

19/Aug/1946  
It is with feelings of sincere joy and thankfulness that I write you this letter two days after celebrating the first anniversary of our Republic. Naturally we are all overjoyed to find that, in spite of the hard knocks we took during the past twelve months, we have not only survived but gone on from strength. As you will be able to realise for yourself, we who bear the responsibility of government faced some anxious moments in the early days of our existence when the whole weight of two powerful imperialisms was ranged against us. But even in our darkest moments we felt instinctively that our friends would stand by us; and events have justified our conviction.

The will and determination of our people and the heroic manner in which they faced the severe tests of Surabaya, Bandung and the other places where Indonesian blood flowed in such wanton profusion undoubtedly played an important part in safeguarding our independence. Nevertheless it is equally true that we owe much to our friends and well-wishers the world over who so generously championed our cause and strengthened our belief in the justice of our struggle. Their exertions on our behalf, especially at the bar of public opinion, has made us their debtors for all time.

In these circumstances it was only natural that we here should have turned our eyes towards India - and in my opinion we were entitled to do so - because your country and your people are linked to us by ties of blood and culture which date back to the very beginning of our history. The word "India" must necessarily always be part of our life for it forms the first two syllables of the name we have chosen for our land and our race - it is the "Indo" in Indonesia. This Jogjakarta from which I write is - like Java, Sumatra and most other place names - an Indian word; my very name itself is eloquent testimony to the great extent to which we have fallen heir to the rich culture of your ancient land. And, at this very moment of writing, the first ship to take rice to India is being loaded at the port of Probolinggo, which is made up of two words "Purba" meaning first, and "Kalingga" - it was the place at which the first Indians set foot on Indonesian soil, the Kalinggas who came here in search of the wheat from which Java derives its name. It is mere coincidence that fate has conspired to make history turn full cycle, or is it a happy augury for a resumption of the close relations which were severed when our respective countries surrendered their birthright to alien rulers and exploiters?

Politically, too, we have learnt much from you for your national struggle for liberation has inspired and guided our own

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movement here. Seeing that we have looked to you for so much, it is any surprise that we should have turned to you this past year when we fought with our back to the wall? Could anything be more natural than that? Unfortunately the bulk of the Allied occupation forces here were Indian and it was inevitable in the nature of things that these Indians and Indonesians should have found themselves ranged against each other on the field of battle. But that made no difference to our national relations because we understood how it had come about. I must digress here to relate to you something that happened during a tour I made last year, in company with many foreign correspondents, when the battle of Surabaya was at its very height. After I had addressed a mass rally of a hundred thousand people, one Indian correspondent - Mr. Kidwai - asked if he could say a few words. He addressed the gathering and said: "If India had been a free country, Indian troops will still be here as they are here now, but with a difference - they would be fighting for you and not against you". The ovation which Mr. Kidwai received amply proved how well my people understood the true situation. There spoke the true voice of India.

Yes, we know how you felt about all this, and we know too how hard you have striven to recall these troops and to give us the benefit of your moral support. These can never be forgotten. That is why, when Mr. P.S. Mani asked Mr. Sutan Shahrir whether Indonesia would help India with rice, we agreed without any hesitation whatsoever. Our only regret is that we cannot do more.

For the goods you are giving us in exchange we are deeply grateful especially for the textiles. The three years of Japanese occupation plus the present blockade being maintained by the Dutch have made our clothing position acute. This also applies to many consumer goods which cannot be produced by us.

Your personal help in all these matters, the kind words of encouragement you have repeatedly sent us and the way in which you have made the world conscious of the Indonesian question are matters for which we can never sufficiently thank you. But Indonesians can never forget what you yourself or what India has done for us. Ingratitude is not one of our sins. Therefore, we shall always cherish the help and good will we have received from you and, when all the present difficulties have passed, we look forward to friendship and fruitful co-operation with you. Meanwhile please accept my best wishes and sincere thanks. We hope it will not be long before you can come here in person to see for yourself just how deep is the affection and respect we have for you and for India. Till then, Merdeka!

Yours sincerely,

*Ir. Soekarno*