

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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Dear Mr. Rogers:

It is misleading to say that the recent regional-military troubles in Menado, Macassar and North Sumatra are a threat to Indonesian national unity. Instead, they show that the basic conditons of national unity have not yet been firmly established in this vast archipelago.

The problem of Indonesian unity is stated succinctly in the national motto, "Bhineka Tunggal Ika"---"Unity in Diversity". In the seven year interim between the winning of full independence from the Dutch and the convening of the Constitutional Assembly, state power has been so completely centralized in the national capital that Indonesia's rich diversity of interest and culture has hardly had an opportunity to express itself. It is as if some impatient jeweler were trying to construct a serviceable brooch out of pieces intended for a rare necklace.

This one-sided understanding of "unity in diversity" has fed the steady growth of discontent and restiveness in the rich islands outside Java. In mid-1956, this wave of dissatisfaction has crested in the sensational cases of copra and rubber smuggling by regional commands of the Indonesian Army. The situation is now so serious that the Ali Sastroamidjojo coalition cabinet is being called upon to make policy decisions which conflict sharply with its principles of thorough-going centralism.

The unifying elan of the Indonesian nationalist movement has dissolved rapidly during the past seven years, and we now see the government face-to-face with the uncomfortable fact that powerful groups in the regions and islands of Indonesia are not in agreement on the concepts and institutions of their association.

It will be the task of the newly-elected Constitutional Assembly to discover workable formulae for the organization of the state. In view of the Indonesian genius for compromise and aversion to wooden, doctrinaire thinking, there is reason to hope that this job will eventually be done with skill and even distinction. But at present,

regional discontent is growing at such a pace as to threaten this good work before it begins. The Constitutional Assembly will not begin its sessions until sometime this fall, and it may not complete its work for many years. Even now a new balance of power may be shaping up in Indonesia as a result of the unsettled regional crises. It is quite possible that the Constitutional Assembly will find its conclusions dictated not by conscience, negotiation and compromise, but by the clear realities of the situation now emerging.

Vice-President Hatta has said that Indonesia's current regional troubles are a reaction not to "Javanism" but to "Djakarta'ism". His remark is worth noting and testing, for it may provide a sort of hook we can use to pull a few strands of sense out of the tangled regional situation I have described in my last three letters.

At first glance, the disturbances in Menado, Macassar and North Sumatra seem to bear out the Vice-President's point; the source of today's troubles should be sought within the Indonesian government administration and not in the conflict of Indonesian ethnic and cultural groups. But in accepting this view, we might bear in mind that the significance of these troubles is not how they began, but rather how they will end.

Facts brought to light in the past three weeks have helped establish the nature and kinship of the events in Menado, Macassar and North Sumatra:

(1) North Sumatra. More conclusive information has now been made public about the role of the North Sumatra Territorial Command of the Indonesian Army in the smuggling of rubber from Teluk Nibung Harbor. Colonel Simbolan has admitted his part in planning the illegal commerce and has stated publically that he notified the cabinet of his plan some weeks ago. When asked why he came to his decision, the colonel actually wept as he described the miserable living conditions of his troops and his hopes for building new barracks with the Rp. 30,000,000 earned through the smuggling trade in late May and early June.

The settlement of the Teluk Nibung scandal will apparently be left to Army Headquarters in Djakarta, which has announced that Colonel Simbolan will soon leave his command in a "routine transfer" marking the end of his tour of duty in North Sumatra. Recent reports from Medan indicate that Simbolan, now more popular than ever with his troops, is reticent to accept this order at the present time. If he refuses, he will be defying not only the cabinet but his own army superiors. Such an action would mean an end to the period of army unity which began with the Djogja Declaration of February, 1955. If he accepts the transfer, he will probably be ignoring the urgings of his fiercely loyal subordinates. It is a dilemma which high officers in Menado and Macassar must also face this month.

(2) Menado, North Sulawesi. It is now known that the Twenty-fourth Regiment of the Indonesian Army, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Worang, was the principal instigator of the copra smuggling from North Sulawesi in April and May. Reliable sources also claim that the East Indonesian Territorial Command of the army knew of Lieutenant-Colonel Worang's intentions and gave its blessings to the venture.

