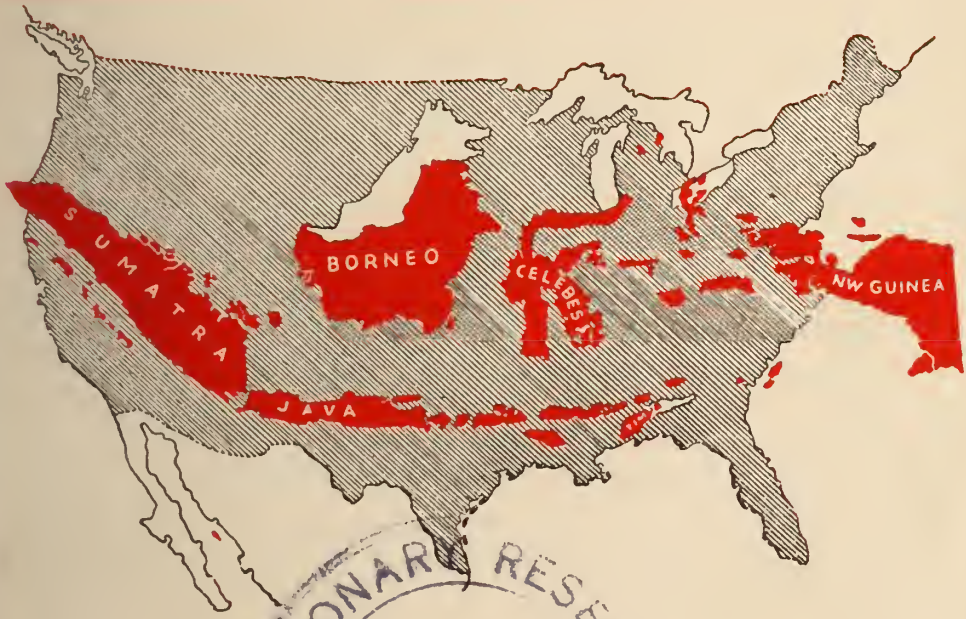


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A Letter to You from . . .

COUNT VAN RANDWIJCK

MISSIONS CONSUL
NETHERLANDS INDIES



American Christians have been giving, and are asked to continue to give generously, for the support of "Orphaned Missions," that is, to sustain the European missions temporarily separated as a consequence of the war from their parent churches in Europe.

Eighteen missions of twelve European societies were at work in the Netherlands Indies, supported by Christians in Holland and Germany. The support from Germany was cut off in September, 1939, and all support from the Netherlands ended suddenly in May, 1940. The staff, finances, and administration of all these missions have been placed under an Emergency Committee with headquarters in Batavia. The work is thus under unified direction.

The executive officers of this Emergency Committee are the two Missions Consuls, officers through whom for many years all relations of all the missions in the archipelago with the government have been regulated. The two Missions Consuls are appointed and supported by the National Missionary Council in Holland, and in fact they serve in ways similar to those of the secretaries of National Christian Councils in other lands. Count van Randwijck, the Senior Missions Consul, was present at the Madras Meeting of the International Missionary Council and presided over one of the sections of that meeting.

The following letter describes the need for continued help of the work in the Netherlands Indies, and at the same time expresses thanks for aid that has been given.

A. L. Warnshuis, *Secretary*,
INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL

*Batavia, August 1, 1941.**Dear Unknown Friend:*

Those who since the fateful date of Holland's occupation by the Germans so faithfully are supporting the missions in the Netherlands Indies should hear something about the country their gifts are spent in and more particularly about the missions they are spent for. The Netherlands Indies has until recently not been a very well known country among the general public. I suppose that many of our American friends have not often heard of it except by tourist folders about Bali, the last paradise, the enchanted isle. It certainly is our own fault that we did not speak enough of this our wonderful country. The Netherlands Indies may be known a little nowadays as an exporter of rubber and tin to the United States, and a buyer of American tanks and airplanes. This very fact shows that this country is not untouched by the tension in the Pacific, notwithstanding its geographical position, away from the main thoroughfares of the world. Until very recently the inhabitants felt pretty safe between its three neighbors: the Straits Settlements, Australia and, in the north, the Philippine Islands, best known to you, dear American friend.

The climate is sometimes described as pleasant. It is in fact not so bad as an American heat-wave. It certainly has the advantage of making winter coats superfluous. Still, many Dutch people cannot think of the climate without feeling a strange longing for a skating party on one of the lakes in Holland. Even they, however, admit that it is quite cool in many a hill station.

An American friend once asked me how many islands there are in the archipelago and how many inhabitants the U. S. A. would number, provided they were as densely populated as Java, the principal island. I confess it took me some time to do the counting, but the result was that there are over 100,000 islands and that there would have to be nearly 3,000,000,000 Americans in order to give you some idea of what density of population means here. (And your latest census shows that there are 132,000,000 people in the United States.)

This takes me to the most important topic for any friend of Christian missions: the inhabitants. They number about 66 millions, some

1,600,000 of whom are Chinese and non-indigenous Orientals. The greater part of the indigenous population belongs to the same race as the Filipinos, the Indonesian race. In spite of the fact that the inhabitants of the whole country (with the exception of New Guinea and surrounding islands) are very much like one another they speak a number of different tongues, the total number of languages being estimated at over two hundred. Only a few of them have more than a million speakers. The Malay language, however, has been the lingua franca of the archipelago for many a century and offers a welcome, though necessarily very imperfect, substitute for the missionary who feels himself unable to learn all the vernaculars of his district. Still the missions are keen to preserve and use the local languages: there exist over twenty-two translations of the Bible or parts of it in the different vernaculars and for the great majority of the population of the archipelago the whole Bible is accessible either in its own language or in Malay.

