ANALISIS SEJARAH
2026, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 205–214
DOI: https://doi.org/10.25077/jas.v16i2.180

Published by
History Laboratory, Department of History
Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Andalas
Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia

Research Article

The Transformation of Civilian Freedom Fighters' Families during the Indonesian Revolution and Postwar Period in Java

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Abstract

The Indonesian Revolution (1945–1949) profoundly reshaped family life, yet the experiences of civilian freedom fighters' families remain marginal in its historiography. This study examines how revolutionary warfare transformed family structures, social status, and domestic roles in Java, as well as how these families adapted during and after the conflict. Employing historical methods, the research draws on archival documents, contemporary newspapers, published personal accounts, and oral interviews with former fighters and their relatives. The findings reveal that displacement, separation, bereavement, and economic insecurity disrupted household stability and intensified women's responsibilities as caregivers and providers. Limited state assistance further compounded these hardships, prompting families to develop informal support networks and collective associations. These adaptations extended family relationships beyond biological and household ties through shared experiences of struggle and loss. The study highlights civilian fighters' families as active participants in revolutionary social history and postwar reconstruction.

Article History

Submitted 15/05/2026
Revised 25/06/2026
Accepted 31/08/2026
Published 05/11/2026

Keywords

Civilian freedom fighters; family history; Indonesian Revolution; social resilience; postwar reconstruction.

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INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Revolution (1946–1949) created profoundly different experiences of everyday life. Independence brought hope, but it also marked the beginning of a more complex struggle as the Dutch sought to re-establish control over Indonesia. People expressed their enthusiasm for national freedom in various ways (Sasi, 2023), including through direct and indirect contributions to the revolutionary struggle. Civilian participation became a major source of strength in the resistance.

Unlike countries with established armed forces, Indonesia was still developing its military institutions in the years immediately following independence. Its defence structures remained fluid as the government sought an appropriate institutional model. Civilians helped address the shortage of defence personnel under State Defence Council Regulation No. 19 of 1946 ("Koordinasi Ketentaraan: Kewadjiban Mempertahankan Tanah Air, Peratoeran Dewan Pertahanan Negara No. 19," 1946). Loyalty to the Republic, the determination to end colonial rule, and the desire to contribute to the struggle encouraged large numbers of people to join civilian fighting groups, commonly known as *laskar*. These non-regular fighters emerged as a distinct social group. Their experiences show that memories of wartime conditions were not confined to state institutions but were deeply embedded in everyday life.

Accounts of war, however, are often dominated by political, diplomatic, and military developments and by prominent individuals. Such an emphasis obscures dimensions of the Indonesian Revolution that remain insufficiently explored. Sartono Kartodirdjo argued that historiography should move beyond particular institutions and elite groups to include the wider population in all its diversity (Kartodirdjo, 1981; 1982). The everyday experiences of ordinary people during the revolution have received relatively little attention within broader accounts of the independence struggle (Purwanto & van Klinken, 2023). Even when personal experiences are discussed, narratives tend to privilege masculine heroism and armed struggle rather than women's social experiences or the organisation of family life (Purwanto, 2006).

ISSN: 2087–5010 (Print) | ISSN: 3047–9444 (Online) | ©2026 The Author(s)
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War is not confined to conflict in the public sphere; it also penetrates the domestic sphere of family life. The relationship between war and family life in Indonesia predates the revolution. During the Pacific War in the early 1940s, the Japanese occupation forced many men to leave their homes to work on infrastructure projects supporting the war effort, including as *romusha* labourers. The prioritisation of food for wartime needs left families struggling to obtain adequate meals and, in some cases, facing starvation (Kiswanto et al., 2025). Families experienced these hardships largely through coercive policies over which they had little control. By contrast, the revolutionary struggle was pursued in the name of Indonesian independence and unfolded across Indonesian territory. Its consequences were experienced alongside feelings of belonging, pride, hope, and nationalism, despite the considerable risks involved.

