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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

INDONESIAN FIRST DEPUTY PREMIER SUBANDRIO

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
Office of Current Intelligence

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
13 December 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Indonesian First Deputy Premier Subandrio

1. At the time of the abortive insurrection on 1 October First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Subandrio was probably the second most powerful man in Indonesia. His scarcely disguised drive for power had raised him to great heights within the Indonesian state, but his tacit alliance with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in the past few years had won him the enmity of the army, and he is now a major target of the army leadership. Intensely ambitious, highly agile, shrewd, and capable, Subandrio has been for the past two years Sukarno's political heir in all but name. His intelligence and force of character, coupled with a high degree of unscrupulousness, make him still a man to be reckoned with.

2. Subandrio has had a somewhat checkered career, which has been spent almost entirely within the Indonesian bureaucracy. Trained as a doctor, he was educated in Java, where he was born in 1914, and evidently had no chance to travel abroad during his formative years. As a student during the few years he practiced medicine he engaged in nationalist activities against both the Dutch and the Japanese, associating himself with the anti-Japanese movement led by Sultan Sjahrir. In 1945 he opted for a political career,



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joined Sjahrir's Socialist Party (PSI), and became a member of the newly-formed republican government. He was made Secretary General of the Ministry of Information in 1946, served as the Indonesian representative in London in 1947, and was appointed ambassador to Britain in 1950 when Indonesia became fully sovereign. In 1954 he was made ambassador to the USSR, and in 1956 he returned to Indonesia as secretary general of the Foreign Ministry. He was made Foreign Minister the following year and became a member of Sukarno's "inner cabinet" in 1959. His rise has continued to be rapid since then.

3. Subandrio has, however, no political base of his own. He was abroad when the PSI split in 1948 and did not formally rejoin the reconstituted party under Sjahrir, which was eventually banned in 1960 after becoming implicated in the rebellion of 1957-58. Subandrio remained politically unaffiliated until 1958, when it was revealed that he had joined the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI), which was then close to President Sukarno. He has, however, played little or no part in PNI affairs, and probably cannot be considered to have been a PNI member for the past few years. Subandrio owes his position entirely to the patronage of President Sukarno, who appointed him to a series of important governmental posts with responsibilities in several fields, and made him first deputy premier--the number two governmental slot--in 1963.

4. Subandrio is useful to Sukarno in a variety of ways. He has a retentive mind and is a master of detail--an asset that is especially helpful to the President, [redacted] Subandrio is also a flexible and extremely able negotiator, perhaps the best in Asia. He is intelligent and forceful but has never opposed Sukarno on a major issue. [redacted]

[redacted] Subandrio has acted to implement Sukarno's policies rather than to initiate his own and has been most acute in recognizing and perhaps anticipating the direction in which the President's thoughts are running. In general he has served as Sukarno's faithful satrap, but the relationship between the two men is probably

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more complicated than simply one of master and servant, for Subandrio has probably helped to reinforce and strengthen Sukarno's convictions and prejudices.

5. At the time of the 1 October insurrection Subandrio held a variety of posts of great influence within the government in addition to his Foreign Ministry portfolio. As first deputy premier he had a major executive voice in the Indonesian administration. As head of the government-owned news agency, ANTARA, he was able to publicize widely his own activities. He controlled the Central Intelligence Organization (BPI), which he operated as his personal fief and which had penetrated virtually every sector of Indonesian life as well as all government organs. Through his direction of the Supreme Body for Retooling the State Apparatus (KOTRAR), he had authority in selecting and removing government personnel and in channeling the activities of governmental and semi-official organizations. In the past year, Subandrio gained control also over Indonesian foreign trade, which not only made him a major factor in the private sector of the economy but probably enabled him to increase his own wealth--a useful asset [redacted] [redacted] bribery is often used as a political tool.

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6. Subandrio was also a powerful behind-the-scenes figure in the educational field, for the ministers of higher and basic education owed their positions to him. Through bribery he was able to exert control over the powerful and extremely politically-minded radical student movement. He also offered to become the patron of the Moslem Student Association and established contact with other Moslem youth and labor groups in an effort to become the protector of those elements within these bodies that would be willing to follow his lead in order to save their organizations from being banned. In addition Subandrio maintained close working relations with the left-leaning head of the air force, Omar Dani, and attempted to remove the head of the navy by supporting the leaders of a short-lived mutiny last year.

