

BUNG KARNO'S INDONESIA



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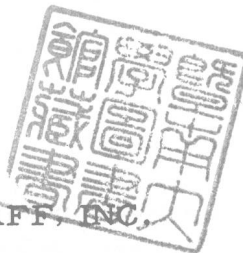
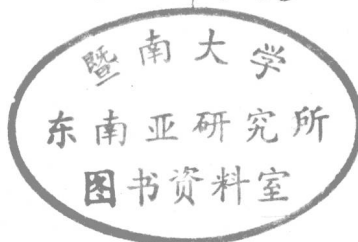
BUNG KARNO'S INDONESIA

by Willard A. Hanna

Revised Edition

A Collection of 25 Reports Written for the
American Universities Field Staff

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FOREWORD

Willard A. Hanna wrote Bung Karno's Indonesia after a data-gathering visit to that country in 1959. A trip to Indonesia in 1960 gave him an opportunity to review his earlier findings. As a result, this revised edition, published in response to a continuing demand for the book, has new material in the preface and postscript. The body of the text is unchanged from the first writing as a series of Reports for the American Universities Field Staff Reports Service.

Dr. Hanna brings to his evaluation of Indonesian affairs an intimate knowledge of that country equaled by few Americans. Prior to his 1959 visit he had lived and worked in Indonesia for a total of seven years, during which he saw Indonesia's successful fight for freedom from Dutch rule and its subsequent struggle with the internal and external problems of independence.

The 25 Reports included in this volume constitute only part of a continuing series on Southeast Asia distributed to member universities and colleges of the American Universities Field Staff, Inc., and to subscribers to the AUFS Reports Service. Along with favorable comment on the quality of Dr. Hanna's analysis of how Indonesia is faring under President Sukarno's program of guided democracy, came suggestions from many readers that a collection of the reports be given wide distribution exactly as they reached subscribers, but in a bound volume.

For those to whom this book is a first introduction to the American Universities Field Staff, a word about subscription arrangements may be in order. Written by Associates who comprise a full-time career staff, AUFS reports from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and (in limited volume) Europe are distributed to institutional subscribers under a scale of fees ranging from \$100 to \$1,000 yearly. The number of reports issued each year varies as Associates move to and from their overseas bases. In some years it has approximated 100, and it has always exceeded 50. Subscription fees below the actual pro rata costs of delivering the reports are possible through the financial support given the program by the eleven universities and colleges that comprise its corporate membership, by the Ford Foundation, and by other organizations and individuals that subscribe to the purposes of the AUFS.

Phillips Talbot
Executive Director

ONE YEAR OF USDEK: MID-1959 TO MID-1960

How an Acronym and the Slogans Related to It
Affect Indonesia and Its People

"Like an angel's visitation from the skies," such is the quickening effect upon a desperately troubled nation of the newly-revitalized Indonesian Revolution. So declared President Sukarno on August 17, 1960, in his annual Independence Day oration. The solution to the ten-year-long national crisis, he announced, is his personal guidance in the renewal, indeed the perpetuation of revolutionary zeal.

"I tell you frankly," he declared, "I belong to that group of people who are bound in spiritual longing by the romanticism of revolution. I am inspired by it. I am fascinated by it. I am completely absorbed by it. I am crazed, I am obsessed by the romanticism of revolution That is why I, who have been given the topmost leadership in the struggle of the Indonesian nation never tire of appealing and exhorting: solve our national problems in a revolutionary way, make the revolutionary spirit surge on, see to it that the fire of our revolution does not die or grow dim, not even for a single moment. Come, then, keep fanning the flames of the leaping fire of revolution! Brothers and sisters, let us become logs to feed the flames of revolution!"

