

Niels Langkilde Thiele

A Danish Bersiap victim ver. 1.0

10. june 1882 — 18. december 1945

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Niels' youth in Denmark

Niels Langkilde Thiele was born on 10th June 1882 in Frederiksberg. His father was a clerk in the Ministry of the Interior Frederik Andreas Thiele¹ (later mayor in Skanderborg) and his mother was Bertha Emilie Langkilde.

He had 2 older brothers Frederik Anton and Johan Christian and a younger brother Just Andreas.²

In 1906 he obtained his master's degree as engineer, and subsequently began his military service as a conscript with the fortress artillery. Where he finished with the rank of second lieutenant in the 2nd Artillery Battalion.³ So, it was not until after his left the military. That he started his work as an engineer.

As a new engineer, it was not easy to get a permanent job. Therefore, he also held many different positions in the years 1908-1911. Where he took on assignments at various municipalities around the country. For example, he was a supervisor at the construction of Nordby Gasværk on Fanø, and a pumping station at Holbæk Vandværk. Other assignments include assistant engineer for the city engineer in Odense. He also participated in the laying out of the Stubbekøbing-Nykøbing-Nysted railway. A short period at Valby Gasværk, and as supervisor at the construction of Frederikshavns Gasværk.



Nordby Gasværk on Fanø one of the first projects Niels participated in as an engineer (Search: HistoriskAtlas.dk)

¹ Niels father was a veteran from the war in 1864.

² Niels younger brother Just Andreas was a career officer in the Danish Navy. From 1st May 1929 – 31st August 1932 he had been adjutant for the Crown Prince Frederik. Including following him on his journey in 1930 when the Crown Prince visited Siam (Thailand), China and Japan onboard MS “Fiona” .

³ Hof- og Statskalender 1909 p. 402.

Niels new life

In November-December 1911, he undertook a study trip as he had received money for such a trip from the Larssen Legacy. It is not inconceivable that some of the trip went to the Netherlands to investigate the possibilities for a future career in the Dutch East Indies.

As it was difficult to obtain permanent employment as an engineer in Denmark, the extension was great. Thus, in "Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië"⁴ on 12th February 1912, one could read that:

"By resolution issued by the Minister of Colonies No. 39, it is hereby announced that N. L. Thiele has been made available to the Governor-General as an engineer candidate. At Waterstaat en 's Lands Burgerlijke Openbare Werken."

He was not alone, because in the same resolution you could also read about the employment of:

"Alex Bendixsen (1906), Carl Andreas Christian Hansen (1903), Sigurd Strunge (1910), Eiler Asmussen Hagerup (1911), Henry Birket-Smith (1909), Asger Peter Abraham Josefsen Smitt (1908), Svend Erik Asmussen (1910), Villiam Henry Erichsen (1908) and Axel Bredo Michael Obelitz (1911)."⁵

However, they did not travel together into the unknown. When Niels left Amsterdam on 3rd February 1912 on board the SS "Konig Willem I", it seems that he traveled alone.⁶ Normally it was not all passengers who boarded before the ship left the Netherlands.

Many preferred to avoid the trip through the Bay of Biscay and around the Iberian Peninsula. Instead,



SS "Konig Willem I" which brought Niels to his new life in the Netherlands East Indies (Search: [Wikimedia Commons](#))

they took the train to Genoa or Marseille. Were the ships bound for the Netherlands East Indies normally had a stopover. Before continuing through the Mediterranean to Port Said and the Suez Canal. Continuing through the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean before finally getting landsite of Sumatra.

After his arrival Niels was assigned to the works for irrigation from the Tjioedjoeng River in North Bantam.⁷ To begin with as a trainee engineer but in 1913 he was promoted to engineer 3rd class. Beside his work Niels also got time to socialize. From the newspapers it appears he was an active tennis player.

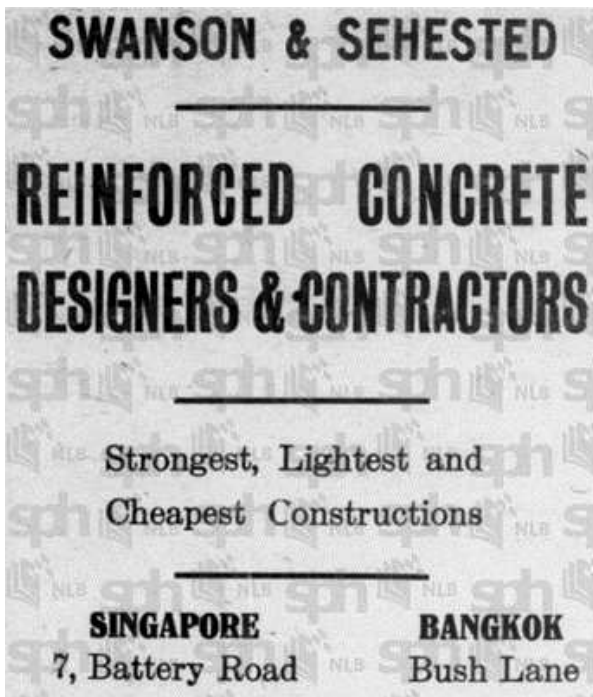
⁴ "Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië". Batavia, 12-02-1912, p. 2.

⁵ The year in brackets shows when the person became a candidate.

⁶ "Provinciale Geldersche en Nijmeegsche courant". Nijmegen, 03-02-1912, p. 6.

⁷ "Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië". Batavia, 21-03-1912, p. 3.

Niels change to the private sector



An advertisement Swanson Sehested in "The Straits Times" 20th January 1920 (Search [NewspaperSG](#))

In 1917 he was appointed engineer 2nd class, and he had the prospect of transfer to Serang. However, he did not extend the contract when it expired later that year. As could be read in "De Locomotief" on 13th November 1917:⁸

"Cancellation: At his own request, with effect from 3rd November 1917, due to termination of his employment after being placed at the disposal of the director of Burgerlijke Openbare Werken, the temporary engineer 2nd class at the Waterstaat and the country's Burgerlijke Openbare Werken, N. L. Thiele."

Instead, Niels had allowed himself to be enticed by an offer from Steen Sehested (1910). Sehested had travelled to Siam in April 1914 to manage work for the Siam Cement Co. This company had been founded the year before in 1913, and was to produce cement in a factory built by F. L. Smith A/S.

It had not taken Sehested long to see all the possibilities. That is why he already established the company Swanson & Sehested in 1915 together with the Scottish engineer John Hunter Swanson. In 1917 they set up a branch in Singapore, which in 1919 also became the company's headquarters.

In 1917 Niels continued his work at Swanson & Sehested.⁹ Were he stayed until 1923. Only interrupted by a year's holiday in Denmark. It was during this holiday that he married Asgerda Kama (born Bjerring) in Frederiksborg Castle Church. Together they had the children Agnete Thiele (born in Kuala Lumpur 4 July 1920), Birgitte Thiele (born in Soerabaia 23 May 1922), Niels Andreas Stadfeldt Thiele (born Batavia 18 March 1925) and Steen Langkilde Thiele (born Medan 7 May 1927).

