SYMPOSIUM ON

DECOLONISATION OF INDONESIA

ROOSEVELT STUDY CENTER

MIDDELBURG, THE NETHERLANDS

SEPTEMBER 2, 1987

CHOICES AND CIRCUMSTANCES:
THE INDONESIAN REVOLUTION 45 YEARS ON:
SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

By Soedjatmoko

I am honoured and delighted to have been asked to address this symposium on the decolonization of Indonesia organized by the Roosevelt Study Center. As you can well imagine, the years in which this took place were among some of the most formative of my life. I will do my best to keep from turning this into an exercise in nostalgia. I hope instead to be able to use some of my own personal experiences during the Indonesian struggle for independence to help illuminate processes that were then underway.

Thanks to several major studies on the Indonesian revolution, and a significant number of personal accounts by major actors in that drama, the main lines of the historical narrative of the Indonesian revolution in the 1940s are well known. In this paper, I will assume you know these general outlines and not attempt to rehash these events one more time.

I intend to position my analysis of those events within the rubric of "Choices and Circumstances." We all make our choices by our own lights - perception that are skewed by our own limited knowledge, values, aspi-

rations and fears, by our sense of what options are available, and in circumstances often beyond our control or knowledge. This is especially so in revolutionary periods, when the unfolding of events is greatly accelerated and human actions infused with feelings of great intensity. This makes revolutions so highly unpredictable, with their own internal dynamics, more often than not beyond the control of its leaders. More than is usually the case in public affairs, one then becomes aware of the disjunction between intent and history.

The basic thrust of my paper will be an attempt to show what happened to the Indonesian revolution -- from the deep frustration and uncertain condition of the nationalist movement at the end of Dutch rule through the growing determination in the course of the Japanese occupation, to the revolution and ultimate emergence of a cohesive and dynamic polity that could no longer be ignored on the world scene.

In the course of the Indonesian revolution, there were a number of crucial choices that had to be made -- and these generally had to be faced within the context of a particular set of circumstances. Choices tend to be, more often than not, one's own; circumstances generally are created outside individual realms of responsibility --and nowhere was this more true than in the kind of cataclysmic geopolitical change that rumbled the political and cultural tectonic plates of Southeast Asia in the first half of the 1940s.

The three most determining circumstances for Indonesia, I believe, were the following:

(1) The rapid collapse of Dutch power in Indonesia in the face of the Japanese advance in 1941-42. To many Indonesians this destroyed both

Dutch credibility as our colonial rulers and the legitimacy of their claims to their lost territories when the war was over. This also reinforced the rather widespread appeal that collaboration with the Japanese had during the early years of the war.

(2) The subsequent disillusionment with the Japanese occupation forces and the growth of anti-Japanese feelings, from which the Indonesian nationalist movement was increasingly able to draw support and strength. In its harshness and cruelty, the Japanese regime helped many of us to steel ourselves for the struggle that followed.

(3) The decision taken that the Allied forces which were to liberate Indonesia at the war's end would be British -- forces who, because of the fortunes of war or whatever, simply did not have the resources to deal with the emotions that were unleashed in Indonesia in the aftermath of the Japanese surrender. The details of why this move came about is a tangled tale, best left to World War II historians. It stemmed essentially, however, from a decision made in early 1945, shortly before the Yalta Conference, by the British and American Chiefs of Staff. This was to split military responsibility in Asia: the Americans, under MacArthur, would have a free hand to move north into China, Japan and their anticipated meeting with the Russians; the British, under Mountbatten, would be left unhindered to move south. Of this decision, the historian Herbert Feis has observed;

"This bore upon the way and time in which subsequent British revovery of Singapore and the Federated Malay States, Dutch recapture of the East Indies, and the French return to Indo-China, transpired."

