

Conciliation or confrontation: Chinese responses to anti-Chinese violence in  
North Sumatra during the Indonesian revolution, 1945-1949

*Konsiliasi atau konfrontasi: reaksi orang Tionghoa terhadap kekerasan anti-Tionghoa di  
Sumatera Utara pada masa revolusi Indonesia, 1945-1949*

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Abstract

“Gajah berjuang sama gajah, pelanduk mati di tengah-tengah (or when two great powers fight, the people in between become the victim).” This old Indonesian saying was cited by a Chinese newspaper from Medan in April 1947 to describe the situation of Chinese people in Indonesia. Chinese people had become victims of violence during the Indonesian revolution, especially in places where military conflict between Indonesian forces and Dutch forces took place. This paper focuses on the responses of Chinese people and their organisations to anti-Chinese violence in North Sumatra during the revolution. Concentrating - at specific turning points - on external interventions, internal tensions, and social networks, it will be shown that Chinese people in North Sumatra employed divergent strategies of response to protect themselves against violence. Ranging between expressing support for Indonesian independence and promoting solidarity between the Chinese people and the Indonesian people on the one hand, and armed confrontation and the “use violence against violence” on the other hand, responses violence became increasingly divided between conciliation and outright confrontation. Finally, the effect of the strategies of conciliation and confrontation will be assessed.

Keywords: Indonesian national revolution, North Sumatra, violence, ethnicity.

*Gajah berjuang sama gajah, pelanduk mati di tengah-tengah.*<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

'When two great powers fight, the people in between become the victim.' This old Indonesian saying was cited by a Chinese periodical *Qianjin Zhoubao* ('Progressive Weekly') from Medan on 13 April 1947 to describe the situation of Chinese people in Indonesia. It may seem strange for such an usually considered privileged and wealthy community to portray itself as a weak lamb (or a small deer in the original Indonesian saying) in between the two powers of Indonesia and the Dutch fighting, but it does illustrate how Chinese people considered themselves as outsiders to the conflict, to which they became victims nonetheless. At the time of publication, there was a period of relative calm, as Indonesian and Dutch government delegations had just signed the Linggajati Agreement on 25 March. However, during the preceding 1,5 year Chinese people had become victims of rising levels of crime and violence while the Indonesian Army and independent people's forces and youth groups fought to defend independence and the Dutch attempted to re-impose colonial rule. Especially in places where military conflict between Indonesian forces and Dutch forces took place, Chinese people were vulnerable to excesses of violence.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper, I focus on the responses to violence by Chinese people themselves. How did Chinese people react to incidents of violence directed against them during the revolution? What did they do to protect themselves against further incidents of violence? This is an attempt to shed some new light on the role of the Chinese people during the Indonesian revolution. Previously, in existing discussions of the role of Chinese people during the revolution, as well as in my own writings, the role of Chinese people is often discussed in terms of their political affiliations to the opposing sides. Chinese people are often identified as either pro-Republic, pro-Dutch, or neutral. Recently, studies have begun to look beyond such a fixed frame. Following pioneering work of eminent scholars and critics such as Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Mary Somers and Benny Setiono, students of the Indonesian revolution are now keen to study the complexities and connections across lines of division.<sup>3</sup>

By focussing on the reactions to violence, I hope to suggest a more dynamic and interactive approach to examine the role of Chinese people during the revolution. Rather than starting

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<sup>1</sup> *Qianjin Zhoubao* [Progressive Weekly], 13 April 1947. The well-known proverb in Indonesian refers to a small deer-like animal (pelanduk) rather than the lamb referred to in the Chinese newspaper: l., *Gajah berjuang sama gajah, pelanduk mati di tengah-tengah*.

