

SUHARTO'S SEARCH FOR A POLITICAL FORMAT

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March has been the month of big political decisions in Indonesia for three years now. In March 1966 President Soekarno, faced with a tumult of hostile student demonstrations, and with unprecedentedly threatening pressure from a newly self-confident army leadership, signed over most of his powers to the commander of the army, General Suharto.

In March 1967, Indonesia's super-parliament, the M.P.R.S. (Interim People's Consultative Congress), met in an atmosphere of great tension. Suharto had concluded that Soekarno could not be persuaded to cooperate with the army on terms which acknowledged its hegemony, and so had to be thrown out; it seemed to many that an attempt to oust the president might lead to a clash between pro-Soekarno units of the armed services and militantly pro-New Order units. But this was averted. Thanks to Suharto's steering skills and caution, and his willingness to leave Soekarno the vestigial insignia of his old glory, it was possible to strip the president of all his powers without giving rise to major disturbances.² Suharto himself was named acting president.

In March 1968 there was a further session of the M.P.R.S. This time there was less sense of crisis than a year earlier, and much less than in March 1966. Suharto and his associates were in reasonably comfortable control of the country. Political excitement rose to a high pitch at several points, but there was no fear of violent clashes of any size.

1. An earlier version of this article appeared in Australia's Neighbours, May-June 1968. Because the editors of Indonesia felt that this study is an important contribution to understanding the politics of Indonesia's New Order--a subject on which far too few studies have as yet appeared--they have endeavored to give it wider circulation by publishing it in revised form here. The editors wish to express their gratitude to Australia's Neighbours for granting them permission to do so.
2. However, over eighty people lost their lives when paracommando units stormed the village fortress of the pro-Soekarno milenarian leader, Mbah Suro, as the M.P.R.S. session was opening. The Mbah Suro story is most interestingly told in David Mitchell, "Communists, Mystics and Sukarnoism," Dissent (Melbourne), Autumn 1968. See also Willard A. Hanna, "The Magical-Mystical Syndrome in the Indonesian Mentality, Part III: The Rise and Fall of Mbah Suro," American Universities Field Staff Reports Service, Southeast Asia Series, November 1967.

The principal importance of this M.P.R.S. session lay in the fact that it forced Suharto and his colleagues to make up their minds about the political arrangements through which they would work thenceforth, about the political forces and political machinery they would use as the props and conveyor belts of their power. As the session approached they had to stake positions in relation to a number of difficult dilemmas of political format on which they had hitherto postponed decisions.

If one looks at the three successive months of March in terms of inferred questions in General Suharto's mind, the question up to March 1966 was "Shall we side with the students against Soekarno?" and the question up to March 1967 "How can we finally oust Soekarno without provoking rebellion among his followers?". In the months before March 1968 the questions were "Who will be our partners in power?", "To whom shall we accord the right to participate in representative and electoral politics, and to whom shall we deny this right?" and "How far shall we allow ourselves to be tied down by civilians, by constitutional prescriptions concerning elections, the powers of representative bodies, freedom of the press, assembly and demonstration, and so on?"

Suharto was in fact in a situation similar to that of Soekarno in 1958-1959, when he had defeated the groups which stood squarely in the path of his "Guided Democracy" but had yet to forge or impose agreement among his supporters for the new set of political machinery which would be rationalized by the triumphant symbol.³ The symbolism of the "New Order" did not point as sharply to changes of political structure as had that of "Guided Democracy," but it certainly called for such transformations.

The M.P.R.S. and the Prospect of Elections

The idea of a People's Consultative Congress (M.P.R.) as the highest organ of state had been introduced with the constitution of 1945. Under this constitution, based partly, it seems, on a Nationalist Chinese model, the People's Consultative Assembly would elect the president and he would be responsible to it. But the congress would meet fairly infrequently; the constitution spoke of a maximum interval of five years between sessions. And the president would not be responsible to the more frequently meeting parliament (D.P.R.), nor could that body oust him. He would thus be a very strong chief executive.

3. See Daniel S. Lev, The Transition to Guided Democracy: Indonesian Politics, 1957-1959 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1966), pp. 164ff.

Though it was generally assumed that the congress should be a popularly elected body, none has ever been elected. In September 1960 President Soekarno established an interim congress, or M.P.R.S.; its members included the 281 men and women who were members of the current (nominated) parliament and another 335 who had just been named by the president to represent particular regions or functional groups. In the case of the party representatives, particular names were decided upon by a process of bargaining between Soekarno and his assistants on the one hand and the party leaders on the other. In the case of those chosen as representatives of particular regions and functional groups--the latter mostly paper organizations--the bargaining was often with leaders of the army.

Three sessions of the M.P.R.S. were held before Soekarno's fall. In each case the government was actively concerned that the congress be seen to have prestige, and so was obliged--and willing--to make minor concessions to the demands of its members, and particularly to those of the larger legal parties. But the power of the congress remained slight. Its pliability was highlighted by its decision of May 1963 to make Soekarno President-for-Life.

