

# The Story of Johan

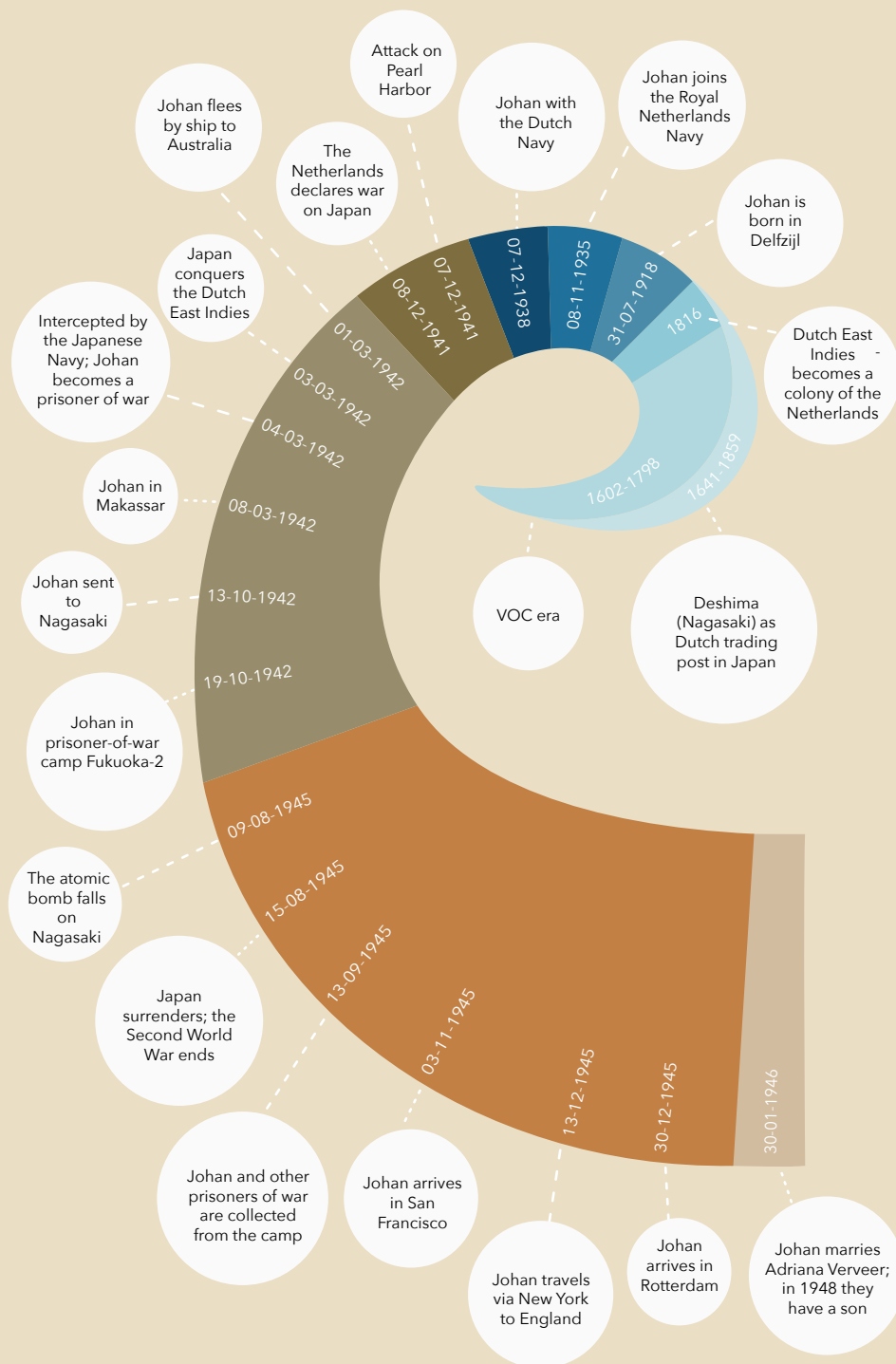
**Three years in Japan,  
but not voluntarily ...**

This small textbook is intended for young people, but also offers adults a concise account about the former Dutch colony, the 'Dutch East Indies' and the course and aftermath of the Second World War in Asia.

History is based and discussed on the story of a young navy sailor who in 1942 was taken to Nagasaki in Japan as a prisoner of war and had to work there as a forced labourer for three years. He witnessed the dropping of the atomic bomb and survived. Finally, attention is paid to the process of healing and commemorating the events as described in this textbook.

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Also on behalf of the Stichting Dialoog-Nederland-Japan-Indonesië  
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## WHO WAS JOHAN?

Johan Willem Schram was born in Delfzijl in 1918. He grew up as the son of an inland waterways skipper who transported goods on the major rivers such as the Meuse, the Rhine and the Waal, mainly in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

As a young boy, Johan sailed along on his parents' ship. But as he grew older, he had to go to school. He attended the Schipperschool in Vreeswijk, which at that time was a village along the River Lek and is now a district of Nieuwegein. There, he received his education and lived as a boarding student. Whenever his parents were nearby or during school holidays, he would rejoin them on the ship.



There was not enough money in the family to allow Johan to continue his studies. Yet a future as an inland waterways skipper did not appeal to him. And so, in 1935, at the age of seventeen, he decided to join the Royal Netherlands Navy. He became a sailor, eager to sail and discover the world.

In Den Helder, the naval city of the Netherlands, he met Adriana, and they fell in love. In 1938, however, Johan learned that the navy would send him to the Dutch East Indies for several years. They were both unhappy about this. They were still able to celebrate their engagement, but then he had to leave. He was expected to return in 1942, and then they could marry. But things would turn out very differently...

Let's first get to know the Dutch East Indies and Japan, and then we'll pick up Johan's story again.



# THE DUTCH EAST INDIES

Indonesia as it is today used to be a colony of the Netherlands.

Indonesia, an archipelago of about 20,000 islands, has a rich cultural heritage that goes back thousands of years. The oldest known human remains in Indonesia are dated one and a half million years ago. At that time Western Europe was still covered under a thick layer of ice!

At the end of the sixteenth century, the first Dutchmen set foot in the East Indies, an old name for what is now Indonesia. Spices such as nutmeg, cinnamon, pepper, cloves and others grew there and brought a lot of money to the Netherlands. At that time, the East Indies was not a single country with one government; it was a group of islands, most of which were ruled by local leaders.

Countries such as Spain, Portugal, and England also wanted to profit from these spices. In 1581, the Republic of the

Seven United Netherlands was founded. It consisted of seven regions that worked together, each with its own government. These governments decided to cooperate with seafaring merchants. As a result, the 'Dutch East Indies Company' (abbreviated in Dutch as VOC) was founded in 1602. From then on, the Netherlands could compete with other countries trading in the East Indies.

The VOC was given the exclusive right by the republic to trade east of the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) and therefore also in the East Indies. The VOC was also given permission to conclude treaties, build forts and wage war, to establish trading posts and defend them against traders from other colonial countries. And that is what the VOC did on a large scale!



Clockwork Orange at Wikipedia

To prevent spices from being delivered to traders from other countries, the VOC also occupied entire areas, such as the North Moluccan island of Ternate and the Banda Islands. Both islands are part of the Moluccas and they were the only places in the world where nutmeg trees grew.

When trading with others did happen in secret in 1621, the VOC killed a large part of the local population. An act we would now call genocide. The few survivors were taken to the slave market in Batavia. Then other enslaved people from India and Africa were taken to Ternate and the Banda Islands to work on the VOC plantations.

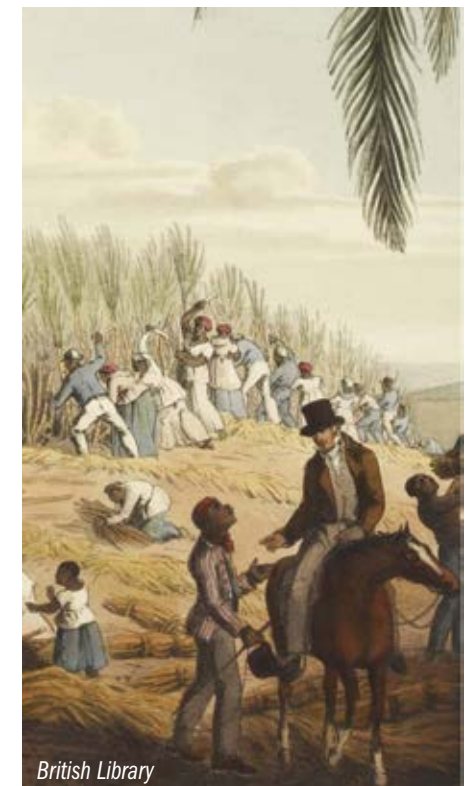
In the years that followed the VOC, often with force of arms, set up tradingposts in many places in Asia and Africa. Batavia (present-day Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia) developed as a hub of trade for and between all of Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe. The VOC literally traded everything among all those countries, such as cotton clothing from India, elephants from Sri Lanka, race horses from Java, tea from China, lacquerware and silver from Japan.

## Slavetrade

As from the beginning of 1500, the slavetrade by ships started, mainly by Spain and Portugal. Enslaved Africans were traded to be forced to work in South America and especially North America, mainly on plantations. The Dutch also

became increasingly involved in the trade in enslaved people. The numbers are staggering: millions of people were traded as slaves in those centuries.

The VOC was not actively involved in this transatlantic slavetrade, but it certainly was in the slavetrade in Asia. With the growing number of tradingposts established by the VOC, the demand for enslaved people also increased after 1600. The VOC brought them from countries in Asia (especially India) and Africa. In addition, enslaved people were also captured during the wars that the VOC waged in the Dutch East Indies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They





not only lost their freedom, but sometimes also their families and their own children.