In the first years from 1915 to 1921, the two founders of Swanson & Sehested had managed the company together. In 1921, however, they stopped the collaboration, after which Sehested managed the company alone until it closed in 1924.¹⁰

After Swanson & Sehested Co. dissolved in 1924. He completed the works in Soerabaja that the company had begun.

⁸ "De Locomotief". Samarang, 13-11-1917. p. 12.

⁹ He was not the only Danish engineer employed by Swanson & Sehested Co with a connection to the Netherlands East Indies. Johan Theodor Havsteen worked in Soerabaja, and afterwards took up a position at Niels former employer Burgerlijke Openbare Werken in Bondowoso on East Java. Unfortunately, he passed away in California in 1932.

¹⁰ Steen Sehested settled down in Malaysia where he continued his work as an engineer. Only interrupted by being interned by the Japanese during World War 2. Most likely because his wife Ebba (born Henning) donated money to "Wool and Material Fond" of the women's section of the Malaya Patriotic Fund (Search: [The Straits Times](#), 7 June 1941, Page 10)

Swanson & Sehested Co did participate in the building of bridges in connection with railroad construction in Thailand. Also, they were responsible for the huge building for the Danish East Asiatic Company on Oriental Avenue in Bangkok. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find out which projects Niels worked on in this period.

Niels did not stay unemployed instead he took a position as responsible for the office in Batavia for the Dutch company Nederlandsch Aanneming

Maatschappij (NEDAM). Like with the period he worked in Swanson & Sehested Co. it has unfortunately not been possible to find projects which show Niels worked on them.

Still through the newspapers from the period where Niels worked at NEDAM. It has been possible to find at least some of the projects for which he might very well have been responsible.

Like a new water pipe for Tangerang, a new 18-meter-long building in Tandjong Priok (Batavia's harbor) for Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland.



An advertisement for NEDAM the company in which Niels worked after his time with Swanson & Sehested Co. ("[Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië](#)" 26th November 1924, p. 11)

Niels become his own master

Ingeneur Bureau Niels Thiele

In 1926 Niels decided to become his own master and opened an engineer burau in Medan under his own name. It can seem strange that he chose Medan for Batavia or Soerabaja both cities he knew well. A reason can be that he saw Medan was underdeveloped compared to the other two cities.

Meaning opportunities for a man like Niels as reinforced concrete was a new material on Sumatra which until then had not been used when building things. Unlike the time he worked at Swanson & Sehested Co. and Nederlandsch Aanneming Maatschappij. It is easier to find examples on projects Niels worked on after starting for himself.

Finally, it should be remembered that when Niels arrived in the Netherlands East Indies back in 1912. Sumatra had just come under Dutch control. So, when he settled down in Medan with his family the area had only been peaceful for a short period.

On 19th February 1869 King Willem III had instituted a medal “the Expedition Cross (Dutch: Expeditiekruis). Also known as the Cross for Important Military Operations (Dutch: Ereteken voor Belangrijke Krijgsbedrijven). There are several clasps for the areas around Medan: “Deli (1872), Atjeh (1873-1874) (1873-1876) (1873-1880) (1873-1885) (1873-1890) (1873-1896) (1896-1900) (1901-1904) (1901-1905) (1906-1910) (1911-1914),¹¹ Korintji (1903),¹² Mid-Sumatra (1903-1907), Samalangan (1877).

As late as 1926-1927 there had also been a communist uprising on Sumatra. In June 1924 Denmark was by royal decree allowed to open a consulate in Medan.¹³

A shopping building for the English Whiteaway Laidlaw Co.

The first project to be mentioned in the newspapers is a shopping building for the English company Whiteaway Laidlaw Co. Which had shopping buildings around the Far East in mainly the British colonies. On 27th September 1926 the “Deli Courant”¹⁴ had an article about the new shopping building being built on Palaisweg:¹⁵

“The new shopping building on the Paleisweg

¹¹ At least 27 Danes served in Atjeh. Among them Martin Herman Heinrich Flammé who died on 26th November 1945 in an internment camp in Batavia. He is buried at Menteng Pulo. A biography about him can be found on www.academia.edu. Another was Ludwig Olaf Wilhelm Kongsted-Jensen who died on 6th June 1945 in an internment camp in Ambarawa. He is buried at Menteng Pulo. At least four Danes participated in Djambi and three in the operations on Mid-Sumatra. One of them was Niels Vilhelm Berger Christensen whose biography can be found on www.academia.edu

¹² Another Danish engineer Jens Askgaard (1914) had participated in the building of the Korintje road from the coast to the interior (interview in “Ingeniøren” 17th June 1922). Unfortunately, he died of typhus 2nd June 1923 on West Sumatra.

¹³ The first Danish consul was a W. Kruse. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find out who he was.

¹⁴ “Deli Courant”. Medan, 27-09-1926, p. 1.

¹⁵ After the Indonesian independence Palaisweg was renamed Jl. Brigjend Katamso.

On the Paleisweg, where the few wooden houses that so disfigured the aspect there used to be next to the proud Avros building. For several months now people have been busy constructing a new, large shop building for the well-known English company Whiteaway Laidlaw, which can be found in many cities in the Far East. The Medan branch is the second in the Netherlands East Indies. A building had already been constructed in Surabaya.

Construction started at the end of May, and it is hoped that it will be completed at the end of November, after which the furnishing and opening will begin as soon as possible.

The main dimensions of the building entirely made of reinforced concrete - according to the design of the Danish engineer Niels Thiele - are: front width 28 meters, depth 33 meters and maximum height 8.20 meters, which will give the building a place of honor among the large shops in Medan. Only the side and rear walls are made of bricks, the rest, including the flat roof, of reinforced concrete; With the exception of a few very small parts, there will be virtually no wooden construction in the entire building once it is completed.

Internally, the retail space is divided as clearly as possible into three large galleries running from the front to the rear, of which the middle and widest (about 10 meters) is higher than the two outer ones, each of which is approximately 7 meters wide. Eight heavy columns support the interior and separate the widest gallery from the other two. In addition to the office, the two side wings house the departments for: clothes, linen, small goods, women's items, toiletries, men's fashion (2 departments), shoes and glassware. The middle section will be reserved for a large number of very low counters, while the travel items department will be located at the back.

The span at the front, without a single column, is no less than 22 meters and is the largest of its kind in the Netherlands East Indies. The entrance, which is 18 feet wide at the front and 9 feet wide on the inside, is located in the middle and on either side of this are 4 large display cases, each about 8 feet wide and separated by narrow bars.

These showcases are therefore not interrupted at any point by larger columns, which undoubtedly improves clarity.

The facade, like the entire building, is kept in a uniform gray; the flat top is closed at the ends by two small towers. The wide cornice bears the name of the Whiteaway Laidlaw company in giant letters. The entire building, which is being constructed by the Langereis company, contains 230 cubic meters of reinforced concrete and 26 tons of iron."