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7. Above all, in the past two years Subandrio had formed an alliance of convenience with the PKI. Sukarno was clearly favoring the party, and Subandrio apparently felt his best interests lay in cooperation with the Communists. This was a purely opportunistic move on his part and was certainly not the result of ideological conviction. Subandrio believed the PKI represented the wave of the future in Indonesia and hoped to ride that wave to obtain power in his own right. He used his various posts to promote and protect PKI adherents, giving them a particularly free rein in ANTATA and in spreading Communist propaganda through KOTRAR-sponsored indoctrination sessions. He also formed a close alliance with crypto-Communists in the Indonesian cabinet. As a result he expected Communist backing in any bid by him for the Indonesian presidency following Sukarno's demise; and indeed until 30 September PKI members were claiming that he was the logical successor to Sukarno. The Communists doubtless saw in him an admirable front man in a PKI-dominated state.

8. The one major power factor that Subandrio had not brought into line by last autumn was the army. The extent of his complicity in the 1 October insurrection, which if successful would have eliminated the army from the Indonesian political equation, is still not clear. He undoubtedly had some advance knowledge of the plot and was probably aware at least of the main outlines of the coup plan. He was a key member of the Revolutionary Council that Colonel Untung hoped to set up and has been implicated in the confessions of both Untung and PKI Central Committee member Njono. His first reaction to the events of 1-3 October was to minimize the whole affair and to attempt to restore the status quo ante. This also was Sukarno's approach to the problem. However deeply involved he was in the insurrection, there is no doubt that Subandrio would have greatly benefited from the elimination of the army as an effective political force.

9. The 1 October affair has proved not only a serious miscalculation on the part of the PKI, but also a body blow to Subandrio's own ambitions. The army, which has distrusted him for years, is

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convinced that he was a prime mover in the insurrection and now hates and fears him more than ever. Using anti-Communist Moslem groups as its spokesmen, the army is mounting a major campaign to remove him from office. Subandrio's hold on the BPI has been weakened and his influence in ANTARA virtually eliminated. KOTRAR has been largely bypassed and is now generally inactive. An anti-Subandrio cabal appears to be developing within the Foreign Ministry. Subandrio no longer has a voice on the operational level of the Supreme Operations Command (KOTI), which appears to be emerging under army direction as a kind of "super cabinet," and his tentative alliance with the left-leaning Moslem groups has completely dissolved. The navy has allied itself strongly with the army. The air force has adopted a more equivocal position, although the new air force commander, Herlambang, evidently still consults frequently with Subandrio.

10. Subandrio's power position has consequently been greatly weakened, but he still holds posts of great nominal authority, and a reverse swing of the political pendulum could quickly restore much of his former power. He is now in the process of changing his political coloring in the hope of making himself more palatable to anti-Communist political forces in Indonesia. Recently he has not only publicly attacked the PKI as a "betrayers" of the Indonesian revolution but has also accused Communist China of interfering in Indonesian internal affairs. Privately he has said he expects the PKI to be banned soon, and he apparently views this development with equanimity. He has also remarked privately that he was naive in attempting to work with the Communists, adding that he no longer trusts the PKI or its allies.

11. This new facade is not surprising, since Subandrio is in essence an opportunist, and the PKI can no longer help him. With the PKI out of the picture, he must rely on Sukarno alone to protect and support him. The President may prove a weak reed on which to lean. He has already given some signs of willingness to use Subandrio as a scapegoat to direct criticism for the present imbroglio away from himself. In a recent confrontation with Defense Minister Nasution Sukarno accused Subandrio--in the

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foreign minister's presence--of spreading slanders about the army. If Sukarno, himself a political opportunist, thought it expedient, he would jettison Subandrio tomorrow.

12. In this sense Subandrio is a barometer of the President's relations with the army. If Sukarno feels that he is not strong enough to resist army pressure, Subandrio is likely to be removed from Indonesian political life. If he continues to survive in office, this may be a sign that the President feels that he can out-wait and out-maneuver the army leadership. In any event, Subandrio's chances of eventually succeeding Sukarno in the presidency have been greatly reduced. But so long as he remains in office he will, given his intelligence, agility and unscrupulousness, continue as an important and sinister factor in Indonesian politics.

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