Enslaved people were used for the construction of forts, in ports and in agriculture on plantations. In addition, they often worked as domestic servants and craftsmen. The VOC transported and traded about one million slaves in those two centuries. And on top of it, enslaved people were often traded by VOC personnel, who considered it as an additional income.

Slavery in the Dutch East Indies was gradually abolished from 1860 onwards. First on the large islands of Java and Sumatra and later also in all parts in the Dutch East Indies. It was not until 1914 that all areas were free of slavery.

During the 'National Commemoration of the Slavery Past' on July 1st in the Oosterpark in the Netherlands, our history of slavery is commemorated annually. During the 2023 commemoration, King Willem-Alexander described slavery as the most hurtful, humiliating, and most dehumanizing form of unfreedom: seeing a fellow human being as merchandise to be used at will, as a powerless tool for generating profit.

### From the East Indies to the Dutch East Indies

In 1798 the trading company 'the VOC' was dissolved and the Dutch State took over all the possessions and expenses of the VOC. The VOC had been in trouble for some

time due to less successful trading, poor financial management and the naval wars with England.

In the years that followed, England occupied the Moluccas in 1810 and the large East Indian island of Java, with its many trading posts and the important seaport of Batavia, in 1811. In 1816, England handed the colonies back to the Netherlands, and the Dutch East Indies came into being. All former VOC possessions and interests were transferred to the Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (Dutch Trading Company), which had been established for this purpose.



**Dutch soldier with his Indonesian wife**  
*Wikimedia Commons/Collectie Tropenmuseum*

The government in the Indies introduced an extensive tax system and obliged the native population to use part of their territory to grow crops for the profitable European market. Not all areas in the Dutch East Indies were obedient to the government. It was not until 1914 that the Netherlands, often with great military force, gained full control over the entire Dutch East Indies.

From 1860 onwards, prosperity increased with the start of plantations for coffee, tobacco, tea, quinine and rubber. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and technical progress such as the use of steamboats instead of sailing ships also contributed to this. It ensured that a large number of Dutch people moved to the Dutch East Indies to work for Dutch companies established there. Schools, roads, hospitals and hotels were also built, mainly intended for the many Dutch people

who went to live or work there and visit family.

The enormous profits made by the Dutch Trading Company were also used for major projects in the Netherlands, such as the construction of the first railway line from Amsterdam to Haarlem. We must realize that these vast colonial profits came at the expense of the local population, who suffered greatly from hunger and forced labor.

From the first presence of Dutch people (men) in the Indies, desired and also undesired relationships arose between Dutch men and Indonesian or indigenous women. The children born from these relationships formed a new population group with a mixed background, the 'Indische Nederlander' or the Indo-Dutch or Indo-European. Also, more and more



**Arrival in Batavia**  
*Wikimedia Commons /collection Tropenmuseum*

people with a different nationality moved to the Dutch East Indies. This created a great diversity among the inhabitants, especially in the larger cities.

But at the same time there was also a strong inequality. In the Government Regulation of 1854, the population of the Dutch East Indies was divided into three main groups. At the top were the Europeans (mainly the Dutch), who held the highest status and most privileges, and at the bottom were the indigenous people, who often had little or no political or economic power. In between was the Indo-European population: people of mixed European and Indonesian descent, or Europeans born in the Dutch East Indies. They often spoke both Dutch and Indonesian, were familiar with both cultures, and worked, for example, as civil servants, teachers, or in the army.

This division into groups of residents with the 'Europeans' on the top rung of the ladder and the original residents on the lowest rung can be seen as a form of 'apartheid' based on religion and race. As a result, prosperity and development were not fairly distributed among the population and even until just before the Second World War not everyone had the right to participate in governing the country. However, they wanted to determine the course of the country themselves and express their opinions freely, as was customary in the Netherlands as well.

It is understandable that this led to a growing desire among the indigenous population to become independent, separated from the Netherlands. How this unfolded, and what led up to it, will be told in the following chapters. But first, let us go back to Johan.



**Advertisement in Dutch soldier with his Indonesian wife**

## JOHAN IN THE DUTCH EAST INDIES

In 1939 Johan arrived in the Dutch East Indies on a large passenger ship, the 'M.S. Christiaan Huygens', and was placed on a naval vessel.

It was the first time he was so far away from home for such a long period. But working on the ship, sailing the wide seas and the tropical climate in the Dutch East Indies suited him well. Despite missing his fiancée Adriana and his family. It was 'just'

for three years. But it turned out to be for a much longer time...!

At that time many people were not aware of the interest that Japan, too, had for the Dutch East Indies because of its rich natural resources such as minerals, rubber and especially oil. Japan desperately needed these resources to wage its wars in Asia!



**Hr. Ms. Witte de With: one of Johans ships in the Dutch East Indies**

*Wikimedia Commons/Beeldbank Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie*

**J**APAN  
Japan is an archipelago in East Asia in the Pacific Ocean. It consists of four large islands and thousands of smaller islands.



'The Land of the Rising Sun' as Japan is often called, has a long history and is the only remaining empire in the world today.

Most of Japan is mountainous. That is why there is not much space for agriculture and for cities. Japan also has few raw natural resources and is therefore dependent on supplies from abroad.

Japan is very volcanic and there are often smaller and sometimes also major earthquakes. The highest mountain in Japan, called Mount Fuji, is a dormant volcano. The mountain is 3776 m high and plays a large role in the Japanese culture. The Japanese consider the mountain to be sacred and that is why it appears in many Japanese prints.

The history of Japan has known different periods. During one of these, the 'Edo period' (from 1603-1867), the Netherlands played an important role. At that time, Japan closed itself off for 265 years from the rest of the world. No people were allowed to enter or leave the country. Contact with foreigners was also forbidden to ensure that Western and especially Christian influences had no chance in Japan.

As early as 1543, the first European ships arrived in Japan. A group of Portuguese merchants, accompanied by Catholic missionaries, set foot on Japanese soil, and later Dutch and English ships also found their way to Japan. They were admitted with

suspicion but were allowed to establish trading posts in the port town of Hirado.

However, what the Japanese leaders strongly opposed was the growing success of the Catholic missionaries in converting Japanese citizens to Christianity. As a result, the Portuguese traders and the Jesuits were expelled from Japan, and Japanese Christians were persecuted and killed on a large scale. After this, trade with foreign merchants was restricted to the small artificial island of Deshima in Nagasaki Bay.

The Netherlands became the only Western country with which trading was possible. In addition, the neighbouring countries China and Korea were also given permission to trade.

For about 250 years the Japanese population was cut off from the rest of the world. Much of what took place outside Japan passed them by, such as the early phase of the Industrial Revolution. This was the period as from the mid-18th century in which industry increasingly used machines. Deshima actually offered the only glimpse of innovations from the West. A limited group of prominent and highly educated Japanese people made grateful use of this during that period.

For example, there was an early interest in Western books, science and technology. In particular in the fields of medicine, mathematics and chemistry and warfare. The Dutch were only too happy to provide this knowledge in order to secure their trading position. In this

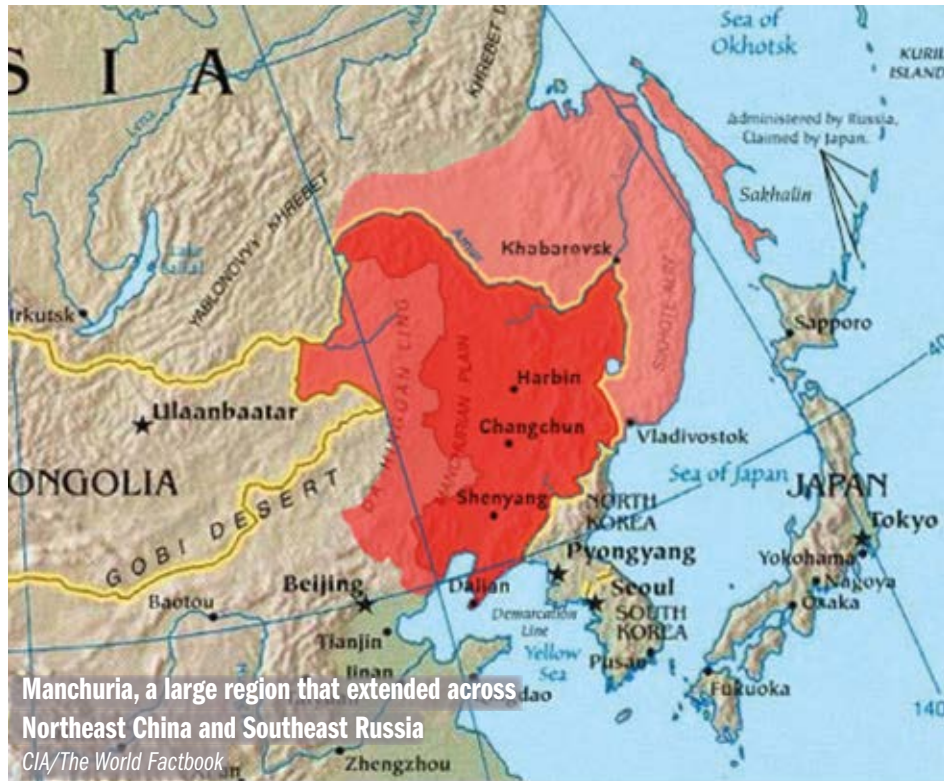




way, the Netherlands contributed to the development of Japan.

It was not until 1854 that the Japanese – forced by American warships – reopened their ports. Because Japan had resisted foreign influence for so long, they had to catch up with many developments in the

industrial field and in the field of modern technology. A number of European countries then contributed to the development desired by Japan. The Netherlands did this mainly with its extensive knowledge in the field of shipbuilding and hydraulic engineering.



