

FROM THE ASHES - THE RISE AND FALL OF THE PKI



A SHORT HISTORY OF THE
INDONESIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

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INTRODUCTION

Twenty-five years ago the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was the largest aspiring revolutionary party in the world with three and a half million members. Six months later it had been effectively destroyed and up to a million people lay dead. Yet this was not the first time the PKI had been crushed. Three times in fifty years the PKI rose up and three times it was crushed - most terribly and tragically of all following the events of September 30th 1965.

Why did it happen? This pamphlet will attempt to answer that question and in doing so focus on a number of basic themes and theoretical questions that recur throughout the Party's history.

But this has not been written simply for historical interest. We believe the lessons of Indonesia are of burning relevance today throughout all of the ex-colonial world. The theoretical questions that confronted the PKI are fundamentally the same as those that confront activists today throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America, and it is to those serious activists that this pamphlet is aimed.

The pamphlet pretends to be nothing more than an *introduction* to the enormously rich history of the PKI. Whilst there are many books on the subject (some of them very bad), to the best of our knowledge the history of the Party has not been condensed into pamphlet form since PKI leader Aidit's 'official history' three decades ago. This will be an extremely critical look at the Party's history, yet it must be stated that despite all the criticisms it is quite clear that, over 50 years, the PKI attracted to its ranks the cream of several generations of Indonesian society. The news of the annihilation of the Party was a terrible blow to the whole labour movement internationally.

25 years on and the capitalist press throughout the world beat their chests and daily trumpet their message, "Marxism is dead!". Yet for all the talk of the triumph of capitalism, the class struggle continues unabated, particu-

larly in the ex-colonial world. It is perhaps fitting that this pamphlet is being produced now, with virtually all the leaders of the labour movement internationally singing along with the capitalists, hang-dog style, to the the funeral songs for Marxism.

Our analysis is quite the opposite.

In Indonesia the ideas of Marxism have run through the history of the working class movement like a backbone. And despite all the killing, all the torture, all the imprisonment and all the repression, you cannot kill ideas. Yet at the same time those ideas have suffered decades of Stalinist distortions, some of which still linger. To analyse and correct the distortions is of crucial importance and it is hoped that this pamphlet will be of assistance.

Furthermore, as the new generation of Indonesian activists know, a revolution never has been, nor will it ever be, won from within the walls of a seminar room. Political theory is of crucial importance, but not for its own sake. The whole point of theory is that it is a guide to action. As the brave old PKI leader Aliarcham, who died in the Boven Digul concentration camp said, "Study while struggling: without study it is impossible to struggle!"

We are fully confident that far from being dead, the ideas of Marxism will come once more to be the driving force behind the mighty Indonesian labour movement when, from the ashes, it rises once again.

It is only a matter of time.

September, 1990.

The Early Years

The communist movement in Indonesia sprang from an unusual source. A year before the First World War, the winds of revolt were blowing through Java. Amongst the Dutch colonialists there was widespread alarm. Thousands of miles away Lenin wrote, "A significant development is the spread of the revolutionary democratic movement to the Dutch East Indies (the old colonial name for Indonesia) Parties and unions are being formed at an amazing speed. The government is banning them, thereby only fanning the resentment and accelerating the growth of the movement."

Dutch colonialism was vicious. An American visitor wrote, "A Polynesian transported to a scene of conventional Javanese activity would at once devoutly believe the worst that the missionaries had told him about hell." So great was the exploitation of the Indonesian masses that a major part of Dutch social capital formation in the nineteenth century was financed by wealth extracted from Indonesia. Yet for the Indonesians themselves, living standards were either stagnant or declining.

A writer who himself had been a plantation boss wrote of Javanese contract workers, "They may not run away from their work for that is forbidden by their contract which the ignorant, misled coolie signed somewhere in Java ... They are doing forced labour, or if you like they are slaves. The coolie slogs from morning till night, toiling and stooping; he has to stand up to the neck in stinking marshland, while greedy leeches suck his thin blood and malaria mosquitoes poison his sickly body. But he cannot run away; for the contract binds him. The *tjentengs*, the watchmen and constables of the firm, who have the strength of giants and are bestially cruel, track down the fugitive. When they catch him they give him a terrible hiding and lock him up, for the contract binds him."

The first main road in Java, built by command of the Dutch governor Daendels was likewise built by forced labour and those who failed to complete their allocated quota of road on time were summarily hanged. But to top it all off, the road was, "exclusively for European use. Dirt tracks alongside were provided for the 'natives!'" (1)