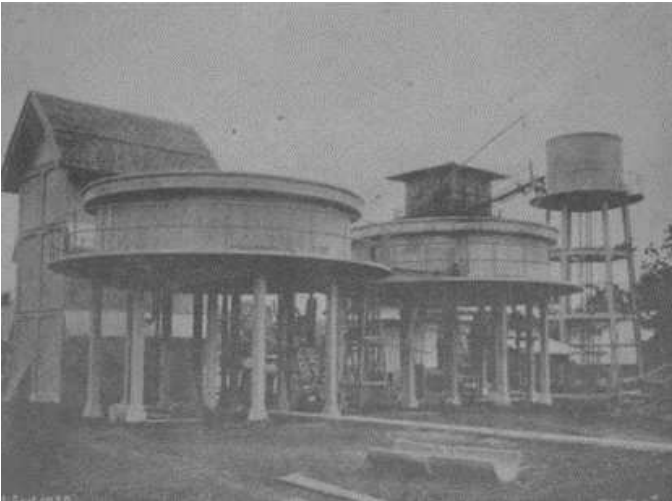
The Ocean Quay in Belawan

While finishing the shopping building Niels was already looking forward to the next. Belawan the harbor of Medan was to have a longer quay. Just before Christmas on 15th December 1926 the result of the tender could be read in "Deli Courant":¹⁶

"The completion of the Ocean Quay in Belawan.

We understand that the outcome of the tender for the completion of the second part of the Ocean Quay in Belawan is as follows: Volker company in Batavia *f*

¹⁶ "[Deli courant](#)". Medan, 15-12-1926, p. 1.



In the beginning the newspapers did not include pictures in their reports from Niels projects.

But advertisements like this from "Saw's commercial diary 1931" show he participated in the building of the drinking water provision at Bagan Si Api-Api.

270,000; Nederlandsche Beton Mpij. f 196,950; Nederlandsche Aanneming Mpij. in Surabaya f 191,800; ir. Niels Thiele in Medan f 187,000.

The estimate made by the port management in Belawan amounted to f 190,000.

Furthermore, variant projects have been received from Niels Thiele (f 175,500) and two from the Ned. Aanneming Mpij. (f 169,500 and f 164,000).

The decision regarding the allocation rests with the director of B.O.W. Where this concerns a tender by choice, it is likely that the work will be

awarded to the lowest tenderer."

Deli Courant was correct Niels bid did win. One Niels first jobs was to finish the Ocean quay at Belawan the harbor of Medan.

“THE COMPLETION OF THE OCEAN PORT AT BELAWAN.

As was recently announced, after a tender by choice, the execution of the work "completion of the second part of the Ocean Quay in Belawan" has been assigned to Niels Thiele in Medan, for an amount of f 187,000.

With the start of execution of this work, which will take place in the second half of August to be completed in 1927, a start has already been made - according to the "Deli Courant." - although the main task: pouring concrete on the wall, which currently only consists of caissons and is 500 meters long, will not be completed before March has been started.

A start has now been made on constructing a shed for the 65 coolies, probably Javanese - the 20 Toukangs - Chinese - who will be employed here.

They hope to start pouring the concrete in March. This second part of the Ocean Quay is treated in exactly the same way as the first.

When this last part of the Ocean Harbor has been completed. It will have a quay length of 1000 meters, lying 70 cm above Belawan level or 120 cm above highest water level."

It was not only big projects which took up Niels time. According to "Deli Courant"¹⁷ on 29th December 1927. He also participated in a minor project to secure the drinking water provision at Bagan Si Api-Api.

¹⁷ "[Deli courant](#)". [Medan], 23-12-1927, p. 2. From "[Saw's commercial diary 1931](#)" It is possible to see he was responsible for 564 12 meter long concrete pillars.

Another project where Niels an active part was the "Housing Park Arcadie" in which he also took on the job as director.¹⁸ And on 14th November 1928 "Deli Courant" brought a longer article about the place:¹⁹

“The new housing park “Arcadia”

How it grows. Yesterday, under the guidance of the director of the new housing park, we were able to visit "Arcadie", located near the border of the municipality on Gloegoar. On behalf of the firm, which operates this housing park, a number of concrete houses are being built by the Niels Thiele company, some of which are already ready and even fully occupied, while the construction of another part is still in progress. Although the road there is not yet very well constructed - when it rains people sink up to their ankles in mud - there are already some signs of the situation as it will become in the near future. At the point where the Gloegoerweg, the new road on which the houses are built, ends in the Belawanweg, there will be a large, square or small park that leaves open two wide driveways for the housing park. The houses are approximately 50 meters apart from each other, creating a wide road that ends at the suspension bridge over the Deli River and the well-known river path. The intention is that this road will be extended there later and that there will be a wide road bridge. But this is (fortunately on one side) still a thing of the future. Fortunately, because both the bridge and the river path make Arcadia so truly Arcadian.

The houses are small, but spacious enough to be occupied by newlyweds or bachelors. Indeed, the impression one gets from these houses is particularly favorable. There is a spacious front gallery, a closed rear gallery, a bedroom with an attached mandi room, a study and, as far as the outbuildings are concerned, a kitchen and a servants' room. Six houses also have one garage. Designed in sleek, simple lines, the houses are doing very well, and the flat roofs have even given ingenious people reason to create a roof garden with a cozy seating area. Indeed, everything has been done to make it as pleasant as possible for the residents. They have quite a large yard in front and behind the houses; electric light, water pipes and gas have already been installed when you move into the house, and the residents can paint a name on their villa, which further enhances the character of a villa park.

These Arcadian homes are particularly suitable "for Anfanger", because they are easy and yet very tasteful - several residents have already shown this! - to be furnished and because the rents are not too high. On the left side of the Gloegoerweg are 7 houses built on the right side 16. Since the firm still has a large site at its disposal - the whole is 30,000 m³ - where more houses will be built.

This solution to the Medan housing problem is more practical and in many ways more pleasant for the residents than apartment construction, which undoubtedly has its many disadvantages compared to the advantages of your own small home. Yesterday we rightly heard tribute to the leader of the villa park plan, ir. C. Rademakeren, to Mr. Niels Thiele under whose leadership the houses were built and indeed neatly finished.”

¹⁸ "[De Sumatra post](#)". Medan, 27-08-1928, p. 10.

¹⁹ "[Deli Courant](#)". [Medan], 14-11-1928, p. 1.

The Demmeni Bridge

On 26th May 1936 Niels really must have been pleased when “Deli Courant” announced he got the assignment to build The Demmeni Bridge:²⁰

“NEW DEMMENI BRIDGE AWARDED
Ir. Niels Thiele receives the assignment.

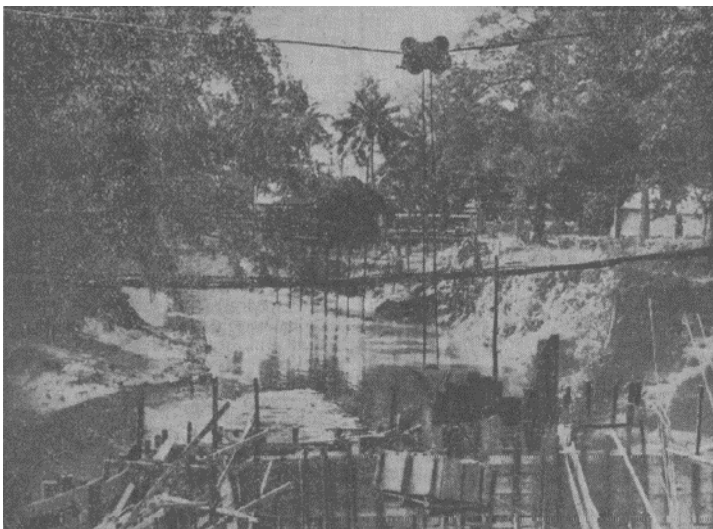
We understand that the construction of the Demmeni Bridge over the Deli River has been awarded to the lowest tenderer, Niels Thiele. The registration, which took place for a few weeks, had to be based on an own design, which would then be subject to an assessment by the municipal authorities involved.