In the process of this analysis, I would like to recall a number of

discussions I had with some of the leaders of the Indonesian revolution. I would like to think that these could help to throw additional light on subsequent events, their historical background and their longer-term significance. I would also very much hope that this might advance understanding of not just the Indonesian revolution, but also the revolutionary processes which are still so much a part, and so much a dilemma, of our modern world.

While I have been asked to speak to you about the development of the Indonesian national movement in the 1940s, I find that simply clicking off history by calendar decades may not always be the most illuminating way of accounting. Many of the issues in the Indonesian revolution, for example, assume far greater significance when they are looked at within a somewhat broader compass that includes events of the 1950s.

In particular, I intend in my reflections to make some comparisons with the period starting in 1958 --what might be called the resumption of the revolution-- after the interval of Indonesia's post-revolutionary experience with democratic government.

Before proceeding further, however, I should describe my particular vantage point for these events and my personal biases. I was a second-year medical student, in my early twenties, at he start of the Pacific war. I had three political mentors who, in varying degress and in various ways, have influenced my political perspectives.

The first of these was Amir Syarifudin whom I came to know briefly at the beginning of the Japanese occupation, before he was imprisoned and tortured by the Japanese military. On his release from jail at the end of

the war, and his appointment as the Minister of Information in Indonesia's first cabinet, he invited a fellow student Soedarpo Sastrosatomo, and myself to help him in establishing a foreign relations section in the ministry charged particularly with dealing with the foreign press.

We published an English-language daily, the Independent (with the help of a few moonlighting British soldiers/journalists), and a weekly in Dutch, Het Inzicht, intended to keep contact and conversation going while both negotiating and fighting continued.

I had many searching discussions whith Amir Syarifudin, a man of great erudition, immense personal warmth and charm. Despite his Islamic family origins, he had converted to the Christion faith. In particular, our discussions often centred on how he had reconciled his deeply felt Christianity with his equally deeply felt views of Marxism. From my conversations with him, there emerged insights that helped to shape many of my own personal convictions that have guided me in later life.

Sukarno was my second mentor. The foundations for a long-lasting relationship, during which we discussed revolution, Marxism, Javanese mysticism, national goals and international politics, were laid at a rather stormy session in 1943, when, with two other student friends of mine, we held a sit-in at Sukarno's house and more or less forced him into a discussion with us lasting several hours. I will return to this incident later in my remarks.

My third mentor was Sutan Syahrir, Indonesia's first Prime Minister after independence. He taught me that there need not be a contradtiction between a totally committed revolutionary and a democrat as well as a socialist and humanist.

Partly because I was also attached to the Prime Minister's office, I was privileged in being able to move freely between many of the leaders of the revolution, including, of course, Vice-President Hatta. I suppose I enjoyed this freedom also because I was too young to be a threat --I was 23 at the beginning of the revolution-- and also did not have, nor was interested in having, a powerbase of my own. This made it possible for me to be privy to a number of confidential discussions by the leaders and, in some instances, to become an intermediary between them.

From my experience then, and now with the hindsight of having witnessed various forms of decolonisation, I have come to feel that the process of Indonesia's progression toward nationhood could be categorized essentially by a series of choices that both at the individual and at the collective levels had to be made.

Collaboration or Not?

One important choice was whether or not to collaborate with the Japanese authorities. Early in the evolution of the national movement the question of co-operation with the Dutch colonial authorities had come up. The division between co-operators and non-co-operators had run through much of the history of the nationalist movement. Then, however, the context was essentially political. During the war the context was a world-wide military conflict which colonial nationalism looked at in terms somewhat different from the democracy-fascism duality.

The Japanese occupation, for the Indonesians, did not mean merely the substitution of one colonial regime for another. The Japanese defeat

of the Dutch represented the destruction of a whole system of power. In-contrast to the Dutch, the Japanese, initially, sought to mobilize popular support for their regime by appealing to nationalist sentiments. After a few weeks, however, they disbanded all political parties and appealed to, developed and tried to capitalize on a latent sense of Asianism, thereby circumventing the question of Indonesian independence and a host of questions of an ideological nature.

