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Indonesia: Different but the same (1993)

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Part IV



DIFFERENT BUT THE SAME—1993

PROLOGUE

One of the problems I face in my job is my own confusion. The exploration and producing division covers geography so wide, populated by people so diverse, facing political and economic challenges so intractable that I often, well, despair. At root I figure what most folks want is a regular meal, a healthy night's sleep free from fear, and a sense that their kids'll get a fair shake. But things get in the way. Often it's the political ambitions of armed gangs nearby. Sometimes, though, it is the good intentions of my own countrymen, who, in pursuit of righteousness, have been known to Zippo a hooch when good intentions come to grief. I got a chance to ruminate on all this recently during an assignment in Indonesia.



A few years ago, my boss, Patrick Humphrey, the president of E&P, stopped me after a meeting on Asia. "Remember the money," he said, holding my arm at the elbow. "We never say no to the Indonesians." A bit overstated, because he'd wind up saying no lots. But in the PR end of things, he wanted to make sure I remembered that my job included making sure the Indonesians knew we are their friends and, therefore, they had no reason to throw us out of the country. Friends sometimes help friends make their arguments about their country's affairs with policy makers in the United States. This is tricky. Federal law prohibits Mobil from lobbying on behalf of Indonesia. But we can certainly lobby on our own behalf, which often calls for conversations that sound pretty similar.

"Senator Robb is going to Asia during the recess. He wants to visit the Arun field," Mobil's lobbyist in Washington told me one afternoon. "Can we get it set up?" This was serendipity. Charles Robb, one of Virginia's U.S. senators, was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Asia, a key Senate guy on policy matters dealing with two countries of intense interest to E&P, Indonesia and Vietnam. In Indonesia, Mobil earns \$500 million

every year from gas operations in Aceh Province on the northern tip of Sumatra. That's nearly 25 percent of the company's total profit. Nothing is more important to Mobil than protecting its profit stream.

It turned out that Robb, in addition to going to Indonesia, was also scheduled to go to Vietnam, where it currently is illegal to do business owing to the continuing U.S. embargo from the war. Mobil is interested in the embargo because it prevents Mobil's return to the South China Sea where Mobil drillers discovered oil in the final days of the Saigon regime. Not wanting to rile any Vietnam vet in the U.S. or be used by the gangsters running Vietnam as their capitalist show horse, Mobil has avoided lobbying the U.S. to end the embargo. But Mobil has done everything it can to make the Vietnamese think Mobil knows where the oil is and that when the embargo is lifted Vietnam should grant Mobil its old offshore acreage and watch Mobil launch an oil boom. Much of this game has the mark of a manipulative fan dance, complete with flashing well logs and seismic strings, but with the all important identifying marks cut off, and thus heightening the intrigue and Vietnam's desire. It has worked splendidly. Vietnam believes Mobil knows more than anyone, and urges other companies to work with Mobil if they want the most coveted offshore blocks.

Robb, though the senator from Virginia where Mobil makes its world headquarters, has never been particularly helpful to Mobil, his largest corporate constituent by a factor of perhaps 100. On federal issues involving marketing or environmental legislation, Mobil's favorites, Robb voted with Mobil's adversaries. Yet he faced reelection in the fall. In the usual course of his political business, Robb's political fundraisers some weeks ago contacted Mobil and asked for a donation. Robb's operatives were politely told: No, why should we? This conversation continued in the precise and correct language used when political fund raising intersects with law making.

When Mobil later learned Robb was planning a fact-finding trip to Asia, our lobbyist suggested Robb might want to visit Mobil's Arun operations in Sumatra. Given that his subcommittee oversees Indonesian policy matters, Robb quickly agreed that a visit was certainly appropriate. We would make sure that the Indonesian government understood that Mobil's arranging the visit of such an influential senator was a worthy act of extreme friendship.



On Sunday, August 14, I stood with John Mangsot, MOI's new public affairs manager, and Dick Simpson, the senior MOI manager, in the VIP reception lounge maintained by the Indonesian Air Force at Halim Airport in Jakarta. I had been to Halim two years before en route to Irian Jaya, with Simon, the Batak who at that time was the MOI public affairs manager. Mangsot, a Catholic from Manadou on the northernmost peninsula of the island of

Sulawesi, had replaced Simon, whose somewhat rugged Batak demeanor had put off the Javanese in Pertamina, the state oil company, and the government once too often.

At that time, the portion of the airport we had used resembled a Pascagoula bus station at midnight when the only lights were too few fluorescents high above. By contrast, the VIP reception area was elegant. We stood overlooking a well-tended garden planted with flowers that blasted reds, yellows, oranges and green in the midday sun. The air-conditioned room was recently painted and had a plush Oriental rug on the marble floor, with Balinese style furniture arranged for somewhat formal receptions favored in much of the world for showcasing guests on important visits. I went over to a small television to reduce the blaring volume on a 15-year-old American music video that played on the TVRI station. A porter was serving coffee and tea upon request.

At 12:30 p.m., a limousine delivered Dr. Arifin Siregar, 59, the newly appointed Indonesian ambassador to Washington, to the VIP lounge. Born in Medan, North Sumatra, Arifin was educated in the Netherlands and Germany, and possessed a doctorate in economics. He spoke fluent English, Dutch, German and French and had served Indonesia as Minister of Trade and Governor of the Bank of Indonesia. He would replace Abdul Rahman Ramly, the Acehese former Pertamina director, who had been ambassador to the U.S. since November 1988.

Arifin, a thin, dark-skinned man with a receding slickered pompadour, quickly put all at ease with his command of a very elegantly accented English. I had heard that Arifin was a Batak but his suave demeanor was different from what I had expected. It turned out that Arifin is from South Tapanuli, North Sumatra. Though Batak, it was more correct to call him of South Tapanuli rather than lump him with the rugged headhunters from the Lake Toba region, where Simon, the real Batak, comes from.

Arifin quickly charmed us with stories about his tour in the United States during the 1960s when he worked with the World Bank in Washington. He recalled the demonstrations, the hippies, the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, the riots. And of course he remembered President Johnson.

“Tell me,” he said, turning to me, “is it an embarrassment to bring up the fact that Senator Robb is the son-in-law of the president?”

Arifin showed just the right hint of mischief in his question, and we all laughed at Arifin’s consideration of correct protocols. We agreed that since it was such an obvious fact of Robb’s life, it could hardly be an embarrassment. This brought on a discussion about Robb’s reelection fight and a scandal involving sex, drugs and political dirty tricks in which Robb found himself last year, and which in fact is an embarrassment and may yet end his career.



