

Freebooters of Indonesia

Led by 'The Turk,' a fanatic 'states'-rights' group plunges the young republic into new guerrilla war

On the night of December 8, 1949, a patrol of the Indonesian Republican Army saw a black, unmarked Douglas transport drop some supply-cases on the slope of a mountain in western Java. The soldiers sped to the scene, but there was no trace of the cases. The appearance of the mystery plane was nothing new; it had been dropping supplies and sometimes parachutists on the mountains since November, when the Dutch Army had moved out of the region. The Indonesian regulars who moved in have been raided sporadically by a band of outlaws belonging to the so-called Darul Islam, and it was assumed that the black aircraft was aiding them.

The Darul Islam group, an organization of fanatic Indonesian Moslems, was born during the guerrilla war with the Dutch, in which it fought against them. It has, however, little use for other Indonesians, whom it considers semi-infidels, and it is in open rebellion against the government at Batavia (recently rechristened Jakarta) which it detests as a secular régime. The aims of Darul Islam are fairly nebulous, but the main one seems to be a large measure of autonomy for the area where it is strongest, the small state of Pasundan in western Java, one of the sixteen states and "autonomous areas" that make up the United States of Indonesia.

Altogether these territories cover almost as much of the globe as the United States does. There are vast differences among the sixteen—not in race, but in density of population, economic development, native culture, and political history. Some declared their independence by outright revolt after V-J Day. Others were granted semi-independent status by the Dutch between 1946 and 1948, theoretically to decentralize the

colonial system, but actually to weaken the strongest, most populous, and best developed state of the sixteen, the Republic of Indonesia. When the territories were drawn together by a constitution modeled after that of the United States, it was inevitable that a sort of states' rights movement would start up at once.

There were no envoys from the Darul Islam, or any of the other small Indonesian groups, at the conference in The Hague at which the Dutch gave the U.S.I. its independence. The negotiations were dominated by the Indonesian Republic, which comprises about two-thirds of Java in area and has half of the total population of all sixteen Indonesian states. The Indonesian Republic, which had started the revolt against the Dutch, considered itself the kingpin of the new federation, and its envoys impatiently waved aside the demands of minority groups.

As the Hague Conference drew to a close last fall, the Darul Islam intensified its attacks on the Indonesian army occupying Pasundan. They were armed with American-made small arms, but where they had gotten them was as mysterious as where the black airplane came from. The membership and policies of the Darul Islam group seemed

even more mysterious after one Dutch correspondent reported that it had been infiltrated by Communists.

The fighting in Pasundan subsided somewhat for a month or so after the birth of the U.S.I., but then flared up dramatically in western Java. This time, while the irregulars of Darul Islam renewed their attacks in the hills, a motorized force of six hundred men, wearing the red and green caps of the special forces of the former Royal Netherlands Colonial Army, made a lightning dash into the town of Bandung, the capital of Pasundan. Within ten minutes, this group had shot up the town and captured the headquarters of the Indonesian Federal Army. It turned out that the group was made up mostly of half-castes who had enjoyed a favorable position under the Dutch. Bandung is a concentration point for



Dutch troops awaiting shipment home, and during the raid, the Dutch soldiers stayed in their barracks, but their commanding officer persuaded the rebels to withdraw after a day's sharp fighting. They warned that this was only their first raid. In the next few days, Darul Islamites took the railway junction of Tjimahi, paralyzed rail and road traffic through the whole of Pasundan, and even penetrated Jakarta.

The commander of the rebels, though he did not take part in the fighting himself, was a former Dutch Army captain, R.P.P. Westerling, nicknamed "The Turk." American newspapers did not mention at the time that he is also the acting head of a large political organization named RAPI—*Ratu Adil Persatuan Indonesia* (Organization for the Just Government of a United Indonesia), which stands for states' rights and opposes the central

government at Jakarta. It is a league that includes Darul Islam and twenty-three other guerrilla groups which fear that the Indonesian Republic will dominate the archipelago.

Westerling has had a curious career. He was born in Istanbul, thirty years ago, the son of a Dutch father and Turkish mother, which explains his nickname. He has persistently refused to reveal whether or not he is a Mohammedan himself, but he knows a great deal about the Koran, which has no doubt strengthened his influence upon the Moslem fighters of Pasundan.