Yet far from just accepting the situation, there were uprisings

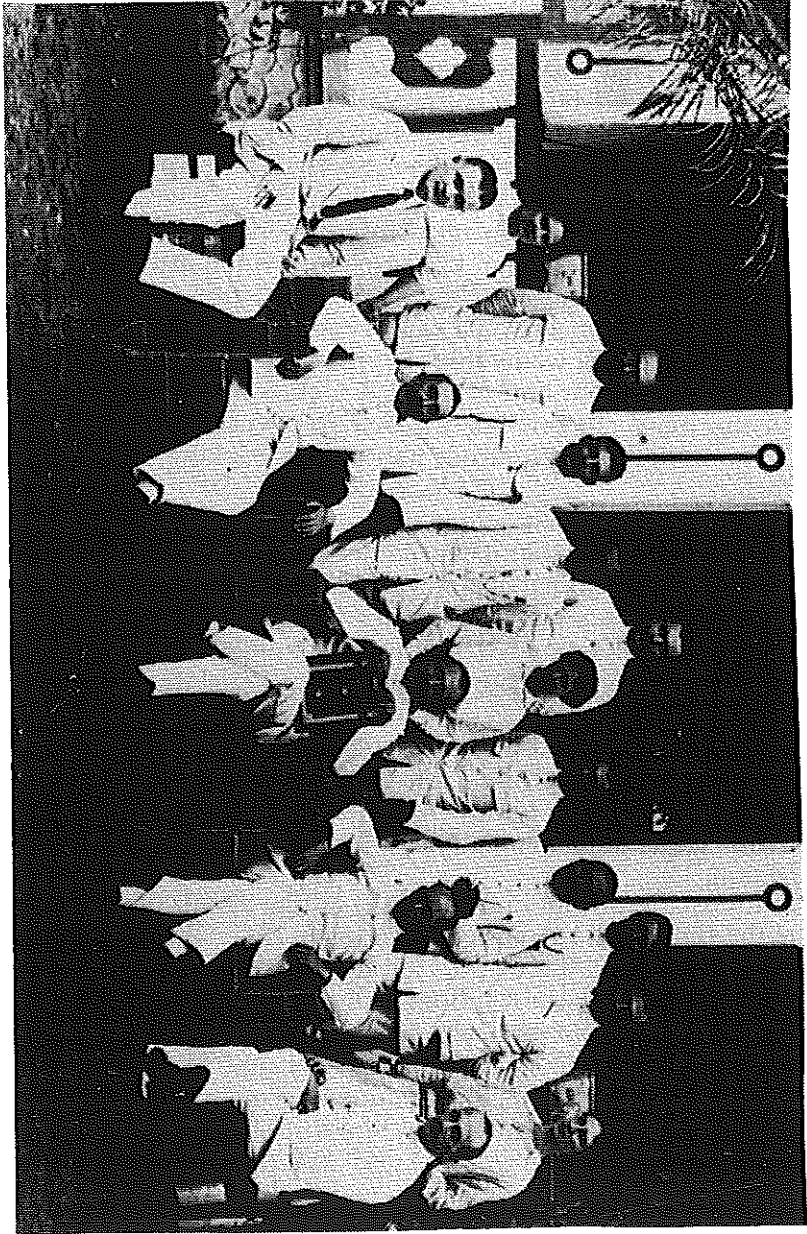
against the Dutch right throughout the whole colonial period and direct control by the Dutch, outside the island of Java, was not achieved until well into the twentieth century. The British colonialist Raffles commented that, "ever since the arrival of the Europeans they (the Javanese) have neglected no opportunity of attempting to regain their independence." But the rebellions had always been at local or regional level.

In 1911 the first mass political movement in the country that existed on a national scale, Sarekat Islam, was formed. Founded originally to protect the interests of the Javanese batik merchants from competition by Indies Chinese traders, it rapidly became a rallying point for discontent, spreading from the urban commercial class to the poorer population of the towns and into the rural areas, under the leadership of Umar Said Tjokroaminoto.

At around the same time, a former Dutch railway union official, Henk Sneevliet, came to Indonesia looking for a job, having been blacklisted in Holland. On his initiative the Indonesian Social Democratic Association (I.S.D.V.) was founded in 1914. From an original sixty members their numbers grew to eighty-five by the following year and they began to produce a paper however it was in Dutch. This was because the vast majority of ISDV members were Dutch and despite the fact that poverty was increasing, they were not reaching the Indonesian masses.

By this time, in contrast, Sarekat Islam - a movement rather than a party - had hundreds of thousands of adherents. Accordingly the ISDV decided to orient their work towards it, and it was from this source that the first generation of Indonesian Marxists were recruited. Prominent among them was a young railway worker, Semaun, who at the age of seventeen was vice-chairman of the Surabaya branch of the ISDV, and in 1917 became one of the editors of the first Indonesian language socialist newspaper *Soera Merdika* - (*The Free Voice*).

1917 was a tumultuous year. The conservative elements within the ISDV split away during the year over an article written by Sneevliet in the Party newspaper celebrating the February revolution in Russia and saying, "Dutch rule in the Indies would go the way of the Tzar if only the Indonesians set their mind to it."



ISDV members, Semarang, 1917

The government immediately set about prosecuting Sneevliet and attempted to suppress discussion of the uprising, which inevitably had the opposite effect and soon everybody was talking about the Russian revolution.

While Sneevliet was awaiting trial, the Batavia branch of the ISDV, dominated by the conservatives, published a declaration saying, "We should oppose those who, ignoring the unity of the native population groups necessary for the achievement of national independence and freedom, drive a wedge into it through their so-called socialist internationalism."

Meanwhile Sarekat Islam (S.I.) was in turmoil also. Semaun had moved to Semarang where he was instrumental in building a strong SI branch which was becoming increasingly publicly critical of the SI leadership. By the time of the 1917 conference Tjokroaminoto and other SI leaders wanted all relations with the ISDV cut off, but the Semarang branch, where the ISDV's strength was centred, had strong backing from other branches.