During the revolution, families were especially vulnerable to the consequences of both conflict and its aftermath. Households that had anticipated a more secure future after independence faced renewed disruption as fighting intensified. Families were separated, displaced, and subjected to what has been described as "domestic paralysis" (Febriani, 2021). Many lost the presence or support of economically active members, particularly men. Early military policies largely excluded women from formal military activities (Salebaran & Amini, 2022). Consequently, wives and mothers often assumed greater responsibility for sustaining their households.

The far-reaching effects of war on family life are documented in studies of societies affected by the Second World War. In Italy, Battistin et al. (2022) found that wartime male mortality altered the marriage market, strengthening men's bargaining position while weakening that of women. In the United States, women experienced a double burden as they entered paid employment while continuing to perform domestic work (Strong & Weiss, 2017). Research on civilian flight and family survival in wartime France also highlights the fragmentation and insecurity of households (Risser, 2012). Families of veterans faced additional pressures when caring for relatives with physical injuries or psychological difficulties and negotiating the stigma associated with those conditions (Lynch, 2015).

In the Indonesian context, studies of the relationship between revolution and family life have often drawn on literary representations. Febriani (2021), for example, argues that the disruption of domestic life during the revolution shaped ideas of the ideal family in post-revolutionary Indonesia (1950–1965), contributing to decolonisation and national identity formation. Gunawan et al. (2020) likewise describe household disorganisation, anxiety, and unpredictable social conditions in urban settings during the revolution. However, the historical experiences of fighters' families remain insufficiently examined through archival records and first-hand testimony.

These findings invite further investigation into how the families of Indonesian civilian freedom fighters changed during the war and how those changes related to broader historical developments. This study therefore reconstructs transformations in family life within the context of the Indonesian Revolution. Java was selected because of its political and military importance during the conflict. Following the proclamation of independence, the Republic's government operated on Java, with Yogyakarta serving as its temporary capital. This concentration of political and military activity shaped the experiences of fighters' families. Their participation in networks extending from villages to urban communities also fostered distinctive patterns of solidarity and collective adaptation.

The families of civilian freedom fighters occupied a distinctive position in revolutionary society. Unlike political elites or some families connected to the regular military, they often lacked institutional protection and reliable financial support. Their circumstances combined ordinary civilian responsibilities with involvement in the independence struggle. Although family members did not necessarily participate in combat, they frequently provided logistical assistance, information, and emotional support. These contributions rarely appear prominently in official histories. At the same time, households faced the threat of arrest, bereavement, displacement, and economic hardship. Their responses reveal important forms of social resilience.

METHOD

This study employs the historical method, comprising source identification and collection, external and internal criticism, interpretation, and historical writing. Primary and secondary materials were examined to reconstruct how the Indonesian Revolution affected the domestic lives of civilian freedom fighters' families and how those families responded to changing circumstances.

Primary sources were collected from several institutions, including the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI) in Jakarta, the Yogyakarta Library and Archives Office, the Yogyakarta Palace archives, and the Pura Pakualaman archives. Contemporary newspapers and magazines were consulted at the Jogja Library Center on Malioboro Street and through digital collections, including Delpher. Secondary literature was accessed at the National Library in Jakarta and libraries in Yogyakarta.

First-hand testimony was particularly valuable for reconstructing everyday experiences that may be absent from official records. Interviews were conducted with relatives of former fighters, including children and a war widow, and with a surviving former fighter. Potential informants were identified through the Yogyakarta branch of the Indonesian Veterans' Legion (LVRI DIY) and its local offices. Participants were selected on the basis of their connection to civilian fighters and their ability to recount relevant experiences. Their testimony was compared with documentary evidence as part of the process of source criticism. The interviews supplemented written sources and provided insights into the emotional dimensions of wartime family life.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Revolutionary War and the Transformation of the Family's Comfort Zone

