

Pematang Siantar in the Early Independence Period 1945-1947

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Abstract:

This study examines the strategic role of Pematang Siantar during the early period of Indonesian independence (1945–1947), when the city functioned as the administrative and military center of the Republic of Indonesia in Sumatra. Using a historical research method, the study employs heuristic, source criticism, interpretation, and historiographical approaches to analyze archival records, government documents, memoirs, and secondary historical sources. The findings reveal that the relocation of the Sumatra Provincial Government from Medan to Pematang Siantar in April 1946 was driven by the deteriorating security situation caused by Allied and Dutch (NICA) military operations. During approximately twenty months, Pematang Siantar became the center of governmental administration, military coordination, and logistical support for the Republican struggle, particularly in the Medan Area. The city also played a significant role in the reorganization of the Indonesian National Army (TNI), the establishment of the Regional Defense Council and the Regional Struggle Bureau, the issuance of the Province of Sumatra's Republican currency, and the consolidation of national unity through visits by prominent leaders, including Vice President Mohammad Hatta. Despite internal challenges such as logistical shortages and tensions among military groups, Pematang Siantar remained a vital revolutionary city that strengthened the Republican government's resistance against Dutch military aggression. The study concludes that Pematang Siantar made a decisive contribution to sustaining the Republic of Indonesia in Sumatra by serving not only as a temporary capital but also as a strategic political, military, and economic center during one of the most critical phases of the Indonesian Revolution.

Keywords:

Pematang Siantar, Indonesian Revolution, Sumatra Provincial Government, Indonesian National Army (TNI), Dutch Military Aggression.

I. Introduction

In the PPKI session on August 22, 1945, the city of Medan was designated as the capital of Sumatra Province and Mr. TM Hasan as Governor of Sumatra. Medan was the beginning of the long struggle to uphold the proclamation of Indonesian independence in North Sumatra. It is known that after receiving official confirmation of his appointment as Governor on October 2, 1945, Mr. T.M. Hasan then ordered the raising of the red and white flag throughout Sumatra and began issuing decrees. This decree officially marked the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia Government for the Province of Sumatra in Medan. However, the formation of the Republic continued to face obstacles. These obstacles came from the military forces of the Dutch, the Indonesian National Armed Forces (NICA), the Allies, and their agents. Brigadier General TED Kelly as Commander of Allied Forces in Medan on October 18 1945 issued an edict prohibiting Indonesians from holding weapons and had to hand them over to Allied troops.

This proclamation aroused suspicion among Indonesian youths toward the British army and convinced Indonesian leaders that the British were essentially colonial forces aiding the Dutch in recolonizing Indonesia. This suspicion became evident after they began provocative and terrorized the Indonesian people after arriving in Medan. This led to numerous physical clashes between the republican youth and Allied/NICA troops, which made Medan unsafe as

the capital of Sumatra Province. Therefore, in mid-April 1946, the Sumatra Governor's Office and all its offices, as well as the TKR Division IV Headquarters and its entire staff, moved to Pematang Siantar. Pematang Siantar eventually became a bustling city during the early days of the proclamation. The city was filled with young fighters, government officials, and refugees from the Medan area, and visited by national figures from Java. This article is intended to briefly describe various historical events that demonstrate the importance of the city of Pematang Siantar during the early period of Indonesia's struggle for independence.

II. Research Methods

2.1 Migration to Pematang Siantar

The paragraph above mentioned that one of the main reasons for moving the provincial government center from Medan to Pematang Siantar was the unfavorable security situation. The following section will describe various Allied attacks on Republican troop bases in Medan, particularly since March 1946, which led to the relocation of the Republican government center to Pematang Siantar.

After the explosion of the March 1946 Incident The situation in Medan was becoming increasingly unsafe. In Medan, the new British Commander, Heddley, began military attacks on Republican military bases on the Medan-Area border. In these attacks, several political figures, such as M. Saleh Umar, were captured. On March 9, 1946, British troops again attacked the People's Army military base in the Sunggal area. A day later, the TRI military bases in Pancur Batu and Trepes were attacked, and several weapons were seized by the British. A British troop unit was then stationed in front of the Sultan of Deli Palace to guard the palace from disturbances by revolutionary youth.

