The Conference in Retrospect

"It's been a week of hectic hard work, but it's been worth it" is a common remark this week end amongst the 2000 at the Conference.

At Colombo in April-May, 1954, Premier Ali Sastroamidjojo of Indonesia brought forward the idea of an Asian-African Conference. The five Premiers at Colombo discussed the desirability of holding such a conference, and favoured the proposal that the Prime Minister of Indonesia should explore the possibility of holding it.

Later in the same year the Prime Ministers of India and Burma joined with Premier Ali in making public statements in favour of the conference. Abroad, however, not much heed was being paid. "Afro-Asia", as the press christened the idea, was thought little more than a slogan.

In December came the Bogor Conference. The five Prime Ministers could agree on the purposes that the Asian-African Conference would have, they could agree on the nations to be invited. It was decided that the Conference should be held and that invitations should be sent out.

Asian and African countries began to show interest in the idea, but, at least in some cases, scepticism still remained. Externally, the idea was often ridiculed.

But there were still many difficulties in the way of success. How many of the 30 countries invited would actually accept when the time came? Could Indonesia, could Bandung, provide facilities for such a gathering? Could there be guarantees of Indonesia's ability to ensure the maintenance of security? These and many others were the doubts expressed in the Asian and African countries, as in the outside world.

Some doubts were dispelled when it was clear that 29 of the invitations had been accepted, but many queries remained until the very eve of the Conference, especially in the non-invited countries.

With the arrival of the delegates in Bandung, however, doubts began to be dispelled rapidly. Externally, opinion was faced with the fact that the countries invited had accepted, and that the delegations did arrive. This in itself could be seen to constitute success for the idea.

In Bandung, accommodation and transport, conference buildings and press facilities, were ready to function effectively. Furthermore, the security measures which had been taken gave no one the feeling of being restricted in his movements. Crowds and excitement notwithstanding, the atmosphere was remarkably normal. The Indonesians could see immediately that the preparations which had been made by the Joint Secretariat, aided by various agencies of the Indonesian Government, were nothing to be ashamed of. The overseas visitors were generous in the comparisons they made.

On Monday morning the Conference began. Delegation after Delegation passed down the decked streets, and walked up to the main Conference hall between the press of people which lined the cleared roads.

The note struck by the two main addresses, of President Sukarno and the newly-elected Conference President Ali Sastroamidjojo, was humanity in its highest and widest sense. A number of those present compared the atmosphere with that in the early days of the League of Nations and at the time of the signing of the Atlantic Charter.

The hope which the addresses created was stimulated further by a number of practical decisions made quickly. One was the decision that the Conference should work by unanimous agreement, rather than by decisions arrived at by voting and a simple or two-thirds majority. Another was the agreement that there should be no political committee, as earlier envisaged, but a series of less formal meetings of Delegation Heads.

In the following days, a number of the difficulties which had been predicted made themselves felt. In the opening plenary addresses of some of the Delegation Heads, and later, reportedly, in closed meetings of the Economic and Cultural Committees and in those of the Heads of Delegations, the differences of policy long known to exist between various of the participating countries expressed themselves, sometimes very forcibly.

In discussions on what constituted colonialism, on "peaceful co-existence" and the well-known Five Principles, and on a number of particular regional issues, the points of view adopted were often in contradiction to one another. There was some degree of justification for the pessimism of much of the reporting of the Conference at this stage, but there was misreading of the situation in so far as it was reported as a portent of the failure of the Conference. It did prove possible to keep the work of Conference moving forwards.

At the end of the Conference, the mood is a very different one. Among the delegates and visitors in general, and the representatives of the sponsoring countries in particular, there exists widespread satisfaction at the ostensibly results of the Conference.

Of notable importance is the fact that, on every occasion where partisan feeling on a particular issue became intense, the good offices of one or another leader of the Conference were able to prevent the creation of
an impasse. This in itself is a reflection of the atmosphere of goodwill, and of the serious desire for mutual compromise and agreement in the face of the urgency of the situation, which was present on all sides.