Working through Sukarno and Hatta, they established mass organizations which, over time, as their war situation deteriorated, were increasingly brought under direct Japanese control. Through a series of youth organizations a major effort was made at indoctrinating a younger generation which had not been exposed to Dutch colonial influence, and which was to have a longlasting effect on Indonesian political culture. They also appointed Indonesian officials in higher level positions in the administration. All of this was very different from what we had known under the Dutch style of administration. The Japanese occupation created a number of conditions which strengthened immeasurably the potentials for the Indonesian revolution.

It was the Japanese, for example, who forbade the use of the Dutch language and thus forced the Indonesian elites to use the Indonesian language. In so doing, the Japanese helped to reduce the great social distance that had existed under the Dutch colonial regime between the Indonesian elites and the masses of ordinary villagers. It also led to a very rapid development of the Indonesian language as a modern language of wider communication, and a veritable explosion of cultural activity and literary creativity occurred.

Efforts were also made by the Japanese to mobilise --again in contrast with basic Dutch colonial policy-- Muslim support. The consultative council of Indonesian Muslims (Masyumi) became a vehicle for Muslim participation. This laid the foundation for concerted Muslim political action which was to be a major political force during the revolution for independece, and made their leaders part of the Indonesian elite, again in sharp contrast with Dutch colonial policy.

The Japanese occupation thus helped to lay the foundation for a single Indonesian polity. Under Dutch rule such an objective had been out of the reach of the nationalist leaders. Although the other parts of the former Netherlands East Indies were under different military administrations and enjoyed much less freedom than the nationalist movement in Java, the development of a broad-based mass movement in Java speaking on behalf of all the Indonesian people proved of decisive importance for the whole of Indonesia.

Sukarno saw the revolution within the context of collaboration with the Japanese authorities. Let me turn again here to the beginnings of our relationship with my calling at his house in 1943, along with two fellow students Soedarpo and Soebadio. We three were part of the relatively small group in Indonesia at the time who refused collaboration with the occupying government, and we had decided to challenge Sukarno, the leader of the nationalist movement, on his decision to collaborate with the Japanese.

After being informed that Sukarno was not available, we decide to wait him out. When he finally did appear, he was quite angry and asked

what we wanted. I realized that we would have somehow to capture his attention immediately, if we had any hope of discussion with him. To do so, I addressed him in Dutch -- then a forbidden language. I said to Sukarno:

"Bung, we have come to renounce our allegiance to you."

This did the trick and he asked us inside, where discussions went on for a number of hours. This event occurred in 1943, just after the battle of Guadalcanal, one which I felt was a harbinger of the ultimate defeat of the Japanese.

I asked him why he advocated collaboration. He told us because they had promised three things that the Dutch had never been willing to discuss: Number One, a parliament; Number Two, an army; and Number Three, independence. I replied that these were pormises which the Japanese would never keep. At best we would be given a pseudo-parliament, an auxiliare role to the Japanese army, and a sham independence. After several hours of heated debate, Sukarno told us to come back and see him in five years' time --if we were all still alive-- and see who had been right! It was the beginning of a warm but often contentious relationship that lasted till 1958, when he broke it off.

I am telling this story not to claim any prescience of what was the right path for Indonesia at that point. As Barbara Tuchman remarked in The Guns of August, "honour wears different coats to different eyes." What I want to do here is to point up the choices - and the circumstances - that confronted all of us involved in the struggle for Indonesian independence. My choice was to reject the notion of collaboration with the

occupying forces. Sukarno opted for the opposite path. Had he decided not to collaborate, would the cost to the Indonesian nationalist movement have been far higher?

As it was, the cost of collaboration was very steep. After the war, for example, segments of the population vented their hostility on local Indonesian authorities who had been involved in the recruitment of forced labour and compulsory rice deliveries during the Japanese occupation. Many of these local officials, both in Java and Sumatra, were murdered by their angry fellow citizens.

