

INDONESIA — The Next 20 Years

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INDONESIA

WE were sitting in the anonymously smart gloom of the Ramayana Bar, red furnishings glowing softly in the light against the black. We might have been anywhere in international hotel-land, but we were in the Hotel Indonesia. The English businessman was telling me that he was in Djakarta for five days. That would give him enough time, he said, to report on its economic potential.

A drink later, having been in Djakarta for one day, he already seemed prepared to sum up. "This country is booming," he told me, as he reached for another peanut. "There's a great potential here. Look at all these new buildings they've put up."

I got out of the air-conditioning into the warmth of mid-afternoon. Motor-scooters, Holdens, trishaws, jeeps, lorries, and Army tanks seemed to be reticulating in the roundabout like dirty water in a fountain. A few contemporary-style buildings (mostly foreign-built) stuck up above the red-tiled roofs and the scruffy paddocks. One of them — a Sukarno fantasy — was dead, still-born, a black skeleton of steel.

I walked along the potholed pavement of the wide boulevard that Sukarno had wanted to turn into his East-West axis. Drivers were washing their trishaw wheels in puddles of mud. The department store rose from the dust of what looked like a cattleyard, most of its floors empty. And beyond was the big paddock, marked "Freedom Square" on the map, tufty with unkempt grass and weeds. Monuments rose from other paddocks, topped by statuary that looked as if it had been designed by the art director of a boys' adventure magazine. How could even an Englishman, who was summing up Indonesia's economic potential on a five-day visit, be so looney as to find metaphors of national enterprise among this rubbish? I saw a note of the old currency lying near one of the puddles. Nobody had bothered to pick it up. It was a leftover from Sukarno's great spending carnival.

The Muslim New Year was coming and parts of Djakarta were littered with the paper of exploded fireworks. All Djakarta seemed still to be littered with the remnants of exploded Sukarno. It was almost impossible to discuss any-

thing else. "First the political settlement, Mr. Horne."

Under Sukarno, Djakarta was a huge court, in which the courtiers conspired against each other, gossiping about themselves and Sukarno with an extraordinary vehemence and private frankness. They still gossip as if Sukarno still controlled his court. When a much-heralded speech by Sukarno was broadcast it proved cautious and hedging. It was like listening to a disappointing episode in a famous radio serial.

A Minister of State relaxes on a banquette . . . "No, Mr. Horne, we don't want to kill him. He still wants to kill us, but we have had enough killing" . . . At an embassy party the guests gossip only about Sukarno . . .

When I go to see Cosmas Batu Bata, one of the six co-chairmen of the presidium of KAMI, the Student Action body, he sits up stiffly in his cane chair, fresh-faced but stern, and hands me a page torn from a notebook: "1. Remnants of the Old Order must be com-

By DONALD HORNE

pletely exterminated. 2. Political stability as soon as possible. 3. Stability in the economic field." *Who are the remnants of the Old Order?* I ask. Sukarno and his supporters. *What do you mean by exterminated? Killed?* He flicks his wrist. Yes, of course, kill him.

The Western Press has been impatient for Sukarno to be deposed, quicksmart. But the wiseheads who have been nagging the new leaders of Indonesia to hurry up about it have ignored the intricacy of the moves by which the new leadership has been caging Sukarno, and then carefully plucking him of power, feather by feather, but with a respect for legitimacy.

Whatever happens to the man Sukarno, surely Sukarno is now dead. The fun of military and economic adventurism, the gay escapades of power, the bright rainbows of global importance have collapsed into a puddle of inflation and debt. Whatever tragedies of poverty and faction may still be enacted in Indonesia, it may be impossible for 20 years, for a whole

generation, to find the funds to erect such a crazy facade again.

Who would put up the money? The Russians summon Indonesians to Moscow, insisting on prompt repayment. The non-Communist creditors gather in Tokyo, in Paris, in Amsterdam, reading lectures on pragmatism, and offering concessions by dictating policy. The Japanese flock to Djakarta, expectant and determined, moving into its economy to help make it work.