A number of developments, not actually part of the Conference but clearly a contribution towards its aims, have helped to mould the atmosphere of hope. One of these is the signing of the China-Indonesia Treaty on Dual Nationality, which took place on Friday. Another is the Treaty of Friendship between Indonesia and Afghanistan, which was signed on Sunday morning.

The last working session of the Conference, which lasted for virtually the whole of Sunday, produced no easy agreement. But the fact is that it did produce agreement. Moreover it produced a great deal of satisfaction among the delegates. As the working session closed, with the adoption of a vote of thanks to the President, Secretariat, and Rapporteur, the delegates all looked happy.

The results of the Conference cannot, of course, be measured at the present time. Clearly one of the most important ways in which it was to achieve its objectives was that of informal contacts and discussions, some of which are no doubt still going on, and the outcome of which is necessarily undisclosed. Such contacts have certainly been established on a great many levels, including the highest.

History, of which the delegates at Bandung were so consistently conscious, will judge the significance of the Conference.
Left:
At the street with Javanese bridal dress
Saudi Arabian support

Right:
Ladies at a tea
Delegation houses
PLACES

THE CONFERENCE

[Images of people and buildings]
The Memorable Last Day of the Conference

Sunday, the last day, found excitement mounting through both the meeting halls and the streets of Bandung. As the closed sessions at Dwi Warna building went on far longer than the schedule provided, the crowds in the streets became denser and denser.

Within the Dwi Warna pressmen waited patiently outside the closed doors of Conference Room No. 2. But almost without a break the session continued into the afternoon.

In the Conference hall at Gedung Merdeka it was announced at 3.25 pm that the open plenary session closing the Conference which had been set for 3.00 pm was postponed. A murmur passed over the crowd, which was already pressing restless against against the lines of police and their jeeps, standing opposite the entrance of the main Conference building, Gedung Merdeka.

Within the Conference building the press room and refreshment bar were filled to capacity. Pressmen and photographers who had plane and train reservations out of Bandung for the late afternoon worriedly checked their watches. Small groups were seen anxiously consulting each other. What was happening? What was to be the climax of this historic week?

Suddenly at just on six fifteen there was a stir. The sirens of the police escorts could be heard in the distance. The excitement of the crowd became greater and greater. Then at last the delegates came, one little group after another. Most of them looked tired, but they clearly weren't disappointed. In a businesslike fashion they got into the session as quickly as they could, photographers and pressmen notwithstanding. The Conference Secretary asked the pressmen to leave the front of the hall and immediately the President opened the meeting.

The first item of the agenda was the Secretary's reading of additional messages to the Conference. A very long list it was, from the Presidium of the Mongolian People's Republic to the Formosa Democratic Independence Party, Tokyo, from the Indonesian Association in the Netherlands to the Foreign Missions Board of the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A.

Then the final communiqué came. It was clear to the audience that the long delay had been due to the problems which the drafting of this communiqué presented. Firmly and clearly the Conference Secretary, Roeslan Abdulzani, read the whole of the lengthy text. At every important point one or two pressmen left the galleries to get to the teletypists. Right through there were whispers in every part of the hall, with delegates and pressmen commenting to one another about the items that they had not expected — but concentrating at the same time, so as not to miss any part of the conclusions.

From seven till almost ten, eighteen of the twenty-nine delegation heads presented their closing addresses. The speakers thanked the Conference Chairman, the Indonesian Government, the Joint Secretariat and the people of Bandung for all that they had done to make the Conference a success. They were unanimous in their appreciation of the cordiality and good fellowship which had characterized the whole of the Conference. A number of the speakers commented on the specific achievements of the Conference, but almost all of them emphasized that today was a beginning not an end.

The final speech was the one of the Conference President, which we reproduce in this issue. When it was over the doors of the Conference hall were opened and the shouting of the crowd reached a pitch that was quite unprecedented. It was raining but the people of Bandung were determined to see the leaders of the two continents, on this their last opportunity. The delegates in their little groups walked to the front of the building, waved to the cheering crowd of onlookers, and walked off in the direction of Hotel Homann. It was a striking sight to see the Prime Ministers of India and Indonesia, clearly happy and oblivious of the photographers all around them, strolling together down the middle of Bandung's main street.