"Is it necessary for everything to be done in a revolutionary way? Could it not be done more patiently?" Only the timid, the discouraged, the defeated, the traitorous, Bung Karno declared, are asking these questions. His reply was categorical: "Let there be none among us who seek to amend or to modulate the revolutionary spirit." The "enemies" of the Indonesian Revolution, those who suggest, perhaps, that ten years after actual achievement of independence from the Dutch the revolution might well simmer down, will be relentlessly pursued and punished. So, too, will all those who seek to preserve Western rather than distinctively Indonesian values. Most particularly, "free-fight private enterprise" and "liberal Western democracy," the latter both "the child and the mother of bourgeois capitalism," are finished in Indonesia. Their demise is mourned only by "the reactionaries, the cynics, the hyper-intellectuals, those whose wealth is 'made,' those of 'vested interests,'"

those who squeal and whose eyes roll in convulsions because every stronghold of their interest . . . is crumbling and falling," and along with their interests those of the foreign "profiteers," "exploiters," and "counterrevolutionary plotters."

Bung Karno on August 17, 1960, soared to his most emotional, most self-hypnotic pitch of revolutionary eloquence since December 27, 1949. The Indonesian people, perhaps not uncoincidentally, had reached their lowest ebb to date of well-being and morale. The decade had been distinguished, to be sure, by noteworthy advances in education and health, in national self-consciousness, and in international influence; it had been distinguished also by internecine political feuding, by nationwide armed disorders, both large and small, by reckless economic manipulation, and by questionable international dealings. It had been distinguished most of all, so far as the vast majority of the people of Indonesia were concerned, by disappointed expectations of achieving exactly what revolution was supposed to bring--more or better food, clothing shelter, and miscellaneous consumer goods. The last year had been by far the worst. The last year, from mid-1959 to mid-1960, might be designated the Year One of USDEK.

USDEK is a 1960 Bung Karno coinage from the initial letters of five slogans by means of which he seeks far more to agitate and to divert than to develop the nation. The five components warrant itemization and comment: (1) Undang-undang Dasar '45 (Return to the 1945 Constitution), meaning concentration of power in the hands of the President; (2) Socialisme à la Indonésie (Indonesian Socialism), meaning division and redistribution of wealth; (3) Demokrasi Terpimpin (Guided Democracy), meaning substitution of numerous unwieldy, nonvoting, appointive, consultative bodies for the former elective bodies of state, and of Bung Karno's intuitive "guidance" for majority decision; (4) Ekonomi Terpimpin (Guided Economy), meaning substitution of state ownership and operation for free, private, and capitalistic enterprise; (5) Kepribadian Indonesia (Indonesian Identity), meaning ultranationalistic revolutionary ardor.

USDEK, according to Bung Karno's critics and opponents, who include now not only the larger part of the Indonesian intellectual elite (the "hyper-intellectuals"), rapidly increasing numbers of the middle class (the "reactionaries"), and even large numbers of the ordinary people (the "discouraged"), means an attempt at conversion of the Republic of Indonesia into an USDEK-istan à la Tovarich Sukarno. As yet, however, like democracy à la Indonesia before it, USDEK-style socialism à la Indonesia isn't working out very well. Most of the potential USDEKistani, while they do not exactly reject USDEK-adence, do not acclaim it either. The weak de facto Sukarno dictatorship, which virtually all thinking Indonesians deplore, either because it exists or because of its ineffectualness, means less the concentration of power in the hands of Bung Karno than the denial of it to anyone else.

"I can't and I won't," said Bung Karno three years ago, "ride a three-

legged horse." He proposed, therefore, to prop up his wobbly coalition Government, which depended upon ministers affiliated variously with the Nationalists, the conservative Muslim and the liberal Muslim political parties, by assigning to the fourth major political faction, the Communists, their "due share" of office. This 1957 konsepsi of Sukarno's--that he could unite all feuding factions into one happy family, of which the Communists would be loyal and accepted members--shook the nation and all but shook it apart. It led directly to the 1957 regional insurrections, to the costly 1958 military suppression of those insurrections, to Bung Karno's own open assumption of open power, and to his attempt to disguise responsibility by appointing vast and numerous "consultative" and "advisory" bodies. It led also to USDEK, for Bung Karno proceeded by backtracking, switchbacking, and sidetracking onward toward his objective, until today he has a united national façade, USDEKorated with revolutionary slogans.