### Japan has fought a number of major wars in the history of the past 150 years, especially with China.

Japan was still afraid of being occupied by Western colonial powers. After 1854, Japan was determined to become a superpower and therefore set up a strong army and a modern industry. This led to two major problems: there was a large shortage of raw materials and Japan needed markets for its own products. Just like the Western countries had done before, this led Japan to bringing large areas in Asia within its sphere of influence by incorporating those areas as Japanese colonies. The countries were simply no match for the Japanese military power.

The 'First Sino-Japanese War' was fought as from 1894. The war lasted only a short time (until 1895), mainly about gaining power over Korea. The next war was the 'Russian-Japanese War' (1904-1905) which was also won by Japan. The result was that after these two wars Japan gained power

over Korea and Taiwan and large areas in Manchuria. With these victories, Japan proved that it had developed into a strong superpower that could now compare itself with the Western powers. These victories, however, also created a strong belief in Japan that the Japanese army was invincible.

The 'Second Sino-Japanese War' (1937-1945) arose from Japan's ambition to dominate China and expand its already occupied territories. What followed was a bloody and brutal struggle. After the Japanese army had captured the city of Nanking, countless crimes were committed, such as looting, murder and arson. More than ten million Chinese civilians and soldiers died in this battle.

News about these violent conquests also reached America, sparking widespread outrage and anger. This paved the way for restrictive measures against Japan, as described in the next chapter.

# **T**HE WAR WITH JAPAN

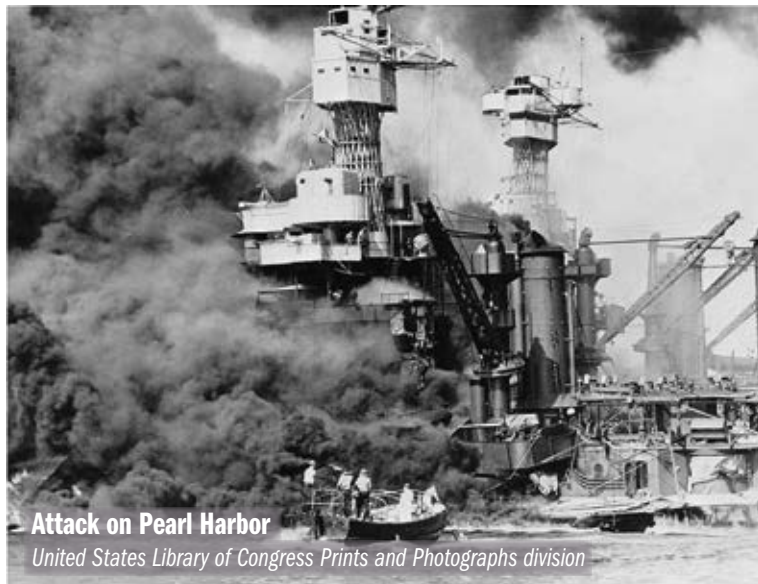
The global bad economic situation after 1929 also had major consequences for Japan.

Due to the poor economic situation after 1929, poverty in Japan increased greatly, as did the shortage of raw materials. The population began to grow dissatisfied with the government, which failed to solve these problems. Groups of high-ranking military officers took advantage of this discontent by misleading the people with heroic tales of a powerful ancient past. As a result—and also because the majority of soldiers came from the many impoverished farming families—the army gained the support of the people.

This support also came from industrial leaders who hoped to earn a great deal of money from it. Civil political freedoms

were then simply pushed aside, and even the prime minister at the time was killed. Due to these events in the early 1930s, democracy in Japan effectively came to an end, and the Japanese army began preparing for an 'Asia for Asians,' with Japan in a leading role!"

The unfolding Second World War in Europe and the occupation of France by Germany paved the way for Japan to take control of the French colony of Indochina in 1940 and in 1941. Indochina refers to present-day Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and eastern Thailand.



**Attack on Pearl Harbor**  
*United States Library of Congress Prints and Photographs division*

America and other Western powers were very concerned about this and possibly even further Japanese efforts for territorial expansion.

To avoid war the United States wanted to negotiate. When this proved to be unsuccessful, the United States, along with the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, decided in 1941 to implement restrictive measures, such as reducing and later halting the delivery of supplies to Japan, such as ores and oil. Japan's response was unexpected and shocked the world.

## **The Attack on Pearl Harbor (Hawai)**

Japan decided first to eliminate the American fleet. The strategy behind this was clear. If Japan could eliminate the American fleet in Hawaii, the path to the South would be open: to the Dutch East Indies and the British colonies of Singapore and Malaya. After all, the Netherlands and Britain in Europe had their hands full defending themselves against Germany.

On one of the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean, the US Navy assembled a large number of its war fleet just before the start of the Second World War. This presented the Japanese navy with a golden opportunity to deliver a major blow to the American navy with a surprise attack, and they seized this opportunity. On the morning of December 7, 1941, Japan launched its attack on Pearl Harbor, which shocked and completely surprised

the world. The damage to the American fleet was enormous, and the losses were also substantial. Later that day, war was declared on the United States and Britain. The following day the United States, Britain, and the Netherlands declared war on Japan. And so, the Second World War in Asia was a fact.

After this attack the American presence in the Pacific was (temporarily) greatly reduced. Not entirely, because part of the American fleet (aircraft carriers and submarines) had departed just before the Japanese attack. This allowed the Americans to resist the Japanese fleet more than six months later and ultimately eliminate a significant part (see later in this booklet). But for now, the Japanese navy and army seized the opportunity to conquer large parts of Southeast Asia.

## **The Battle of the Java Sea and the Japanese Occupation of the Dutch East Indies**

The Netherlands declared war on Japan on 8 December 1941, in response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. On 11 January 1942, the Japanese landed on Dutch Borneo and also in other areas of the Dutch East Indies. The Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL) was unable to stop the Japanese invasion, and territories were conquered at a rapid pace.

Resistance was also offered at sea against the advancing Japanese navy. On 27



February 1942, the “Battle of the Java Sea” took place. An American, British, Australian, and Dutch naval squadron under the command of Rear Admiral Karel Doorman attempted to stop a Japanese invasion fleet carrying troops for the invasion of Java. During this battle, the Japanese navy defeated the Allied fleet, and more than 2,300 sailors lost their lives, including 918 Dutchmen. Japanese losses were minimal; only 10 Japanese soldiers were killed.

From early March 1942 onward, the Japanese were able to land large groups of soldiers at several locations in the Dutch East Indies. On 8 March, negotiations began over the unconditional surrender of the KNIL; the formal surrender was signed on 9 March 1942.

In the course of 1942, Japan went on to conquer almost the entire territory of the Dutch East Indies, as well as other parts of Southeast Asia. With this, Japan had achieved its goal: a vast Japanese empire

in East Asia. But this would not last for long...

### The Battle of Midway

In June 1942, Japan decided to capture the American-occupied island of Midway in the Pacific Ocean and launched the attack. What the Japanese navy didn't realize, was that the secret code used by Japanese naval vessels to communicate with each other and with the Japanese high command had been broken by the American intelligence. This meant that the US Navy could read all Japanese secret messages and successfully prepare for the Japanese attack.

With the number of aircraft carriers that had sailed before the Japanese attack on Hawaii, the US Navy was able to win the Battle of Midway. This marked a turning point in the war in Southeast Asia. In the years that followed Japan steadily lost ground until the war ended in 1945 (see also further in this book).



## PRISONERS OF WAR: soldiers captured by the enemy during a war.

Japan made extensive use of prisoners of war (POWs) and forced laborers from occupied territories, compelling them to work in mines, shipyards, factories, and on railway construction projects. These actions violated international agreements governing warfare, including those concerning the treatment of prisoners of war.

Most young Japanese men were deployed as soldiers, leaving few available to perform the heavy labor needed to sustain Japan's war efforts. As a result, Japan forced large numbers of men from conquered territories—including approximately 140,000 Allied prisoners of war—to work in

occupied regions and within Japan itself, where around 36,000 POWs were held.

One of the most infamous examples is the Burma Railway between Thailand and Burma (now Myanmar), constructed between 1942 and 1944. The brutal conditions and relentless labor led to the deaths of about 15,000 prisoners of war and roughly 100,000 conscripted workers from occupied territories.

Within Japan, prisoners of war were dispersed across the country and held in approximately 130 POW camps. They were treated very badly and were forced to do



Prisoners of war working on the Burma Railway Australian War Memorial

hard labour under dangerous conditions. Many (~3600) died during their captivity in Japan.

In the eyes of many Japanese soldiers a POW deserved no respect or pity. The

POWs felt this contempt and suffered greatly from the brutal violence, the harsh living conditions without medical care, inadequate food, and the labour under dangerous conditions.



Air base Morokrembangan nearby Surabaya *Wikimedia Commons/Wereldmuseum Amsterdam*

## BACK TO JOHAN

Johan was transferred to an air base near Surabaya in November 1941.

He worked at the Morokrembangan air base, the base for the seaplanes of the Naval Air Service (MLD). When Japan rapidly conquered the Dutch East Indies early 1942 and the air base came under fire, it was clear that Johan could not stay there. Along with thousands of other Dutch navy personnel and Dutch East Indies soldiers he was ordered to flee by ship from the Dutch East Indies to Australia to continue the fight from there. Sadly, he and many others did not succeed!

The ship Johan was sailing on, the 'SS Tjisaroea', departed from the quay of the port city of Tjilatjap on March 2, 1942, bound for Australia. The first few days passed smoothly, but on March 4, 1942, the ship was intercepted by the Japanese navy. The order was clear: sail back to the Dutch East Indies, to the city of Makassar on Celebes (now called Sulawesi) with all people on board. There, they were taken prisoner of war and imprisoned.

