

# IN THE WORLD

## BRITAIN

# Pounds outweigh plutonium danger

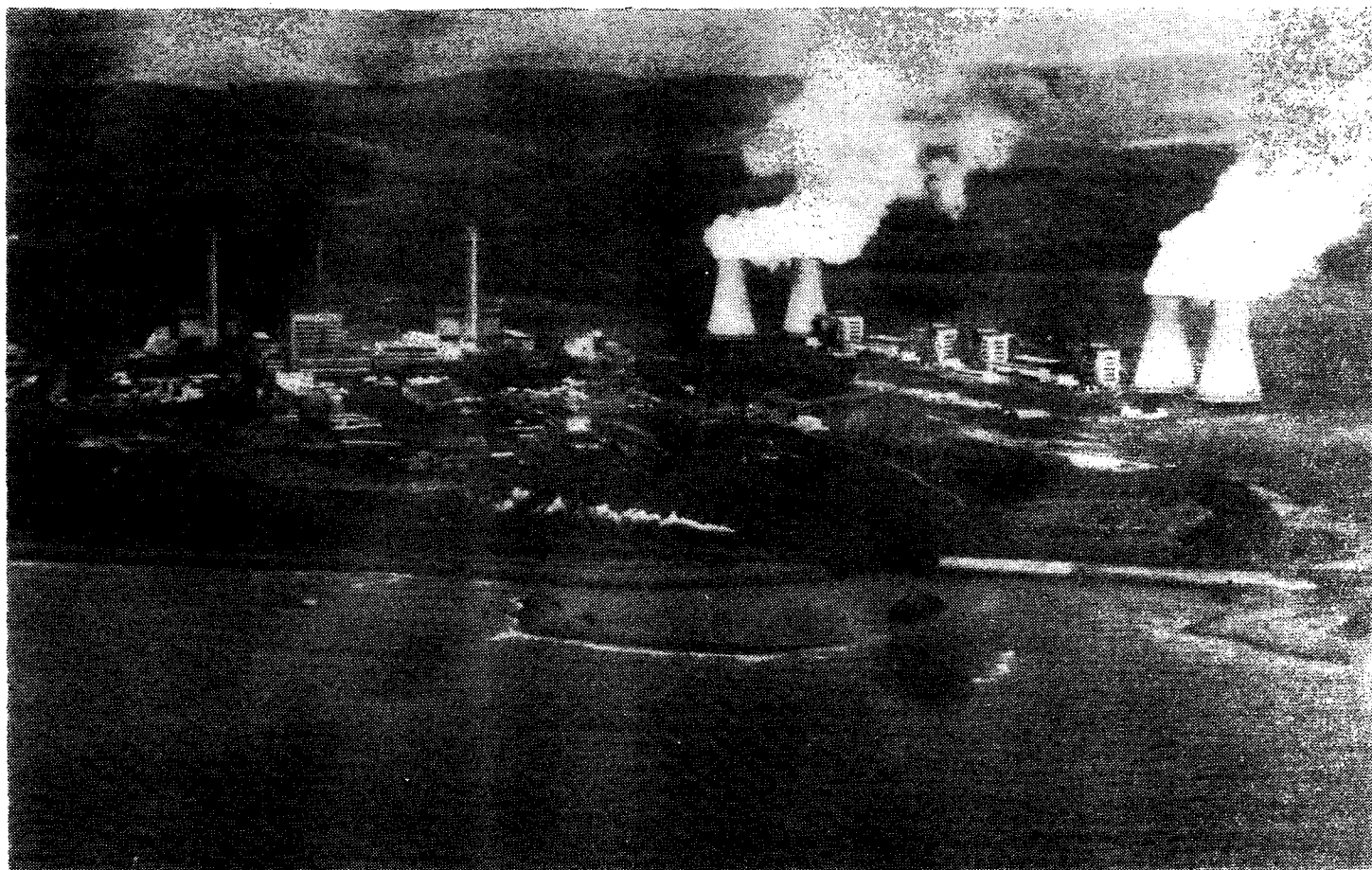
By Mervyn Jones

LONDON

**W**INDSCALE, A REMOTE village on the north-western coast of England, appears set to make a name for itself in the frightening history of the nuclear age. Since the early 1950s it has been the location of Britain's pioneering nuclear power stations, and its record includes an accident when the escape of contaminating material was admittedly serious and narrowly missed being catastrophic. Now there are plans for a larger enterprise with huge international implications. The proposal is to create a center for reprocessing nuclear waste, partly British and partly imported.