He lived in Turkey until 1940, when he somehow enlisted with the Australians in North Africa. The Dutch government in exile soon called him to England as an instructor of commando troops. In 1944 he was parachuted into occupied Holland, and played an active part in the underground. In September, 1945, he was parachuted into the Indonesian island of Sumatra, and when British troops landed he was made chief of their Counter Intelligence Bureau. After the British withdrawal he organized the Special Forces of the Royal Netherlands Colonial Army. This group of tough fighters consisted mainly of half-castes blindly devoted to their leader. In their struggle against their pure-blooded Indonesian countrymen they repeatedly committed ghastly cruelties, for which Westerling finally was called to account. Captain Westerling's political acumen was small; he preferred direct action to tedious negotiation; and more than once he clashed with the Dutch high brass. In November, 1948, he was cashiered out of the Netherlands Army.

He immediately went into the hotel business,

opened a trucking firm, and started an export trade with Singapore on a barter basis. A few days before he started his raids, he told a Dutch correspondent that he was sending goods to Singapore, but he failed to mention what he got in return. It is strongly suspected that this trade was carried out by plane, and also that the plane was a Douglas.

In any event, Westerling made enough money to finance certain secret activities. According to his own statement, he founded RAPI in February, 1949. In order to achieve its aims, RAPI needed an army. In 1949, Westerling made contact with other Indonesian guerrilla groups. Darul Islam provided him with his first shock troops. The ranks of his invisible army were further swollen when the Hague Conference decided that the Netherlands Colonial Army would be merged with the Indonesian Federal Army. In this merger the pure-blooded Indonesians grabbed almost all of the key positions, and many disgruntled half-castes, mainly officers and non-commissioned officers of the special forces, deserted and went into the jungle. Westerling had little trouble getting them to join his bushwhackers.

At the end of the year Westerling felt strong enough for decisive action, and on the fifth of January, 1950, he addressed a polite letter to the government of the U.S.I. It said that in his opinion the army of the young state was too inexperienced and too badly led to insure order, especially in the state of Pasundan.

His dearest wish, the letter went on, was to turn Pasundan into a "strong and healthy" state, within a federation where all the territories would enjoy equal rights. He was acting, he said, on behalf of the greater part of the Indonesian population, who did not wish to be dominated by the Indonesian Republic. He proposed that henceforth law and order, in Pasundan first of all, should be upheld by the Indonesian Army in collaboration with the troops which he had the honor of commanding. His troops, he said, wanted a speedy decision; and, although he was trying to avoid premature clashes, he was slightly afraid that his high-strung followers might get out of hand if an affirmative answer did not reach him within the space of seven days.

Apparently this attempt at black-



mail was not taken seriously by the newly-formed government of the U.S.I. Most people thought that it was another of the many cloak-and-dagger adventures for which "The Turk" was renowned throughout the archipelago. During the seven days after he had issued his ultimatum, Westerling went about his business as usual, and nobody disturbed him.

The Dutch High Commissioner issued a curt declaration that the Dutch government had severed its relations with him a year before. He strongly condemned Westerling's ultimatum, pointing out at the same time that responsibility for law and order had been transferred by the Dutch to the sovereign U.S.I.

When the time was up, Westerling attacked. It was rumored at once that Dutch officials were backing him. Westerling himself told a Dutch correspondent that "some Dutchmen were actively supporting" him, and that "Dutch friends" had loaned him one fourth of the four hundred thousand guilders (\$105,280) he had needed to organize and arm the RAPI and set it in motion.

Many Dutchmen, not yet reconciled to their defeat in what they still call "Netherlands India," view Westerling's antics with considerable glee. The suspicion that Westerling's revolt has strengthened the Dutch position in New Guinea, which the Dutch intend to retain as a Crown Colony, is highly significant in this connection. Some Dutch officers in Java are highly amused by Westerling's bold challenge to a government which gave a typical demonstration of oriental indolence by not arresting him while it had time to do so.

The inexperienced leaders of the U.S.I. have committed other political blunders which favored Westerling. The Indonesian Republic has already practically absorbed the state of Eastern Java—whether legitimately or not it is hard to say. It was clear that the weakly-governed state of Pasundan was to be next.

Understandably, but still very unwisely, Indonesian staff officers refused to give commissions to the best fighters of the Colonial Army, who have now triumphantly shown up the poor fighting quality of the relatively inexperienced Indonesian Republican Army.

