

# Bali Exorcises An Evil Spirit

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**T**HE TINKLING NOTES of a gamelan orchestra drift gently on an afternoon breeze, a bare-breasted housewife walks lazily down the street to market, dogs and pigs lounge in the sun while little children play hide-and-seek in the rich green woods beside the road. The idyllic picture of rural life on Bali, a land of verdant forests and rice paddies, soaring volcanic peaks and rough-hewn coasts, remains almost unchanged after generations of Dutch colonial rule, Japanese occupation, and Indonesian independence.

It is only on closer inspection of some of the *desas*—the little villages where most of the island's two million inhabitants live—that one realizes that something has happened to upset the equilibrium of Balinese society. The Hindu temples are piled abnormally high with offerings for festivals and purification ceremonies. Here and there one sees the charred ruins of a house or a meeting hall, often inscribed with anti-Communist slogans. The initials "PNI" for Partai Nasionalis Indonesia, now the island's ruling party, are painted above the doorways of many homes in the clay-walled compounds. Villagers have taken pains to publicize their anti-Communism since the great purge in which some fifty thousand alleged Communists on the island were dragged from their homes and killed.

The purge lasted two months, from mid-November, 1965, to the middle of last January. Many Balinese have already enshrined it in the folklore of the Hindu religion, to which ninety per cent adhere. The most impressive demonstration of their feelings, perhaps, was the New Year's celebration at the spring equinox. Traditionally an occasion for cleaning out devils, the ceremony this year was marked by an unusual number of processions as well as staggering offerings of food and

flowers. The Balinese, it seemed, were not only exorcising the last remnants of the evil spirit of Communism but were also cleansing themselves of guilt for the killings.

"Whenever anything happens to upset the harmonious life of Bali, we say it was created by devils," explained Tjokorda Rai, a member of a noble Balinese family and head of the provincial department of religious affairs. "We have always purified the earth and given offerings to evil spirits after disasters. We have so many ceremonies now because much blood has been shed with no ceremony at all."

## Before the Deluge

The Balinese were slow to respond to the news of the attempted Communist coup in Djakarta on October 1, 1965. It was not until early November, after Communists had shot and killed a police officer, that Balinese began to mobilize against the Communists. Encouraged by a company of red-bereted army paracommandos, the same force that was then engaged in slaughtering Communists in central Java, the leaders of the Nationalist

Party organized a campaign to eliminate the influence of Communism from every corner of the island. PNI members burned and looted entire villages, rounding up thousands of suspects. Using lists supplied by the police, villagers worked together at killing their prisoners. One man would stab a victim while another hit him over the head with a rock. "I couldn't believe it," a foreigner who witnessed the bloodbath told me. "One Balinese never killed another alone. It was all community work. The whole village was instructed."

Before that October 1, the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) appeared to hold the balance of power over its Nationalist rivals on Bali. The governor, Suteja, was openly pro-Communist, and Communists or their sympathizers predominated among schoolteachers and on the faculty of Udayana University in Denpasar. Communists frequently raided Nationalist Party rallies, throwing stones and assaulting PNI members. Confident that all Indonesia would soon be theirs, they boasted that when this happened their enemies would die. For the anti-Communists, who saw Sukarno and the government apparently on the side of their enemies, the only hope seemed to lie in maintaining large political organizations and waiting for their chance.

When it came, the Communists were caught completely by surprise. They were too disorganized to strike back, especially when the Nationalists were accompanied by paracommandos and other members of the armed forces. Also, the PNI had the full backing of Hindu religious leaders and of the island's small Moslem population. "Our religion teaches us not to kill or hurt," said a Hindu priest, "but we felt we had to crush whoever tried to disgrace God."

The disrupting influence of the PKI extended far beyond denigration of religious values. Young Communists sneered at all phases of Balinese culture, from ancient dances to modes of dress, and refused to join in traditional community projects. Village life stagnated in many areas as Communists boycotted construction work, refused to participate in communal rice planting or harvest-



ing, and disrupted social groups responsible for organizing marriage ceremonies and cremations. They planted their own fields, worked on their own projects, and, oddly enough, sometimes had their own temples.

