

2D-22-66-8

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DATE: April 5, 1968

SUBJECT: **The HMI: Moslem Youth Views the Modern World**

REF :

SUMMARY: Indonesia's largest student organization, the (Moslem) Indonesian Association of Students, or HMI, held its national Working Conference March 1-5 in Djakarta. The Conference produced a political statement which warned of the threat posed to Indonesia by "international capitalist-liberal forces" seeking to dominate it politically. This statement is symptomatic of a marked xenophobia and religious fanaticism on the part of younger Moslem activists which results from their isolation and provincial educations, and from the barrages of anti-Western propaganda to which they were subjected in the Sukarn era. Foreigners, and especially Americans, dealing with Indonesia are likely to be encountering the effects of the Moslems' narrow backgrounds for a long time to come. A list of the HMI's leadership is enclosed.

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During the week of March 1-5, 1968, the Indonesian Association of Students (Himpunan Mahasiswa Indonesia, or HMI) held its National Working Conference in Djakarta - thereby marking, in its customary fashion, the halfway point between two of its quadrennial National Congresses. The Conference was intended to reassess the policy decisions taken at the last National Congress in Solo in 1966, and to set the tone for the HMI's activities for the next two years.

The conclusions reached at the Conference were embodied in a "political statement" issued on March 8. It began with the premise that Indonesia's current "political jitters" are caused by two factors: a) economic difficulties affecting the "people's nine basic commodities"; and b) the machinations of

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"There are planned, systematic efforts by international capitalist-liberal forces to dominate the internal political situation based on their conceptions, as was previously done by the international communist movement prior to Gestapo. Politically, the international capitalist-liberal forces want a two-party system divided into a government party and an opposition party, like the system of government followed by Westernized parliamentary democracies. Economically, they want free-fight liberalism (sic), wherein prices are completely determined in the market with the slogan, 'Leave it to market forces.' Culturally, they interpret modernization as a process of Westernization. Ideologically, they wish secularism to be practiced." (Transl. from Antara, March 8, 1968.)



Turning to the question of what should be done, the HMI castigated the "independent group" (which it meant secularists in general, and the ex-PSI elements in particular) for allowing itself to be dominated by such "capitalist-liberal forces." The statement urged that an "ideological" (i.e., religious) outlook is not irreconcilable with program-oriented politics, demanded limits to religious proselytizing among adherents of recognized religions, and called for government controls on foreign aid to religious groups. Warning against resurgent PKI activity, the HMI urged tighter controls over the economic and political actions of Chinese in order to control it. Finally, the students demanded replacement of incompetent Ministers, especially the Minister of Finance,* with "loyal, capable individuals" who enjoy mass political backing.

The anti-Chinese and anti-Christian portions of this statement are not particularly surprising, given the Moslems' hatred of the former and resentment of the latter. But the heritage of Sukarnoist xenophobia found in the reference to "international capitalist-liberal forces" was disturbing even to many Indonesians: the influential columnist and former editor, Rosihan Anwar, who has maintained close relations in recent months with modernist Moslem circles, lamented the attitudes manifested by the HMI under its supposedly moderate leadership and deplored its xenophobia as "hunting for ghosts at high noon."

The first reason for such HMI fanaticism is political. As the Embassy already has reported, Moslems generally have found themselves on the defensive over the last few years - first against their leftist and Sukarnoist rivals, then against the military-Christian-secularist coalition which they have imagined was building up against them in recent months. Also, during the months of maneuvering before the PKI was born, some militant Masjumi politicians like Lukman Harun found the HMI a useful channel for their political activities.

Partly as a result of their own propaganda. Furthermore, Moslems are ready to No Objection To Declassification in Full 2010/08/30 : HIA-R JONES HOWARD P parties and f-2D-22-66-8 oriented policies are at least partly intended to subvert Islamic principles. According to Winarno Zain, head of the HMI Foreign Relations Bureau and a former American Field Service student, there is some credence given in his organization to the notion that the "independent group" is partly foreign-supported and is aimed at restricting Moslem influence. When questioned about the proposal for a "two-party system" being advocated in West Java, he acknowledged that HMI members in that province are particularly agitated by this idea and are convinced that it is designed to relegate Moslems to a permanent state of opposition, cut off from government power.

In the HMI Working Conference, according to Winarno, West Java delegates under their extremist and politically opportunistic Branch Chairman, Ekki Sjachruddin, were especially strong in support of the militant statement which finally was adopted. Winarno also agreed when the writer asked whether such militant HMI leaders as Nurcholish Madjid, the General Chairman, and Mar'ie Muhammad, the Third Vice Chairman, maintain close contacts with the Muhammadiyah and PMI leader, Lukman Harun. (It will be recalled that Harun was the sponsor of a parliamentary interpellation last year on the questions of Christian proselytizing and of foreign aid to religious groups.)

Both Madjid and Mar'ie Muhammad have been conspicuously militant at different times in the past year. Mar'ie was the principal Moslem spokesman in the religious feuding which has split the Student Action Command, KAMI, in the past few months, and he developed a personal vendetta with the Catholic leader, Cosmas Batubara. He seemed to mellow at the end of the year after a trip to Germany, Winarno says. He was and remains the dominant personality in the HMI as a result of his political shrewdness, hard work, single-minded dedication to the organization, and forceful personality. In addition to his connection with Lukman, Mar'ie has been much influenced by NU First Chairman Subchan in recent months, and made a political trip to Makassar with Subchan in January.