<sup>2</sup> Biro Sejarah PRIMA [Pejuang Republik Indonesia Medan Area], *Medan Area Mengisi Proklamasi: Perjuangan Kemerdekaan dalam Wilayah Sumatera Utara* (Medan: Badan Musyawarah Pejuang Republik Indonesia Medan Area, 1976) 223-224, 721. For an insightful discussion of the location and timing of outbreaks of violence against Chinese during the Indonesian revolution, see Mary Somers Heidhues, 'Anti-Chinese violence in Java during the Indonesian revolution, 1945-49,' *Journal of Genocide Research* 14:3-4 (2012) 281-401.

<sup>3</sup> Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Hoakiau di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Bintang Press, 1960); Mary F. Somers Heidhues, 'Citizenship and Identity: Ethnic Chinese and the Indonesian Revolution' in: Jennifer W. Cushman and Wang Gungwu ed., *Changing Identities of the Southeast Asian Chinese since World War II* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1988) 115-138; Benny G. Setiono, *Tionghoa dalam pusaran politik* (Jakarta: Elkasa, 2008).

'positions' as a starting point to 'dynamics of violence', interaction, social relations between Chinese and Indonesians, and changes over time.

In order to explore patterns of response over time, I identify three key moments, or turning points, at which Chinese people became victims of incidents of violence and in reaction took action in order to protect themselves against further acts of violence directed to them. Considering the limited scope of this paper, I select three turning points that occurred during the first year of the revolution, that is, after the independence of Indonesia was proclaimed by Soekarno and Mohammad Hatta in Jakarta on 17 August 1945.

Concentrating on the dynamics of violence and reactions to violence at successive moments in time, it will be shown that Chinese people in North Sumatra employed divergent strategies of response to protect themselves against violence. Two patterns of response emerge: conciliation and confrontation. Conciliation here is understood the attempt to prevent further incidents of violence by peaceful means, including diplomacy, maintaining friendly relations, and expressing solidarity. Meanwhile, confrontation is understood as an attempt at self-protection by expressing direct opposition to perpetrators of violence who appear to target Chinese people deliberately. Ranging between conciliatory, diplomatic attempts to solve conflicts between Chinese and Indonesian people on the one hand and outright armed confrontation on the other hand, reactions of Chinese people to violence became increasingly divided between conciliation and outright confrontation.

The research underpinning this paper combines various sources – including governmental and military archives, internal organisation documents, pamphlets, newspapers and memoirs – from three perspectives, Chinese, Indonesian and Dutch. In this paper, however, I concentrate on Chinese-Indonesian relations, while leaving discussion on Dutch perspectives for another paper.

Background: Chinese people in East Sumatra

But first let me briefly provide some background information on Chinese people in East Sumatra.

Population (1930)

- ± 10% Chinese residents among the population of the former colonial Residency East Coast of Sumatra.
- 30-40% Chinese residents among the population of cities and towns like Medan, Pematangsiantar, Binjai, Tebingtinggi etc.<sup>4</sup>

Migration patterns

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<sup>4</sup> *Volkstelling van Nederlands-Indië 1930* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij 1933-1936). VII. Chinezen en andere Vreemde Oosterlingen in Nederlands-Indië.

- Relatively recent arrival of migrants, starting only after the opening up of plantation areas from 1870 onwards.<sup>5</sup>
- Plantation workers (M., *huagong*)
- Merchants (M., *huashang*)
- Professionals (M., *huaqiao*. In general migrants with occupations for which education was required, such as teachers, journalists, government officials, office employees).<sup>6</sup>

Migration of Chinese people to East Sumatra coincided with the rise of Chinese nationalism and the establishment of the Republic of China. So many of the migrants who came to East Sumatra, in especially large numbers after 1900, identified themselves as 'overseas Chinese', members of the Chinese nation, and not just with their hometown, or dialect group in South China, like many of their predecessors, Peranakan Chinese in Java, did. On arriving in East Sumatra, many migrants were already or became influenced by the Chinese nationalist movement, which aimed to strengthen China in two ways: internally to unite the Chinese people as one nation (considered still as 'loose sand', speaking different dialects), and externally against foreign imperialism by Western countries and Japan.<sup>7</sup>