### Prisoners of War in Makassar

From the docks of Makassar all the way to the prison where they were to be held, the prisoners of war were driven forward and beaten by Japanese guards. The locals cursed them; they were happy to be freed from Dutch rule. The Japanese slogan was

'Asia for the Asians,' so the population believed they would now also be freed.

But that turned out differently, as the local population ultimately suffered greatly under the Japanese occupation. Millions, especially young men, were recruited and forced to work under terrible conditions in Japanese-occupied areas. It is estimated that around half a million Romusha (the term used for this group of forced laborers) – sometimes along with their families – lost their lives.

Life in prison was hard for the prisoners of war. Twenty people in one small cell, frequent beatings, the food was poor and sometimes no food at all. After their transfer to an old barracks life became somewhat less difficult. They had to work, but sometimes they were also allowed to roam freely within the barracks and had some leisure time. Johan used this time to learn a little English. He even made his own dictionary, which he always kept with him. It's a miracle that it could be preserved.

Johan's stay in Makassar ended when he, along with approximately one thousand other British, American, Australian, Dutch, and Dutch-East Indies naval personnel, was selected for forced labour at a shipyard



**Prisoners of war on the quay of Makassar** by Van Dijk / cartoonist for De Telegraaf, 1980s

in Nagasaki in Japan. The transport from Makassar to Nagasaki took place by ship in October 1942. Just imagine, from tropical Makassar to the much colder Nagasaki without suitable clothing! Many POWs fell ill after arriving in Nagasaki.

### Hell Ships

The transport of prisoners was not without danger. From 1942 onward approximately 140,000 western allied POWs and

countless Asian recruited labourers (including Romushas) were transported in the holds of so-called 'Hell Ships' to locations in Southeast Asia and also Japan. Such a 'Hell Ship' was often a freighter or sometimes a passenger ship and not suitable for transporting large numbers of prisoners.

Most prisoners of war and forced laborers were crammed into the poorly ventilated

hold of the ship that transported them. This was also the case on the hell ship Asama Maru, where Johan ended up.

There were toilets only on the upper deck. Not everyone could reach them in time, which made the lower hold of the ship increasingly filthy. The heat – and later during the journey, the growing cold – also made life on board difficult.

From time to time, the prisoners of war received food and water from above, which had to be shared among all the prisoners below. As a result, not everyone received the small amount of food intended for each person. Combined with the poor and unhygienic conditions, many prisoners became ill on board and arrived in Nagasaki weak and exhausted.

As you have already read, the prisoners were all locked up deep in the ship's hold.

In the event of an attack by Allied submarines or aircraft, they would not be able to reach the deck quickly to save themselves. Moreover, there were no life jackets or lifeboats available for the prisoners of war.

The Allies wanted to stop the supply lines of the Japanese army in Asia and in Japan itself. They attempted to do this by sinking as many Japanese ships as possible. However, it was not always clear whether a Japanese ship was carrying prisoners of war, Japanese soldiers, or military equipment. As a result, the Allies also sank so-called Hell Ships, causing many deaths among prisoners of war and Romusha laborers.

Johan, together with the other prisoners, survived the grim sea voyage on the Japanese 'Hell Ship'. He ended up in the POW camp Fukuoka-2 on Koyagi Island in the bay near the city of Nagasaki.



**MV Asama Maru arriving in Nagasaki** Private collection / source unknown





## POW CAMP FUKUOKA-2

The camp consisted of several barracks, largely divided into rooms where 50-60 men ate and slept.

Initially the camp held 1,563 Dutch, Dutch East Indies, British, Australian, and American prisoners of war. From May 1945 onward, more than half of them were transferred to other camps in Japan to work primarily in coal mines. The camp was mainly populated by navy personnel of all nationalities and soldiers of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL).

Among the prisoners were also survivors of the Battle of the Java Sea, who had been rescued from the sea by the Japanese navy. They were taken prisoner of war and transported to Japan (including Fukuoka-2) and various locations in Southeast Asia for forced labour.

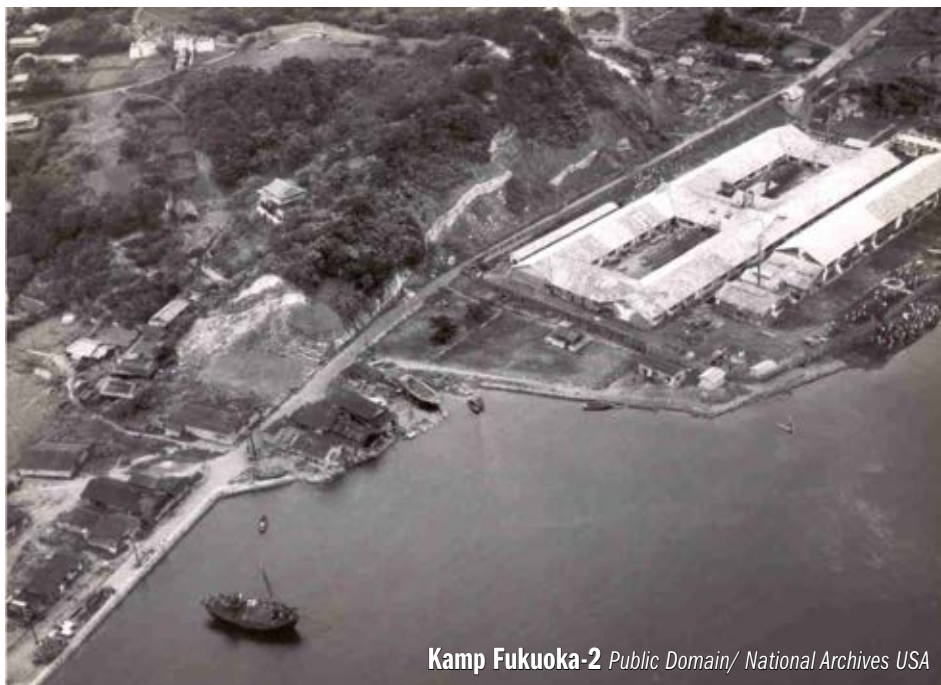
The camp consisted of a number of barracks divided into 28 rooms where between 50 and 60 prisoners of war ate and slept in bunk beds. There were also several barracks that served as a kitchen, a storage space, and quarters for the Japanese guards. Toilets and bathrooms were primitive; only later a bathroom was built with large tubs for prisoners to bathe in.

There were doctors and male nurses in the camp who themselves were prisoners of war and a Japanese doctor. But not much could

be done because there were insufficient medical equipment, medicines, and food. Much of it was kept by the Japanese guards for their own use. The prisoners sometimes tried to steal medicine and food from this supply or smuggle it into the camp from the shipyard. They risked severe punishment if they were caught, which happened regularly.

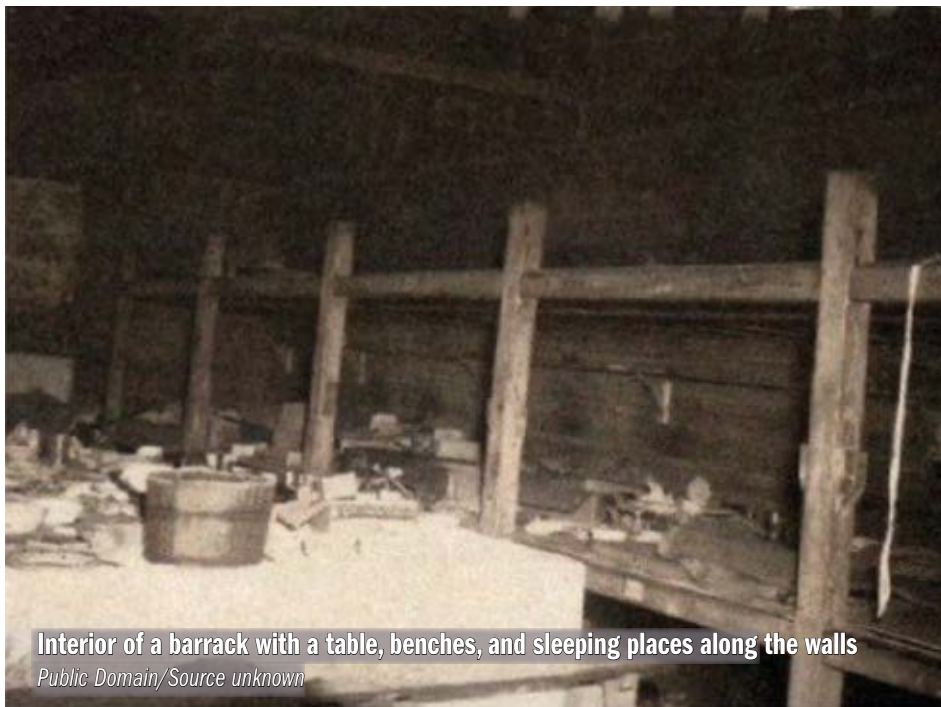
The POWs had to work at the Kawanami shipyard, which was also located on Koyagi. Every day, except Sunday, they walked along the 1.5-kilometer-long path to the shipyard. Having arrived there, they worked on shipbuilding under the supervision of strict and sometimes cruel Japanese supervisors. The workdays were long, from early morning until late afternoon. It was also dangerous work, due to the lack of suitable work clothing and footwear. A number of POWs perished at the shipyard.

Johan was also assigned to work in the kitchen and perform tasks within the camp itself. The food from the kitchen usually consisted of a bowl of watery soup, a little bit of rice, seaweed, a very small amount of meat, and occasionally some bread. Consequently, the prisoners lost weight and their fitness deteriorated significantly. Furthermore, they were beaten up almost



daily as punishment if in the opinion of the guards they did something wrong or did not work hard enough.

