

INDONESIA ACCUSES!

Soekarno's
Defence Oration
in the Political Trial
of 1930



OXFORD IN ASIA
HISTORICAL MEMOIRS

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Soekarno's Defence Oration
in the Political Trial of 1930

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FOREWORD

THE Translation Project Group is engaged in sponsoring translations of South-East Asian source materials. Formed in late 1970 as a sub-committee of the Southeast Asia Regional Council's Research Committee, the Group endeavours to respond to the need for translation of important works from South-East Asian languages. The Group decided that initial translation efforts into English should focus on materials of a biographical nature emanating from the various countries of Southeast Asia. The first work to appear in this series, published by Oxford University Press, is Soekarno's *Indonesia Menggugat (Indonesia Accuses!)*.

The members of the Translations Project Group wish to express their appreciation to the Southeast Asia Regional Council and its parent organization, the Association for Asian Studies, for facilitating its efforts and to the Ford Foundation for providing the necessary funds.

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Dr. Paul van der Veur (Chairman), Professor of Government, Ohio University.

PREFACE

PROFESSOR John M. Echols always encourages his students to couple language learning with tasks useful to their professional interests. For three students in the summer of 1962 this led to an attempt, preposterously ambitious in retrospect, to translate *Indonesia Accuses!*, Soekarno's defence speech in the 1930 political trial of several P.N.I. leaders. Fred Bunnell, George Kanehele and I, all students of political science, learned in the process probably as much about the slippery complexities of political language as we did about translating Indonesian. Under the gentle, always accessible, guidance of Professor Echols, we gained a kind of knowledge, both in language tool and political sensitivity, which would be of inestimable value in our subsequent careers.

As my fellow students went off to field work, I continued the translation of *Indonesia Accuses!* and gradually became immersed in a task which has consumed substantial portions of an eleven-year period. Given the differing published versions of the Indonesian text, it proved necessary to translate the volume several times to construct a single, integrated approximation of them all. This, it turned out, was far less time consuming than the search for citations and verifications of the many dozens of quoted passages, a task complicated by the difficulty, in many instances, of ascertaining the language from which Soekarno himself was translating.

For a political scientist it was unavoidable that a serious confrontation with Soekarno should inspire research into some of the questions pertaining to the formulation of his ideas. This led to the long essay and to the heavy annotation of the translation designed to facilitate analysis and to provide a basis for those who hopefully will undertake research of much larger scale into the circumstances of the trial and into the history of the development of nationalist thought. The essay and the annotations raise more questions than they answer. They also impose

a substantial impress upon Soekarno's speech, an impress which might be regarded as doing considerable violence to its genuine flavour were it allowed just to stand on its own without accretions and other interference. The charisma which ultimately came to entrance so many, nonetheless leaps from the pages of *Indonesia Accuses!* and leaves one in wonder that the judges were not mesmerized into acquittal.

It is a mark of Soekarno's masterful performance that the liveliness of his rehtoric on that occasion was scarcely diminished by his employment of an untypically scholarly mode of presentation. He was, for instance, generally faithful to the many texts he quoted. Considerable distortion of course did occur in those cases where he quoted from, say, a German text which in turn was a translation from an English original. The more translation steps removed from the original, the more the distortion magnified. Generally I have been guided by the desire to translate what Soekarno thought he was quoting; hence the favoured version is a translation directly from the side-by-side Indonesian /Dutch quotation in *Indonesia Accuses!*, although whenever possible this has been checked against the original. Where significant the differences have been noted or alternative translations provided. In a few instances Soekarno did deliberately alter a quoted text. These alterations are more notable for their political significance than for the fact of distortion.

Cadenced repetition of phrases and other rhetorical techniques and characteristics of Soekarno's idiom have been retained for the most part. In order to capture most closely Soekarno's style and meaning I have tended to veer toward the literal in translation rather than render his language into phraseology which in many cases would be more felicitous and euphonious to the native English language ear.