I believe it is wrong to pass judgement on Sukarno, as some have attempted to do, for having collaborated out of weakness of character. Still, collaboration did pose a difficult ethical problem. Was it really in the best interests of the nationalist movement? It is clear that this was someting that deeply troubled him -- for example, his role in providing forced labour for service outside Indonesia. As J.D. Legge has remarked on Sukarno's decision to collaborate, "Like so many choices about ends and means, it was all or nothing."

Basically, Sukarno saw the Allies as the real enemy. Collaboration with Japan could be used to fit Indonesia's nationalist purposes. For a long time, as our meeting with him in 1943 and subsequent events showed, he believed in a Japanese victory. To him, collaboration was primarily a strategic choice.

There is little doubt that Sukarno's decision benefitted the Japanese occupying forces. At the same time, he justified what he was doing on the ground that he was serving the long-term interests of Indonesian na-

tionalism. He saw himself as co-operating with a temporary invader, a choice which would, in the end, be useful to the cause of Indonesian independence.

With the luxury of hindsight, we can see that Sukarno's role during the Japanese occupation was of enormous importance in the making of the revolution. It enabled him to set the foundations for a number of key elements in the struggle for independence.

His co-operation with the occupying forces gave him access to channels of communication --reaching down to the village level-- something which he had never enjoyed before. Though these were designed to communicate the wishes of the Japanese, in practice, Sukarno used them also to make known his own ideas.

The creation of the voluntary military forces --PETA, even though the Japanese disbanded it a few days after the proclamation of independence-- was another step of vital importance in the subsequent fight against the Dutch. And the formation of a system of local councils provided a framework for future local government.

Above all, perhaps, he awakened the consciousness of the young, making them an indispensible force in the fight for independence. For all the indoctrination they had received, and for all their sometimes unreasoned militancy, the occupation did help the youth of Indonesia to see the uncertainties of the time -- a vision that had largely escaped many of them. In the process, and I speak of one who was then young, we gained a notion of our possibility to shape the future. All of this made Indonesia of 1945 a very different social entity than that of the 1930s - when Dutch power had seemed so secure.

In this and other ways, Sukarno helped to create a new polity -- one willing to put aside its differences in the interests of being, finally, one nation. For all of these reasons, I have little difficulty - now 45 years on - in seeing much justification in Sukarno's choice to collaborate with the Japanese in 1942, even though many of his reasons to do so had turned out to be wrong. Neither do I have any difficulty in seeing as fully justified the role of those who did not want to collaborate, as they kept alive and nurtured the commitment of part of the nationalist movement to antifascism, anti-feudalism, and to democracy.

Anti-Japanese or Neutral: How to Declare Independence?

By the end of the war, anti-Japanese sentiment had come to pervade pretty much the whole of Indonesian society.

As the war drew to a close, in the summer of 1945, this confronted Soekarno with another choice: should he believe that the promises of the Japanese government for a declaration of independence would be kept in case of a Japanese defeat, or should he ignore the Japanese and independently make a bold proclamation?

Soekarno himself still retained his faith in the assurances of the Japanese military. However, he had pressure on him from two sources. The first came from Syahrir - he and his followers were firmly opposed to independence being granted as a "gift" of the Japanese. He wanted independence to be anti-Japanese and anti-fascist, and an attempt was in fact made to proclaim independence on August 16. The second pressure came from

the youth, who were not particularly concerned with ideology, but wanted a bold declaration of independence.

In the end, despite his "kidnapping" by youth leaders in the early morning hours of 16 August 1945 --to try to convince Sukarno to take the bold path-- he chose a middle way: a brief statement of independence that was neither couched in anti-Japanese terms, as Syahrir wished, nor declared immediate intention to seize power, as the youth leaders desired. There are differing accounts of how much influence the "kidnapping" might have had on Sukarno's decision - ranging from his own assertion that it was negligible, to that of Adam Malik that without the kidnapping there would have been no proclamation.

