

Commemorations 14 and 15 August

Commemorations victims in the Netherlands Indies (Amstelveen)



Every year on the 14th of August a commemorations is held in Amstelveen in memory of the victims of the Second World War in general and the Netherlands Indies in special. Thousands of military are remembered who were sent by the Dutch government to the Indies and gave their lives. The ceremony is supported by the Royal Military Band and personel of the 20 Natresbat. One day later the Comittee Commemoration Victims in the Netherlands Indies in The Hague celebrates the end of the war.

Location: Indies Monument in the Broerse Park, Molenweg in Amstelveen.

Information: 020-6457999 or www.pelita.nl, www.sh15aug1945.nl.

Commemoration end WW II / capitulation Japan (Den Helder)

At the 15th of August in Den Helder the capitulation of the Empire of Japan is remembered at the monument 'To those who fell'. The foundation '15 August Commemoration Den Helder' organizes the ceremony, in memory of the many who lost their lives in the battles and the terror of life in and outside the camps during the Japanese occupation and the uprising against the Dutch authorities afterwards.



For many citizens of Den Helder the capitulation of Japan has a special meaning. About 850 marines lost their lives during the battle of the Java Sea. Others were made prisoner of war by the Japanese and had to do forced labour at for instance the Birma railway and the Pagan-Baroe railway on Sumatra. Also a lot of marines families were among the Dutch in the Jap camps in the Indies, because the Royal Navy had an

important base in Surabaya. Many of them had to, after the Japanese capitulation, stay in the camps until October.

The ceremony is at the monument 'For those who fell' across the water tower at the crossroads Middenweg/Polderweg/ Javastraat in Den Helder. This is near the railway station.



The monument was erected in 1919 in memory of the staff of the Navy, Fishery and Merchant Navy, who lost their lives in the period of the Mobilisation (1914-1918). Their names are on the plaques on the left and right hand side of the obelisk. Their graves are in Flushing and in Den Helder. The monument is surrounded by four hardrock poles connected by a chain. The chain originates from the torpedo boat G11, which struck a mine near Terschelling during the First World War (magazine 'Our Fleet' 1922).

At the back of the obelisk the arms of the Netherlands and the Netherlands Indies are depicted. The names of the fallen personnel from the Navy in the Netherlands Indies during the battle of the Java Sea of 27 Februari 1942 are in a displayed book. Through the educational centre of the ROC at the Sperwerstraat 4 (tel. 0223-611200) you can receive the key for the cabinet where the book is. (*Zie voor een van de slachtoffers onder 'Antillen'.*)

The monument, the Dutch Virgin who leans on a stricken anchor, a child against her and a drowned victim at her feet, covered by the Dutch flag, was made by the sculpturer A.G. van der Lom from The Hague. From the unveiling by queen Wilhelmina in October 1922 it stood at the Harbour Square. On Friday 13 April 1945 it was damaged by an allied air raid. On 27 February 1946 the first post-war ceremony took place, with special attention to the victims of the battle in the Java Sea, which happened four years earlier. The monument was repaired in 1951 by the artist and stonemason Van der Louw from Den Helder. It was moved in 1993 in front of the building 'De Boeg'. In 2001 the monument was moved to the 'Ronde-Island'. In the pavement in front of the monument a globe is depicted.

For more information: Mrs. W. Postma-Reindorp, te. 0223-643362 (between 9.00 and 16.00 hrs).

Sources: www.nieuwsbank.nl and www.mindef.nl.