Against this background, it is important to realise that the relationship between overseas Chinese with colonisers as well as Indonesian nationalists was very ambivalent. In the time of Dutch colonial rule, just like Indonesians, Chinese people were colonised by the Dutch, were subject to discrimination and political repression, but on the other hand were privileged by the Dutch as important economic allies, and therefore resented by many Indonesians.<sup>8</sup>

After Dutch rule was overthrown by the Imperial Japanese army in March 1942, the ambivalent relationship with both power holders and Indonesian population remained. China was already at war with Japan since July 1937 and became one of the Big Four Allied powers (the US, Great-Britain and the Soviet Union) after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, marking the beginning of the World War II in the Pacific theatre. Many Chinese migrants in East Sumatra considered the Japanese as enemies of China and

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<sup>5</sup> Dirk A. Buiskool, 'The Chinese Commercial Elite of Medan, 1890-1942: The Penang Connection,' *JMBRAS* 82:2 (2009) 113-129; Michael R. Godley, 'Thio Thiau Siat's Network,' in: John Butcher and Howard Dick (eds.), *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming: Business Elites and the Emergence of the Modern State in Southeast Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993) 262-271.

<sup>6</sup> Wang Gungwu, 'A note on the origins of *hua ch'iao*,' in: Wang Gungwu, *Community and nation: essays on Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1981) 118-127.

<sup>7</sup> Edmund S.K. Fung, *In search of Chinese democracy: civil opposition in Nationalist China, 1929-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 1.

<sup>8</sup> Kwee Tek Hoay, *The Origins of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia* [translated by Lea E. Williams] (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Translation Series, 1969); Lea E. Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism: The Genesis of the Pan-Chinese Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1916* (Glencoe Ill.: The Free Press, 1960).

the Chinese people.<sup>9</sup> But when the Japanese invaded East Sumatra, Chinese shopkeepers experienced harm from looting by Indonesian people, while the Japanese protected them against looting.<sup>10</sup>

Subsequently, when the Indonesian people achieved independence after the defeat of Japan in August 1945, the ambivalent relationship between Chinese and Indonesian people also remained. On the one hand, Chinese firmly supported the principle of self-determination underpinning the Atlantic Charter and the United Nations and thus the independence of the Indonesian people.<sup>11</sup> But in the meantime, China had become one of the victorious great powers in the United Nations, which greatly enhanced the pride of Chinese people and made some of them arrogant rather than sympathetic to the Indonesian independence movement.<sup>12</sup>

Exploring patterns of response

Turning point 1: September 1945

Against this background, one month after the news arrived in East Sumatra that the independence of Indonesia had been proclaimed by Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta in Jakarta, a clash occurred between Chinese people and Indonesian people in Medan, Pematangsiantar and other towns in East Sumatra. September 1945 was a time when it had not yet become clear who was going to rule Indonesia. Although the Republic of Indonesia had already been established, it was not officially inaugurated in East Sumatra until 6 October.<sup>13</sup> Nor was it clear that the British Army would arrive in East Sumatra to accept the Japanese surrender and repatriate Allied prisoners of war and internees. Meanwhile, some Chinese people began to fly the flag of the Republic of China and celebrate the victory of China. As Biro Sejarah PRIMA (Pejuang Republik Indonesia Medan Area) writes:

“In those circles also circulated news that will occupy Indonesia is the Chinese army [as part of the Allied occupation forces]. This make part of them became arrogant and vainglorious, and then performed actions and words that offended the Indonesian people, so that in some places in Medan and Siantar fights occurred between the Indonesian nation and Chinese around September 15 [1945].”<sup>14</sup>

This incident was the first clash between Chinese and Indonesian people East Sumatra after Indonesia achieved independence. Still only in September 1945, one month after the

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<sup>9</sup> Yoji Akashi, *The Nanyang National Salvation Movement, 1937-1941* (Lawrence: Center for East Asian Studies, University of Kansas, 1970); Adam McKeown, ‘Conceptualizing Chinese diasporas, 1842 to 1949,’ *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58:2 (1999) 306-337, 326; Rana Mitter, *Forgotten ally: China’s World War II, 1937-1945* (New York 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Hamka, *Kenang-kenangan hidup* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Pustaka Antara, 1966), 181-183; Interviews B. Tanoedji, by Dirk A. Buiskool, Medan, 3 October 2000 and 12 January 2001 (Stichting Mondelinge Geschiedenis Indonesië (SMGI), interviews 1650.1 and 1650.2).