There are several specific points about the translation which need to be made. First, quotation marks generally have been retained as in the original. Their purpose varies greatly, at times indicating direct quotation, indirect quotation, tongue in cheek, emphasis, or an uncertain combination thereof. Second, other punctuation of the original has been retained, including the ample use of exclamation marks customary in polemical writing of the time. Third, parenthetical explanations by Soekarno, for example, within quoted passages, are so indicated, whereas explanations by the translator are bracketed. Fourth, footnote numerals within the text usually remain in their

original location, though the placement at times differs from common Western practice. Fifth, place names have been spelled according to standard English versions; names of individuals and organizations are spelled according to Soekarno's usage, and may differ markedly though not unintelligibly. Finally, no attempt has been made to adjust the Indonesian language material to the new, 1972, official Indonesian orthography; the spelling of the 1931 (Fonds Nasional, FN) or 1961 (Departemen Penerangan, DP) texts, the two principal editions employed, has been retained, whichever applies to a particular term or passage.

A reading of this book will leave no doubt that there are myriad areas of inadequacy. There must be, for instance, individuals whose knowledge could have spared me weeks or months of fruitlessly agonizing effort to run to ground an elusive citation. Libraries were rumaged in the United States, Europe and South-East Asia, but a number of sources nevertheless remained beyond my ken, perhaps buried within larger works or possessed only by private individuals. Metaphors, by the same token, which were importantly communicative in the context of the times, may have been entirely missed or awkwardly rendered. Though I shall be dismayed to learn that the obvious was probably just before my eyes, any help in clearing up the enigmas and mistakes will be appreciated and will more than make up for the chagrin.

Several persons and organizations were of assistance in preparing the manuscript. A perennial source of inspiration and a constant font of bibliographic and linguistic information, John M. Echols lent moral and intellectual support essential to the project's completion. George Kanehele and Fred Bunnell heavily contributed to the earliest draft of the translation. Dr. Umar Kayam, Soemarsaid Moertono and Pandam Guritno Siswoharsojo offered enlightenment on many arcane words and phrases in Indonesian and Javanese. Taufik Abdullah assisted with Islamic or Arabic terms. Through the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project George McT. Kahin provided financial assistance for the typing of an early draft. Paul van der Veur and the Translations Sub-Committee of the Inter-University Southeast Asia Committee of the Association for Asian Studies provided assistance toward publication and funded the final typings of the manuscript. Without Professor Mario Einaudi I would not have been guided to the significant literature of liberal-socialism and would

never have unearthed the Rappoport book on Jean Jaurès. To all of these individuals, to my wife, Karen, who lent an acutely perceptive ear for acceptable English, and to my daughter, Rebeccah, who assisted in proofreading, I stand deeply indebted. I also stand personally responsible for the book's shortcomings.

University of Colorado,
August 1973

ROGER K. PAGET

ABBREVIATIONS

A.I.D.	<i>A.I.D. de Preangerbode</i>
DP	Departemen Penerangan
FN	Fonds Nasional
I.A.	<i>Indonesia Accuses!</i>
Ir.	Insinjur, Engineer title
I.S.D.P.	Indische Sociaal-Democratische Partij, Indies Social Democratic Party
Mr.	Meester (in de Rechten), Attorney title
P.E.B.	Politiek Economische Bond, Political Economic Union
P.K.I.	Partai Komunis Indonesia, Indonesian Communist Party
P.N.I.	Partai Nasional Indonesia, Indonesian Nationalist Party
P.P.P.K.I.	Permufakatan Perhimpunan-Perhimpunan Politik Kebangsaan Indonesia, Association of Political Organizations of the Indonesian People
P.S.I.	Partai Sarekat Islam, Sarekat Islam Party
S.D.A.P.	Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij, Social Democratic Workers [Labour] Party
S.I.	Sarekat Islam, Islamic Association
S.R.	Sarekat Rakjat, People's Association
T.B.T.O.	Tulak Bahla Tawil Oemoer
V.C.	Vaderlandsche Club, Fatherland Club
V.O.C.	Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, Dutch East India Company

