

SELFISHNESS AND IGNORANCE WRECKED THE PEACE

THE Indonesian question may be regarded in two ways. The first way is that of the newspapers. According to them the public could judge the situation by hearing the Dutch and Indonesian accusations, and by comparing them, approving of the party whose complaints are weightier and more trustworthy. By this method conflicts between equal parties are commonly judged, but in the Indonesian question the public soon found that it was worthless. There was no end to the accusations and all were extremely serious. The Dutch accused the Indonesians of violating the demarcation line set up between the two armies; the Indonesians accused the Dutch of violating it no less. According to the Dutch, this was because the Indonesians did not supply the rice they had promised. According to the Indonesians the rice was not supplied because the line had previously been penetrated. In fact, the newspaper reader has been so confused by these contrary claims that he, quite justifiably, suspended judgment. How could he decide whether it

was the Dutch or the Indonesians who had sabotaged the currency or whether the confiscations of agricultural produce by the Dutch Navy were more or less justifiable than those by the Javanese people?

Incorrect Comparison

The instincts of New Zealanders in this respect are correct. When the newspapers pitted the Dutch against the Indonesian case, they assumed that the fight was between two equal parties whose violations of the accepted code can be estimated in the same way. The conflict is however between a people that is in the process of gaining its independence and is at the same time fighting feudalism and primitiveness in his own ranks, on the one hand, and a fully-developed commercial nation concerned about its interests on the other. What two parties so widely different in character are doing can never be compared. A violation that from the Indonesian side is an outburst of popular rage regretted by the Government is a different thing from action decided at Dutch Army Headquarters.

The Indonesian Republic is in important respects different from all older nations and also from any states newly formed. On the one hand the feudal period in Indonesia is so near to its close that Sultans and other aristocrats have no decisive voice in the government. On the other hand no indigenous capitalist class has yet sprung up. The leaders are therefore all simple men without hereditary glory or large wealth whose personalities attracted followers in an atmosphere of political excitement. These Indonesian intellectuals are all-round men rather than experts in any particular branch. They are rather like European politicians of the Renaissance who were considered capable of dealing with strategy one day and with financial or diplomatic problems on the next. Their experience in the Dutch Civil Service, if any, was limited to that of lower non-responsible personnel. This experience however is not always the basis of their present activities. Sjarifuddin, the present Premier, used to be a minor official at Economic Affairs, but before his premiership he

was Minister of Defence. Sjahrir's knowledge was almost entirely theoretical before he became Premier and had to negotiate with Dutch, British and American diplomats.

Awareness of the State

The visitor to these departments feels himself carried back to the Renaissance, for if the officials lack that specialist knowledge which is only obtained through a tradition of centuries, they have another quality which servants of a modern state have frequently lost—the capacity to see the state as a whole, to discuss it as one body for whose welfare and fate they are responsible in all its aspects. Indonesian politics are made by the body of officials serving in the most diverse functions. Decisions are often made by the common intuition of a group rather than the judgment of a department head supported by documents. This does not mean that the department head does not exhibit the autocratic attitude inevitable in the Orient, but that there is little specialisation and therefore one man may have the most varied responsibilities.

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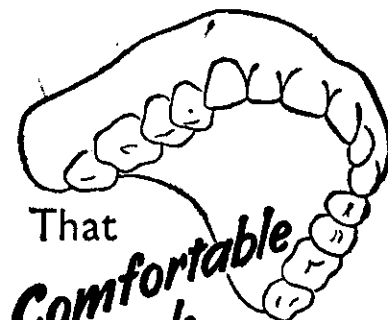
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