

hem, als steeds, om het herstel van Englands machtspositie in Zuidoost-Azië. Dat de Amerikanen eind '43—begin '44 in de *Pacific* sneller vorderden dan zij hadden verwacht en dat inmiddels door zijn eigen stafchefs werd overwogen om te zijner tijd in de *Pacific* een Brits eskader aan de Amerikaanse *Pacific Fleet* toe te voegen, wekte zijn verontrusting. Begin maart '44 gaf hij daar uitdrukking aan in een memorandum aan de bij de oorlogvoering nauwst betrokken Britse ministers, de leden van het *Defence Committee* van zijn kabinet. 'A decision', schreef hij,

*'to act as a subsidiary force under the Americans in the Pacific raises difficult political questions about the future of our Malayan possessions. If the Japanese should withdraw from them or make peace as a result of the main American thrust, the United States Government would after the victory feel greatly strengthened in its view that all possessions in the East Indian Archipelago should be placed under some international body upon which the United States would exercise a decisive control. They would feel with conviction: 'We won the victory and liberated these places and we must have the dominating say in their future and derive full profit from their products, especially oil''*¹

de aardolie, niet van Malakka overigens, maar van Nederlands-Indië.

Het argument maakte op de Britse *Chiefs of Staff* geen indruk. 'Whatever strategy we follow', aldus hun contrabetoog,

*'the major credit of the defeat of Japan is likely to go to the Americans. Their resources and their geographical position must make them the predominant partner in Japan's defeat. The first mortal thrust will be the Pacific thrust, upon which the Americans have already embarked. We should not be excluded from a part in this thrust'*² —

blijken uit de dagboek aantekening van generaal Brooke d.d. 17 maart '44: 'On conclusion of our COS' (Chiefs of Staff) 'meeting we were sent for by the PM' (Prime Minister) 'to discuss latest American forecast of their moves through the Pacific, which have been speeded up by several months in view of their recent successes . . . He then informed us that he had discovered a new island just north-west of Sumatra, called Simalur' (Simaloer, zie kaart III op de pag.'s 58—59). 'He had worked out that the capture of this island would answer as well as the tip of Sumatra and would require far less strength. However, by the time he had asked Portal' (de stafchef van de Royal Air Force) 'for his view, he found out that from the point of view of the air he had little hope of building up his aerodromes and strength before being bumped off. From Cunningham' (de First Sea Lord) 'he found out that from a naval point of view, with the Jap fleet at Singapore, he was courting disaster. I began to wonder whether I was in Alice in Wonderland or qualifying for a lunatic asylum!' (aangehaald in Arthur Bryant: *Triumph in the West 1943—1946. A study based on the Diaries of Field Marshal the Viscount Alanbrooke* (1959), p. 166).

¹ Aangehaald in (*United Kingdom Government, Cabinet Office*) *History of the Second World War. Military Series. Grand Strategy*. John Ehrman: *Volume V. August 1943—September 1944* (1956), p. 442. ² A.v., p. 446.