The Demmeni Bridge will now be built in almost the same style as the Soekamoelia Bridge, which is also being constructed by ir. Niels Thiele and which is still being worked on continuously.”

It was also “Deli Courant” which brought a longer article about the project on 13th November 1936:²¹

"How is it progressing with the Demmeni bridge?"

Today the foundation is being put in place.



Transport of material via transport cable in connection with the construction of the new Demmini bridge. A revolutionary method at the time.

Symphony in concrete

Bandjirs caused quite a stir and, among other things, knocked away large pieces of the mud dams.

Despite the setbacks experienced by the recent heavy rainfall and the damage caused by it, work on the new Demmeni bridge is progressing well. Today is a memorable day, one can say a milestone in the history of the realization of this symphony in reinforced concrete, because today the foundation pedestal on the side of the tangsi is completed. And since the pedestal on the other side has already been completed earlier, we can say tonight at twelve o'clock that the

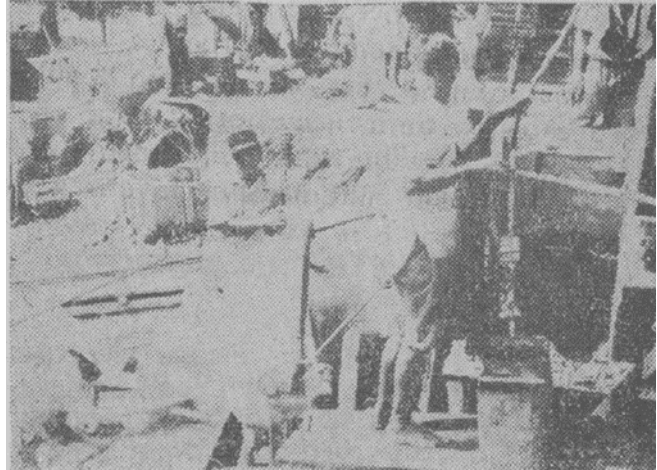
²⁰ "[Deli courant](#)". Medan, 26-05-1936, p. 6.

²¹ "[Deli courant](#)". [Medan], 13-11-1936, p. 1.

riskiest part of the bridge construction is behind us.

Bandjirs threatened the dams

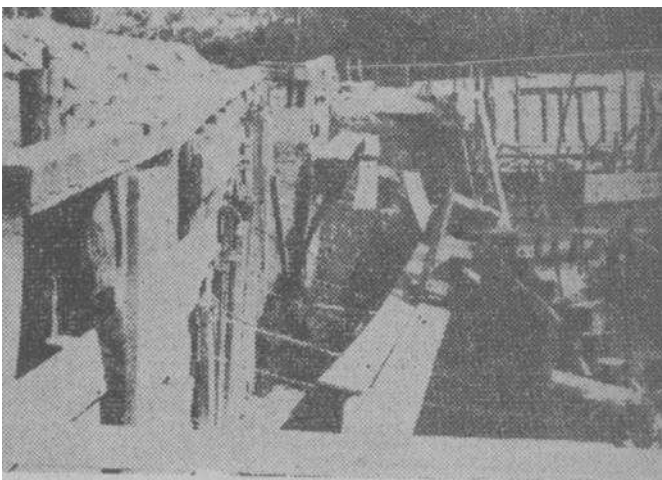
These reinforced concrete bases are located deep in the ground, at the bottom of what is now a huge pit, a difficult job that must be done below the water line. The pits therefore had to be protected from the force of the encroaching river water with wide mud dams, which required the assistance of heavy pumps with long pipelines. Because the mud banks cannot be that thick without the water seeping through. It is drained to a well in one of the corners of the pit and from there it is sucked in and transported to the place where it belongs to the riverbed. And here the bandjirs have held most of it back. Much of the east embankment has been washed away as if it were the work of children at play, and not exposed to the force of the elements. The mud dam was reinforced with iron and thus the work could be prevented from being interrupted prematurely.



One of the two concrete mixers that delivered 70 cubic meters of concrete each day.

This morning, when we visited the scene of this battle against the water, under the direction of Mr. Ir. van Assen, who is currently in charge of the construction, hard work was done to complete the western sole. Because the foundations of the new bridge have the shape of a foot, on which you can distinguish a sole and an instep, while above it you see the tibia rising.

That is, in the drawing, because in reality we have not come that far yet. What is being completed today is the western foot sole. The eastern one is already completed, and safely hidden under a layer of water. Certainly, although it is a strange sight at first for a layman to see the Thunder Pit. People think of an accident, of carelessness, of a faulty pump. But it is only conscious intention, because as a result of this layer of water, the pressure, inside and outside the hole, has become equal, so that it remains protected from all possible unpleasant events.



The damage to one of the dams after the violent storm.

Hungry for concrete

Meanwhile, on the tangsi side of the river, two large concrete mixers, with a capacity of at least 70 cubic meters per day, continuously work a thick gray paste into the hungry mouth of the pit, where workers spread the material over a braided steel window. It will

take hours and hours for this hunger to be satisfied, but as mentioned, it is expected to be completed by midnight.

And then the work below the waterline is over. And as a result, a calmer period will begin, where not all risks will have disappeared, but at least the most important ones will. As long as there was still work to be done in the deep, there was always the chance that the water would be in a bad mood and disrupt the course of events by playfully trying to put into practice the fatal law of communicating vessels.

There was a lot of hard work before it happened, and both Mr. Valk, responsible for day-to-day management, as well as Mr. Niels Thiele, contractor, and Mr. van Weezel, executor, have had a busy time. And that will probably also be ahead, because a lot still must happen before the first car, cyclist or pedestrian can again get from the Esplanade to the Poloniaweg without first having to head towards the Oude Marktstraat.

When considering the work, it is worth remembering that concrete work in Deli is still very new. Until three or four years ago, this material was unsuitable for our region because we did not have the staff to handle it. Because not everyone can be used for concrete work, it requires professionals who are, one would almost say, as literally as figuratively, thoroughly versed in this work.

And then there is something that our guide told us is completely new to the east coast, and maybe even to India. It is the transport cable - the "cable railway" - which serves to transport materials and all things that need to be brought from one bank to the other.

Meanwhile, the wires of the D.S.M., the cables for the electrical network, hang in the air above the sungei. They are waiting for a new bridge to get them a home again, since the old one was so cruelly taken from them, whose old bridge is only a few poor poles left."

The last greater project Niels according to "De Sumatra Post" before World War 2 came to the Far East. Seems to have had was the building of the Irrigation work at Simeloengoen. On 6th September 1940 they wrote:²²

"New waterworks at Simeloengoen



The aqueduct at Tanah Djawah that was built in connection with the waterworks at Simeloengoen.