A special company has been formed with the name of British Nuclear Fuels Limited. The installation would take three years to build and demand an investment of 600 million pounds (1 pound = \$1.88), but there is little doubt that in time it would be very good business and would make a significant contribution to Britain's balance of payments. A number of countries that have (or intend to have) nuclear power stations are keen to become customers, with Japan well to the fore.

Blandly described in BNFL statements as a reprocessing plant, the installation would in fact be a plutonium factory. The material reaching Windscale would be turned into separated plutonium, and this would be returned to the customer nation. The argument is that indefinite storage of unprocessed waste—the practice in the U.S., where reprocessing is banned—creates intractable problems for densely populated countries like Britain or Japan. It is further said that plu-



The Windscale and Calder Works, Cumberland, England.

tonium would be a valuable addition to a nation's nuclear power capacity.

### Proliferation and terrorism.

Most practicably and therefore most probably, the plutonium would be used in fast-breeder reactors. The building of fast-breeders is regarded as a dangerous step for several reasons. Britain's Minister of Energy, Tony Benn, has authorized one of them on an experimental basis but has

so far resisted pressure to embark on a general fast-breeder program.

Still more alarming is the possibility of using the plutonium in the making of nuclear weapons. As a supplier for this purpose, Britain would be in direct breach of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. BNFL claims that its plutonium would be subjected to a process called "spiking," a method of rendering it unsuitable for weapons use.

But there is much controversy over the validity of this process. In 1977 the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission took the view that spiking could not be 100 percent effective if a government—or a terrorist group that might get hold of plutonium—were determined to make a nuclear explosive.

Objections to the Windscale project have been expressed on various grounds.

*Continued on page 10.*

# New budget reflects dim view of world economy

By Mervyn Jones

LONDON

**C**HANCELLOR OF EXCHEQUER Denis Healey has introduced a cautious budget. It is seen as a recognition that British economic difficulties are by no means over. He has been under strong political pressure to make sweeping tax cuts on both personal income tax and company tax to give a stimulus for higher production.

Both the Confederation of British Industry, the main employers' organization, and the Trades Union Congress had urged cuts amounting to 3.5 million pounds [1 pound = \$1.88]. But Healey has decided to limit cuts to the 2.5 million pounds that had been accepted in pre-budget discussions as minimum.

These cuts are concentrated almost entirely on personal tax and will benefit everyone from low-paid workers to the rich. The greatest improvement will be felt by the half-million people on moderately high incomes, mostly middle-rank business executives who had complained loudly about their burdens. Healey asserts that workers on average earnings with wife and children, if they have received the maximum wage rise allowed under government policy, will experience a 6 percent improvement in living standards.

### Rebuff to liberals.

This is better than last year's standstill but will hardly evoke rousing cheers. Meanwhile, he has refused any relaxations in the company tax, and business circles will be very resentful. But tactful concessions have been made to owners

of small family businesses as well as farmers and hotel owners. In political terms, these are concessions to the Liberal party.

This gesture, however, is eclipsed by Healey's rejection of the main strategy urged by the government's Liberal allies. They had pressed for very large income tax cuts offset by substantial increases in indirect taxes, especially the value added tax that is levied on all consumption goods except food. Any such increase would have meant overnight speedup of inflation and would also have generated revolt from Labour rank and file who traditionally oppose consumption taxes.

Healey had more political sense than to adopt such a strategy. But the rebuff will be keenly felt by the Liberals and shows that the party pact is far from giving them an influential voice in key decisions. They are now threatening to ally with the Tories in voting against budget measures. If carried through this threat would mean government defeat and an immediate election. It is highly unlikely, however, that the Liberals, now in the weakest position for years, will take such action. Anyway, Healey has decided to call their bluff.

On the left of the Labour party there will be criticism of the small, indeed derisory, extra sums granted to social services. The health service gets an extra 50 million pounds and education an extra 40 million. These are tiny sums in relation to the budget as a whole and do little to compensate for the cuts of recent years. Certainly they will not reverse the steady rundown of standards in the slum schools and antiquated hospitals of Britain's main cities. The only gesture to critics has been the cancellation of the widely re-

sented increase in payments for school meals. Meanwhile, to defuse right-wing pressure, Healey promises extra money for the police and prisons.