The situation in Menado was still confused at the end of July. In June, the government had issued its ineffective order to close the smuggling port, Bitung Harbor, then it hastily retreated when faced with the united anger of the Menadonese. Since then, Djakarta has regained a tiny shred of prestige through a ceremony in which part of the supplies and equipment earned through the smuggling trade were officially surrendered to the Army Chief-of-Staff. The materials were then officially given back to the original recipients in North Sulawesi, who had of course retained possession all the while. The fiction of central government control was thus asserted, while the right of regional leaders to act illegally was in fact affirmed. The act seemed worthy of a Chinese government in the heyday of warlordism.

In its most recent steps, the central government has passed from face-saving ceremonials to boldness. Lieutenant-Colonel Worang has now been officially ordered to leave his post and report for duty elsewhere, reportedly in Kalimantan. There is some evidence that neither Worang nor his regional backers intend that the transfer order be accepted.

If Worang can be persuaded or forced to move, a trend toward the growth of genuine warlordism will have been blocked. If not, Djakarta will have to accept the fact that its authority is almost nil in North Sulawesi at the present time.

(3) Macassar, South Sulawesi. Down south at the provincial capital of Sulawesi, the fact and purpose of army participation in the recent troubles are more difficult to establish. It is only through indirect evidence that we arrive at the conclusion that the Macassar Base Command of the army, under Lieutenant-Colonel Andi Mattalatta, has supported and guided the Action Committee which seized control of the Copra Foundation facilities in Macassar.

This conclusion is demanded by two facts, one plain as day and the other as confusing and real as fog. In the first place, the Action Committee could not have taken its daring action and would not still be in a position of power without the support of local armed units. The existence of martial law in Macassar makes this doubly clear. Secondly, the leading members of the Action Committee are veterans who fought under Andi Mattalatta during the revolution. Even now, the veterans are his "anak buah", his "children", and Andi Mattalatta is their "Bapak"

or "papa". This type of continuing paternal relationship between revolutionary commanders and their former troops has been of great and sometimes bewildering significance in these first years of real freedom. It may be something fundamentally Indonesian, or it may be only a passing phase in this period of partially-formed institutions and confused authority. Whatever its nature, this type of relationship makes very real demands.

In earlier letters, I have tried to show how the "Papa-children" relationship works in two directions. The idea is worth restating, for it throws new light on the troubles of mid-1956. If we take Atjeh in early 1953 as an example, we see retired military commander Daud Beureueh in somber meditation at his village near Sigli, pattering now and then on the mosque under construction next door and receiving delegations of officials, religious leaders and veterans from all corners of Atjeh. During those days, he arrived at his decision to launch a rebellion. One factor which drove him to the necessary pitch of anger was the feeling that his former troops were suffering needlessly in the post-revolutionary years. As a proper "papa", he looked on their plight with a feeling of responsibility and sajang, that very Indonesian word which means both pity and love. He was bound by a powerful code to take some action to improve their lot.

But Daud Beureueh was also bound to listen to their pleas and suggestions. If the young hot-heads were bent on digging up their old rifles and going to war, he had to listen, understand and advise. Under the conditions of their relationship, he could not actually dictate to them. Indonesian concepts of leadership preclude such heartlessly authoritarian conduct.

Here is an example of a puzzling paradox in recent Indonesian political life. On the one hand, we see the deeply rooted authoritarian tradition which Indonesians usually describe as "Papa'ism". A leader is sought to give single voice to the united sentiments of the group. My past letters have tried to show how this tradition operates in army units, veterans' associations, and the Javanese villages of Modjokerto Regency. On the other hand, the leader or "papa" who emerges often finds himself influenced and even led by spirited underlings. We can look again to the example of Daud Beureueh, or to the situation so common in Javanese villages where a rich, powerful headman bows to the will of the aggressive youngster who leads the Village Youth Defense Corps.

One explanation of this paradox is found in the family life among almost all of the ethnic groups of the islands. The father is undisputed leader of the family, and tradition says that it is wrong for the children to express selfish desires which conflict with the interests of the family, these interests naturally being interpreted by the father. But the children enjoy great license and influence.

In many cases, father can't bring himself to say "no", and the success of his leadership depends in part on his talent for avoiding situations where "no" must be said. To some westerners, this type of family life appears to lack proper discipline, and the children seem shockingly successful in getting their own way. But what the arrangement may lack in discipline and orderliness, it more than makes up in solidarity and interdependence.

These examples touch the situation in Macassar at several points. The veterans of the Action Committee have been in constant contact with their former commanders for the past several years. It is their good fortune that one of their "papas", Andi Mattalatta, is Base Commander at Macassar. He is obviously supporting their actions. But it is very possible that he did not take part in the initiation and planning of the seizure of the Copra Foundation, but instead was forced to accept the seizure as an accomplished fact. Nonetheless, he is now obliged, as "papa", to support and defend them to the limit.

