

Indonesia hasn't played the game according to Western rules.

The armed struggle for succession, if it materialized, was supposed to come after Bung Karno had passed peacefully from the scene.

The struggle was supposed to have been a simple, clear-cut, Oriental version of High Noon--a winner take all showdown between the three million-strong Army and the 350,000-man Army.

It hasn't happened quite that way, but are the PKI's hands completely clean?

According to latest reports, President Sukarno--thanks to the loyal Army leadership of Generals Nasution and Suharto--has regained at least a modicum of control. The loyalists have the backing of the Navy and some Air Force units; they also have control of some key installations, particularly the radio station.

This is the bare outline. The full story--even a semblance of one--of the last three days remains a mystery. We know "when," but not "who" or "why."

The first question is obvious: Who was behind the September 30th coup?

It must be assumed that the alleged plot planned for October 5th by the so-called "Council of Generals" was a piece of fiction invented by Lt.-Col. Untung and his supporters in the September 30th movements. In Indonesia it would be difficult to launch a coup against Sukarno without either killing him or claiming to save him. And although the September 30th group claimed to have Sukarno under protective custody, their coup was clearly aimed at both Sukarno and the Army leadership.

It must also be assumed that the list released by the anti-Sukarno forces of a 45-member Revolutionary Council was, in good part at least, a fabrication.

Vice-Admiral Martadinata was on the list; now he is cooperating with the loyalist Army commander, General Suharto. Deputy Premier Leimena, a member of Sukarno's four-man inner cabinet, was also on the list; now he is reported to be at Sukarno's side. It may, however, be significant that the other member of the inner cabinet who was on the list, Foreign Minister Subandrio, and the Air Force Chief, Omar Dhani, who was listed as number six on the list, have not yet been heard from. The silence surrounding the ambitious Foreign Minister and the Communist-leaning Air Vice-Marshal suggests that they were not unwilling members of the Revolutionary Council. Most important, however, is the absence of top Communists from the Council list. Could a coup in Indonesia be launched against both Sukarno and the Army leadership without at least the tacit agreement of the PKI? Is the

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absence of PKI leaders from the list a carefully-calculated omission?

The few facts available suggest that the anti-Sukarno coup was not controlled by the PKI, but that the Communists were willing to go along with it and, in good time, pick up the pieces.

There is only one document which gives a clue about the temperament of the September 30th group: the Radio Djakarta statement released by the anti-Sukarno forces shortly after they launched their coup. The statement claims that "this operation is solely an operation within the Army and aimed at the Council of Generals which has stained the Army..."

The statement adds that "Generals and officers who have neglected the lot of their subordinates and who, at the cost of the sufferings of their subordinates, have lived in luxury and led a gay life and have wasted government finance must be kicked out of the Army..."

Does it sound familiar? It is very much the sort of statement which has been broadcast over Arab radios by a generation of military malcontents: the hard steel cum muddled ideology hysterics who have been playing havoc with Middle Eastern history for so many years. Perhaps it was Indonesia's turn. The younger Army officers growing older, growing more leftist and nationalist as the years and honors passed by, may have decided that it was their turn for a place in the sun.

The PKI, apparently, was prepared to let them ^{take} their place. If the September 30th coup had succeeded the tenuous balance of power would have been shattered. The Army leadership would have been disgraced and the PKI, the only surviving force with a coherent, effective organization, would have been running the show in a very short time without shedding so much as a drop of blood.

Reuter today reported that Harian Rakjat, the central organ of the PKI, came out in support of the September 30th group on Saturday. If true, it means that the Communist Party was most likely playing a careful waiting game. But it jumped too soon.

It is not necessary to assume that the PKI played anything like a leading role in the anti-Sukarno putsch. First, it would not have been necessary for the Party to have been directly involved in order to get what it wanted in the long run. Secondly, PKI Secretary-General D.N. Aidit has based the Party's strategy on erasing its guilt in the abortive 1948 Communist uprising at Madiun by being Sukarno's greatest supporter.

Now it seems as if the PKI's strategy, so successful in the past, has back-fired badly. Even if it is not true that Harian Rakjat came out in support of the anti-Sukarno forces last Saturday, the PKI has already dirtied its hands.

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Sukarno, according to the PKI, was the great leader, the father of Indonesia, and the PKI was his most loyal child.

But where was the PKI when Sukarno was in trouble? The Party is not a para-military organization, but it has three million members and perhaps as many as 15 million supporters in organizations like the Barisan Tani Indonesia (Peasants' League). Where, simply, were the street demonstrations, the anguished cries for Sukarno's return? The Party did nothing. That is its greatest crime.

And who has saved Sukarno? The reactionary, untrustworthy Army. The Army that the PKI has been sparring with for so long. The Army that President Sukarno wanted to weaken. The Army over which, at Chou En-lai's less than subtle suggestion, President Sukarno wanted to place "political cards."

President Sukarno can draw his own conclusions. That is, if he will again be in a position to draw conclusions. Gordon Brooke-Shepherd, writing in today's Sunday Telegraph, may have come closest to the truth when he suggested that "...the Sukarno era is over."

The Sukarno era is over. The Bung cannot play the same game any more. He is an old, worn-out 64, and the coup has probably aged him considerably. Part of the nation has tried to destroy him and no matter how hard he tries, the old complicated slogans will no longer have the same effect. Indonesia has come to the end of its tether, morally, financially and politically. It is time for something new.

It is to be hoped that the events of the last few days will have a purging, renewing effect, and not merely be recalled as a chess game with radio stations. It is obvious that the course Sukarno set has brought has brought his nation to ^{THE} brink of disaster. It is obvious that it is time for Indonesia to remember the fine dreams it had when it secured independence from Holland. But what is obvious in the West is not always so obvious in Indonesia.

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