The upshot was, that rather than expelling the ISDV the SI were forced to state that if "parliamentary action should prove unfruitful, the Sarekat Islam would not hesitate to revolt. Moreover, the congress condemned 'sinful' - that is, foreign - capitalism and demanded freedom of political organisation, radically improved labour and agrarian legislation and free public education." (2)

Thus from what had been a merchant's protection guild six years earlier, and had only four years earlier proclaimed its unconditional loyalty to the Dutch government, the SI had become a mass movement rapidly heading in a revolutionary direction.

But most significant in its effect of all the events of that year, was the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917. It sent an electric charge around the world. But it was particularly inspiring to the revolutionaries in Indonesia because they were always being told that Indonesia was too backward, it didn't have a strong enough proletariat to take power and in fact suffered from an 'absence of all factors assumed necessary for a socialist revolution'. And yet here was Russia, a backward peasant-based economy and the working class *had* taken power!

Inspired by the Bolsheviks, the ISDV began organising soldiers' and sailors' soviets (councils) and within three months there were more than 3,000 members of the movement which became known as the Red Guardists.

Meanwhile economic conditions continued to deteriorate, real income declined continuously from 1914 - 1924 and there was a 'general restlessness' in the air. Considerable attention was devoted to work in Sarekat Islam and the position and influence of the ISDV steadily gained ground. ISDV member, Darsono, became the official SI propagandist and Semaun became SI commissioner in charge of West Java.

By the 1919 SI congress, the powerful influence of the ISDV was unmistakable. Their paper reporting the congress declared, "... the struggle was directed squarely against capitalism and was not, as in previous times, an attack by a few on 'sinful capitalism', a combination of concepts that rests on a misunderstanding of socialism."

But the tide began to turn. Amongst revolutionaries the perspective had been that the Russian revolution would simply be the first in a series of revolutions that would sweep across Europe, including the Netherlands, and which in turn would intersect with the movement in Indonesia. But the movements in Europe were defeated, (for reasons we shall go into later), while in Indonesia Red Guardists and ISDV members were imprisoned and the Dutch revolutionaries banished.

The merchant bourgeois Moslem interests that had steadily lost ground within Sarekat Islam, began to reorganise and it in turn began to crack apart. Within a few years Sarekat Islam had collapsed.

The work within Sarekat Islam had transformed the ISDV from a small group of Dutch expatriates with almost no contact with the Indonesian masses, into an overwhelmingly Indonesian organisation that in many areas actually led the masses.

But while Sarekat Islam was falling apart, the first phase of Indonesian Communism was not yet over. Having changed name from the ISDV to the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) in 1920, it became the first Communist Party in Asia and, although numerically small, during the 1920s it far outweighed any other political party in Indonesia in terms of its public support.

During the early 1920s, the PKI led a number of major strikes, notably of the pawnshop workers in 1922 and the railway workers in 1923. The strikes however were unsuccessful. But they further alarmed the Dutch who in turn stepped up their repression of PKI activities. Some of the PKI's most able

leaders such as Tan Malaka, Bergsma and Semaun were expelled from Indonesia - Sneevliet had suffered the same fate, and many more were to follow.

It was around this time also that the party abandoned the organisational methods of democratic centralism. Instead, it was determined that a local unit could act independently, without informing party headquarters, "so long as its decisions were in line with the PKI constitution and by-laws".(3) In the increasingly volatile situation, to try and organise a revolutionary party on a 'do your own thing' basis was a recipe for disaster - particularly given the relative inexperience of the party and the continual arrests, imprisonment and banishment of party cadres. (It was no doubt these factors that played a large part in the decision being made in the first place.)

In mid-1925, with the economy picking up, strikes began to occur again, all wild-cat, all small and mostly unsuccessful. Then in Semarang major strikes began to break out. Thereafter followed strikes in Medan and Batavia and a near general strike in Surabaya. Repression was stepped up. The right of assembly was prohibited in all areas where the PKI existed. Frustration and desperation grew - not least among the inexperienced leaders who were left. It was decided to organise an insurrection - for the following year.

"However by then the labour unions of Java, which were to have provided the major revolutionary thrust, were in a state of collapse following their defeats. Secret terrorist organisations had been established in some regions but the centre had little or no control over them - the transmission of the centre's ideas had depended to a great extent on its now banned publications. There were conflicts within the regional party organisations, and even sub-sections showed increased independence of section leadership."(4)

To make matters worse, the leadership of the party itself was split over the question of insurrection and during the 'preparatory' period, some leaders were touring branches arguing in favour, and others were touring arguing against the idea. The movement was visibly dissolving into anarchy.(5)

Thus when they occurred, the uprisings were a disaster. Despite the rebellious mood that undoubtedly existed, the movements in Java were quickly put down, with the exception of Banten where resistance continued until late in 1926 and Suma-

HET VRIJE WOORD

Orgaan van de Partij der Kommunisten in Indië.
(Perserikatan Komunis di India.)
(P. K. I.)