National Commemoration Capitulation Japan (The Hague)

Foundation Commemoration 15 August 1945

Commemoration Dutch Congress Centre The Hague / Commemoration Ceremony Indies Monument The Hague

Speech by dr. Bernard Bot, minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of The Netherlands, on occasion of the 15 August commemoration at the Indies Monument, The Hague, 15 August 2005



Dear attendance, ladies and gentlemen,

I'm grateful to have been given the opportunity by the Foundation Commemoration 15 August 1945 for making today this memorial speech. To me, as the minister of Foreign Affairs en representative of the gouvernement, it's a honourable task. But, like many of you, I'm also here as a child of the Indies. Just as with you this commemoration brings to me feelings and emotions, surface today positive as well as negative memories to Indonesia, 5 time zones and 14,000 kilometers away from this place, but emotionally so near. They are the memories you'll carry the rest of your life, but who don't have to interfere with an optimistic and forward looking attitude to life. After all, commemorating is, beside remembering, also looking forward.

First the past: with the capitulation of Japan, exactly 60 years ago, there also came an end to the Japanese occupation of the Netherlands Indies, an occupation which brought grief to so many of us. We remember the members in our families and our friends who gave their lives or died during the Japanese occupation. We also remember the countless forced labourers, the Romusha's, who often died nameless.

After the capitulation the suffering, contrary to what was so dearly hoped for, wasn't over yet. Right after the capitulation a vacuum of power existed which could only partially be filled by the British. During this so-called Bersiap period many thousands of innocent Dutch-Indies and Indonesian civilians, mostly women and children, lost their lives.

In the years after a painful, lengthy and violent separation of roads between Indonesia and Holland followed. For a great part of the Dutch-Indies community we thus speak about many years of physical and psychological suffering.

For myself, I look back on my time in the camp Tjideng with mixed feelings. Perhaps as a child you're less quickly touched by the sorrow and the hardships around you, perhaps you take things more easily. But you also grow up very fast. A stay in an orphanage, when my mother was hospitalized, made me streetwise very early.

Probably that's why this period is still so sharp and vivid in my memory. I vividly remember the internment, the departure of my father to Birma, the koempoelans in the morning and in the evening, the hours of waiting and afterwards the bow for camp commander Soni. I also know you died a thousand deaths when you couldn't attend the koempoelan because you were ill, because the Japanese could find out with a check. The memory of the hunger is something that, I believe, with my generation lives on strongly in the sense that you won't throw away easily anything that is still a bit edible.

A small anecdote. We were forced to maintain some allotments supposedly to grow some vegetables. I was ordered to help in a tomato bed. I was very disappointed when some morning almost ripe tomatoes had disappeared.

I suspected the boy next door of this evil deed and decided to retaliate. Only, his tomatoes were all still unripe and green. I still ate them which I repented afterwards. It's wasn't for long when I felt sick to death and had to confess to my mother what I had done. "Boy", she said, "you'll always get what you deserve".

A lot is written again about the Japanese capitulation. Ofcourse it's terrible what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But I also know that war couldn't have gone on for a bit longer, otherwise we wouldn't have survived this camp. And for sure my father wouldn't have returned from Birma and Siam. To me therefor, 15 August is a day with a special meaning.

The liberation, the return of my father, who I didn't recognise ofcourse when we first met again, the return to Hoolland, are likewise uneraseble memories I'd like to share with you today. The welcome in Holland was something of a cold shower. And I don't say this because of the cold climate I went to. It was hard to explain what we had gone through. The regular reaction was, that with us in the Indies, at least the sun had been shining, while they suffered from cold during the hunger winter. In shor, nobody in Holland was waiting for that group of Dutch from the Indies. Soon you learned not to talk to much about your experiences, but listen with sympathy to the stories about the war in Holand, the Germans and the destruction camps.



Maybe that's the reason why we were able to integrate so well and so quickly in Dutch society. Maybe therefore we quickly stuck plasters on all those wounds and picked up our lives. And ofcourse there also were reasons to be grateful. We had survived and at least found a new home. Personally therefore, I'm grateful to stand in front of you, that I like so many of you endured this period well, and have shown you can come out of this ordeal even stronger.