There was, after the landing of the British troops and Dutch administration officials in their wake, a growing concern that Sukarno might be seized by the Allies as a collaborator or war criminal. At the same time, it was clear that, in the eyes of the Indonesian people, Sukarno was the authentic leader of the revolution and that his safety was of prime national importance. He consequently moved to an undisclosed place in the interior of Java, leaving Hatta in Jakarta as acting President.

During his absence, the Central National Committee decided to change the system of government from a presidential system to a parliamentary one with a cabinet responsible to the Central National Committee which was seen as a precursor of an elected parliament. With the blessing of Mohammad Hatta, a new cabinet was formed, consisting of people who were not seen as collaborators with the Japanese, whith Syahrir as Prime

Minister. The first cabinet however refused to resign, as it did not recognize the validity of the change. Together with my friend Soedarpo we were dispatched by the Syahrir cabinet to find Sukarno and to bring him back to Jakarta as soon as possible, so that he could make the decision as to which cabinet should govern. When Sukarno came back, he lined up the two cabinets opposite each other in his home and, without much discussion, decided that the Syahrir cabinet would henceforth be the legitimate cabinet. Here again the irony of the circumstance that led Sukarno to opt for a cabinet of non-collaborators.

Negotiate or Fight?

When the British arrived in the autumn of 1945, they found a functioning government ready for its independence to be recognized. When it became clear that, in the wake of the British forces, the Dutch were trying to re-establish their control, fighting broke out in various places, with Surabaya as the site of the bloodiest battle in the revolution.

A few days after he had become Prime Minister, I asked Sutan Syahrir why he considered the path of negotiation essential. He said that his ultimate aim was the international recognition of the declaration of independence encompassing the territory of the former Netherlands East Indies. This meant the recognition of the Republic of Indonesia as a state, with a government with all its attributes. His most immediate goal however was to prevent the British from bringing in more troops. In the meantime the fighting could and should continue.

Syahrir argued that the British were not necessarily our enemy and

that we should avoid turning them into one. Once the British troops had left we could deal with the Dutch, despite the disparity in military power. He felt that the British should rather be used to ensure that any negotiated settlement be reached involving a third party, under international auspices. This policy at the same time did not prevent him, however, from declaring as his first act as Prime Minister his solidarity with the citizens of Surabaya in their uneven battle.

Soon after this, another event occurred which led to a further clarification of the strategy of Syahrir's real politik. Late November an American war correspondent from Newsweek, Harold Isaacs, arrived in Jakarta from Indochina, bringing with him a letter from Ho Chi Minh to Vice-President Hatta, whom the Vietnamese leader had met in Europe many years earlier at a meeting of the Anti-imperialist League. In his letter, Ho suggested that the two revolutions be co-ordinated. Hatta transmitted the letter to Syahrir.

When I subsequently asked Syahrir how he would respond, he said --to my immense surprise and disappointment-- that he was not going to respond to the letter. He intended to simply ignore it. I asked him, "Why? - wasn't this a betrayal of the Asian Revolution?"

Syahrir then said the following: As long as we can keep the British from bringing in more troops, we can win our struggle. The Dutch are in no position to conduct a protracted war. They are a small country, and though they may win many battles, so long as our military potential is not entirely destroyed, we will ultimately prevail.

But Ho Chi Min's Vietminh, he said, were faced with an entirely different situation. France, despite its defeat on the battlefields of

Europe, was still a major military power. Also, he said, our nationalist movement is led by nationalists - theirs by communists. They are bound, therefore, to have more enemies than we do. This means that we will gain our independence more quickly than the Vietnamese. "And once we are an independent nation, we could help them more effectively than anything we could do now."