### Anxiety about economy.

Evident in Healey's speech was anxiety over the prospects for the British economy. He began by saying that "world recovery has been more sluggish than expected" and described 1977 as a "disappointing year." He was speaking after the Copenhagen meeting of EEC prime ministers had yet again failed to produce convincing plans for economic upturn.

Action has been deferred to the summit of major capitalist nations to be held this June in Bonn, but there is at present no reason to expect that this will be any more productive than the 1977 London summit. Failing world recovery, as Healey frankly said, "no single nation can even solve its own problems."

To put this more precisely, tax cuts and greater spending power in Britain might merely result in a renewed flow of imports and cancel the recent improvement in the balance of payments, unless countered by willingness of other nations to buy British exports. But there is no sign of such willingness.

The fault lies partly with the restrictive policies of Germany and Japan and partly with the weakness of British industry. To quote Healey again, "Unless British industry can produce, a budget stimulus will create jobs in other countries, not our own."

High imports will inevitably raise the inflation rate. Healey forecasts a rate of 7 percent for 1978 but his hopes in the past have always been disproved by events.

On the eve of the budget came news that prices of industrial raw materials have risen 2 percent in March, a bad omen for future consumer prices.

His May promise was that the budget stimulus, plus the flow of North Sea oil, will increase gross national product by 3 percent in the coming year. This too remains to be seen. Once again he was forced to report that the increase for the past year has been zero.

Unemployment remains an insuperable problem for the Labour government. Healey referred as usual to the "intolerable level" but ministers have been using this phrase since 1975 and have continued to tolerate it. Figures have marginally fallen in the last two months but the outlook is bad.

Three warning signs came within days before the budget was announced. The steel industry, now in critical condition, announced plans to hasten closures of older plants, bringing gloom notably to the city of Cardiff whose doomed steel plant is the mainstay of its local economy. British Leyland, the auto combine now in government hands, decided to close its plant in Merseyside, Britain's hardest-hit industrial region where unemployment is double the national average. And 2,000 jobs have vanished in the closing of a plant making TV sets, a field in which British industry is fighting for survival against Japanese imports.

On present showing, the trend seems unlikely to be reversed. "The main purpose of the budget," Healey said, "is to encourage growth of economic activity sufficiently to get unemployment down." All indications are that this will be a formidable task.



# Plutonium

Continued from page 9.

People living nearby are divided, with some fearful of possible accidents and nuclear poisoning, others attracted by employment opportunities. There is much anxiety about the safety of the material (both incoming nuclear waste and exported plutonium) that would be carried by ship all over the world. Point has been given to these fears by the recent wreck of an oil tanker on the French coast, with 220,000 tons of oil spilling out to beaches. "If we can't transport oil safely," asks a letter in a London newspaper, "what makes us think that we are ready to transport plutonium?"

Then there is the problem of terrorism. To forestall it—if indeed there could ever be a guarantee of forestalling it—might require armed security forces in the locality, road-blocks and house-searches, and intensive screening of workers in the plant. All this could be extremely unpleasant, not to say incompatible with accepted civil liberties and privacy rights.

## Collision course with U.S.

Above all, there is a sharp divergence internationally on the question of whether or not the project will allow nations possessing the know-how—let's remember that Brazil, Argentina and Pakistan are among BNFL's prospective customers—to come closer to making nuclear weapons. Britain, supported by France and West Germany, maintains that Windscale would be a safety factor because it would deter such nations from building their own plutonium factories, in which spiking might not be in effect.

The U.S. is known to take the contrary view and to frown on any sanction to reprocessing. A respected science correspondent has written: "Western Europe and Japan are on a collision course with the United States over measures for controlling the spread of nuclear weapons." The British government will have to consider whether this is the right moment to risk a clash with the Carter administration.

British law obliged the government to set up an open inquiry into the project headed by a judge, Mr. Justice Parker. Parker held hearings lasting three months at Windscale itself and listened to submissions from local interests, ecology campaigners, and distinguished scientists from Britain and abroad. His report came down solidly in favor of the project, dismissing all objections as exaggerated.

