

## DIPLOMATIC DISPATCHES

Nora Boustany

### Envoy's Crash Course in Bush Transition II

**M**any ambassadors are boning up on Secretary of State-designate **Colin L. Powell's** autobiography, "My American Journey," studying the lineup of the old-guard comeback kids of "supply-side" economics and getting to understand what the incoming administration is all about.

Indonesia's ambassador to Washington, **Dorodjatun Kuntjoro-Jakti**, a man of ideas, is trying to come to grips with the term "compassionate conservative." He has become "addicted to the polls" and C-SPAN to follow what happens in Congress. "I watch the polls. I call this the instant-plebiscite era."

"We have to come up with good reports to send back to our capitals," he said, sipping jasmine tea in his majestic office with mahogany paneling, high ceilings, 20-foot gilt mirrors and marble columns. The ambassador focuses on gauging how the recent interest rate cuts and economic slowdown here will affect economies in Southeast Asia: "Are we going to have a soft landing on our hands, or are we going to have a soft landing at all?"

Ever since he was dispatched here in 1998 at the height of the Asian financial crisis, Dorodjatun has had to be a crisis manager. Capital flight to the tune of \$20 billion brought Indonesia to its knees, and the economic expert and government critic who understood the dynamic of the collapse was asked to help his country by going to Washington.

"I had been fighting [former **President Suharto**] all my life, criticizing his policies and using figures," the bespectacled envoy said.

Suharto, who imprisoned Dorodjatun for more than two years for speaking out and leading student dissidents, was toppled within 10 weeks of the ambassador's arrival here. Dorodjatun had to downsize his embassy, close offices around the country and forbid his staff to work nights, because "we did not have the money to pay our electricity bill."

Working around the clock because of the 12-hour time difference with Jakarta, Dorodjatun strategized and lobbied to secure \$15 billion from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Export-Import Bank as well as grants from the United States over three years. He arranged for hundreds of thousands of tons of cereals, soybeans and rice to be shipped to Indonesia from here, as about one-third of the country's population of 180 million plunged into poverty because of the crisis. "We were on the verge of mass hunger. It was touch and go. It was hell," he recalled.

He eventually sought help from the Ex-Im Bank to lease six 747 jumbo jets to transport personnel to help plan the first free and open elections since 1957 in Indonesia, a country covering 3½ time zones, roughly the distance between Moscow and Dublin.

No one expects a level-headed and

hard-boiled economist to joke about "going to bed with my tie on," a standard reply to how he likes Washington, or to be heard belting out **Marlene Dietrich** songs in German after dinner with friends. He goes to work when Jakarta is still sleeping and works until 2 in the morning.

When President **B.J. Habibie** took over from Suharto, the ambassador flew home repeatedly to brief him. It was not always pleasant: "I brought harsh messages. What I tried to do was to keep perceptions on both sides on an even keel. I was like the guard at the diplomatic bridge," he recalled.

He talked about Indonesia's 300 ethnic groups and more than 200 religions to explain the backdrop to his country's security problems and the overarching role of tribal and community leaders linked to the military. On Aceh and other problematic provinces, he said: "It is a nation-building process that is going to require decades."

He credited American universities for infusing university students at home with ideas of modernization, the supremacy of the judiciary, press freedom and a free market system, and more recently the drive for good governance.

#### Bank Invests in Homeless Men

Four years ago, when **Jennifer A. Sullivan**, the deputy general counsel at the World Bank's International Finance Corp., was volunteering at the Gospel Rescue Ministries, which house and counsel drug-addicted men, it dawned on her that their problem was self-esteem.

She arranged for some of them to volunteer at an animal shelter, walking dogs and taking care of cats. They were "very employable," she realized, and 24 of them have worked at the legal department of the IFC in the last four years, moving on to other jobs in the corporation and to the private sector. "We definitely had work they could do—filing, data entry, messenger and mailroom work," she said yesterday. Volunteerism spread in her department and a mentoring program for the homeless began.

Rep. **Tony P. Hall** (D-Ohio) is presenting World Bank President **James D. Wolfensohn** with an award today for IFC's outreach effort.

#### Singapore Ranks as Most 'Global'

A study released Monday by the A.T. Kearney consulting firm and Foreign Policy magazine said tiny Singapore ranks as the world's most "global" country. The global index listed countries according to patterns of income distribution, lower levels of corruption and higher levels of political freedom compared with "less global" countries. The Netherlands ranked second and Sweden third. The United States came in 12th.