Despite efforts by both civilian and military leaders to reorganize the government structure in Medan and control the people's militia. Although There were efforts to quell the riots that occurred in March, but the city of Medan remained unsafe. While violence outside the Medan Area began to subside, armed clashes with the British continued within the Medan Area. On March 15, 1946, the British attacked the People's Army military base on Brayan Island, seizing the army's weapons and supplies. A day later, the People's Army retaliated by attacking the KNIL headquarters on Brayan Island. Two days later, the TRI headquarters and training center were attacked. They seized a large number of weapons and detained 28 TRI officers and two officials from the People's Economy of the Republic of Indonesia (ERRI), including D. Egon and Burhanuddin. The British military attack did not stop there. The following day, the TRI base at the Marendal Plantation was attacked and many weapons were seized by the British. Simultaneously, the British attacked the Republican prisoner-of-war camp in Sukaramai and freed 19 prisoners. At that time, 164 Republicans were captured by the British. The harsh British actions in the Medan Area created several problems for the Republican government leaders. Both Dr. Amir and Achmad Tahir realized that a major confrontation with the British would threaten the security of the Republican government in East Sumatra. Dr. Amir issued an official statement on March 19, 1944.6, the day after the British attacked Sukaramai and Marendal. The statement contained a call for a peaceful solution, which read as follows: We are not at war with the British. We must resolve the difficulties we experience with them through diplomacy, so that we do not gain a bad name internationally and do not harm the peace negotiations in Batavia (Jakarta).

Dr. Amir, Achmad Tahir, and other Government and TRI leaders in Medan had been in constant contact with the British Commander since the outbreak of the Social Revolution. They continued to strive to implement the diplomatic policy adopted by the Central Government. On

March 21, 1946, nearly three weeks after the outbreak of the social revolution, Mr. TM Hasan finally returned to Medan from Palembang. The following day, he held a meeting with TRI and civilian leaders. At the meeting, it was decided that a KNI meeting for all of Sumatra would soon be held. The meeting also decided to move the provincial capital of Sumatra to Pematang Siantar, given the increasing pressure from the British military. However, the Commander of Division IV of the TRI would remain in Medan to oversee the activities of the martial law government established after the social revolution by Achmad Tahir.

Achmad Tahir, as Commander of Division IV of the Indonesian National Army (TRI), immediately implemented changes in government. TRI's Head of Supplies, Mahruzar, was appointed Resident of East Sumatra, replacing Junus Nasution. When Mr. TM Hasan departed for Pematang Siantar to arrange the transfer of government, Dr. Amir and Achmad Tahir continued to assure the British that they would continue to cooperate with the British in maintaining security and order in Medan. They also explained that all Republican military forces would remain stationed outside the Medan-Area boundary. As previously known, on January 1, 1946, TRI figures attempted to unify the military organization whose structure was still weak. Due to the provocation of the British/NICA troops in Medan and its surroundings, the Commander of Division IV instructed that existing troops be moved out of the city. The transfer of TRI troops outside the city was intended to form a disciplined and consolidated unit, so that the training carried out could proceed according to plan.

Most of the members of the Division troops IV TRI moved outside Medan, to Brastagi, while Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) also moved to Pematang Siantar. News broadcasts resumed after equipment was rebuilt, allowing broadcasts to resume normally. The relocation of troops and radio equipment was followed by the gradual relocation of other government institutions to Pematang Siantar and Tebing Tinggi.

Meanwhile, on April 12, Mr. TM Hasan decided to appoint 100 members of the Sumatran House of Representatives and also announced the names of its members. Among them, twenty members were appointed from East Sumatra and eleven from Tapanuli. They were Sutan Seri Moelia, Amin Soetardjo, Lokot Batubara, Oesman Effendi, Oesman Jusuf, Mrs. Moenar Sastro Hamidjojo, Abdullah Jusuf, Tama Ginting, Natar Zainuddin, Saleh Umar, SM Tarigan, Jusuf Abdullah, Kario Siregar, Nolong Sirait, Dr. Gindo Siregar, Marnicus Hutasoit, SH SiMatupang, Dr. Sunaryo, Haji Abdul Rachman Sjihab, and Bachtiar Junus. The members from Tapanuli were Patuan Raja Natigos Lumbantobing, SM Simanjuntak, Mr. Rufinus Lumbantobing, Raja Djundjungan Lubis, Sutan Mangaradja Muda, Sutan Naga, Baginda Kalidjundjung, Raja Barita Sinambela, G. Silitonga, Abdul Hakim, and Washington Hutagalung. The DPR session was to be held in Bukit Tinggi on April 17, 1946. At that time, Mr. TM Hasan had dissolved the Military Emergency Government in East Sumatra and appointed Luat Siregar as Resident of East Sumatra.

