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Twenty years

Indonesian foreign policy

1945-1965

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8, 1956, he was confronted with these difficulties. Although President Soekarno did not put any conditions on the composition of the cabinet, he informed the 'formateur' that the new cabinet should have a working majority in the parliament, with the support of the majority of the political parties. However, President Soekarno made several statements demanding that the PKI not be left out of any cabinet since this party had commanded about fifteen percent of the electoral votes during the general election. These presidential statements did not make the work of the 'formateur' any easier.

In spite of their many differences, the two largest Muslim parties, the Masjumi and the Nahdatul Ullama, agreed that they would not join the cabinet if the 'formateur' invited the PKI to participate. Given the firm stand taken by the two Islam parties, it became clear to the 'formateur' that the wish of the president to include the PKI could not be fulfilled.

'Formateur' Ali approached the Masjumi and asked it to join the cabinet. He did this very reluctantly as he was more or less forced by circumstances to do so.

When the cabinet was announced as consisting of Ali Sastroamidjojo as Prime Minister, Mr. Mohammad Rum of the Masjumi as the First Deputy Prime Minister and Idham Chalid of the Nahdatul Ullama as the Second Deputy Prime Minister the reaction of the PKI was bitter. It had counted, with the support of President Soekarno, on being invited by the 'formateur' to join the government.

Referring to the composition of the new cabinet, President Soekarno stated at its installation on March 26 that 'nothing is perfect but God. The composition of the cabinet is by no means perfect but I hope that under the leadership of Premier Ali it will positively contribute to the achievement of prosperity for the people.' This presidential statement clearly showed his disappointment that the PKI had been excluded from the cabinet.

The former secretary general of the ministry of foreign affairs, Mr. Ruslan Abdulgani, a notorious stalwart of the PNI and also confidant and personal friend of President Soekarno, was appointed the new foreign minister. Mr. Abdulgani did not make any allusions to a new start for the foreign policy of Indonesia. **He stated that Indonesia's foreign policy would remain anchored to its traditional base to be independent and active, directed toward the 'liberation of Indonesia and Asia from social and economic bondage.'** (ANP, March 27, 1956)

But the cabinet and the foreign minister in particular were confronted with the inheritance of an unfinished bill for the abrogation of the Union. The bill had not been signed by the president and so the law could not be

enforced. The new cabinet had to submit a new draft bill to the new parliament in order to make the unilateral dissolution of the Union a legal reality.

This was done and the new-draft abrogation bill did not differ much in legal terms from the bill submitted by the Burhanudin Harahap cabinet. Finally President Soekarno signed the abrogation bill on May 8, 1956. **Therefore the dissolution of the Dutch-Indonesian Union became a legal reality according to the Indonesian Constitution.**

This episode was unique in the parliamentary history of Indonesia — that the same subject was submitted twice for approval to the parliament even though it had been approved earlier by the previous parliament. As attested to by the judgment of the Supreme Court, it was clear that the approval of the abrogation bill by the previous parliament was legally correct. Therefore, it could be concluded that the submission of a new draft bill to the new parliament was based on political considerations only. The Indonesian nationalist party was now satisfied that it had also participated in the dissolution of the Dutch-Indonesian Union, although through a rather unusual procedure.

The new cabinet did not immediately publish a new policy vis-a-vis the Netherlands. It only made the statement that henceforth the West Irian dispute would be resubmitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations in order to find a peaceful solution. But it had become evident that the patience of the Indonesian government was nearly exhausted. The failure of the Indonesian-Dutch negotiations in Geneva followed by the subsequent negative results of the deliberations at the General Assembly was the real turning point in Dutch-Indonesian relations. A turning point towards the lowest ebb in history of that relationship appeared unavoidable.