It seems that General Suharto decided soon after his assumption of executive powers in March 1966 to use the M.P.R.S. as a principal instrument for the political remodelling on which he was embarking. Thus a fourth session of the large body was held in June-July 1966--after 136 of its members had been dismissed as Communists or prevented from attending because of their membership in the Communist-sympathizing Partindo party (and another 142 had been replaced by new men of their parties, regions, and functional groups).⁴

Suharto was attracted to the M.P.R.S. as a vehicle because he wanted de-Soekarnoization to proceed in an orderly fashion rather than taking place through the "parliament of the streets" as some of the student groups and other pacemakers of the New Order were proposing. But he was in no position to stage-manage the session. In fact he was obliged--partly because he was not yet firmly in control of the executive and partly because of the intense support for "democracy" among many of his civilian supporters--to endow the congress with greater prestige and more actual decisional power than it had ever enjoyed before. And there is a sense in which he tied himself to the M.P.R.S. as an institution at its mid-1966 session, in that he chose to have this body confer upon him the executive and emergency powers

4. On this M.P.R.S. session, and the politics of 1966 generally, see R. K. Paget, "The Military, in Indonesian Politics: The Burden of Power," Pacific Affairs (XL, 3-4), Fall and Winter 1967-68, pp. 294-314.

which he had held only as a "gift" from Soekarno up to that time. Finally, he added to the likelihood that the M.P.R.S. would remain somewhat autonomous by maneuvering General Nasution into chairmanship of the body. Nasution had been Suharto's main rival for the presidency up to that session of the congress. His acceptance of the M.P.R.S. chairmanship (and a subsequent congress decision that Suharto should exercise the functions of the presidency in the event of Soekarno being unable to do so) removed him from that contest. But it left the general with an interest in maintaining, and perhaps expanding the newly achieved semi-independence of the M.P.R.S.

In the following eighteen months the political significance of the M.P.R.S. grew as the prospect of early elections receded. According to a decision of the M.P.R.S.'s mid-1966 session, elections for a new parliament and M.P.R.S. were to be held by July 1968. But the government's commitment to this date was treated with more and more scepticism as time went on. The academic economists advising General Suharto were known to regard early elections as a threat to their effort at economic stabilization, their assumption being that the parties would again succeed, as they did in the 1955 elections, in siphoning off large amounts of government money to finance their campaigning. And there was considerable support in the army and among civilian New Order militants for the view that democrats should not rush to organize elections in conditions where the enemies of democracy (read pro-Soekarno forces) were likely to emerge victorious.⁵ In mid-1967 Suharto spoke several times of the possibility that elections would have to be postponed.

Within parliament there was sharp disagreement about the electoral system to be adopted. In February 1967 the government submitted a bill which provided for single-member constituencies and took the *kabupaten* or regency as the constituency unit. This was linked in the minds of government leaders and their political braintrusters with ideas of forming a "Grand Alliance of New Order Forces" (or "New Order Front" or "Movement for Pantja Sila Democracy") which would put forward a single candidate in each constituency. The government leaders' hope was that this would make it possible to transcend the older pattern of a plurality of more or less ideological parties based on particular cultural communities. It would

5. Mahasiswa Indonesia (Edisi Djawa Barat), (II, 43), 2nd week of April, 1967. This West Java student journal was the leading spokesman for this view. Compare the statement of the Working Conference of the student action front K.A.M.I. held in June 1967: "It is appropriate to hold elections as a means of realizing the ideals of democracy as set down by the M.P.R.S., provided that priority is given to seeing to it that the outcome ensures the greater freedom of the forces of New Order democracy." Kompas (Djakarta), June 12, 1967.

certainly have resulted in a drastic under-representation of Java--for the average Java kabupaten has almost four times the population of the average kabupaten in the outer islands. Opposition to the bill was understandably strong in a parliament which was dominated by the Nationalist P.N.I. and the conservative Islamic Nahdatul Ulama (N.U.), both regarded as ideological parties and both drawing most of their strength from Java. In November 1967 the special commission of parliament charged with considering the bill changed it to provide for some members to be elected by proportional representation.⁶ But this in turn angered the government and the New Order militants, and so, after some demonstrations outside parliament by a group of Bandung students (who were reportedly sponsored by the West Java military commander Major General Dharsono), the government withdrew the bill completely, announcing that it would draw up another.

By taking this action, after almost nine months of parliamentary discussion of the earlier bill, the government set its foot firmly on the road to a major postponement of elections. One effect of this was to give questions of political restructuring a new urgency. A closely related effect was to suggest that the next session of the M.P.R.S., which was being talked of as likely to be held in March 1968, would have to take decisions of a far-reaching kind which had previously been thought of as the business of an elected, permanent congress. The mandate Suharto had received as acting president was till the elections only. Would he ask the forthcoming M.P.R.S. session for a new mandate, and, if so, as "acting president" or as "president"? For what period of time? With or without the emergency powers currently vested in him? With a vice-president, as the current (1945) constitution seemed to require? If so, with whom?