The only person who remained in the city of Medan was the Mayor of Medan, the Republic of Indonesia, Mr. Mohammad Jusuf. Mr. Mohammad Jusuf's position indirectly served as the Representative of the Republic and also as a liaison between the Republic and the Allied forces. Vital institutions, such as the Police Station, Post Office, Telephone Office, Railway Station, and General Hospital, were maintained despite constant terror and intimidation. Strangely, the British army did not take these buildings by force, the reason being to give the Dutch the opportunity to build up their forces. The political policy of the Allied/British army invited the Republic to negotiate, indirectly opening up the opportunity for the Dutch to use Medan as a military power base after the Republic left.

After issuing the decision to appoint members of the DPR of Sumatra, Mr. TM Hasan and Amir Sjarifuddin who was visiting Sumatra (Medan) to investigate the Social Revolution case - left for Bukit Tinggi. A day later, Abdul Xarim MS and Luat Siregar, along with 18 other members of the House of Representatives, also left for Bukit Tinggi. The House of Representatives session opened on April 17, 1946, and was attended by one hundred members. Governor Mr. TM Hasan was elected as the Chairperson of the Session and the leader of the Socialist Party, Dr. Gindo Siregar as the Deputy Chairperson. Several members of the Executive Board were also elected, namely: Dr. Gindo Siregar and Dr. Sunaryo (East Sumatra), Mr. Rufinus Lumbantobing (Tapanuli), Soetikno (Aceh), Tjik Wan (South Sumatra), and Mohammad Nasrun (West Sumatra).

The DPR session successfully decided on the formal structure of the Republic of Sumatra's government. Fundamentally, the DPR Sumatra decided that: The province is headed by a Governor, the sub-province is headed by a deputy governor (Young Governor), the residency is headed by a resident. The district is headed by a regent, the kawedanaan by a Wedana, and the Kecamatan by a Tjamat and under him there are Heads of Nagari, Huta, Kampung, villages and so on. In addition, laws were passed establishing government departments responsible for finance, social welfare, health, communications, religion, information, security, and defense. Each department had branches at the residency level. The DPR session also approved the creation of a special department to handle economic development, education, and plantations.

The important decision of the DPR Session was the division of Sumatra into three sub-provinces (administrative areas), namely North Sumatra (Aceh, East Sumatra, and Tapanuli Residency), Central Sumatra (West Sumatra, Riau, and Jambi Residency), and South Sumatra. - (Palembang, Bengkulu, Lampung, and Bangka/Belitung Residency). Each province is an administrative region without autonomous powers or government institutions and is headed by a Vice Governor. The Vice Governor is responsible for coordinating the various residency governments within his/her region. The meeting also decided to move the provincial capital of Sumatra from Medan to Pematang Siantar. Security and transportation issues were the strong basis for this decision, as seen in the quote below:

"Due to the difficult transportation situation, the journey of the Working Body members from Bukit Tinggi back to their respective places and from there to the capital of Sumatra takes quite a bit of time.

Due to the critical situation in Medan, the office of the Governor of Sumatra was decided to be moved to Pematang Siantar and with that, the Working Body of the People's Representative Council of Sumatra must also be based in Pematang Siantar..."

The Sumatran House of Representatives (DPR) session concluded on April 19, and Mr. TM Hasan then returned to Pematang Siantar. Implementing the DPR's decisions was no easy task. The Department of Plantations, Information, and the Economy was established only in May. In early July This was followed by the formation of the Government Advisory Council for Plantations and Economic Development. This council was led by Ir. Indratjaya and Dr. Gindo Siregar. The council was tasked with overseeing government economic activities in Sumatra, including operating the oil fields at Pangkalan Berandan and Pangkalan Susu, controlling taxes, currency circulation, and trade. In August, other departments were also established: Health, Education, Religion, and Defense.

The relocation of the center of government took place secretly to avoid threats and action from the Allied/NICA military authorities. After the relocation of the office of the Governor of Sumatra and the Headquarters of the TKR Division IV/TRI Sumatra Command at

the end of April 1946, then followed by the East Sumatra level struggle bodies moving to Tebing Tinggi, including 2 (two) local newspapers, namely Soeloeh Merdeka and Mimbar Oemoem including their printing units.

To carry out the activities of the Republic of Indonesia government in Medan, Mr. Mohammad Jusuf was assigned, while the TRI Division IV/Sumatra Command maintained its representative office on Jalan Thamrin Medan under the leadership of Captain Asmatuddin. As a result of this transfer of civil and military government, the majority of the population also moved en masse. This action was the first evacuation in the struggle to establish and maintain the independence of the Republic of Indonesia.