I remember how disappointed I was -- I felt a deep sense of betrayal. But, of course, Syahrir proved to be right in the end. Except for one thing: at the time Indonesia's independence was recognized, he was no longer in power, and the government had different priorities -- among them a foreign policy much more oriented towards the United States.

Syahrir could not, of course, publicly state the grounds for his strategy of negotiation. Meanwhile, there was continuing pressure on him - from both the military and from political sources - to launch a military attack and to aim for a military solution against the Dutch.

There then came a point in 1946 when Syahrir agreed that the army should be given an opportunity to test its strength and to undertake a general offensive. This however led to no major military achievements and as a result much of the military pressure against negotiation abated. At the same time the effectiveness of negotiation depended on both our ability to purchase and smuggle in arms and ammunition through the Dutch blockade and on gaining international recognition of our independence from as large a number of countries as possible. The first objective was initially succesfully met, but became more difficult later on. In the end, at the time the Round Table Agreement was concluded we had just about run out of ammunition.

A major step towards the second objective resulted from a meeting between the deputy Foreign minister in Syahrir's cabinet, H. Agus Salim and Brigadier I.C.A Lauder, Chief of Staff AFNEI, at the end of November 1945. At that meeting the British agreed that the government of the Republic of Indonesia would assume responsibility for the disarming of the 35.000 Japanese troops and their transportation as well as that of the 28.000 internees from the interior to Allied occupied territory. This difficult task was entrusted by the Indonesian Government to a specially formed unit, POPDA, headed by Brig. Gen. Abdulkadir.

Another step in the same direction was Syahrir's offer, also in November 1945, to send rice to India, then stricken by famine, even though the abundant harvest in West-Java was also needed in other parts of Java. It was an offer the British found impossible to refuse, and 500.000 ton of rice was transported to Allied controlled harbours in trucks provided by the British.

The second objective, of international recognition, also required the establishment of several offices of representatives of the Indonesian Republic in Singapore, New Delhi, Cairo, Canberra and London, fincanced through blockade-running with various produce from Java and Sumatra. These efforts led, after the Linggarjati-agreement and the de facto recognition of the Republic by the U.K. on March 21, 1947., and by the USA on April 23, 1947, also to the de jure recognition by Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. The Indonesian Mission to the Security Council established after the first military action, was financed from the proceeds of produce purchased by the American trading firm Stein Hall, and transported by the "Martin Behrman" of the American Isbrandtsen

Line, in defiance of the Dutch blockade.

Syahrir's negotiating strategy made him also insist on an arbitration clause in any understanding to be reached with the Dutch. It was indicative of his belief that the Republic's first priority should be international recognition.

In the subsequent Linggarjati negotiations on Indonesian independence, agreement seemed impossible because of the unwillingness of the Dutch to accept the arbitration clause. The Dutch delegation pleaded their case with Soekarno, following which he approved deletion of the clause.

When Syahrir was told of this by the Dutch delegation he confronted Soekarno, threatened to resign and told him that he, Soekarno, could continue the negotiations. Soekarno then reversed his position. The result was the inclusion of Clause 17 in the Lingarjati agreement. This was one of the main reasons why the Indonesian case could be brought before the Security Council when the Dutch resumed their military action after they had signed the agreement.

It should be pointed out, however that the Security Council carefully avoided justifying its decisions in the Indonesian case on the basis of this arbitration clause.

One party or multi party revolution

One of the most unique features of the Indonesian Revolution has been the establishment of a multi party political system in the midst of a revolution. It is especially striking in comparison with the one party systems with which many other countries emerged from revolution. Indone-

sia's road towards a revolutionary multi party system was a rather tortuous one. Soekarno wanted the Indonesian Republic to be a one party state. The transition to a multi party system required first that the Central National Committee transformed itself form an executive body to a legislative one, and required also the establishment of a quasi parliamentary system with a cabinet responsible to the Central National Committee as the precursor of an elected parliament.