Robb came into the nation's consciousness in 1967 as the ramrod straight Marine officer employed as a social aide at the White House who wound up marrying the boss's daughter. He'd go on to become a decorated combat officer in Vietnam, go to law school and settle in suburban Washington. I first met him in 1985 in Richmond after he had, predictably, gone into his father-in-law's business and become governor of Virginia. In my assignment as Mobil's PR guy in what was then the U.S. headquarters in Fairfax, I inherited an appointment by Robb to a governor's commission of the arts. The commission's mission was to conduct an arts award banquet during which Robb would demonstrate his cultural bona fides and give awards to significant Virginia artists, such as Johnny Cash's in-laws, the singing Carter family, Ella Fitzgerald, and artists and sculptors whose names I long ago forgot. Mobil's role was to help pay for this event, and the various social activities at the governor's mansion and around town. My personal mission was to carry Mobil's shield in all these events and be quiet. Since then, Robb, a conservative Democrat from the South, had done a great deal to make his Democratic Party more responsive to the average Joe and thus more competitive in national elections. In that pursuit he joined with Georgia's Senator Sam Nunn and Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton in founding the Democratic Leadership Council. Throughout the 1980s Robb's name was mentioned with Clinton, Nunn and Al Gore as presidential and vice-presidential material.

But Robb had problems. He was a very popular governor and a successful vote getter, winning 71 percent of the vote in his 1988 Senate race. But he faced persistent rumors that he was a party boy, who liked going to Virginia Beach and hanging out with the broads and guys who weren't too careful about hiding their cocaine while he was around. I was among the many who could never believe these rumors were true. But the rumors did dog him. Republicans used them, true or not. And in 1987, his name came up during a federal grand jury probe of drug trafficking in Virginia Beach. Part of what made this so tantalizing was that Robb was such a straight arrow: married the President's daughter, Marine officer, Vietnam combat hero, movie idol looks, earnest unexciting public speaker, family man, conservative politics.

The Robb story got worse in 1991 with a TV expose about his apparent affair with a beauty queen while he was governor. As this was brewing, reports surfaced that Robb's staff had gotten hold of a tape of a telephone conversation, recorded in October 1988, between then Lt. Gov. Douglas Wilder and a supporter discussing the rumors about Robb's trouble with drugs, parties and sex stories. The tape turned out to be the handiwork of an electronics whiz who got his kicks randomly taping others' wireless phone calls. He was a Robb supporter and, recognizing the political nature of the conversation, saved it. In

1989 the tape found its way into the hands of Robb's staff who would call it "beach music." They thought they could use the tape with reporters, off the record, to demonstrate how Wilder, Robb's arch political foe, was trying to undermine Robb. They were stupid. The tape itself was illegal.

Wilder, by then Virginia governor and a cranky pol who didn't know who his friends were, had become an honest to goodness enemy of Robb's. Posturing the indignities of the violation of his privacy, Wilder whined that he'd been a crime victim and that he'd been illegally bugged, and demanded lawmen prosecute whoever did it. The handling of the tape by Robb's staff and Robb's involvement was so ham-handed that the matter wound up before a grand jury, along with a few campaign financing violations, allegations of conspiracy to violate various wiretap laws, perjury and the like. Robb aides pleaded guilty and for much of 1992 it appeared Robb himself would be indicted. His career was a ruin. Robb's Senate colleagues shook their heads in wonder at his handling of the entire matter, and Robb's Virginia friends abandoned him and their hopes that the Old Dominion might have a president again one day.

Then, in late 1992, reprieve; the Justice Department said the grand jury refused to indict him. Robb was in the clear. He'd dodged the bullet, but the damage to his personal reputation and to his career was done. No more talk about presidential ambitions. Once you've faced jail, your standard for what accounts for success changes.

Now Robb faced reelection. The competition was Oliver North, the retired Marine lieutenant colonel, who had made a small fortune in recent years talking right wing trash and how he was the patriotic mastermind behind the Iran-Contra and other stunts at the Reagan White House.

On the plane trip to Arun, I sat next to Robb's aide. About 30, he called me sir and Mr. Collins, and was a polite and respectful young man. We got to chatting about how it was to work for the senator's subcommittee. He said it has been very interesting, and that this trip was thorough and fast. No parties on this trip. "Senator Robb takes this seriously and is traveling hard and trying to take in a lot. When we were putting this trip together, there was a lot of joking on the committee about Robb looking for votes. Only nobody could figure how many Virginia voters he'd be seeing in Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and Indonesia."



First some facts and a little background. Indonesia has 183 million people and is the world's fourth most populous nation, after China, India and the U.S. Like the western frontier dictates American identity, the most important feature to Indonesians' national psyche is that theirs is a nation of 17,508 islands, in the world's largest archipelago. Of these islands, 6,000 are inhabited by the

peoples of 200 different ethnic groups in a national territory that stretches more than 3,200 miles across a distance equal to that from Seattle to Bermuda.

Every nation and its peoples have their origins in the mists. In the case of Indonesia, the people originated from the successive migrations of Indians, Malays, Chinese and Arab traders over the centuries who brought Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam to the peoples who inhabited the lengthily archipelago. In the 16th century the Europeans came, first the Portuguese, followed by Dutch, English, and Spanish. By the end of the 17th century, the Dutch East India Company had established a firm hold on Sumatra, Java and the Moluccas (Spice Islands) and built its headquarters in a town they called Batavia (now Jakarta) on Java. With the exception of a five-year period between 1811 and 1816, the Dutch held on for three and a half centuries. It was Dutch colonial rule that wove this diverse and disparate thread of earth and humanity into a national identity.

This identity asserted itself in 1927, when Dutch-educated Indonesians formed the Indonesian Nationalist Party, which elevated a young idealist named Sukarno as its president. When the Japanese invaded the archipelago in 1942, nationalists viewed this as liberation from the Dutch and eagerly joined the Japanese Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. But the Japanese blew it, just as they did everywhere they went. The Indonesians' dreams for a better world among Asians turned to a murderous nightmare. As Simon explained to me: "Three and a half years of the Japanese made us forget three and a half centuries of the Dutch."

After Japan was expelled from the archipelago after World War II, Sukarno declared Indonesian independence on August 17, 1945. Now it was the Dutch's turn to blow it. They said no deal, and a four-year war ensued. At its conclusion the Netherlands agreed to union with an independent Indonesia. The fate of Irian Jaya, a province at the eastern end of Indonesia's consciousness and occupying the western half of the island of New Guinea, was left unresolved. The dispute over Irian Jaya provided for ever-deeper resentments in the years ahead.

After independence, Sukarno manipulated Cold War politics and lost his bearings, ascending into ever-thinner atmospheres where madness finally convinced him of realities unseen by others. In 1955, he orchestrated the so called Bandung Conference, during which a gang of Third World shakedown artists assembled and mouthed warmed-over Red lingo about how the West was bad, and to make amends it should turn over property and money. Ever eager to counter the Soviets, U.S. cold warriors bought this line, throwing dough at Sukarno's gang. The U.S. even persuaded the Dutch to turn over Irian Jaya to the Javanese empire builders in 1962-63, who then spent six years employing napalm raids and death squads, defying Dutch and U.N. condemnation, to subdue independent-minded Dani and other Irians who had other ideas than

becoming an obscure eastern province in the Javanese, or rather, Indonesian, quest to fulfill a national destiny.