Although the relocation process went smoothly, a problem was the lack of buildings in Pematang Siantar that could be used as government offices and accommodate all the employees who moved. But the revolutionary spirit removed that obstacle. With a spirit of mutual cooperation, an office that should have been a government office was converted into the mayor's office. Provincial offices and agencies were merged with district-level offices and agencies. The printing press and the daily newspaper "Soeloeh Merdeka" occupied the "Dezon" shop building, where all their employees resided. Pematang Siantar City Hall, formerly the office of the Assistant Resident of Simalungun and Karolanden, became the office of the Sumatra Provincial Government, now located on Jalan Merdeka, Pematang Siantar. It was from here that the wheels of government and military operations to destroy Dutch/Allied military posts in the Medan area were shaped, and the threat of Dutch military aggression was discussed and decided. Revolutionary fighters were born and developed in this city. This spirit also led the residents of Pematang Siantar to sacrifice their homes and other possessions to be used as offices or residences for civil servants and freedom fighters.

2.2 The Role of Pematang Siantar in the Struggle for Independence

A revolutionary city is the nickname for a city inhabited by revolutionary fighters who possessed a fiery spirit and soul in defending the Republic of Indonesia from the Dutch colonialists and their henchmen. Pematang Siantar certainly deserves the nickname of a revolutionary city, because the city was indeed filled with fighters who also mixed with refugees and civil and military government bureaucrats, as mentioned in the paragraph above. It was not uncommon for arguments to occur between the leaders of the militia and officials of the Governor of Sumatra regarding the provision of war logistics. Marnicus Hutasoit, a member of the Governor's staff who handled the militia issues, well described the revolutionary atmosphere as follows:

"The employees' salaries had to be paid, and the army and the militia demanded their share. The Medan Area Front had to be defended. Attention and activity shifted from the front to the rear of the front, namely to Tebing Tinggi and Pematang Siantar, around the Resident's and Governor's offices. The most important parts of these offices were the plantation product licensing and finance departments. The struggle agencies often requested licenses to export plantation products. Licenses were mostly sold to merchants. The militia members usually did not have enough capital to realize the licenses so they could export them themselves....Finally, all the licenses fell into the hands of the Chinese. Many merchants became members of the militia's supply division. They usually lived behind the militia. Those who were ordered to come to the front were the heads of the militia's supplies, who crowded around the Resident's and Governor's offices. When they came to the office, they usually wore fighter's uniforms,

high boots, and pistols. When they asked for licenses, the following words came out: "Our children are no longer eating; the children at the front have no clothes." If the children leave their posts, the Dutch will continue to Tebing Tinggi." "Do the children have to come from the front to get their licenses, later the children will take them for you." "Don't forget, because the children are guarding the front, you can sit here in peace." The pistol is usually placed on the table, or the pistol belt is moved slightly forward so that the pistol is clearly visible. There was an incident where the attic of the Governor's office was shot at because money was not paid out quickly enough. A leader of the militia put his finger in his mouth, then took it out and said "Don't wait until this finger is dry. There must be money."

This depicts the revolutionary atmosphere in the city of Pematang Siantar, which served as the administrative center of North Sumatra Province. It is a dialogue between Marnicus Hutasoit, a member of the Regional Defense Council, and one of the leaders of the people's militia (*lasykar*) tasked with collecting war logistics, including money, for the struggle on the front lines. This dialogue clearly illustrates the crucial role of Pematang Siantar in the early days of the independence revolution in Sumatra. Pematang Siantar was the capital of the Republic's government in Sumatra. From here, all strategies for the struggle against the Dutch military in the Sumatra region were controlled. Aboe Bakar Loebis stated that Pematang Siantar at that time resembled cities in the United States at the end of the 19th century. Armed men, members of the *lasykar*, were everywhere. On the one hand, this reflected the strong public support for the Republic of Indonesia, but on the other, it also demonstrated a low sense of national consciousness, as each people's militia had its own means and strategies for fighting. Coordination between the republic's armed units was extremely minimal. The revolutionary atmosphere was a "heated" one, often leading to friction and arguments between fellow fighters. However, this atmosphere actually explains the busyness of organizing the distribution of war logistics from this city to attack the Dutch/Allied positions in the Medan Area.