Rapid and often unexpected population movements became widespread during the revolution. Several developments contributed to displacement, including the relocation of the national capital from Jakarta to Yogyakarta in early 1946, negotiations between Indonesia and the Netherlands, and the territorial consequences of the Linggarjati (1947) and Renville (1948) agreements[1]. Continuing military operations further intensified insecurity. These developments encouraged large numbers of people to leave cities for Republican-controlled areas, particularly Yogyakarta. Some families travelled on foot across mountainous terrain, accompanied by children and carrying few possessions, while attempting to avoid Dutch patrols and armed robbers[2].

Intensifying Dutch military pressure, growing instability in Jakarta, and threats to Republican leaders prompted the transfer of the capital to Yogyakarta, with the support of Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX (Monfries, 2015). Refugees arrived from several groups and circumstances: approximately 50,000 people from Jakarta; 1,793 former forced labourers repatriated from Singapore in stages; people displaced following the Linggarjati and Renville agreements; and military and civilian resistance groups whose numbers remain unknown (Sasi, 2017). Yogyakarta's population reportedly rose from approximately 170,000 to around 600,000 after it became the capital (Yudoyono, 2017).

Motivations for leaving varied, ranging from loyalty to the Republic to fear of the growing Dutch military presence. Republicans were compelled to leave areas brought under Dutch control. Many families departed hastily and with little preparation for Republican-held territory. Some lost access to their homes, which came under Dutch control or were occupied by others, making their return extremely difficult (Saldjimah, 1949).

Some displaced families found shelter with relatives or strangers. Households sometimes accommodated large numbers of refugees, including people with whom they had no prior connection (Saldjimah, 1949). As the city centre became overcrowded, refugees sought accommodation in suburban and rural areas. Village heads arranged lodging in the homes of relatively prosperous farmers or merchants, often in locations less exposed to Dutch patrols (Keraton Yogyakarta Archive, No. 748; Tashadi et al., 1992). Previously unacquainted families formed supportive relationships through shared circumstances, sometimes coming to regard one another as an extended or "new" family.

Displaced families also turned to relatives and friends for shelter, food, clothing, and other necessities as savings dwindled and employment became scarce. Not everyone was able or willing to help. Uncertainty and the daily struggle for survival sometimes strained or severed kinship and friendship ties. Conversely, strangers forged new bonds of solidarity. Wartime displacement thus generated both the integration and disintegration of family and social relationships.

Families also faced threats to their health, including outbreaks of yaws and plague. Population growth contributed to inadequate sanitation and shortages of water ("Penghematan Pemakaian Air," 1946; "Penoetoepan Air," 1946). Poor living conditions compounded these problems. Childbirth could become especially dangerous because of limited medical facilities and high infant and child mortality (Lucas, 1996). These conditions compelled households to develop alternative coping strategies.

Food choices were increasingly determined by availability and the need to satisfy hunger rather than nutritional adequacy. Amid shortages and rising prices, families sought cheaper substitutes. Rural women in Yogyakarta prepared locally available foods, including tubers, gathered wild vegetables, and consumed insects as an alternative source of protein (Ningsih, 2024). Urban women with dwindling savings sold or bartered remaining possessions to obtain food. Some sold clothing or prepared food for sale, keeping a portion for household consumption. Contemporary accounts also suggest that some women who had lost family support amid the upheaval turned to prostitution (P.D.S., 1948).

Threats to personal safety compounded these hardships. Civilians faced the possibility of violence from Dutch soldiers, while inflation and economic pressure contributed to insecurity and crime. Families also confronted increasingly variable prices for essential goods. Government measures reportedly included monetary assistance associated with the introduction of the Oeang Republik Indonesia (ORI) in late 1946 (Uddin et al., 2020) and subsidised access to necessities such as rice, candles, kerosene, and diesel. Nevertheless, these interventions appear to have offered limited relief from deteriorating living conditions.