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INHOUD. Congres P. K. I.—Vervolgafgen—Ons buitengewoon
kongres—Prechtische lessen in den klassensjif-Tjpto's
tweede intesenering—Eldige kongres V. S. T. P.—Het
kongres der C. P. te Rotterdam—Zieklicht.—Van de
Redactie—Steunfonds—Sneeveliet over Rusland.

DARSONO'S HALSMISDAAD.

Onze kameraad Darsono is veroordeeld tot twee
maanden wegens belediging. Daar men hem voor dit
vreeselijke feit reeds preventief had gezet, heeft hij
nog een korte poos te zitten en komt begin Januari
vrij.

HET A. S. CONGRES VAN DE P. K. I.

SOEKINDAR VRIJGESPROKEN.

Het Vrije Woord - PKI Dutch language newspaper,
1920

tra where the insurrection did not begin until early 1927 and was quickly smashed - 13,000 arrests were made and of those arrested an unspecified number were executed. Thousands were imprisoned and 1,300 were sent to the horrendous, malaria infested Boven Digul concentration camp in West Papua.

Thus ended the first period of open Communist activity in Indonesia.

Underground and Independence

It's important to note that it was only from this point that the focus of the struggle became 'nationalism' and the rise of the nationalist movement occurred.

In fact Ruth McVey, the most astute of all bourgeois commentators, points out that Indonesian communists of the time felt that, "nationalism was a European phenomenon of the nineteenth century and not a real issue in the Indonesia of their day ...

The concept of a revolution aimed not just at national independence but also at drastic social change was ... not limited to doctri-

naire leftists (sic) in the central party leadership; it was an integral part of the PKI's popular appeal The power of this appeal is shown by the fact that opponents preferred to attack the PKI on almost any issue except communism itself."(6)

Not only physically but ideologically, the whole movement had been thrown backwards. It is also important to take note of world events and the subsequent development of the communist movement internationally which in turn had a decisive effect within Indonesia itself. As we have said, revolutionaries throughout the world expected the Russian revolution to be but the first in a series of revolutions that would bring the working class to power in at least several key countries in Europe that were unquestionably ripe for revolt. However, fundamentally because the leaders of European Social Democracy sided with 'their own' capitalist classes, and because the young revolutionary parties there had not developed the strength to overcome that fact, the revolutions failed.

Consequently, even though the working class had won power in the Soviet Union, because it was an isolated, backward country that had been weakened by three years of world war, ravaged by civil war and almost brought to it's knees by invasion from all the major imperialist powers on top of all that, an inevitable reaction set in. And this reaction manifested in the rise to power of a bureaucracy - hesitant at first, but paradoxically growing in confidence (and ruthlessness) with each revolution that was defeated internationally. And personified in this process was the consummate ruthless bureaucrat - Joseph Stalin.

In the last years of his life Lenin formed a bloc with Leon Trotsky, the other great leader of the revolution, to try and put a check on what was happening, but he was extremely ill and died in 1924. Trotsky now became the individual who personified the struggle against reaction, both bourgeois and Stalinist. Historians portray the ensuing struggle between Stalin and Trotsky as some kind of crude, individual struggle for power. This was not the crux of what was at stake at all - rather it was a struggle over either the maintenance or the abandonment of Bolshevism itself.

But to return to Indonesia, by the time of the 1926/1927 uprising, this process was already decisively under way. The Communist International (Comintern) formed under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky as a focal point for the strategy and tactics of

revolutionaries internationally had suffered a consequent degeneration. While undoubtedly the turn of world developments had enormously affected the prospects for Indonesian revolution, the Stalinisation of the Comintern does not seem to have played a determining role - the Stalinists at this time were mainly pre-occupied with the situation in China.

There, the Comintern had ordered the Chinese Communist Party to work within the Kuomintang (KMT), a bourgeois nationalist organisation, with the strategy supposedly based on the Indonesian experience. But here lies a crucial difference. The Indonesian Communists had not buried their own programme, but instead loudly proclaimed it. In contrast, "the Comintern leadership instructed the Chinese communists to sacrifice their own programme in favour of the bourgeois programme of the KMT ... to dissolve their independent press - and even hand over a list of their members to the KMT leadership." (7) As a result, in a chilling preview of Indonesia 1965, the Chinese Communist Party suffered a catastrophic defeat and thousands of workers were slaughtered.

Given Moscow's lack of attention it should however be noted that, according to Se-maun, the Comintern did not want to establish any centres outside Moscow for Asian work for fear that Asian revolutionaries would be attracted to the Left Opposition - the group Trotsky led. Furthermore, what is unquestionable is that subsequent swings in policy by the Comintern were to play a decisive role in Indonesian affairs.

"The end of this first phase of PKI history brought a shift in the scene of Indonesian Communist activity. Indonesia itself was now only a

AWAS! AWAS! PROGRAMMA

PENTING!

