

IN MEMORIAM: L. N. PALAR

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Lambertus Nicodemus Palar, one of Indonesia's most able and respected diplomats, died in Jakarta on February 12 of this year. If any man could be regarded as the dean of his country's diplomatic corps it was he. Throughout an unusually long career in which he held nearly all of Indonesia's most important diplomatic posts, he developed a reputation for representing her interests with consistent effectiveness. One might expect that such success would have left him at least a little arrogant and pompous. But he never displayed any such qualities. When I last saw him in Jakarta five years ago, Palar was still as genuinely modest, unassuming, sincere, and straightforward as when I first met him almost three decades before. He much preferred to be addressed as "Nick" rather than "Mr. Ambassador" or "Dr. Palar," and most of those who knew him soon felt comfortable in doing so.

There can be no doubt that these characteristics, together with the very real warmth of Palar's personality, keen mind, quiet patience, and capacity to understand the views of those with whom he had to deal--whether friends or opponents--helped him become the effective diplomat he was. Certainly they were essential in what was his earliest diplomatic success, and probably his major one: his broadening of the understanding of many initially passive or hostile UN representatives with regard to Indonesia's anticolonial struggle, induced some of them to influence their governments in ways beneficial to Indonesia. That he was so successful in arguing Indonesia's case against such seasoned Dutch diplomats as Van Kleffens and Van Royen testified to his ability.

Born in Tomohon, Manado, on June 5, 1900, Palar went to the Netherlands in 1928 to study at the University of Amsterdam, and subsequently stayed on to work there. In 1935 he married Johanna Petronella Volmers, affectionately known as "Yoke," a gifted woman, and as modest and informal as her husband. In the years before the war Palar served as head of the Indonesia Section of the Dutch Social Democratic Party (SDAP). His role in the underground resistance during the Nazi occupation of Holland won him the respect of many Dutchmen, especially those in the Dutch Labor Party, the postwar political grouping which had the most progressive colonial policy. In 1945, he won one of its seats in the Dutch Parliament (Tweede Kamer), in which he served until the Netherlands launched its first major attack against the Republic of Indonesia in mid-1947. Palar then promptly resigned his seat in protest, whereupon the Republic's government in Yogyakarta invited him to come to Indonesia to prepare himself to become its spokesman before the United Nations Security Council.

The office that Palar opened in late 1947 in New York, in the back of a Lexington Avenue grocery store, was undoubtedly the most modest of any country's representative to the United Nations. But with a small staff of able young men--Sudarmo, Soedjatmoko, and Sumitro--he made it a remarkably effective one, despite the fact that until 1950 he was handicapped by being permitted a mere

"observer" status at the United Nations, rather than being accepted as a full-fledged representative.

With the official transfer of sovereignty at the end of 1949, Indonesia became the United Nations' 60th member and Palar his country's official "Chief Delegate." After serving in this capacity until 1953, he was for three years Indonesia's Ambassador to India. During this period he played an important role in planning the April 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung, where he ably chaired the Subcommittee on Colonialism. Soon afterwards he served concurrently as Ambassador to the Soviet Union and East Germany for two years. Then following a five-year appointment as Ambassador to Canada, he returned in 1962 to head Indonesia's delegation to the UN once more. When Sukarno withdrew Indonesia from the United Nations in 1965 Palar became Ambassador to Washington. There, under unusually difficult circumstances--the confrontation with Malaysia and the uncertainties following the September 30, 1965 coup attempt in Indonesia--he won the admiration and respect of the American officials with whom he dealt. In view of his long previous postings to the UN, it was fitting that it was he whom Jakarta chose in September 1966 to carry the message to the Secretary-General that Indonesia desired to resume her membership. When at the end of that year he retired from his post in Washington no other Indonesian foreign service official had served his country for so long or with greater ability.