

Battle of Surabaya: Use the mystery cards to explain how a defeat can be a victory at the same time?

Clue 1

After November 1945, the British decided that they would be neutral in the Revolution and not support the Dutch claim to Indonesia.

Clue 2

Around 6000 British Indian troops came on 25 October to evacuate internees. Within three days fighting had started after attacks on the British Indian troops. Around 15 000 Indonesian armed soldiers of the newly formed Indonesian army and local mobs killed many of the British Indian troops. The British and Indonesians called a ceasefire.

Clue 3

Many of the Dutch now realised that their Dutch East Indies empire was lost forever. Before the battle many of the Dutch had honestly thought that the Republic had no real support among the Indonesian people. Afterwards, few thought that this was true any more.

Clue 4

The Japanese commander in Surabaya Shibata Yaichiro armed the Indonesians with Japanese weapons after the Japanese surrender. Soon a Dutch navy captain reached Surabaya and Shibata surrendered to him on 3 October but Shibata ordered his forces to give their few remaining weapons to the Indonesians who would in turn be responsible for turning them over to the Allies. Unsurprisingly, the Indonesians 'forgot' to do this.

Clue 5

The British launched a furious attack on the 10th of November. It took three days to conquer half the city but the fighting lasted for three weeks before they won the battle. At least 6000 Indonesians died and thousands more fled the broken city as refugees. The Republicans lost many fighters and most of their heavy weapons in the battle. In the end they were forced out of Surabaya.

Clue 6

The Indonesian fighters' sacrifice created a nationalist symbol for Revolutionaries to rally around.

Clue 7

Fighting broke out again after the ceasefire and the local British commander, Brigadier-General Mallaby, was killed.

Clue 7

In late October and early November the leaders of Indonesia's major religious organisations declared that fighting for Indonesian independence was a Holy War and the duty of all Muslims. Muslim leaders and their students began to pour into Surabaya from the pesantren schools of East Java and revolutionary leader Soetomo ('Bung Tomo'), used the local radio to build support for the revolution with fiery speeches.