As proof that the government continues to show consideration despite the circumstances of the time. Continues work to improve living conditions, such as with the new waterworks at Tanah Djawah.

The largest construction makes us think of the gigantic aqueducts from Roman times. Water led down from the mountains to the cities, creating rich agriculture where there used to be desert.

The aqueduct at Tanah Djawah carries water from Bah Hapasoek and Bah Horas across the gorge to Bah Boloek at a height of 26 meters. The aqueduct is 67.5 meters long and transports 4 cubic meters of water per second. This is with

²² "De Sumatra post". Medan, 06-09-1941, p. 2.

the view that the stream must provide a large flow (10 meters) before it is led through the aqueduct.

On the west bank of the Bah Boelek gorge, it directs the water into a large reservoir. From this reservoir, the water first flows past some rice fields that are under construction. It is intended that in 2-3 years they will cover 800 hectares.

The aqueduct will also become accessible to pedestrians. As it is planned to create a corridor next to it.

The waterworks so important to agriculture in Simeloengo will be inaugurated shortly.

The work was designed and built by Niels Thiele.”

Public debate on the use of reinforced concrete in projects

But it was not only the building of buildings, bridges and other things which took Niels time. In between he also took part in the public debate about reinforced concrete. Which was still unknown to many as it had not been used on Sumatra before at least not to a greater extent.

For Niels it was not only a question about trying to make a living. He also participated in the public debate. Like in this article in "Deli Courant" 9th June 1926:²³

“Permanent drying shelters.

Mr. Niels Thiele, who specializes in reinforced concrete construction, came to offer us a plan for the replacement of the temporary atap drying shelters in the tobacco culture with permanent reinforced concrete buildings. This idea is not new. Years ago, consideration was given to replacing the temporary drying shed with permanent buildings as well as the possibility of accelerating the drying process with artificial heat. In this last area, experiments were even carried out in later years, the results of which we do not know, but which in any case did not lead to the revolution in tobacco culture that was intended.

Of course, this does not necessarily mean anything about new plans, and we therefore warmly welcome the idea of modernizing the tobacco culture in itself. We believe that another construction company was already working in this direction a year ago, but we have not heard of the results since. In any case, the interested party fully appreciates the plan.

Mr. Thiele has envisioned a drying shed of large dimensions, consisting of about 15 large stone rooms of 11.40 x 15.20 m, making the entire building 171 m long, with a height of approximately 16 m. This building is thought to be equipped for artificial drying by a steam boiler with a set of tubes in each room through which steam is conducted, which returns to the boiler. By water spraying, the moisture content of each chamber can then be carefully controlled in connection with the strength of the drying process.

Each room is equipped for a daily harvest of 860,000 leaves per day, which are lifted onto drying sticks using a simple hoisting device to prevent damage to the leaves. This harvest is calculated on the yield of a division of 100 fields. For drying, 1 kilo of wood per 1 kilo of tobacco leaf has been calculated, most of which wood can come from the department itself.

The shelter is made of a concrete frame, the walls and compartments supplemented with a brick wall. It offers the advantage of low maintenance and complete disinfection of every insect species by means of lime.

The designer estimates the price of such a building at around f 150,000, which according to his calculations will be paid off over a period of 26 years, during which it will be written off. The building, would be significantly cheaper than the current atap barns, including the sums currently spent on insurance against fire and storm damage. He also assumes that his shelter will be used for four years and will then be empty for 7 years, to then be used again for 4 years, although it cannot be ruled out that such barns can be used for two divisions with the help of narrow gauge, so it don't have to be empty for 7 years.

However, we hear that people are already building significantly cheaper drying shelters, even below 2000 guilders, by planting of their own material, apart from the atap, plays a major role.

²³ "[Deli courant](#)". Medan, 09-06-1926, p. 1.

Furthermore, the designer is counting on an insurance premium of 2% for fire damage in the current tobacco warehouses, but the question is to what extent the tobacco warehouses provide their own insurance.

Finally, the issue naturally stands and falls with the question of artificial irrigation, on which tests must be decisive and the market is a very strong factor.”

Niels must have had a good reputation. As he also acted as guide now and when for the engineer association. When the association made excursions to visit either finished or undergoing projects in which he was a part. Explaining the details behind the constructions.

When in 1939 the debate about building a new town hall on the Esplanade flared up Niels participated in it. As could be read in “De Sumatra Post” on 4th August 1939:²⁴

“Ir. Niels Thiele: "A cheap plan (f 200,000) will in any case be horrible!!

Ir. Niels Thiele, the Medan concrete specialist, had little confidence in the success of the municipality's plan. That the Esplanade will be spoiled by oak construction, no matter how and where. When a town hall is built on the Esplanade, the entire Esplanade will become just a garden of the town hall. There is no way to deny that. If one were to assume that there need be no objection to the degradation of this most beautiful square in Medan, then the question remains, "can things still be saved by building a worthy city hall?"

According to Mr. Niels Thiele, "this is not completely excluded, but it is certain that it will not be a terrible thing if one cannot or does not want to spend more than two hundred thousand guilders. For such an amount one can never build a building that can add cachet to the Esplanade and justify the damage to the square.”

²⁴ "[De Sumatra post](#)". Medan, 04-08-1939, p. 2.

Niels and transportation

There can be no question about that business were going well for Niels in the 30th. Normally the newspapers published the passenger list for the different ships arriving from or sailing for the Netherlands. But Niels is not to be found on them.

One reason can be that he never returned to Europe after his wedding in 1918. This would be very uncommon for wealthy people like Niels. Another reason could be that he was flying. Although the newspapers did mention now and then who was passenger. They did not do it all the time.

KLM²⁵ had been formed on 7th October 1919 and from then on, the airplanes had become better. Just like long distance flights were started up on an experimental basis. KLM's first flight to the Netherlands East Indies had been back in 1924.

Although it would not be until 1930 before they started to fly between the Netherlands and the Netherlands East Indies on a regular basis. To begin with only once every fortnight growing in regularity to three flights à week at the outbreak of World War 2.

That Niels was used to flying can be seen from two articles. On 9th December 1935 the "Deli Courant" could inform its readers about the arrival of a KLM plane bound for the Netherlands. And among the passengers we find Niels who are returning from Palembang in Southern Sumatra:²⁶

"THE ARRIVAL OF THE "KIEVITE"

Bad weather in Singapore

The "Kievit", the KLM aircraft on its way to Holland, arrived here from Singapore on Saturday morning, piloted by Captain Hondong. The aircraft spent the night in Singapore due to bad weather conditions. There were on board the "Kievit". Two passengers for Medan, namely Mr. Niels Thiele who arrived from Palembang via Singapore and Mr. Lim Tjoe Tjong from Singapore. There was also a passenger from Singapore, Mr. Frances Lee, bound for Bangkok. Two American ladies who had arrived here the previous week with the KLM. plane from Bangkok embarked at the Medan airport; these tourists now returned to Siam's capital with the "Kievit".