Madjid, on the other hand, is a scholar rather than an organization man. He is about the same age as Mar'ie, approximately 29, and was born in the vicinity of Surabaya, as was Mar'ie. Unlike Mar'ie, however, his entire education has been in Moslem religious schools. He attended the same prestigious East Java Islamic high school as did Idham Chalid, and now is an advanced student at the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) in Djakarta. In spite of his youth he already is gaining a reputation as an Islamic scholar and a polished speaker. He, too, has absorbed some of his political ideas from Lukman Harun, so far as can be judged, and in addition has been influenced by the head Imam of the Great Mosque (where Madjid lives) in the Djakarta suburb of Kebajoran. The Imam writes newspaper columns under the pen name "Dr. Hamka," which is an



acronym for his real name. Hafi Amrullah Mohamed Faidi Abdillah Hafi Amrullah
that he has no No Objection To Declassification in Full 2010/08/30 : HIA-R JONES HOWARD P
show a preoccu-2D-22-66-8 some of the same themes manifested in the HMI "poli-
tical statement" - suspicion of pernicious foreign influences in Indonesian
politics, a belief that Christian aggressiveness in proselytizing unnecessarily
offends Moslem sensitivities, and a conviction that Islamic religious teachings
and daily politics are inextricably intertwined.

This background on the two most important HMI leaders highlights another pheno-
menon of their experience, which helps further to explain the attitudes shown
in the HMI's political statement. This is the much more parochial nature of
their educations, compared to their fathers. Whereas the former Masjumi leaders
such as Roem and Natsir had an international education and knew their Dutch
opponents well, the current generation of Moslem students has been cut off
from many foreign contacts during some of their formative years. Over the
same period they have been subjected to a stream of Sukarnoist propaganda against
the West which they have been unprepared to rebut or even to place in perspec-
tive. This deficiency is characteristic not just of the HMI, but of other Moslem
youth as well - and indeed of many older Indonesians who did not have personal
contacts to keep them in touch with other points of view.

A striking example of distorted views of the West and of Western ideas was pro-
vided by the quasi-HMI newspaper Angkatan Baru on March 25, in an article en-
titled, "Decadence and Modern Philosophy." It was written by Ali Alaydrus,
a former General Chairman of the PII (former Masjumi high-school students' af-
filiate), who had impressed the writer in several personal meetings as a thought-
ful, fairly balanced young man (he is 30) who would not tend to jump to ill-
founded conclusions. His column on "Decadence", however, began with the asser-
tion that "modernism" goes under a variety of names: positivism, pragmatism,
socialism, communism, nationalism, chauvinism, Nazism, fascism and Zionism.
The essence of modernism, which he called a Western export to underdeveloped
countries, was defined as a revolt against religious and spiritual norms, aimed
only at satisfying material desires, and having as its "principal dogma" a
denial of the existence of a "life hereafter." He blamed modernism's influence
for a wide range of evils, including the destruction of traditional Asian cul-
tures, the spread of chauvinism and intolerance, the breakdown of family ties,
and a loosening of sexual morals.

Unfortunately, Moslem youth like Alaydrus, Mar'ie and Madjid can find support
for such distorted views of the West in influential circles elsewhere in their
own society. The example of Lukman Harun already has been mentioned. Angkatan
Baru provided another on March 25 when it revealed that, in response to public



protests about to obtain an "No Objection To Declassification in Full 2010/08/30 : HIA-R JONES HOWARD P
istry on the n-2D-22-66-8rious foreign threats to Indonesia. One of these threats was communism, and another was described as "international capitalist-liberal forces" which seek to maintain the "lifeline of imperialism" by promoting investment in Indonesia so that they can continue to extract its natural wealth.

Moslems such as Madjid, whose education has been entirely in provincial Moslem schools, are peculiarly ill-equipped to evaluate such notions as this, given the isolation in which they have lived in the waning years of the Sukarno era. The effects of their provincialism are likely to be felt in many dealings by foreigners with Indonesia, and especially those of the United States, for some time to come.

GREEN



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ected at Eighth National Congress,
Solo, September, 1966.)

General Chairman -

Nurcholish MADJID

Vice Chairman -

Ekki SJACHRUDDIN

" "

Ir. Beddu AMANG

" "

Mar'ie MUHAMMAD

" "

Ahmad DRANI

" "

G. MARTHA

" "

Anniswati ROCHILAN (ex-officio)

Secretary-General -

Nazar E. NASUTION

Deputy "

SOLICHIN

" "

Harun KAMIL

General Assistants -

A. NURHANI

Munadijat AMINARTO

SULARSO B.A.

Special Assistants -

Drs. Jusuf SJAKIR

A. NABRANI Misbah

ZULKIFLI Hanafiah

FIRDAUS Wadjdi

Ir. TAGANGALUN

(N.B.: This list already has been carded and forwarded to the Department, but is included here for convenient reference.)

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