<sup>11</sup> Manifesto of the first general meeting of the members of the “Hua Chiao Chung Hui, Medan”, 9 December 1945, 2.10.62: 3950.

<sup>12</sup> Hamka, *Kenang-kenangan hidup*, 273, 282.

<sup>13</sup> Biro Sejarah PRIMA, *Medan Area Mengisi Proklamasi*, 125.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 721.

proclamation of 17 August, the clashes occurred well before the first violent clash between Indonesian independence fighters and Dutch soldiers, which happened another month later, on 13 October (*Peristiwa Jalan Bali*, 'Bali street Incident').

Now for the response of Chinese people: on 17 September, five Chinese organizations, together representing journalists, youth and the former anti-Japanese association, issued a statement calling up for unity and cooperation between the Chinese and Indonesian people. It ends by saying:

"Beloved brothers! In name of the intellectuals of all cultural directions, journalists and patriotic youth groups, representing overseas Chinese people in East Sumatra, we pay respect, bear responsibility and offer a hand to our beloved Indonesian brothers! Indonesian brothers! Overseas Chinese people, on the basis of the right of self-determination, support the independence movement of the Indonesian people! Indonesia for the Indonesian people! Long live Indonesia!"<sup>15</sup>

This reaction provides the first illustration of an attempt at conciliation. By issuing a pamphlet calling for unity between Chinese and Indonesian people, the five Chinese organisations used peaceful means to prevent violence from escalating, taking responsibility instead of blaming others, and emphasising friendly relations and solidarity between the two peoples. According to the authors of Biro Sejarah PRIMA, prominent leaders of the independence movement themselves, the statement did indeed do much to ease the atmosphere and reconcile Chinese and Indonesian people.<sup>16</sup>

#### Turning point 2: December 1945

However, by December 1945, the situation had again become tense. The Allied forces had landed in East Sumatra, as well as a small number of Dutch officers of the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA), including the notorious Lt. Raymond Westerling. The first clash between Indonesian Youth and Lt. Westerling had occurred on 13 October. The flag of the Republic of Indonesia just been officially raised on 6 October, inaugurating the Province of Sumatra and the city of Medan as its capital. However, it was also a time when the Republican government, army (*Tentara Keamanan Rakyat*, TKR) and police (*Kepolisian Negara Indonesia*) were not yet able to preserve law and order. The security of life and possessions of civilians could not be guaranteed, and especially many wealthy Chinese and shopkeepers suffered from unchecked crime, robbery, extortion, even kidnap and murder.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Pamphlet calling for unity between Chinese and Indonesian people, issued by Perhimpunan Wartawan-Wartawan Tionghoa Soematera, Ban Penyelidikan Soal-Soal Indonesia, Lembaga Anti-Fascist Soematera, Perkoempoelan Penghidoepan Baroe Soematera, Medan, 17 September 1945, Nationaal Archief (Den Haag), Netherlands forces Intelligence Services [NEFIS] en Centrale Militaire Inlichtingendienst [CMI] in Nederlands-Indië, 2.10.62: 5404 (hereafter NA, NEFIS/CMI, 2.10.62).

<sup>16</sup> Biro Sejarah PRIMA, *Medan Area Mengisi Proklamasi*, 722.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 223-225. See also Anthony Reid, *The blood of the people: revolution and the end of traditional rule in Northern Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979) 148-177.