From Pematang Siantar, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, Sumatra Province, continuously strived to rehabilitate the economy devastated by the Japanese occupation. Since mid-1946, the population's food and clothing conditions have improved. The use of sackcloth has virtually disappeared. Furthermore, the government has guided the people's economy through cooperatives. Among these efforts are efforts to increase rice cultivation, build irrigation, distribute land, and import staple goods from abroad through barter for Indonesian produce. In the social sector, the government has established a committee to manage *romusya* (a place for the poor) and the poor, which then collaborates with the Religious Affairs Office. The Republican government faced financial difficulties because, officially, it did not have its own currency until 1946. In Sumatra, the only currency in circulation was Japanese currency. There was too much Japanese currency in circulation, causing its value to steadily decline. Conversely, prices of goods continued to soar. The cause of the inflation of the Japanese currency was apparently the actions of the Dutch government. It was widely known that the British government in Singapore had obtained the printing press, and the printing equipment subsequently fell into Dutch hands. With this equipment, the Dutch were able to distribute counterfeit money throughout the republic. To overcome this problem, the government of the Province of Sumatra printed its own currency with the name of the Republic of Indonesia Money of the Province of Sumatra in denominations of five *roepiah* and ten *roepiah*. Pematang Siantar's role in the struggle for independence can also be seen from four points: first, the Regional Defense Council-Regional Struggle Bureau, the Reorganization of the National Army, and Visits by National Figures, such as Hatta.

III. Results and Discussion

3.1 Regional Defense Council-Regional Struggle Bureau

In early July 1946, the Regional Defense Council (DPD) was established in Pematang Siantar. The DPD was established based on the State of Emergency Law of June 28, 1946. According to this Constitution, the DPD carried out the duties of the State Defense Council. However, in practice, the DPD served as a body that collected and distributed food and other supplies needed by the people's militia. From its headquarters in Pematang Siantar, all of these duties were carried out to support the people's militia's struggle against the NICA/Allies on the Medan Area front. To the Medan Area People's Militia Regiment Command The Regional Representative Council (DPD) provided approximately 2,000,000 Japanese shillings per month. This assistance was deemed insufficient and disappointed members of the People's Army. They saw that military units, which were legally mandated to receive government funding, were not guaranteed, let alone those based in plantation areas, mandated by the government to appropriate a portion of plantation production for their unit's expenses.

This situation ultimately led to the disappointment of several people's militia commanders, such as Timur Pane of the Flying Dragon Troops. In October 1946, his troops seized control of state plantations along the Medan-Pematang Siantar road, engaged in direct trade with Malaya, and controlled the ports at Panton Labu and Lubuk Pakam. Timur Pane's actions were finally halted by an attack by troops from the Gadjah II Division in early November 1946. This attack did not resolve the logistical supply problem for the people's militia, but instead created another complication, namely that many members of the militia directly requested assistance from the local population under the name of the Medan Area People's Militia Regiment for personal gain. Finally, on September 19, 1946, the State Defense Council issued regulation No. 19 of 1946, which stipulated that the costs for the people's militia would be borne by the government and its implementation would be carried out by the Struggle Bureau.

In Sumatra, the Regional Struggle Bureau Inspectorates did not develop as well as in Java, which oversees the People's Army Brigades. In East Sumatra, the Struggle Bureau was only formed on January 7, 1947. Officially named "Regional Struggle Bureau 49," it was headed by Major Djamin Gintings and Captain Burhanuddin from the TRI, and Abdul Wahab Siregar and Nathar Zainuddin from the Lasykar. Djamin Ginting's position was then replaced by Nathar Zainuddin.

After the improvements were made, the East Sumatra Struggle Bureau began its activities. Together with the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TRI), the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TRI) collaborated to gather strength and coordinate defense on the Medan Area front. The East Sumatra Regional Struggle Bureau, together with the TRI, also carried out activities related to the placement of personnel (TRI/lasykar) under one command and the financing of TRI and lasykar operational activities. Similar to the DPD, the Struggle Bureau disciplined the people's lasykar. Until the dissolution of the Regional Struggle Bureau 49 on September 23, 1947, the Struggle Bureau was unable to register the actual number of people's lasykar members and their weapons in East Sumatra. The Regional Struggle Bureau 49 could only estimate that, before the outbreak of the First Dutch Military Aggression, the total number of people's lasykar in East Sumatra was around 30,000 people with 10,000 weapons of various types. Nevertheless, the DPD and the Struggle Bureau were two government institutions established, among other things, to supply war logistics to support military operations against Dutch troops in the Medan Area.

