

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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Dear Mr. Rogers:

For the second time in less than three years, an Indonesian cabinet is being confounded and threatened by a major army crisis.

The Indonesian Army has impressively exhibited its new-found unity by refusing to accept the new Chief-of-Staff appointed by the Ali Sastroamidjojo cabinet. The Minister of Defense has resigned and it seems very much as if the cabinet itself will tumble. At the present--Monday, July 18--no compromise is in sight.

Observers are asking whether military rule is in the offing for Indonesia. I think not, but the next few days may prove otherwise.

The new crisis is in contrast to the now-famous confusion of October 17, 1952, when the army found itself divided into two evenly matched camps--one supporting President Sukarno and the other aligned on the side of the former Minister of Defense, Sultan Hamengko Buwono. Since the early months of this year, the opposing army cliques have been coming together in an effort to bury past differences and rid the army of political party alignments altogether. The symbol of the new unity was the Jogja Declaration signed on February 25 by all high-ranking army officers. In part it demanded that a clear distinction be made between political and professional qualifications for appointments.

The test of the Jogja Declaration came in late spring when Army Chief-of-Staff Bambang Sugeng resigned. On June 10, a decision was reached by President Sukarno and the cabinet to appoint Colonel Bambang Utoyo as his successor. The new choice was unfortunate, for Bambang Utoyo does not possess the professional qualifications of seniority, experience, or health indicated by the Jogja Declaration. It appeared that more suitable candidates had been ruled out because of their past connection with the political opponents of President Sukarno. In short, the new appointment smacked of old politics, and thus it was considered by the greater part of the Indonesian officer's corps.

On June 27, President Sukarno administered the oath of office to Colonel Bambang Utoyo, at the same time raising his rank to Major General. It was a simple and unusual ceremony. The Assistant Chief-of-Staff was not present. The powerful army regional commanders had

boycotted the ceremony. There was no guard of honor, and music was provided by the local Fire Station band.

The embarrassment of June 27 brought quick but ineffective action from the Ali Sastroamidjojo government. The Assistant Chief-of-Staff, Zulkifli Lubis was called to the office of ambitious, leftish Minister of Defense, Iwa Kusumasumantri. He again chose not to appear, and an order was issued for his dismissal from his post. The new Chief-of-Staff issued his first "Order of the Day", and it looked as if the government was hoping somewhat blindly that the affair would soon be forgotten. But it had underestimated the determination and unity of the army.

Colonel Lubis refused to accept his dismissal and immediately ordered the seven regional army commanders to Djakarta for a special conference, which lasted from June 29 to July 2. Unity was maintained and the army announced its position: (1) the new Chief-of-Staff must resign, (2) Assistant Chief-of-Staff Lubis must be reinstated, (3) Colonel Lubis would act on behalf of the army in negotiating a further settlement of the Chief-of-Staff problem with the government.

Much has happened in the two intervening weeks, but no solution has been reached.

Through the Ministry of Information, the government firmly announced that it would only accept a solution "within the framework of the constitution and law". An ad hoc committee was formed to represent the government in its dealings with the army spokesman Colonel Lubis. On July 13, the government settlement proposal was presented to the army:

- (1) Minister of Defense Iwa would resign.
- (2) Assistant Chief-of-Staff Lubis would be reinstated, since his dismissal had been ordered by Iwa but not approved by the cabinet.
- (3) Chief-of-Staff Bambang Utoyo would be retained for a short period, then would resign voluntarily.
- (4) The army would propose three new candidates from which the government would select Bambang Utoyo's replacement.

The army has not yet made an official answer to the government offer, though rumours indicate that the reaction may be negative. In the meantime, Minister of Defense Iwa has resigned, and Colonel Lubis can be considered reinstated.

So the government-army dispute is at least temporarily a stalemate. Both sides have advanced an honorable principle which they seem determined to support: the army objecting to the universal application of the political spoils system of appointments, and the government insisting that Indonesia's military forces bow to Parliament and the constitutional Commander-in-Chief, President Sukarno.

The government-army dispute does not hang in thin air, unconnected to the larger developments in Indonesian politics. Its most important roots are probably in the "spoils system" adopted by the Ali Sastroamidjojo cabinet and in the widespread negative reaction that has been caused by the favoritism and corruption which have accompanied the extension of this system.

A certain amount of office juggling has been carried out by each Indonesian cabinet. Under the Masjumi Party coalition cabinet of Mohammad Natsir, district assemblies were appointed by a system of selection which favored the Masjumi Party, and key decision-making officials were principally from the Masjumi or its allied parties.

Under the Ali cabinet--which has now held office for twenty-four months--the technique of political appointment has been perfected and perhaps overused. Down to the lowest levels of the civil service, strong pressure has been put on Indonesian officials to join the Indonesian Nationalist Party. Selection of the supposedly non-political officials of the important election committees has been heavily weighted in favor of the Indonesian Nationalist Party and its friends. Even in the allocation of import licenses and foreign exchange, the friends of the government have been favored and its opponents ignored.

