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Flexibility is the Word in Jakarta

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Whatever else the effects of the abortive coup may have been, the Indonesian authorities clearly have forgotten for the moment their campaign against neo-colonial and imperialist culture. There are even reports that an American film distributor, once accused of spying for the CIA, may return, and Indonesian teen-agers again dream happily of such names as John Wayne and Kim Novak and Doris Day.

On a higher level, military officers actually seek out members of the Western press corps at news conferences and elsewhere to publicize their campaign against the Communists, whom they accuse with increasing frequency of "not only masterminding but sponsoring" the October 1 coup d'etat. Military censors, however, still scratch out references in correspondents' copy to disagreements with President Sukarno and the foreign ministry.

Observers conclude that the leaders of armed forces want to win the sympathy of the anti-Communist West, particularly the United States. At the same time, they do not wish to open themselves to the damning charge of collaborating with Indonesia's imperialist enemies and exploiting internal differences.

No one realizes the delicacy of the position of the armed forces more clearly than Gen. A. H. Nasution, the defense minister. For six weeks after the coup, the mild-mannered leader secluded himself in his home in between occasional trips to the armed forces headquarters or, less often, to the palace to see President Sukarno.

In recent weeks, however, General Nasution has dared to make a series of statements urging the army to wipe out the Communists and warning of the dangers of a renascent Communist organization. Even though Sukarno objects to the continuing anti-Communist campaign, he cannot keep his defense minister from saying what he wants.

Western diplomats—and particularly the Americans—are reluctant to talk optimistically, even "off the record" and "for background only," about the possible long-range implications of the gradual shift in Indonesian attitudes toward China, the United States and other major powers.

So inured are they to the official—and continuing—campaign to "crush neo-colonialism, colonialism and imperialism" that they find it hard to believe Indonesia might actually adopt a position of de facto non alignment.

Indeed, from reading Sukarno's recent utterances, one would not think that Indonesia's attitudes had changed at all. Repeatedly, the president has stressed the desire to maintain close relations with China even though military leaders accuse China of indirectly supporting the coup.

The signs of change, however, are unmistakable. Sources at the Indonesian embassy in Tokyo have said that Indonesia is considering replacing its charge d'affaires in London with an ambassador. Dr. Subandrio, the architect of the Peking-Jakarta axis, saw first the American and then the Soviet ambassador in his office two weeks ago.

After conferring with United States Ambassador Marshall Green, Subandrio said they discussed "general problems." Since Subandrio has spoken lately of Indonesia's "new flexibility" in foreign policy, it seems certain that they talked about the possibilities of an Indonesian-American rapprochement.

Indonesia's "new flexibility" extends, if anything, more to its relations with the Soviet Union than the United States. As a result of Indonesia's close

ties with China, the Soviet Union slowed down its aid program and ceased work nearly a year ago on a new steel mill 70 miles west of Jakarta.

Subandrio has said that Indonesia now is free to develop its relations with Communist nations without having to consider ideological differences among them. He blamed Communist China's influence over Indonesia's Communist Party for his country's affair with China before the coup.

In perhaps the most publicized example of the prevailing tone of Indonesia-American relations, Ambassador Green recently presented the education ministry with 60,000 books once on the shelves of the five USIS libraries in Indonesia. The books were already in the hands of Indonesian police, who had confiscated them for "safe keeping" from Communist rioters.

Only ten months ago Dr. Subandrio had charged the books were "poisoning the minds" of Indonesian students. Now they will be even more accessible to Indonesians. The Education minister has promised to distribute them among university libraries throughout the country.

It will be a long time before Indonesia actually admits that it would like to adopt a position of genuine non-alignment vis-à-vis the United States and formally break the Jakarta-Peking axis. In the meantime, Indonesian army officers joke that the CIA no longer stands for the Central Intelligence Agency. "Now we say it means the Chinese Intelligence Agency," said a lieutenant commanding a tank platoon.