REPORT FROM INDONESIA

BY VIRGINIA THOMPSON ADLOFF

EDITORIAL NOTE: The following three dispatches, recently received from Mrs. Adloff, present a first-hand view of current developments in Indonesia. Mrs. Adloff is at present studying conditions in Southeast Asia for the American Institute of Pacific Relations. She is the author of several works on the area, including Thailand: The New Siam and Post-Mortem on Malaya.

EXPERIMENT IN SELF-GOVERNMENT

Malang, N.E.I.

The one and one-half year old Republic of Indonesia is embarking on an experiment in Asiatic self-government with assets which seem to outweigh its liabilities.

Among the Republic's major assets are a remarkable degree of internal unity, large reserves of manpower, and able as well as vigorous leadership. The Java soil is exceptionally fertile, and there are great tracts of underpopulated land and important raw material resources on Sumatra. The Republic's liabilities consist chiefly of an economy depleted by the Japanese occupation, of military activities simultaneous with efforts to stabilize its government, and of operating in economic and cultural isolation.

No minority or cultural problems comparable to those of India divide the Republic's population. The Eurasians and Chinese, the most important and unassimilable of the minorities, must ultimately accept Indonesian citizenship and all that it implies; otherwise they will have only the limited rights of other foreigners. In the case of the Eurasians, Indonesian citizenship means losing the legal status of "Europeans," which would injure their racial pride. There is nowhere else for them to go, however, unless their proposed colonization of New Guinea be put on a more practical basis than present plans suggest. The Chinese, for their part, will probably have to renounce their traditional ties with China, accept more official controls over their economic activities than in the past, and give up their present political aloofness in the Dutch-Republic struggle. Neither group, in any case, is militant or numerically important in comparison with the Republic's fifty million Indonesians. As to the dissidents within the Indonesian ranks, their differences of opinion lie mostly in the field of foreign relations—in the manner of achieving independence from the Dutch—rather than in how independence will be internally applied. The leaders of the People's Front, the only genuine opposition group that has developed as yet within the Republic, have been in prison awaiting trial since the abduction of Sjahrr last June.

The isolation in which the Republic has been and...
is still operating is the more serious as it follows three and one-half years of Japanese occupation, and its effects are psychological as well as economic. The “self-sufficiency” which the Japanese forced upon Indonesia spelled spoliation and death for millions of Javanese. At the same time the Japanese preoccupation with their war was so complete that the Indonesians acquired, as an inadvertent by-product, experience in administering their own country and, above all, self-confidence and an intensified nationalism.

The spirit of nationalism is immeasurable among Java’s youthful leaders—and it is the very young who are running the Republic. Their newly acquired self-confidence and experience, however, are admittedly limited. Far from being anti-fascist in general, or anti-white in particular, — and we may thank Japan’s interpretation of Asiatic brotherhood for this—the eyes of Javanese youth are turned to the West for an ideology and for technical aid in developing their country. This attitude is partly an unfortunate mental habit of dependency which is rooted in their colonial past, and it has certainly been intensified by the economic blockade which the Dutch have thrown around Republican territory. But at the same time Java’s youth shows an eagerness to learn and an idealistic if naive groping for spiritual as well as material leadership from the Western democracies, especially the United States. If unsatisfied, these feelings might produce in time results inimical to the peace of the Pacific. — February 5, 1947

BALI ON VERGE OF DECISION

Den Pasar, Bali

On February 25 the Council of Bali, established during the island’s brief Republican regime, will vote on a Dutch bill providing for a drastic change in its own election, its powers, and its relationship to the local rajas.(1) Acceptance of this bill, which is a foregone conclusion, will slightly enlarge the electorate to perhaps a fourth of the total population and will enhance the powers of the Council at the expense of the rajas. The Resident and chiefs of the island’s technical services are still Dutch appointees and Bali will remain under martial law until the last Pemoedas (organized youth) return peacefully to their homes. The present Dutch policy of placating the Balinese intellectuals at the expense of the rajas may drive a greater wedge between those two groups and may also serve to alter the intellectuals’ present major antagonism against the Dutch—following the lead of the Javanese Republicans—to a more cooperative attitude. Should the Dutch plan for a federated Indonesia, as opposed to the Republican desire for a unitarian one, eventually win out, the Balinese revolution, already largely abortive, will terminate completely.

As elsewhere in Southeast Asia the Japanese in Bali suffered after V J Day a severe loss of morale and a split in their ranks between supporters of the local independence movement and followers of the Allies’ orders. Comparatively few Japanese deserted or turned over their arms to the Pemoedas, Laskar Rayat, Pesindo, and TRI groups which were formed in Bali (in imitation of their Javanese prototypes) after the independence of Indonesia was proclaimed on August 17, 1945. The Republican-appointed governor of the Lesser Sundas was one Poedja, a former judge of the Boeleleng court and member of the Japanese-sponsored Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence. For a period of four months a Republican government functioned in Bali, until it attempted an unsuccessful revolt against the Japanese on December 13, 1945. Thereafter the eight rajas of Bali assumed responsibility for maintaining law and order and wider powers than they had enjoyed under the Dutch, and administered the country in council form with the advice of Poedja until the arrival of the Dutch troops in March 1946.

