

November 13, 1958

Journal Entry of Ambassador Volkov: A Conversation with Subandrio

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Summary:

A journal entry from B.M. Volkov, the Soviet Ambassador to Indonesia, about a meeting with Subandrio, the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, on October 22, 1958. Over the course of about an hour, they discussed several issues of Indonesian internal and foreign affairs, including concerns about unrest in Thailand and interference from the West, tension with Australia over possession of West Irian (Indonesian New Guinea), Sukarno's upcoming visit to Latin America and Subandrio's upcoming visit to the Soviet Union.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

USSR EMBASSY IN INDONESIA From the journal of B. M. VOLKOV RECORD OF CONVERSATION with Minister of Foreign Affairs SUBANDRIO 22 October 1958 SECRET Copy #1 Iskh. #233/s13 November 1958 Subandrio conveyed a request to move to today the routine visit previously scheduled for 23 October. I agreed and was immediately received by Subandrio. As the discussion report demonstrates below, Subandrio had apparently used the pretext of a "routine visit" in order to turn our attention to several questions of Indonesian internal and foreign policy, without attracting unnecessary interest.

1. Subandrio stated that the Indonesian government is worried by the events in Thailand and that yesterday a special meeting was held with the participation of military officials to discuss this matter. "For us it is clear that the events in Thailand, Pakistan and Burma are links in the same chain. The situation in Asia is such that political officials are being forced to lean to the left in order to avoid losing popular support. This does not suit the USA, which would like to see more conservative and more stable forces in power, especially certain military circles. Thus, parties and the parliament are liquidated, and a military dictatorship is established. These coups d'etat are facilitated by the fact that the 'Western liberal democracy,' with its multi-party system, has discredited itself in Asia and does not have deep roots here, as evidenced by the corruption of a number of political officials and a number of parties' ties with imperialist powers." "When Sukarno turned attention to this, the Western press literally hounded him, accusing him of attempting to establish a dictatorship, accusing him of totalitarianism, communism, and so on. Right now Indonesia has become practically the only country in this region which still has a parliament, freedom of political parties, and where the constitution is still in effect. According to our reports," noted Subandrio, "there is a real threat of a military dictatorship being established in the Philippines, and then Indonesia will be literally surrounded by countries with hostile military dictatorships. We do not want," said Subandrio, "to allow such a military dictatorship to take hold in Indonesia as well. Certain powers have tried to achieve this with the help of rebels and continue their attempts to achieve this through other means. But we will not refrain from taking any actions in order to prevent this, since such a dictatorship, which does not have its roots among the people and is not committed to protecting national interests, would only benefit the imperialist powers." I agreed with Subandrio that the exacerbation in the political situation in many Asian countries from the Pacific Ocean to the Middle East is the result of the implementation of a specific plan by the imperialist powers to interfere in the internal affairs of these countries and to strengthen their positions at the price of their peoples' national interests. I asked Subandrio what he means when referring to steps that should check the new attempts by the imperialists to interfere in internal Indonesian affairs. Subandrio replied that the imperialists' chief obstacle is Sukarno. "The imperialists are not afraid of the establishment of a communist government in Indonesia, although they may gripe about it. But they are deathly afraid of Indonesian nationalism. Thus we will strengthen Sukarno's position with every possible means. The military situation will be maintained at increased levels, in connection with the foreign political events and, in particular, in connection with the coups d'etat in a number of Asian countries." Subandrio twice emphasized that they are against military dictatorship that has no ties to the people and is not based on an "ideological concept," but they are in favor of a government that would strongly defend national interests. "Dictatorships come in different forms," concluded Subandrio. Despite the fact that Subandrio had warned that this discussion is of a "friendly, unofficial character," and that he is "sharing his personal thoughts," I came away with the impression that he was acting on instructions from the government and perhaps from Sukarno personally. Subandrio expressed his satisfaction when I mentioned that I would inform Moscow of our discussion.

2. Subandrio stated that the question of Western Irian [Indonesian New Guinea] is becoming very intense in connection with the political campaign undertaken by Australia, which is showing interest in controlling this territory and may go into conflict with Indonesia over this issue. "A deterioration in relations with Australia may bring serious consequences, since it is an immediate neighbor of Indonesia. But we cannot accept any type of compromise on this question. We are taking measures and will continue to take measures to exert influence on Australian popular opinion and to convince the USA to take up a more acceptable position on the question of Western Irian, though we are not convinced that this will achieve positive results. We are also worried," continued Subandrio, "by the possibility of the establishment of military bases on the Portuguese section of Timor." I noted that, in my opinion, the chief reason for the

deterioration in the question of Western Irian is the American desire to establish military bases there. I inquired Subandrio whether any military bases have been already established on Timor. Subandrio replied in the negative and again repeated that they are primarily apprehensive of actions undertaken by Australia and not the US.3. Subandrio reminded me of the request to provide President Sukarno with a Tu-104 plane for his trip to Latin America, regarding which he had spoken earlier with comr. Kuznetsov. He emphasized that if the fulfillment of this request is impossible, then they will consider this request never raised. "But we would very much like to send the president on Pan American," said Subandrio, "because we are afraid of using the other airlines (SAS, Air India) for fear of the possibility of provocation. The enemies of Indonesia would give a lot to get rid of Sukarno, since this would ease their attempts to steer Indonesia away from its path of independence." I promised to inform Moscow of this request.4. Subandrio said that he plans to stay in the Soviet Union between the 20th and 30th of November and expects to spend 2-4 days there. He again expressed interest in whether A.A. Gromyko and V.V. Kuznetsov will be in Moscow during this time, as he would like to meet with them. "We have good communications through the diplomatic channels, but from time to time a personal meeting of Foreign Ministers is highly useful." I agreed with this and promised to ascertain whether comr. Gromyko will be in Moscow in late November. The rest of the meeting, which lasted about an hour, was of routine nature. Also present at the meeting was Embassy attache comr. A.N. Babkin. USSR AMBASSADOR IN INDONESIA [signature](B. VOLKOV)