By now, Sukarno was lost in the ethers, having given the Soviets influence in the government and military and in the labor unions and even trying to invade Malaysia at one point. The country, ever in debt and unable to encourage new investments, was in near economic ruin. Goods when available were too expensive and famine widespread. In early 1965, Sukarno withdrew Indonesia from the U.N. over the Malaysian mess, and the Reds, perhaps at Mao's urging, began muscling in on the government through murder, blackmail and intimidation. One day six senior ministers were murdered in what appeared to all to be a Communist coup attempt.

The reaction, a nationalist counter-coup, was swift. Indonesian patriots, led by Suharto, took power from Sukarno and began a countrywide sweep of Reds that was so ferocious and so Indonesian in its secretive thoroughness that it even now takes the breath away. In the relative blink of an eye, at least 300,000 and perhaps 500,000 so-called communists were butchered. Among them were tens of thousands of Chinese who happened to be handy when xenophobic commanders thought it a good thing to clean up a wayward neighborhood or two of foreign ideologies.

When in Aceh, Mangsot explained the atmosphere at the time. Mangsot lighted a clove cigarette and said that right after the coup he was a student leader at a university at Jojakarta on Java.

"I've never told this to anybody...you see it was..." Mangsot said, pausing and trying to find the words to match the emotions that were beginning to overwhelm him. "All students were suspect," he said, stopping for a few more seconds. "I was so scared. I haven't forgotten. One night after we were asleep, some of us older students, the people from the student government, were awakened by the police. They took to the river. They stood us along the bank and pointed to the river where we knew a few days before there were many bodies in the river. The police said that we should be careful or we would join them."



To understand Indonesia, of course, is to confront the fact that it was a Dutch colony, not English. The Dutch, forced to contend with the dominant Anglo world, were secretive and protective of their turf and uninterested in integrating the archipelago into the wider Western world. Thus isolated, the remarkably mixed up cultural tableau along the 3,000-mile archipelago has remained mysterious and unexplained for centuries to the average English-speaker.

Some say the diversity of Indonesia, just now being appreciated by the wider world, is not only its beauty and also its weakness. The Indonesians fear they could easily turn into an Israel and Palestine or Northern Ireland or

Cyprus or Yugoslavia. They are islands separated, and in their self perception of nationhood, these nation builders see their people as 85 percent Muslim, 10 percent Christian, with the remaining 5 percent Hindu, Buddhist or animist.

Within and among the indigenous Indonesian ethnic tribesmen are 9 million Chinese who made up perhaps 5 percent of the population, and who occupy a position akin to, say, the Jews in Germany after World War I. The Dutch used the Chinese to run the economy, and, it is said, the Chinese today still wield much influence in the commerce of the country. They remain in ethnic enclaves, and not integrated into the wider fabric of society. Simon was once offered a job with a Chinese company in Medan and turned it down. “How can I work with snakes against my people,” he explained with no sense of irony or shame.

Indonesia perceives itself under constant threat from within. Remember the water; a people are literally divided from each other thousands of times. What does this do to the national mind? From a national security point of view, this nation is vulnerable to becoming as separated as its land, isolated from each other and easily led to suspect the worst of their island neighbors across the way.

In the early days, the Indonesian nation builders insisted Indonesians speak one language: Bahasa Indonesia, not Javanese, nor Sumatran, nor Batak, nor Manado. Bahasa, a Malay-derived dialect (in English Bahasa means language), was the patois of no one ethnic group. The nation builders convinced everyone that using Bahasa Indonesia was an act of patriotism, as it ensured that no one ethnic group possessed cultural superiority. At the same, in a nation with so many religious and ethnic traditions, the nation builders adopted a state philosophy, called Pancasila, which is taught to everyone at every gathering, every class room, in all periodicals, in the pledge of allegiance, and woven in symbolic form into the Symbol of the Republic. The national ideology’s inseparable and mutually qualifying principles are:

Belief in One Supreme God
A just and civilized humanity
Unity of Indonesia
Democracy led by the wisdom of deliberations among representatives
Social justice for all the people of Indonesia.

The state motto is: *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which has been officially translated into English as either “Unity in Diversity” or “Many Are One.”



In Indonesia, the trust and peace that come from a common civic faith are grounded in fear. Pieties alone are not enough. In Indonesia, the feds do not fear invasions from Australia or Singapore or Malaysia or the Sultan of Brunei.

The Indo feds fear dissent. Internal security is paramount, lest the awful conflict erupt among the peoples. And only with internal security can an economy grow that will keep the people content. The nation is young, fragmented and fragile, and the habits of civic trust are new. In this environment any act by the Irians, say, for independence is a threat to the nation, a violation of Pancasila. When that happens, the Indonesian send in the army, which acts as a national police force, and napalm. If agitators on East Timor demonstrate, they may be shot. If Acehenese separatists continue to foment rebellion in Aceh, those known may be taken from their beds and dragged into the street at night. Their hands will be bound behind their backs, and their throats slit. Their neighbors will see the dead in the street when morning comes.

The trouble on the island of Timor began when socialists elected to power in Portugal in the mid 1970s gave up their imperial colony of East Timor as unworthy, and withdrew their forces from the eastern half of Timor island, located on the southern rim of the Indonesian archipelago. To an Indo fed looking at the map, East Timor stretched slightly northward aiming (dangerously) at the center of the cluster of islands trying to form a single nation. If East Timor, a half-island, tried to assert its independence with boundaries stretching in an arch into the water at the heart of Indonesia, the secure symmetry of the Indonesian nation would be altered.

What if this new nation became a Red base in the center of Indonesian archipelago? At that time, Reds were about to win the Vietnam War. A world still in the grip of the Cold War wondered, too. The U.S. forces were exhausted by 12 years of war in Vietnam. Did the United States and Australia wink, send money to the Indonesian military, provide arms and planes and bombs? Why were President Ford and Secretary Kissinger so visible with Suharto at the time? Did the U.S. want the Indonesians to snuff Reds? In 1976 the Indonesians annexed East Timor and began a pacification program that turned into a war in which some 100,000 were killed.

Such conversations between official Washington and official Indonesia occurred on many levels over the years, with some levels not knowing what the others were doing, and with new participants walking into the conversation late and not knowing what has been said before. To those involved on both sides with each other over time, this has become a very frustrating exercise as it becomes clear that past relationships no longer hold the weight they once did and that ignorance is more often the rule in deciding what will be said and done.

Now years later, with a new generation in power in the West, we have a situation where the same gang that made war on Reds in the mid 1970s with U.S. blessings is faced with the results of a November 1991 demonstration in the East Timor town of Dili in which a demonstration at the funeral of an local separatist turned tragic.