3.2 Reorganization of the Indonesian National Armed Forces Command

Pematang Siantar City witnessed an important event in the reorganization of the national military. In a meeting between Amir Syarifuddin, Mr. TM Hasan, and the Commander of the TRI Sumatra, General Suhardjo, it was decided to reorganize the TRI Sumatra command structure. The TRI Command Headquarters was moved from Medan to Prapat and then based on the decision of the Head of the TRI Sumatra General Headquarters, since March 15, 1946 the TRI Headquarters was moved again to Bukit Tinggi. The Division IV Command Headquarters was moved to Pematang Siantar. The reorganization of the TRI command structure apparently underwent another change following the deterioration of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands and the threat of a Dutch military attack on the Republic of Indonesia. President Soekarno finally issued a decree to address the country's security issues.

Based on President Sukarno's Decree dated May 3, 1947, which ordered the merger of all armed forces into the Indonesian National Army. the Lasykar Rakyat and TRI commanders in East Sumatra jointly discussed the merger. On June 26, 1947, a meeting was held to continue the formation of the TNI East Sumatra. The meeting, held at the X Division Headquarters in Bah Jambi, Pematang Siantar, was attended by the Commander of X Division and his staff, representatives from Lasykar Rakyat, the Struggle Bureau, and the East Sumatra Regiment as Chairman of the Regional Defense Council. At the meeting, all agreed to join the TNI, but the form and process of the merger remained a matter of serious debate. The Lasykar commanders, whose members numbered large, demanded broad autonomy for their units within the TNI that would be formed. For example, Timur Pane stated that his already large troops should be recognized as a TNI Regiment. Jacob Siregar from the North Andalas Napindo proposed that two TNI Brigades be formed from the North Andalas Napindo troops, namely Brigade-A and Brigade-B. Brigade A will consist of the "Halilintar" Regiment and the "Barisan Harimau Liar" (Wild Tiger Brigade), with Selamat Ginting as its commander. Brigade B will consist of Napindo troops in the Medan Area, with Bedjo as its commander. Meanwhile, other Lasykar members have not yet submitted proposals. TRI officers, on the other hand, demanded that the merger entail centralization of command structure coordination. The meeting in Pematang Siantar ultimately failed to produce a concrete decision. However, the increasing possibility of military conflict with the Dutch prompted both sides to continue bargaining.

Finally, on July 13, 1947, General Suhardjo ordered all TRI and Lasykar Rakyat forces in Sumatra to immediately join the TNI. In Pematang Siantar, the TRI Commanders of Division X, between June 26, 1947 and July 13, 1947, made a temporary agreement with the most powerful Lasykar Rakyat commanders. The East Marsose Pane Army was accepted as part of the TNI. The Napindo and BHL units in Tanah Karo and Langkat were combined into TNI Brigade A, under Commander Selamat Ginting. The Lasykar Rakyat units in Deli Serdang became TNI Brigade B under Commander Bedjo. However, a number of Lasykar Rakyat units refused to obey Suhardjo's orders, especially those from Pesindo and Barisan Merah. Even those units that were accepted as part of the TNI were very few in compliance, as they had autonomy in political and economic aspects. For some of the People's Lasykar, in general they continued to operate freely as before, they competed with each other both with other People's Lasykar and with TRI, especially in competing for economic resources as a means of obtaining weapons.

3.3 Visits by National Figures

Since Pematang Siantar became the center of government of the Province of Sumatra, it was from this city that the wheels of government and the strategy of the struggle against Dutch military aggression were regulated. Here the center of the republic's government in Sumatra was located and here the "heart and soul" of the republic was at stake. Given the importance of this

city, Pematang Siantar was made the destination of visits by several national figures from the island of Java, such as Mr. Amir Syarifuddin April 1946, Mr. Hermani April 16-23, 1946, Dr. Adnand Kapau Gani (Deputy Minister of Defense) September 1946, Mr. Mohd. Roem (Minister of Home Affairs), Mr. Latuharhary, Mr. Maria Ulfah Santoso (Minister of Social Affairs), Mr. Sjafruddin Prawiranegara (Minister of Finance) in May 1947 and Vice President Mohd. Hatta and his entourage in July 1947. Their clear goal was to cultivate, develop and ignite the spirit of struggle against the return of the Dutch colonialists.

The varying timings of the visits reflect different backgrounds. Mr. Syarifuddin, as Minister of Defense, visited Medan, Tebing Tinggi, and Pematang Siantar following the outbreak of the "social revolution," which created chaos (mutual suspicion and leading to primordial conflict) in East Sumatra at the time. Several figures were seen giving public speeches, urging the people to remain united in the struggle against the Dutch. On this occasion, only Mohd. Hatta's visit will be narrated based on its political, practical, and strategic value, as it coincided with the first Dutch military aggression plan on July 21, 1947.