Although a Djakarta editor assured me that "our economy has been much better in the past fortnight," the economy may swivel around desperately for several more years while the good-housekeeping measures the creditors enforce lead to popular discontent. But a country like Indonesia can still function even when it does not meet the standards of economic stability of developed societies. Where it must meet international standards is in its international economic policy. And here it is in the hands of its creditors.

An ebullient belief that Indonesia has something to show the world still exists. But as long as it does not burst into military extravaganza, what does that matter? After Indonesia I visited six other Asian States and in each of them there was also a belief that each State had something to show the world. What one hopes is that, for a while, Indonesia will scale its ambitions down a bit, think of itself as a South-East Asian power first and display its initiatives fruitfully in that region.

In one sense the definition of Indonesian purpose was what most of the conversations I had in Djakarta were about. What was Indonesia now to do? Some of the discussion was still confounded by the claptrap of post-Sukarnoist terminology, especially in the more lusty fanfares in the newspapers. ELIMINATE THE DEVIATING AND HYPOCRITICAL PRACTICES OF THE OLD ORDER AND OTHER CRIMINAL COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY ELEMENTS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE NEW ORDER. Sukarno's habit of sloganising now lives on in the mouths of his enemies, but it seems to exist mainly in print. In conversation there

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is a return to cooler language and a persistent usage of the word *pragmatic*.

"The era of Great men is over. The Nkrumahs and Sukarnos are finished." I heard this not only in Djakarta, but in Singapore, Saigon, and Seoul. There is a boredom with the old nationalist or Afro-Asian rhetoric, the mere drumming-up of words. But in Djakarta the rhetoric of modernisation and of social justice still comes haltingly. Like the leadership in Burma, Sukarno had turned his back on giving even lip service to the aspirations that improvement of material conditions for ordinary people is an essential task. He preferred the heroic style to the pragmatic — unfinished monuments in weary paddocks rather than filling in the potholes in the streets — and left such a verbal legacy that some of those who now want to be pragmatic are nevertheless not quite sure what to say.

In the new generation, although they were brought up on Sukarno's battlefield of words, there is more understanding. It is a delight to find how resilient to the bombast of their leaders young minds can be. It was even a delight to find that when a Djakarta editor brought his son with him "so that he can see an Australian," the son was dressed like an Australian teenager and remained coolly aloof toward the conversation of his elders.

Boisi Liok, representative of the "independents" on the presidium of KAMI, talked to me in a typical student's bedroom, bed unmade, books scattered around, the sign "Casino Royale" scrawled on the door. He spent some time in a kibbutz when he was overseas and hopes that KAMI's final role will be to take the spirit of modernisation to the villages. Every night, he says, his group of students meet and they discuss Modernisation. "First, a Mentality Revolution! Then an Organisation Revolution." The sky suddenly falls down on us in a black storm and a cannonade of rainwater adds emotion to what he is saying.

He speaks pleasantly and softly, letting the rainwater provide the emotion, sad eyes in a long triangular face complemented by a student's grin. It is somehow heartening when he complains of student apathy. All most

students want is a job, a house, a car, he says — it's as if Indonesia were a Settled Society. Indonesia, he says, must become a . . . what is the word? . . . like the American West? *Pioneering*? I suggest. Yes, Indonesia must become a pioneering society, like the American West. *Like Australia, too*, I suggest. Yes, Indonesia must become a pioneering society like Australia.