The demonstration got out of hand. The local commander ordered his troops to open fire. More than 100 were killed. The shootings were witnessed by BBC's Yorkshire television, which made video of the melee; a writer from the *New Yorker* magazine, and a reporter from National Public Radio in the U.S. Among the dead was the son of an American journalist who lived in Malaysia, and who described the life and death of her student son with such terrible beauty in an op-ed column in the *Wall Street Journal* that the incident moved the world.

Suddenly, the Dili demonstration entered the mainstream of the Western consciousness. The usual things were now to be said by the usual people who appear when moral outrage is required for public consumption. Political leaders in the civilized world were under pressure to do something. U.S. training of Indonesian military was suspended. Portugal moved for sanctions in the U.N.

In Rhode Island, where Portuguese-Americans vote in large numbers, many called on their U.S. senator, Claiborne Pell, to act. As chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Pell traveled to Indonesia for discussions and asked to go to East Timor. Suharto said no. Pell, under pressure at home, now had to say some things, too. The official conversation between the United States and Indonesia was going in the wrong direction. Friends began to worry.

Now, more than a year later, how the U.S. was to treat Indonesia was on the table of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Chairman Pell was waiting for a report on the subject from subcommittee chairman Robb. We arrived in Jakarta on Saturday, August 14, and on page one of the *Jakarta Post* was a large headline illuminating the government's eagerness to be seen now as reasonable.

After the Dili massacre in November 1991, the government investigated and slapped the hands of the local military commanders. The treatment of the demonstrators was somewhat different. After a trial, the Timor rebel leader, Jose "Xanana" Gusmao, was sentenced to life for leading an armed separatist movement called Fretilin. The worldwide human rights community howled foul.

Indonesia's friends hoped they would get smart. And on page one of the August 14 newspaper was the headline "Xanana Sentence Reduced to 20 Years." The article stated that Xanana, in appealing for clemency on June 19, had admitted his guilt and apologized. Did the government believe that the U.S. ambassador would show Robb this headline and story the next day? Could the timing have been an accident?

That same day, Suharto at the presidential palace received 35 tribal leaders from East Timor who "denounced Portugal (and) reiterated their commitment as part of Indonesia" according to the news report. These tribal chiefs,

called “liurai,” were pictured in the paper as bowing in a line to Suharto, who gave each a red and white Indonesian flag as a token. The chiefs read from a statement saying that since July 17, 1976, the East Timor people had proudly been citizens of Indonesia. “We firmly reject Portugal as the administrative power in East Timor because the Portuguese government acted irresponsibly when it quietly abandoned East Timor in August 1975 during a state of civil war,” the chiefs said.

The liurai, according to the news account, “called Portugal’s demand now to pursue the decolonization process through a self-determination act as unrealistic and no longer appropriate...they also charged Portugal with trying to impose communist rule in 1975 as a condition of decolonization...” Suharto agreed with the liurai. Political stability is crucial for economic development; the 17 years of integration has proven the virtue of putting development at the forefront, Suharto said. “I think you yourselves witnessed the differences both physically and spiritually, between 460 years under colonial rule and the 17 years that you have been part of Indonesia.”



Political stability grounded in ruthlessness has been integral with the economic growth that has occurred during the last 25 years. When the anti-Communist counter coup brought Suharto to power in 1967, the average annual income was \$50; 60 percent of the people lived in poverty. Since then, foreign investment had grown annually, reaching \$10 billion last year alone. After Suharto took over political stability, despite how it’s achieved, has nurtured an economy that has grown an average of 7 percent a year. In the 1970s the oil and gas boom (including Mobil’s discovery in 1971 of the Arun field, one of the largest natural gas fields in Asia), prudent investments and economic planning began to transform the country. Half the country has been electrified. Health care and preventive medical clinics have taught birth control, diet and hygiene. Infant mortality has dropped, the birth rate has been reduced from 2.4 percent in 1965 to 1.8 percent now. Today GNP is \$150 billion and projected to break \$215 billion by the end of the decade, when the average annual income will be \$1,000. Today only 15 percent of the people live in poverty.

This economic growth didn’t occur by accident. A series of islands unified by a sense of common purpose whose chief tenet was resistance to colonial power had to rely on its military, Bahasa Indonesia and Pancasila. Most countries marshal a military to protect themselves against foreign threats. Indonesia saw no threat from foreigner invasions. All threats to Indonesia were internal. To keep such internal threats under control, Indonesia had to rely on marshalling its work force and its economy into a coherent unity.

The Indo feds declared more than 150 industries (oil, rice, shoes, textiles,

autos, electronics, etc.) as critical to the nation's economic security. Such industries would be administered by government ministries. Since all persons employed in these industries work at government direction, they are, in effect, government employees. These companies could be privately owned or publicly traded on a stock exchange. But the charter, or license, to do the business must be approved by the government. If a foreign company wishes to do business, the government must approve its license. Because their motive is to develop local business, the foreign company will be assigned an Indonesian partner company in a joint venture, and the activities of that joint venture company will be administered by the government. As a result, employees of the foreign joint venture company are government employees as well.

In the case of Mobil Oil Indonesia, this relationship is complicated by the fact that the oil and gas industry is a government monopoly. Pertamina, the state oil and gas company, is the partner to all foreign oil companies, such as Mobil. In effect, Mobil Oil Indonesia is a contractor to the state oil company, with the state getting 70 percent and Mobil Oil getting 30 percent in a production sharing contract, or PSC. A shorthand has developed; companies like Mobil are called PSCs. Pertamina has 40 PSC companies as partners who have contracts in 140 areas across the country. Less than half of these areas produce oil and gas; the rest are places where dreams are made.

Under this arrangement, Mobil Oil Indonesia employees are government employees, a fact they take seriously indeed. All MOI employees, even expats, wear a badge on their shirt pocket that is symbol of KORPRI, the association (union) of government workers. KORPRI has leaders and subleaders, who are chosen in some subtle and mysterious Javanese method by the ministries and the employees themselves, who subsequently become power centers themselves. The current leader of KORPRI is Simon; his predecessor is Mangsot, who had been KORPRI leader the previous six years. In effect, the PR function for Mobil Oil Indonesia is making sure Mobil and the government know what each other wants.



In the West, labor unions grew when working people were not treated right by the owners of capital. Exploited workers banded together and gained power from collective action, either by withholding labor and demanding better conditions, wages and benefits, or voting freely in elections to change laws. This process had its beginnings in the last part of the 19th century. By World War II the issue was settled. Unions had legal standing, a voice in government, a say at the bargaining table and were getting what they wanted, if slowly. In the U.K., unions actually took over the government. Since then, unions have faced the fate earned by their own success. The middle class that grew prosperous because of union activity in the first half of the century, decided by the

end of the century they didn't need the union any longer. Unions now look for new worlds to conquer, new members to enlist in their cause of human dignity and have turned their sights on the developing economies of the world, particularly Asia. Thus Indonesia, swelling with riches from its expanding economy, comes into view and its treatment of its workers the subject of discussion in Georgetown townhouses.