On the 28th October 1939 "de Sumatra Post" reported about the arrival of the KLM flight from the Netherlands:²⁷

"YOUNG PASSENGERS OF THE "VULTURE"

SIX CHILDREN OFF THE EAST COAST.

The K.L.M. plane De Gier, which left Naples yesterday, brings six children to Medan: two for Ir. Niels Thiele, two for Mr. E. Furrer, administrator of Goenoeng Mèlajoe, one for Mr. A.C. van Rossum, administrator of Pantai Boeaja and one of Mr J.C. de Kok of the B.P.M, in Pangkalan Brandan.

Further coming to India with this plane is a child of Mr. Ie Keng Djinn in Batavia, one of Mr. Ruyter van Toe loengboejoet (South Sumatra), one of Mr. Van der Beek in Poerwakarta and two of Mr. Van der Steenhoven in Surabaya."

²⁵ KLM mean Koninklijke Luftvaart Maatschappij N.V. or Royal Dutch Airlines in English.

²⁶ "Deli courant". Medan, 09-12-1935, p. 2.

²⁷ "De Sumatra post". Medan, 28-10-1939, p. 2.

While Niels and his family choose to fly when travelling. It was not all that was written about him that revolved around the projects he oversaw. On 6th October 1936 the readers of "De Sumatra Post" could read an article he probably was not enthusiastic about. Niels was also a car owner and one day on the way home from Atjeh he had an accident:

" Serious car accident near Sigli.

MR IR. NIELS THIELE SERIOUSLY INJURED.

We understand that a car accident took place near Sigli on Sunday morning, in which a passenger car fell through a bridge railing due to skidding.

We further learned that the car was driven by Mr. Niels Thiele, the well-known Medan builder and specialist in reinforced concrete, while sitting next to him was a German, an executor of construction works in Aceh.

Because the car skidded on the gravel of the road, the car crashed through a bridge railing and fell.

Mr. Niels Thiele had some ribs broken, while his fellow passenger broke his collarbone.

In the beginning it seemed as if both gentlemen had fared well, but when they arrived in Medan, Niels Thiele had to be immediately admitted to the hospital on Timorstraat. He appeared to have broken four ribs and further internal bleeding. As we now learn, his condition is quite serious, and he is completely prohibited from speaking.

The fellow passenger has recovered his feet and is only walking with his arm bandaged. As we understand, both gentlemen, coming from Aceh, were on their way home."²⁸

Even though Niels got seriously injured in this accident. It did not take long before he was back working on all his projects.

²⁸ "[De Sumatra post](#)". Medan, 06-10-1936, p. 2.

The war comes to the Far East

Unfortunately, the good life did not last. On 1st September 1939, World War II broke out in Europe. However, it only became important when the Germans attacked in the west on 10th May 1940.

This triggered the code word "Berlin" in the Dutch East Indies. Meaning that primarily German and Austrian citizens, but also children of mixed marriages with a German/Austrian father, were arrested. This regardless of whether they were a political mover, Jewish or not.

Likewise, well-known Dutch sympathizers with the Nazis were also arrested. To be on the safe side, the citizens from Belgium, Denmark,²⁹ Yugoslavia, and Poland were also arrested. As the Dutch official Cornelis van Heekeren later wrote:³⁰

“It is amazing that on 10th May throughout the archipelago with its continental distances, the officials and police arrested the Germans and other 'enemy subjects'. These 'enemy subjects' also included German Jews, political refugees from German territories, Czechs, Hungarians, Danes, Yugoslavs, Belgians, Poles and Dutch NSB (Dutch Nazi Party) members. The decision on this was (...) made based on Article 20 of the Articles of War and the Laws of War. In implementing the principle, it was believed that it was better to arrest everyone for the initial period and then find out who could be released again. What was not foreseen was that the public reaction to the reports from Europe would be so violent that the release of the internees was practically impossible because they were no longer accepted in the small white upper echelon of colonial society.

There had always been many foreigners in government service in the Dutch East Indies, especially in the army and police. An announcement in the Volksraad in 1939 shows that there were then about 200, ten of whom were police officers. Insofar as they were enemy subjects, they were dismissed and interned on 10th May 1940.”³¹

With the entry of the Japanese into the war, the Dutch East Indies also became an active war participant. It does not seem that the war or the war preparations have affected the couple Thiele. Unlike many European men, it does not appear that Niels reported to the local home guard (Stadwacht).³²

It had not been, nor would it have been completely harmless if he had. The Japanese landed north and south of Menado on 12th March 1942. At Tigga Roenggoe, 21 members of the Stadwachten had been

²⁹ Unfortunately, it has not been possible for me to find the names on the Danes who was arrested. But it does not look like Niels and his family were among them.

³⁰ Cornelis van Heekeren later wrote the book 'Batavia seint Berlijn, de geschiedenis van de Indische Duitsers in Nederlandse gevangenschap' (Batavia sends to Berlin, the story of the Indian Germans in Dutch captivity).

³¹ An example is Otto Coerper a German who was born in Dudweiler in Germany on 7th October 1891. He had obtained Dutch citizenship in 1929. On 10th May 1940 he was chief of police in Soekaboemi in West Java. He was given the task of interning everyone of German descent, and subsequently when the task was completed. He was ordered to allow himself to be interned with those he had just interned.

For unknown reasons Gustav Adolf Ilgen who was born in Wiesbaden on 3rd July 1887 was not arrested. On 10th May 1940, he was officer in the colonial army, and commander of a division on Java, the most important island in the colony.

³² A man who did sign up was Christian Peter Elof Andersen from Aarhus who volunteered. Christian is believed killed in action at Menado on Celebes on 11th January 1942. He is buried at Menteng Pulo in Jakarta. Another Dane who had died in combat was Gunnar Olsen who was shot down over Tarakan. His father was the Danish consul in Batavia Frithiof Guttorm Erik Olsen. He is buried at Menteng Pulo,

assigned to guard a bridge. When they heard about the Japanese landing, they decided to blow up the bridge. When they were later captured by the Japanese, they were executed.³³

Medan was occupied on 13th March 1942. However, the Thiele couple had already felt the first of the horrors of war at this time. As early as 11th December 1941 the 81st Air Group from the Japanese Army Air Force had made reconnaissance over Medan. On 28th December the airfield at Medan was attacked for the first time. By 18 light bombers escorted by 7 fighters from the 3rd Air Division of the Japanese Army Air Force.³⁴ Because of this air attack, Vice-Admiral Conrad Emil Lambert Helfrich³⁵ ordered that only one ship could stay in the harbor at a time.³⁶

However, no heavy fighting had taken place around Medan. When the Yoshida³⁷ Detachment landed at Idi north of Medan on 12th March 1942. The main target was the oil installations at Langsa and Pangkalan Brandan.³⁸

The Japanese preparations for the landing on Sumatra³⁹ had cost Danish victims. Ulrich Bernstorff von Sperling (1915)⁴⁰ served as manager at the railway in the Atjeh province. On 24th February 1942 he had received information that sabotage had been carried out on the track. On his way out to investigate the matter more closely, he was murdered.⁴¹

Another episode including a Dane was Engineer Thorkil Jacobsen (1917) and his family. In 1941, Thorkil Jacobsen was transferred to Padang (the main city in Central Sumatra). At the outbreak of the war, however, he and his family were in Aceh province. Where he had taken over the work after many of the Dutchmen who had been called up.

