

A Desirable Leader:

Reflection of the Populist Characteristics

Jakarta: Mizan

By *S. B. Pramono & Dessy Harahap*

Reviewed By

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There is no country that is successful in its management without intervention of a leader. The leader is the spearhead of the success of a country. The thought, effort, even the habit of the leader are capable of making people follow and treat them like an idol figure/a celebrity. A successful leader will always be honored while those who fail will usually be scorned and even removed.

The book entitled *Pemimpin Yang Dirindukan: Refleksi Karakteristik Kerakyatan* (A Desirable Leader: Reflection of the Populist Characteristics) written by S.B. Pramono and Dessy Harahap contains brief biographies of several Indonesian national leaders that have been under the spotlight both nationally and internationally. They were the forerunners of promoting diversity in Indonesia, and their existence won respect from other nations that saw Indonesia as a nation of dignity. There are thirteen (13) major figures who made Indonesia a great nation through their thoughts and services, namely: Sukarno, Mohammad Hatta, Sutan Syahrir, Muhammad Natsir, Haji Agus Salim, R.A. Kartini, Supomo, Muhammad Yamin, the Great Commander Sudirman, Ki Hajar Dewantara, Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX, Yap Thiam Hien, and Hoegeng. They were born to the nation, raised in a distinguished and educated family, and held prominent positions of their era. Being easy to read, straightforward and communicative makes this book so interesting and attractive that it should become a reference for the youth who have 'intent' to be a leader.

Sukarno and Muhammad Hatta, the proclaimators, for example, are said to have a simple personality and great managerial ability to run the country. Sukarno's famous appearance made him the Indonesian men's fashion trendsetter. His idea of wearing a cap, white shirt and suit jacket, long and short-sleeve 'safari' shirt have now become one of the nation's typical national clothing. For Sukarno, a dress code was an important image which was necessary for political purposes, not for distinguishing between the nobility/educated and the common people.

Unlike the flamboyant Sukarno, Muhammad Hatta was a figure depicted by Marvis Rose (Australian historian) with typical leadership characters, resolute, courageous, and optimistic; his attitude was ultimately able to bring Indonesia's independence while under the pressure of the colonizers. The author noted that the creativity of Hatta had been obvious since his youth; his love of science was shown by his collection of more than 30 thousand books in his private library. Hatta also was recognized as a human rights fighter that contributed to the drafting of the Constitution in addition to his efforts to include the subject of the economy and people's welfare in section 33 of the constitution before being amended. Another name who fought for independence of Indonesia was Sutan Syahrir, an eminent diplomat who also implemented his ideas in the Government. His ideas won international recognition of the struggle of Indonesia to become a sovereign state after World War II. Another freedom fighter whose struggle was recognized by Soekarno and Hatta was Muhammad Natsir. Sukarno once said of Natsir, "Hij is de man" (he is the man). Hatta also recounted that President Sukarno would not sign the government's decision if it was not prepared by Natsir. This indicates Natsir's influence on the government's policies. His strength was founded on simplicity that became his hallmark. What he displayed during his term in office is hardly found now, because Natsir's simplicity was no longer practiced by current the leaders of Indonesia.

If Natsir was known for his simplicity, another leader who participated in the struggle of Indonesia's independence and known for his brilliant diplomacy was Haji Agus Salim. His intelligence was excellent as he was able to master nine self-taught foreign languages (Dutch, English, German, French, Arabic, Turkish and Japanese). His diplomacy skills were superior and he possessed all the requirements to be a diplomat i.e. a vast knowledge on history, culture and civilization, international law, mastery of foreign languages, a simple and calm personality. Agus Salim, according to the author, was friendly but always alert.

Similarly, the author also narrates the same thing about the other freedom fighter who established a strong foundation for the nation, R.A. Kartini, who is described by as being able to think one step ahead of her time. Then, Supomo who was among the first generation of legal experts in Indonesia better known by the public as the initiator of the five basic principles of the nation in the first meeting of the Agency for Preparation of the Independence of Indonesia, namely: unity, democracy, social justice, solidarity and deliberation. Interestingly, his critical and concern with the fate of the nation was demonstrated with rejection of human rights in the Constitution. He

argued that human rights are products of an individualistic state, a gift of nature and the state.

The book also recounts the life of the Great General Sudirman, a commander who was able to position himself between two extreme ideologies. Despite his profound loyalty to Islam, he did not show the attitude of fanaticism and intolerance. Another name that showed his existence in the field of education was Ki Hajar Dewantara. Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX also played an important role in the revolution and development of the nation. Yap Thiam Hien, a fighter of the rights of the minorities was also known as a thinker who dared to oppose the policies of the rulers if perceived unfair and prejudicial. He proved it by disputing the article 6 of the Constitution which stipulates that the President of the Republic of Indonesia is a native Indonesian. The last name to be covered in this short biography is Hoegeng. He was so phenomenal that he was called the legend of anti-corruption movement because during his office as the Chief of the Indonesian Police, his integrity and honesty have become a unique image in the police force. President Gus Dur once said, "In Indonesia there are only three honest policemen, namely the sleeping policeman (speed bump), the statue of a policeman and Hoegeng."

What the author tries to convey through the short narrative is a fact of history that must be known to the younger generation and the future leaders as this book tells about the national fighters who may be unknown to the public at large especially to the younger generation. As Bung Karno said, "My struggle was easier because I fought to expel the invaders, but it will be more difficult for you as your struggle is to fight against your fellow countrymen." This indicates how heavy the responsibility of the current younger generation is. Despite its interesting and inspiring content, the book only tells about the positive side of the 13 (thirteen) freedom fighters; it does not display the minus/negative side that we all can change and should not be repeated by the next leaders of the nation.