 66a and b from the Indies State Gazette of 1914 No. 205/206. Three days later, the ISDV and the Insulinde sponsored a public meeting to denounce the arrest of Marco and to protest against the dreaded Articles.

About three months later, in October, the Indies press community was again jolted by the persecution of Darna Koesoema for similar kind of press offences.²² But to many radical Indonesians it was Marco’s *persdelict* that was the most serious; and for that he became a kind of martyr to them and also to many non-European journalists. To them he had indeed lived up to his motto:

*Be bold because of truth
 Misgive because of guilt
 One for All
 All for One
 Whatever that entangles will be severed
 Whatever that obstructs will be broken
 Let live our **kesatriyaan**, us natives.²³*

Marco was sent to the Boegangan gaol at Semarang on November 27, 1915. But just one day before that he learnt that following his appeal, and possibly also as a result of protests from several quarters, his gaol term had been reduced to seven months.²⁴

In the meantime, the struggle to get Articles 63a and b and 66a and b abolished continued. The radical parties, especially the Indies Social Democratic Association, the Insulinde, which was the alter ego of the defunct Indische Partij, and which by now was under the strong influence of the ISDV, the Railways and Tram Employees' Union and the Native Journalists' Union met in January 1916 to form the Press Freedom Action Committee.²⁵ For Sneevliet, who was the brain behind this movement, the issue of press freedom was not only the concern of the radical socialists who saw the danger of the said Articles in their effort to spread Marxist ideological teachings through the press, but more important the case had given the socialists an opportunity to establish rapport with the journalists of the vernacular press and to demonstrate to the latter the socialists' committed stand in the issues of anti-colonial struggle and anti-exploitation by capitalism.

One particular issue that the committee was able to exploit was the prevalent feeling that ran high among Indonesian journalists over the alleged practice of racism by the Dutch in their dispensation of justice. Native journalists strongly believed that they were often discriminated by the courts when they were put on trial in cases of press offences or *persdelict*. It was often alleged that while the press laws and the Penal Code Articles were stringently applied to Indonesian journalists, European journalists or writers writing defamatory articles (if placed within the purview of the said laws) were often let off lightly. The most common grouse or complaint of the Indonesian journalists was European writers or editors who wrote derogatory articles which abused the indigenous people were never perceived by the authorities as having "aroused or fostered animosity, hate or contempt between the different groups" in the Indies. Thus when Marco's *persdelict* became a sensational issue among the native journalists, the socialists in the ISDV, VSTP and the Insulinde were quick to come to Marco's aid. In January 1916 the committee for the freedom of the press also sent a telegram to the Governor-General requesting that Marco's sentence of seven months be reduced further.²⁶

Whether it was the government's strategy to diffuse the situation in the most tactful manner and so prevent the radical groups from gaining a stronger voice among the Indonesian journalists, or whether it was the attention given by many quarters to Marco's arrest (which even drew enough criticisms in Holland against the manner the Penal Code laws were applied) or indeed whether it was the sensation of it all which caused furore among the Indonesian *pergerakan* leaders that changed Marco's fate, nonetheless, to the surprise of many people, Marco Kartodikromo was released from gaol exactly three months after his detention.

Following his release Marco joined the editorial board of *Pantjaran Warta* [News Broadcast], a paper that was edited by Raden Goenawan, the Chairman of the West Java chapter of the Sarekat Islam. Marco's stay with the paper was, however, brief. On July 5, 1916 he left Batavia for the Netherlands, supposedly with an intention to study.²⁷ But he did not remain long in the Netherlands. After five months, Marco returned and arrived at Batavia on February 12, 1917. But barely ten days later he was put in preventive custody in the native gaol in Batavia. Again he was charged of committing *persdelict* and transgressing Article 66a - "arousing or fostering animosity, hate or contempt against the government of the Netherlands Indies".

When the trial began in late April, Marco was further charged of transgressing Articles 21 and 30 of the Indies Printing Press Regulation. Marco was accused of having printed and distributed seditious articles. It appeared that Marco's brief stay in Holland had not been totally idle. While contributing articles to the papers in Java (in his capacity as the travelling editor of the *Pantjaran Warta*), Marco had ventured to publish a collection of articles in the brochure he titled *Boekoe Sebaran* (book of propagation). The first volume which was printed for 1,500 copies in November 1916, contained an essay entitled "Rawe-Rawe Rantas Malang-Malang Poetoeng" (Whatever that entangles will be severed, whatever that obstructs will be broken), the title of which was one of Soewardi Soerjaningrat's favourite expressions. It was in that article that the Court found the following statements highly offensive:

Government!! We demand equality!!

