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INDONESIA: The Land the Communists Lost

# TIME

THE WEEK



GENERAL SUHARTO

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THE WORLD

INDONESIA

Vengeance with a Smile

(See Cover)

The Ikeya-Seki comet appeared on Indonesia's eastern horizon early one morning last October. From the base of the volcano Agung, navel of creation and home of the Great Gods, the mystic prophets of the island of Bali watched it streak through the sky for ten days and were alarmed. It was an omen, they warned, of much death and change of government in the land.

The prophecy was all too accurate. Amid a boiling bloodbath that almost unnoticed took 400,000 lives, Indonesia, the sprawling giant of Southeast Asia, has done a complete about-face. It



SUHARTO

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changed not only its government but its political direction, fundamentally, radically and unexpectedly. President Sukarno, after 20 years of egotistical misrule, has been stripped of almost everything but his palaces and women. A new regime has risen, backed by the army but scrupulously constitutional and commanding vociferous popular support. "Indonesia is a state based on law not on mere power," says its new leader, a quietly determined Javanese general whose only name is Suharto.

Under Suharto, the nation that last year was a virtual Peking satellite has become a vigorous foe of Red China. It has called off its senseless, undeclared war against Malaysia and revived its friendships with other neighbors. It has halted the economy-wrecking, prestige projects that Sukarno so dearly loved. And in an orgy of flashing knives and coughing guns, it has virtually wiped out the Partai Komunis Indonesia (P.K.I.)—which under Sukarno had grown to be the third largest Communist Party in the world.

The Yellow Jackets. Last week in Djakarta, the fall of Sukarno was made complete. Gone were the giant billboards that once portrayed him as a people's hero kicking Uncle Sam in the tail. Instead, the city's fences and walls were covered with neatly scrawled slogans such as "Go to Hell, Marxism." Gone were the Communist mobs that had made the U.S. embassy their favorite battleground, gone too the armed youth cadres that had marched daily through Djakarta, singing *America, Satan of the World*. Demonstrators still surged through the streets, but they wore the yellow jackets of the Anti-Communist Students Action Command, and the song they sang—to the tune of *Michael Row the Boat Ashore*—was "Sukarno should be pensioned off."

The most dramatic scene of all was in the Moscow-built Bung Karno Sports Palace. There, under the silent, smiling gaze of General Suharto, the Provisional People's Consultative Congress had been in session since the middle of June to put the final seal of legality on the great change. It had already confirmed Suharto's authority to act "on behalf of" Sukarno. Last week, without a dissenting voice, it revoked Sukarno's authority to issue decrees in his own name. It also formally outlawed any form of Marxism, approved Suharto's moves to end the Malaysia conflict and his decision to reapply for membership in such world organizations as the United Nations, which Bung Karno had contemptuously abandoned. Then, in the unkindest cut of all, the Congress stripped the Bung of his lifetime presidency and ordered national elections within two years.

Me Bow? And what did Indonesia's first and only President think of it all? "I have no desire to be a king, a king of kings, a shah-in-shah," he told the Congress. "I want to participate in the leadership." Fortunately, the Congress had agreed to let him help Suharto select a new Cabinet. It was "help" that Suharto was not likely to make much use of, but still it gave the participation the Bung needed to save face. "When I heard this, my heart felt like going 'plong-plong,'" he said.

Thus spoke the man who less than a year ago was a snarling, swaggering demagogue whose hatred for the West made the Kremlin seem a neutralist. True enough, the Bung himself was not a Red ("Me bow down to Moscow? Anybody who ever came near Sukarno knows he has too much ego to be a slave to anybody"). Nor was Indonesia a member of the Communist bloc. Sukarno had his own ideas. His government, he constantly proclaimed, was based on the principle of NASAKOM—the happy union of Nationalism, Religion and Communism. The world was divided into NEKOLIM (neo-colonialist imperialist powers) and NEFOS (the

Newly Emerging Forces that would destroy imperialism). To speed the destruction, Sukarno was building a costly headquarters for a new "U.N." to be known as CONEFO (Conference of Newly Emerging Forces). To promote the general cause, the Bung last year proposed a new Asian power bloc, a Djakarta-Peking axis, which he said was just the thing "to meet the demands of history."

False Hopes. Everything, in fact, seemed to be going the Reds' way. Under the skilled hand of Secretary-General Dipa Nusantara Aidit, the P.K.I. had risen from virtual oblivion after a 1948 coup attempt to a membership of 3,000,000—not including the 14 million members of its labor and youth fronts. At the suggestion of Chou En-lai, Sukarno had given the green light for a massive People's Militia, which the Communists intended to use to contain the army—their only possible rival in any struggle for power. In addition, they were infiltrating the army. On the teeming island of Java, home of 65% of the population, the military was estimated to be 40% pro-Communist.

What happened?  
From the Communists' point of view, just about everything went wrong. It turned out that the great majority of their card carriers were simple peasants who had joined the party because it promised them land. Moreover, Indonesia's Moslems, 90% of the population, were becoming increasingly resentful of the cavalier treatment they were getting at the hands of the confident Reds. Finally, the party ignored its basic tactical doctrine: that it would never try to seize power so long as Sukarno was alive.

Late in September, three Chinese acupuncture summonsed from Peking to treat Sukarno for a kidney ailment reported that the Bung was failing fast. Immediately, the party swung into action, advising the President that they were trying to forestall an army coup. Sukarno apparently gave the plotters his blessing. In any case, on the morning of Oct. 1 the youth cadres, a battalion of mobile police and two renegade army battalions set out from Halim Air Force base near Djakarta to launch the coup. Led by Colonel Untung, commander of Sukarno's own palace guards, they quickly seized the government radio station and the telephone office, took over the presidential palace, and rounded up six leading anti-Communist generals, executed them and stuffed their bodies down a well. They missed the most important officers of all.

Unmarked Grave. General Abdul Haris Nasution, the man who had built the army's power, leaped out of a rear window when his would-be kidnapers stormed into his home (they killed his six-year-old daughter, instead). General Suharto, who as chief of KOSTRAD (Stra-