Hygiene in the camp was very poor. The POWs suffered greatly from insects such as fleas, vermin, and fungal infections. But occasionally the men were allowed to bathe together, in a large concrete tub filled with hot water. For the first bathers the water was too hot, for the last bathers too cold and too dirty because the bathwater wasn't changed. Clothing was also a major concern. It was difficult to obtain suitable clothing and the men had to work in thin tropical garments come rain or come shine. They were weakened by lack of proper food and many died of pneumonia or another illness.



Interior of a barrack with a table, benches, and sleeping places along the walls

Public Domain/Source unknown

Ultimately, 72 POWs did not survive the hardships in the camp and on the shipyard. Several of the POWs transferred from Fukuoka-2 also died in other camps.

To keep their spirits up the POWs occasionally also had their fun moments. Like making music with homemade instruments and making up and telling jokes, especially about the Japanese guards. Secretly, slips of paper were also circulated with news occasionally picked up from Japanese workers.

At the shipyard during the shipbuilding process, the POWs deliberately made minor technical errors here and there to make the vessels less seaworthy. By doing

so the prisoners took a great risk, as the punishments were severe, when discovered.

Not all Japanese guards were brutal and cruel to the POWs. Some of them, often secretly, gave the POWs a little more food and medicine. Weakened POWs were sometimes assigned to do less strenuous work, and they were sometimes allowed to swim in the sea after work.

A number of POWs secretly kept a diary in the camp. Camp life and work at the

shipyard were described on small scraps of paper, in well-hidden notebooks, and sometimes even on cigarette packets. The POWs knew this was forbidden but did it anyway, and if the guards discovered it, they were severely punished. The diaries were also destroyed, but a few were not discovered and were kept safe. A great blessing, as the diaries are such valuable testimonies and also contain valuable information about life in the camp and at the shipyard.

Tis 13 Aug 1943.  
Ik heb Influenza en ben zoodruende niet naar  
de werf. Ik ben van plan om te stoppen met het  
deftich 'twart te gevaarlijk. De rest moet ik  
meer onthouden. Er zijn meer heel veel  
ongerechtigheden gebeurd. Laat ik er  
maar over zwijgen. Laten we hopen  
dat dit leven niet te lang meer  
duurt. De menschen die nog  
steeds door komen zijn uitstekend  
Dus alle hoop op gas stellen is  
reeds de afloop afwaakt.  
Ik zal het wel maken

Excerpt from a prisoner-of-war diary

Private collection/Source unknown

Ts/8-43



## INTERNMENT CARD JOHAN WILLEM SCHRAM

Internment cards for prisoners of war were drawn up by the Japanese during World War II, as prescribed by international conventions. The cards contain personal information of the prisoners of war, such as their name, number, date of birth, rank, medical condition, camp name, registration number and date of death, if applicable.

Many personalized internment cards can be found on the website below.

[www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/nt00425?activeTab=nt&sorte=https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/nt00425?activeTab=nt&sorte-ring=prs\\_achternaam&volgorde=asc](http://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/nt00425?activeTab=nt&sorte=https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/index/nt00425?activeTab=nt&sorte-ring=prs_achternaam&volgorde=asc)

收容所 Camp	東條海軍少佐監獄 A. Schram 1433	番号 No.	1433
姓名 Name	Schram, J.W. 24-12-1918	生年月日 Date of Birth	30-7-1918.
国籍 Nationality	オランダ H. 1433	所属部隊 Unit	No. 13653. Kon. 100. Marine. Marine Vliegkamp. "Moro-Kembang" Soerabaja.
階級 Rank	Wetters-l. Klasse. Konstabelmaat, Holland. (1433)	捕獲年月日 Date of Capture	昭和17年1月4日
捕獲場所 Place of Capture	印度洋	母の名 Mother's Name	Hinderkjen Zondag.
父の名 Father's Name	Schram, A.	職業 Occupation	軍人
本籍地 Place of Origin	Selfsyl, Nederland.	通称 Report	A. Schram, Nieuwenborstraat 46B, Rotterdam, Holland.
通称 Report		特記事項 Remarks	

補修欄 Other Informations
昭和17年10月24日 福岡陸軍収容所第II=收容人
昭和18年9月13日 長崎陸軍収容所第II=收容人

## LIFE ON KOYAGI OUTSIDE THE CAMP

Koyagi was a poor island. Residents worked on the land or at the shipyard.

When World War II began in Asia in 1941, most Japanese men were drafted to serve in the military. In addition to the Korean labourers already present, women and children were also forced to work at the shipyard. From 1942 onward, prisoners of war joined them.

What was it like for the residents of Koyagi during the war? We have learned a little more from conversations with Koyagi residents who experienced the war. Today's schoolchildren have also contributed to this.

The situation for the residents of Koyagi deteriorated steadily during the war. Rice was almost nonexistent, and residents had to make do with sweet potatoes, thin porridge made with wheat grains and food intended for livestock. Fresh water was also scarce; the residents relied on rainwater. Those who could grow their own food were best off.

But the increasing bombings and firings by American aircraft from 1944 onward, the constant fleeing to air raid shelters, and the lack of medical care also made the war very difficult for the residents of Koyagi.

Children as from the age of twelve also had to work at the shipyard. They only attended school on weekends. They walked from their homes to the shipyard access road and marched the last part of the way together with the POWs. The children found these tall Western men very interesting and were eager to wave to the POWs. But this was not allowed, and the POWs were also not allowed to contact the children.

Life inside the camp fence and at the shipyard was, as described earlier, hard and cruel for the POWs. From what is written above we can conclude that life for the Japanese civilian population outside the camp fence was very difficult, and they also had to try to survive. They lived apart from the prisoners of war, but they too were victims of the war. Just like the large numbers of Japanese civilians who died in the many bombings in Japanese cities, caused by the bombing of the wooden Japanese houses, as you can read in the next chapter. In wars, it is always the civilian population that ultimately suffers the most and where most of the casualties occur.



# THE ATOMIC BOMB ON NAGASAKI

Japan could no longer control the vast territory it had conquered in Southeast Asia. But ending the war was not an option for some of the military leaders.

Mid-1942 and early 1943 the Allies launched their counterattack. The Allies increasingly expanded their territory, and as the war progressed, mainland Japan itself became a target. The naval blockades that prevented goods from reaching Japan led to severe shortages and famine.

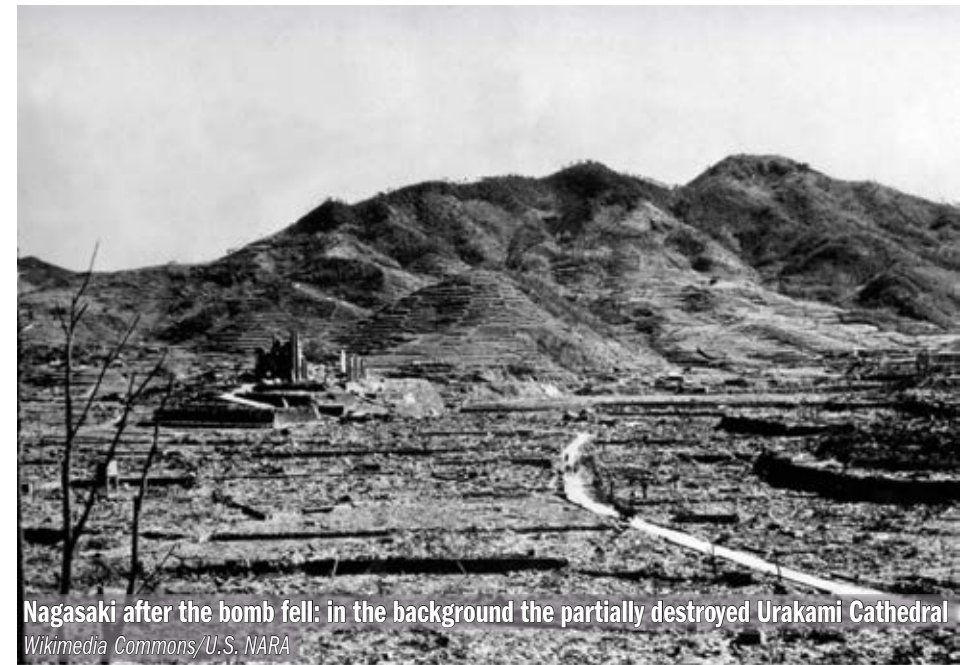
On March 9 and March 10, 1945, the first major bombing raid, primarily using incendiary bombs, took place on Tokyo, resulting in more than 90,000 civilian casualties (primarily women, elderly people and children). A quarter of the buildings (mostly wooden houses) were destroyed by fire, leaving many homeless. Not only Tokyo was bombed, but also 64 other Japanese

cities, leaving many dead and many who had no roof over their heads anymore.

However, the Japanese military government refused to surrender and in doing so ended the war. The American government then decided to take a dramatic step and bomb Japan with weapons of mass destruction. On August 6, 1945, an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki on August 9.

The bomb dropped on Nagasaki ('Fat Man') was originally intended to target the munitions factories in Kokura (a town north of Nagasaki). However, low cloud cover made Kokura difficult to hit and it was decided to fly back to base and drop the bomb on Nagasaki en route.

The dropping of the bomb was a great shock to everyone. The enormous explosion, the intense light, the hot and strong wind, and the impressive silence that followed made a deep impression on everyone. Then came the realization of the large number of dead and wounded, the devastated city, and the loss of so many loved ones. The suffering and immense grief of the civilian population is almost unimaginable. The number of victims that day in Nagasaki was



Nagasaki after the bomb fell: in the background the partially destroyed Urakami Cathedral  
*Wikimedia Commons/U.S. NARA*

approximately 40,000, and that number continued to increase in the days and months that followed.