Perberkaslah pada tanggal pertunjukkan

**„KORBAN
PERTJINTA-AN“**





ENTREE PRIJZEN:
incl. Om. Baring

Loge	f 1.-	Klas III	f 0.30
Klas I	f 0.75	Klas IV	f 0.20
Klas II	f 0.50	Klas V	f 0.10

DAHLIA-OPERA
(Het Molecische Operie Gezelschap)
KRAMATFLEIN - BATAVIA - C.
*Ini malam dan
Malam berikutnya
Mempertunjukkan*



*Miss Roek dan Mr. Zainal
dalam sjeritera:*
GAGAK-SOLO
*Sjeritera pentjoeri gentleman
jang amat menarik hati.
Liatlah Mr. Zainal sebagai
Lord-Lieter Indonesia!
Dengacalah njanjian' jang
merdoe!
Acteurs dan actrices jang
djempol.
Datanglah jang soere-soere,
djangan sampai
kehabisan tempat!*

THE BAROE

An underground PKI pamphlet put out during the 1930s with a fake cover announcing a play by *Dahlia Opera*, an Indonesian theatre group (From *The PKI Baroe* by BB Hering)

minor part of the stage. Until 1935 there was no significant activity there. Then Musso, an exiled PKI leader living in Moscow, returned to Indonesia to set up the 'illegal PKI', ...A far more important centre of Communist activity, however, was the Netherlands, where many of the future leaders of the Indonesian Republic were living at that time as students." (8)

For some years a nationalist organisation called Perhimpunan Indonesia had been in existence in Holland and it was to this organisation that the expatriate students were affiliated. During the same period a myriad of nationalist organisations sprang up within Indonesia itself including the PNI, the Partindo and the Gerindo. It was particularly in Gerindo that PKI members worked. During this period work within the trade unions was also maintained.

The depression had a ravaging effect on the Indonesian economy. Peasants were forced to pawn their land as taxes were raised to pay for the crisis - between 1926 and 1932 taxes increased 44%. As right-wing author JM Van der Kroef puts it, "those proletarianisation processes, in the long run could only strengthen the appeal of the Communist Party, and while in the 1930s there were no spectacular outbursts that could be attributed to..(the PKI)..there was undoubtedly a broadening of political consciousness in Indonesian society that was ready for exploitation at a later date. In 1933 sailors on the Dutch naval vessel *Zeven Provinciën* mutinied briefly, siezed command of the ship and attempted to sail it to a Russian port, until a bomb attack by a Dutch naval plane put an end to these plans. The mutiny, though apparently instigated by a Socialist trade union and by nationalists, was not without effect on developing Indonesian political opinion, despite its ignominious end. The present writer, who was in Indonesia at the time, heard in many Dutch circles that the Communists were really responsible for the mutiny..."(9)

Exports collapsed. The amount earned by export sales in 1935 was only 25% of that in 1925. Poverty and hardship rose, unemployment rose, the economy contracted and wages were cut. Wages paid out (in million guilders) were: 1929-102; 1931 - 84; 1934 - 10.

Meanwhile the Comintern had veered wildly to the left and then back to the right again. In perhaps the Comintern's most glaringly demented phase, having destroyed the revolutionary

possibilities in China through leaning on capitalist elements, the Stalinists veered in diagonally the opposite direction. According to them it was now the "Third Period" - the period of the final collapse of world capitalism (which was quite possible).

But what made it *impossible* was their policies. The Socialist Parties, Labour Parties, Social Democratic Parties internationally, many of them being huge working class organisations, were declared to be 'social fascist' parties. The Comintern declared that these parties now constituted the main danger confronting the working class and therefore they had to be destroyed. This policy had its most tragic repercussions in Germany where rather than uniting with the rank and file Social Democrats against the fascists, the Communists consistently fought against the Social Democrats as the "main enemy". Hitler was able to come to power "without breaking a pane of glass". As a result, the strongest Communist Party outside the Soviet Union was destroyed.

As the mistake became clear, a panicky Stalin did another U-turn. Ignoring the fact that the Western capitalists had supported Hitler in his rise to power as a 'bulwark against Communism', the Comintern declared that Communist Parties throughout the world must form a 'Popular Front' against the fascists with 'their own' respective capitalists - of course on the terms of the capitalists.

As Ted Grant put it, "...the full danger which Hitler represented to the Soviet Union was apparent to everyone. Stalin and the bureaucracy became panic-stricken. Contemptuous and cynical of the capacity of the Comintern as an instrument of world revolution, Stalin more openly converted it into an instrument of Russian foreign policy. An organisation in class society which ceases to represent the working class inevitably falls under the pressure and the influence of the bourgeoisie. Stalin, in his search for allies, now turned to the bourgeoisie of Britain and France. The 'Popular Front' policy was initiated.... This policy of coalition with the liberal capitalists is one against which Lenin had struggled all his life."(10)

What the 'Popular Front' meant in Indonesia was not only 'co-operation' with Indonesian bourgeois nationalists, but the Dutch as well! According to the line every other consideration, including even independence, had to be subordinated to the struggle against fascism.

In Holland, as far as the Netherlands Communist Party was concerned, not only was socialism off the agenda, but even independence for the colonies of Dutch imperialism, i.e. Indonesia. At the same time, the expatriate Indonesian students' organisation, Perhimpunan, which was now controlled by the Communists, dropped the word 'Merdeka' (meaning independent) from the name of its journal, *Indonesia Merdeka*.