Although the Dutch maintained the framework of the rajas’ rule, they named “advisers” for the council of rajas, arrested Poedja, and placed “experts” over the Balinese who had been directing the technical services. Sporadic fighting with the various expeditionary forces which the Javanese Republicans attempted to land in Bali, and with the youth groups which had sought refuge in the western hills and jungles of the island, lasted until the eve of the Den Pasar Conference in December 1946. The Dutch claim that ninety-five percent of the Pemoeda’s leaders were killed or taken prisoner and that those who now remain outlaws are merely robber bands aggregating no more than about seventy individuals. They have been attempting by a combination of force and the inducement of employment to win over the intellectuals and the larger group of Balinese who were weary of the violence and disorders rife on the island for more than a year. Contributing to the success of this policy has been the loss of virtually all contact between the Republicans in Bali and those in Java and between the urban intellectuals and the Pemoeda groups remaining in the western hills, as well as a decimation of leadership.

In November 1946 a movement called Parindo was started, chiefly among the intellectuals of Den Pasar, Tabanan, and Singaradja, of which the orientation

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(1) On March 25, 1947, representatives of the Netherlands and of the Indonesian Republic signed the “Cheribon Agreement,” by which the Netherlands accords formal recognition to the Republic. The agreement also projects the formation by January 1, 1949, of a sovereign nation composed of three states: the Indonesian Republic (Java, Sumatra, Madura); Borneo; and the Eastern Islands (including Bali). (New York Times, March 26, 1947.)
and membership are a commentary on the present status of Bali's revolution. Social welfare activities for the building of a democratic state are the very general stated objectives of Parindo, and its membership — approximately 2,000 — is almost wholly confined to Bali's main towns and to Indonesians. Chinese and Arabs are being encouraged to form their own analogous organizations which may eventually merge with Parindo. Constructing a democratic state in Bali does not involve an undermining by Parindo of the local caste system, apparently out of fear lest any such move might endanger the precarious unity which prevails among the comparatively few politically conscious Balinese. The rajas, despite their pro-Dutch leanings after March 1946, still command considerable reverence among the villagers, although there are signs that this attitude is weakening and that a greater consciousness of rights and aspirations is beginning to dawn in even small and remote communities. The fact that Soekawati, the President of East Indone sia, is a Balinese and that his son-in-law, the Anak Agung of Gianjar, the new Minister of the Interior, is also Balinese seems to influence only a few conservatives in favor of the new state. The intellectuals continue to look to Sjaehir and Soekarno as their leaders and to work towards a union with the Republic in Java and Sumatra.

How successful will be the new State of East Indonesia in Bali depends on its endorsement by the Java Republic, through signing the Linggadjati agreement, and on a fundamental change in the prewar mentality and policy of the Dutch. Considerable distrust of the Dutch exists among the Balinese intellectuals, increased by the type of regime which has been in force since March 1946. If East Indonesia will provide a real framework wherein the Balinese can learn to govern themselves and modernize their state there is a good chance that it may succeed. The Balinese intellectuals who want immediate union with the Republic are aware of the smallness of their numbers, the lack of wide support and understanding for their program among the masses, and the islanders' unpreparedness to approximate the political evolution of the Javanese. Economically the Balinese intelligentsia are now in a position far less favored than during the Japanese occupation, when the size of the bureaucracy and its privileges were appreciably greater. The Dutch must increase the salaries of their Balinese officials to meet the prevailing inflationary costs. They must simultaneously offer them wider opportunities for self-government and self-improvement, if the pro-Republican faction is to accept the palpably artificial and Dutch-fabricated federal structure which has been created with East Indonesia as the first state. — February 22, 1947

LEADERSHIP AND PROSPECTS FOR UNITY

Batavia, N.E.I.

Indonesia's revolution is more important than similar movements in neighboring countries, not only because of the Indies' greater size and resources, but also because of its large number of capable leaders. Differences among them, however, may lead to problems once opposition to Dutch rule has been eliminated.

Sjaehir is the one Republican leader whose popularity may be characterized as well-nigh universal. He is undeniably the head of the Westernized, intellectual Indonesian youth and the chief of the best organized party—the Socialists. Not only is he widely respected in Republican territory but the nationalist groups in East Indonesia have confidence in his leadership and are willing to stand by any agreement which he sponsors. The Dutch themselves find him the most reasonable among Republican officials — so much so that some even hope to detach him from the other members of the triumvirate, Soekarno and Hatta. This is wishful thinking but it derives from the fact that Sjaehir is essentially a humanist. He happens also, however, to be an Indonesian nationalist.