Government!!

Take heed! We, the sons of the Indies, are inflamed!!

Government!!

Fulfill the demands of the sons of the Indies!

So that the peril of revolt will not arise in the Indies, the land where we spilled our blood!!²⁸

On April 24, 1917, the Raad van Justitie sentenced Marco to two years' imprisonment. Subsequently, however, following an appeal, the High Court reduced it to a year. On February 21, 1918, he was again a free man.

The persecution of Marco had again drawn the attention of Hendrik Sneevliet. In a letter dated March 5, and addressed to the newspapers in the Indies, Sneevliet appealed to the non-European journalistic community to urge the government for the abolition of Articles 63a and b and 66a and b. Not all the journalists were, however, moved to respond to the call made by the chairman of the Press Freedom Action Committee. Abdoel Moeis, editor of *Neratja*, did not even report in his paper about Marco's second *persdelict*. Even Moehammad Joesoef, chairman of the Semarang Sarekat Islam, opposed the idea of the Semarang SI joining the Press Freedom Action Committee. His argument was that if the natives had any objection it would suffice to send a delegation to the Governor-General. There was no need to raise a hue and cry since by doing so the SI would be seen as hating the government. But Semaoen, the vocal VSTP (Railways and Tram Employees' Union) propagandist and editor of the leftist periodical, *Si Tetap* opposed Joesoef and argued for the participation of the Semarang SI in the Press Freedom Action Committee. He said,

... Whether or not we plant the seed of hatred through the newspaper is only a matter of opinion. The natives who read Marco's article don't feel the seed of hatred planted; but why should the government suspect the seed of hatred being planted, while van Haastart²⁹ and Asjimptoot³⁰ have once planted the seed of hatred from the natives' view point but were judged by the government or its representative as not having planted anything?³¹

Semaoen's defence of Marco and especially Sneevliet's initiative in generating action through the Press Freedom Action Committee were perhaps the main considerations that impelled Marco to join the ranks of the communists in the Semarang S.I. and the ISDV soon after his release from gaol in February 1918.

But Sneevliet himself was experiencing difficulties with the government in early 1917. On March 19, greatly inspired by the news of the overthrow of the Russian Tsar, he had submitted an article entitled "Zegepraal" (Triumph) to be published in *De Indier*, organ of the Insulinde. In the said article Sneevliet called upon the Javanese to take the episode of the Russian revolution as a lesson for their struggle. He also hinted that if the Javanese were to emulate the Russian revolutionaries they too would attain victory over the colonial rulers. This brought alarm to the authorities. On November 20, Sneevliet was tried for *persdelict*. He was accused of inciting the feelings of enmity, hatred and disdain towards the government; he was

also accused of attempting to incite the population to rise against the government and replace it with another. The prosecution called for a sentence of nine months' imprisonment for Sneevliet.³⁰ Had he been an Indonesian the verdict would have been clear and swift. But the Raad van Justitie at Semarang on December 1, 1917 dismissed the case because it felt that "despite its harsh language, the article could not be construed as an attempt to incite hatred against the government".³¹

By October 1918, however, the government had already felt that Sneevliet's outspokenness and subversive writings in the Semarang communists' journal, *Het Vrije Woord* (The Free Word)³² were beginning to appear dangerous if allowed unchecked. He was found to have been actively making propaganda among the soldiers and sailors in Surabaya, urging them to form soviets or councils. On November 21, Sneevliet was interrogated by the Resident of Semarang and a week after that an order for his arrest was issued by the High Court. On December 17, 1918 Sneevliet was detained at the Military gaol in Batavia, and subsequently banished from the Indies.

The banishment of Sneevliet put the movement for the freedom of the press in disarray. Many of the outspoken leaders of the movement whose writings in the *Sinar Hindia* were seen as propagating hatred against the government were now threatened with persecution. Semaoen, Marco, Soegito, Soeharijo and Darsono were cross-examined by the Officier van Justitie (Public Prosecutor) of Semarang on their writings.

