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Crackdown in Indonesia

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The killing of Brigadier Mallaby by Indonesian nationalists and the stern ultimatum issued in consequence by the British commander of Allied forces in Java highlight the growing seriousness of the situation in that island. Brigadier Mallaby was treacherously murdered by a riotous mob of armed nationalists in violation of the terms of a truce just concluded between the local Indonesian leaders and Brigadier Mallaby for the cessation of fighting in Surabaya, the chief port city at the eastern end of Java. This outrage indicates that here, as elsewhere, the self-styled leaders of the independence movement either cannot control their followers or are acting in bad faith. The British authorities would thus appear to be justified in giving the nationalists notice to deliver up all those concerned in the murder or suffer the consequences of a full-scale Allied offensive for the restoration of order.

The nature and circumstances of the so-called Indonesian nationalist movement are imperfectly understood here in America. To begin with, the movement is practically confined to the island of Java, though its spokesmen claim to represent the whole of the Netherlands Indies. This claim is rebutted by the facts of the case, which are that the Netherlands Indies are a vast and far-flung archipelago containing a multitude of islands, large and small, inhabited by widely different peoples whose only connection with one another is the nexus of Dutch rule which the Javanese rebels seek to destroy. The Javanese tacitly acknowledge this when they bracket in their hostility not only the Dutch and Eurasians, but also certain native elements in Indonesia, such as the Amboinese, who are traditional upholders of Dutch rule. The presumption is that the other islanders would not be inclined to accept the authority of a Javanese government, even granting that such a regime could be effectively established. And that is a matter which is still a very moot point. The story of the "Indonesian republic" proclaimed by a group of leaders centering in Batavia, the capital city at the western end of the island, is that of a fire which those who kindled it are

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