The single national party Soekarno established almost immediately after the proclamation of independence was to be the expression of and the sole vehicle for the Indonesian revolution. In the atmosphere of uncertainties and doubts about the strength of the position of Soekarno-Hatta and their capacity to provide revolutionay leaderhsip, especially prevalent among the young, many young leaders in the Central National Committee wanted a change of leadership. The apparent aim was of some of them to push for the chairmanship and vice-chairmanship of the Central National Committee to be handed over to Sutan Syahrir and Amir Syarifuddin. To those young leaders this was a first step towards the implementation of Soekarno's testament. This so-called Soekarno testament was the result of a meeting between Tan Malaka and Soekarno in which Tan Malaka pointed to the weakness and vulnerability of Soekarno's and Hatta's position and the need for them to leave behind a testament stipulating to whom the leadership of the revolution and the Indonesian State would be entrusted. It included the names of Tan Malaka, Syahrir, Wongsonegoro and Iwa Kusumasumantri. Other groups simply wanted Syahrir and Amir Syarifuddin to take over the leadership of the Central National Committee without removing Soekarno and Hatta. It was decided that more effective

leadership was needed, and after a brief discussion and dismissal of a proposal for a Directorium of three persons, the Central National Committee agreed to establish a working committee which would work with a parliamentary cabinet responsible to the Central National Committee. Subsequently Vice President Hatta appointed Syahrir as formateur of the first parliamentary government.

The second stage saw the proclamation of a political manifesto and the invitation by the Working Committee of the Central National Committee to the general public to form political parties as a necessary complement of a democratic parliamentary system. This development has often been explained simply as a tactical move to enhance the credibility of the Indonesian Government as an acceptable partner to the negotiations. This explanation underrates the internal dynamic behind this particular event. The bitter experience of the Japanese Military Occupation had led to the prevalence at that time of a strong anti-fascist and anti-feudal sentiment as well as of a desire for a more democratic approach free from the taint of Japanese collaboration. There was also a strong feeling then that it was important to ensure the involvement and participation of as many groups as possible in the widely varied spectrum of Indonesian politics, as a means to broaden the basis of support for the revolution. The full political participation of the various minority groups in Indonesia would make it clear to the Dutch that the time that they could play off one group against the other had passed. Had this development in the Indonesian revolution merely been a negotiated ploy, then the multi party system and the climate of vigorous debate and often open political con-

flict would not have survived the revolution. There clearly was, and continues to be, a democratic strain and an openness toward the outside world in the nationalist movement, despite its ups and downs in subsequent years in Indonesian history. The movement towards parliamentary democracy early on in the Indonesian revolution contituted a choice not by a single person but by a number of groups, each pursuing its own objective and continuing to pursue this objective in the context of a democratic parliamentay system. It was therefore a collective choice, supported by the National Committee, Vice President Hatta and later on Presiden Soekarno, in circumstances which would have made such a development also advantageous from a negotiating point of view.

It lies outside the scope of this paper to analyze the causes of the eventual failure of parliamentary democracy in Indonesia. Suffice it to say that it was a combination of the domestic failure to settle basic differences about the nature of the state and about economic development and also to reconcile parliamentary disputes with the need for effective government, and on the other side, the stubborn refusal on the part of the Dutch to work towards an acceptable settlement of the West Irian issue. All this led to a radicalisation of Indonesian politics and to Soekarno's decision in 1958 to resume the revolution through his Guided Democracy. It was, ironically, a choice he could make because of the circumstance of Indonesia's unilateral abrogation of the Netherlands-Indonesian Union, for wich he had not given explicit instruction.