Parliament and the Demands to Overhaul the Party System

More immediately the New Order militants were presenting the government with a dilemma by pressing for a radical overhaul of parliament (whose members also belonged to the M.P.R.S., comprising one-half that body). The origins of the current parliament lay in the 283-man D.P.R. appointed by President Soekarno in June 1960. Its 30 Communist members and a number of others had been suspended in the wake of the coup and counter-coup of October 1965, and 108 new members had been appointed in January 1967. But the leaders of the students' and intellectuals' action fronts and other New Order radicals insisted that it was still Old Order in spirit, and adduced its attitude in the

6. The resulting "combined system" is described in Angkatan Bersendjata (Djakarta), November 27, 1967.

question of the electoral bill as evidence. In November and December 1967 there was talk in the publications of the student action front K.A.M.I. of a withdrawal of the K.A.M.I. leaders who had been put into parliament the previous January unless the government agreed to some kind of further purge of the old members.

What the New Order radicals wanted was in fact no less than a supersession of the existing party system. In their eyes this system was dominated by parties through whom Soekarno had chosen to work, parties which were ideological and not programme-oriented, conservative and not committed to modernization, and whose adherence to the ideals of the New Order was formal and hypocritical.⁷ They did not advocate that the existing parties be banned or merged in a single state party; that, they felt, would have been to fly in the face of the symbols of democracy. But they had come forth in the course of the preceding year with several proposals whereby the party system might conceivably be sidestepped or reduced in significance. Most important of these was the idea, suggested at an all-Java conference of military commanders in early July, that non-party civilians who had been active in one or other of the action fronts (and who had not succumbed to the pull of any of the parties since then) should form themselves into an "Independent Group" which the armed forces could take as their civilian partner. This proposal attracted widespread interest, and various non-party politicians, from Foreign Minister Adam Malik downwards, declared themselves willing to lead an Independent Group of some kind.

By November 1967 a group of intellectuals around Dr. Umar Kayam, the director-general of radio and television, had succeeded in establishing a rough monopoly over the Independent Group label. The efforts of these intellectuals to attract civilian support were largely unsuccessful. And their proposals for political restructuring, notably the idea of establishing a two-party system, with one party promoting faster change and one slower, were generally regarded as impractical. But the Umar Kayam group had the support of some powerful military radicals centering around Major General Kemal Idris (head of the Strategic Command) and Major General Dharsono (West Java commander and head of the Siliwangi division).

Suharto's record over the previous eighteen months suggested that he would not easily be pushed into a radical overhaul of the party system, for the general had consistently sought to prevent the anti-Soekarno reaction from going too far. This was partly a reflection of his strong belief in the importance of stability. He had declared economic stabilization and political stabilization

7. The role the parties have played since the beginning of Guided Democracy is most fully discussed in Daniel S. Lev, "Political Parties in Indonesia," Journal of Southeast Asian History (VIII, 1), March 1967, pp. 52-67.

the "Twin Duties" of his cabinet, and had presented the nation with the "Five Forms of Order" (Political Order, Social Order, Economic Order, Legal Order, and Security Order) in one of his few attempts to cluster ideological themes in the style of Soekarno. But it also reflected the fact that Suharto is a Javanese (and one of *abangan* or syncretistic religious orientation, rather than of *santri* or strongly Muslim outlook), and that most of the pressure for radical de-Soekarnoization came from non-Javanese (and a few Javanese *santri*).⁸ As if to declare that he would not allow himself to become what many in East and Central Java, particularly P.N.I. men, were saying he was--an honest Javanese trapped and manipulated by slick cosmopolitans and fanatical Muslims from West Java and Sumatra--he had taken a conciliatory approach towards such laggards in support of the New Order as the P.N.I. and N.U., and particularly towards the Soekarno-sympathizing sections of the armed services, the marines and other sections of the navy, and parts of the police. On the axis between New Order militants and New Order laggards, Suharto was a centrist, a balancer who sought to stand up to the challenges with which a strong right was presenting him by not allowing the already feeble left to be weakened further.

Nor was Suharto's centrism that of one man. On the contrary, it had become the position of a powerful group of generals, strong particularly in Djakarta--men of Suharto's personal staff (S.P.R.I.), the general staff of the army, and some key economic agencies. Most of the officers of this group were Javanese from Suharto's old Central Java (Diponegoro) division (though the group also included two powerful Sumatrans, Major General Alamsjah, the head of Suharto's personal staff, and General Panggabean, the acting chief of staff of the army). Their hostility to militant New Order generals like Kemal Idris and Dharsono carried overtones of old rivalries between the Diponegoro division of Central Java and the Siliwangi of West Java, rivalries which were themselves partly ethnic (Javanese versus the rest) and partly between officers considered close to the people and nativist and those whose style was more sophisticated and cosmopolitan. In addition, there was an element here of conflict between older officers and younger (for New Order militancy had greater appeal to the colonels and lieutenant-colonels), between Djakarta interests and regional ones (for the military radicals held a large number of regional commands), and between staff officers and soldiers in civil administrative posts on the one hand and fighting soldiers, particularly of elite units, on the other. This was by no means a simple bi-polar division; a host of criss-crossing loyalties

8. On Suharto's background see Willard A. Hanna, "The Magical-Mystical Syndrome in the Indonesian Mentality, Part V: Pak Harto--the Myth, the Man and the Mystery," American Universities Field Staff Reports Service, Southeast Asia Series, December 1967.

and associations blurred and complicated the pattern. But tension between the two core groups was persistent.