The number of Protestant Christians is rather considerable: there are between 1,600,000 and 1,700,000 of them, i.e., nearly twice as many as the number of Christians in Japan and China put together. This is due to the fact that the Indonesian churches are largely the products of what present-day missionary theory calls "mass movements." Conversion of families, villages or clans, not of separate individuals, is characteristic of this method of missionary work and on many a field in this country group conversions extended very quickly.

Next to being largely a "mass movement area" the Netherlands Indies as a mission field are characterized by a relatively great stress having been put on the work in rural districts among the simple peasantfolk. From a purely missionary point of view there does not exist a rural problem as there does in some other countries. The problem our missionaries are up against is rather the problem of the towns, the middle and upper classes, the intellectuals. Understanding of the dangers of Western secular civilization has in the past been less absent from the minds of missionaries and board secretaries than insight into the necessities and advantages of higher education of Indonesian Christians. This missionary policy was corroborated by a similar government policy. Not until 1914 was there created a spe-

cial type of primary school with the Dutch language as the medium of instruction for future Indonesian intellectuals. This explains why, up till now, there have not been many national Christians, with a college or university education, capable of framing the policy of their churches. Their number is much smaller than, say in India, where Western education started eighty years earlier, but it is continually and rapidly increasing. I may mention in this connection the important work of the theological colleges and the Christian Student Movement. This work will continue to grow in importance as the opportunities for training on a university level are increasing. There are now technical, law, medical, literature and agricultural faculties and an academy for Indonesian civil servants.

In the third place the Netherlands Indies count what is believed to be a greater number of Christians won from Islam than any other country in the Moslem world. These converts are mainly to be found on Java and they do not, of course, belong to any mass movements. There are some 65,000 of them out of a total population of 45 millions on this entirely Islamized island. Islam is spreading rapidly both in breadth and in depth and the time will not be far off when all animists will have to choose between Islam and Christianity. Missionary leaders are very conscious of the fact that this presents a most serious challenge to the Christian forces in this country and especially to those outside Java. Still, we can hardly overestimate the importance of the Christian communities on Java with regard to the clash of Islam and Christianity. The greatest spiritual battle will have to be waged on the main island itself and much will depend on the faith, the courage and the wisdom of those Christians who have their home there.

There is a fourth characteristic which I should like to draw your attention to: it is the nationality of the missionary forces. I think that about half of the world's missions are in the hands of your countrymen and the greater part of the remaining half in those of the British. Under these circumstances it is a curious thing to note that in a great mission field like the Netherlands Indies by far the greater part of the missionary forces has always consisted of Germans and Dutchmen, with some Swiss in between.

One of the difficulties arising out of this situation is the language to be used in contact with the world mission. One of our national shortcomings is that we do not know English as well as Dutch and that consequently we use our national language in speaking and writing and even in our numerous missionary publications. Practically everything that has been written about the mission in this country is in Dutch or in German and would have to be translated to be of any use for you. Since you and so many other unknown friends are helping us in our distress, we are trying as much as possible to put English informative material at your disposal. If we have not done it sufficiently — and I know we have not — it is only on account of the language barrier.

The internment of all German missionaries which had to take place on May 10, 1940, and unavoidable measures of economy made us lose about one-third of the European missionary staff. I shall not write in detail about all questions of organization, finance, personnel and missionary policy which have since that date occupied the minds of those who have to lead the missions through this crisis. Suffice it to say that on the whole the work of evangelization and church-building, the medical missions and the mission schools could be carried on. After the very serious events of May and June, 1940, we had little hope that so much of the work could be kept intact as has proved to be possible. Thanks for this go to a large group of entirely new contributors in the Netherlands Indies, the United States, Australia and South Africa. We know that the menace to our work still continues but we have learned by the experience of last year to “take no thought for the morrow.” It may on the whole be said that the most baffling problem immediately after the German invasion was the question, “How to finance the work?” If our new known and unknown friends continue to support the work as they have been doing, this problem will be solved. Nowadays we are concerned about the problem of personnel. Will all the missionaries, many of whom were due for furlough in 1940 after seven or eight years’ service in the tropics, sometimes in very lonely places, be able to carry the greater burden of work and responsibility which circumstances have put upon their shoulders? Will it be possible for their reduced number to do something more than reorganize existing work

and keep it going? Will they have the power to keep the aggressive attitude which is essential for any mission work? Will they be able to find and finance the tools without which no missionary can fulfill his task? Will they be in a position to give the young independent churches the help they need? Will those who, after the internment of their German colleagues, are working among the Bataks under difficulties probably unsurpassed in missionary history find it possible to prevent the great Batak Church from doing itself irreparable harm?

My dear unknown friend, I sincerely hope that this letter gives you some idea of the missions in the Netherlands Indies. It would have been very easy to dwell at length upon many more aspects of the present situation but I shall be brief. There are many reasons for rejoicing and thankfulness; we have good ground for hope and we reject any defeatism for the missionary cause. Still we do not know what the future has in store for us and nobody can look at it without grave concern for the world in general and for the small part of the Christian cause we are responsible for in particular. All we can do is to go forward unshaken in the firm belief that "Jesus Christ reigns in the midst of His enemies," and that the final victory is His. We appeal to you not only for material help but for your coöperation in prayer for the branches of the struggling church of Jesus Christ which are to be found in the Netherlands Indies.

Yours very sincerely,

S. C. VAN RANDWIJCK,
Missions Consul in the Netherlands Indies



To carry forward this work and similar work in Africa, India, China, the Near East — wherever there is need, regardless of nationality or creed — the continued help of North American Christians is essential.

Send your gift to your own church, or to the relief committee of your denomination, or direct to

THE INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL

156 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.