**T**HE GREAT ENTICEMENT of Communism on Bali, as elsewhere in Indonesia, was land. Communist propagandists had little difficulty luring thousands of Balinese peasants by promising to distribute the holdings of wealthy owners. The PNI scoffed at the government's land-reform law of 1961. It demanded division of even small private holdings among landless peasants and scolded the government for moving too slowly.

But the PKI had a great weakness: it was essentially an alien growth implanted only superficially on a conservative society with centuries of strong traditions. In the end the Communists were defeated because they threatened a radical departure from the orthodox Balinese past. Once the Balinese were aroused, the military leaders discovered that their appetite for revenge was almost insatiable. "In central Java we had to activate the people to fight against the Communists," a paracommando officer told me, "but in Bali we had to slow them down."

An anomaly of the Balinese political situation today is that many Nationalist Party leaders persist in paying lip service to President Sukarno even though he supported the Communists before the coup and refused to outlaw the party afterward. "I feel in a little way the President has fought against the Communists," a PNI leader told me. The basis for his belief was that General Suharto had signed the March 11 order outlawing the PKI in Sukarno's name. "If he let his name be used, he must have approved the order," the official went on, disregarding the fact that Sukarno's palace was surrounded by troops and he had no choice but to yield.

The fact that Sukarno's mother was Balinese has helped to popularize him on the island. The Balinese, a tiny minority in a country of over 100 million people, half of them Javanese and nine-tenths of them Moslem, have always hoped that Sukarno would protect them against outside domi-

nation. Actually, he has done little for them. Although he owns a large villa in the mountains and used to visit the island regularly, he has allowed the armed forces to assign Javanese commanders to its military establishment and has not opposed their occasional efforts to spread the influence of Islam among the Hindu population. Local PNI leaders have nonetheless counted on the magic of Sukarno's name to swell the party's membership, which now includes approximately seventy per cent of the electorate. The policy of the PNI in Bali parallels its approach in other parts of the country, particularly central Java, where strict adherence to Sukarnoism has kept millions of members on the party rolls.

**A**S ELSEWHERE, the issue of Sukarnoism has also had a disruptive effect. By opposing Sukarno, the minority League for Upholders of National Independence, founded by military officers in Djakarta, has consolidated its strength, especially in eastern Bali. It now claims twenty per cent of the island's voters, including a number of former members of the Partai Sosialis Indonesia, outlawed by Sukarno six years ago. The inner councils of the PNI, moreover, have been torn by debate over Sukarno. The result is that the top provincial leadership of the party, while urging nominal allegiance to the President, sometimes recommends that voters not participate at all in discussions "pro and contra Bung Karno."

The primary spokesman for this point of view is Mantik, a prosperous businessman who took over as first chairman of the party in Bali last spring. "Let them quarrel about Sukarno on Java; I would not be willing to fight for him," Mantik said in an interview in his home in Tabanan, fourteen miles northwest of Denpasar. Mantik and his allies believe that Sukarno's influence on Bali is declining. "If Sukarno resigns, not a single Balinese will defend him," he said. "I tell my people every day, 'Whether Sukarno resigns or not, Bali must remain at peace.'"

Because of this pacific line, members of a pro-Sukarno PNI student organization have tried to smear and

intimidate Mantik. They may have been secretly supported by the island's pro-Sukarno governor, Merta, who preceded Mantik as provincial PNI chairman. Merta, regarded as an ineffectual administrator, owes his appointment to Sukarno's influence. Reliable sources report that the armed forces are only awaiting an opportune moment to remove him quietly from office, just as they have removed pro-Sukarno governors in Java and elsewhere.

The armed forces, in fact, hold the ultimate power over Bali. Although only three thousand troops are assigned to the island, the military commander, Brigadier General Sukartyo, expects that Governor Merta will follow his "suggestions" to the letter. He also hopes for obedience from the political parties and youth groups, whom he is trying to organize under the broad aegis of the Pantjasila Front, named for the Indonesian state philosophy of belief in God, nationalism, democracy, humanism, and social justice. General Sukartyo has preserved a superficial appearance of calm by outlawing all demonstrations and prohibiting the militant Action Command of Indonesian Students, a power in Djakarta, from forming a chapter on Bali. But the calm may be deceptive.