Suharto's ties to the S.P.R.I.-Diponegoro division generals were not so binding as to keep him from making concessions to the New Order radicals. And in the political circumstances of the last two months of 1967 there were strong incentives to do just that. One key problem was that Suharto's cautious style and moderate, stabilizing policies were producing a strong sense of drift and demoralization in the political public. Another was that several of his immediate assistants, including key figures from his personal staff and top executives of government economic agencies, had come to be principal targets of a vigorous press campaign against corruption. Moreover, prices for rice and many other commodities were rising precipitately in the last few months of the year,⁹ and this caused not only consumer resentment but increased general disillusionment with the government's policies of budget cutting and credit restriction, necessarily unpopular measures whose one immediately redeeming feature had been their dampening down of the earlier hyperinflation.

Finally, Suharto may have sensed real danger to his position behind the numerous rumors circulating in November and December 1967 of an impending young officers' coup. Whether he did or not, the rumors highlighted the existence of an intensely dissatisfied group of colonels and lieutenant-colonels in the Siliwangi division and some of the mobile units under the Strategic Command, men who felt that Dharsono and Kemal Idris had been altogether too tepid in their protests against corruption, compromise, and drift.

For all these reasons the New Order radicals' ship was full in the sails; and Suharto had every incentive to take some of the wind out. In December he announced that parliament would be given a "redressing." The term was new, and had little recognized meaning. (There was precedent in Soekarno's "retooling" for choosing an obscure word of English or quasi-English for maximum ambiguity!) What was clear was that it was a concession to the demands of the New Order militants, but one which fell short of a radical supersession of the party system.

The P.N.I. and the Neo-Masjumi

Closely related to the questions raised by critics of the party system as a whole were those to do with the right of

9. See D. H. Penny, J. Panglaykim, Dahlan Thalib, "Survey of Recent Developments," Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies (Australian National University) (No. 9), February 1968; also H. W. Arndt, "Survey of Recent Developments," Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies (No. 10), June 1968.

particular parties to a legal existence. There was no disagreement about the Communist Party remaining banned. But what about the P.N.I., which had gone along enthusiastically with many of the dominant trends of the pre-coup period, and important segments of which had remained actively pro-Soekarno even after March 1967? By mid-1967 it was clear that the efforts of an army-supported P.N.I. executive (Osa Maliki, Usep Ranawidjaja, and others) to make the party New Order-minded had run into solid opposition. The authority of the new executive had been fairly well established in Central Java, thanks largely to the efforts of Hadisubeno Sosrowerdojo, the P.N.I. regional chairman, a long-time anti-Communist and an old associate of General Suharto. But its position remained very weak in the other key province of East Java and in many of the regions outside the central island; and the continuing influence in these provinces of leaders stigmatized as "Old Order" served to buttress the conviction of many militants that it was folly to hope that the P.N.I. leopard would change his spots. There had long been local army-blessed harassment of P.N.I. branches in various places outside Java, but in the second half of 1967 commanders in several outer provinces, particularly in Sumatra, actually banned all P.N.I. activity.¹⁰

In the months before the M.P.R.S. session, and the "redressing" of parliament which preceded it, Suharto had to decide whether the P.N.I. would or would not be given a place in the constitutional order. On December 21, he instructed all regional government authorities to "help and provide opportunities for the P.N.I. to effect crystallization and New Order consolidation within itself" and asked the parties, organizations, functional groups, and action fronts to refrain from disturbing this process. Several days later he sent the Acting Chief of Staff of the Army, General Panggabean, to Sumatra to negotiate an end to the bans on the party's activities. When the "redressing" of parliament was completed, P. N. I. representation was down slightly, but the party still remained the largest of the parliamentary groupings.

The Masjumi and Socialist parties, which had been banned by Soekarno in 1960 on the ground that some of their leaders had been involved in the Sumatra-Sulawesi rebellion of two years before, presented Suharto with an analogous but more complex set of issues. There was no real problem in the case of the Socialist party (P.S.I.), as the leaders and active members of this organization, having little mass support and already exercising influence through the action fronts, non-party press, and the bureaucracy, did not press for their party's re-legalization. (An earlier attempt to establish a new party based on the Socialists and the national-communist Murba Party

10. This discussion of P.N.I. affairs is based heavily on the findings of Angus P. McIntyre of the University of Sydney and Yale University.

had been abandoned.) But the leaders of the old Masjumi were active in their demands for a legitimate political vehicle, and these pressures presented the government with a serious dilemma.

