

INDONESIA

REPORT TO AMNESTY

Adam Malik was unfortunately in Bonn during the week that I was in Djakarta and Mochtar Lubis thought it was pointless to talk to anyone in his Ministry especially as there would be an opportunity to see Malik in Manila at the One Asia Assembly which we were both going to attend. However, Malik flew in to make an opening speech and flew out again to open a session of ECAFE in Bangkok and I was only able to have ten minutes with him in his hotel, but all the same I think the meeting was quite useful.

In Djakarta Mochtar Lubis arranged for me to see the Sultan of Jogjakarta, the Minister of Information (Budjardjo) and Dr. Hatta who is advisor to the President. I had an hour with each of them.

I also saw Mr. Yap, Blickenstaff of UNDP (three times) and fortuitously the Major-General commanding Central and Western Sumatra (Widodo), and a member of the Supreme Advisory Council (Professor Johannes).

I have written fairly detailed accounts of the conversations with members of the Government and with Yap, but it may perhaps be useful if I give a little of the political and economic background which I picked up from the many conversations I had with journalists and others. (For an up to date and informative account of the political scene I recommend an article by Rosihan Anwar in the April issue of Pacific Community, a quarterly published in Tokyo).

The economic outlook is bleak. Although Suharto has done wonders in putting an end to inflation (there is no longer a Black Market rate for the rupiah; arriving travellers are not asked how much currency they bring with them;) the economy is stagnant and the population is increasing by 3 million a year. Family planning offers no solution either in the short or the medium term. The only way to relieve the population pressure on Java is by massive re-settlement (Transmigracie) to the underpopulated islands. So far the Transmigracie policy has been a comparative failure, the highest figure achieved in any one year being 40,000 people, most of whom seeped back again to Java. This is the field in which UNDP may be able to help, but it is probably unrealistic to expect any UNDP programme for the re-settlement of prisoners except as part of a much wider operation, for the population as a whole.

The Islamic leadership is frustrated. As the Amnesty paper "Background to Indonesia" points out (p.3.) the reforming Masjumi Party has not been allowed to re-appear. The new Islamic Party, the PMI, is led largely by religious leaders who are not strictly politicians (the lack of political leaders has always been a besetting weakness of the Muslim parties). The Army is secular and distrusts the religious leadership and has now made sure that in the 1971 Elections the Army will retain control of Parliament and of the Assembly.

In his article Anwar states that there is a very high rate of conversion to Christianity (last year the figure was 250,000). Although many of the converts are Chinese Indonesians there are still sufficient Indonesian Muslims among them to cause disquiet. The reasons why so many of the young are losing faith in Islam are no doubt complex but whatever the causes their loss to the faith must add to the bitterness of the Islamic leaders. Anwar also warns Suharto that if he keeps the lid too tightly clamped down on political activity he may go the way of Ayub Khan.

I have dealt with the frustration of Muslim leaders at some length because I think it may have a direct bearing on the prospects of the 'C' Category prisoners.

You will see that almost everybody with whom I talked referred to the hostility felt in the villages towards the prisoners because they are Communists and Communism is a threat to Islam. It must of course be remembered that if the 1965 'Coup' had succeeded then the Communists would have taken over. It must also be remembered that as in Greece in 1944, the Communists committed the most dreadful atrocities in 1947, particularly in Madiun where they seized power but also in Central Java. And people have not forgotten.

However, Yap said that except when they go berserk the Javanese are very docile and could be persuaded by Government propaganda to drop their hostility to the prisoners, but he saw no sign on the part of the Government of any willingness to effect any reconciliation. The Minister of Information gave me the impression that he had to take account of Muslim sensibilities and that, for all his protestations, he was not likely to do very much to abate these prejudices. As long as the present mood is allowed to continue it will make it more difficult for the prisoners to return to normal life and I am afraid that it may be used as an excuse by the Government for going slow on the releases of 'C' Category prisoners.