But the moral responsibility for Westerling's revolt rests with the Dutch. Their ruthless methods of restoring "order" have resulted, after four years of desultory fighting, in disorderly conditions all over Java. The Dutch attempt to lay down the law created whole armies of outlaws and *condottieri*.

The RAPI revolt flared up at a particularly unpropitious moment: It almost coincided with the arrival in Washington of Indonesian envoys soliciting a loan of one hundred million dollars from the Import-Export Bank. No conscientious banking executive will grant a mortgage on a house that is on fire; but it would be highly regrettable if the governors of the bank based their decision on this unhappy incident only.

The U. S. government has had a good deal to do with the birth of the young United States of Indonesia. Dean Acheson, a consummate diplomat, gave all the credit to the U.N., but it is widely known that the stern notes which the State Department sent to The Hague finally broke the stubborn resistance of the Dutch government.

Its U.N. envoy declared to the very last that U.N.'s interference in "Dutch sovereign affairs" was unwarranted, while the Netherlands Prime Minister has more than once darkly alluded to "overwhelming pressure from abroad." It is easy to say, as Dean Acheson did recently, that the new states in Southeast Asia must fend for themselves. At that particular moment he could say nothing better, faced as he was with a dangerous revolt in Congress. But for

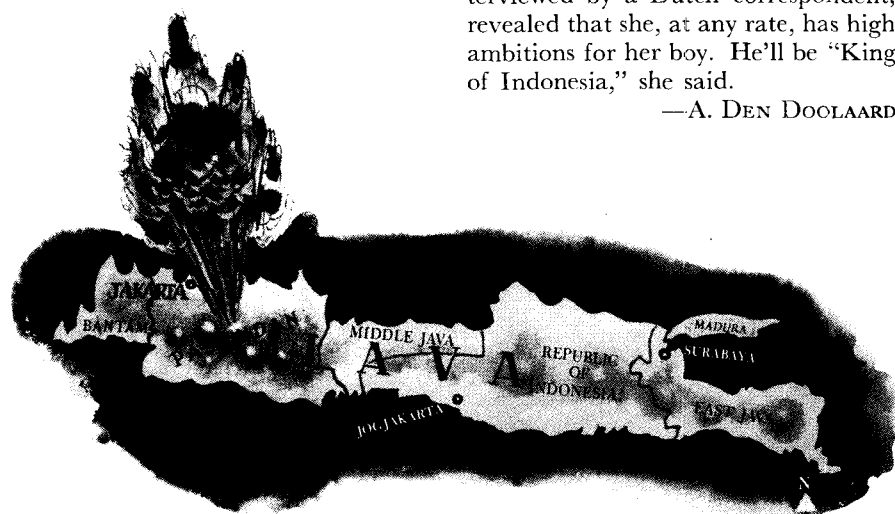
the first decade they can fend for themselves no more than minor children can. Only a substantial dollar loan will enable Indonesia to boost its food production, to rebuild its badly-damaged railways, and to extend its rudimentary electrical-power system.

It seems to be an immutable law that a colonial territory that wins its independence by revolution sooner or later has to fight a civil war. Any revolting state contains incompatible elements, which usually manage to get along in the revolutionary period. Therefore, the present revolution probably will not end with the capture or death of Westerling, who has all the makings of a feudal warlord, although he denies wanting to be one. The states' rights movement in Indonesia is an unavoidable political phenomenon, upon which Westerling has exercised a catalytic influence, and it will continue with or without him until more stability has been achieved. It is to be devoutly hoped that the period of strife will be short.

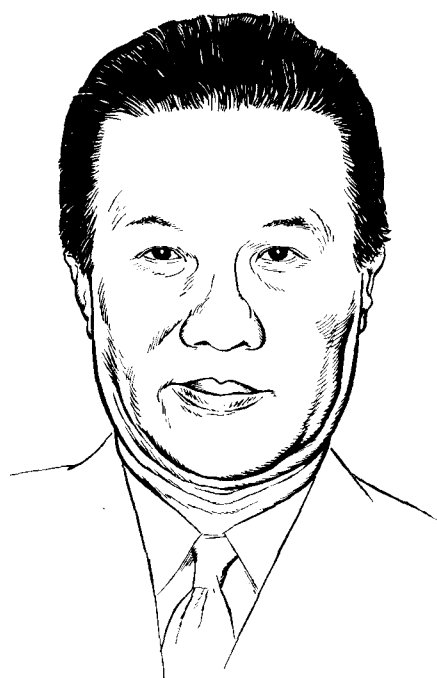
When civil war flared up in the United States ninety years ago no world power was strong enough to interfere. The U.S.I. is as rich in potential resources as America was, but in all other respects, the newborn Indonesian federation is incomparably weaker. This weakness gives the present brawl its dangerous significance, because it is taking place in the shadow of Asia's heartland, where Communism has achieved a lightning victory.