His wife Kirsten Taaning Johansen and son Thorkil were sent south on a train. Here they ended up in the Takengon internment camp, while he was captured and imprisoned by the Japanese. After a short stay in prison, however, he was released again, and later he also managed to get his wife and son released.

According to the official Japanese history about World War 2 the occupation of Medan went as follows:⁴²

After the landing, the Sawamura Regiment had its advance unit in motor vehicles (one company led by the 3rd Battalion commander) charge toward Medan, while the main force of the regiment followed the unit on bicycles. The force continued its advance by repairing destroyed bridges

³³ Major Junzaburo Nakamura was not prosecuted after the war. He is believed killed in action during the fighting in New Caledonia, and his commander Colonel Yuzo Kitayama was acquitted by the temporary court-martial in 1949. When it was assessed that he had not been present and had not been informed about the deed.

³⁴ According to the "Invasion of the South" p. 194. The attack was a result of a misinterpretation of photographs. The attack was repeated on 16th January 1942.

³⁵ Conrad Emil Lambert Helfrich was commander of the Dutch navy in the Netherlands East Indies.

³⁶ At the end of January 1942, when the Japanese controlled the entire Malay Peninsula, Helfrichs banned all use of the port.

³⁷ The detachment was named after its commander Lieutenant Colonel Yoshida Masaru.

³⁸ The Yoshida detachment even included an oil drilling squad to secure the oilfield became operational fast.

³⁹ The Japanese codename for the attack on Sumatra was "Operation L"

⁴⁰ Ulrich von Sperling is buried at Menteng Pulo in Jakarta. Another Danes who are said to have been murdered during the Japanese invasion is Otto Weismann. He is not in the Dutch database of war victims, and it has not been possible for me to find any evidence.

⁴¹ Ulrich von Sperling was indeed the victim of an F-kikan (Japanese fifth column) operation, but it is outside the scope of this biography to go into detail.

⁴² "The Invasion of the South: Army Air Force Operations, and the Invasion of Northern and Central Sumatra" p. 428.

on the way, and around 0830 on the next day, the 13th when it reached a point about thirteen kilometres east of Medan, it received from the advance unit a report of the capture of Medan.

From the landing onwards, the troops were welcomed with cheers by residents in every village, and the town of Medan was also filled by a crowd who had gathered to welcome them.

After arriving in Medan, Regimental Commander Sawamura summoned the governor of northern Sumatra and the upper echelons of his administration to the police station to announce the instructions of the divisional commander and took the necessary measures to maintain public order.

Then, while sending one element to Belawan (a port on the coast north of Medan) to occupy it, the regimental commander deployed his unit for the guarding of Medan and vicinity. Around 1500 on that day, Division Commander Lt. Gen. Nishimura Takuma, Chief of Staff Col. Obata Nobuyoshi and others arrived in Medan in succession and received Colonel Sawamura's report on the situation.

On the very first day, the Japanese occupying power handed out leaflets:

It is announced by the Japanese occupation force:

1. that the banks are currently closed.
2. that the post office is currently closed.
3. radio broadcasting from the Dutch East Indies is prohibited.
4. it is forbidden to have a connection abroad via radio.
5. weapons such as rifles and revolvers must be handed over to the police.
6. The occupying troops' police are ordered to maintain order as usual and, if necessary, to use weapons.

From today, 13th March the curfew has been introduced from 7 pm to 6 am. This means that no one is allowed to leave their homes during the period mentioned before.

Anyone who disobeys this prohibition and is found on the street or outside their home risks being shot without warning.

Medan, March 1942
The Chief of Police

For Niels and his family, the first encounter with the Japanese army was probably much like the one Egon Ostram⁴³ and his family had as told by his wife:

“At noon the first storm troops entered Tebing Tinggi. Rough, dirty, primitive in appearance – they poured through the streets of the city. They wore no regular uniform. Sun helmets to which they had fastened torn stripes of cloth at the back to protect their necks and shoulders from the tropical sun, khaki shorts, heavy shoes to which their feet seem unaccustomed, knapsack, guns, knives – this was their uniform and equipment. Some wore undershirts or short sleeved sport

⁴³ Nils Egon Olaus Ostram was a Swedish missionary priest who lived in Tebing Tinggi. He was murdered by Indonesian extremist a week before Asgerda and Niels. After the war his wife Vera wrote a book about him and their time on Sumatra *O Bok Su: the story of Egon Ostrom, known to the Chinese as "O Bok Su," an Ambassador to the Kingdom of God.*

shirts. The majority were bare to the waist. All seem to suffer from the heat. They seemed more elemental, more animal, than any men I had ever seen. The realization that our lives and the fate of our children were in the hands of these soldiers froze our hearts.”⁴⁴

Just like the Ostrams the Thiele family probably stayed inside. While they could hear Japanese soldiers shooting at people who were plundering the homes of the westerners who had fled. Just like the servants working for Asgerda and Niels most likely had run away.

Later registration took place. As Danish citizens Asgerda, Niels and their daughter Agnete was considered allies of the Japanese.⁴⁵ It may seem strange that families like Jacobsen and Thiele were not interned together with their Dutch neighbors. The reason was that Denmark like Japan was a co-signatory of the Anti-Comintern Pact. The Japanese therefore regarded Denmark as an ally.⁴⁶ Niels and his wife therefore came to live as "Buitenkampers" during the Japanese occupation.

⁴⁴ This observation was very common for western civilians when they saw the Japanese soldiers for the first time.

⁴⁵ Their two sons were in Denmark when Denmark attending school when Denmark was occupied. Birgitte was not as lucky as the rest of the family. Being married to an KNIL officer she must have been considered Dutch. Which meant she was most likely interned.

⁴⁶ Olaf Werner Sørensen (1911) was not lucky enough to come under this. As chairman of "De Frie Danske" in the Dutch East Indies, he was interned. Like others who had openly supported the Allies.

Sumatra during the occupation

With the Japanese occupation the Netherlands East Indies were split up in three zones.⁴⁷ Sumatra came under the 25th Army which at first had its headquarters in Singapore. But as war progressed it was moved to Padang on Sumatra's west coast.

It did not mean that life necessarily was easier. They had to have a sign on their home informing that it was Danes living inside. They also had to wear a Danish flag (Dannebrog) on their clothes. Pay tax to the Japanese military and use the new Japanese money. The Japanese also expected people to bow to them.

Initially, however, Niels was able to continue his work, and the Japanese most likely could use his knowledge of reinforced concrete. Else like Thorkil, he would have to stand in for the Dutch engineers now in internment camps.

As time went by, however, daily life became more and more difficult. The Japanese radicalized the local population so much that in 1943 Niels had to give up running his engineering office. When both employees and the staff at home refused to work for whites.

With the Japanese as the new rulers Sumatra did not become a more secure place either. As local uprisings occurred at different places. Not because of the Japanese occupation. But because the Japanese allowed the local rulers who had ruled under the Dutch to continue.

General Kesago Nakajima⁴⁸ a retired general had been appointed governor in East Sumatra. Nakajima allowed internees who had taken up vital positions before the war to return to their former plantations and other positions to keep them running. Although they would have to do so under strict Japanese or native supervision.