In order to find protection, Chinese people formed the Gabungan Perkumpulan Tionghoa Perantauan (GPTP, 'Overseas Chinese General Association') – we are zooming in on Medan now –, which represented the Chinese people in Medan and tried to secure protection with the authorities. Following the policy of the Republic of China, Chinese migrants in East Sumatra maintained neutrality as long as the Netherlands was not willing to recognise the independence of Indonesia. Therefore, the GPTP maintained contact with both Republican and Allied authorities, as well as leadership of independent Indonesian struggle groups (*badan perjuangan*) such as the Markas Pengawal Pesindo [Pemuda Sosialis Pesindo] ('Head Quarter of the Indonesian Socialist Youth Guards'), the struggle group guarding the part of Medan where most Chinese people lived. But when asking authorities for protection proved to no avail, the GPTP decided to raise a 'protection committee' to discuss alternative options to obtain protection against rising crime and violence in the Chinese quarter of Medan.<sup>18</sup> By 13 December, Chinese newspaper *Harian Kerakjatan* ('Democracy Daily') published a call for recruits for a Barisan Pengawal Tionghoa (BPT, 'Chinese guard brigade', or 'Chinese Security Corps' as it was called in English. In Mandarin: Bao'andui, better known as Pao An Tui), soon to be established in order to 'lend assistance to upholding the public order' in Medan.<sup>19</sup>

Although the Barisan Pengawal Tionghoa later became very notorious as 'collaborator' of the Dutch, it was not so at the beginning.<sup>20</sup> Mind you that also the organisations who had released the conciliatory statement after the September 1945 incident were also represented in the GPTP, and were among the organisations that taken the initiative to raise a Chinese home guard. In the beginning, the BPT was not armed with fire arms. It operated more like a household alarm system, sending out warning by sounding the gong installed in households as soon as a robbery was about to take place somewhere in the neighbourhood. A small group of recruits, armed only with sticks, would then arrive at the house to scare off the robbers.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the GPTP obtained approval of both Republican authorities and Allied officers in Medan.<sup>22</sup> So when the BPT made its first appearance in the city, early in January 1946, it marched through the streets to introduce itself to the public and make its formal appearance to the Governor of Sumatra, Teuku Mohammad Hasan. *Soeloeh Merdeka* reports that

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<sup>18</sup> Outlines of organisation, manifesto and members of the Hua Chiao Chung Hui, Medan, 9 December 1945, NA, NEFIS/CMI, 2.10.62: 3950; *Harian Kerakjatan*, 12 December 1945.

<sup>19</sup> *Harian Kerakjatan*, 13 December 1945. Also see: Report on the Pao An Tui by Chief Constable of the Police in Medan, W.G. Eybergen, Medan, 30 October 1947, Nationaal Archief (Den Haag), Ministerie van Defensie: Archieven van de Strijdkrachten in Nederlands-Indië, 2.13.132: 1340.

<sup>20</sup> Nasrul Hamdani, *Komunitas Cina di Medan dalam Lintasan Tiga Kekuasaan 1930-1960* (Jakarta: LIPI Press, 2013); Martin Sitompul, 'Teror Pao An Tui di Medan,' *Majalah Historia* [undated], URL: <https://historia.id/militer/articles/teror-pao-an-tui-di-medan-v2ew5> (Accessed 31-08-2019).

<sup>21</sup> Weekly intelligence summary no. 11, HQ 26<sup>th</sup> Indian Division, Medan, 1 January 1946, attached to Report on Sumatra no. 2, Lt. C.A.M. Brondgeest, Medan, 6 January 1946, Nationaal Archief (Den Haag), Algemene Secretarie van de Nederlands-Indische Regering en de daarbij gedeponeerde Archieven, 2.10.14: 3100.

<sup>22</sup> Barisan Pengawal Tionghoa di Medan,' *Harian Kerakjatan*, 18 December 1945

“This brigade will work together with the police, TKR, Partai Nasional Indonesia, Pemuda Sosialis Indonesia and other associations, and when the situation is safe again, this brigade will be disbanded as soon as possible.”<sup>23</sup>

So, here in this incident, what we see is a combination of confrontation (opposing perpetrators directly), and conciliation (in the meantime continuing to maintain good relations with Republican authorities).

