

INDONESIA at the CROSSROADS

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Introduction

The country we are about to see is one of the Southeast Asian countries. Like the Philippines, Indonesia too is composed of some 3,000 islands. Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao comprise the big islands or group of islands in the Philippines. They are five large and important islands which comprise the Republic of Indonesia: Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes and the recently acquired Western Irian. The fabulous island of Bali has become a tourist favorite spot and has been immortalized in a movie **SOUTH PACIFIC**.

Formerly known as the Dutch East Indies, Indonesia at present is the world's largest archipelago. Placed from east to west, the Republic would extend from Honolulu to San Francisco. In the island of Java alone, there are about 700 million inhabitants, making it one of the densest populated areas in the world.

The first Europeans to reach Indonesian shores were the Portuguese who arrived early in the 16th century. Then the Dutch came in 1595 colonizing that area till 1945. Right after the Japanese surrender, a bloody revolution started in that Southeast Asian country. The Indonesians

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were tired of their Dutch masters who had exploited their natural resources and enslaved their economy. Led by the youthful rebel SUKARNO, the revolution succeeded in ousting the Dutch. This is the historical background of the country we are interested in knowing more about concerning our missionary activities there.

Political Situation

We will divide our study of Indonesia into two parts. First, it would help us much to know the political situation in the country for the past 10 years so that we can assess the Religious situation which will follow. As can be seen, the political and religious elements cannot be separated, especially so, in Indonesia because of their Constitution. Indonesia's basic law is called PANTJASILA, translated into English, FIVE BELIEFS on which the Republic rests. The people and government of Indonesia believe:

- 1) In ONE Supreme Almighty GOD
- 1) In Democracy
- 3) In Social Justice
- 4) In Love for your fellowmen
- 5) In National Unity. This last BELIEF has been achieved so well by the introduction of one common language called BAHASA INDONESIA.

From the CONSTITUTION of the Republic, one can see the religious belief of the people who helped frame it. Although Indonesia is mostly Moslem, yet every Moslem believes in ALLAH, God almighty. This is his first concern in life.

As we have already mentioned, SUKARNO was one of those responsible for Indonesia's independence. In gratitude for his noble work, the people voted him into office. As president of the republic he did his best to bring prosperity and peace to his newly created country. While Sukarno was president, Mohammed Hatta was his Premier. But as the years went on Hatta could not see eye to eye with his President, and this led to Hatta's resignation from public office. From that time on, Sukarno was unchallenged as the dictator-leader of Indonesia. One of his first follies was to have himself elected as President-for-life by

members of Congress whom he had himself chosen. These Congressmen owed Sukarno a big favor. In return they unanimously elected him as their leader for life. A second folly made by Sukarno was his decision to combine THREE POLITICAL Parties, although one was contradicting the other. He himself coined up a new word NASAKOM. Breaking this up into their meaning:

- 1) *NAS* — *Nasional* (National Party)
- 1) *A* — *Agama* (Religious Party)
- 3) *KOM* — *Komunis* (Communist Party)

Each of these Political Parties was supposed to uphold and be true to the basic law of the Republic, to the PANTJASILA. The Chairman of each Party was to swear to God to be faithful to and protect the Constitution. Here we have the greatest lie of the century. How could communism ever affirm its belief in God? It disowns the very existence of the almighty! How could communism affirm its belief in democracy, in social justice, in love for one's fellowmen and in national unity? Communism goes contrary to all of what the CONSTITUTION believes in. The PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia) in the meantime started its campaign of infiltration and subversion. Cabinet officials, high ranking Military Personnel were not spared. They made it hard for missionaries to do their work, blocking any entrance from abroad of any supplies needed for the missions.

Next, they started to have students involved in every sort of rally and demonstration. Every demonstration was a bloody one. Prices had gone way, way up. The economy of the country was ruined. Anti-Western feelings were instilled every day through the Mass Media of TV, press, speeches and radio. When Malaysia became independent, on Sept. 16, 1963, the greatest and most tumultuous riot ever recorded in Djakarta occurred. The British Embassy was completely burned down: the ambassador's car was turned upside down and burned; the British flag was desecrated. The political situation seemed ripe to declare a revolutionary situation.

There was just one big thorn which was an irritant factor to the PKI: a good number of high ranking Army and military officers were anti-communists. Among them was the Chief of Staff himself, the only four-star general, Gen. NASUTION. He was joined by another staunch

foe of communism, Gen. Yani, Commanding General of the Army. Men like these had to be liquidated and disposed of before they thwart the communist officers in the Armed Forces. Six Army Generals lost their lives on that fateful September morning. Gen. Nasution was in the list of those to be killed but by a stroke of fortune he was able to escape. General Yani and five other top anti-communist generals lost their lives. GESTAPU reminds one of the Secret Police Force of the Germans. In Indonesian it is another abbreviated word meaning:

GE — Gerakan (Movement or revolution)

S — September

TA — Tiga

Both words mean 30

PU — Puluh

Hence, GESTAPU means, *September 30th Revolution*, of 1965. This was the state of affairs politically up to the coup-d'état where many Generals, Admirals and the Air Marshall himself had been implicated, tried and found guilty of high treason to their country, to the PANTJASILA, Indonesia's Constitution.