Taken together, these experiences show how wartime mobilisation transformed everyday family life. Displacement, scarcity, and insecurity disrupted familiar domestic routines and placed new social and economic demands on households. For civilian freedom fighters' families, the danger of losing male relatives was accompanied by changes in the distribution of domestic and economic responsibilities.

Becoming a Family of Civilian Freedom Fighters: The Struggle Over Status, Structure, and Role

During the revolution, unmarried women could support the struggle through public kitchens, the Red Cross, women's organisations, and other groups. Married women, however, often encountered additional barriers to direct participation because of their responsibilities as wives and mothers. Families were frequently pressured to leave Dutch-controlled areas, particularly when husbands were associated with the Republic; those who remained risked detention (Lucas, 1996). For many women, therefore, involvement in the revolution was shaped by the activities of their husbands as well as by their own choices. Family testimonies illustrate these circumstances.

> "Ketika peristiwa Clash I (Juli 1947) terjadi, saya mengikuti suami yang dipindahkan ke Cirebon, dan setahun lamanya kami berada di daerah sekitar kaki Gunung Ciremai. Anak kami yang pertama lahir di sana pada tanggal 27 November 1947. Selama itu kami harus sering berpindah tempat, sebab keadaan tidak mengizinkan untuk tinggal di satu tempat. Tentara Belanda berkeliaran di mana-mana. Pada waktu perintah hijrah dikomandokan, suami saya diperintahkan kembali ke tempat semula, yaitu Jakarta Timur, sedangkan saya melanjutkan perjalanan ke Banten." (Kamaruzzaman, 1995).
>
> ["When the First Clash (July 1947) occurred, I followed my husband, who had been transferred to Cirebon, and for a year we lived in the area at the foot of Mount Ciremai. Our first child was born there on November 27, 1947. During that time, we had to move frequently because the situation did not allow us to stay in one place. Dutch soldiers were roaming everywhere. When the order to relocate was given, my husband was ordered to return to our original location, East Jakarta, while I continued to Banten."] (Kamaruzzaman, 1995).

In an interview, Endang Mulyati recalled similar difficulties during the early years of her marriage, when she was caring for young children.

> "Saya menikah tahun 1945 … Tahun 1947 anak pertama sudah lari-lari ikut (mengungsi) tapi di daerah Pekalongan. Nanti kalau ada patroli (serdadu Belanda) kita lari-lari sama warga lain karena kan ditinggal (oleh suami yang ikut berjuang) … jadi harus hidup sendiri. Ke desa ke rumah ibu juga jalan sendiri tidak boleh pakai apa-apa. (Bayi) di jalan menangis sampai dinunutkan gerobak muat bata … takut nanti kalau ketahuan Belanda. Ditutup rumput-rumput begitu. Tahun 1948 Belanda bom-bom lagi di Wonosobo saya melahirkan anak ke dua. Baru umur dua hari langsung lari sampai ke Gunung Sindoro. Tahun 1949 suami baru mencari dan menjemput. Pulang ke Pekalongan lewat Dieng … jalan kaki bawa anak kecil-kecil dua. Banyak sekali dukanya." (Endang Mulyati, 2025).
>
> ["I got married in 1945 … In 1947, my first child was already running around with us (as we fled), but in the Pekalongan area. Whenever there was a patrol (by Dutch soldiers), we would run along with the other villagers because my husband had left to fight … so I had to fend for myself. I had to walk to my mother's village on my own, without taking anything. The baby cried on the way until we had to hide him in a cart loaded with bricks … because we were afraid the Dutch might find out. We covered him with grass like that. In 1948, the Dutch were bombing Wonosobo again, and I gave birth to my second child. When the baby was just two days old, we immediately fled all the way to Mount Sindoro. In 1949, my husband finally came to find and pick us up. We returned to Pekalongan via Dieng… walking with two small children. There was so much suffering."] (Endang Mulyati, 2025).