The primacy of political considerations is seen in the very make-up of the Ali cabinet. It's original Minister of Economics, Iskaq, was so bombarded with accusations of corruption that he was forced to resign. The charges were never seriously contested. The present Minister of Justice has been similarly barraged with charges of corruption and dishonesty in the alleged sale of visas to unqualified applicants, yet he remains in office. The public has been given the impression that corruption has spread at a frightening rate under the Ali cabinet and that a good share of the squeeze has found its way back to the treasuries of the government parties. It is safe to say that political morality--in matters of money or favoritism--has fallen to an unprecedented low during the last two years in Indonesia.

The character of the Ali government has influenced the army both indirectly and directly. As a presumably non-political body containing a disproportionately large number of Indonesia's educated leaders, the army has undoubtedly shared in the general disillusionment with party politics and its manifestations. More directly, the army has felt and resented the heavy-handed political pressures of its Minister of Defense, Iwa Kusumasumantri.

Iwa's policies as Minister of Defense have consistently served to perpetuate the rift brought about by the events of October, 1952. The group which had supported the former Minister of Defense was isolated, neutralized, and--when possible--eliminated from power. When Armed Forces Chief-of-Staff Major General Simatupang failed to resign, his post was abolished and its power transferred to a ministerial cabinet directly under Iwa's control. Officers of presumably "correct" political attitudes were appointed to Djakarta headquarters and efforts were reportedly made to remove high-ranking officers with "incorrect" views. It has even been reported that military supplies

have been channeled to politically favored divisions and denied to others.

Partly as a result of Minister Iwa's policies, the army began to draw together, as if in self-defense. At the Jogjakarta meeting held in February, 1955, the longstanding rift in army ranks was patched, and the army announced its determination that party politics would not again bring disunity and panic in Indonesia's military forces.

The test of the new army attitude came with the resignation of Chief-of-Staff Bambang Sugeng, who had stubbornly opposed many of Minister Iwa's schemes, among them a plan to arm a large communist veteran's organization as a sort of militia against the Darul Islam rebels. From the point of view of seniority, experience, and ability the post should probably have gone to Colonel Simbolon, commander of Territory I in North Sumatra. But Simbolon was unacceptable "for political reasons" and the choice seemed narrowed to those who had supported President Sukarno in October, 1952. The choice finally went to Colonel Bambang Utoyo, former commander of Territory II in South Sumatra, which had supported the President.

The united opposition of the army to this choice could have been predicted by the President, the cabinet, and Minister Iwa, if only they had paid due attention to the Jogja Declaration, or to the May 20 statement of Colonel Simbolon:

"At this time we are confronted with a complex and forboding situation. The military appropriation that we have received is far short of that received in previous years. The appropriation for subsistence has fallen, while the prices of foodstuffs have risen steadily.

Because of a lack of funds, the condition of our troops living in sub-standard barracks cannot be improved. Our stocks of several types of important medicines are depleted.

Transportation repairs are impossible because of a lack of money and furloughs have been postponed for the same reason.

It can be said that we have had almost no rest since the revolution broke out, first fighting against the Dutch and now facing elements bent on destroying the state. Our ages increase, our families grow, and the responsibility placed on our shoulders by the state grows ever greater...

(According to the conclusions reached) at the February meeting of high officers in Jogja, unity is the absolute condition for the solution of the psychological problems which have arisen in the Army.

The appointment of a new Chief-of-Staff for the Army must not be allowed to give rise to new splits in our ranks. I am

certain that if the government gives full attention to the principal problems faced by the Army and to the results of the recent Jogja officers's meeting, the new appointment will be made in such a way that no disturbing consequences will ensue..."

But the appointment was made on the basis of old splits, and the consequences have been truly disturbing.

As I write this from a village in East Java, a compromise solution may have already been reached in Djakarta. Compromise is an Indonesian forte, and future historians may find that it was the margin of democracy's survival during these uncertain, tumultuous years. On the face of it, the greatest current threat to democracy would seem to be the possible implementation of a military dictatorship. Is this a strong or a remote possibility? My impression that it is a remote possibility will probably be shown to be true or false during the next week.

The basis of my assumption is to be found in the attitude of the army leaders themselves. It is clear--at least at present--that the officers involved in the present crisis have no intention of "saving the nation" or dictating to the civil government on matters of general state policy. Of course, it is almost axiomatic that military dictatorships are imposed "against the will" of the officers involved and as temporary expedients. The course of recent events in Egypt or Pakistan seem to exemplify this outlook. For a proper evaluation of the Indonesian situation, the outlook of the "strong man" type should be contrasted with that of Assistant Chief-of-Staff Z. Lubis, who has been the army spokesman in the recent troubles. His order of the day for July 17 may be considered to voice the feelings of the greater part of the army.

ORDER OF THE DAY, July 17

In connection with the affair of June 27, 1955, the Indonesian National Army has been constantly faced with provocative accusations that it intends to destroy the structure of democracy and establish a military dictatorship on the "rubble" of destruction...