But the report has merely prolonged the controversy. In many ways it is evasive or seeks to reassure without much conviction. On the security issue, for instance, Parker says:

"The most one can do, it seems to me, is to require the government should en-

sure that the interference with our liberties goes no further than our protection demands and that there should be some Minister answerable to Parliament if interference goes further than this."

Worse, the judge has been accused of distorting the evidence that he heard. Dr. Tom Cochran, an American nuclear physicist, says that he argued that spiking is ineffective against terrorists and is cited in the report as holding that it is effective. He told the press that he has written to Peter Shore—Secretary for the Environment, and hence the man who must make the final decision—"to express my shock and dismay at the way in which the judge misrepresented my testimony." Three British scientists who gave evidence opposing the project also charge Parker with distortion or selective quotation.

## Parliamentary debate.

On March 22 the issue was debated in Parliament for the first time since the Parker report was made public. Shore, who had already hailed the report as "masterly" and "persuasive," urged MPs to give their approval. He pointed out that Japanese orders promise a windfall of 250 million pounds, and European contracts should be worth as much again. To reject reprocessing, he said, would mean a need "to design and develop new facilities for long-term storage." He was supported by his opposite number, the Tory spokesman on environmental matters.

Leo Abse, an independent-minded Labour MP, spoke against the project. "A terrible price will be paid," he warned, "for going into an export business with appallingly malignant side effects." He went on to charge that we are being hustled into a decision by "the nuclear industrial complex."

MPs were allowed a free vote without party whips, but the pro-Windscale attitude of both the government and the official opposition naturally influenced the outcome. The motion—technically to "adjourn the debate," i.e. to give approval to the government's policy—was carried by 186 votes to 56 in a thinly-attended House. The vote is not decisive in any final sense, since further votes are necessary to endorse actual construction work and investment of public funds.

For opponents of Windscale, however, this first test of parliamentary opinion is undoubtedly a setback. They plan an intensive lobby of MPs and a mass demonstration in London—this, in fact, should already have taken place but was deferred because of the government's two-month ban on marches. Within months, in any case, we may be committed to a project that many informed people still regard as extremely perilous.

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# Indonesian czar

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Looming large in this kind of thinking is the liberation of Indochina, and the American antiwar movement that helped bring it about. "I think Americans can't appreciate the impact of Vietnam," Soekarno observed. "They may not be familiar with the danger of subversion."

He is critical of what he calls the New Left: "I do not know what their objectives are, but it seems from the result of their activities as if they are against our country. They have been trying to publish information damaging to the interests of Indonesia. On the human rights, or so-called prisoners, they are blowing the

## Americans "may not be familiar with the dangers of subversion."

whole issue out of proportion, as if this is the real thing that matters, or the only thing that matters, while keeping silent about other big issues in other countries, particularly Vietnam and Cambodia."

## War in Timor.

Late in 1975, the Indonesian government took over the eastern part of the island of Timor, intervening just as the former colony was about to receive its independence from Portugal. Again there were reports of massacres by government forces. Estimates of the numbers who died range anywhere from 10,000 (the government of Indonesia and the U.S. State department) to 100,000 (Timorese refugees, opposition members of the Australian Parliament and Amnesty International).

At the time, there were protests at the UN about the Indonesian incursion; the General Assembly and the Security Council called on Indonesia to respect the island's right to self-determination and to withdraw its troops. Indonesia ignored the calls. Last November, with the U.S. dissenting, the UN General Assembly voted to send a mission to East Timor in advance of a visit by a special committee to determine whether the island should be independent after all. In December, Amnesty International scored Indonesia for refusing to allow the International Red Cross to visit East Timor.

There is strong evidence that the Indonesians overcame guerilla forces on East Timor that were not so much ideological as nationalist. Still, Soekarno views the East Timor situation as part of the Com-

munist threat. As such, it has been eliminated: "As far as we're concerned," he explained, "East Timor is no longer a problem."

Soekarno's concern for security applies to his own work as well. Under a 1968 law, President Suharto has the power to stop anything that might incite people, including the publication of inflammatory material. Soekarno and the *Kopkamtib*, a military security force, are the President's agents. In 1974, after protests against the visit of the unpopular Japanese premier, Soekarno closed down six newspapers, among them the student paper *Harian Kami*, which had been critical of the government's handling of the demonstrations. Spates of outright censorship, however, were followed by a more restrained approach. Last spring, newspaper executives reported warning visits by the *Kopkamtib* when they published stories about students protesting a hike in bus fares.