Is there freedom to bargain at the table for higher wages, greater benefits, safer work conditions, and elimination of child labor? No. There seem to be so many people in uniform around. Why can't the AFL-CIO organize in Sumatra or Java? Why aren't there strikes, collective bargaining systems? Unions in the West and their supporters in the human rights community demand labor freedom now. The people who are obliged to listen to such talk are members of the U. S. Senate, particularly Democrats like Chuck Robb.

One of the reasons Robb was in Indonesia was to find out why many in the American labor movement wanted to suspend the General System of Preferences for Indonesia. The GSP is the systematic removal of tariffs for nations that export goods to the United States. GSP is routinely allowed for more than 120 countries, and is only suspended when a particular nation does something the U.S. doesn't like and the U.S. wants to express its dissatisfaction.

Under the GSP, Indonesia was allowed, for example, to export duty free some \$600 million in goods to the U.S. in the first 10 months of 1992. That year, several groups petitioned the United States Trade Representative to remove Indonesia from the program. These advocates said that Indonesia has no free labor unions, pays low wages, does not respect worker's rights and exploits child labor.

On Robb's committee was a newly elected liberal from Wisconsin named Feingold who within weeks would introduce an amendment to suspend GSP for Indonesia because of labor violations, as well as the abuse of human right in East Timor and Aceh. The fact that a Wisconsin liberal would carry this kind of water for his patrons is no surprise. Feingold was a sixties style New Lefty who came from Madison, the university hometown, perhaps one of the most liberal constituencies east of Santa Monica.

Mickey Kantor, however, was another matter. Kantor is an L.A. lawyer and fund raiser for left wing pols, who also has made a fortune working for big time corporate clients, including Mobil, which once retained him to help out on air quality permitting for the Torrance refinery. Such skills earned him a partnership with Charles Manett, another L.A. lawyer well connected in Democratic Party circles and who was chairman of the Democratic Party during the Carter years.

After Clinton's victory, Kantor was named U.S. Trade Representative.

Kantor's biggest task will be to engineer the politics needed to win congressional approval for the North American Free Trade Agreement, which would create a barrier free zone among Canada, the U.S. and Mexico, a most worthy end but which is bitterly opposed by the AFL-CIO.

Organized labor also opposed the GSP for Indonesia because of imports. Kantor, in trying to knit the NAFTA deal, did what any L.A. pol would do: give the NAFTA opponents a bone. As an incentive, Kantor tossed in Indonesia's GSP, utterly ignorant of its implications for the U.S. in Asia, and said he'd recommend a suspension. In April 1993 Kantor said he would recommend suspension of GSP to Indonesia because it had not taken steps to adhere to internationally recognized worker rights. Friends of Indonesia launched intense lobbying. Fortunately, Kantor had acted unilaterally and violated several internal executive department protocols, which would allow Commerce, State and other agencies such as the NSC and CIA to offer opinions. Kantor's only ally in the Cabinet was the Labor Secretary. Finally, President Clinton agreed to delay the issue until September 1994 for further study, which included the Robb visit.

But other forces went to work. On the plane trip to Aceh, Ambassador Arifin asked whether Indonesia needed to retain new counsel in Washington, which most agree is necessary, and which is meaningful because the quality of the lobbying you have in D.C. is critical on all subjects. As the conversation continued, Arifin said that he had been contacted by the Manett law firm, Kantor's former partners, who suggested they could be very helpful representing Indonesia on the GSP issue. Ambassador Arifin was seeking to learn the ways of Washington. How is a friend to answer such a question?

Ambassador Arifin knows the U.S. and Indonesia have national interests that transcend current politics. Indonesia aspires to act on the world stage; but on its own terms. Suharto is president of the Non-Aligned Movement and as such considers himself a voice for the Third World, and takes time to make speeches at the United Nations from the Non-Aligned pulpit. Along with Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, and Brunei, Indonesia is a member of ASEAN, the Association of South East Asian Nations, a regional association put together to promote trade and mutual security. ASEAN is a counterweight to Japan Inc. and Red China, who give their Pacific neighbors hives. One of ASEAN's missions is find a way to keep the U.S. military in the neighborhood, now that the Philippines has decided that domestic politics has made Clark AFB and Subic Bay Naval Base politically incorrect. ASEAN nations all want the U.S. to keep its military presence, despite the fact that Filipinos tossed the U.S. out for domestic political reasons. They don't like Japan, fear the North Koreans and consider Red China the greatest menace of all. Politics isn't the problem with China. It is the mere fact that one in five human beings on the planet is

Chinese. Being entrepreneurs, the Indonesians know that in business, anybody with a 20 percent market share owns the market.



When we got off the plane at Aceh, we were escorted to a van and driven right to the PT Arun plant, where natural gas is processed into LNG for transport to Japan and Korea. Arun is a very important place to Japan and it was important that Senator Robb see it. The van toured the plant, which is situated along the beach overlooking the Strait of Malacca. The plant was gleaming in the sun. The palm trees waved in the wind, which blew over the surf rolling onto the beaches. You'd think you were in California, except for the three-foot lizards that scampered around the berms sunning themselves. We saw a massive LNG tanker in the manmade harbor loading up, while another empty tanker lay offshore waiting. More than 210 cargos are sent from PT Arun a year to Japan and Korea. Japan gets 20 percent of the LNG it uses a year from PT Arun, which is equal to 10 percent of its energy needs.

The van dropped us at the administrative building, where Senator Robb and the two ambassadors were greeted by the dozen members of the PT Arun management team. All but two were Indonesian, with the two ex-pats, both Texans, seconded Mobil guys, one in operations and the other in technical departments. After nearly 20 years, the plant was well run by Indonesians, who were plenty smart and qualified to operate any plant anywhere; most were graduates of USC, Wisconsin, Michigan, MIT, Virginia Tech and the like. In fact, PT Arun is one of the safest plants in the world, according to the British Safety Council, an insurance outfit, which has given the plant eight "Sword of Safety" awards, more than any other in the world.

Robb was escorted into the briefing room, where coffee was served and a modern audio visual show gave the plant the Madison Avenue treatment about how it supplies customers, is technically and financially significant, and how well it fits into the community. There were lots of photos of the Acehnese praying, dancing, at school, in clinics. The manager of the plant then introduced his direct reports, who were pleasant and open and eager to please. They were proud of their plant and of themselves, and it showed. There was no denying the heft and professionalism of the place. We could have been in a refinery or gas plant in Port Arthur, Texas. Robb was struck by the size. The PT Arun LNG plant has six operating trains, or processing units, and each one would cost \$1 billion to replace.