These testimonies illustrate the extensive responsibilities women assumed during wartime displacement, particularly in caring for children while their husbands were absent.

Wartime displacement compelled civilian freedom fighters' families to move repeatedly in search of safety. Many had to manage without the daily presence or support of male household members. Bambang Suharto, a surviving civilian freedom fighter, recalled his mother's painful decision to allow him to join the struggle (Bambang Suharto, 2025). Families were separated and scattered. Unlike the families of regular military personnel, civilian fighters' families did not necessarily qualify for official protection or financial assistance (ANRI, No. 213). This disparity illustrates how formal recognition could shape access to social support.

> "Keluarga saya yang masih tinggal di kota tidak luput menjadi incaran orang-orang Belanda, sehingga pernah diadakan penggeledahan karena dianggap sebagai sarang pejuang RI. Ayah meninggalkan rumah dan mengikuti jejak pertahanan ke desa-desa, sementara beberapa keluarga lain masih tetap tinggal di kota. Dengan demikian bercerai-berailah kami." (Bambang Suharto, 2025).
>
> ["My family members who remained in the city were also targeted by the Dutch; in fact, their home was once raided because it was suspected of being a hideout for Indonesian independence fighters. My father left home and joined the defense forces in the villages, while some other family members stayed behind in the city. Thus, we were scattered."] (Bambang Suharto, 2025).

Families also played an important role in providing moral support to relatives engaged in the struggle.

> "Ketika siasat beralih ke perang gerilya, aku sudah berstatus sebagai istri dan ibu. Walaupun demikian, kemauan untuk terus turut berjuang tidak memudar. Semangat juang tidak mungkin dihentikan, meskipun dalam bentuk yang berbeda. Aku lebih banyak berfungsi sebagai pendukung moral dan penunjang gagasan suami, yang sering berkata dengan nada mengingatkan bahwa bagaimanapun dan apa pun yang terjadi, aku dan anak-anak tidak boleh jatuh ke tangan Belanda, karena itu akan sangat mempengaruhi suamiku dalam menjalankan tugasnya." (Bambang Suharto, 2025).
>
> ["When the strategy shifted to guerrilla warfare, I was already a wife and a mother. Even so, my determination to continue fighting never wavered. The fighting spirit could not be stopped, even if it took a different form. I mainly provided moral support and encouraged my husband's ideas. He often reminded me that, whatever happened, our children and I must not fall into Dutch hands, as this would seriously hinder him in carrying out his duties."] (Bambang Suharto, 2025).

Around 1948, Mohammad Hatta, then serving as Vice-President, Prime Minister, and interim Minister of Defence, proposed repatriating refugees to reunite families separated by territorial divisions and enable their return home (ANRI, No. 10). The proposal was not implemented before the revolution ended. Military and diplomatic priorities appear to have delayed action on family reunification, leaving displaced people to decide whether to remain in temporary settlements or attempt to return to their places of origin.

The death of family members was another severe consequence of the war. The revolution claimed the lives of many young men. Wives, mothers, and other relatives experienced the loss of husbands, sons, brothers, and partners (Adisusanto, 1953). Contemporary accounts associated such losses with growing numbers of widows, reduced household stability, difficulties in childcare and education, and, in some cases, prostitution (Sutardjo, 1950). Reliable statistics are not available in the sources examined. Women with limited education or literacy could face particularly restricted opportunities to earn a living after losing a spouse.

Accounts of war widows also appeared in the newspaper *Kedaulatan Rakyat*. One report described Mrs Sudirman of Surabaya, whose husband died during the guerrilla war. While grieving his death, she also lost her son, who had served in the Student Army during fighting around Malang. She subsequently joined the effort to defend the Republic when Dutch forces entered Jombang. Mrs Sudirman was already known for her involvement in the women's movement, including founding the Putri Budi Sedjati association and serving as the first woman on Surabaya's Haminte Council[3] ("Wanita Dalam Gerilja," 1949).