It was the stage where, dressed splendidly for his part, he strutted, incomparably dignified, made important by the power he had to awaken an absurd expectation of something heroic going to take place—a burst of action or song—upon the vibrating tone of a wonderful sunshine. He was ornate and disturbing, for one could not imagine what depth or horrible void such an elaborate front could be worthy to hide. He was not masked—there was too much life in him, and a mask is only a lifeless thing; but he presented himself essentially as an actor, as a human being aggressively disguised. His smallest acts were prepared and unexpected, his speeches grave, his sentences ominous like hints and complicated like arabesques. He was treated with a solemn respect accorded in the irreverent West only to the monarchs of the stage, and he accepted the profound homage with a sustained dignity seen nowhere else but behind footlights and in the condensed falseness of some grossly tragic situation. It was almost impossible to remember who he was . . .

. . . nothing could happen to him unless what happens to all—failure and death; but his quality was to appear clothed in the illusion of unavoidable success. He seemed too effective, too necessary there, too much of an essential condition for the existence of his land and his people, to be destroyed by anything short of an earthquake. He summed up his race, his country, the elemental force of ardent life, of tropical nature. He had its luxuriant strength, its fascination; and like it, he carried the seed of peril within.

‘Karain: A Memory’, in Conrad, Joseph, *Tales of Unrest* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1923, 1898), pp. 6–7.

INTRODUCTION

by *Translator*

I Historical Perspective

WHETHER in Washington, Peking or Djakarta the name Soekarno struck mixed chords of danger, mystery, romance, fury and grandeur. Megalomaniac, crypto-communist, neo-fascist dictator, or more kindly, prematurely in political dotage—so his enemies, and sometimes his friends, sought to secure an elusive identity. Soekarno was a confusing man, scarcely less so to Indonesians than to Westerners. This confusion, undoubtedly refracting Soekarno's own tenuous complexity, grew almost exponentially, finally in 1965 to fracture, then to shatter into the grotesque arabesques of other great and heroic tragedies. There had been, of course, a younger man, a brash, budding Indonesian nationalist forty years before, who was less confusing. This introductory essay to Soekarno's first, and most important, book, is a foray into the vibrant, less confusing, intellectual identity from which over several decades emerged the 'Great Leader of the Revolution'.

The primary objective is to illuminate and analyse some aspects of Soekarno's single most extensive presentation of his pre-independence views. *Indonesia Accuses!* (*Indonesia Menggugat!* or *Indonesië klaagt aan!*) was the title given to Soekarno's defence oration, in Dutch colonial criminal court in Bandung in 1929. It was addressed explicitly to Europeans and drew upon European liberal socialist literature for much of its form and substance of argument. Indirectly it was an appeal to countrymen for nationalist mobilization. Our confinement to a single, if major, exponent of Soekarno's writing has the disadvantage of discouraging broad generalization about his public intellectual career in its entirety. There is the compensatory opportunity, however, to highlight his intellectual connection with European political literature.

The second objective is to examine the development of several basic themes of Soekarno's thought over an eight-year period, from 1926 to 1933, to show precisely that there was change and that *Indonesia Accuses!* was an intermediate step within a longer developmental process.

Finally, the trial is set in more specific context by a series of

documents originally collected and published by Fonds Nasional. These documents include the indictment, a newspaper editorial, party proclamations, and the publisher's comment on the verdict. Numerous allusions and references to specific allegations in *Indonesia Accuses!* are clarified by an examination of these documents.

The task is complicated and probably prejudiced by the fact that it deals with the writing of a man who, especially in the later years of his twenty-year presidency, evoked highly emotional, even jingoistic, reportage in the West. In the United States journalistic and even scholarly treatment was increasingly influenced by the drama of immediate turns of Indonesian political events.¹ In turn, historians tended to enlist interpretations of current politics to strengthen arguments dealing with distant centuries.²

The history of the trial, of Soekarno's defence speech, and of subsequent publications of that address in Dutch and Indonesian remains cloudy. The prevalent view is that the entire speech was given in its presently published form during that trial, that a couple of years later it was translated into Dutch and published. Contrary to this view is the opinion that it was delivered originally entirely in Dutch, that only parts of the present version actually were used during the trial, and that the Indonesian version appeared much later. With few exceptions most senior nationalists and prominent figures of Soekarno's government to whom I raised the question, responded emphatically that Soekarno