I got the impression that no-one is according them much priority: they are at once an embarrassment and an economic burden. Pressure from the outside world should certainly be maintained or else there is a danger that they will continue in prison in constantly worsening conditions, but pressure must be discreet.

In the meantime there is, I think, a good chance of the Government agreeing to allow the I.C.R.C. in to inspect camps, and to provide medicinal and other supplies. The agreement between the I.C.R.C. and the Greek Government made a good impression. For many reasons, which are obvious, inspection with no publicity, and with the Red Cross reporting only to the Indonesian Government, has great attractions. It remains to discuss how the approach should be made. Please see my talks with the Sultan and with Malik.

Yap Thian Hien *

Mr. Yap told me something about the aid that has come in through the churches and the channels through which it has been distributed. The Roman Catholic Church, acting unofficially through its own channels, has been able to get aid through to Buru and in Central Java. The National Council of Churches (NCC) has been distributing aid in Central Java and Djakarta as follows:

Seventy five (75) tons of milk powder to Buru which was supplied by the Church's World Service in New York. This was sent to the Minister of Social Affairs and Yap found out that it did arrive in Buru. Holland has promised to send tools for carpentry and for building on Buru. The NCC is still waiting to hear from the Government whether they will waive the import duties; otherwise, Holland will agree to buy locally. They all seemed to think that it is better to send goods rather than money. One of the NCC's problems is to check that everything sent is received by the prisoners and so although the Government might wish to handle the aid the NCC will try to insist that it is sent to their own representatives as otherwise there is "too much waste".

The NCC has given packages on three occasions: two to men's and one to women's camps, the last time being in January when they gave 2,500 packages to a men's camp near Djakarta. The package consisted of a mat and a cushion, soap for washing and for bathing, a sarong and checkers for recreation. They were forbidden to give any literature.

At Christmas they distributed 726 packages to a men's camp and 165 to a camp for women.

1. Medicines

The NCC has requested medicines from the World Council of Churches in Geneva, from Holland and from New York. They particularly needed quinine and medicines

*(Mr Yap is Chinese, a highly respected lawyer, and active in the Indonesian Council of Churches)

for TB. There is, of course, also scabies among the prisoners. There is very little water and no sanitation in the camps.

Mr. Yap showed me some photographs taken in a courtyard showing a number of prisoners lined up in front of the building and also showing the ceremony of handing over the packages by an Interdenominational team. They were not allowed to look inside the buildings and on later visits they were not allowed to take any photos.

2. Category 'C' Releases

I had been told on arrival that the Government intended to release "all 75,000 'C' prisoners" by the end of the year. But Mr. Yap said that this is not going to happen if releases continue at the present rate. At present, only small packages ranging from twenty to a maximum of 250 are being released. The NCC are never told when prisoners are going to be released.

Their condition is pretty desperate on release; although they no longer need a certificate of non-involvement it is difficult for them to work as employers are afraid to use them for fear of the resentment that will be felt elsewhere. (It must be remembered that there is a great deal of unemployment both of the open and concealed kind in Indonesia, even for graduates, and that there is a great deal of poverty.)

Mr. Yap explained that when released, being for the most part destitute, they go to very poor areas. To single them out for relief would also cause resentment in these areas and he therefore said that a relief policy would have to embrace probably five times as many people as the number of prisoners who need the relief. In other words, to help 200 families you would have to help 1,000 because of the surrounding poverty.

Although the certificate of non-involvement is generally no longer required, in fact the local executives, head of the street community (each street has one) has to check on them consistently. Released prisoners have to report to the local executive regularly.

3. House Arrest

Neither Yap nor Mochtar Lubis knew anything about prisoners under house arrest. My question seemed to come to them as a surprise but they both said that this did not necessarily mean that such prisoners do not exist.

4. Category 'B' Prisoners

The total is quite simply not known; figures fluctuate all the time; nothing has been published and no-one can see the records. My impression is that arrests are still being made (See below when Yap talks about the treatment being given to prisoners in interrogation centres) as purges are still being carried out within the civil service and the army.