Two concepts of Revolution

It is possible then to discern two different concepts of revolu-

tion, exemplified by their two major protagonists, Syahrir and Soekarno. Both of them realized that revolution constituted the release of tremendous social forces, and an acceleration of history accompanied by passionate emotions. To Syahrir these powerful forces had both great creative but also destructive potentials. It was the task of the revolutionary leader to harness those forces and to direct them to democratic and humanistic goals through democratic institutions, and also by fighting the impact of fascist military indoctrination especially among the young. When in the face of new Dutch demands his parliamentary support collapsed, Syahrir refused to stay in power despite urgings from many quarters. He considered it important for the growth of democracy in Indonesia to be ready to draw the consequences of parliamentary defeat.

On the other hand, when Soekarno urged me to go into politics, he posed as one of his conditions that I should not join the Socialist Party. When asked what was wrong with that party he replied: "There is nothing wrong with the Socialist Party. But we are in a revolution; it is too early to be concerned with democracy and human rights." In a series of personal conversations he elaborated on his view of revolution. He said: "A revolution is like a run-away horse. It goes its own way. The task of a revolutionary leader is simply to stay in the saddle until the horse has run its course. Only then could he steer him in the desired direction." When I asked him about the danger of being thrown off the horse, he replied: "That is a risk a leader should take in a revolution." One hears here echoes of a revolutionary romanticism, historical determinism, and even of Trotsky's: "No enemies on the Left." And indeed Soekarno did feel the need, in the course of a second revolution from

1958 to 1965, to be more revolutionary than anybody else. Nevertheless both he and Syahrir were in agreement on the primacy of the goal of nationhood in the national revolution of 1945.

The last time I met Soekarno was at the end of 1966 when his power was in decline after his failure to "save the revolution", and when Indonesia had rejoined the United Nations. Upon my return from the UN General Assembly he asked for my assessment of the cultural revolution in China. After I had given him my view I asked him why he asked me that question. He replied: "If Mao Tse Tung wins, it means to me that the era of the Great Revolutions is not yet over, and I draw great strength from this".

Before closing let me recount one crucial decision in which I was even more marginally involved than with some of the other. When the second Dutch military action removed Soekarno, Hatta and Syahrir temporarily from centrestage, and the Republic was at its most vulnerable, the Sultan of Yogyakarta played a keyrole in the preservation of the Indonesian Republic by his steadfast refusal to join the Dutch side. Instead he ordered an attempt to re-occupy Yogyakarta timed to coincide with the Security Council discussion of the Indonesian case in Paris in 1949. It was Lt. Col. Soeharto who led the attempt and managed to occupy Yogya for six hours on the 1st of March. I was at that time one of Indonesia's delegates to the Security Council, and when a telegram from our office in Singapore brought the news, I immediately held a press conference which managed to shoot a hole of some proportions in the statement by the Dutch delegation shortly before that the Dutch military were in full control and that the Republic of Indonesia had ceased to exist. It is obvious

that if the Sultan had not stuck to his commitment as a repbulican nationalist, Indonesia's history might well have taken a somewhat different course.

A number of other crucial choices were made in the 1940's. I have limited myself to those of which I had personal knowledge. The choice for instance, between social revolution and the primacy of nationhood was made early on during the revolution maybe not so much by conscious decision as well as by the circumstance that chaos was looming ahead at a time when the revolutionary government had to prove its effectiveness in maintaining law and order in the face of the impending arrival of the Allies. In this Soekarno, Hatta and Syahrir concurred. Looking back at the various points of articulation in the history of the nationalist movement in the 1940's one comes to realize how open ended history, even revolutionary history is, and how tenuous is the notion of historical determinism. In our attempts to understand our historical situation one can not but look for general trends, and try to grasp what seems to be the significance of the dominating features of our time. But in history no one can be certain of the longer-term consequences of one's choice, given the unpredictability of circumstances. This is also true for the ultimate choice one has to make: to join what seems to be the mainstream of history, or to prefer a place in one of the minor counter - or cross-currents of history. Ultimate certainty or security is not to be had in either, and so it seems, one can only make one's choices on the basis of one's own convictions and values, and in all humility.

Tokyo - Jakarta, September 2, 1987.