"In my country," Soekarno explained, "we have freedom of the press, but of course the freedom is not absolute. You have to balance the freedom with responsibility. Ours is a developing country. We cannot afford the luxury of instability."

Soekarno oversees a system of positive as well as negative reinforcement to get the kind of coverage he wants. The government regularly gives away choice plots of land suitable for building to favored editors and journalists; bank loans are available at prime rates for financing a house. So many have taken advantage of the offer that an entire section of the city of Jakarta is called Journalists Village, and the government has installed free roads, schools, utilities and a marketplace. Soekarno seemed not to question the propriety of the arrangement; his only comment was that it is an inexpensive way for the journalists to live: "It's cheap."

The interview almost done, we asked Soekarno, his fingers delicately holding a slim Continental cigarette, whether he was, as the State department had indicated, a voice of restraint among more authoritarian officials.

His eyes flickered, and briefly Soekarno seemed to lose his marked self-control. Suddenly he leaned back, opened his mouth and laughed out loud for the first time in the interview. "I do not know," he replied finally. "Of course I do my duty. I do not know if I'm a restraining influence."

Connie Page writes for Boston's **REAL PAPER**.

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## INDONESIA

# The press czar defends bloody history

By Connie Page

**A**MONG THE COUNTRIES FAVORED in the Carter administration's foreign aid proposed for 1979 are several with long and bloody histories of violating human rights. One is Indonesia, the 13,000-island archipelago, junta-run, south of Vietnam. If Congress approves the request, Indonesia will receive about \$50 million in economic aid and \$45 million in military aid.

Like many of the military regimes the U.S. supports, Indonesia is of immense strategic importance, and is expected to assume an even more critical role over the next ten years.

It is the largest country in southeast Asia, and the fifth largest in population in the world, its people numbering well over 135 million. With its vast expanse of land stretching out over thousands of islands, Indonesia is in a key location to fill out a string of American military bases throughout the Pacific Basin. It commands two important straits, the Malacca and the Makassar, which provide oil tanker routes from the Middle East to Japan and Europe; and another, the Ombai, which is deep enough to allow nuclear submarines to pass through. Indonesia also is variously the third or fourth largest supplier of oil to the U.S., running neck and neck with Iran. Though ostensibly neutral, Indonesia gets closer to the U.S. with each passing year.

With Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos independent and Thailand in perpetual political convulsion, it is one of the last secure ramparts against communism in that part of the world.

## Press czar.

A recent interview with an official high in the Indonesian government gives some further insight into the country's peculiar attraction for the U.S. The official is Soekarno (like many Indonesians, he goes by only a single name). He is Indonesia's chief censor, and a confirmed anti-communist.