The banishment of Sneevliet may have deprived the journalists in the *pergerakan* of a daring and articulate spokesman who was committed to the struggle for the abolition of Articles 63 and 66 (a - b). But his banishment nevertheless did not deter the communist journalists from continuing the work of Sneevliet. The series of press persecutions that took place between 1917 and 1918 (there were altogether no less than 17 persecutions) led Semaoen to initiate the founding of a multi-racial Indies Journalists' Union in March 1919 in which journalists from the communist as well as the non-communist organizations became members.

The year 1918 marked the closing of the first phase in the development of political journalism in the Netherlands Indies. By the end of that year no less than 73 new titles of newspapers and periodicals had emerged in the major cities of Java. But as was the case in the early period of the vernacular press, the circulation of newspapers remained acutely limited. The indigenous press was more often than not plagued by a chronic problem of financial stability. Lacking in advertisements, the press failed to attract the trading community - consisting mainly of Chinese and European businessmen, who would rather be patrons of the Chinese and Dutch-owned newspapers. Its financial weakness, therefore, clearly reflected the economic poverty that still characterised indigenous society. Such newspapers thus could not remain in circulation for long. But the rise of political and

ideological consciousness led many a *pergerakan* leader to found a newspaper or periodical that acted more like a propaganda broadsheet than a 'news' paper.

FOOTNOTES

¹ On the history of the Sarekat Islam see A.P.E. Korver, *Sarekat Islam 1912-1916*, Historisch Seminarium van de Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1982. Takashi Shiraishi's work, *An Age in Motion, Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912-1926*, nevertheless gives an illuminating picture of the role of the young radicals in the party who eventually became stalwarts of the Indonesian communist movement.

² See this writer's, "The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness (1855- 1913)", Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1984, pp. 304-309.

³ See *ibid.*, chapters VI and VII.

⁴ Obeisance demands the doer to bend down while walking and then perform the *jalan dodoq* by moving forward while sitting on the floor and then, while still some distance from the person to whom the *sembah* was paid, he would raise both hands before the face with his palms placed together with fingers straight and thumb touching or pointing toward his nose. This was done every time he wished to utter something. See *ibid.*, p. 166.

⁵ See Ruth T. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1965, pp. 14-15.

⁶ See *ibid.*, chapter XI and XII.

⁷ The Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan was formed on 17 March 1900 at Batavia by a group of *peranakan* Chinese philanthropists and journalists. Its basic aims were: to promote Chinese customs in accordance with the teachings of Confucius; to promote Chinese interest in education; and to defend the general interest and welfare of the Chinese community in the Netherlands Indies. See Nio Joe Lan, *Riwayat 40 Taon dari Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan - Batavia (1900-1939)*, Batavia, 1940.

⁸ See Savitri Prastiti Scherer, "Harmony and Dissonance: Early Nationalist Thought in Java", M.A. Thesis, Cornell University, 1975, for a discussion on the *Comite Boemipoetra*.

⁹ Translation taken from *ibid.*, pp. 298-304.

¹⁰ Douwes Dekker, a Eurasian, had played a seminal role in the indigenous movement since 1908 when in that year he inspired the students of the STOVIA to found the Budi Utomo. He was the Chief Editor of *De Expres*, which he founded in early 1912. Through that paper Dekker hoped to nurture his ideas on Indies nationalism and inter-racial unity and cooperation.

¹¹ On the amendment made see *Djawi-Kando*, No. 88, 30 July 1907. See also *Soeloeh Keadilan*, No. 3, March 1908.

¹² See Oemar Seno Adji, *Pers: Aspek-Aspek Hukum*, Erlangga, Jakarta, 1974, p. 101.

¹³ Mas Atje Padmawiganda's statement when commenting on Marco's *persdelict* in *Hindia Moeda*, No. 7, 15 May 1917.

¹⁴ *Doenia Bergerak*, No. 1, 28 March 1914. This was the first official issue of the paper which had the Inlandsche Journalisten Bond as its publisher, and the Electriscche Drukkerij Insulinde at Bandung as printer. Specimen issues issued earlier were printed at the H. Buning Press, Yogyakarta.