"One billion," said Robb over and over. "Unbelievable!"

But American politics was stuck in Robb's head. We were in Aceh, designated a special province by the Indonesian feds since 1945 in honor of its singular crankiness in defying central authority, be it colonial or federal, in a state-controlled (American built) gas plant that supplied Japan with 10 percent of its

energy. Before him were a dozen managers of this industrial colossus, and watching were a senior official of their government, the Indonesian ambassador to the United States, as well as William Barry, the U.S. ambassador to Indonesia.

“Is there any matter involving labor that you would care to tell me,” Robb asked, working his words around in an obtuse way but finally finding his way as he searched for a way to ask whether this group felt exploited by their country or whether plant employees in their trust had complaints. “I know this may not be an easy subject to discuss, however, are employees here treated in a way that is consistent with...”

This was an embarrassing moment; one I wasn't quite sure how to gauge. Here we had a U. S. senator, an intelligent guy, a son-in-law of the U.S. president who had led the war in Vietnam, asking senior technocrats who are employed by their country as operators of an energy plant to discuss worker rights in terms that would be meaningful to American labor unions and human rights advocates. Did Robb believe he would be given information that would verify the worst that he had been told in Senate briefing rooms? This query and its motivations were so completely out of place that I was surprised the manager's response was civil: Employees of PT Arun were paid perhaps three times the amount paid by other plants in the area and about equal to what would be paid if the plant were in, say, suburban Jakarta

Give Robb credit, though. The question of union and human rights nagged him. He was considering matters in Washington, as the Senate's point man on trade and military relations with Indonesia. Human rights and labor advocates in the States had assured him that the people in Aceh (and East Timor) were being oppressed by Indonesian fascists and that workers in Indonesia had no freedom. Robb kept chewing this bone to resolve these political allegations with the reality before him. The fact was he was going to need answers when he returned home.

After the plant tour, we drove to Bukit Indah, the Mobil residential compound nearby where some 57 Mobil managers who work at the Arun Field reside with their families. All but a dozen of the families are Indonesian. Bukit Indah (Bahasa for Beautiful Hill) was as attractive as I had remembered it; familiar now too, recalling memories of previous visits, the tastes of the mango and pineapple, the smells of the jungle and now feeling as comfortable as South Florida, where you could easily believe you were. Palmetto shrubs and palm trees dotted the landscape, which were well tended with grasses and flowers, both wild and tropical.

We drove the Robb party to the Guest House, where in the living room, the senior ex-pat, Bruce James, briefed Robb about the Arun Field, which still contains 8 trillion cubic feet of gas and is one of the largest such fields in the world. James, 50, is a Texan whose position is field producing operations manager. He is Mobil's senior man in Aceh. Mobil had just completed a \$750 mil-

lion construction project to install booster compressors to maintain pressure in the field so that production would stay consistent and Mobil's profit stream would continue through the decade. His briefing was clarity itself, and Robb listened politely, though he was clearly becoming tired and had to fight heavy lids. Finally, the U.S. ambassador, frustrated with the day's developments and lack of hard information, broke through the fog.

"Gentlemen," Barry said, aiming his comments at the MOI American employees nearby, "we have a U.S. senator who is chairman of the subcommittee on Asia here in Aceh, and he will be returning to Washington in a few days to consider some important questions dealing with Indonesia. One of those is the situation with the Aceh separatists. I am holding a letter in my hand from Amnesty International that alleges that more than 2,000 people have been killed in recent months. What do you have to tell the senator?"

Well, give the ambassador his due. He couldn't have been more forthright. Apparently diplomacy was practiced a bit differently than I had thought. Seated next to him was Arifin Sirigar, the new Indonesian ambassador to the U.S. As Ambassador Barry waded around the Amnesty International paper, I thought that Ambassador Arifin might have snapped the old Yiddish theater gag: "Hey, what am I? Chopped liver?"

James stepped forward and did the best he could, explaining that the figure 2,000 seemed out of line.

"I live here with my family, and, frankly, if that number were true I wouldn't have them here," James said, truthfully, though it was what we had rehearsed earlier. He went through the other point we had discussed earlier, too. "We have our own sources here, of course, among our employees who live here and who talk with each other and their families and neighbors, and we've been keeping a rough tally on the numbers of incidents and the dead. We have the figure at closer to 200 over the last two years or so, but none in recent months," James explained.

"That 2,000 figure just doesn't seem to match anything we heard. Now there are some incidents, where police will arrest someone and he will be held incommunicado for a while, we have heard of that. In fact one of our own employees was held that way. He was suspected of stealing a Mobil van that was used in an ambush of an army post and then abandoned later. The police picked him up from his home and he was held for months."

I had become involved in that incident more than two years before because of correspondence with Asia Watch, a subsidiary of Human Rights Watch, whose director had visited Aceh as a guest of the rebels and had a great deal of detail about abuses and murders. I had learned at that time that to call these guys rebels and their death murders was, well, perhaps not the best terminology.

"Hey," a manager of MOI said to me then, "you think we're somehow

going to be against the police and army because they are rough. No way! These guys are protecting us and our families. You think we want rebels going around the place ambushing our plant, shooting our people, perhaps shaking them down in their homes? What do you think would happen to our business, then?"

I had to admit that I hadn't thought of it that way. I could see this wasn't a simple matter of the good guys (rebels) versus the bad guys (Indo feds). And here was James, not making that argument, only simply stating the facts as he knew them: The reports of massacres and the like were overblown. What was at hand was shooting, counter shooting, sniping, counter sniping, minor action bringing about minor reaction. No sweeps through villages, no napalming of mountainsides, no death camps, no death squads.

James turned to two of the Acehnese employed by MOI at Arun, one named Imran Ayack, a devout Muslim and former college professor who as Mobil's community relations manager, administers a local giving program that costs the company \$200,000. Imram tried to explain the history and the realities of the area, but his accent was so thick and his manner was so differential, he had no credibility.

Hours later, Imram cleared up the confusion caused by his heavily accent and convoluted explanation to Robb, and gave more details about local gang wars. We got the U.S. consul general from Medan to listen to Imran's details about the local gang wars. She knew the story and assured us she would send a paper to Robb about what Imran had tried to say.

That paper would explain that the current wave had its origins in the early 1950s in the early days of the republic when the Acehnese ulema, the local religious leaders, organized the Daico Islam to express concern about the secular state the Javanese were building.

Daico Islam had enough respectability to be credible with the U.N. and in the Muslim world. An Acehnese named Hasan Tiro was part of that group and learned how to manipulate Western political forces. Raids were organized from Malaysia into Aceh, and for a time the Daico Islam commanded some respect among the people, the ulema, and the intelligentsia. But soon the federalism manufactured by the Javanese and their police forces began to erode popular support. Among the more successful tools of nationhood was the Arun gas field and the prosperity it brought the Acehnese.