The live outside the camps was not easy. When the war luck changed the Japanese started to get more paranoid. People were taken in for interrogation by the Kempeitai. The natives also reported any suspicious things going on Japanese.⁴⁹

The Danish doctor Poul Jensen Ellehøj who had come to the Netherlands East Indies as a military doctor in the colonial army. Afterwards worked as a government doctor and Danish consul on Sumatra. He passed away of exhaustion on 23rd September 1943 at Ajertawar.⁵⁰

Like on Java the Japanese on Sumatra also formed a military corps Gyugun.⁵¹ Their task was to guard important places like airfields and places where landings could take place. But what is lesser known is that the Japanese saw no problems in using natives as forced labors (called romusha).

Romushas lived and worked on different projects under the same conditions as western internees and prisoner of war. One such project on Sumatra was the Pekanbaru railway also known as the Pekanbaru Death Railway.⁵²

⁴⁷ Java came under the 16th Army and the Greater East under the Navy.

⁴⁸ Kesago Nakajima was responsible for the Nanjing massacre.

⁴⁹ The Netherlands East Indies Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS) never succeeded in gaining intelligence on Sumatra during the war. Although the Allied tries to land several teams. All were betrayed by the natives they contacted.

⁵⁰ In 1983 after his retirement as an officer in the Danish army. His son Ole Jørgen Ellehøj returned to Sumatra and found his father's grave. He was later reburied with his wife at Store-Heddinge Cemetery. Unfortunately, the grave has been removed.

In 1937 when Poul Jensen Ellehøj had been on leave in Europe. It was Niels who had hold the position as Danish consul on Sumatra.

⁵¹ On Java it was the Heiho.

⁵² Thorlai Baslev Ishoy a Danish planter on Java ended up working on this railway. Because the Japanese accused of sabotage.

The Japanese capitulation and Bersiap in Medan

Since the end of April 1942 Sumatra had been part of the British Area of Operation. Churchill was eager to re-occupy Northern Sumatra and then recapture Singapore from there. A plan his own chief of staff General Alan Brooke saw as unrealistic. Besides Roosevelt and his advisors had their focus on keeping China in the war. And without help from the Americans the plan could not be put to life.

Unlike in Europe peace did not come to Sumatra right away when the Japanese capitulated on 15th August 1945. During the Potsdam Conference in Berlin at the end of the war in Europe. It had been agreed between the Allies that no one was to accept or make any contact with Japanese forces. Before General McArthur had accepted the Japanese unconditional surrender in Tokyo Bay.

This situation gave a power vacuum on Java and Sumatra. Sukarno who had worked with the Japanese during the war. Announced the Indonesian independence in Batavia on 17th August 1945 with the help of the Japanese.

The westerners who had been sitting in internment camps under harsh conditions. Was ordered to stay in the camps because it was considered too dangerous for them to leave them. The Japanese forces (now named Japanese Surrendered Personnel) received orders to protect the internees and prisoners of war and keep peace until the Allied forces arrived.

Meanwhile supplies were dropped from the air by Royal Air Force. The 321 Squadron which was a Dutch squadron and flew B-24 Liberators and Catalinas. Had received permission to paint huge Dutch flags on the side of their planes. To bring hope to the internees of the soon to be liberation.

This brought a tense situation. Many Japanese supported the Indonesians wish of independence. Therefore, they supported the Gyugun with arms and ammunition. While many Japanese left their posts and went into what they called self-internment. While they waited for their return to Japan.⁵³

It was not until the 2nd September 1945 when Major Gideon Francois Jacobs⁵⁴ of the British Royal Marines parachuted into Sumatra near Medan with a team. That the allied started to get a real picture of the situation on Sumatra.

This was followed by more teams among others one lead by 2nd Lieutenant Raymond Westerling⁵⁵ on 14th September 1945. His task was to form and train a new police corps. But it will not be until 11th October 1945 before the first British/Indian troops arrive in Medan in form of 6 South West Borderes.

Among all this Asgerda and Niels volunteered to work for the RAPWI⁵⁶ organization. Although the natives threatened to murder those who did that. By now kidnappings and murders were the order of the day. Making life outside Medan very dangerous for people who supported the Dutch (or Allied for that matter), Chinese but also families of former members of the colonial army.

It is not known how exactly Asgerda and Niels were murdered. An article in "The Straits Chronicle"⁵⁷ on 29th December 1945 gives the following story:

⁵³ For a Japanese version about the period read "A Japanese Memoir of Sumatra, 1945-1946: Love and Hatred in the Liberation War" by Takao Fusayama. Fusayama was an officer in the Japanese army occupying northern Sumatra during the war.

⁵⁴ Major Jacobs wrote "Prelude to the Monsoon" after the war.

⁵⁵ Westerling later commanded the Depot Speciale Troepen (Special Forces) a unit with which he was later accused of committing war crimes on southern Celebes (today Sulawesi).

⁵⁶ RAPWI means Recovery of Allied Prisoner of War and Internees

⁵⁷ [The Straits Chronicle](#), 29th December 1945

“... One of the oldest Medan inhabitants, Mr. Niels Thiele, a Swede architect, was murdered together with his wife on Sunday Nov. 16. He lived in his own house, which was located outside the protected area. His daughter had lately been married to a British officer of the paratroops,⁵⁸ who was one of the first who landed in this area. In some circles it is presumed that this marriage prompted the action of extremist.”

Another Dane Bernhard Wøller was luckier. Bernhard had been administrator on the estate S.F. Djati-barang before the war.⁵⁹ The estate was situated in the regency Pekalongan on Mid-Java. Although like in Medan the internees had been told to stay in the camps. Many had left the safety and returned to their former homes.

In October 1945 a massacre took place on those who had returned with at least 17 men⁶⁰ from Bernhards estate being among the victims. The reason Bernhard was not among them was that he had gone to Batavia to meet the Danish consul 3 days earlier.⁶¹

⁵⁸ The book “De danskes vej bind 3” mention his names as Captain Brown.

⁵⁹ During the war he was forced away by the Indonesians.

⁶⁰ The 17 come from my on records taken from the homepage of the [Oorlogsgravenstichting](#).

⁶¹ [1938 Rapporten en verklaringen betreffende overledenen tijdens de Japanse bezetting en door de Japanners geëxecuteerden. Met bijlagen.](#)

Postscript

There can be no doubt that Niels had a good reputation on Sumatra. A proof on this can be seen in that as late as 30th December 1945 a former employee had an advertisement in the newspaper offering his services.⁶²



As late as in December 1950 one of Niels employees still used his name to look for work.

⁶² "[Het nieuwsblad voor Sumatra](#)". Medan, 30-12-1950, p. 3.

Searches

Hof- og Statskalender 1909

De Danske i Siam 1858-1942

Gids voor de Oostkust van Sumatra (Deli)

Saw's commercial diary 1931

Medan Beeld van een Stad

[The Invasion of the South: Army Air Force Operations, and the Invasion of Northern and Central Sumatra](#)

[Opdracht Sumatra: Het Korps Insulinde](#)

www.navalhistory.dk