

SUBJECT: The Place of Moslems in Indonesian Politics

REF :

Enclosed with this airgram is a memorandum of conversation between the reporting officer and Nurcholish Madjid, General Chairman of the Moslem Students' Association (HMI), who will be traveling to the United States on a State Department Leader Grant sometime in the early autumn of 1968. Madjid is listed on the Potential Leaders Biographic Reporting List (PLBRL: see CA-5700 of February 1, 1967).

*PL 6  
INT 1000/125 Summary*  
Madjid believes that Indonesian politics still is dominated by a Dutch-trained social elite which has managed to hold on to its favored position since independence, depriving the "Moslem majority" of the voice to which it is entitled in a democracy. Although he acknowledges that the Moslem majority in Indonesia is not the "90%" often claimed by Moslem party spokesmen, he asserts that the non-Santri Javanese will "follow us" into full acceptance of Islam.

Madjid's views are closely-argued and bolstered with references to Indonesian and Western writers. As has been previously reported, he has a scholarly turn of mind and has read widely, although within a narrow frame of reference: his political analysis is rather narrowly focussed on righting the real or imagined political wrongs toward Moslems of a previous era. In the reporting officer's opinion, the ideas he expresses originated with an older generation of Moslems such as Drs. Lukman Harun of the PMI Party, and Dr. Hamka of the Kebajoran mosque, rather than through Madjid's own readings. However, the fact that a relatively well-educated, well-read and intelligent

Enclosure: *all m.m.*

Memorandum of Conversation of April 27, 1968



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Moslem youth leader eloquently defended such distorted and distorted views of contribution to Indonesian by the young generation of Moslems as a whole.

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For all his professed awareness of the differences between Santri Moslems and the abangan or prijaji Javanese, Madjid shows a striking insensitivity to the fears of these groups for the politically-organized Moslems. He apparently assumes that ethnic Javanese are really just aspiring Moslems who eventually will see the light. He almost certainly would be lumped with the "Islamic staters" by non-Moslems. Unfortunately, he has erected such an elaborate historical and political theory, and buttressed it with so much supporting "evidence" from Indonesian and Western sources, that the resulting structure will be hard to shake.

GREEN



**Participants:** -2D-22-68-6 Madjid, General Chairman, HMI  
William Cain, Head of Foreign Relations Bureau, HMI  
Edwin L. Barber III, Second Secretary

**Place and Date:** Mr. Barber's house, April 27, 1968



Madjid explained modern Indonesian history largely in terms of the Dutch effort to hold on to their colonial empire, and of the lingering effects this has had on post-independence politics. According to his reading, Dutch colonial policy during the twentieth century was strongly influenced by the well-known Dutch scholar and student of Islam, Snouk Hurgronje, who was an advisor to the Indies Government for many years.

Hurgronje, said Madjid, believed that the key to perpetuating Dutch rule lay in subduing revolutionary Islam. His idea was to draw a distinction between "political Islam" and "religious Islam," and to adopt a lenient policy toward the latter while suppressing the former. To placate Moslem religious sensibilities, Madjid asserted that the Dutch, at Hurgronje's recommendation, restricted Christian proselytizing in various parts of the archipelago. On the political front, however, they attempted to deny Moslems any meaningful role and set out to rule through an "elite minority" composed of prijaji (aristocratic) Javanese, Christians, and certain ethnic minorities such as Chinese and Ambonese.

Hurgronje's theories, Madjid continued, required that this "elite" be made into a cultural halfway group between the Dutch at one extreme and the Santri Moslems at the other. The "elite" therefore was favored with Dutch-sponsored education, travel to Holland, government jobs, and other advantages; incidentally, it is obvious that Madjid believes high-quality education to have been the key advantage enjoyed by the "elite" but denied to Moslems.

After independence, Madjid stated, this Dutch-trained "elite" used its wealth, education and position to maintain its domination of Indonesian politics and government. The only exceptions to this domination were provided by those Masjumi politicians who, solely on the strength of their large mass following, were propelled into Cabinet positions. As an example of this dominant "elite," Madjid cited Sukarno, the Dutch-educated son of a prijaji teacher and a Balinese woman; he also noted

that abangan and Santri bureaucrats still occupy the positions of  
ment jobs. As No Objection To Declassification in Full 2010/09/01 : HIA-R JONES HOWARD P  
tion, Madjid w-2D-22-68-61onesia's Santri Moslems as a community are seventy  
years behind in education, economic status and social development.

The result, according to this view, still is an undemocratic concentra-  
tion of power and influence in the hands of the few at the expense of  
the alleged "90% Moslem majority" of Indonesia. Madjid was quick to  
acknowledge the inaccuracy of the latter figure since the abangan Java-  
nese who are lumped into it are lax Moslems at best. He also acknow-  
ledged that there are basic differences between them and the Santris  
as a result of the historic enmity between the Moslem and Hindu-Javanese  
communities on Java: in his own case, he recalled that Santris were  
decidedly in the minority in his East Java home town, that they and the  
non-Santri groups automatically wound up on opposing sides in school  
games, and that brawls often resulted.

He nevertheless described non-Santri Javanese as persons of "weak be-  
lief" who are in search of stronger guiding principles than they have  
had. Islam appears to him to be the obvious answer for them. When  
asked about this, he quickly expressed the belief that abangan "statist-  
ical Moslems" will eventually "follow us" into full acceptance of Islam.