The attitude and actions of the Indonesian National Army cannot be construed so as to favor the destruction of parliamentary democracy in Indonesia. The problem must be seen from the point of view of the Indonesian National Army's responsibility to the Motherland and to the Nation....The Indonesian National Army is nothing more than a "corporation" owned by eighty million Indonesians, each of whom owns a share in the concern. Because the state is based on democratic principles, the people's control is channeled through a "board of directors" and "shareholders board", i.e. the executive and legislative branches of the government...

But the Indonesian National Army is now faced with individuals or persons in the (state) apparatus, who, in the view of the Army and the public, utilize the structure of democracy in a manner that does not conform with the bases, principles, norms and conditions that we all share, who do not follow "the rules of the game" which we all recognize, who misapply these rules for a-national interests, who in short do not apply them to achieve the goals of the state...

In connection with the relations between politics and military force, there are two extremes in political structure. The first emphasizes the military element and gives rise to militarism, that outlook which puts military considerations above politics and gives birth to military dictatorship.

The second emphasizes politics and eradicates the military element. It gives birth to "politicalism" or "civilianism", and takes the form of an unarmed democracy. The Indonesian National Army wishes a balance or harmony between political and military factors, between statecraft and strategy...

The history of the Indonesian National Army shows that it has taken the initiative itself to eliminate and/or lessen the possibility of militarism in our country. The first instance of this was seen at the end of 1951, when Army Headquarters formulated a military plan which stressed factors of national construction. The plan called for the establishment of compulsory military training by the middle of 1956.

With this plan, the army leadership hoped to replace the professional army with a system of civilian militia cadres, for such a system would demand a great deal less expense and would extend military training to the entire nation, thus obstructing the growth of militarism.

But the plan of 1951 was smashed on the rocks of those events preceeding and following October 17, 1952, so that it has not gone into effect to this day.

The second proof was given this year, when the officers of the Army General Staff advanced its conception of a plan for conscription, training and public military education to an ad hoc committee of the Ministry of Defense.

The Indonesian National Army does not sponsor militarism, but it also refuses to accept the political opportunism or "civilianism" which is spreading in our nation. The Army opposes the concept that politics is the only factor for consideration, and that military considerations must be put aside. This is especially true if it is the political opportunism of individuals and groups.

Events in the Army have sufficiently revealed the efforts to place "political" considerations above those of military strategy, tactics, administration, logistics or technique.

As a result, the allocation of materials and funds for the Army has been made on the basis of politics rather than efficiency, honesty, or the well-being of the soldiers who continue to experience privation. As a consequence we do not yet have a national defense policy...after ten years of freedom and national sovereignty.

Our military leaders are appointed by the President on the basis of cabinet decisions, but the choice must be based on a balance of military and political factors, not on politics alone. Such a system would ensure that the military would not violate the constitution. The leaders of the state are chosen through elections or by Parliament, not in military staff meetings...

In conclusion, I wish to present a rule which every soldier in the National Army should take as his guide: "If the civilian leader says 'yes' and the military leader says 'no', the answer is 'yes'. This does not mean that 'yes' is automatically the truest answer or that the civilian leader is better than the military leader." In short, the message of this Order of the Day is that the provocative accusations that the Indonesian National Army is violating democratic methods...are not true...Show by your words, attitudes, and conduct, that you are citizens of the same standing of all Indonesian citizens so that the public will truly realize that the Indonesian National Army is the property of the nation.

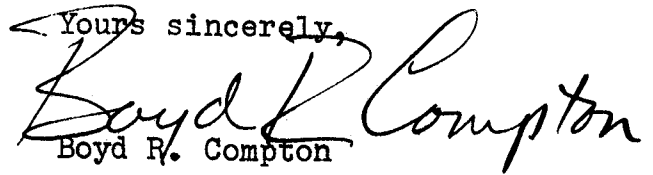
With nearly solid army support, Assistant Chief-of-Staff Lubis is in a powerful position during these critical days. If he and his fellow officers were hungry for power, the temptation and the possibility exist now for strong action. So far, he and the army have shown no willingness to embark on this course.

The army has travelled a long road since October 17, 1952, when it was split and rendered ineffective by ideological differences. It has become united as a major interest group, eager to play its role and defend its interests. In much the same way, the governing Indonesian Nationalist Party has gone through a process of rationalization and become much more of a political machine than a vehicle of an ideological movement. As the spirit and attitudes of the revolution continue to ebb, such groups are maneuvering and jockeying to find their position in the hierarchy of state power.

The events of this month will do much to determine the future relationship between the Indonesian government and its army. The crisis could still result in violence or dictatorship. So far, however, both parties to the dispute seem determined to find a solution to their problem within the framework of democracy, law and moderation.

Now we must wait for a short time to find how well the Indonesian National Army can stand up to the temptation placed before it.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Boyd R. Compton". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name below it.

Boyd R. Compton

Received New York 7/25/55.