

DOS REVIEWED 31-Mar-2008: DECLASSIFIED FOR RELEASE IN FULL

DATE: June 28, 1967

SUBJECT: KAMI: A View from Bandung

REF :

Enclosed is a memorandum of conversation with Sugeng Sarjadi, Chairman of the Bandung branch of the University Students' Action Command (KAMI). At a luncheon in the reporting officer's house he showed himself frankly discouraged and cynical about the present pace of Indonesian politics.

Of particular interest were his remarks on the political instincts of Indonesian students, whom he characterized as uninterested in ideology and indifferent to traditional political sloganeering. The KAMI students are basically pragmatic in outlook, according to Sugeng - particularly those in SOMAL, a non-party faction within KAMI which recently has shown some signs of activity on its own.

His comments show clearly the somewhat naive impatience of the Bandung students, and their inclination to brush aside any and all obstacles in their rush toward their goals. Of special interest here is the emphasis placed on problem-solving in place of political slogans. The nurturing of such pragmatic attitudes among the young generation will provide the greatest long-term hope that Indonesia will be able to master its own problems of modernization and development.

GREEN

Enclosure:
As stated



-2D-25-81-8

DPR

Edwin L. Barber III, Second Secretary of Embassy

Place and Time: Mr. Barber's house, June 22, 1967

Sugeng expressed his disgust, and that of his Bandung cohorts, with the slogans which dominate Indonesian political discourse. When asked for a definition of Pantjasila he retorted, "What is it?" As for "Indonesian Socialism," he asserted that none of the students know what it means.

The present generation of students generally make poor political party material, in Sugeng's opinion, since they are not well disciplined, have no interest in ideology, and are preoccupied with their studies and personal lives. This is particularly true of SORIAL, the Secretariat of Local Student Organizations, which is a component of KAMI: its members are the well-to-do children of the middle class who are "relaxed" and non-ideological. It is true, however, that the leaders of the HMI (Indonesian Students' Association, a former Marjumi affiliate) are upset about the Middle East situation, on grounds of sympathy for their Arab co-religionists.

As a group Sugeng says the students are more interested in solving problems than in sloganeering, and it is in this context that they like James Bond movies - more for the hero's capacity to meet and overcome challenges than for his sexual adventures. (Comment: The Embassy is inclined to believe that these two characteristics are equally interesting to the students.)

The election bill, according to Sugeng, is "a dead letter" and will not be passed because of the complete inability of the parties to reach any agreement on it. As for the parties bill, he wondered why it is necessary to have the Army's approval before a new party can be formed. He thinks the formateurs should just go ahead with their plans for new organizations.

The West Java students, for their part, are anxious to leave the Djakarta students behind, since the latter are too much the political compromisers, and strike out on their own to "lead Indonesia." Nor is the Bandung group interested in East or Central Java, which they believe eventually must follow the rest of the country. They are frustrated at Suharto's slow, devious style and perplexed as to how they should react to him. Sugeng declared, however, that they have threatened Suharto with more street demonstrations on August 17 unless concrete action is taken against corruption in government before then. Sugeng was uncertain whether the current malaise is the fault of Suharto or of a group of bad advisors surrounding him. He acknowledged that some foreign observers have recalled that the latter benevolent view was formerly applied to Sukarno as well.



As for himself. ~~Stevens is disappointed at the~~
the government No Objection To Declassification in Full 2010/09/01 : HIA-R JONES HOWARD P
constructive R-2D-25-81-8. As a result he intends to play the role of
"social irritant", or gadfly, in parliament whenever the opportunity arises.