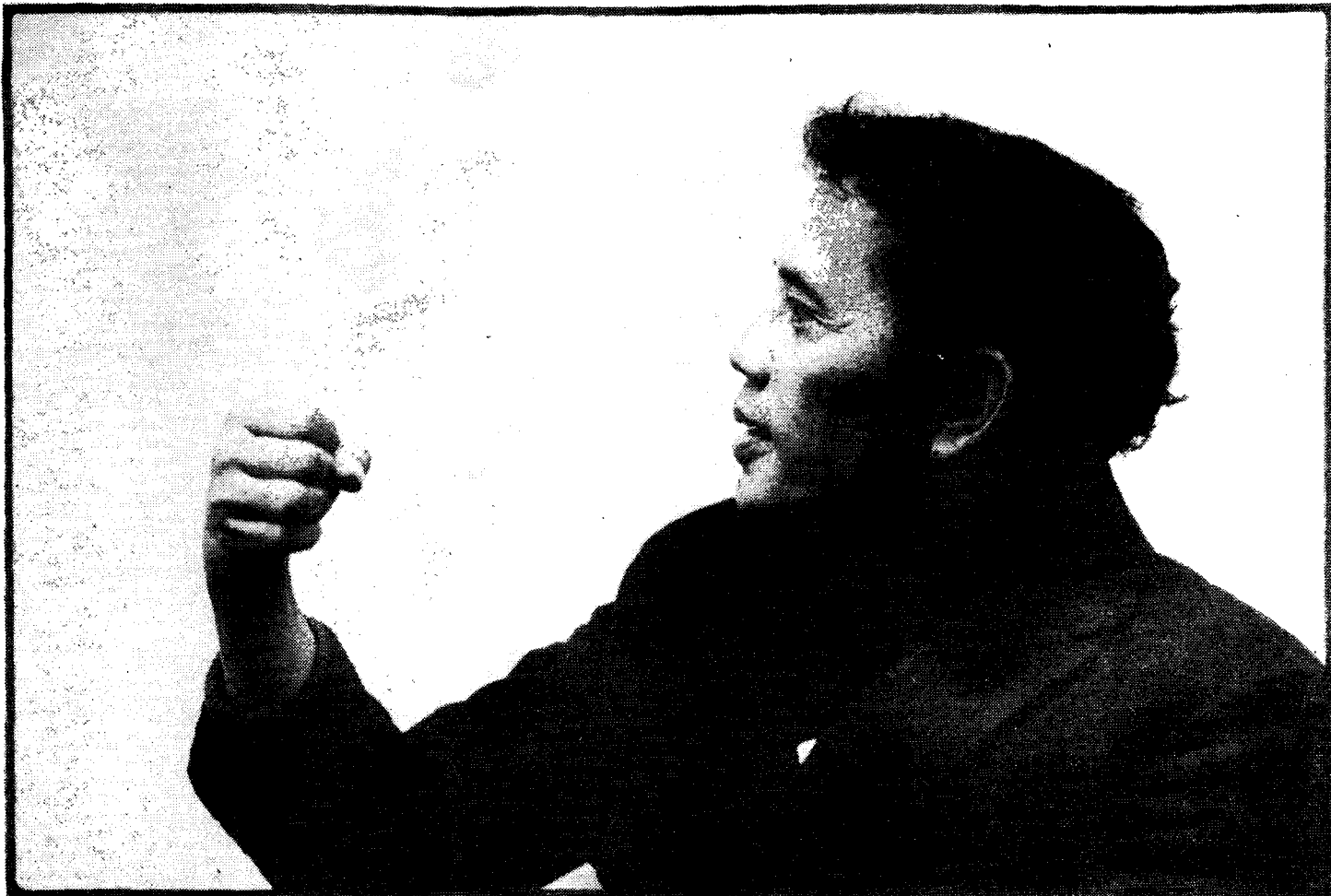
Soekarno is a small man, his cheekbones sculptured, his hair oiled and curly. For many years a press attaché stationed in Rome and London, he is urbane, cordial and speaks English with a slight British accent underlying the native resonances. Recently he was on a month-long tour of the U.S. sponsored and bankrolled by the State department.

The purpose of his trip was never precisely clear; apparently, however, it was not simply to satisfy professional curiosity. An eager caller who arranged an interview described Soekarno as Indonesia's "press czar." A State department hand-out sent in preparation for the meeting had this to say about Soekarno: "Though he is charged with censoring the press, he is philosophically sensitive to the problems involved. The [American] embassy [in Jakarta] thinks he may be a voice of restraint among other more authoritarian officials." The implication of these conflicting reports seemed to be variously that Soekarno's stateside experiences might help him argue for reason at home or, alternatively, that those Americans who met him might look more favorably on his country.

## Communism a crime.

Soekarno's diplomatic and government career spans the entire length of office of the sitting President of Indonesia, Suharto (who also uses just one name). Suharto came to power almost by accident, in the wake of a coup in 1965. Almost immediately, the President set about to destroy the communist movement that was flourishing at the time. He authorized or allowed (Western reports are unclear) one of the most grisly campaigns of slaughter in modern times.

As a *Time* dispatch of the day described it: "Communists, red sympathizers and their families are being massacred by the



Soekarno interviewed at Boston's REAL PAPER.

Eric A. Roth

thousands. The killings have been on such a scale that the disposal of the corpses has created a serious sanitation problem in East Java and Northern Sumatra where the humid air bears the reek of decaying flesh. Travelers from those areas tell of small rivers and streams that have been literally clogged with bodies. River transportation has at places been seriously impeded."

Afterwards, President Suharto had Communists and Communist sympathizers who were still alive imprisoned without trial. Many of the 100,000 or so political prisoners now in Indonesian jails—and the extraordinary number puts the country on top of Amnesty International's list of human rights violators—have been there since the 1965 purge.