All political factions, meanwhile, continue their feuds, while being subjected simultaneously to manifestations of Bung Karno's favor and disfavor, and in turn bringing pressure to bear on Bung Karno himself. Under the USDEKified regime, factional members submissive to Bung Karno are rewarded with mutually overlapping and offsetting privileges, recalcitrant members are played off against each other, uncommitted members are wooed by explanations that USDEK means all things to all people. Sukarno himself, meanwhile, is a dictator as frequently dictated to as dictating. In his relations with the military and the Communists, his two chosen but only semicommitted and mutually-distrustful allies, he must practice highly skilled political acrobatics while at the same time keeping his eyes and his hands on a dozen other factions, each with schemes and demands of their own. Bung Karno, who in 1957 declined to mount a three-legged horse, now finds himself, as a result of his experiment in crossbreeding of dissident and unstable political species, mounted precariously astride a skittish hybrid of hydra, centipede, chameleon, and chimera.

The record of the Year One of USDEK requires brief review, with the preliminary notation that despite any appearances, the emerging USDEKistan is as yet no more a monolithic state than USDEK is a four-legged equine yearling. Bung Karno on July 5, 1959, dismissed the elected Constituent Assembly and reverted by unconstitutional decree to the 1945 Constitution. On March 5, 1960, he "deactivated" the elected Parliament; on June 27 he appointed a new "Gotong-Rojong" (Mutual Aid) Parliament of 283 hand-picked members; on August 15 he expanded this Parliament into a monster 609-member People's Consultative Congress. On August 17 he ordered the dissolution of the Masjumi (Liberal Muslim) and the Socialist parties, the sources of the most outspoken anti-USDEK criticism. On September 13 he suspended overt public activities of all other parties, but only after various regional military commanders had already banned Communist Party activities, in part at least as an independent countermeasure to Sukarno's moves against the Masjumi and the Socialists. On September 24 he suppressed the opposition press and con-

fiscated its properties, but two weeks later, after signing statements pledging support of USDEK, some of the papers resumed publication. Throughout the year, individual critics of the Bung Karno regime have been subjected increasingly to its vigilance. High-ranking military officers, for instance, have found themselves suddenly relieved of their posts, although at times they have been assigned on face-saving missions abroad.

Opposition to USDEK, however, has persisted and even increased. In March 1960 prominent political and intellectual leaders organized the Democratic League to support "liberal Western democracy" in preference to "Guided Democracy." Bung Karno has not as yet dared to disband them. Top-ranking military officers have repeatedly resisted Bung Karno's manipulations. They have not amassed an impressive record of successes, but neither have all of them as yet been purged. Within the Communist Party, which has gained enhanced prestige and increased following in recent years, partly as a result of Bung Karno's favor, a strong faction keeps advocating a break with him before the party is inextricably implicated in an USDEK debacle. In early July 1960 the Communists published an outspoken indictment of 1959-60 government failures, a document soon suppressed and retracted, but indicative, despite later parade of amity, of a deep party disaffection with the regime.

In economic affairs, Bung Karno experimented first (August 24, 1959) with overnight devaluation by 90% of approximately one half of the nation's currency and the devaluation and freezing of large bank accounts. This "financial reform" was carried out for the announced purpose of soaking up the "hot," "black market" money of the "corruptors," of checking inflation, and of reducing prices. It was to be followed up, it was announced, by thoroughgoing reorganization of the nation's whole financial and economic system. By January 1, 1960, the amount of money in circulation had exceeded the predevaluation total, deficit financing was proceeding at an even faster pace than before, inflation was continuing its upward spiral--the black market rate for a time going as high as 500 rupiahs to the United States dollar--and no follow-up economic measures conceivably conducive to improvement were yet in sight. As of mid and even late 1960, inflation was still unchecked, economic recovery and development were still stalled. To be sure, a grandiose 5100-page, Rp. 240 billion, eight-year "blueprint" of economic and social development has been compiled under the direction of one Mohammad Yamin, no economist or sociologist but rather a lawyer, antiquarian, politician, and poet. The plan took one year to contrive, and when it emerged, just before the anniversary of National Independence Day (August 17, 1945), Bung Karno paid special tribute to the "richness of symbolical fantasy" which had prompted its designer to divide it into 8 volumes, 17 chapters, and 1,945 items. It was then consigned to the monster People's Consultative Congress from which it seems unlikely soon to re-emerge as any realistic working plan appropriate to the nation's requirements or its resources.