These accounts show that the effects of war extended beyond physical destruction to changes in families' social position and identity. Participation in the independence struggle could confer moral recognition on civilian fighters' families, while widows navigated both public respect and social stigma. Such perceptions influenced how communities and public authorities treated affected households. In the postwar period, negative associations with the conduct of some former fighters could also affect their relatives. Family identity thus extended beyond the household to encompass political affiliation, resilience, and social solidarity.

Death, displacement, and prolonged separation made family structures more fragile. Women frequently assumed responsibilities previously carried out by men, particularly in earning income and caring for dependants. These overlapping obligations placed additional pressure on women (Permana & Pratiwi, 2024). The evidence therefore suggests that war penetrated domestic life, reshaping family structures, social status, responsibilities, and identity.

Adaptation Strategies: The New Face of Civilian Freedom Fighters' Families

The revolution left a lasting legacy after the fighting ended. Postwar society was shaped by loss, trauma, and shared experiences of upheaval. Some families were reunited, but others had to adapt to permanent changes in their composition. The transition to postwar life therefore required further adjustments.

Shared experiences encouraged civilian freedom fighters' families to build enduring networks of mutual support. Tatik Suhartinah, the daughter of a former fighter and an administrator at the Sleman branch of the Indonesian Veterans' Legion in Yogyakarta, recalled close relationships between her family and other veterans' families from her childhood. These ties later influenced her involvement in the veterans' organisation. Her parents also stressed the importance of maintaining such relationships after the war (Tatik Suhartinah, 2025).

Families of former civilian fighters maintained these relationships through commemorative events, including Heroes' Day and Independence Day (ANRI, No. 698; "Helddendag in Djakarta," 1951). Such practices sustained a sense of belonging within a broader community of fighters' families. They also reveal how ideas of family could extend beyond biological kinship and the private household to encompass social bonds formed through shared experiences, solidarity, and survival.

Community organisations also provided support to families affected by the war. In the early 1950s, women's organisations established the Foundation for Widows of War Victims. Perwari, Gerwis, P.W.K.I., Wanita Katolik, Rukun Wanita, Aisyiyah, G.P.I.I. Puteri, and Wanita P.N.I. participated in its establishment. Its initial activities focused on Salatiga, where approximately 50 widows had reportedly received no government assistance ("Steun Aan Weduwen van Vrijheidsstrijders," 1952). Wealthy individuals, including merchants, also contributed financial assistance (Keraton Yogyakarta Archive, No. 1667).

Following the revolution, many civilian fighters' families and war widows received inadequate government support, while employment opportunities for former fighters remained irregular (NN, 1951). As early as 1946, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Social Affairs Division of the Bureau of Struggle under the Ministry of Defence had proposed allowances for families of militia members killed in combat. Implementation, however, was reportedly inconsistent and unequal (ANRI, No. 12). These shortcomings prompted demands for assistance, particularly from the Badan Pembantu Keluarga Korban Perjuangan (BPKKP).

The BPKKP originated as a community initiative and was, for a period, administered by the Ministry of Defence. During the war, it distributed monthly financial assistance to families of deceased civilian fighters, supported refugees, and helped supply the front lines (Sutojo, 1995). From 1947, however, it operated as an independent community organisation funded by public contributions rather than government subsidies (ANRI, No. 801; Keraton Yogyakarta Archive, No. 1776).

The head of the BPKKP regional centre for the Besuki Residency in Jember, for example, publicly urged the government to address the needs of fighters' families. Assistance for people affected by the struggle, including those with disabilities, had reportedly made little progress before the Dutch military offensive and was further disrupted thereafter. Financial constraints prevented the BPKKP from fulfilling all its responsibilities. It therefore called for government intervention while offering to assist in implementing support measures (ANRI, No. 350; Pura Pakualaman Archive, No. 1835).