The numbers on Buru may now amount to 10,000 people. Nobody knows how they are living; since the one-day visit of journalists last December no-one else has been allowed in. They are not allowed any writing materials nor books, not even newspapers. The Government said that it would be too expensive to provide them with writing materials but this was an evasion because there are many private donors willing to give but nothing would be allowed.

5. The International Red Cross

There is no Muslim organisation providing relief. Father de Blot in Central Java has Muslim students and doctors doing social relief work and Mr. Yap thought that he keeps some statistics.

The Red Cross, if it can come in, must set up its own channels so as to avoid all suspicion of its motives. The first priority is to get admission to the

interrogation camps, which is where prisoners are dreadfully maltreated. Mr. Yap talked about terrible sufferings under interrogation and about Nazi methods. It would not be sufficient for the Red Cross merely to have access to the detention camps.

6. The Mood of the country

Everywhere I went I was given the story that many 'C' Category prisoners on release met with much hostility and ostracism when they tried to return to their villages. In some cases, I was told, they asked to be re-admitted to the camps. Mr. Yap thinks that this is so but that the people could easily be persuaded to think differently if the Government really gave a lead; he said that except in times of crises the Javanese are very docile and are open to persuasion. However, it must be recognized that Islam is opposed to the release of these prisoners. To quote Mr. Yap, "They would like to see them dead. They say why must we feed our enemies?"

7. Chinese-Indonesians

Many Chinese or Indonesians of Chinese origin are among the 'C' Category prisoners, and according to Yap, were in no sense Communists or fellow-travellers. They were pulled in very often because of their membership of an association called BAPERKI. This Association, based on democratic principles, took over the Kuomintang schools and then the other Chinese schools when they were banned in 1956. You paid a subscription to BAPERKI in order to insure that your child would be educated. However, after the abortive coup, membership constituted guilt as BAPERKI was accused of being associated with KPI, because some of the top people in BAPERKI were Communists or fellow-travellers. Yap himself is one of the directors.

The Sultan of Jogjakarta

(After the fall of Sukarno a triumvirate ran the country consisting of Suharto, the Sultan and Adam Malik, but once Suharto became President the other two members of the triumvirate lost power to the Generals. All the same, the Sultan is in a politically strong position partly because he is so respected and because he is the "Overlord" of four Economic and Industrial Departments.)

1. The Mood of the People

When I raised the question of the prisoners he immediately wished to talk about the mood of the people. The majority, he said, were hostile to the prisoners and afraid. In Central Java the Communist cells had been brilliantly organised and he gave the impression that the Communist organisation still persisted but I checked later with Mochtar Lubis who said that the cells had been smashed. The Sultan referred to the Communist atrocities in 1947 which had not been forgotten.

I asked him if the people could be persuaded to change their attitude to the prisoners. He thought this was possible but that it would take a long time, so I asked him what alternative he saw: would re-settlement be a possibility? Yes, he thought there could be re-settlement in other islands, not on the model of Buru but that whole families should be re-settled together. In answer to a question he said that UNDP help would be welcome, but when I said that I thought that the U.N., though willing, would need a formal, official approach, the Sultan said that the President had already talked to the United Nations. This must be a reference to the 1968 meeting "at a low level" but when I mentioned this to him he did not appear to understand for he said "What can be higher than the President?" At this stage I did not know how far the UNDP would be willing to take the initiative but as will be seen from my talks with Blickenstaff he is quite prepared to offer his service and I do not believe that he needs an approach from the Indonesian side. All the same it would probably be unwise if he wants to achieve anything for him to make specific proposals for re-settling prisoners except in the context of something much wider.