Hatta's visit to Sumatra was motivated by the worsening relations between the Indonesian and Dutch governments following the Linggarjati Agreement. To anticipate the worst-case scenario, President Sukarno dispatched Vice President/Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces, Drs. Mohd. Hatta, to Sumatra. The purpose of Hatta's visit was widely publicized through the press and radio broadcasts, as follows:

- a. To review/train the people of Sumatra regarding the implementation of the independence struggle so that it is in line with the independence struggle on the island of Java, as the center of the struggle.
- b. To provide an understanding to all levels of society regarding the government's intentions and aims in agreeing to the Linggarjati Agreement with the Netherlands.

In contemporary terms, Hatta's visit was intended to consolidate political resolve and unite the struggle, given the lingering threat of Dutch colonialism returning to Indonesia. This was the first visit by a high-ranking government official to Sumatra, and he planned to travel as far as Kutaraja (Banda Aceh).

Hatta's entourage departed from Tugu Station, Yogyakarta in May 1947, bound for Jakarta (Tanah Abang) to meet Prime Minister Sutan Syahrir. They then proceeded to Serang, Banten, and from Merak, crossing to Sumatra. The journey to Pematang Siantar was made overland. Hatta's entourage was met by the Governor of Sumatra, Mr. TM Hasan, in Lampung. From Lampung, they traveled along Sumatra, stopping in several major cities, such as Palembang, Bengkulu, Jambi, Pakan Baru, Bukit Tinggi, Tarutung, and Sibolga. In Palembang, he received a visit from JJ van de Velde, the Commissioner of the Dutch Government in Sumatra (Recomba). In each city he stopped, he delivered speeches urging the people to unite against the enemies of the republic. From Sibolga, the journey continued to Pematang Siantar, arriving on July 5, 1947. When he arrived in Pematang Siantar, an armed conflict was taking place between the Pesindo troops (Sarwono), the Pesindo Knights (Abdul Malik Munir) and the Marsose troops (Timur Pane).

Upon hearing the news, Hatta immediately held a briefing at the Governor of Sumatra's office and the following day summoned all the leading fighters from across East Sumatra. The meeting, held on July 6, 1947, was held at the TRI Division X Headquarters in Bah-Jambi. During the meeting, Hatta ordered all warring troops to reconcile and strengthen unity, as the enemy was threatening them. Timur Pane immediately interrupted the discussion. He said, "The Marsuse Army obeys the Vice President's instructions. I will immediately order my troops to lay

down their arms." Sarwono from Pesindo also stated the same thing, "Pesindo is ready to lay down its arms and Pesindo is also ready to destroy the Dutch colonialists who are on the front lines of the Medan Area." The Vice President's instructions were ultimately obeyed. Hatta then explained the political situation in Java after the signing of the Linggarjati Agreement. According to him, the Dutch would most likely carry out military aggression against the Republic of Indonesia. Hatta's mandate was able to raise the fighting spirit of these military figures. "If the Vice President agrees, the Marsuse troops are able to immediately destroy the Dutch colonialists from the Medan Area," said Timur Pane, who at that time had appointed himself as Major General. These words were essentially emotional statements so as not to be said to be less "fierce" than his competitor, Sarwono Sastro Sutardjo, commander of the Napindo troops. In reality, the Dutch military aggression could not be stopped until it reached the center of the Sumatran Provincial Government in Pematang Siantar. Seeing the fighting spirit that was already so high, Hatta then instructed in a meeting held on July 16, 1947 to; (1) immediately seize the city of Medan from the hands of the Dutch colonialists (2) no later than before the Eid al-Fitr 1947, the city of Medan must be in our hands.

From then on, activity erupted at the Governor's Office, the TRI Division X Headquarters, the Lasykar – Lasykar Rakyat Headquarters, the Regional Defense Agency, the Struggle Bureau, and the Simalungun Regent's office. They called on young people to immediately join the republican forces. Young people from Tapanuli and surrounding Simalungun came to Pematang Siantar to join the Lasykar and TRI units. Public kitchens were immediately opened, and women began Red Cross training. A week later, the TRI and Lasykar began sending troops to the Medan Front Area, such as Tembung and Tanjung Morawa.

