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CIA of Indonesia
Pres. Subandrio

Whose Coup?

Beneath a looming official portrait of President Sukarno, ten Indonesian military officers sat in judgment last week on the man who for three years was Sukarno's own closest adviser and political ally: ex-Foreign Minister Subandrio. Until the disastrously abortive Communist attempt at a coup a year ago, Subandrio, a shifty, 52-year old physician, was generally considered the instigator of Sukarno's gradual drift into league with Red China. And, suspiciously, when the coup was launched, Subandrio was off in Sumatra, then a Communist stronghold.

Now on trial for subversion, the once-resourceful Subandrio cut a pitiful figure sitting alone between the judges and some 500 spectators. Haggard after months of questioning and disheveled in a baggy suit, he seemed utterly unable to cope with the barrage of questions hurled at him. Was he not, as head of Indonesia's Central Intelligence Bureau, informed in advance of the Communist plot? Yes, he admitted. Why had he failed to report such critical news to Sukarno? "Because I have an inferiority complex toward Sukarno. If the report was true, then Bung Karno with his thousand eyes and ears would already know about it." Had he not bowed to the influence of Communist China? Yes, he had taken Premier Chou En-lai's advice not to pay a \$100 million debt to Russia, and Chou had once offered him 100,000 weapons to arm Indonesia's "workers and peasants."

Diversion: Characteristically, Subandrio tried to divert the court's attention to a purported British-U.S. plan to attack Indonesia last year. He made much of a document describing such a scheme, allegedly written by British Ambassador Sir Andrew Gilchrist and supposedly found in the home of U.S. businessman William Palmer, whom many Indonesians suspect of being a CIA agent. But the story was undermined by Subandrio's admission that after the coup he had flung about charges of CIA conspiracy without any foundation.

As the trial wore on, few Indonesians had any doubt about the outcome: Subandrio would be found guilty and condemned to death. Bung Karno himself clearly had his eyes and ears trained on the courtroom. Far from hinting at clemency for his erstwhile colleague, he took the occasion of an Army Day speech to make his first public denunciation of the Communist putsch, in which some believe he was personally implicated. To loud applause he shouted, "I curse this coup!" But this did not stop violent rioting around his Merdeka Palace by Djakarta students demanding that Sukarno himself go on trial. As one senior officer said to another after the speech, "We have to do better than that."

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