



INDONESIAN ELECTIONS

Election posters of the various political parties decorate cities and villages throughout Indonesia.

studying this problem, the Indonesian Government drew on the experience of other countries to see whether their techniques could be adapted to the peculiar needs of Indonesia. While the voting procedures of Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States were considered, it was found that those followed in the general election in India three years ago were perhaps most suitable.* It will be recalled that in the Indian elections the parties had chosen distinctive symbols such as a bullock, a sheaf of grain, a tree, etc., which the voters could readily identify. This system was adopted in Indonesia. The ballots for each seat had printed on them the symbols of the parties contesting the seat and the voter indicated his choice by punching a hole with a nail or a bamboo stick through the symbol of the party he supported. Because of the large number of parties, it is not surprising that the ballots in some districts contained as many as 60 to 80 symbols and were over two feet square. Nor is it surprising that some voters had difficulty in choosing between the many symbols, among which were the bull of the Nationalist party, the star of the Socialists, the rosary of the Catholic party and the hammer and sickle of the Communists.

The Campaigns:

In the circumstances it might be doubted whether, in spite of the labour devoted to preparing the mechanics of the election, the Indonesian people had any real chance of making a meaningful choice. However, the basic principles and practices of democracy are not completely unfamiliar to Indonesians. Dutch colonial policy for some three centuries had preserved the indigenous

* See "External Affairs", January 1952.