What the Masjumi leaders stood for was highly congruent with some of the central ideas of the New Order. If anyone had stood up to Soekarno and the Communists from the beginning it was they. Moreover, it was widely argued that the Islamic militancy which troubled Suharto sporadically throughout 1967--most notably after the anti-Christian rioting which damaged 21 churches in Makassar on October 1st--could only be contained if both the liberal-modernist and fundamentalist streams of reformist Islam, which had found political expression through the Masjumi before 1960, were again allowed some kind of legitimate representation.

On the other hand, various centrists within the army contended that Islamic militancy was better suppressed than conciliated; they also opposed any tendency to remove the stigma still attached to those who had been involved in the rebellion of 1958, arguing that these men were every bit as much traitors as the Communists. At the same time, some of the military radicals were against the idea of a neo-Masjumi because they saw this as likely to strengthen the party system as a whole, a system they hoped to see destroyed, superseded, or at least radically transformed. Finally there was pressure against a neo-Masjumi from some of the leaders of the Masjumi's old rival, the Nahdatul Ulama.

Suharto had made it clear in late 1966 that he was opposed to a simple rehabilitation of the Masjumi, but there were numerous indications in early 1967 that he would allow a new party to come into being which would represent at least several of the groups which had previously worked through the Masjumi. After a short period in which it seemed that former Vice-President Hatta would be given the nod to lead such a party, the initiative and anticipated government blessing passed to a seven-man group led by K. H. Fakhri Usman, a second-ranking member of the old Masjumi leadership who had not been involved in the rebellion. From that time forth there were rumors every two months or so that a new Partai Muslimin Indonesia was about to come into formal, government-endorsed existence; but each set of rumors proved mistaken.

The resolution finally came in early February. Immediately after a conference of regional military commanders which had discussed the question of the proposed new party, the members of Fakhri Usman's group were summoned to see Suharto, who told them that a Partai Muslimin Indonesia would be allowed to come into existence almost immediately--but not under their leadership, and indeed on tougher terms than previously foreshadowed. Anyone who had either been involved in the 1958 rebellion or had

been a member of a Masjumi leadership committee at any level at the time of the party's dissolution in 1960 would be excluded from executive positions of any kind in the new party, at least until a party congress was held and a new executive elected.

This decision caused consternation in important sections of the reformist Muslim community, for it meant that very few reformist leaders would be allowed to play a part in the new organization who had not previously had political rights as members of the Muhammadiyah, a large social and educational association which had had parliamentary representation for some years. Those who had hoped that the P.M.I. would be a neo-Masjumi rather than a Muhammadiyah-writ-large were sharply disappointed. But the Muhammadiyah leaders were happy to comply with Suharto's specifications, and so the Partai Muslimin Indonesia was formally established in February, under the chairmanship of the Muhammadiyah leader Djarnawi Hadikusumo.¹¹

The M.P.R.S. Session of March 1968

On January 30 the acting president disclosed the terms of parliament's "redressing." Its membership would be raised from 347 to 414. The representation of the armed services would be raised from 43 to 75, and the action fronts would gain 24 new seats. As for the parties, they were asked to draw up lists of members they wanted to recall and to discuss with him lists of men they wanted to put in their places. But each party would keep roughly the same total representation.

On February 13 Suharto installed 179 new members of parliament, 67 of them new men and 112 to replace ones who had been recalled. At the same time he disclosed that a new Supreme Advisory Council (D.P.A.) was about to be named. Coming on top of the appointment of a number of new Supreme Court judges, these actions suggested a sharp increase in the pace of governmental action. But the real drama was still to come.

On February 28 the reconstructed parliament met for the first time. Under strong pressure from two of Suharto's "project officers," it passed a most far-reaching resolution on that same night, partly for the consideration of the M.P.R.S. working committee, which was due to begin a meeting on the following morning. The M.P.R.S. should be called into session immediately, the parliamentary resolution said; it should appoint General Suharto full (as distinct from acting) president; it should endorse the government's proposals for a five-year development plan; and it should postpone elections for up to five years.

11. S. U. Bajasut, Facta Documents VI, Partai Muslimin Indonesia (n.p., 1968), contains almost all of the documents relevant to the founding of the P.M.I.

A few days later, the M.P.R.S. working committee drew up a time-table for the congress session. It would meet between March 21 and March 27, enabling Suharto to leave Indonesia on March 28 for a scheduled state visit to Japan (and to leave as full president, government supporters added).