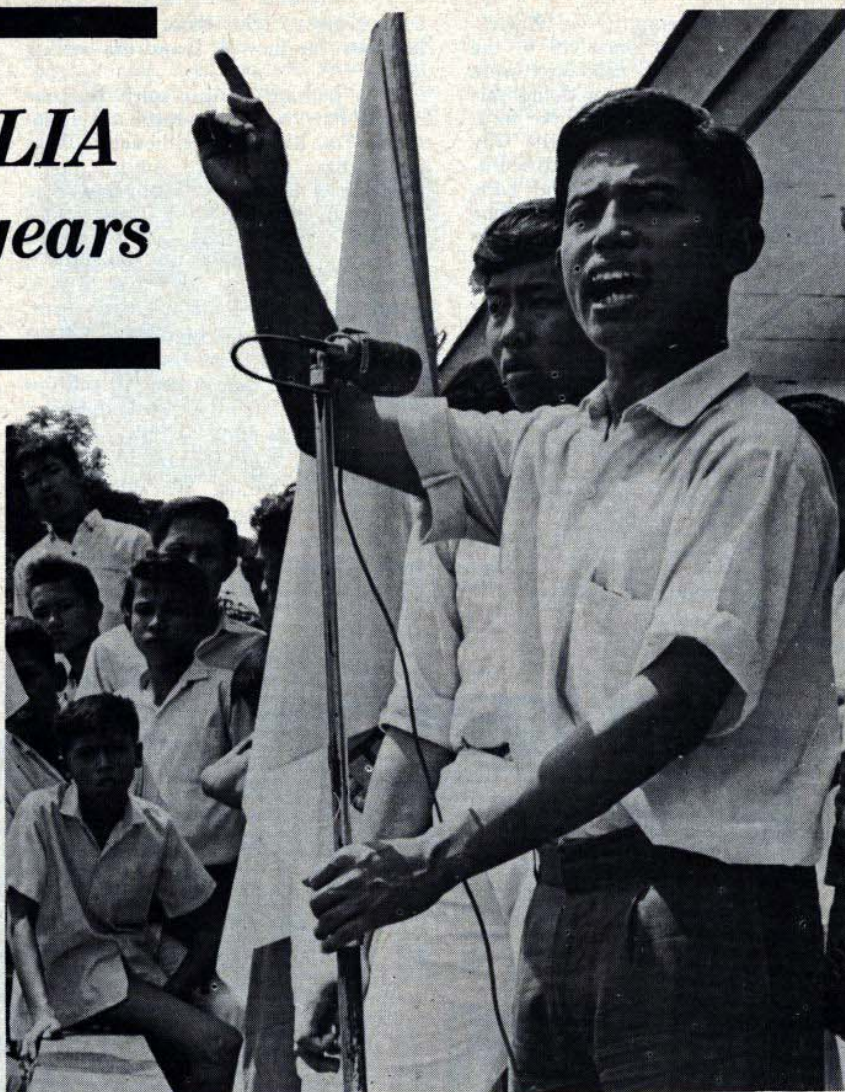
With other students it is also encouraging to hear a familiar conversation — of the conflict between the generations. There are the older RSL types, the generation of Freedom Fighters, reliving battles, and the young, with new and different enthusiasms. The generals? There were too many generals, was the answer, too many generals living in the past, but the students I met seemed to trust Suharto. "Suharto cares for the peasants." After Sukarno? "After Sukarno we must not sink back into the corruption."

To be a nation of more than 100,000,000 people, however exasperated by poverty, is to see oneself in the world in a way Australians cannot imagine. Although military show might

rust away it seems unlikely that Indonesians will lose their understandable sense of self-importance. Here both the Malaysians and the Filipinos may be in error when they put up their own schemes for regional co-operation. When the Indonesians are ready to talk about regional co-operation it seems likely that they will have their own ideas. They may not just say *me too* to President Marcos, and certainly not to Tunku Abdul Rahman.

Some of the Indonesians I spoke to were more interested in regional co-operation with Australia and New Zealand than with Malaysia and the Philippines. They even discussed defence pacts "between the oceanic powers." When I told this to a Filipino Senator in Manila (where the claim to Sabah is still going strong) he was shocked. "Why," he said, "we are all one race! We are all Malays. We show ethnic similarity!" To the Indonesians this ethnic argument may no longer be conclusive. Australians and New Zealanders may not be Malays: but they are skilled, adaptable, "westernised," and prosperous.

After the Japanese war and the col-



lapse of colonial empire, we Australians had to reorient ourselves to the fact that our nearest neighbors were the Indonesians. We began doing this 20 years ago and, although there were no doubt many crudities in the way in which we jolted into this reorientation, crudities of both love and hate, we have got on with the job. For some Indonesians, reorienting themselves to the fact that their most important neighbor is Australia, and that this matters, is something with which they have been concerned for merely 20 weeks, if that.

There was the continuing tradition that we had supported them against the Dutch (and a continuing hatred of Sir Percy Spender's attitude to Indonesia when he was External Affairs Minister), and an official friendship which — because of the skill of our official policy — survived the Confrontation. (Our Embassy wasn't stoned.) But somehow, whatever the

be acquainted with those amenities in life that are now so humdrum among us.