Thus when the Japanese invaded Indonesia in 1942 the PKI were placed in the position of having to argue that the Indonesian masses should combine with the Dutch to fight them. But the Indonesian masses wanted no part of such a deal. Indeed far from seeing the Japanese as the main enemy, future PKI leader Aidit later recalled, "The Indonesian people harboured illusions that the Japanese were liberators..." when they first arrived. These illusions were soon dispelled. It is worth noting as well, that the Dutch colonialists harboured no such 'allied' illusions as the PKI had. When some Indonesians did request arms to help fight the Japanese, they were told this was 'impossible'.

An interesting contrast with the official PKI line is provided here with the position of Indonesian communists still prisoners from the '26/'27 rebellion, who were taken by the fleeing Dutch administration with them to Australia, to prevent them being used for propaganda purposes by the Japanese. Having effectively been isolated from the Stalinist degeneration of the Communist movement internationally, (as a result of being in prison for a decade and a half), they were not at all happy with the idea of a bloc with Dutch colonialism. As Australian communist, Rupert Lockwood, revealingly put it, "Though advised by the CPA (Communist Party of Australia), the PKI ... at first made sectarian errors (sic) that made CPA hairs stand on end. The PKI brought many problems with it from behind the barbed wire of D Compound. Not a few of its members still spoke in the warmed-up clichés of 1926 (sic), and resisted co-operation with the NEI (Dutch) Government-in-Exile."(11)

But the CPA persisted and won out. Their "advice" manifested in the old PKI leader Sardjono, (as Lockwood so inimitably puts it)"... *setting an example...* by donning a Dutch uniform, as Netherlands Indies Government-in-Exile Public Relations Officer." Sardjono had spent the previous 16 years in a Dutch concentration camp!

Other Indonesian workers were not at all convinced. Referring to Indonesian seamen stationed in Australia during the war Lockwood lamented, "... the Indonesians held that the war was a purposeless clash of empires, after which they would be asked to accept the familiar currency of authoritarian direction."

The Japanese occupation marked a turning point. The capitulation of the Dutch Colonial Administration only eight days after the Japanese invaded had an enormous psychological effect on the Indonesian masses - they had seen them defeated and defeated easily. At the same time, illusions in Japanese imperialism disappeared. They instituted a brutal slave labour (romusha) system under which at least 200,000 people died. Some sources say up to two million Indonesians died during the occupation. And therefore despite their policy towards the Dutch, the PKI did earn respect for their hostility to Japanese occupation.

However with the defeat of Japan the whole situation was radically altered and the PKI missed an enormous opportunity. Stalin and the Western powers were dividing up the continent of Europe between them - nothing was to upset that, therefore the PKI had to continue to 'compromise' with the Dutch. While Stalin and the West were leaning on one another, the colonial world was simmering with revolution.

Commenting on Communist exiles returning from the Netherlands, George Kahin wrote, "It does seem clear that when they first arrived in Indonesia late in 1945 and early 1946, they were adhering closely to Moscow's line... Their initial orientation was, paralleling that of the Netherlands Communist Party, anti-Republic. They conceived of the Republic as Japanese-made and Fascistic and their objective was to reunite the Netherlands and Indonesia. Thus the Netherlands government was happy to fly them out free of charge to Indonesia."⁽¹²⁾ Indeed, during the independence struggle, the PKI, by following Moscow's directives, at times found themselves objectively to the right of the PNI and even the Masjumi party!*

But rapidly the exiles realised their position was ridiculous. As Kahin puts it, "...they saw the Republic from the inside. They soon concluded that it was neither a Japanese product nor a Fas-

*The Masjumi were a right-wing Moslem party.

cist dictatorship. It was clear to them that the Republic had the enthusiastic support of the population..."

From mid 1944 onwards the exiles in Australia were organising Indonesian Independence Committees and at their request, in a magnificent display of working class internationalism, the Australian trade unions put a ban on Dutch shipping. This



Internationalism at work - Indonesians and Australians march together through Sydney, 1945

proved to be a definite thorn in the side of Dutch attempts to recolonise Indonesia. It should be pointed out that this was in large part due to the influence of the Communist Party of Australia and was effectively against the Moscow line - the pro-Dutch position was clearly untenable for a sustained period.

In late 1945 the *Australian Militant*, a Marxist paper of the time, reported on news just received from Amsterdam: "Widespread indignation with the imperialist policy of the Government of Holland in suppressing the struggle of the Indonesians

for their independence, has led in the past week to organised protest movements of soldiers culminating in mass demonstrations last Saturday, and a general strike in this city which began on Monday and was concluded Tuesday night.

During the second week in September, the soldiers at the Harderwijk camp near Amsterdam were informed that they were to embark for Indonesia. ... The soldiers protesting against the government order ... bluntly refused to go. They formed a committee representing at first 150 men, and went to the Communist headquarters to obtain aid...since many of them were members of the CP. The leaders of the latter refused all help. The soldiers' committee thereupon turned to the other workers' organisations ..."

For its part, Radio Moscow, the voice of the Soviet bureaucracy, ignored the proclamation of independence in 1945. The Soviet Union didn't adopt a favourable attitude to the Republic until January 1946.

British paratroops, sent to Indonesia to help restore Dutch rule, staged a sit-down strike and British merchant seamen in Sydney mutinied. Boycotts were eventually imposed on the Dutch by workers in Burma, Canada, Sri Lanka, China, Egypt, Holland, India, Japan, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, the Soviet Union, Thailand, and the United States.