The positions of the commanders in North Sulawesi and North Sumatra are similar. We may believe Colonel Simbolan when he claims that his feeling of sajang for his troops led him to seek extra funds through smuggling. It is understandable how this feeling of paternalism may have won out temporarily over the call of duty and discipline, even for such a competent and dedicated soldier as Colonel Simbolan. The same may be said of the motives of Lieutenant-Colonel Worang. But we should not forget the second condition of "papa'ism": these officers are now under a strong obligation to listen to the further pleadings and requests of their subordinates. It will be exceedingly difficult for them to acquiesce to restrictive orders or disciplining from Djakarta if their troops do not so wish. Here is a ready-made rationalization for the officer who harbors a hidden hunger for the power of a petty warlord.

A new danger has arisen with the return to Macassar of Colonel Warrouw, the handsome, ambitious Territorial Commander for East Indonesia. A Menadonese, he is leader and "papa" of the troops garrisoning the immense area which includes Sulawesi, the Moluccas and the Lesser Sunda Islands. Either through coincidence or very shrewd foresight, he was invited to accompany President Sukarno on his journey to America and Western Europe. When trouble broke out almost simultaneously in Manado and Macassar, Warrouw was thousands of miles away. On returning, he received orders to surrender his post and report as Military Attache in Peking. Like Simbolan and Worang, he is reportedly digging in his heels.

Colonel Warrouw is probably the only leader who could bring Christian North Sulawesi and Muslim South Sulawesi together in a united front against Djakarta. He is from the north, but his position is so strong in Macassar, his headquarters, that he has been aptly called

"Mr. Sulawesi". In the past, Warrouw has shown little aversion to actions which conflict with central government policies. His ambitions and ideals have simply not allowed him to become a disinterested professional bystander on the political scene. Now he is facing his greatest temptation, for he could undoubtedly defy Djakarta with impunity and the expectation of enthusiastic support from Sulawesians, north and south.

In reviewing the cases in Manado, North Sumatra and Macassar, the truth and usefulness of Vice-President Hatta's comment on "Djakarta'ism" becomes apparent. In the first two cases, army commanders took direct action to make up a supposed deficit in their appropriations from the Ministry of Defense. In Macassar, an army commander supported a local committee in its effective attack on central government copra policy. In all three cases, objection was made against administrative policies of the government and appropriate illegal steps were taken. Conceivably, no action would have been taken if military appropriations had been larger or if copra policy had been different. Up to this point, the troubles appear disturbing but not dangerous, for they are reactions against "Djakarta'ism", which I would describe as a strong centralization of administrative policy-making and financial control in the national capital, implemented without sufficient power to ensure enforcement.

As noted above, the central government has reacted as if the regional troubles were primarily matters of administration, and so far, its attempts at a settlement have involved nothing more than administrative decisions: the Copra Foundation was disbanded, an order was issued to army commanders to stop smuggling, Bitung Harbor was closed then reopened, and finally three of the regional commanders were given transfer orders to new posts.

The point of danger is reached when the reaction to "Djakarta'ism" becomes a region-wide movement which feeds on the cultural or historical unity of an area. When this occurs, Djakarta is faced with a movement which may veer suddenly and surprisingly toward regional nationalism or separatism. At this point, the movement becomes as much anti-Javanese as anti-Djakarta, and all the voiceless, repressed resentments of the past years come out on parade.

The purpose of this essay is to ask whether this danger point has been reached. If the sporadic, uncoordinated reactions against heavy-handed centralism are indeed at the point of transforming themselves into positive regional movements, then the situation has become more desperate than the Ali Sastroamidjojo Cabinet cares to admit.

In this respect, the tangled situations in North Sumatra, Manado and Macassar differ considerably. At present, North Sumatra appears to present the least danger and Manado the most.

It is slightly preposterous to think that Colonel Simbolan could be elevated as leader and spokesman for the polyglot mixture of Christian Bataks, Muslim Bataks, Atjehnese, Malays and migrant Javanese who make up the population of North Sumatra. The area is a cultural hodge-podge. Resentments against Djakarta flourish in the region, especially because of the great treasure of revenue and foreign exchange which flows from the Medan plantation area to Djakarta with so little apparent compensation. A visitor in Medan, the provincial capital, hears outspoken criticism of Djakarta on every side, but he sees little evidence that a leadership group is emerging to direct these resentments toward local nationalism or separatism. A possible explanation for this is that the Bataks--the most dynamic ethnic group in North Sumatra--have already won unprecedented influence in the central government, principally in the Indonesian Army and the Ministry of Education. Colonel Simbolan, himself a Christian Batak, has great personal power within his garrison division, but his influence does not seem to cover the province as a whole.