(Living history)

Sixty years, ladies and gentlemen. The distance in time between today and the events in the past is growing all the time. And doesn't this bring the risk of oblivion, like Mr. Boekholt pointed out two years ago on this occasion? I hope and trust this won't happen. I think future generations will stay interested in the common past of The Netherlands and Indonesia. I think our youth is willing to adopt this history, like the students from the Liberal Christian High School adopted the Indies monument and like so many other schools for instance maintain the military cemetaries. But to convincingly cherish the history, the past and the knowledge about that past also must be relevant today and in the future for our youngsters.

Winston Churchill once said it like this: the further one is able to look back, the further one is able to see in the future. Indeed: historical knowledge isn't a superfluous luxury, but the condition for a clear view on the future. And this certainly meant for the relation between Holland and Indonesia. When the Dutch will come in contact with Indonesia and Indonesians, in whatever way, they'll have to know something about the history of this country, and therefore also about centuries of shared Indonesian-

Dutch history. Dutch people, who think they can successfully go into business or diplomatic channels in Indonesia, without knowing anything about the history, usually come away with a flea in their ear.

When a society wants to meet the future with faith and optimism, it must be prepared to be honest about the less favourable sides of its own history. Certainly in a time when we in Holland – at work, in the sports canteen and at school – want to bridge the diverse ethnic and religious communities in our country. In the context of this commemoration it means that we dare admit that even after the introduction of the so-called ethical politics the interests of the Indonesian population for most Dutch was at best a second degree item.

Working on a mutual future. That shouldn't only be the motto within our own society, but also in the relation between Holland and Indonesia. The challenges we have to take up are manyfold, like the battle against intolerance, extremism and terrorism.

Indonesia is important. It's a driving force behind regional cooperation in South-East Asia. As a secular state Indonesia houses more Muslims than any other country in the world, but it's also the guard of centuries of Buddhist, Hinduist and Christian traditions. As such Indonesia has a say in the dialogue between the cultures. During the Dutch chairmanship of the European Union last year therefore, we've paid a lot of attention to intensifying the connections with Indonesia.

(Message to Jakarta)

Ladies and gentlemen, to further intensify the relation between Indonesia and Holland, it's helpful to remove whatever is left of old sores, as far as it's within our power. Therefore, as representative of our country and as representative of the generation who experienced the pain of the separation, I'll take a plain today, travel through those five time zones and cover these 28,000 kilometers. On the 17th of August then, I will represent our country at the Indonesian celebration of the proclamation of independence on the 17th of August 1945. I will explain to the Indonesian people that my presence can be seen as a political and moral acceptance of that date.

But what really matters now is that we clearly show the Indonesians our opinion. Already for decades Dutch representatives join the celebrations of the Indonesian independence on 17 August. With the support of the Cabinet I'll clearly explain to the Indonesians that Holland realizes the independence of the Republic of Indonesia already started on 17 August 1945 and that we – sixty years to date – generously accept this fact in a political and moral sense.

Acceptance in a moral sense also means that I will join the former expressions of regret about the painful and violent separation of Indonesia and The Netherlands. Almost six thousand Dutch military lost their lives in this battle, many lost limbs, or became victim of psychological traumas, for which, again, was only little interest in Holland.

By the large scale deployment of military resources, our country ended up on the wrong side of history so to speak. This is especially wry for all people involved: for the Dutch-Indies community, for the Dutch military, but first of all for the Indonesian population.

Ladies and gentlemen, only when we stand on the top of the mountain, we're able to see the simplest and shortest way up. This also goes for the people who were involved in taking decisions in the forties.

Only in hindsight it's clear the separation between Indonesian and Holland took far too long and was achieved by much more military force than needed.

This is the message I'll take with me to. I also fiercely hope for the understanding and the support of the Indonesian community, the Moluccan community in Holland and the veterans of the policing actions.

After all, to keep our mutual history alive, we also need a mutual perspective on our future. Working together for a healthy and safe future, and for the good relation with Indonesia, will help us to bear even the most painful aspects of our past.

I thank you for your attention.

Sources: www.pelita.nl, www.sh15aug1945.nl and [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)