It was the youth of Indonesia who were the driving force behind the independence struggle, and it was their irrepressible zeal that led to the declaration of independence on August 17th, 1945. (They at one stage actually kidnapped the nationalist leader Sukarno who was a lot more 'cautious', in order to force his hand.) Sukarno became President of the Republic of Indonesia and another bourgeois nationalist, Hatta, became Vice President.

The Dutch however, were not at all pleased with the idea of losing their colony. Following the British army who arrived in Java in late September, they attempted to militarily re-assert control. In December 1945 the *Militant* reported, "Lacking heavy arms, lacking military training, lacking everything except a burning conviction of the justice of their cause, the Indonesians are fighting back bravely against the British invaders at Surabaya.

In bravery, devotion, and administrative skill, they have astonished the world, including those imperialist bandits, who

now find themselves compelled to resort to military force when they had hoped ... that trickery and prevarication would do the job. The British Command, after a series of conferences designed to gain time for the assembling of their and the Dutch military forces, have brutally bombed and shelled the virtually defenceless city of Surabaya, in the meantime holding open Batavia and other ports in readiness for the arrival of the Dutch armies now reported to have reached India.

The capitalist press speaks gloatingly of Indonesians mown down in "fanatical" attacks on British tanks, and of many women and children killed when troops fired on a "mob". No prisoners, they say, are being taken, because the natives have ignored the British ultimatum to disarm. In the meantime they continue to spread the usual childish nonsense about thousands of Japanese soldiers fighting for the Indonesians ...".

In fact the British, who had supposedly gone to Indonesia to disarm the Japanese, had in fact *re-armed* them, and



Women during the Independence struggle

the two enemies of yesterday were now fighting alongside each other against the Indonesians. The British withdrew but the struggle with the Dutch continued, occasionally militarily, but mainly politically, until December 1949 when independence was finally achieved. Throughout this period, the Indonesian government controlled certain areas of the country and the Dutch controlled other areas.

Having abandoned their alliance with the Dutch, the PKI still however remained completely submerged within the independence movement itself. As Ruth McVey puts it, "The PKI's leaders, following a policy of extreme self-effacement.... identified their programme completely with that of the government even in the latter's least popular policies." (13) Demands on behalf of the workers and peasants were set aside in the "national interest".



Tan Malaka

In the mid 50s, Aidit, reflecting on the failure of the PKI to capture the leadership of the independence struggle wrote, "During the revolution, the Party abandoned political, ideological and organisational freedom and did not attach sufficient importance to its activities in labor and peasant circles. These were the reasons why the revolution failed ... The Party failed to realise in the August revolution that there was no need for illegality. The Party failed to realise that the Dutch colonial era ended and that a new era opened. This was the first mistake: the failure to declare the party legal and lead the revolution."

As a result the leadership of the independence movement became a struggle between various bourgeois nationalist figure-heads - Sukarno, Hatta, Sjahrir, etc - along with Tan Malaka* as well.

It should be emphasised that despite the mistakes, the PKI were

*Tan Malaka had split with the Comintern and become a 'left-wing nationalist'.

nevertheless potentially a powerful force with sympathetic military units. Recognising the possible threat, Hatta, now leader of the Republican government, initiated a "re-organisation and rationalisation" process within the army - meaning the disbandment of PKI units. Conflicts between pro and anti PKI military units occurred with more and more frequency culminating in the brutal "Madiun Affair" in 1948.



Musso

Pro-PKI soldiers seized control of the city of Madiun in central East Java in September 1948. It does not appear that the PKI was involved in the planning of the operation except at a local level, however once the rebellion had begun it quickly became an attempt to take power, and PKI leader Musso declared himself head of an alternative government. However just as in 1926/27 it was quite swiftly crushed - though this time in a more bloody fashion. However the party itself did not have to go through another twenty-year period underground.

Indeed within a year George Kahin was writing in the *Far Eastern Survey* about the potential of growth for the PKI - "That potential is strong, particularly among young intellectuals, in direct proportion to the frustration of hopes for real national independence...a number of able young intellectuals having a high leadership potential, formerly opposed to Communism, are being attracted toward it and are almost certain to join ... if the present anti-Communist leaders of the Republic are forced to make more concessions to the Dutch." This illustrates how fluid the situation was.

Within three years the party was leading major strike movements. Jeanne S. Mintz quite graphically describes the mood of the times, "... within a few weeks after the transfer of sovereignty, there was a general miasma of disillusionment, as the revolu-

tionary `elan faded and no single equally inspiring force came to take its place. From the masses of the Indonesian people who had played an active role in achieving their independence there

came a rather inarticulate but nevertheless real demand that independence bring in its wake something positive and tangible, some visible differences from the poverty and hardship of their daily lives. As some of their leaders had anticipated, the Indonesian people soon made the discovery that independence is not enough."(14)

It was also in 1951 that a group of young men led by D.N. Aidit, none of whom were aged over 30, came into the leadership of the PKI. It is really from this point that the third incarnation of the party begins.