One early government response was to provide subsistence allowances to war widows and their children, although these payments reportedly lasted only a few days (Sutardjo, 1950). Throughout much of the revolutionary period, the absence of comprehensive legislation left civilian fighters' families without the forms of support available to the families of regular military personnel. Many widows were also ineligible for pensions because their husbands had not been government employees. This unequal access to assistance contributed to structural hardship, while community solidarity provided an important means of support.

Certain wartime provisions envisaged assistance through casualty funds or related benefits in cases of death during military operations ("Oorlogsweduwen," 1946). More explicit statutory recognition came with Law No. 75 of 1957 concerning veterans, which provided for benefits and healthcare for widows and orphans of veterans of the Indonesian independence struggle (DPAD DIY Archive, No. 4715).

CONCLUSION

War reshaped not only political and military affairs but also family life. Civilian freedom fighters' families were both witnesses to and participants in the Indonesian Revolution, enduring separation, bereavement, insecurity, and shifting responsibilities even as the independence struggle succeeded. Their experiences demonstrate how conflict transformed domestic structures, social roles, and family status. Although often absent from accounts centred on the battlefield, these families contributed to sustaining the struggle through practical and emotional support. In the aftermath of war, many developed networks grounded in shared experiences and mutual assistance. Their history is therefore integral to understanding how Indonesian society reorganised itself during and after the revolution.

This study contributes to the social history of the Indonesian Revolution by foregrounding family experiences that are often marginal in conventional narratives. Its oral-history evidence is limited by the age, health, and availability of surviving witnesses and relatives. Further research could incorporate additional first-hand accounts, compare experiences across regions beyond Java, and examine the longer-term relationship between veterans' families and post-revolutionary welfare policy.

NOTES

[1] Under the Linggarjati Agreement, signed on 25 March 1947, the Netherlands recognised the Republic of Indonesia's de facto authority over Java, Sumatra, and Madura. The Renville Agreement, signed on 17 January 1948, further restricted the territory under Republican control. The Van Mook Line served as a demarcation line.

[2] During the revolution, population movements from cities to Yogyakarta and other Republican-controlled areas were described as an exodus or mass displacement.

[3] The Haminte Council (*Gemeenteraad*) was originally a municipal representative body responsible for matters including transport, housing, health, and public services. Its institutional role changed during the conflict, increasingly encompassing urban defence and wartime logistics.

Acknowledgement

This is an optional section. I would like to express my gratitude to Mrs. Mutiah Amini for her support and guidance throughout this research project. I would also like to thank the informants who agreed to be interviewed for this study. Furthermore, I would like to thank Universitas Gadjah Mada for granting me access to its library resources and Turnitin services, both of which were user-friendly and efficient. Without the support of all these parties, this research would not have been possible.

Author contributions

The author has full contributed to this article, from manuscript preparation to finalization.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Availability of data and materials

Data was collected from various locations. These sources were obtained through searches of the following institutions: the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI) and the National Library, both in Jakarta; the Yogyakarta Library and Archives Service (DPAD DIY); the Yogyakarta Palace; the Pura Pakualaman in Yogyakarta; the Jogja Library Center on Malioboro Street; and various other libraries in Yogyakarta. The data can be accessed by visiting these institutions in person or by first obtaining official permits.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

The authors have given approval for the publication of this manuscript.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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List of Informants

1) Bambang Suharto, aged 97, Babarsari, Yogyakarta; former civilian freedom fighter; interviewed on 17 December 2025.
2) Endang Mulyati, aged 93, Warungboto, Yogyakarta; widow of a civilian freedom fighter; interviewed on 16 April 2025.
3) Tatik Suhartinah, aged 55, Tridadi, Yogyakarta; member of the LVRI Sleman executive board and daughter of a civilian freedom fighter; interviewed on 6 May 2025.

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