"The Balinese are confused," Mantik told me. "First they were taught to tolerate Communism and Marxism; then they were told to kill the Communists. A few months ago, they all said 'Long Live Bung Karno!' and now the press tells them he is a bad man. No one knows what is good and what is bad." A nucleus of surviving Communists is believed to have gone underground to reorganize the party. Like many Balinese, Mantik fears a revival of fighting. "At present the Communists are afraid," he said, "but if they get the opportunity they will seek revenge."

The anti-Communists on Bali have maintained their cultural traditions against a severe threat. They have hardly begun, however, to regain the equilibrium and composure that characterized their society. The question today is whether the Balinese can unite and recover sufficiently to resist similar threats in the future.



# The Warren Commission: The Critics and the Law

## 1. Beyond Reasonable Doubt?

KENNETH GOODALL

**I**NQUEST, by Edward Jay Epstein. Viking. \$5. Bantam. 95 cents.

**RUSH TO JUDGMENT**, by Mark Lane. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. \$5.95.

The *Report of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy* has failed to dispel the doubts that swept the country and the world in the aftermath of the tragedy three years ago in Dallas. A recent public-opinion poll tells us that the conspiracy theory is very much alive in the minds of Americans, despite the overwhelming credence given to the single-assassin conclusion of the Warren Report when it was issued in September, 1964.

These two books not only have helped to feed the lingering doubts but also have infected persons heretofore immune. Some of the Warren

Report's earliest and warmest admirers in the United States and Europe now have decided that their original estimates may have been too hasty. Lord Devlin, a British former judge, praised the report in the March, 1965, issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* and said, "On the facts that the Commission brought to light there is no evidence of any accomplice." This fall, after reading Edward Jay Epstein's *Inquest*, Lord Devlin wrote in the *Observer*, "the possibility that Oswald had an accomplice cannot be disposed of as neatly and conclusively as the report does," and the Commission itself "was not as potent an instrument for discovering the truth as externally it appeared to be." Alistair Cooke, the *Guardian* correspondent, confessed a similar though deeper change of

heart on the basis of a reading of *Inquest* and Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment*, which together convinced him that the Commission and the Federal Bureau of Investigation "from start to finish appeared to have a perverse preference for testimony that was contradictory or unreliable or cowed or perjured."

Among others, Alexander M. Bickel, professor of law and legal history at Yale, and *Life* magazine have joined such foreign observers as Cooke and the *Times* of London in calling for a new investigation by either an independent group of qualified men or a government investigative body. And Representative Theodore R. Kupferman (R., New York) is sponsoring a resolution to set up a joint Congressional committee to determine whether the assassination needs further investigation.

**F**OR ALL the old doubts these two books have reinforced and the new ones they have stirred up, both are inadequate, though in different ways. *Rush to Judgment* is by a man who seems predisposed to discredit the probe. This does not rule out the ultimate validity of Lane's arguments, but it does put them into question in the same fashion in which the arguments of those persons who accept the Warren Report on faith must be examined.

A New York lawyer and a former assemblyman who unsuccessfully attempted to represent Lee Harvey Oswald's interests before the Commission, Lane has earned a reputation as the Commission's most rapacious critic. It is surprising, then, to find in *Rush to Judgment* an air of reasoned calm so out of keeping with the Lane we have heard about that it is tempting to fantasize a second Lane closeted somewhere in the inner sanctum of Holt, Rinehart & Winston. Despite the book's tone, its intended effect is to shock. Lane often seizes on unresolved pieces from the investigation, throws them to the reader as a defense attorney would to a jury, and then, with the sensation created but no point really made, moves on. Lane's book was written after the manner of a brief for the defense of Oswald; as such, it makes some arguments that might well have impressed a jury if Oswald had lived to be tried.