The Sukarno regime had already in 1957 and 1958 adopted the politically

and economically vindictive policies of nationalizing the properties of the Dutch and of the Kuo Min Tang Chinese, with the result that production for export had speeded up its long-term decline and local business had stagnated. The Government proceeded late in 1959 with a program of expelling from the rural areas those Chinese businessmen who had not opted for Indonesian citizenship, most of them Communists of convenience hoping for Peking's protection which was not effectively forthcoming. As of January 1, 1960, most of the Chinese merchants who had formerly "monopolized" the rural trade were put out of business. Other Chinese and alien businessmen not as yet directly affected were anticipating drastic new antiforeign measures and were adopting drastic devices of self-protection--such as, for instance, the export of capital at any rate the rising black market might set.

The Government met the emergency by coining a new slogan: "Sandang-pangan," signifying abundant food and clothing at low subsidized prices. It set up co-operatively-run Sandang-pangan shops to replace the dismantled Chinese collection-distribution system and to handle the supplies which had not been either produced or imported. Sandang-pangan, according to Bung Karno's own admission in his August 17, 1960, oration, has to date been a failure. Even rice and textiles, the two indispensable commodities for the ordinary citizen, have often been in critically short supply at unprecedentedly high prices. The ordinary worker can now no more manage to support a family on the standard daily wage of Rp. 5-10 (US\$0.10-.20 at the new, but still unrealistically low official exchange rate) than can the high government official on a monthly salary of Rp. 2,500 (US\$50). Readjustment of the wage-salary system, like readjustment of the price system, also years overdue, seems not even to be contemplated by the USDEK- and revolution-obsessed Sukarno.

On the international front, Sukarno has stepped up both the frequency and the extravagance of his international junkets, as well as the intensity of his drive, first, to force the Dutch to concede to Indonesia the possession of stone-age Irian Barat (Netherlands New Guinea), and second, to establish Indonesian leadership of an Afro-Asian bloc of nations. His latest foray into international travels and affairs occurred when he turned up at the United Nations General Assembly meeting last September. He traveled by Pan-American jet plane--chartered at an undetermined cost--and arrived with an entourage of 51 persons, including such ill-assorted fellow travelers as Indonesian Communist Party Chairman Aidit and Army Chief of Staff Nasution, altogether an astounding troupe of politicians, assembled and transported, conceivably, to keep them from conspiring against him in his absence. Bung Karno publicly supported the Khrushchev position on modification of the United Nations Secretariat, added his own proposal for transfer of the United Nations headquarters away from the United States, and lobbied privately on the Irian Barat question and on assignment to Indonesia of a Security Council seat. He then hustled off to Europe, first to Paris whose pleasures had been denied him on his previous round-the-world junkets by French obstinacy in refusing to invite him either as an official or unofficial visitor.

PREFACE

Bung Karno remains today as for the last 30 years the key figure about whom Indonesian events continue to revolve, or as now seems more commonly the case, to whirl. He has now become a figure of Greek tragedy proportions, combining the role of hero, victim, and villain of the Indonesian nationalist revolution, trapped in his own legend as the ideological father of his country, interested primarily in escapist diversions from the dilemmas revolution has induced, betrayed as much by fate as by folly.

The nation of Indonesia, like Bung Karno, seems almost inevitably to arouse in the observer the extreme reactions of enthusiasm or of despair, or of fluctuations between the two. Indonesia is breathtakingly beautiful, immeasurably rich in both natural and human resources, altogether exhilarating in its potentialities as by far the biggest, most populous, most richly endowed, most strategically located nation of Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the task of organizing, disciplining, and developing the nation has defeated to date the best efforts of everyone who has attempted it. Ex-Vice President Hatta, for instance, has retired in defeat and dismay, as did ex-Prime Minister Sjahrir before him. Ex-Prime Minister Natsir joined an insurrection that failed, as did ex-Minister of Economic Affairs Sumitro and ex-Governor of the Bank of Indonesia Sjafruddin. The present Sukarno clique opportunistically exacts its rewards while it prepares to escape retribution. Bung Karno himself, "crazed" with nonstop revolution, seeks personal diversion wherever he may find it. Resourceful, reliable, even hopeful men and women remain, but those who are identifiable invite discrimination or frustration, and those who have still to be identified remain, of course, unknown quantities so far as truly effective and constructive leadership is concerned.