¹ Journalistic interpretations of Indonesian events acquired a distinguishable political alignment according to whether or not the given periodical was liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican. About Soekarno, however, journalistic reaction was uniformly negative. We can take by way of example one several-month period when news coverage about Indonesia figured prominently in the American Press. Whether *The New York Times*, *The Reporter*, *National Review* or other journals across the nation, adjectival phrases remained uniform: 'Asian Napoleon' (*New York Times* editorial, 30 March 1964); 'imperialistic', 'belligerent' (*New York Times* editorial, 22 February 1964); 'South Sea Serpent' (*New York Times* cartoon caption drawn from *Newsday*, a Long Island paper, 6 September 1964); 'Imperialistic pro-Communist' (*National Review*, 28 January 1964); 'megalomaniacal ambitions' (Justus M. van der Kroef in *National Review*, 5 November 1963); 'Soekarno's Communist-backed fascist-style dictatorship' (Dennis Warner in *The Reporter*, 23 April 1964). Occasionally they become more caustic, such as: 'power-hungry, woman-crazy dictator, . . . ambitions that rival those of . . . Tojo and Mussolini' (*Monterey Peninsula Herald*, a California liberal Republican daily, 10 September 1964). *The New York Times*, however, also noted editorially a similarity to Mussolini, 31 August 1964.

² Cf. the essays of C. C. Berg and Bambang Otomoto in D. G. E. Hall, ed., *Historians of Southeast Asia*. Professor Berg in lectures at Cornell University on 12, 13, and 16 March 1963, elaborated on how the lessons of the present strengthened his views on the pre-colonial history of Java. For a similar approach reaching diametrically opposite conclusions, see Muhammad Yamin, *Gadjah Mada: Pahlawan Persatuan Nusantara* (Djakarta, 1953).

had spoken in Dutch and believed that the Indonesian version was a later translation. In the introduction to the volume officially authorized by the Indonesian Government, of trial transcripts and other documentation surrounding the 1930 trial, Notosoetardjo, the editor, notes that the major sessions of the trial ended on 27 September 1930 and that a number of additional sessions were held before the actual end of the trial on 22 December. These latter sessions were all for various defence statements, including Soekarno's. In Mr. Notosoetardjo's words the extra sessions were held first 'to hear the defence of Bung Karno entitled, *Indonesia Menggugat* . . .'.³ Even Soekarno implied elsewhere that his defence speech was not entitled *Indonesia Menggugat!* at that time. In a footnote to an article, 'Swadeshi dan Massa-Aktie di Indonesia', which appeared in *Suluh Indonesia Muda* in 1932, Soekarno mentioned that the translation of his defence speech into Dutch was called, 'Indonesië Klaagt aan!' and that 'it is now "*Indonesia Menggugat*".'⁴ Notosoetardjo quoted a conversation with Maskun, one of Soekarno's fellow defendants, from which the following excerpt is taken: "'Pleidooi Bung Karno [Bung Karno's Defence] which later was entitled '*Indonesia Menggugat*' was written where and in what language; did he use a text", I asked. Maskun replied, "Yes, he used a text and prepared it in jail. He delivered it generally in the popular language, Indonesian, and for those parts using foreign language, he employed the foreign language also".'⁵ Just a few pages later Notosoetardjo, as noted above, seemed to have forgotten the distinction about when the title, '*Indonesia Menggugat*', came into being.

According to Maskun's statement, the version published in several editions since the Second World War, which is in Indonesian except for the many quoted passages which appear side by side in both Dutch and Indonesian, is the same as was delivered by Soekarno in court in 1930. This view would be acceptable were it not that none of the literature (so far as I have been able to ascertain) about the nationalist movement indicates the existence of a pre-war Indonesian version of Soekarno's defence speech. Its existence is not mentioned in the works of Petrus Blumberger. J. M. Pluvier's bibliographic reference is only to 'Soekarno, *Indonesië Klaagt aan!*, rede, 1930'.⁶ George McT.