It is perhaps in this spirit that we should now begin to approach Indonesia. For 25 years (although official policy has been more subtle) many Australians have seen South-East Asia mainly in terms of crisis, even of immediate catastrophe. The period in which this represents a useful approach may now be ending. We have, in fact, already introduced many refinements, extended many friendships, but behind it all there has often been a sense of insubstantiality: that present friendships will be blown out by later cataclysm.

Perhaps they will be. The area is still unstable. But we know how to act if things go wrong. We should now start thinking about what we should do if things go right. As part of the crisis approach, we should make our alliances and send off our expeditions;

the Medicine Go Down," the dentist and doctor had set up their tents, and a couple of diggers were mixing up an oildrum of Instant Cherry Punch Mix.

It is possible that the great crises for Australia are a generation or more away, not necessarily in a Communist context (what will "Communism" be in 20 years?), and perhaps at present unimaginable. It is even possible that crisis may not exist for us if by that time we have really learned to behave naturally in our geographic environment, to act as if we are ourselves.

Here the present changes in Indonesia may be of overwhelming importance. Imagine what a difference it would make if, whatever the internal problems of Indonesia, our two nations, given the differences that arise between even the matiest of nations, remain friendly for the next 20 years.

In this time tens of thousands of Australians might have established contacts with Indonesians and at all levels



"... the era of Great Men is over"

map said, we were not really there, next to Indonesia, or if we were, there was some doubt as to whether we had any right to be there. We were an old thing, an anomaly that history might correct when it got around to it. When I suggested that some Indonesian university should later set up a School of Australian Studies, as we have Schools of Indonesian Studies, this seemed too revolutionary for even the exponents of the New Order.

With some of those I spoke to, however, including the most influential, there seemed to be something of an uncertain reaching out toward Australia ... not the outstretched hand holding the begging bowl but a kind of reaching toward the future, to a common humanity, and to a destiny in which the ordinary people of Indonesia might

we are now even beginning to make some sense of our military forces. But apart from really revolutionising our armed forces so that they are truly Australian in conception (and this is something we should be doing now) perhaps we have taken the crisis approach about as far as it need go.

It does not necessarily harm crisis planning to plan also for the possibility of friendship. To take a crude example: when I visited a Vietnamese village in which the Australian 5th Battalion was conducting an interrogation, although the villagers were confined into IN and OUT trays of barbed wire enclosures as they went, one by one, to sit in the schoolroom with Vietnamese interrogators to see if they would pass their examination, the band was playing "Just a Spoonful of Sugar Makes

Australian and Indonesian organisations might be dealing with each other. One can say that there are many ways in which this would do the Indonesians good, but consider also the even greater good it would do us. It is by developments such as these, not merely by diplomacy or by military expeditions or by trade, that Australia is losing its provincialism, its sense that the really important is far away, and developing a new sense of national identity, in which the really important seems to be here at home. This is what is meant by saying that Australia might become "Asian."

Which would liberate the imagination of young Australians more? To continue to serve their two-year term in the ghettos of Earls Court? Or to

spend a couple of years working in Indonesia, among Indonesians?

South-East Asia is not, of course, a kind of sanatorium to which Australians go for a cure. With the Indonesians, as with other nations in South-East Asia, we must find out what ways they want us to help them, and then, perhaps, be choosy about which of them we pick. With so many things to do, it is sensible to choose those which might be the most use, and which can actually be achieved.

But we must also look for the ways in which Indonesians can help us. In economic matters these would be hard to find: in strategic matters, Indonesia is important. In matters of the spirit, of attitudes to life, the Indonesians, like other peoples in South-East Asia, can cross-fertilise our world-views and our culture so that perhaps finally, in our part of the world, we can between us give that novelty and extension to human consciousness that it would now seem that Europe is not likely to provide.