Up to this very day the memory of that event lives on in the minds of the residents of Nagasaki (and, of course, of Hiroshima), and gatherings and commemorations are regularly organized. The drop of the atomic bomb and its consequences are commemorated. Schoolchildren also actively participate, and many are active in peace movements, organized by their school or on their own initiative. Their goal is to wake us all up and do everything they can to live in peace in a world without nuclear weapons.

Johan and the other POWs witnessed the

explosion. They saw the bright flash of light, heard a huge bang, and felt the strong, hot gust of wind after the bomb detonated. Moments later, they also saw the enormous plume of smoke (like a rising mushroom) rise several kilometers above the city.

The bomb had caused damage in Koyagi, the shipyard, and in the camp (collapsed walls, broken windows, etc.) but not nearly as severe as in the city. The distance to the spot where the bomb fell was too great for that. The POWs all survived, although several were injured because of collapsing buildings, especially at the shipyard.

The Japanese camp guards disappeared after a few days. The POWs initially remained in the camp, but later they also



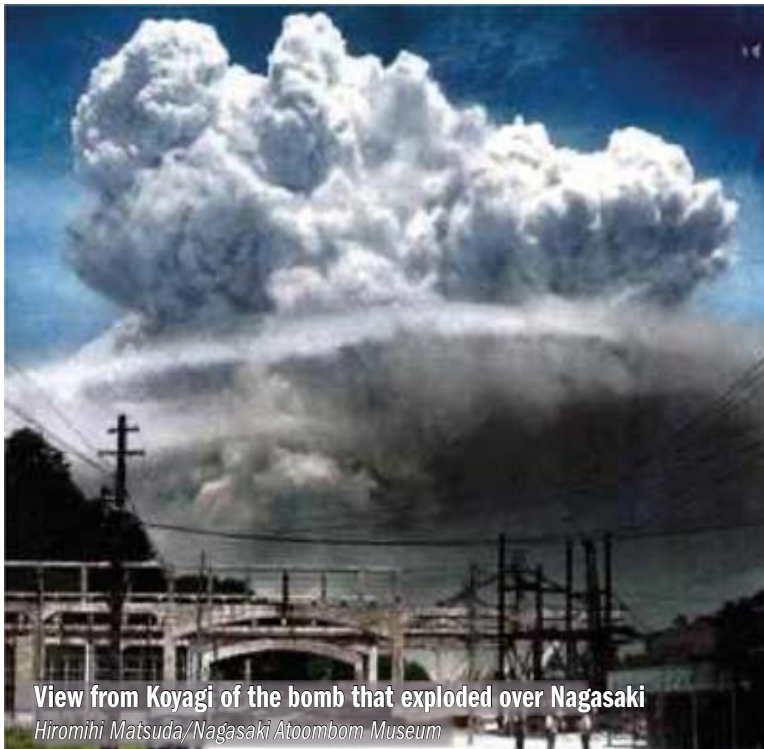
*Wikimedia Commons/U.S. NARA*

traveled to the city in small groups by boat. There they witnessed the devastation with their own eyes. There was practically nothing left of the city, only smoldering rubble! And they, too, realized that many thousands of civilians had perished.

The Japanese government then decided to stop fighting on August 15, 1945. Besides the two atomic bombs, a second reason

was Russia's declaration of war on Japan on August 9, 1945.

Japan's unconditional surrender took place on September 2, 1945, marking the end of World War II. A new era began for the prisoners of war who had survived nearly three arduous years in the camp and the direct consequences of the atomic bomb. This was also true for Johan!



View from Koyagi of the bomb that exploded over Nagasaki  
Hiromihi Matsuda/Nagasaki Atombomb Museum

## FOOD DROPS OVER KOYAGI

After the surrender of Japan, Johan and the POWs were supplied with food and medicine from the air, through so-called food drops.

The Japanese population in Koyagi also benefited from this. This was partly because the dropped parcels ended up outside the camp, but also because the POWs shared food with the local population.

Notes were also scattered throughout the camp announcing that Japan had surrendered and that the POWs would soon be picked up by the Americans.

The drops were carried out by large aircraft (B29s) of the US Air Force. One aircraft crashed during a drop near the village of Sanwa, not far from Koyagi.

The only crew member who survived the crash was taken care of afterward by Japanese residents from the village near the accident site. He returned home to America, injured but alive.

Feb. 1942

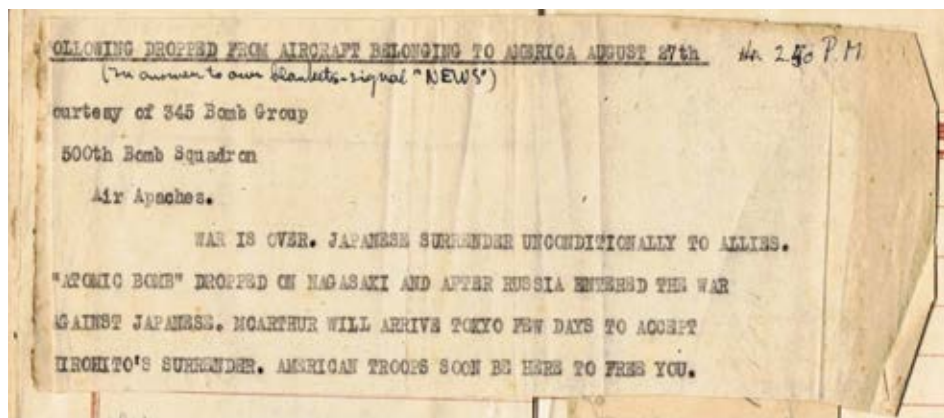
American Red Cross STANDARD PACKAGE NO. 8 for PRISONER OF WAR FOOD CONTENTS	
x Evaporated Milk, irradiated	1 14 1/5 oz. can
x Lunch Biscuit (hard-tack)	1 8 oz. package
x Cheese	1 8 oz. package
x Instant Cocoa	1 8 oz. tin
x Sardines	1 15 oz. tin
x Oleomargarine (Vitamin A)	1 1 lb. tin
x Corned Beef	1 12 oz. tin
x Sweet Chocolate	2 5 1/2 oz. bars
x Sugar, Granulated	1 2 oz. package
x Powdered orange concentrate (Vitamin C)	2 3 1/2 oz. packages
x Soup (dehydrated)	2 2 1/2 oz. packages
x Prunes	1 16 oz. package
x Instant Coffee	1 4 oz. tin
x Cigarettes	2 20's
x Smoking Tobacco	1 2 1/4 oz. package



Food drop over Fukuoka-2

Source unknown/Original caption: Camp Nagasaki Mission No. 315 POW M4 3243N-12950E





**Information to prisoners of war: the war is over!** *J. J. Budding*



**Departure of the prisoners of war from the camp on 13 September 1945**  
*U.S. NARA (courtesy of Mr. Toru Fukubayashi)*



**Hospital ship 'USS Haven' and 'USS Chenango' in Nagasaki** *U.S. NARA*

## LEAVING THE CAMP: Johan goes home

On September 13, the former prisoners of war were picked up by boat by the American army and dropped off at the quay in Nagasaki near Deshima, formerly the trading post for the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC).

Everyone was medically checked, deloused, and had to wash themselves thoroughly. The sick received appropriate care on a hospital ship that was also moored at the quay. Johan and the other former POWs were given plenty of food and clean clothes and then boarded the aircraft carrier 'USS Chenango'. This ship took the former POWs to Okinawa, one of Japan's southernmost islands. Shortly afterward, the journey was continued by plane to Manila in the Philippines. There they could recuperate and regain their strength. It wasn't until mid-October that Johan and many could begin the long journey home, which took him over four months from the Philippines, via the American west and east coasts, to England and finally the Netherlands.

For Johan that journey began with a long boat trip from Manila on the 'USS General A. W. Brewster'. The destination was Oakland, a city in the United States near San Francisco. After arriving on October 22, 1945, the former POWs were taken care of in a large hospital and medically checked

again. Naturally, they all wanted to get home as quickly as possible, but they had to wait until transport home was arranged. The Netherlands had emerged from the war completely impoverished and had no means to repatriate compatriots far from home.

To bridge the time usefully many former POWs sought work to earn some money for later in the Netherlands. Johan found work in a sugar factory in Crockett, a town near Oakland.

The journey home was not resumed until December 13, 1945, when Johan departed by train for New York. From there, he continued his journey on a large passenger ship, the 'MS Queen Mary', for the voyage to Southampton, England. Once there, Johan traveled by train to Dover, and the last part of that very long journey home was completed by boat at the end of December. Finally, on December 30, 1945, Johan arrived in Rotterdam. There he was reunited with his family and his fiancée, Adriana.

His folks back home had already received a telegram in October 1945 informing them that Johan had survived the war. A telegram is a forerunner of an email, with which quickly transmitted written messages were passed on. The joy at home was immense,





**Telegram from Johan's parents to Adriana** *private collection*

and the tension and fear for his well-being ended, especially after his return on December 30, 1945!

It was also an emotional reunion for Johan with his family and his fiancée, Adriana, whom he hadn't seen for almost seven years. After returning home, he was given a few weeks' leave and then had to report back to the navy.

At the end of January 1946, Adriana and Johan married in Den Helder. They lived briefly with Johan's parents in Rotterdam and with Adriana's parents in Den Helder, there was a huge shortage of housing. After the birth of their son in 1948, they got to a house in Den Helder, the municipality where they lived for most of their lives.

## WHAT ABOUT ADRIANA, JOHAN'S FIANCÉE?

While Johan was in the Dutch East Indies, war with Germany broke out in the Netherlands in 1940.



