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Latest Developments in the Modernist Moslem Camp

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SUMMARY

The Indonesian Moslem Party (PMI) has failed to take root outside of Java while "non-political" organizations sponsored by ex-Masjumi figures have drawn massive support in the provinces. The PMI leadership has continued to spurn its Army sponsors by opposing the Development Cabinet while the former Masjumi leaders have welcomed the government's accent on pragmatic economic policies. The November Congress of the PMI will give its current leaders and its former military sponsors the opportunity to bring better known Masjumi figures into the party leadership. If this is done, the PMI will probably "take off" as a national political party and perhaps renounce its opposition alliance with the Nahdlatul Ulama. If Masjumi figures are not brought in, the PMI will most likely remain an ineffective if vocal opponent to the present regime.

The Indonesian Moslem Party has announced that it will hold its first National Congress during the first week of November 1968 when it will elect new officers. PMI Vice Chairmen John Naro and Agus Sudono told Embassy officers that PMI Chairman Djarnawi and his friends attempted unsuccessfully to postpone the Congress until March 1969 as they were justifiably afraid that they would lose their positions in an earlier Congress. Both Sudono and Naro reiterated their willingness to withdraw and make room for Masjumi candidates.



Former PM Masjumi P-2D-26-95-2, who withheld personal support from the PMI, expressed scepticism in a July 22 conversation with Embassy officers that the PMI Congress will choose more dynamic and better known leaders from the old Masjumi rolls. The Congress' participants (which will probably be largely chosen by the present PMI leadership and will be overbalanced with Javanese) will not wish to cross the Army on this score, Natsir explained. The Army's position was made clear in the negotiations leading to the PMI's formation, Natsir continued, and need not be reaffirmed through further pressures to be effective. Natsir added that the only way of ensuring a completely free election of the PMI leadership would be to obtain in writing General Suharto's earlier oral affirmation that the PMI is free to elect whomever it likes at its National Congress. Natsir volunteered that he had recommended to the PMI leaders that they obtain such a document.

Natsir said that he and other "older generation" Masjumi leaders will not seek office in the PMI. They would like to see the "younger Masjumi generation" (Anwar Harjono, Hasan Basrie and Muttaquien were mentioned specifically) take charge with perhaps an older generation leader such as Fakkih Usman or Dr. Mohammad Roem serving in an honorary or advisory role. Natsir said he and other well known Masjumi figures would "introduce" this new leadership to the Masjumi masses. Natsir clearly implied that such an "introduction" would not be offered a leadership slate resembling the current one.

Natsir confirmed reports the Embassy has received from other sources that the PMI has not taken root outside East and Central Java. Natsir said that some of the former Masjumi's regional leadership has joined the PMI, including a few figures in the West Java Masjumi stronghold of Garut. Many others, who have better known names and larger followings than the PMI's national leadership, have not done so. During a recent trip to Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, one of the modernist Moslems' historical strongholds, Natsir asked the whereabouts of the PMI office and was told that it did not exist.

In the meantime, the two Moslem organizations within which the older generation of Masjumi leaders operate have been expanding by leaps and bounds. Sjafruddin Prawiranegara is currently on a trip to the Nusatenggara islands where he will install several new branches of his businessmen's association IUSAMI. Kalimantan is next on his list. He has already visited West Sumatra, Sulawesi and Lampung. With the exception of the latter province, where his visit was played in low key, he has drawn crowds and local newspaper play which would have done honor to a chief of state. The former Masjumi farmers' affiliate, STII, is also undertaking membership drives in the outer provinces. Natsir's trip to West Sumatra was on behalf of the STII, and former Masjumi Chairman Prawoto Mangkusasmito is currently carrying the organization's banner through Central and East Java.



Methods of running the STII exemplify the pragmatic methods now being used by the former Masjumi leadership. Noting that the STII had originally been organized as a purely political vehicle for the elections, Natsir said it is now being given a completely new complexion. Every new STII branch is organized around a development project, Natsir pointed out. In West Java, the STII has undertaken an experimental farm, a road building project and an agricultural school for peasants' children. In West Sumatra it has for the past several years operated an experimental farm and cottage industries producing silk and straw mats. Natsir's trip to West Sumatra was to announce openly these projects, which had not been publicized because of the STII's uncertain standing with the central authorities. West Sumatra Governor Harun Zain, according to Natsir, was miffed to find that these projects had been going on without his knowledge. He was, however, impressed by the results and on July 22 assembled all of the province's Level II Chiefs of Region (Bupatis) to see the experimental farm. No STII branch will be recognized, Natsir pointed out, until it has a development project on which to concentrate its activities.

The striking contrast between the "modernizing" attributes of the older Masjumi generation and the "traditionalist" attitudes of the young PMI leaders is also apparent in the position they take towards the new Development Cabinet. At the Embassy's Fourth of July reception, Sjafruddin Prawiranegara characterized the Cabinet as the best one possible at this time. He praised the selection of Sumitro as Minister of Trade although he has in past conversations revealed some distaste for Sumitro as a person. Sjafruddin denied reports that he had been asked to join the Cabinet, said that he would not have accepted a position as Minister of State without portfolio at any rate, but noted his willingness to lend the new Cabinet his informal advice and help. PMI leader John Naro at the same reception displayed a quite different attitude. After eliciting a favorable reaction regarding the new Cabinet from an Embassy officer, Naro said with some vehemence that any cabinet which does not take into account the preponderant strength of the Moslem camp in the distribution of its portfolios cannot succeed.

In summary, latest developments tend to confirm the Embassy's initial assessment that the PMI is not making the grade as a mass political movement and that it is to the government's benefit that it not do so if it adheres to its present leadership and policies. Minister of Education Mashuri recently indicated in a private conversation that Suharto's inner circle of advisors now realizes that their choice of PMI leaders has not produced the desired results. The November Congress of the PMI offers Suharto two alternatives. He can passively or actively support the current PMI leadership with the result that the PMI will probably remain an opposition party but so ineffective as to be relatively harmless. Or he can publicly indicate the Army's willingness to accept the election



of former P-2D-26-95-2ders with the result that he will have a party sympathetic to his development program but also one with sufficient strength to challenge the government when interests diverge. The choice is not an easy one, and the Embassy would not wish to predict Suharto's decision.

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