Soekarno refused to call them political prisoners, but rather "criminals because they have committed a crime." In

the strictest sense, he's correct. Like many countries using jail to pacify dissidents, Indonesia has made communism a crime.

## New left.

Late last year, Indonesia claimed to have released about 10,000 of these prisoners. Soekarno insisted, however, that this was not in response to American pressure. "As far as we're concerned, we have our own philosophy. We act as we've always acted in accordance with that philosophy. We believe in the five principles embodied in the Pantja Sila [a sort of Declaration of Independence]—God, nationalism, humanism, democracy and social justice. In relationship to the prisoner issue, for example, it is humanism: If they [the Communists] do something wrong, it is our duty to guide them to the right path."

Indonesians interviewed in this country and recent American visitors there feel that the slaughter and longterm imprisonment of Communists all but destroyed their influence. Observers see political dissent, such as it is, emerging rather from the almost feudal nature of the culture—a jostling for power among so many warring princes. Still the government officially targets Communism as the gravest threat to its internal stability.

During the interview, Soekarno repeatedly referred to this danger. He claimed that by the time of the 1965 coup, the Communists by their own count numbered about five million. "So there must still be a lot of people in Indonesia who are silently supporting the Communists," he concluded. "That's why the Communists in Indonesia are still considered a threat."

Continued on page 10.

# U.S. officials deny deception on aid

By Lenny Siegel

**M**EETING BEHIND CLOSED doors in late March, the subcommittee on Asia and Pacific Affairs of the House International Relations committee declined to challenge the administration request for aid to Indonesia.

The administration has also chosen to ignore a previously unannounced internal ban on arms sales that has left a strange trail of bureaucratic duplicity.

In early 1976, the American military aid bureaucracy violated its own secret ban on arms shipments to Indonesia. The U.S. arranged to supply at least \$1.3 million in spare parts and maintenance for a squadron of OV-10 "Bronco" counterinsurgency aircraft, previously sent to Indonesia under the Foreign Military Sales program. These orders, admit State department and Pentagon officials, violated an administrative hold that the two agencies had imposed when the U.S. learned that Indonesia employed American arms in its Dec. 7, 1975, invasion of neighboring East Timor.

Members of the House committee first learned of the temporary arms embargo in March 1977 when Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard Holbrooke reported, "To ensure that we were in compliance

with the applicable statutes, while we were reviewing the situation, the U.S. administratively delayed the provision of additional security assistance to Indonesia although military equipment already in the pipeline continued to be delivered."

The problem, reported Holbrooke's deputy Robert Oakley, was that the Indonesians had used U.S.-provided C-130 "Hercules" transport planes and U.S. arms in their invasion of East Timor. American aid legislation and agreements with the Indonesian government both require the U.S.-provided arms not be used in foreign aggression.

In justifying a resumption of aid after only a six-month embargo, Holbrooke said, "During this period there was also significant reduction of hostilities in Timor. Under these circumstances, we believed it appropriate to reinstate security assistance for Indonesia and we did so in late June." Furthermore, the U.S. accepted the July 12, 1976, "incorporation" of East Timor as Indonesia's 27th province, so from that time military action in East Timor could be considered internal police action, not foreign aggression!

Members of the International Relations Committee were upset that they had not been informed of the embargo until nine months after it ended. Lester Wolff, the New York Democrat who heads the subcommittee on Asian and

Pacific Affairs, asserted that Congressional action supporting security assistance to Indonesia "might have been different if we had all been made aware of what was happening."

The Washington-based Center for International Policy studied a Pentagon-supplied print-out of Foreign Military Sales agreements, and it found that the U.S. had made at least four new offers of weapons during the supposed ban. Cornell Southeast Asian specialist Ben Anderson reported this contradiction to the International Relations Committee on Feb. 15, 1978, and State and Pentagon officials admitted that they had indeed violated their own ban. Oakley told the Committee, however, that they had not been "out to deceive."

Two possibilities emerge from this rather confusing sequence of events. First, the State department invented the embargo retroactively, to make Congress think that it was scrupulously enforcing aid legislation. Or second, top Ford administration officials overrode their deputies and misled them. Representative Don Fraser (D-Minn.) has asked both the State department and Defense Security Assistance Agency to provide documents so his subcommittee on International Organizations can determine exactly what happened. ■

Lenny Siegel is a researcher at the Pacific Studies Center in Palo Alto, Calif.