This indecorous pressuring of parliament gave rise to protests from a wide range of civilians and to repeated demonstrations from the student action fronts. Few of the protesters were opposed to the renewal of Suharto's mandate. (Some Suharto supporters were convinced that Nasution was determined to oust Suharto when the opportunity came; but if this was his intention he evidently did not believe the time had yet arrived, for he kept silent.) Many people were opposed to postponing elections for as long as five years, and they were not only from the parties but also from the high school students' action front, K.A.P.P.I., whose leadership was dominated by reformist Muslims. But the most widespread feeling was simply that the government was asking for too much and giving nothing in return--particularly in relation to persistent demands for the investigation of leading generals alleged to be big-time corruptors. Indeed, it was felt the government was not asking but imposing its demands, treating the country's legislative bodies with frivolous disrespect. Rosihan Anwar, the country's foremost columnist, expressed a common resentment with the military high-handedness which seemed to characterize the whole procedure when he wrote mockingly about the "project officers" assigned to "prepare" the general session of the M.P.R.S. so that it would achieve its "target" within the "time limit" set down and with the "logistics" employed.¹²

The government's response to the wave of protests was tough. Six student leaders were arrested early in the month, as was the chairman of the intellectuals' action front, K.A.S.I. Student demonstrators were injured by soldiers on at least two occasions. The army commander for Greater Djakarta announced that he would have thirty battalions at the ready for the M.P.R.S. session, and the top civilian of the government newsagency Antara (a

12. Kompas, March 8, 1968. It should be emphasized, however, that generalizations of this kind encompass only a tiny proportion of the Indonesian population. The political public whose attitudes I am trying to picture here is limited in the first instance to people aware of the currents of week-to-week politics in the capital; this is roughly the group of those who read Djakarta newspapers regularly, perhaps one million people of the country's 115 million. And among these it is limited to people who are thought of as having a right to participate in the politics of the New Order--which excludes all Communists, many P.N.I. men, and a great number of Chinese.

subordinate of Antara's military head) was sent overseas for several months. A few days before the opening day of the congress soldiers were posted at several of the universities and high schools in the capital. In addition, army men checked all transport coming into the city, looking particularly for students.

Civilians spoke more and more of the government's "bulldozer" and "steamroller" tactics. Rosihan Anwar, writing on the eve of the M.P.R.S. session, quoted approvingly a *Sydney Morning Herald* description of Djakarta as being in "an explosive mood of disillusion."¹³ More than ever before, politics was a matter of the army versus the civilians.

The most important issues the M.P.R.S. tackled were those which flowed from the controversial parliamentary resolution of February 28-29. Would Suharto be named full president? If so, would this be with a reaffirmation of the sweeping emergency powers conferred upon him, first by Soekarno in March 1966, and then by the M.P.R.S. session of June-July 1967--powers which allowed him "to take any actions he deems necessary for the security, peace, and stability of the process of government or the furtherance of the Revolution"? How long would his new mandate be valid? Would it be somehow tied to the Five Year Development Plan? And what would be the date by which M.P.R.S. elections must be held? Related issues were raised by civilians who wanted to compel Suharto to give a full account of his stewardship thus far (including the matter of alleged corruption among his assistants), and by others who wanted additional legislation on the subject of human rights.

But there were also a number of quite separate issues, particularly the matter of the vice-presidency. Names bandied about in this connection included those of Hatta, Nasution, Adam Malik, the Sultan of Jogjakarta, Major General Alamsjah, H. M. Subchan Z. E. and Imron Rosjadi of the Nahdatul Ulama, and Lieutenant General T. B. Simatupang. There was the demand that Soekarno soon be tried, and there was also the draft prepared by the M.P.R.S. working committee for a Basic State Policy, which was to function as a kind of successor to Soekarno's Political Manifesto of 1959. This last item was particularly controversial because it raised again the old issue of Islam and the Pantja Sila (the Five Principles first enunciated by Soekarno in June 1945 and including affirmation of belief in "the One Divinity"). The working committee draft referred to "the Pantja Sila as interpreted in the Spirit of the Djakarta Charter," referring to the charter drawn up in June 1945, which spoke of the "obligation of Muslims to adhere to Islamic law."¹⁴

13. *Kompas*, March 21, 1968.

14. On the Djakarta Charter controversy, see Lev, *op. cit.*, pp. 257ff.

The government and its army representatives seem to have placed the M.P.R.S. members under a great deal of pressure in the course of the session. Almost all of the proceedings were held behind closed doors, but members made such private comments as, "They brand you as an enemy if you criticise them ever so slightly," and "Being in there is a real test of one's moral courage." In the end, however, the government showed a measure of flexibility, acceding to the demands of its critics at several important points.