The very puzzling figure of Sukarno has never been really analyzed. Historians and experts in political science have all been puzzled at the actuations of Sukarno ever since the coup d'état started. It was Sukarno who had withdrawn Indonesia from the United Nations, the only country ever to do so since the UN had been founded; it was Sukarno again who had withdrawn Indonesia from the Olympics by forming his own GANEFO = *Games of the New Emerging Forces*. All members of this organization were communist countries. It was clear Sukarno was veering his country towards Djakarta-Peking axis. Could it be possible that the great Sukarno, who was once known as the Father of the Revolution, may now be branded as TRAITOR to that same revolution he had once led? We leave this to history to write.

It is a sad event to recall that the students had continually been challenging Sukarno to step down from his life-long presidency. So on March 11, 1967, as Congress convened, this same congress who had voted him President for life, now eased him out of office and appointed Gen. Suharto as Indonesia's second president since her independence, in 1945.

The present situation politically is better. The original NASAKOM has now been reduced to a mere NASA. Even between these two Political Parties, there is a fight for utter domination. The NASional Party which is predominantly MOSLEM is bitter against their counterpart the Agama (Religious Party) which is made up predominantly of Christians: Catholics and Protestants of all sects. This is how the Political Situation is in that Republic.

Religious Situation

If one were to look at statistics or numbers as the norm for things, then one would have to conclude that Christianity has been a failure in that country. Simply glancing at statistics we find the following:

- 1) Islam: 90%
- 2) Catholics: 1%
- 3) Protestants: 1%
- 4) Animists & others: 8%

But statistics, impressive though they may be, is not everything. Although a minority, Catholics are a militant force and a group to be reckoned with. For a population of about 150 million, there are only 2,600 priests ministering to the spiritual needs of the people of God. Catholics have played an active and prominent part in the political situation of that country. They have held posts in the Cabinet and have done well in promoting peace and order. During the turmoil of the coup, they were instrumental in the capture of communist traitors in both the civil and military departments. Sukarno's number TWO man, Dr SUBANDRIO, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was a real PKI sympathizer, yet no body knew about this except for the fine cooperation of the Catholic Party. This was brought to the attention of proper authorities in the Military branch. Subandrio was captured, tried and found guilty of treason. He is at present awaiting execution before a firing squad. The Catholics and the Armed Forces have worked hand in hand to rid the government of undesirable elements as well as subversive ones.

The Catholic mission in Indonesia is doing fine. Many converts are recorded due to a large measure to the works of mercy rendered selflessly by Catholics in hospital work, free clinics, orphanages and parish schools.

The Catholic Church has found deep roots in Indonesian soil and it is there to stay. Unfortunately, though, there seems to be bitter opposition between the Christians and non-Christian communities. The Moslems have long been clamoring for a Moslem state-religion. Sukarno has always been against this and so has his successor Pres. Suharto. One reads of reports of a clash between Christians and Moslems. Recently, a church and a Catholic school were set on fire and damaged by extremists. A Protestant temple was desecrated and torn down by a fanatical group. Now that the Communist Party is outlawed, a new enemy has loomed in the horizon.

CONCLUSION

If we were to gather some food for thought for both the Political and Religious Situations in Indonesia, our first conclusion would be that if Indonesians would keep true to their PANTJASILA, their Constitution, they would certainly go forward in progress and peace. Second, one can learn a lesson from what took place in that country. Communists CANNOT be trusted. They use all means to obtain what they have in mind. They use violence, trickery, force, sabotage, murder and deceit. Although the stage was all set for the PKI to take over yet the coup d'etat failed miserably. This proves to us that there are still men who are intelligent enough to see through a fake front.

Lastly, when a people is given a choice between slavery and freedom, between communism and democracy, the choice is clear and loud. It is our hope that the Catholic Church in Indonesia may continue to spread the Gospel of love unhindered and may it grow in number and in quality. Indonesia has proved to the whole world that a foe can be beaten if the people as a whole come out in the open to denounce what is evil. It took a lot of courage for Indonesia to go against the regime of Red China. Peking has been taunting Indonesia ever since that coup failed. She had called the present government of Pres. Suharto a puppet tool of the Western kind of imperialism. But Djakarta has dared to put Peking in its proper place by closing her embassy in Peking and recalling her diplomats back home. Let this be another of the countless other lessons Indonesia has taught this weary world.