¹⁵ The said articles were: "Wong Gede [Big Man]", written by O.J. Dridomeos; "Pendapetan hal Technische Hooge School di Hindia" [View Concerning the Technical High School in the Indies] by Lid Member of I.J.B.; "Ah! Javanen zijn dom" [Ah! The Javanese are Stupid], by Mr. Juist, lid I.J.B. Madionsche; and "Keloeh Kesah Jang Amat Sangat" [Excessive Sighing and Restlessness] by J.K. van Kalk. See *Doenia Bergerak*, No. 45 (no date).

¹⁶ See *Goentoer Bergerak*, No. 3, 13 March 1915.

¹⁷ No clear reasons were given for Marco's visit. But it was stated in *Doenia Bergerak* of 21 April 1914 that Haji Samanhoedi had once encouraged him to go to Turkey so that he may widen his horizon. Samanhoedi seemed willing to launch a campaign to get enough funds for his trip. Marco, however, declined to go to Turkey. Nevertheless, following his controversial polemic with Rinkes, some of his friends and colleagues might have urged him to consider going abroad in order to "cool off". He had also to reckon with the *persdelict* charges that he was facing. Thus when friends and colleagues launched a donation campaign for the trip Marco opted to go to Singapore. See *Goentoer Bergerak*, No. 7, 10 April 1915 and No. 13, 15 May 1915.

¹⁸ Darna Koesoema was born at Rangkasbetung, Banten. He used to be the editor of *De Expres* in Bandung. He was both member of the Insulinde as well as the Sarekat Islam. An activist in the nationalist movement, Darna become editor of *Goentoer*, the mouthpiece of Insulinde in Semarang. Later, when the paper merged with *Doenia Bergerak*, Darna continued to serve the paper under its new name, *Goentoer Bergerak* [Moving Thunder]. He moved to Surakarta in April 1915.

¹⁹ J.H. Soeharijo was secretary of the Kragan chapter (in Rambang) of the *Sarekat Islam*. He was also adjunct secretary of *Porojitno*'s central committee in Surabaya. He became chief editor of the *Selompret Hindia* from the beginning of its inception in January 1915 as the official organ of the Poro jitno.

²⁰ See *Goentoer Bergerak*, No. 15, 5 June 1915 and No. 16, 12 June 1915.

²¹ *Goentoer Bergerak*, No. 20, 10 July 1915 and *Sin Po*, No. 241, 16 July 1915.

²² Darna Koesoema was accused of breaching the press regulation by failing to disclose the identity of 'Djojobojo' (a pseudonym), author of an allegedly defamatory article which appeared in the third issue of the *Goentoer Bergerak*, dated 13 March 1915.

²³ *Goentoer Bergerak*, No. 2, 6 March 1915.

²⁴ See *Sin Po*, No. 49, 27 November 1915.

²⁵ Members of the committees consisted of: D.J.A. Westerveld and H. Sheevliet (both of the ISDV), G.L. Topee and R. Pramoe (both from the Insulinde), Zimmerman van Woesih and Joesoef (VSTP), Brandsteder (Marinebond), Soeharijo (Porojitno), Tjipto Mangoe-koesoemo and Darna Koesoema (both of the IJB) and K.T. Kwee (representative of the Chinese-Malay Press).

²⁶ See *Djawa Tengah* No. 7 10 January 1916.

²⁷ Marco's intention to leave for Holland was first aroused by a suggestion made by the Committee for Press Freedom set up by Sneevliet. The committee advised

Marco to meet Mr. Mendels, member of the Dutch parliament, to seek justice in regard to his persdelict charges. Sosro Koornio, editor of the *Sarotomo*, also launched a campaign to collect donations for Marco's trip to Holland. See *Goentoer Bergerak*, No. 26, 21 August 1915.

²⁸ The above statements were printed in a brochure dated 23 November 1917. The author was none other than Marco himself who used the pseudonym, "Wong Djawa".

²⁹ Chief editor of *Het Nieuws van den Dag van Nederlandsch Indie*.

³⁰ Pseudonym of A.M. Ducroo, a young military officer who was a correspondent of the *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift*.

³¹ *Sinar Djawa*, No. 55, 16 March 1917.

³² See *Kaoem Moeda*, No. 261, 27 November 1917.

³³ For an account of Sneevliet's trial, see F. Tichelman (ed.), *Socialisme in Indonesie: De Indische Social - Democratische Vereeniging 1897-1917*, Deel 1, Foris Publications, 1985.

³⁴ See *Neratja*, No. 38, 24 February 1919.