³ H. A. Notosoetardjo, *Bung Karno Dihadapan Pengadilan Kolonial* (Djakarta, 1964), p. xlix.

⁴ *Dibawah Bendera Revolusi*, Djilid Pertama (Djakarta: Panitya Penerbit *Dibawah Bendera Revolusi*, 1964), p. 123, footnote 2.

⁵ Notosoetardjo, op. cit., p. xxxv.

⁶ *Overzicht van de ontwikkeling der nationalistische beweging in Indonesie in de jaren 1930 tot 1942* (The Hague: Van Hoeve, 1953), p. 227.

Kahin in *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* states (in a footnote) only that 'Soekarno's eloquent defense at this trial was later printed as a pamphlet, *Indonesië Klaagt aan!* ("Indonesia Accuses!")' and was widely read in nationalist circles'.⁷ Given Kahin's meticulous research and sympathetic treatment of the nationalist movement, it is unlikely that either the existence of an Indonesian version or the possibility of original delivery in Indonesian, if known, would have escaped mention. Bernhard Dahm, who so far has done the most serious research into the development of Soekarno's political thought, provides no enlightenment on this issue, although his treatment of the trial is based on 'detailed reports' in *Suluh Rakjat Indonesia* and *De Locomotief*.⁸ Interestingly, *De Locomotief*, which was furiously critical of the Government's coddling of the defendants, noted in summarizing Soekarno's defence speech that the full text was 173 pages of Malay.⁹

Until proven otherwise, I am inclined to accept the view attributed to Maskun, which in substance was that irrespective of published Dutch versions, Soekarno's defence speech was originally delivered in Indonesian, except for the many quotes from Western publications. My recent acquisition of an edition, of *Indonesia Menggugat!* ostensibly published in 1931 provides strong corroboration. Apparently the first edition, it contains a publisher's note stating: 'In Ir. Soekarno's defence speech there are many foreign language quotations. For readers unfamiliar with those foreign languages we have therefore provided an Indonesian translation alongside the quoted passages.'¹⁰ Again, Soekarno appears to have spoken in Indonesian, but employed Dutch when quoting foreign writers. Since Soekarno was in prison at the time of the publication of the first edition, he may not have participated in the translation of the foreign language passages. Nor is there evidence that he provided such translations thereafter.

⁷ Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1952, p. 92, footnote 87.

⁸ *Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 119-26. John Legge matter of factly states that the speech was in Dutch, and only much later, in 1951, published in Indonesian. *Sukarno: A Political Biography* (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 110 (footnote 6).

⁹ Avonblad edition, 1 December 1930, p. 2. I am indebted to Benedict Anderson for this reference.

¹⁰ *Sedjarah Pergerakan Indonesia, 1929-1930*, Vol. III, 'Pembelaan Ir. Soekarno Dimoeke Landraad Bandoeng' (Fonds Nasional [1931]), preface note. An advertisement inside the front cover of Volume III describes each volume, though exact titles are not provided: Vol. I, 'Speeches by the National Fraction, the I.S.D.P. Fraction and the Government Concerning the Government's Action toward the Indonesian Nationalist Party'; Vol. II, 'Interrogation of the Four P.N.I. Leaders, Ir. Soekarno, Gatot Mangkoepradja, Maskoen and Soepriadinata, before the District Court in Bandung'; Vol. IV, 'The Defence speeches of Mr. Sasromoejono, Idi Prawiradipoetra and Mr. Sartono before the District Court in Bandung'.

Although later editions differ substantially in their translations into Indonesian of the foreign language quotations, the bulk of the text in each edition is virtually identical. Where there is change in the text, the changes provide further strong evidence that the address was originally in Indonesian. In the first edition many foreign words or newly coined Indonesian counterparts are footnoted and explained in simpler language. Later editions drop most of these footnotes, evidently because it was felt that the terms had come to be commonly understood. Also, Indonesian counterpart terms relegated to the footnotes in the first edition later replaced the Dutch or other foreign language terms in the text. The various editions of *Indonesia Accuses!* provide an excellent measure of the evolution of specific political terminology over several decades. Partly for this reason I have retained in the translation the original footnotes wherever they differ significantly from the later editions.