One hesitates to write so optimistically . . . the unity provided by anti-Sukarnoism might snap and after his final removal Indonesia might fall to pieces . . . or unity might survive at the cost of the pragmatism about which people boasted to me in Djakarta . . . or the pragmatism might again become the cunning of everyone in for his cut, salting away what he can when he can . . . One remembers that the massacres after the failed coup added to the horrors of the 20th century, a century rich in horror, and there is no final guarantee that such monstrosities might not recur . . . and also that the poverty of the peasants in parts of Java has become alarmingly self-generating, apparently irrevocable . . .

In the suburbs where the generals live you see a peaceful, prosperous upper-class suburban villa, well designed, nice garden, children's toys at the door . . . everything normal except for the army tank on the lawn, its gun swinging slowly like an elephant's trunk, and for the sub-machine-guns poking out of the garage instead of the handle of the motor mower. It was from pleasant houses like these that men were pulled across the neatly trimmed lawns, killed, and then mutilated . . .

It is easy enough to be sceptical about the future of Indonesia, especially when it is — or perhaps more exactly Djakarta is — still passing through a political revolution. When I sat with some students who were planning a demonstration, one of them was introduced as "a fine poet and fighter," another as "painter and revolutionary," another as "perhaps the best of our younger poets and very brave." There they were, so young, so good-humored, puffing at scented cigarettes — a "Hang Sukarno" demonstration in the morning, a poem written in the after-

noon, a tutorial on modernisation of agricultural techniques at night.

Perhaps it is this combination of good humor, liveliness, and serious purpose that both provides some of the hope for Indonesia and something of a



SUKARNO . . . with his cap off

reminder to us. When I visited one of the newspaper offices it was certainly a reminder to me that a determined spirit sustains hope. By almost anybody's standards the office was alarmingly inadequate: reporters' bikes were parked behind their desks, next to the clatter of the composing room; circulation had been cut from 45,000 to 30,000 because newsprint was short; the paper could run to only four pages. But like other post-Subandrio papers, refreshed like desert flowers after rain, there is a springing into life: the paper represents an Idea, it is built around a concept of what things should become. When we

were a struggling colony we had papers like that, too.

Mochtar Lubis is a startlingly confident embodiment of such hope. It was night when I visited him. Unlike many other genuinely brave men he *looks* a hero—six feet high, handsome, an entrancing smile. The flash of fireworks exploding in his garden lit up a strong and generous face. He is a man who once defended the paper he was editing with his fists and was later a prisoner of Sukarno's for nine years. His determination to say what he thinks, to be his own man, may have got him into trouble in any society. But he is still bouncing with schemes. A writer, painter, sculptor, an amateur flyer, radio engineer, he bursts with life.

A couple of days later, as we bounced along the potholes to have lunch at a Chinese place Lubis wanted to try out, he told me about his magazine . . . about the newspaper he is starting . . . about radio stations . . . As a result of a chance remark of mine he began thinking about starting an advertising agency. It occurred to me that this was something an Australian could understand. Improvise. Give-it-a-go. It is not all that long since we started advertising agencies with equal insouciance.

On my last afternoon in Djakarta I visited the house of a servant of some Australian friends. His little cottage was part of a huge "village" submerged behind the streets of rich people's houses, but sprawling over acres, a huge village inside a suburb, entered by criss-crosses of tiny lanes. In some ways the cottage was the humble home of a faithful servant in an English village, imitating with poignant modesty the furniture of the Master; in other ways it pulled at my own memories of being a country boy in Australia, of poor people keeping up appearances.

It was desperately clean. On the wall of the tiny front parlor there were two oil paintings and a framed collection of family snapshots: on the mantelshelf there was a snap of the favorite son, the eldest, now in Singapore, playing with a combo. It was the afternoon of a feast day and there was something of the enervated atmosphere of an Australian suburban Christmas afternoon, a lull between excitements.

The flowers were in small silver vases. On the little wooden table was a freshly ironed tablecloth. Two little fish swam in a jam jar on the chest-of-drawers. Dominating the room was an old dresser, filled with treasures—unmatching plates, colored glasses, bits and pieces. We sipped orangeade and ate slices of sponge cake, while the master of the house sat on one side of his chair clasping his hands, laughing nervously yet sensitively. His son had promised to come home from Singapore . . . he hadn't arrived . . . what had happened to him?

It is one of the specialties of our age to categorise the differences between human beings. Perhaps it would also be fruitful for us to examine our similarities.