Hasan Tiro, however, never gave up. He became a leader of what now called the GPK, the Acehnese separatist movement. His headquarters is in Sweden, where he no doubt has access to the large human rights community in those environs and who is the source of Amnesty International's source for the 2,000 dead in the propaganda war against the Indonesia government in the West.

The guy who won the day with Robb was Mashyur Alyadrus, an

Acehnese of about 43 who had been identified as a “talent” during a local Mobil training program 15 years before and who was now on the verge of becoming the senior Indonesian in MOI. I’d heard Mashyur’s potential was so high he could easily be senior management in Fairfax. I’d met him in HQ six months before and within moments of our talk, he showed he understood the basics of the MOI public relations program and had some suggestions how to make it better. The guy is clearly one of Providence’s elite.

“To be frank, Senator, the number 2,000 is just not what we can verify,” Mashyur was now saying. “As Bruce said, maybe 200, but that was some months ago. It is very quiet now. As for attacks on villages, I simply don’t know what to say. I have never heard of such a thing. This is a very tight community, where most people are related to each other, and word of mouth is very important. I haven’t heard of anything like Amnesty International describes. What I would say is that the attacks are more random raids. Perhaps they attack an army outpost and the police and army counter attacks those they can find out who were involved. I wouldn’t call them representative of any people here. They are more like armed robbers, or a gang of extortionists. They have no support among the people. In fact, most of the people I know fear them and are happy for government and army protection.”

The ex-pats were taken aback. Mashyur’s words were so appropriate, so coherent. They were precisely correct. There was nothing to do but marvel. No one had time to preview or help him with his arguments. His words were from the heart.



We’d done our best. We walked down to the compound’s common building where the swimming pool and clubhouse was located. Their Bukit Indah’s Indian caterer prepared a dinner. It was all fine, except he did not prepare enough pineapple, the Acehnese being the best in the world. By the time Robb came to the fruit plate, it was all gone. Robb never knew what he missed.

After dinner, he would fly to Medan and then on to Singapore, where the next day Robb would have lunch with Mobil’s marketing and refining leaders, tour the Jurong refinery and get an earful about the growth of the Pacific markets and how Mobil, his largest constituent at home and a business of some century-long experience in Asia, was going to grow with it. He said he’d never dreamed that the Arun operation was so vast, or that Mobil had such facilities in Asia. “I’m thoroughly Mobilized,” he joked with the people in Singapore.

But now in Bukit Indah after dinner, Robb made his rounds shaking hands, saying goodbyes and making small talk. He was pleasant and easy with the people. When he came over to me, Robb joked that he’d taken some chemical engineering in college, but remembered nearly nothing.

“Your trade secrets are safe with me,” he told me. I wished him luck in the

'94 campaign. He nodded.

“Well, Senator,” I joked, recalling the teasing he had taken from the Senate staff, “I’m probably the only person you’ve seen in Aceh who can actually vote for you.”



We saw Ambassador Arifin twice more; once at a luncheon hosted in his honor that MOI management held at the Mercantile Club, a penthouse dining establishment in downtown Jakarta furnished in English Club Style, complete with mahogany walls, deep carpets, white gloved waiters, and fox hunting prints on the walls. It was my duty to give the talk detailing the corporate overview, describing Mobil’s worldwide exploration and producing, chemical, and marketing and refining operations before quickly turning it over to the senior MOI managers who described in considerable detail Mobil’s oil and gas strategy in Indonesia.

Ambassador Arifin listened politely and over lunch we discussed global political and economic matters: the merits of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the controversial Maastricht trade pact recently approved in Europe, and the economic boom in Asia. Then he steered the conversation toward the need for the U.S. to understand Indonesia’s historical realities and its unique view of its heritage and destiny. This guy was good; real smooth. The ambassador was a pro.

Two days later, at a luncheon jointly hosted by the Indonesian-American Chamber of Commerce and an association of Indonesians who had formerly been students at American universities, we ran into Ambassador Barry and Ambassador Arifin again. Barry said reports about Robb’s trip were positive. He indicated that both he and Arifin would work out details of a road map toward reform that would satisfy the Senate critics and at the same time work toward improving unions in Indonesia, the end of child labor and the like. This road map would be welcome in Jakarta, too, as the speakers at the luncheon were clearly urging Ambassador Arifin to take these questions seriously and help the Indonesian government reform and modernize itself.

Arifin, walking the tightrope, nodded that there was much he heard that he could agree with. “But I should remind you,” he said, hoping to make a light point, “that the most dangerous position for a man in political life is to be in the right at the wrong time.”

Weeks later, after Indonesia’s friends in the U.S. had talked up the problems Indonesia was having in Washington, the *Wall Street Journal* on October 1 published an editorial asking why Washington was content to nibble the Indonesians to death like so many ducks: the post-Portuguese colonial era in East Timor, Aceh, trade union policy....

Can these issues be the sum total of our interest in Indonesia? It is one question to raise such concerns with Indonesians, but quite another to let them dominate the dialogue. All this can do is poison relations for no substantive gain. The Indonesian government can be expected to trumpet to good effect its tough-minded resistance to Yankee pressure. The Indonesians do seem to have a better grip on the fact that some strategy is called for... Unlike other Asian governments, Indonesia has been enthusiastic about Washington's participation in regional confabs... We don't see anyone asking the simple questions: what are U.S. interests in Indonesia? Are American actions serving those interests? How are U.S. actions playing out in Asia? And finally: does anyone in Washington care?



I learned that my world has become smaller during errands one afternoon. I was at Block M, an open market area in Jakarta that surrounded a modern department store called Parsarya. On Melawi Street I picked up a \$13 pair of glasses from a street vendor to replace the pair that had broken earlier.

"Where from?" he asked, using a street merchant's instincts to connect with his customer.

"USA," I said.

"Ah," he said, smiling and revealing missing front teeth. "CLEENTUN."

Inside the department store, which had the design, style and goods that could be found at the Mall in Springfield, Virginia, except for the Indonesian items, batik fabrics, and the carved masks, puppets, statues, faces and other provocative images. I purchased several for gifts, including one of Indonesia's national seal, of the Garuda bird with the Pancasila shield over the birds' chest, over the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*.

The image has a somewhat martial quality, but upon closer inspection looks much like the American seal which has an eagle with arrows, lightning bolts and a shield clutched in its talons. I thought this Indonesian seal might look good in my office, along with the Javanese and Balinese faces and wooden faces.

With these purchases in hand, I stood at the counter waiting my turn. Suddenly, up walked the most familiar of faces. It was Bill Whiting, a former Mobil lawyer I had worked with in March 1983. We both were part of the Mobil team struggling in Albany with Governor Cuomo over his attempt to hike taxes on only a handful of "large" petroleum companies to pay for subway subsidies. Unfair, we shouted to all who'd listen. *The Daily News* ran an editorial cartoon showing Cuomo at bat against a pitcher with a Mobil across his chest. Cuomo's bat had the word taxes written on it, and the pitcher's ball was the U.S. Constitution. The original art for the cartoon was subsequently framed and given to the Mobil chairman when Cuomo months later signed the law that raised taxes fairly across the board on all business receipts, not

just big oil companies. By that time I had been promoted to E&P for the first time.