### Turning point 3: April 1946

However, tensions heightened quickly. Members of the Barisan Pengawal Tionghoa clashed repeatedly with robbers. And not just robbers, also robbers claiming to operate in name of the Republic, demanding ‘contributions’ to the Republic in the form of food, goods or money. Or a Chinese person would be accused of helping the Allies or the Dutch, of opposing the Republic. It did not help that BPT members tended to turn to the Allied forces more than to the Republican police, fuelling suspicions among Indonesians that the BPT was getting too close with the British and the Dutch. Its neutrality became more and more doubtful.<sup>24</sup>

I think that it is important to realise that the Chinese Guard Brigade became part of the struggle for power that was already going on in Medan, between Republican forces defending independence against Dutch return, Allied occupation forces, returning Dutch, remaining Japanese (and various struggle groups and youth groups competing with each other). It was in the months after the social revolution in East Sumatra, when radical nationalists staged a large scale attack on the indigenous aristocracy,<sup>25</sup> a time of intense polarisation between pro- and anti-republic. Accusing your rival of collaboration with the Dutch proved a very powerful tool in this context of spiralling polarisation.<sup>26</sup>

Tensions escalated at the end of March/beginning of April 1946. Dramatic events followed each other in rapid succession: on 29 March the directors of the BPT received an ultimatum from people’s armies united in the Persatuan Perjuangan (‘Struggle Union’), ordering the BPT to either dissolve into the Indonesian police or disband altogether, or else the security of Chinese living outside Medan ‘could not be guaranteed’, according to a Dutch intelligence report.<sup>27</sup> The next day the house of the president of the BPT was attacked by a group of thirty Indonesians armed with hand grenades. Five BPT members were kidnapped.<sup>28</sup> The

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Barisan pengawal Tionghoa,’ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 4 January 1946.

<sup>24</sup> Political and economic overview of North Sumatra, (1-15 January 1946), CO AMACAB and Nefis, NA, NEFIS/CMI, 2.10.62: 725.

<sup>25</sup> Mohammad Said, ‘Apa itu “Revolusi sosial tahun 1946” di Sumatera Timur’, *Merdeka*, 17 February-1 March 1972. Translated by Benedict Anderson and Tunggul Siagian as ‘What was the “Social Revolution of 1946” in East Sumatra’, *Indonesia* 15 (1973), pp. 145-86.

<sup>26</sup> Takao Fusuyama, *A Japanese memoir of Sumatra, 1945-1946: love and hatred in the liberation war* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project Monograph Series no 71, 1993) 43.

<sup>27</sup> NEFIS Publication no. 21, ‘Regionale berichten betreffende de politieke ontwikkeling op Sumatra,’ Batavia, 4 September 1946, NA, NEFIS/CMI, 2.10.62: 636.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Soerat Terboeka. Penerangan Ketoea Pengawal Tionghoa (oleh Lim Sheng),’ *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 11 April 1946.



next day, the PAT received fire arms from the British.<sup>29</sup> During the following weeks, newspapers repeatedly reported violent clashes and even shoot-outs (*tembak-menembak*) between BPT (now with arms) and 'wild youth' (*pemuda liar*), as newspaper *Soeloeh Merdeka* called the opponents of the BPT.<sup>30</sup>

Surprisingly, even during this outright violent confrontation between BPT and the Persatuan Perjuangan, meetings continued to take place at the diplomatic level. In May, a delegation of Chinese leaders and Indonesian authorities even went to Jakarta to convene with Prime Minister Soetan Sjahrir and Chinese Consul-General Tsiang Chia Tung in order to obtain a resolution.<sup>31</sup> In the very same article reporting on the fighting between the BPT and 'wild youth', *Soeloeh Merdeka* describes how the BPT and Republican police continued to work together:

"According to various accounts we have obtained, the shootings were released by a number of 'wild young men' and the Chinese Guards, who were said to only shoot up to scare the robber party. Yesterday, after midday we saw several members of the Chinese Guard Brigade with firearms, obtained from Allied (British) troops, guarding Wahidin Road and its surroundings. Two suspects were arrested and handed over to the State Police."<sup>32</sup>