The how and the why of Indonesian national deterioration was the subject of a series of 25 American Universities Field Staff reports on Indonesia a year ago, reports which comprise the chapters which follow. The answers to the whether and the whither--whether national disaster can much longer be postponed, whither the yet unidentified new leaders will take the nation--remain as obscure as before.

Belief that in the near future, by reliance upon USDEK under Bung Karno's leadership, the nation can be healthfully regenerated, seems in view of all the evidence to date to be quite without foundation. Fear that in the near future the nation will pass behind the totalitarian curtain or else fragment itself beyond the fact or fiction of national unity seems, unfortunately, rather better founded. Foregoing, however, the temptations of enthusiasm and of despair, it seems prudent to anticipate two contingencies: first, the collapse within a very few years, perhaps even within months, of the disastrous Bung Karno regime; second, the emergence of some new leaders not now closely associated with Bung Karno's failures. The new leaders, whoever they may be, probably will be unable completely to ward off violence, regional defection, or further deterioration. On the other hand, they need not necessarily be either totalitarian or Communist, and, over the long haul, the problems with

which they will be confronted are not irresolvable.

In Indonesia the stakes are big, the gamble is desperate, and the show-down is approaching. The consequences are predictable only in that they will be dramatic, and that at some crucial point not just the wrong men but the right men may have a chance to take over.

W. A. H.

November 28, 1960

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American Universities Field Staff



REPORTS
SERVICE

BUNG KARNO'S INDONESIA

Part I: Backtracking a Revolution

by Willard A. Hanna

September 7, 1959

This publication is one of a continuing series on current developments in world affairs written by associates of the American Universities Field Staff. It is distributed by the AUFS as a useful addition to the American fund of information on foreign affairs.

AUFS associates have been chosen for their skill in collecting, reporting, and evaluating data. Each has combined long personal observation and experience in his foreign area with advanced studies relating to it.

WILLARD A. HANNA, the author of this report, is based in Kuala Lumpur to write about Southeast Asian affairs. Before joining the AUFS in 1954, Dr. Hanna had spent a total of more than ten years in East and Southeast Asia as a teacher, administrator, and writer.

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"We went astray," declares President Sukarno. "We went astray in all fields." "The democracy we have applied up to now is Western democracy--call it parliamentary democracy, if you like. Because it is not in harmony with the Indonesian atmosphere, excesses are bound to occur..., excesses such as misuse of the idea of 'opposition' in the political field; violation of discipline and hierarchy in the military field; corruption and other such like offenses in the socio-economic field."

"Excesses" and "errors," "deterioration" and "disintegration," "deviations, deviations, deviations" from the "sacred principles" of the Pancasila: this is what Bung Karno sees wherever he looks in Indonesia today. He sees a nation which is suffering "all kinds of tortures from all kinds of devils," a nation which is now "in Purgatory," and "going through the process of purification in all matters, so that when we have been purified, after we have been cleansed, we can enter the happiness...of a just and prosperous society." "At the right moment," says Bung Karno, "we were startled into consciousness." But it was only after "voices were heard--at first as whispers, but gradually gaining strength and ultimately assuming the force of a hurricane," voices calling

[WAH-12-'59]

Banking district in Djakarta.



Two Views
of Indonesia



Rice terraces on Bali.

"a halt to the process of leading our Country toward the abyss of annihilation." [Emphasis mine.] These voices, asserts Bung Karno, declared that the solution to the nation's problems could be found only by "Return to the 1945 Constitution" which "harmonizes best with the Indonesian atmosphere" and provides for "Guided Democracy," that is, "Democracy led by wise guidance in consultation with representatives."