We find a very different situation in North Sulawesi. The near-explosion in Manado last June shows how quickly a regional reaction against central interference can be transformed into a positive movement with many of the characteristics of nascent nationalism. The copra-rich area of Minahasa is small. Less than a million people live on the fifty-mile stretch at the northeast tip of Sulawesi, but they form a unique group in Indonesia because of the cultural integration and dynamism provided by their Christian religion, their high educational level, and the various advantages gained through preferential Dutch policy during the colonial period.

The explosive situation in North Sulawesi was nearly triggered off by the order closing Bitung Harbor. The smuggling trade through Bitung had not only given Manado and the whole Minahasa area a moment of well-being. It had also seemed to indicate that regional leaders--acting directly and without reference to government bureaus in Djakarta--could "get things done", in the most general sense of the phrase. After several years of drift and confusion, the people of Minahasa were intoxicated to find themselves involved in a purposeful, concrete action. Perhaps the businessmen, veterans, officials and army officers involved in the copra commerce were also slightly intoxicated by their importance and power. They reacted angrily and aggressively to the closing of Bitung Harbor, and there is little doubt that the government would have faced rebellion within a matter of days or weeks if it had stuck stubbornly to its order. In rescinding the order on Bitung Harbor, the central government deflated the anger of the Menadonese but did not destroy their unity. On the contrary, it showed the Menadonese how effective they are when united as a region.

The strangest quality of the Manado affair was that its leaders did not plan or seriously consider armed action before those exciting days in early June. What ensued was a series of blind reactions

to what appeared to be a blindly centralistic policy.

Macassar's position is unique in that it lies in a small area of considerable cultural and historical unity, but it is also the capital for the entire province of Sulawesi and army headquarters for all of eastern Indonesia. The position of regional leaders there is confused by uncertainty as to the extent of the region they actually represent.

Andi Mattalatta and the members of the Action Committee are natives of the South Sulawesi peninsula which was at one time dominated by the Raja of Goa. South Sulawesi is the most heavily populated area on the island, with more than three million inhabitants who cling to Islam as a creed and warfare as a proud tradition. In normal times, the region was not especially rich in export commodities, but it did produce substantial rice surpluses in its irrigated valleys.

Since 1951, the development of South Sulawesi's resources has been absolutely blocked by the Kahar Muzakar rebellion, which has succeeded in denying the government control of at least four-fifths of the peninsula. The government has met with very modest success in winning over isolated battalions and platoons of the rebel forces and giving them garrison duties in their areas of operations. Some of the regions of South Sulawesi which fall under the shadow of government control are therefore garrisoned by troops native to the area and led by officers of imperfect loyalty. One very noteworthy fact about the region is that nearly all the troops, officers and veterans of South Sulawesi--rebels, recent turncoats and loyal soldiers--were comrades-in-arms during the Indonesian Revolution.

If Andi Mattalatta is the leader and "papa" of the veterans who formed the Action Committee in Macassar, he can also claim that relationship with many of the younger commanders of small garrison units outside Macassar. However, his real support is limited to a few battalions of troops in the immediate area of Macassar, for the rebellion has effectively cut Macassar off from the chaotic hinterland.

The Action Committee program--with its military support from local garrison units--cannot be called a "regional movement", at least not in the same broad sense as the development in Manado. Its area of influence is too limited, and there are signs that the local population has little love for the undisciplined soldiers who so often threaten their lives and property. The situation can be better described as a type of small-scale warlordism, in which high ideals and petty ambitions are inextricably mixed. The power of the Action Committee is nonetheless real, and the government has been powerless to take direct measures against it.

From the start, the Action Committee has claimed jurisdiction



over copra commerce in all of eastern Indonesia, exclusive of Minahasa. This claim has been deflated by the success of the central government in establishing direct contact with most of the copra producing areas in the eastern islands. While the Action Committee has issued angry statements from Macassar, central government agents have been paying old Copra Foundation debts in the villages of central Sulawesi, the Moluccas and the Lesser Sunda Islands, and Dutch K.P.M. ships have been carting copra from these regions directly to Java.