Oriental qualities of warmth and understanding are possessed preeminently by that most ingratiating of all Indonesians, President Soekarno. Detractors of his magnetism and mass appeal complain that Soekarno is overfond of personal fanfare, over-influenced by the last adviser who has talked with him, and over-simple in his approach to the complexities of Indonesian problems. Yet Soekarno is the last person to claim more sophistication than he possesses or to describe himself as more than "just a village-man." For the present any rifts which may divide the high leadership of the Republic are largely academic, because the chief protagonists are well aware of their mutual dependence and of the necessity for maintaining unity, at least until the present political crisis is resolved.

Nevertheless the future does hold possibilities of considerable disunity within the Indonesian nationalist ranks, principally owing to sectional feeling. Many Dutch officials are honestly convinced that the present unity of the Republic is inherently artificial and that regionalism—even within Java—may soon arise even without outside stimulus; others of the Dutch are bent on creating divisions so as to perpetuate the long established policy of divide-and-rule.

Whatever may be the motives, there is evidence that the Sultan of Djocja is being primed by the Dutch to become Soekarno's successor and the first president of the United States of Indonesia. The Sultan's position at present is obscure. He has shown democratic tendencies and fidelity to the Republican cause, and has

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Another possible stimulus to regional discord lies in the number of Sumatrans currently running Java. It is a standing pleasantry that almost every high Republican official is a Sumatran—Sjahrr, Hatta, Sjarifoeedin, Gani, Natsir, and others—and one is reminded of the old gibes at the amiability of the English in letting themselves be governed by the Scots. Actually about fifty Javanese are now being trained to become the future administrators of Sumatra, which seems to be a fair turning of the tables. It is curious that that prewar assumption that it would be the Sumatrans who would become the soldiers of the independence movement and the Javanese its politicians has been in practice reversed. — February 26, 1917

U.S. LEGISLATION AFFECTING ASIATICS—I

BY FRED W. RIGGS

A number of bills have been introduced into the current session of Congress which relate to the immigration and naturalization status of Asians. Most sweeping in nature are several measures which would eliminate all racial bars to naturalization. A second group consists of a number of bills which would extend naturalization and quota rights to Koreans. Others deal with special problems such as the naturalization of persons who served in the armed forces.

These proposals constitute part of an effort to clear the record of those laws which discriminate against the peoples of Asia on a racial basis. So long as these laws remain, we may be responsible for an eventual “situation” which is a threat to international peace.

Keystone of the restriction policy is the law(1) which extends the right to become an American citizen only to the following “races”: “white” persons, Africans, American Indians, Filipinos, Chinese, and East Indians. Those not enumerated are considered “ineligible to citizenship,” and under our immigration laws are not permitted to enter the country under a quota, although certain special categories enter as “non-quota immigrants,” or “non-immigrants.”(2)

The bills in the first category named above attack this situation by abolishing the list of “eligible” peoples and substituting a provision that the right to become a citizen shall not be denied because of race.(3) Simplest of these is Congressman Marcantoni’s measure which limits itself to this change. Because it ignores other aspects of the problem, however, especially the question of quotas, this bill is regarded as unsatisfactory. More complete are the bills introduced by Senator Langer and Mr. Harrington: they outline a possible number of quotas which would keep down the total possible number of immigrants, while at the same time abolishing racial discrimination.(4)

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FAR EASTERN SURVEY

(1) Act of July 2, 1946, Public Law 485. This list is based on a long evolution in which one group after another has been added:

“(1) White persons, persons of African nativity or descent, and persons who are descendants of races indigenous to the continents of North or South America or adjacent islands, and Filipino persons or persons of Filipino descent;

“(2) Persons who possess, either singly or in combination, a preponderance of blood of one or more of the classes specified in clause (1);

“(3) Chinese persons or persons of Chinese descent, and persons of races indigenous to India; and

“(4) Persons who possess, either singly or in combination, a preponderance of blood of one or more of the classes specified in clause (3) or, either singly or in combination, as much as one-half of those classes and some additional blood of one of the classes specified in clause (1) . . . ."

(2) May 26, 1924, Sec. 13(c); 43 Stat. 162; 8 U.S.C. 213(c).


(4) Harrington’s bill provides that: (1) “the right to become a naturalized citizen under the provisions of this chapter shall not be limited by race or national origin;” (2) the “barred zone” provisions of the 1917 Act shall be repealed; (5) each colonial system of European power in the Far East, excluding those which already have a separate quota, is to be considered a separate country with a quota of 100 a year; and (4) everyone heretofore ineligible, except persons of various exempt groups, shall enter under the quota of the country to whose “indigenous” race he belongs, and preference up to seventy-five percent be given to those born and resident in the country.