2. 'C' Category Releases

He said that they wanted all the 'C' Category prisoners released because "they are costing us money". In fact they are being released subject to the difficulties presented by the general hostility of the people towards them. There was a certain amount of confused talk at this point. At first he said that all the 'C' Category prisoners had been "active", but then he was prepared to admit that there might be many injustices. I mentioned BAPERKI and he listened attentively but then said "Ah, but those will all be Chinese". It was fairly clear that he regarded the Chinese as presenting a continuing and a lasting problem. Although he is a humane person I felt pessimistic about his feelings towards the Chinese Indonesians; for him they represent a problem which has a very low priority. It must be admitted that he has a lot of problems on his hands. I asked him about the forced re-settlement of Chinese (in Palembang and Kalimantan?). There are in addition the families which have been waiting for shipment to China. The Republic of China, he said, had let them down. They only sent two ships. There are 5,000 families waiting "at our expense". One cannot feel very confident about their fate.

I asked him whether he would consider a commission to review the 'C' Category prisoners, but he replied "There is no need of a commission, we intend to release them".

3. Red Cross

This seemed a hopeful line. His immediate response was, "Why should they not come?" As far as he knew, it had never been discussed. He was most interested in the agreement with the Greek Government which for him constitutes a precedent, and he undertook to look into the matter if I would send him a note about it. Afterwards Mochtar Lubis thought that this should be followed up by an informal letter from the Red Cross to the Sultan mentioning my visit, but I imagine that this is hardly possible and it may be better to work through Malik (see below). This is the most important matter for discussion.

Air Vice-Marshal Budjardjo, Minister of Information

(He is fairly young and impressed me as being able and potentially an ally, although there is a strong streak of chauvinism in him. He is clearly a good public servant and probably uncorruptible. His political record does him credit. For the last ten years before 1965 Sukarno kept him out of the country in various diplomatic posts, first as Air Attache to Egypt after he had joined a circle of young thinkers, including Mochtar Lubis, who were opposed to the way the country was being led. It was he who gave Mochtar Lubis the licence to restart his newspaper, Indonesia Raya.)

He was inclined to paint a rather rosy view of the state of the prisoners. Not only are the 'C' Category being released but there is a good deal of leniency shown to the others. He said, for example, that, when ill, 'A' prisoners are allowed to go to hospital and receive visitors without any supervision; 'B' prisoners are allowed back to their villages and visits to their families - it is no use them trying to escape for this "would be their doom". These points were made to me when I asked why the intellectual prisoners should not be allowed to have books and writing materials. As for Buru, families will go as soon as the prisoners are economically self-supporting. He thought that this might be perhaps in one year's time. He referred to Buru as a concentration camp.

1. Red Cross

When pressed he admitted that there must indeed be hardships and a certain amount of illness and disease. At first he was very resistant to the idea of the Red Cross coming in and said that they should work through the Indonesian Red Cross, but he was very interested to learn of the Red Cross agreement with Greece and he was favourable to an arrangement which would attract no publicity. He had

been afraid, I think, that the Red Cross would be used as a stick with which to beat the Indonesian Government. I told him that I would be discussing the question of the Red Cross with Adam Malik in Manila but I did not mention to him that I had discussed it with the Sultan. He would be glad to have a copy of the agreement with the Greek Government, but as I only had one copy I reserved it for Malik.

2. UNDP

He spontaneously mentioned UNDP and said that their help would be unacceptable: this was something the Indonesian Government could look after themselves. He gave me the impression that the Indonesian Government was unlikely to make an official request for U.N. aid with re-settling prisoners because (a) this U.N. agency was not free of political influence from countries hostile to Indonesia (Lubis later explained that he probably meant the Communist countries and in particular the Soviet Union), and (b) re-settlement was a much bigger problem affecting millions of Javanese: let UNDP help with this and within this wider context perhaps the problems of the prisoners could be fitted in.