After a brief battle between Dutch soldiers and the German army and a heavy bombardment of Rotterdam, the Netherlands surrendered on May 15, 1940. Den Helder, the naval city, was also bombed by the Germans during that time.

After the German occupation the Allies (particularly the United States and England) wanted to prevent the shipyard from being used by the German navy as much as possible. Therefore, it was decided to bomb the shipyard. As with previous German bombardments, this was not always accurately executed. Residential areas were also hit, killing many residents of Den Helder. During the war, Den Helder

was the most bombed city in the Netherlands!

Adriana lived with her parents in Den Helder at the time. Because of the bombing, she fled with her parents, brothers and sister to Anna-Paulowna, a small village not far from Den Helder. They only moved back to Den Helder after the war, in 1945. At the end of that year, Adriana and Johan were reunited, as you have read in the previous chapter!



**Arrival of prisoners of war in the Sint Jobshaven of Rotterdam**

*Weekly magazine 'De Spiegel', 1946*



**Bombardments on Den Helder**

*stichting Erfgoed Den Helder*

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR FOR THE JAPANESE POPULATION

The war was also a horror for the Japanese population. Many died from diseases, lack of food and medicine, and the numerous bombings.

The atomic bombs claimed many lives. In Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a total of approximately 150,000 people were killed by these two bombs. In the months and years that followed hundreds of thousands more people died from serious injuries and radiation caused by the atomic bombs. Many children are born with congenital physical deviation caused by the radioactive radiation to which women are exposed.



Wikipedia Commons/ Yōsuke Yamahata

Impressive are the deeply saddening stories of people who lost loved ones and never found them. A visit to the site of the bombing in Nagasaki and to the nearby Atomic Bomb Museum vividly illustrate the suffering. A metal lunchbox, for example, belonging to a schoolgirl, along with her school photo. She did not survive and was never found. Only the lunchbox, partially melted and twisted by the heat of the atomic bomb, remains. But also the images of people searching for food, drink, and medical help (see photo).

In the museum, through these images and testimonies of survivors, you will vividly realize how the war also had terrible consequences for countless innocent Japanese civilians.

On August 15, 1945, the Japanese emperor declared the end of the war on the radio. The military government was unwilling to do so and wanted to fight to the bitter end. Fortunately, the military did not get their way!

Finally, on September 2, 1945, Japan's Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu, signed the unconditional surrender aboard the American warship 'USS Missouri'.

It was not until September 13 (see also page 33) that the prisoners of war were transferred from the camp to the quay

of Nagasaki. From there, the now former prisoners of war began their journey home



Public domain/Stephen E. Korpanty



# THE DUTCH EAST INDIES DURING AND AFTER WORLD WAR II

**During the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies, almost all Dutch men and women, as well as other Europeans present in the Dutch East Indies, were imprisoned in camps guarded by Japanese soldiers.**

The camps were divided into separate sections: men's camps, camps for women and their children and boys' camps. The camps were often urban districts or buildings fenced off with barbed wire, where people could walk in and out at regular times. Early 1943 the rules became stricter and to prevent camp residents from having contact with the outside world, woven bamboo mats were placed against the barbed wire. Furthermore, the camps were heavily guarded.

The living conditions in the camps deteriorated. There was a serious shortage of food, water and medicine and the Japanese guards were brutal, even to women and children. The poor sanitary facilities also caused infectious diseases such as dysentery, which killed thousands of people.

Initially boys could stay with their mothers until they were about seventeen. But from 1944 onward, boys as young as ten years



Women's camp Tjideng Public domain/National Archives

were separated from their mothers and placed in male camps or camps reserved only for young boys. Some were lucky and ended up with their father or brother, while others were left entirely to their own. Like the men, they too were forced to work for the Japanese: in the fields, chopping down trees, as cleaners and as caregivers for the sick.

When the war ended, the boys were released from the camp, and children, often assisted by the Red Cross, set out to find their mothers. Often the search was successful and children were reunited with their mothers. But some children were not so lucky, because their mothers had not survived camp life.

Most Indo Dutch people were not imprisoned in camps. This large group of 'buitenkampers', consisting mainly of women and children, often lived in ordinary houses with many others. This was cheaper, as they had no income, and it was also safer. They, too, were at the mercy of the whims and terror of the Japanese army. And as the war progressed, the Indonesian population became increasingly aggressive, too.

## Comfort Women

In Japanese-occupied areas, many girls and young women were lured from their homes with false promises of good work and a better life. They were ultimately forced by the Japanese army to work as

prostitutes for Japanese soldiers. The exact numbers are unknown but are estimated at many hundreds of thousands, including tens of thousands of Dutch and Indo Dutch women and girls. Japan called these women and often very young girls, 'comfort women'. This term was very misleading, because the girls and women who were taken were deprived of their freedom and were in fact abused.

## The Bersiap

When the war was over, everyone thought that freedom and peace would return. But that was not the case. On August 17, 1945, the Indonesian nationalists Sukarno and Hatta declared Indonesia's independence in Batavia. They were the two main leaders of nationalist groups that had wanted independence even before the war. But the Netherlands refused to hear of it and did not listen to them.

Those who did listen to Soekarno and Hatta was the Indonesian youth. They wanted to prevent the restoration of colonial rule. After the declaration of independence, unrest grew steadily. The indigenous population turned against the Dutch, the Indo Dutch, and groups who in their opinion had collaborated with the former Dutch occupiers. This was particularly true for Moluccans and other population groups, such as those of Chinese descent. Moluccans are inhabitants of the Moluccas, a large archipelago in eastern Indonesia. Many



Moluccan men worked for the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL). They were therefore seen as supporters of the Netherlands.

A period of violence followed, committed primarily by fanatical Indonesian youth, the 'pemoeda's'. This period is known as the Bersiap period. Bersiap means 'Be prepared!' Tens of thousands of people died at that time, including many Moluccans, Dutch and Indo-Dutch people and Chinese born in Indonesia as well as Japanese soldiers who, shortly after the surrender had been ordered to defend these groups against the rising violence. This period ultimately marked the prelude for the struggle for independence of young Indonesia.

## Struggle for Independence

For economic reasons the Netherlands refused to part with the colony and resorted to military intervention: the First Police Action in 1947 and the Second Police Action at the end of 1948. The Indonesians call this struggle 'Agresi Militer Belanda I & II'. The result was a bloody and often brutal battle between Indonesian fighters and Dutch soldiers. Both sides were guilty of war crimes. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed, both Indonesian fighters, Dutch soldiers and many civilians.

Under pressure, particularly from the United States, a ceasefire was agreed upon. On December 27, 1949, the transfer of sovereignty was signed in Amsterdam. With this signing, the independence of

the Republic of Indonesia was formally confirmed, with Ir. Soekarno as its first president. Indonesia was required to pay the Netherlands a large sum of money as 'compensation'. This was paid in the following years.

In the Indonesian Republic, this is viewed differently today. It is believed that it would be appropriate for the Netherlands – which exploited its colony, the Dutch East Indies, for centuries – to make reparations in return.

Part of the former Dutch East Indies, namely Dutch New Guinea, remained under Dutch authority even after the transfer of sovereignty. However, Indonesia considered the territory in question to be Indonesian territory. Only after much negotiation, pressure from the United States, and a looming military conflict was Dutch New Guinea transferred to Indonesia in 1963. It is now a province within Indonesia and is called Papua.

Meanwhile, the Netherlands has also become aware of the fact that the military intervention during the Indonesian struggle for independence was wrong. In 2020 King Willem-Alexander apologized on behalf of the Dutch government at the time for the misconduct and brutal acts of war that took place during the so-called 'Police Actions' carried out by the Netherlands.

## Indo Dutch people leave Indonesia

It became increasingly clear to many Indo Dutch citizens that they were not welcome in the new republic. This was not only felt but also clearly expressed to them. This led to the departure of approximately 300,000 Indo Dutch citizens between 1945 and 1965. Most of them left for the Netherlands by ship. Many also emigrated to America and Australia.

For most of them this meant an encounter with the Netherlands, which, to them, was cold. They had heard a lot about it, but had never been there. Moreover, they were not always very welcome in the Netherlands, which had been plundered and impoverished by the Second World War!

The same applies to the 12,900 Moluccan KNIL soldiers and their families who ended up in the Netherlands after the transfer of sovereignty. After arriving in the Netherlands many of them lived in camps for extended periods. These camps were built by the German occupier during the war as prison camps.

In the years that followed after the cold reception in the Netherlands, the Indo Dutch people and Moluccans integrated into our society. Ten to fifteen percent of the current Dutch population has an Indo or Moluccan background!



Beeldbank Ministerie van Defensie

It is wonderful and important to notice that the cultural heritage, brought along by all who came to the Netherlands after the war, is recognizable and part of our daily lives. The Indo Dutch and Moluccan cuisine, street names in many municipalities such as Javastraat

and Sumatrastraat, markets and also intercultural festivals testify this.

We should not forget the distant history recounted in this booklet. After all, that past has made us who we are today, and that will also apply to our future.



Indisch Dutch people arriving in the Netherlands The National Maritime Museum / Willem Job

## JOHAN AFTER THE WAR

Johan remained in the navy and, even after the war, sailed on many naval vessels and visited every continent.

Fortunately, he never experienced war situations again. He was away from home often and sailed across many seas. As he grew older, his duties at sea lessened, allowing him to spend more time at home. In 1964, Johan was promoted to officer, a crowning achievement of his naval career.

He retired in 1969 and has since indulged in his hobbies: camping and crafting. He continued to live in the place where his heart has always been: the naval city of Den Helder.

Like many other former prisoners of war, Johan spoke very little about his time in captivity after returning from Japan. By not talking about it, the former prisoners hoped they could forget that period. Fortunately, there were also those who were able and willing to speak about it, and diaries have been preserved (see also page 25). Because of this, we know much about what they went through.