Nobody knows quite what Westerling hopes to gain for himself and his followers. His mother in Istanbul, interviewed by a Dutch correspondent, revealed that she, at any rate, has high ambitions for her boy. He'll be "King of Indonesia," she said.

—A. DEN DOOLAARD



Viet Nam—Roadblock to Communism



Bao Dai

The U. S. government has recognized the Bao Dai régime in Indo-China. Are we backing a slightly face-lifted French imperialism or a genuine national state? The Soviet Union and Communist China have recognized the revolutionary movement of Ho Chi Minh, which controls much of the country. Ho's name means "Man who sees clearly." Do Moscow and Peking see Indo-China's future more clearly than Washington and London do?

On the answers hangs the fate not only of one nation but of all Southeast Asia. Indo-China borders on Burma, half-circles Thailand, and is a dagger pointing at Malaya and Indonesia. In 1941, shortly after Tokyo took it over from Vichy France, it was the Japanese jumping-off place for all four. If Indo-China can resist Communism, it will be a bulwark for all the area. If it cannot, none of the countries in Southeast Asia is safe.

The new state of Viet Nam contains the three major provinces of old French Indo-China—Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin-China—with twenty-two million of Indo-China's twenty-seven million people. Cambodia and Laos, the other two provinces, which the United States has also just recognized as separate kingdoms, each have another race and language. Laos is a tangle of mountain and jungle, with about 1.5 million backward people. Cambodia has three million leisurely people, the best dancers in Asia, and, at Angkor, some of the world's most deservedly renowned ruins. Both states are picturesque, but so unimportant that Ho Chi Minh's forces have not yet troubled to infiltrate them.

Viet Nam is important. Except for a million G-stringed Moï tribesmen in the uplands and a half-million busy Chinese traders in the towns, almost all its people share the same Annamite race and language—and a vigor rare in Southeast Asia. They grew the rice, tapped the rubber, and mined the coal that were Indo-China's most valuable prewar exports. Viet Nam's mountainous northern border is the best land line of defense against possible Chinese attack possessed by any country in Southeast Asia. The French, by their agreement with Viet Nam, have left 130,000 troops along that border—seventy thousand from metropolitan France, twenty thousand from the Foreign Legion, and forty thousand Moroccans and other Africans. Half of Viet Nam's own 110,000 troops are also stationed along or not far from the border.

West of Laokay, the border is an almost uninhabited area of high, roadless mountains, which no aggressor has ever tried to cross. From Laokay east to Moncay and the sea, the Viet Nameese and French believe they are strong enough to stop any direct Chinese Communist attack, whether it comes

down the Red River valley, across the mountains between Laokay and the sea, along the coastal strip, or by sea itself. Their defense net is also tight enough to keep any aid that Mao Tse-tung might send Ho Chi Minh down to a trickle.

Having toured all five provinces of Indo-China, I believe that Bao Dai has a much better than even chance against Ho Chi Minh, even if Ho is backed by Russia and China; that Bao's régime is essentially nationalist rather than French; and that our policy on Indo-China is the right one.

To show why I believe this, let me tell of a man and a town. The man is Bao Dai, a stocky, poker-faced type who shakes hands with an athlete's grip and talks flawless nationalism in flawless French. "The people of Southeast Asia," he told me, "will fight Communism effectively only when convinced that colonial days are over and that they are independent."

"Is Viet Nam fully independent?" I asked.

"Our agreements with France are a good start," he said, "and we are going on from there. The French can help defend and develop Viet Nam. But we will rule."

Bao Dai means it. The Viet Nameese now realize that he does, though they weren't sure when he returned to Indo-China last April after three years in exile. Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh movement still controls a lot of jungle, and sometimes strikes even at the cities by night. But Bao Dai has gained ground. Many nationalists who refused to enter a French-run régime are joining him. A typical one is Huu Tri, a slim, dapper man, who accepted no postwar office until last July, when he became Governor of North Viet Nam, the crucial region that borders China.

"Bao Dai is not the puppet that he was before the war," said Governor