3. Hostility to released prisoners

I asked him whether the village hostility to released prisoners could not be abated by his Ministry. He said that he was doing his best to work for reconciliation. His line apparently is that whatever people may think of the prisoners their children are citizens and must be accepted as full participants in the future of Indonesia. (This line had echoes for me of some British propaganda about first generation coloured immigrants and their children.) He said that Indonesia is still in many ways a feudal society and that one must work through the local leaders. He has 3,000 officers down to district level who report to him on sentiment. He thinks that the mood is changing for the better and gave me a few concrete examples, but he has to reckon with and make concessions to Muslim opinion and the strength of Islamic sentiment. He explained, for example, that he opens his radio programmes with readings from the Koran and in some respects he said he is copying what is being done in Malaya since the May 1969 massacres of the Chinese. He hopes to gain the confidence of the local Muslim leadership and work through it, but he described the ramifications and complexities of Muslim organisation as a web. As in other matters he was inclined to give me rather a rosy picture but, as I have said, I think that provided Indonesian pride and susceptibilities were respected he would work fairly humanely to create a better climate for the release of the prisoners.

Dr. Mohammed Hatta

(Hatta was one of the leaders of the Independence movement in Indonesia, was Vice-President under Sukarno and is now an elder statesman. He has refused office because of his health, but is advisor to the President.)

We talked pretty generally about the prisoners and he undertook to speak to the President about the Red Cross. He suggested that I talk to the head of the Indonesian Red Cross myself but I decided not to after consulting Mochtar Lubis, because I felt sure that he could take no initiative and because Amnesty had not mentioned them to me in their briefing.

Adam Malik

Unfortunately, as I said earlier, this was a snatched interview with Malik in his hotel in the ten minutes remaining to him before he had to leave to catch an aeroplane. I was very glad to find that he still had feelings of warm friendship towards me and my wife, although we had not seen one another since 1956, but he knew all about what we had been doing for Mochtar Lubis. When I said that I was anxious to help Amnesty in any way possible and of course to help the prisoners, he was very sympathetic but he referred immediately to the suspicion of Amnesty

particularly among the Generals, which he had had to fight against. I am sure that it would be very useful when I write to him to send him copies of the Amnesty Report on Israel and the British Section's Report on Prisoners of Conscience in Eastern Europe. He said that he hoped there would be a mass release of 'C' Category prisoners next August but there was no time to go further into this. He agreed that there must be a great deal of hardship and suffering in the camps and he was interested in the ICRC Greek document which he glanced through and which I left with him.

I asked about protocol. Could the initiative come from the Red Cross or did they have to be invited? He said that I should write to the ICRC and send a copy to him. He would then speak to the President. I am naturally very willing to do anything that you advise.

Blickenstaff, UNDP

(He struck me as the best type of international civil servant, a devoted colleague of Hammarskjöld in whose Secretariat he served. He is also a great friend of George Ivan Smith. He headed the U.N. presence in Beirut in 1958 and later was four years in Delhi and five years in Kuala Lumpur before moving to Djakarta. He is therefore very experienced.)

At first he was a little reserved about becoming involved in the question of the prisoners but later I found that he would be most willing to take initiatives if he were asked to. One cannot expect him to start from scratch. I gathered that the UNDP has been held vaguely at arms length though I do not think it is regarded with any hostility in spite of what Budjardjo said. Blickenstaff has strong views about the ineffectiveness or worse of the Indonesian bureaucracy and the inefficiency of a system where so many departments overlap. He would like to suggest that an autonomous agency be set up for re-settlement on the lines of what has been done by Tun Razak in Malaya. I introduced him to Mochtar Lubis who would be prepared, I think, to ventilate these ideas in his newspaper, and I also introduced him to Professor Johannes of Jogjakarta University, who is a member of the Supreme Advisory Council and of the Commission of Four which has been set up by the President to stamp out corruption.

I had several long talks with Blickenstaff and I am sure that he is very approachable and is not afraid either of protocol or of getting out of step with his headquarters in New York. He could find no record in his office of the 1968 meeting with the President and was mystified about it. It should be remembered that he has only been in Djakarta a few months.

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E. J. B. Rose
5th May, 1970