Sadly, their story doesn't end here. As they grew older, many recalled that difficult period in their lives, reliving it. Children of former POWs also often struggled with

what has happened to their fathers. They sensed that there were problems, but often only much later could they connect those problems to the war their fathers were

involved in. Today we know that suffering can be passed down from one generation to the next. See also page 45.

Johan passed away in 1993 at the age of 75. Only shortly before his death did he talk about the feelings he had struggled with all that time after the war. As a POW he felt as if he was used and treated

like a slave. He never succeeded in shaking off that feeling.



Johan in 1964 Private collection



Johan at sea Private collection



High-ranking Japanese officials apologized several times for the suffering inflicted on so many during World War II. Yet many victims doubt the sincerity of these apologies, including Johan! He believed that Japan and the Netherlands treated him and all the other (former) POWs with disrespect. He never wanted to have anything to do with Japan again.

### **How did Johan's son experience his father's wartime history?**

What were the personal consequences of this series of suffering, forced labour

and abuse for Johan? To what extent did it affect Johan's and Adriana's postwar lives? Only after both of them had passed away (Adriana died in 1991 not long before Johan) did this become increasingly clear to Johan's son, André, and he began a quest to understand what his parents had endured.

This quest had a profound impact on André's later life and also caused him a lot of grief. This was partly because he had been unaware of his father's past for so long. The words Johan spoke in the final stage of his life made his son acutely realize that that war still lived on for all those years in his head.

That emotional quest brought new insights (as depicted in the last parts of this booklet), but was also a period of 'deep valleys' because dealing with that undiscussed war past was and still is mentally and emotionally difficult.

This experience, this piece of history as described in this booklet, in general, is the story of so many. It deserves a place in our collective memory. After all, in so many ways, history is a lesson for the present and for the future!

### **Generational Trauma Transfer: Wartime experiences that live on in families.**

Emotional events in people's lives can have consequences for the rest of their lives. If they cannot deal with these emotional events or traumas, it can lead to physical and mental problems. And it can affect their functioning in daily life. Images in a television news report, the explosion of a moped, films about wars, they can all trigger memories. As a result, this person may suffer from, for example, depression, fits of rage, and nightmares.

Children can be affected by this and feel and experience the traumas of the parent in question, and sometimes unconsciously even carry them along into their own development and daily lives. But there are now also indications that the consequences are noticeable in

subsequent generations, and hereditary factors may even play a role here.

Fortunately, since the Second World War, increasing attention has been paid to trauma issues and the 'generational transmission of trauma'. Victims are supported in both social and mental health care settings. And extensive scientific research is being conducted on trauma treatments and trauma transmission.

However, veterans of the Second World War, the subsequent police actions, and veterans of early United Nations peace missions received little or no care and attention at the time. They and their families often processed their experiences alone and in silence. This commands respect, but is also felt by so many of today's generations.



# REMEMBERING AND THINKING OF...

On September 13, 2015, a memorial was unveiled at the site where Fukuoka-2 camp was located.

The memorial on Koyagi in Nagasaki Bay commemorates all prisoners of war. The names of those who died in the camp are listed on the memorial. The memorial also expresses regret for the suffering inflicted on the prisoners of war. It was erected by citizens of Nagasaki as a sign of respect for the former POWs of Fukuoka-2. This memorial is therefore of great significance to the surviving relatives.

The unveiling was attended by a camp survivor and by family members of POWs from Fukuoka-2. Johan's son was also present.

Many have now visited the memorial and found comfort there. Every year on or around

September 13th, a commemoration is held at the memorial, organized by Japanese citizens. For victims and their families, the memorial serves as a symbol of 'respect and recognition' for what has happened and helps them find peace and reconcile with the past.

The Fukuoka-2 memorial also includes a memorial commemorating the crew of the crashed B-29 aircraft. This aircraft crashed in 1945, not far from Koyagi, while on its way to carry out food drops (see also page 31).

A school with a large playground now stands on the site of the former camp. The memorial was initially maintained by the citizens of Nagasaki, and now the school's students do

so. A beautiful and moving gesture that is deeply cherished by the relatives.

In Nagasaki, near the site of the atomic bombing, there is a second memorial commemorating prisoners of war from the Fukuoka-14 camp. This camp was located in Nagasaki, about a kilometer from the site of the atomic bomb explosion.

The Japanese city of Mizumaki also has a memorial for prisoners of war, the 'Cross Monument'. This memorial commemorates

all 871 Dutch prisoners of war who died in camps in Japan during World War II. Their names are engraved on the memorial.

Also worth mentioning here are the 'Dutch War Cemeteries' in Indonesia. Thousands of Dutch victims are buried here, not only military personnel but also civilians. The war cemeteries are managed under the responsibility of the Dutch War Graves Foundation and the British Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Fukuoka-2 memorial together with the B29 memorial *Private collection*



Old site of the camp: now a playground with a school  
*Source unknown*



Crossmonument in Mizumaki *Private collection*



## Commemorations in the Netherlands, Indonesia and Japan

The National Commemoration takes place in the Netherlands every year on August 15th at the Indisch Monument in The Hague. This commemoration gives a chance to reflect on the end of the Second World War and all victims of the war against Japan and the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies. For many it is an opportunity to stand still and remember the Second World War in Asia and their own family history, together

with others who have suffered the same fate. Young people are also increasingly attending the annual commemoration, often at the invitation of their parents or grandparents. But sometimes they also come out of curiosity about their roots and out of respect for their ancestors.

Local commemorations are also organized in many other locations in the Netherlands on or around August 15th. The Bronbeek Veterans' Home and Museum in Arnhem, dedicated to the Dutch colonial and

military history, is also important mentioning. In the large garden of Bronbeek are several memorials related to World War II where those who are involved, gather annually. Also worthwhile mentioning is the Indisch Memorial Center in The Hague, where the history of the Dutch East Indies is extensively highlighted.

In Japan residents also commemorate World War II. This takes place on the same day as we do in the Netherlands, every year on August 15th. In Japan these

gatherings are primarily focused on the desire for peace for all.

In Indonesia, 'Independence Day' is celebrated on August 17. On that day in 1945, as mentioned earlier in this booklet, the declaration of independence was read by the later president Ir. Sukarno. On November 10, 'Heroes Day' is celebrated, during which all Indonesian victims of the struggle for independence are commemorated.



Indisch Monument in The Hague *Private collection*

# 'DON'T FORGET YOUR PAST, BUT MAKE IT A GUIDE TO YOUR FUTURE.'

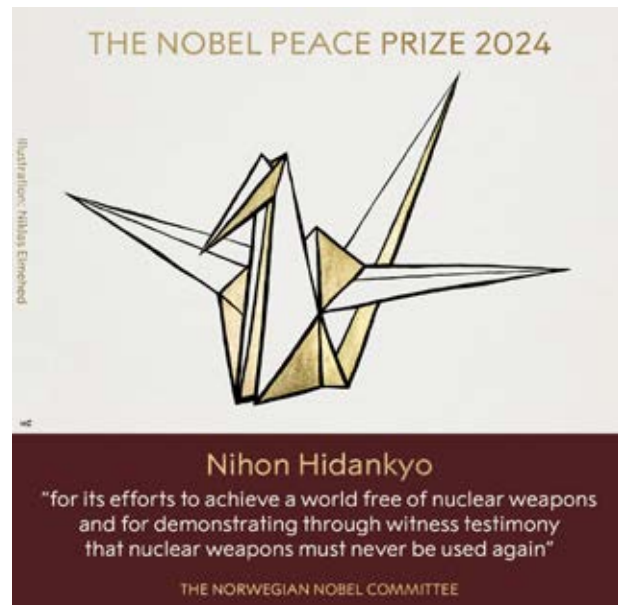
In Nagasaki and Hiroshima thousands of people gather annually to commemorate the victims of the atomic bombings. The ceremonies take place on August 6th at the memorial in Hiroshima and on August 9th in the Peace Park in Nagasaki. But many people.... vervangen door: But in between, many people – including large groups of schoolchildren – also come to commemorate the victims and the events of that time.

Commemorations and memorials offer comfort to victims and their families. They are an expression of reverence and respect for all who died in or suffered in some other way during the war.

Reflecting on history and commemorating

the victims ensures that we continue to be mindful of the millions of mostly innocent victims who lost their lives. But they also remind us that we share a responsibility for safeguarding and maintaining peace. We must all be and remain vigilant.

We must never give up the hope for justice and peace for all. Commemorations are there to express that hope and the deep desire for peace for everyone. But also an encouragement to underscore the importance of peace, freedom, security, and the preservation of our democracy, as well as our shared personal responsibility and involvement in upholding them. This textbook aims to contribute to this and, in particular, to inspire young people to think about war and peace.



The 2024 Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to the Japanese organization Nihon Hidankyo. Its members are victims of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They are committed to peace and a world without nuclear weapons and are people who speak from experience about the damage such a nuclear weapon can cause.



Even if you live in a part of the world where war seems far away, it can suddenly become very real if we don't learn from the past. That past demonstrates that we must safeguard inequality, injustice and the suppression of free speech. But also, power-hungry groups and leaders who seek and exploit their opportunities within it to mislead, incite, and even plunge the population into a war, thus bringing many into deep misery.

It also teaches us how pointless wars are. There are no winners, only losers, with the civilian population as the greatest victims. Therefore, to conclude, here are the wise words of former German President Richard von Weizsäcker:

'We cannot change the past, but we can change the future. If you close your eyes to the past, you are blind to the present.'



## Colophon

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The booklet is an extended version of the first edition in English and provides more information. Several aspects are discussed in more detail. This was prompted by the apparent interest in the earlier editions, even among adults.

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