On the evening of March 27 General Suharto was sworn in as president and for a five-year term. But his emergency powers had been specified and thus narrowed somewhat. And elections would have to be held by July 1971, before the end of Suharto's five-year term and long before the completion of the Five Year Development Plan, which was scheduled to begin in January 1969. The post of vice-president was not filled, but Suharto did make arrangements (without going through the M.P.R.S.) for Sultan Hamengku Buwono of Jogjakarta, the Minister of State for Economic, Financial, and Industrial Affairs, to act as the "Custodian of Presidential Functions" while he was away in Japan and Cambodia. The government declared it would take legal action against ex-President Soekarno when the relevant preparations had been completed--but it did not commit itself to a deadline. And it was determined that the president-elect would form a new Development Cabinet before July 5--but Suharto made no commitment to reduce the number of military men in ministerial posts, lessen the powers of members of his personal staff, or proceed in any new way against alleged corruptors.

On the following morning Suharto flew north. But the M.P.R.S. continued in session. Two of its commissions, those working on the proposed Basic State Policy and the new human rights statute, were locked in conflict, and argued on for two days. In neither case, however, was the deadlock resolved. One report has it that the Muslim groups wanted a decision taken by majority vote in the Basic State Policy commission, and that the army men in the commission prevented this. In any event, the problem was left for the next session of the M.P.R.S., as was that of human rights.

A New Pattern of Alignments?

The inside politics of the M.P.R.S. session was as complex as it was tense, and my knowledge of it is scant and fragmentary. But it seems that the alignment patterns which had appeared reasonably firmly established only three or four months earlier had been shaken. In the first place, the various Muslim groups were combining (across the lines dividing Masjumi from Nahdatul Ulama and separating the militant, centrist, and laggard supporters of the New Order) to present a more or less unified challenge to a government which they saw as dominated by

Javanese generals of abangan religious orientation. There was nothing surprising in the fact that the various Muslim groups were able to work together closely on the Basic State Policy issue. But they also managed to work together fairly well against the president's being given full emergency powers and against a five-year postponement of the elections. (According to one report, they were assisted throughout by General Nasution as chairman of the M.P.R.S. This would tally with the fact that Nasution was the most strongly Muslim of the senior generals, one of the most isolated, and the one with the greatest jurisdictional interest in the strength of the legislative branch.) Conversely, leaders of the nationalist P.N.I. were among the strongest supporters of wide presidential emergency powers.

The increasing cohesion of the Islamic political groups can be seen as a manifestation of the Muslim frustration, growing since 1966, which gave rise to sharp cleavages in the students' and intellectuals' action fronts in 1967 and reached a climax in the anti-Christian rioting in Makassar on October 1 of that year. This frustration arose partly because the men of the Muslim political organizations, who had been in the forefront of the anti-Communist struggle both before 1965 and afterwards, were subsequently given few positions of power. It was also a response to the advances which the Christians had been making in the post-coup period, particularly among the abangan nominal Muslims who had been socio-cultural adherents of the Communists before 1965. In addition, the Middle Eastern war of June 1967 did much to fan militant Muslim feeling. And there were many subtler and less immediately political factors at work, factors which contributed to fundamentalist responses to secularization and to a crisis of reformist leadership.

Even more important, the M.P.R.S. session showed politics as a matter of the army versus the civilians, and to some extent the armed forces versus the civilians. It is true that one can point to General Nasution as a military man siding with the civilians and to Mashuri, the Director-General of Higher Education and a key member of Suharto's "kitchen cabinet," as a civilian siding with the army. But these are exceptions of the kind which proves a rule: for the sides were indeed the civilians and the military. Most army leaders saw Nasution not as a link with the civilians but as a renegade soldier, and most civilian politicians took a similar view of Mashuri. The civil-military partnership of New Order militants--Major Generals Kemal Idris and Dharsono on the one side, Dr. Umar Kayam's Independent Group and like-minded organizations on the other--was scarcely in evidence. The Independent Group had split and been cut off from one of its key channels of influence as a result of an acrimonious disagreement between Umar Kayam and Mashuri, two men who had previously been very close. And Generals Dharsono and Kemal Idris, who had been such

embarrassingly vocal critics of the men around Suharto, were now all but silent. The army seemed unprecedentedly united behind its leaders, the civilians put in their place as never before.

At the most straightforward level, much of the officer support which had accrued to Generals Kemal Idris and Dharsono earlier, because they seemed to stand for dynamic, decisive action and against the government's slowness and drift, fell away when Suharto himself began to act decisively in the months between January and March. But it is probably necessary to see the change in somewhat longer perspective, as an aspect of the withering away of a coalition which had been called into existence by the events of 1966. It was a coalition of the army with groups of students and intellectuals (predominantly academic and non-party) which forced Soekarno to shed his power, and officers like Kemal Idris, Dharsono, and the paracommando head and students' hero Sarwo Edhie, were key link figures in this coalition relationship. But once the army was clearly in the saddle its relationship to the students and intellectuals gradually changed. Some of the intellectuals, particularly academic economists, remained important as policy advisers, executives of economic agencies, and foreign aid negotiators. Others retained influence because of their significance as legitimizers of the regime. But the students were more often an annoyance than a help. As far as they were concerned, the special relationship had become a mere shadow of what it had been: "New Order partnership" had become a phrase of symbolic reassurance, increasingly bare of real political content.