The reaction of the central government to its regional troubles can be described by the overworked phrase, "divide and rule". Accepting the present limits of Djakarta's power and authority, the policy has been carried out with considerable skill. The absence of Colonel Warrouw from Macassar probably prevented the consolidation of anti-Djakarta forces in north and south Sulawesi. After the difficulties arose, the government consistently treated the two affairs as isolated cases. The Menadonese--menacingly united and in possession of a richly productive area--were given sweeping concessions. The Action Committee in Macassar--in control of a small, unproductive region--was ignored and bypassed. A successful leader might have been able to convince dissidents in both regions that their interests coincide. As it was, these interests were made to appear in conflict.

Recent government announcements have described a plan to increase the number of provinces in Indonesia (now ten), so that Sulawesi would be divided into two administrative areas and North Sumatra into two or three. The army has also announced the possibility that it would split its seven territorial commands into smaller units. Both projects would probably reduce the immediate dangers of regionalism by reducing the size of the units with which Djakarta must deal. The long-range effect, however, might well be an intensification of the spirit of localism.

If Djakarta continues to treat the situations in Sulawesi and North Sumatra as administrative problems to be settled by administrative decisions, it may soon be faced with more trouble than it can handle. Conceivably, it may even have to face the possibility of a regional disintegration which few regional leaders actually hope for. At the end of July, the situation had developed far enough in that direction to serve as a warning. The events described above amount to a dramatic protest not only against the administration of the state, but also against the centralistic concepts underlying the state administration. In Menado, the protest has already blossomed into a forceful regional movement. The grave situations in South Sulawesi and North Sumatra could also develop to that point of danger if local leaders so willed.

Basically, the regional problem is one of authority and leadership. The central government has enjoyed an immeasurable advantage since the abolition of the federal United States of Indonesia. Because

that structure was so Dutch-tainted, its former leaders are now still discredited and demoralized. Some of them have since travelled successfully along the road of unitarian nationalism. The few who dared take direct action against the unitary state (Andi Aziz, the leaders of the "South Moluccan Republic," and others) met with failure. The sentiment in favor of federalism has remained strong outside Java, but few leaders have cared to articulate it.

A new situation emerged when former revolutionary commander Daud Beureuh launched the Atjehnese revolt in 1953. Here was an example of an Indonesian nationalist taking direct, violent action because of his conviction that Djakarta's leaders were betraying the ideals of the revolution.

Now, the vacuum in regional leadership has suddenly been filled by regional army commanders who have given years of loyal, valuable service to the nationalist cause. They are not federalists, but the pressures of the current situation seem to be pushing their acts and desperate decisions in the direction of federalism.

These regional commanders are now torn by conflicting loyalties. As soldiers, they are torn between their responsibilities as "papas" to their troops and their professional devotion to duty and discipline. As natives of their garrison areas, they must overcome their distress at the effects of administrative centralism by hoping for the triumph of what they consider to be more equitable, realistic views in the Constitutional Assembly.

It is the good fortune of the central government that the settlement of the current regional problem is in the hands of the Indonesian Army. The unity achieved by the army in 1955, as expressed in the historic Djogja Declaration, gave great satisfaction and hope to the young corps of patriotic officers who rose out of the revolution. If the regional commanders now abide by the Djogja Declaration and accept the discipline of army headquarters, the regional movements in Menado, Macassar and North Sumatra will be denied leadership and the support of arms.

If such a fortunate conclusion is reached, one basic condition for Indonesian national unity will have finally been created: a united, centrally-controlled army. But such an achievement should not be allowed to hide the fact that regional sentiment appears to be overwhelmingly opposed to the concepts and organization of civil government. No substantial basis for Indonesian unity will be found until this system is either changed or made to operate more to the satisfaction of people living outside of Djakarta and Java.

If they are practical men, the members of the Constitutional

Assembly will make a serious study of what has happened this year in North Sumatra, Menado and Macassar. The largest party represented in that body, the Indonesian Nationalist Party, has already announced its opposition to the creation of a second house of Parliament in which all the regions of Indonesia would have equal representation. It is very possible that the conservative Nahdlatul Ulama and the adjustable Indonesian Communist Party will follow the nationalist lead in this matter. Such a development would most likely delay the creation of national unity and contribute fuel to regional fires that are already smoldering.

Dissidents in regions outside Java often complain that they are being treated like unwanted "step-children". The complaint shows a tacit acceptance of the Indonesian concept of the state as a family. It also shows that the family relationship is becoming distant and dangerously strained.

Yours sincerely,

*Boyd R. Compton*

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