Thus, on the morning of July 21, 1947, Dutch infantry supported by armored vehicles, artillery, and fighter aircraft attacked Republican defense positions on the Medan Area border. Hatta immediately met with several prominent figures from the struggle, both in Pematang Siantar and Tebing Tinggi. They were all ordered to gather at the Sumatra Governor's Office. All reports from the Medan Area front were closely followed and studied. The movement of Dutch troops, supported by their fighter aircraft, increasingly threatened the Republican government in Sumatra. Their troop reinforcements had already landed at Cermin Beach. From Cermin Beach, the Dutch military was split into two, one heading for Medan and the other for Pematang Siantar. On July 22, Dutch military aircraft attacked Sinaksak (the headquarters of the Sargih Ras BHL troops). In view of this situation, Vice President Mohd. Hatta delivered his address at a public meeting at Merdeka Square on July 23, held specifically to welcome his arrival. In his address, he urged the masses to foster national unity and strengthen their determination to expel the invaders from Indonesia. That afternoon, Hatta delivered a speech at the funeral of Sakti Lubis, who died in the battle of Simpang Limun, Medan, in the western corner of Merdeka Square in Pematang Siantar. On July 24, Hatta met with figures from the Wild Tiger Brigade and Napindo at Governor Hasan's residence. Muhammad Saleh Umar (Napindo) and Muhammad Yacob Siregar (BHL) ultimately agreed to merge their forces into the TNI.

The Dutch advance was unstoppable. The cities of Medan, Binjai, and Tebing Tinggi fell to the Dutch. From Tebing Tinggi, the Dutch troops continued their advance toward Pematang Siantar, meeting no significant resistance. The city finally fell to the Dutch on July 29, 1947. The next day (July 30, 1947), the Dutch commander summoned all government employees of the Governor of Sumatra to gather at the Siantar Hotel. At the meeting, all employees were required to work as usual, of course as Dutch employees. Some accepted, but most of the republicans chose to leave the city of Pematang Siantar for areas still controlled by republican troops.

After Pematang Siantar, Seribu Dolok, Berastagi, Kabanjahe, and Tanjung Balai were controlled by Dutch troops. As a result of the Dutch attack, the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and the People's Army (Lasykar Rakyat), along with residents loyal to the Republic of Indonesia, fled to the Tapanuli and Aceh regions. Vice President Mohammad Hatta, the Governor of Sumatra, Mr. TM Hasan, and provincial government officials left Pematang Siantar for Berastagi and then Bukit Tinggi.

From Bukit Tinggi, Vice President Mohammad Hatta directly led the Republican Government and sought to strengthen national unity as a whole. Meanwhile, the Resident of East Sumatra, Abu Bakar Djaar, moved his administrative center from Tebing Tinggi to Tiga Binanga (Tanah Karo), then moved it again to Padang Sidempuan. Civil and military government officials all withdrew to Tanah Karo, Tapanuli, and Aceh. The government in the Kewedanaan of Deli Hulu and Serdang Hulu was centralized in Tanah Karo. The Deputy Governor (Young Governor of North Sumatra) Mr. M. Amin returned to his home in Kutaradja. With the First Dutch Military Aggression, the area of military conflict between the Dutch and Republican forces was no longer in the Medan Area, but expanded to the Tapanuli area and the Aceh border.

IV. Conclusion

Pematang Siantar, the second largest city in North Sumatra, witnessed the early stages of the struggle for independence in Sumatra. For approximately twenty months, the republic's government throughout Sumatra was governed from this city, and strategies and tactics were used to defeat Allied/NICA forces in the Medan area. Logistics supplies, plantation licenses, and money were managed from this city. Friction between fellow militia commanders and provincial government officials tasked with managing troop logistics was inevitable. This contributed to the city's incredibly busy atmosphere, earning it the nickname "revolutionary city." It was here that the militia commanders and the army slowly began to shed their sectoral egos and reach an agreement to merge into the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI). Although Hatta stayed in Pematang Siantar for less than a month, his role was crucial in the process of merging various people's militia units into the TNI and strengthening national unity.

In this city, the first Republic of Indonesia currency of North Sumatra Province was printed to replace the Japanese currency, which was increasingly depreciating in value. After the Dutch occupied Pematang Siantar, the embossed currency was not taken with the group of government officials on their way to Bukit Tinggi. That is why Hatta then ordered Aboe Bakar Loebis to infiltrate Pematang Siantar again to recover the embossed currency. The embossed currency was apparently taken by a government official, who then personally handed it to Vice President Mohd. Hatta in Bukit Tinggi.

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