But in the end, the differences proved irreconcilable. The representatives of the GTP voted about how to react to the ultimatum and were not able to reach a solution between them.<sup>33</sup> One part voted to comply with the ultimatum and disband PAT; the other part voted to reject the ultimatum and preserve PAT. The result was that the GTP, the federation of virtually all Chinese organisations in Medan, had split up.<sup>34</sup> GTP rejected responsibility over PAT, but PAT continued as a separate body, and on its own, (without support of an numerically unknown but significant part of the Chinese community, but with support of the other part) outright rejected the second ultimatum that was issued by the Persatuan Perjuangan on 26 April, set on a course of outright confrontation with suspected robbers and perpetrators of violence.<sup>35</sup> GTP on the other hand set on a course of outright conciliation – with the republic and its supporters that is, because at the same time as pledging loyalty to the republic, the GTP declared opposition to Dutch return and gave up

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<sup>29</sup> NEFIS Publication no. 21, 'Regionale berichten betreffende de politieke ontwikkeling op Sumatra,' Batavia, 4 September 1946, NA, NEFIS/CMI, 2.10.62: 636.

<sup>30</sup> *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 25 April 1946.

<sup>31</sup> NEFIS Publication no. 21, 'Regionale berichten betreffende de politieke ontwikkeling op Sumatra,' Batavia, 4 September 1946, NA, NEFIS/CMI, 2.10.62: 636.

<sup>32</sup> *Soeloeh Merdeka*, 25 April 1946.

<sup>33</sup> Report on the Chinese Security Corps (Pao An Tui), Liaison Officer J. Hoogland, Medan, 25 October 1946, Nationaal Archief (Den Haag), Procureur-Generaal bij het Hooggerechtshof van Nederlands-Indië, 1945-1950, 2.10.17: 679.

<sup>34</sup> General report on the Medan Chinese General Association, 9/12-1945 to 31/1-1947 (English translation Nefis, original document not enclosed) 2.10.62: 1566.

<sup>35</sup> 'Kekoeasaan Pengawal Tionghoa di Medan. Semakin diperbesar Serikat,' *Berita Antara*, 30 July 1946.

neutrality.<sup>36</sup> Or as Indonesian news agency *Berita Antara* reported in the months following the break between the BPT and GTP:

“East Sumatra residents protest against the use of the Chinese as Nica soldiers (soldiers in service of the Dutch). It was not long ago that the Federation of Chinese Associations [GTP] throughout East Sumatra denounced the actions of "Poh An Tui" (Chinese guards who were armed by the Allied forces) in Medan and protested against the use of Chinese people as Nica soldiers. (...) [The GTP] will announce that the Overseas Chinese General Association is not related to "Pohantui" (...), file protests against "Pohantui" for committing acts that are hostile towards Indonesian brothers and requests "Pohantui" to accept proposals from the Resident of East Sumatra and the Representative of Medan.”<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

I could continue to provide examples of key moments like these for the remainder of the revolution, but I stop here, although more turning points follow, showing how the two patterns of conciliation and confrontation continued throughout the revolution. In this paper I attempted to illustrate the two patterns of response emerging from the various reactions of Chinese people to violence, and how the two patterns of conciliation and confrontation related to each other. Sometimes the distinction between the use of conciliation (like GTP in the final example) and confrontation (like BPT during the third turning point) may seem very clear, but looking closer and back in time at several successive incidents may reveal that the distinction could be blurred rather than clear.

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<sup>36</sup> 'Digoenakannya Tenaga Tionghoa Diprotes. Oleh perkoempoelan Tionghoa perantauan,' *Berita Antara*, 18 July 1946.

<sup>37</sup> 'Pedoedoek Tionghoa Soematera Timoer Memprotes Pemakaian Bangsa Tionghoa Menjadi Serdadoe Nica', *Berita Antara*, 24 July 1946.

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