The February-March pattern of military-civilian relations clearly reflects an increased disposition on the part of General Suharto to govern by coercion. In general, Suharto has been concerned to minimize his use of coercive methods--except in relation to the Communists and their immediate allies--and willing to operate from a relatively broad political base even where this has meant slow decisions. But the need to clear up a great deal of government business before and during the M.P.R.S. session evidently led him to depart from this approach.

In addition, the adverse political winds of the last months of 1967 must have played some part in disposing the general to use more heavy-handed methods. Dissatisfaction with his government had been high that year, and he had found that there was little he could do to respond positively to the demands of civilian political groups. The economic policies on which he had embarked were likely to remain heavily deprivational for some time. Granted the tenuous balances of intra-army politics, it would have been difficult for him to remove officers from any significant portion of the many coveted positions they held in civilian administration and in government firms. And it would also have been risky to throw out any of the key generals in the S.P.R.I. and the government economic agencies who were

the principal targets of allegations of corruption. In addition, he may well have been worried by the prospect of the additional strain on his resources arising from the new vigor of Communist guerrilla activity in early 1968, particularly in southern East Java.¹⁵ What then, he may well have asked, was the point of allowing the civilians so much freedom to vent their demands? Was this not fanning the general sense of grievance, producing gratuitous frustration? Was it not clear that the critics had been asking for too much? Was it not time that they were taught this, taught that he, Suharto, could also be tough?

The Dilemmas of Coercion

Factors like these suggest that the government's steamroller style at the M.P.R.S. session may have been more than a momentary show of force to cut through a particular knot of problems, that the Suharto government may have committed itself at that point to working from a narrowed political base and to bargain less with organized civilian political groupings. But a glance at some of the factors militating against an attempt to govern in a generally more coercive manner makes one reluctant to suggest this as a firm conclusion.

There remains a great deal of truth in Soedjatmoko's view that "Indonesia's political pluralism, rooted in the variety of her cultural history, impels the nation towards . . . arrangements through which conflicts of interest and viewpoint are accommodated with a minimum of coercion."¹⁶ The political polycentricity born of the legacy of cultural variety means that any single group aspiring to establish tight and exclusive control over all others will tend to draw these others into a coalition directed against itself.

But it is not only Indonesia's cultural heritage which tends to maintain political pluralism. It is also the more recent legacy of bureaucratic power and flaccidity. Suharto, like Soekarno before him, lacks a tightly knit organization through which to give coherent effect to his policies and to strike accurately at his enemies. The regular bureaucracy is anything but such a weapon. A ramshackle assemblage of over-staffed agencies and undersalaried but powerful and accessible officials, it persistently bends government policies in a variety of directions at once. Nor does the army serve as a substitute. It is too far intermeshed with the regular

15. On this see the series of articles in Harian Kami, May 15, 16, 17, 18, 1968.

16. Soedjatmoko, "Indonesia: Problems and Opportunities," Australian Outlook (XXI, 3) December 1967, p. 281.

administration and caught in its web of favor-trading relationships, and it is too arena-like itself, its parts susceptible to sectional and regional pressures.

Suharto's capacity to govern coercively is thus subject to a variety of limitations. On the one hand, he cannot afford to antagonize too many groups of people in the bureaucracy and related organizations (officials of government firms, village heads, and so on), for he must continually plead for the support of these people to secure a modicum of consistency in the way his policies are carried into effect. Moreover, they and their immediate kin make up a large part of the higher strata of Indonesian society, to which all governments are effectively accountable.

On the other hand, Suharto must hesitate before he introduces measures which will add to the pressure which the government exerts on the great mass of the population, for he knows that most such measures are likely to be implemented in distorted fashion at the local level and to be used as warrants for more regulatory activity hampering the flow of trade. Government has borne down quite heavily on this great mass of lower-class people, and it has done so in fairly arbitrary fashion--witness the many illegal tolls, the often very high cost of bribes for formally free government services, and the not infrequent demands by local officials for unpaid labor. This was the situation in the Soekarno period; it is much the same now, and is aggravated inasmuch as increased numbers of villagers and lower-class townsmen now live under political arrest or in its shadow. Suharto could no doubt intensify pressure of this kind. Harrassed by the many demands made on him by the politically influential, most of whom are socially tied to the bureaucracy, he could well see it as in his interest to tilt the balance of social power still further in favor of the bureaucracy and its appendages, for this would probably increase his leverage over them, at least in the short run. But most of the changes he could initiate in this direction would have markedly adverse consequences for the policies of economic regeneration to which he is tied by both domestic political commitment and international financial dependence. And there are no indications that the general has reduced the high priority he has given to economic performance.

In the last instance, therefore, we can only say the M.P.R.S. produced decisions on the formal aspects of political structure under the New Order. For the informal qualities of the new regime, and specifically for the fundamental question of how much the government will bargain and how much rely on coercion in dealing with civilian groups, we must wait for the future to reveal a settled pattern of practice.