By then Whiting had also been transferred to E&P, to work as a lawyer in New Orleans on Gulf of Mexico projects. He and his family fell in love with the town. When the local company, Freeport McMoRan, offered him the post as vice president for the Office of General Counsel and Government Relations, he jumped ship. Freeport operates a massive copper mine in Irian Jaya. Whiting is now an old Indonesia hand and he and I, now standing in this shopping center, traded tales about our current assignments. For the most part, we just shook our heads at the working mojo that had us run into each other here as though it was Tysons Corner.



Tuesday, August 17, was Indonesia's National Day, and we had insisted that we wanted to see the festivities. Mangsot told us to gather at 7 a.m. in a large parking lot next to the Mobil building. I didn't have any idea what to expect. Of course, the day marked the 48th anniversary since the declaration of the republic in 1946, and the beginning of the war with Netherlands for independence. The *Jakarta Post* the following day published photos of celebrations throughout the archipelago, from legions of uniformed Boy Scouts being received by President Suharto at Merkedda (Freedom) Palace to photos of barebreasted grandmothers in Irian Jaya celebrating independence by racing small pigs to the cheers of near naked villagers.

I had awakened hearing the whistles and military style cadence chants of teenage drill teams marching outside the hotel at dawn. By the time we got to the parking lot on Ratu Plaza, it was clear the entire city was organized to celebrate the occasion. In the parking lot we found that more than 500 Mobil Oil Indonesia employees were gathering along with a like number of employees from eight other PSC companies. Everyone was dressed in the blue cap, and blue and white uniform shirt indicating their membership in KORPRI, the association of government employees.

For the next 10 minutes, I was greeted by dozens of my Indonesian colleagues I had worked with over the past few years either in Fairfax or Jakarta. I was dressed in normal business attire, and we joked that we must have missed the memo telling us to wear our KORPRI uniforms. The Indonesians, who were wearing the uniforms as a custom, understood that their dress conveyed their employment had a standing that was more than just Mobil; their dress conveyed even patriotic meanings. Knowing how Americans view uniforms, they weren't sure how we would react. When they realized that we respected their uniforms they thought my joke was great fun.

We gathered in the lobby of one of the nearby buildings overlooking the parking lot, waiting for the festivities to begin. Wives of many senior Mobil

people arrived dressed in a caramel colored uniform dress indicating they were the spouse of a KORPRI member, and as such had certain hospitality and ceremonial chores. The senior Mobil ex-pat manager there was the number three man at MOI, a Texan named Paul Calder, who is well liked by the Indonesian employees as a fair and respectful person. Calder is among the few Americans who actually favors a local fruit called durian, whose odor and taste is so pungent that being able to stomach it has become a test of cultural tolerance.

The organizer of the event was Simon, who was now back in the human resources department and a key KORPRI organizer. Simon introduced me to his wife and other PSC managers, from Conoco, Arco, Union and Shell. He also made sure he introduced me to the representative from the government at the ceremonies, G. Nayoan, the director of E&P for Pertamina, the state oil and gas enterprise.

I had met Nayoan before on a recent trip to Fairfax HQ. At the moment, he was considering how to sweeten the PSCs' pot to encourage more exploration. Right now there are 60 geological basins in the country, 27 percent onshore 63 percent offshore, where geologists say oil and gas could be found. The problem is that under the current arrangement there isn't enough incentive to get companies like Mobil to find it. There are 50 PSCs in 140 contract areas in the country, but fewer than half of those areas are actually producing oil or gas. Pertamina needs more production, and therefore more revenue. The first incentive package developed by Pertamina was in 1977, with sweeteners added in 1989 and 1992. Right now, it's a 70/30 deal, with a set tax rate. Mobil and the other PSCs have argued that the share should be increased to a 35 or perhaps 45 percent take to encourage more exploration. Stay tuned.

We made small talk, and soon it was time for the ceremonies to begin. I had thought that I would stay inside and simply watch the events unfold. But I saw Mangsot and Simon conferring. Mangsot came over to me and said: "You should be in the reviewing line with Calder."

"Are you sure?"

Mangsot assured me this was the right thing to do. I prepared to assume these duties by buttoning my jacket and running a comb through my hair. With the others, I began my walk outside and passed Simon, who, as engineer of this little tableau, winked at me.

"Ahhh, Inspector!"

The ceremony lasted about 45 minutes, and included the playing of recorded music, the raising of the Indonesian flag, a brief speech by Nayoan and the ambulation of a uniformed guard of men and women in front of the eight groupings of PSC employees. The reviewing line included the senior KORPRI leaders from the PSCs, who happened to be Simon and Mangsot,

and Indonesian managers from Shell, Conoco and Mobil. I was one of the few Americans.

The ceremony was entirely in Bahasa, of course. My mind wandered throughout, as I tried to stand as close to attention as civilian bones would allow. Listening to the language, and hearing the cadence of the tones, it was obviously the kind of speech I had heard at, say, the Green Common in Guilford on Memorial Day. What struck me was the order of the people observing the occasion, in rows and in blocks according to company. Men and women alike were dressed in the same textile shirt, with the KORPRI symbol, and the blue baseball style cap was worn by everyone. Some of the women were careful to make sure the cap did not ruin their hairdos, while some of the men were imprecise as to how the cap's brim pointed. They were engineers, after all, not fashion models. Despite the uniform, the people were a symphony of skin colors, facial variations, and body shapes reflecting the diversity of their ethnic makeup.

At one point in his speech, Nayoan said the word Pancasila and I heard the assembly repeat what was obviously a pledge to the Indonesian state philosophy: 1) Belief in One Supreme God; 2) A just and civilized humanity; 3) Unity of Indonesia; 4) Democracy led by the wisdom of deliberations among representatives; and 5) Social justice for all the people of Indonesia.

Here was nation building at its origins, I realized, evoking real emotions among all these people. Any fair-minded witness would find it easy to endorse these principles as very similar to the fundamentals of our own democracy, which have their revolutionary appeal around the world. The Indonesian nation builders probably had read the same books that Ho Chi Minh read when he wrote a declaration of independence for Vietnam after World War II that borrowed language from the U.S. Declaration written by Thomas Jefferson in 1776.

I thought then about the Indonesian Garuda seal that I had purchased. And the motto beneath the shield displaying the symbols of Pancasila and the motto Unity in Diversity. But I compared these official translations with what the young girl said who sold it to me. She barely knew English, and her accent was very thick. What does this mean, I had asked?

"Different, But The Same," she said.

Her translation found the sentiment better, I thought.