"Back to the Spirit of '45," "Back to the Group of '45," "Back to the Constitution of '45," back to his konsepsi¹ of 1957, with "guided democracy" and now, as a later extrapolation, "guided economy" as the formula for national regeneration: this is Bung Karno's current "revolutionary" message. "Correct" the nation's "errors," halt the "sliding-down process," "hurl as far away from us as possible liberalism and capitalism," reject the "free-for-all" "free enterprise economy" of "vulture capitalists" "subservient to foreign masters"; only thus, he announces, can Indonesia "retool" to achieve "its own identity," its own "pure soul and spirit." "Let the imperialists abroad be in an uproar," he orates. "Yes, let the imperialists be in an uproar! We will march on. Let the dogs bark, our caravan will go passing by."

In speeches totalling hundreds of thousands of words, delivered during scores of hours over thousands of miles of travel, Bung Karno has sounded the tocsin for "a thoroughgoing and revolutionary overhaul of our State and social system." "The cant of communism," say his critics, who are multiplying in numbers and volume, both at home and abroad. "The admission of failure," "the same old resort to slogans and nostrums and posturings." "The prelude to military dictatorship" -- "or to a 'people's democracy.'" In sum, the substitution of the backward for the forward look.

There can be no dispute with Bung Karno on two points: first, that the Indonesian crisis is

1 See Bung Karno's "Conception" (WAH-3-'57), Southeast Asia Series, Vol. V, No. 3, an AUFS publication.

"hair-raising"; second, that "drastic action is imperative." There can be and there is dispute as to whether his proposals are genuinely revolutionary, as he claims, or in fact reactionary, whether they place greater stress on accusing the West and soaking the prosperous, or upon identifying with the East and succoring the poor. In 1945 the Indonesian Revolution promised an impoverished and oppressed people freedom, plenty, and progress, by expelling colonialism and establishing democracy. In 1959, by Sukarno's own admission, it has brought them indiscipline, scarcity, and retrogression. In 1959-64, if it fulfills Bung Karno's new promises, it will bring them at last "adequate food and clothing"--an astonishingly modest goal for a "revolutionary overhaul."



President Sukarno

The "Back to '45" movement seems to many persons in Indonesia and abroad to signify not an advance but retrenchment, not the satisfaction but the curtailment of the nation's expectations, not freedom and progress, but a new regimentation, deprivation, and stagnation. It seems to involve sudden, rash measures, enforceable, if at all, only by rigid military authority, leading, if enforced, to suppression of freedom and initiative. These newly evolving policies may well prove even more disastrous to the nation than has the accustomed incoherence of policy and action. In all fairness, however, it must be conceded that the new government (sworn in on July 10) has only just begun to translate promises into programs, that it operates under intense pressure to give evidence of actually implementing reforms, and that in Indonesia drastic efforts have a way of dissipating themselves so that they seem at first to be much more drastic than they really turn out to be in the end. Furthermore, government action, almost any action, may help to relieve one major ill: the stifling sense of stalemate which has long afflicted the nation.

I have recently returned from a five-week visit to Indonesia, after an absence of two years. Perhaps I made my visit at the worst possible time--just after the last government had conclusively failed and just before the new cabinet had had a chance to show what it could do. Perhaps I should, therefore, accept the advice of many of my friends, that I refrain from report or speculation but merely wait and see--for six months at least, perhaps a year. But I do not refrain, for to me it seems important to give a forthright account of the situation at the critical mid-1959 period, if only as a basis for assessment later, say in mid-1960, either of credit for national resuscitation or blame for national collapse. I admit at the outset, at the risk of seeming

unsympathetic and anti-Indonesian to my Indonesian friends, and destructively rather than constructively critical to other readers, that my own attitude is pessimistic. In brief, I was appalled at the further deterioration I observed in a political, economic, military, and social situation which was already alarmingly bad in 1957. I see little reason as yet to believe that on the over-all it will grow better and not worse in 1960 or 1961 or 1962, or that the clear trend is not toward totalitarianism--and ineffectual totalitarianism at that. But if the situation itself is grim, the attitude of many Indonesians seemed to me to be heroic. "Any country except Indonesia would have collapsed long ago," they kept telling me. "We Indonesians can take it indefinitely."

Practically no Indonesian I talked with really expected to do anything else for quite some time to come except to keep right on taking it. A great many of them were urbane in their acceptance--but they displayed less good humor and more acerbity than used to characterize the Indonesian even in the periods of his greatest adversity. In conversations on every side I heard three new catchwords which provide a capsulized commentary upon much that is going on in Indonesia today: "pampasan," "rampasan," and "paspasan."