Before tackling the substance of Soekarno's book, several questions of perspective pertinent to historical context must be raised. Debate may never be resolved decisively, for instance, over the question of European impact versus indigenous rebirth, in the germination and shaping of the nationalist movement. The controversy holds at one extreme that Indonesian nationalism was exclusively a European import, at the other that it was a natural and inevitable reassertion of Indonesian self-interests consequent to a long period of oppression.¹¹ In this essay the debate will not be joined, for it is hoped that at several decades' distance from the events in question, the controversy can now be seen for what it is, a tilting at windmills, an academic diversion. A political activist, Soekarno par exemplar, uses the material at hand, and his measure of success is progress toward a political objective. Neither his integrity nor that of, in this case, a nationalist movement, can fruitfully be measured in the material itself. Rather, it is in the consistency of an activist's political acts, even more, in his

¹¹ Spanning the points of view on this subject are the following publications: John Bastin, 'The Western Element in Modern Southeast Asian History', in Bastin, ed., *Essays on Indonesian and Malayan History* (Singapore, 1961), pp. 1-18; J. C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (The Hague, 1955); K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History 1489-1946* (London, 1953); J. Romein and W. F. Wertheim in *A World on the Move: A History of Colonialism and Nationalism in Asia and North Africa from the Turn of the Century to the Bandung Conference* (Amsterdam, 1956); B. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies* (The Hague, 1955); Yamin, op. cit.; W. F. Wertheim, *The Indonesian Society in Transition: A Study of Social Change* (The Hague, 1956). The most judicious statement of the problem is Soedjatmoko, *An Approach to Indonesian History: Towards an Open Future* (Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Translation Series), Ithaca, 1960.

constituency's perception of the congruence of his acts to the representation of their interests, that some realistic assessment of political integrity may lie. Soekarno's use of European conceptual language, in other words, does not itself impugn his political character. The conceptual apparatus of a political activist must be substantially derivative if he is to be politically credible.

A second problem of perspective rests in the literature of development and modernization which is pervaded by the notion that effective nationalism correlates with the development of modern leadership. One unfortunate inference drawn from this literature is that a particular nationalist leader's career can be meaningfully rated in terms of the presence or absence of specific attributes of modernism. This extends to a nation's entire nationalist elite. Thus Indonesia's movement up to 1930 has been characterized as 'elite development . . . from a traditional, cosmologically oriented, hereditary elite to a modern, welfare-state oriented, education-based elite'.¹² The problems with this dichromatic categorization are several-fold. First, a major political change, perhaps the most dramatic in a country's known history, is implicitly diminished in significance by the fact that the change did not occur *within* the modern context, as if *real* development requires of its leadership acts of prior conversion radically transforming personality, social identity and mental process. Second, political leaders in any degree identified with pre-modern qualities tend to be absolved from responsibility, much as head hunters are excused for their quaint custom. For Western social scientists this provided a convenient way to maintain analytic integrity while ingratiating themselves with nationalists (it was of course essential to earn nationalist sympathies to do any worthwhile research at all). Finally, the dichotomous elite models render exceedingly difficult the task of unravelling the conflictual stresses arising out of what the *nationalists* saw as real and immediate political problems. Philosophical problems remained necessarily at some remove, although a Soekarno, and perhaps most notably, a Sjahrir, could occasionally dwell upon them, especially during long periods of captivity. The old and the new, feudalism and modernity, old imperialism and new imperialism, passive mentality and active mentality, old order and new order—such phrases do permeate Indonesian literature right up to the present. But when they are used, they are intended to have immediate political utility; the history of their coinage is as complex as might be the case in any large and diverse society. They can be meshed with the modernism/tradi-

¹² R. van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite* (The Hague and Bandung, 1960), pp. 1–2.