The reception at the Hotel Homann, given by the Prime Ministers of the five sponsoring countries, had been scheduled to begin at seven o'clock. It was after ten before it began, but by this time it was clear that the work to be done had been done. There was every reason to relax.

The lobbies of the Homann were full till the early hours of the morning with little groups discussing the meaning of Bandung for the future.
PERSONALITIES

Vice President Hatta and Mr. Subardjo of Indonesia stand beside Momolu Dukuly, Head of the Liberian Delegation.


We wish to express our sincere thanks to the management and all the employees of N.V. Visser, Bandung, for their excellent cooperation which has made the daily publication of this Bulletin possible.
The people of Bandung have taken much pride in preparing their city for the A.A. Conference. Though not offering luxury, they have earned praise for the good taste shown in the amenities they have provided.

Approximately 2000 guests, including members of delegations, pressmen, film-men and photographers, have been accommodated, for this purpose 17 hotels and 21 houses were requisitioned by the Indonesian Government. They were all redecorated and additional furniture installed: new linen and cutlery, thermos jugs and coat-hangers are examples of the smaller items which had to be thought of.

For those people with special food requirements, such food as Madras curry and Arabic nuts were imported; the export brand of local coffee was supplied to all establishments, and many European foods were imported.

Traffic routeings within the city were altered for the convenience of people attending conference meetings. This was not so easy to arrange, because the two main conference buildings are rather far from each other, and traffic routeings had to be of such a nature that, whilst the immediate environs of the conference halls were free to traffic for the delegates and press, the rest of the city was open for its normal business.

In practice, it proved that Bandung's traffic authorities are to be complimented on the way in which this problem was dealt with.

For a block or so along all entrances to the conference buildings, all roads were closed to all kinds of vehicles other than those bearing the special labels of the Conference. Special police, Boy Scouts, and a force of school boys and girls — the latter distinguished by their white uniform — kept the traffic flowing and, from time to time, checked the credentials of vehicles and their passengers entering the area.

Pedestrians, however, were entirely free to enter the area, but were kept clear of entrances in order to allow ease of access to delegates and conference workers. In this way, the public was able to come to very close quarters with delegates, and, naturally enough, autograph hunters were to be found everywhere.

Every day throughout the entire length of the Conference, the pavements in front of the Conference buildings were never entirely free of onlookers, who stood along the sidewalks, in shop doorways, and at every point of advantage, patiently waiting for hours at a time in order to see the people of so many different nationalities going about business of such importance.
THE SHOWS AND EXCURSIONS

A number of permanent shows were arranged in Bandung during the length of the Conference. "Cultural shops" were open to Conference people at a number of different centres, the chief one of which contained a horticultural exhibition and an illustration of the batik process, besides many artistic goods for sale.

Another Exhibition was one of oil and Chinese paintings which was on show in a nearby Chinese school.

Two organised excursions were arranged, one to the volcanic crater of Tangkuban Prahu, whose long flat top rises above Bandung city, and the other to Bogor's world-famous Botanic Gardens.

A number of the larger restaurants in Bandung were chosen as the site of nightly entertainments featuring Indonesian dancing, music, singing and drama.

CONFERENCE SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Although pre-conference social activities started in Djakarta almost a week before its formal opening in Bandung, the formal opening of the Conference "season" was the reception held by the President and Vice-President of Indonesia and their wives, at the Governor's Residence last Monday night, April 18th.

Following this official function, which was attended by most of those participating in the Conference, were many private parties given by Chief Delegates and other Conference leaders and their wives, from which the press were excluded. Other private gatherings were given by individuals and groups for friends in the hotels and private houses.

A number of Delegations gave receptions and cocktail parties for the press, at some of which films were shown. Other film shows from the participating countries were open to both press and Delegation members.

Various women's committees were active in providing teas and other social functions for ladies attending the Conference.

The reception to mark the end of the Conference was given by the Prime Ministers of the five sponsoring countries on Sunday 24th April, at the Savoy Homann Hotel.
Prince Feisal of Saudi Arabia (right) and a member of his delegation with Minister Siradjuddin Abbas of Indonesia.
on the Opening Day.

Premier Ali Sastroamidjojo with Sir John Kotelawala and a member of the Syrian Delegation.