"Pampasan" means "reparations." The reference is to Japanese reparations goods, much touted by the government as the answer to the poor man's needs for food, clothing, and building materials. Like other panaceas, pampasan has come to signify scandal and muddle. The first big consignment of reparations consumer goods--textiles advertised to give each Indonesian the traditional new clothing for Lebaran² this past spring--arrived too late, turned out to be of shoddy quality, proved totally inadequate to the need, and became the object of political manipulation to divert them from the general public to the privileged classes. Pampasan, say the wags, may filter down to them eventually--after the next war, for instance.

"Rampasan" means "robbery by violence." Practically every Indonesian can provide from his own experience and that of his friends numerous instances in which food, clothing, homes, and other valuable properties have either been seized, stolen, confiscated, or destroyed. It makes little difference whether the outrage was committed by guerrillas or rebel bands, by the military or persons masquerading in uniform, or by authorized, unauthorized, or semiauthorized agents of government. Rampasan has become so standard a feature of life in Indonesia today that a foreign diplomat--not the first to encounter the phenomenon--need not have been surprised at what happened to him recently. While week-ending at his mountain bungalow in a heavily guarded area, he was visited by armed callers who stripped him of watch, wallet, and other valuables, and then went right on stripping until he was left only with his undershorts. Then, too, no one need have been surprised lately when all Rp. 500 and Rp. 1,000 notes were arbitrarily reduced to Rp. 50 and Rp. 100 in value and all large bank accounts frozen.

² The end of the month of fasting for Muslims and an occasion for much festivity.

"Paspasan" means "getting by." It signifies the subsistence standard of living which, by a combination of ingenuity and miracle, most Indonesians still manage to maintain and, what is more, for the most part to enjoy. "Paspasan," says the Indonesian, as his clothes wear out and sugar disappears from the market, the military requisitions a large part of his house and his month's wages are spent long before he actually receives them.

"Pampasan," "rampasan," and "paspasan" come more frequently to the lips of many Indonesians these days than do the carefully rehearsed slogans of Bung Karno. The "Return to the Spirit of '45" strikes the more cynical as a return to the earlier, rather than the later months of the year in question. In early 1945, under Japanese military occupation, the people were on the verge of destitution, while a few of the revolutionary leaders, including Sukarno, were feted and flattered. Or it strikes them at times as being more like a return to the spirit of '35, save that now a new Indonesian privileged class occupies the homes, enjoys the revenues, and exercises the prerogatives of the onetime Dutch colonial masters. The opprobrium which once attached to the Dutch and to the Japanese is now attaching to some of the Indonesian elite, including a "palace guard" of military men and politicians. It is attaching most of all to Bung Karno himself, who hails the members of this "palace guard" as the "true sons of the Revolution" and sets them his own example of high and extravagant living.

It is endlessly debated in Indonesia today whether Bung Karno or the "palace guard" or the military or the Communists or anyone at all is actually or potentially in command of the situation. What is commonly accepted without debate is that the new government--basically only an expansion and reshuffle of the old--represents one last chance for Indonesia to pull itself together. Privately and contradictorily, however, a great many knowledgeable Indonesians will say, "But these same leaders have failed us already. How can they succeed now when the problems are infinitely worse? And who else is there to turn to?"

This acceptance of apparent incompatibles is what makes the situation peculiarly baffling. But bafflement and frustration are the norm in Indonesia and have been for years. For the foreigner, they make Indonesia half irresistible, half intolerable; for the Indonesian they make Indonesia as inscrutable to himself as to an outsider. For both, they make Indonesia endlessly engrossing. Southeast Asia's biggest, its most populous, potentially its most prosperous and powerful, and certainly its most beautiful and culturally endowed nation has persistently and perversely refused to develop its vast human and natural resources. And there seems to be very little that any right-thinking Indonesian or foreigner can do about it--unless, of course, this new government should indeed prove to be a new deal.

The background factors are a matter of historical record. Indonesia achieved independence from the Dutch with far too little preparation for