D.N. Aidit

The Aidit Years

From the outset, the appearance of the new leadership was one of spectacular success. From fewer than 7,000 members in early

1952, the party numbered more than 150,000 by 1954. In addition its trade union federation SOBSI had become the largest in the country. Rather than concentrating on making "fronts" with nationalist leaders who wanted no part of such deals following Madiun, the PKI was "forced to concentrate on a united front from below, a tactic which proved singularly effective in 1950 - 1951 and was one of the chief factors in the party's swift post rebellion recovery and its development of a number of powerful Communist mass organisations."(15)

This had occurred as a reflection of declining economic conditions - up to 25% unemployment, the continued existence of feudal relationships on the land and the absence of any visible benefit from independence. It is interesting to note that 70% of the estates on Java and Sumatra were back in foreign hands by 1953.

The party's growth continued apace. In the general elections of 1955 the PKI polled 16% of the vote and in local elections two years later they had become the most popular party in Central Java. By 1958 the PKI membership had reached 1.5 million. At government level a series of weak and unstable coalitions came and went from power - in less than seven years, six cabinets succeeded one another!

Meanwhile there were increasing signs of agitation from the senior level of the military who had emerged as a powerful force from the independence struggle. It was against this background, and to divert the attention of the masses from their economic problems, that all the parties in Indonesia became involved in a fervently nationalist campaign to have Dutch occupied West New Guinea incorporated into Indonesia. *In the course of this campaign, in a series of largely spontaneous actions, led by both PNI and PKI rank and file members, the workers of Indonesia occupied and took control of all Dutch enterprises in the country.*

In turn the Armed Forces seized the companies. Their power was now not only military but economic as well. The following year a faction of the Armed Forces representing feudal interests on the Outer Islands (and backed by the United States) attempted to overthrow the government. Lacking mass support the revolt was crushed and as a result some political parties were banned and those that weren't had their activities severely curtailed. Martial law was introduced. Independence had certainly not brought with it stable capitalist democracy!

But worse was to come. Up until 1959 there had at least been

elections, but in that year Sukarno, the President, under pressure from the army, dissolved parliament and in its place proclaimed the formation of an appointed, hand-picked "Consultative Congress". Thus was introduced the 'Guided Democracy' period during which not a single election was held. The PKI approved of Sukarno's actions.

It's worthwhile pausing here to consider the theories upon which the PKI's practical decisions were based. According to Aidit the primary task was to form, "... a united front of all anti-imperialist and anti-feudal forces in the country. That is to say, the working class, the peasantry, the petit - bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. The task of this alliance is to bring about not socialist but democratic reforms."

It should be noted first of all that this was precisely the same 'bloc of four classes' formula from which the Chinese Communist Party had operated in the 1920's which led to their terrible defeat. But why was it such a dangerous theory? Let us look more closely. There was obviously no question that Indonesia had not become a modern capitalist country: as Marxists put it, it had not completed the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution, which were:

- 1) a thorough going land reform, giving land to the peasants which in turn could create a viable internal market.

- 2) the unification of the country and the development of the nation along modern lines, both economically, and politically through the institution of parliamentary democracy.

These tasks were completed in the advanced capitalist world roughly by the end of the nineteenth century. Most of the ex-colonial and colonial countries had not been able to carry through these tasks. In addition, as the advanced capitalist countries solidified their domination of the entire world through imperialism, for the colonial and ex-colonial nations a third task was added:

- 3) The overthrow of direct rule by imperialism and even after that was achieved, the freeing of the economy from the stranglehold still exercised by imperialism.

Put simply, these measures were what was necessary to transform Indonesia from a backward agricultural nation into a modern capitalist democracy. But the vital question was, which forces in society were to carry through these tasks? In Europe these measures had been carried out against the incumbent feudal in-

terests by the rising national bourgeoisie in each of the different countries, using of course, the masses to do their fighting for them. Was this to be the case in Indonesia? What role was the proletariat to play? Let us back-track briefly.

In the very early 1920s when the Communist International had been a healthy organisation an extremely important discussion took place within it's ranks concerning precisely the relationship between the proletariat and the national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries. Arising from this discussion Lenin stated, "... I should like especially to emphasise the question of the bourgeois democratic movement in backward countries...There has been a certain rapprochement between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so that very often - perhaps even in most cases - the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, while it does support the national movement, is in full accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie, i.e. joins forces with it against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes."

But if the bourgeoisie themselves are incapable of carrying through the bourgeois democratic revolution then which section of society is capable? Of all the great revolutionary theoreticians, it was Trotsky, who not only earlier, but more exactly as well, analysed the nature of the revolution in the colonial world, and flowing from it, the tasks of communist revolutionaries - this set of ideas subsequently became known as the theory of Permanent Revolution.

Central to the theory was the realisation that in the colonial and semi-colonial world the national bourgeoisie and the feudal interests were woven together and therefore there was no way that the national bourgeoisie would side with the masses against those feudal interests, nor the interests of imperialism.

Therefore the *workers and peasants* would have to carry out the tasks of the *bourgeois* democratic revolution...*against* the national bourgeoisie! In addition "throughout history the peasantry, tied to it's small plot of land, has had a very narrow horizon, an extremely parochial horizon, moreover because it is so heterogeneous it always looks to the urban classes for leadership. In the modern epoch it is either the capitalists or the working class which provides the lead."(16)

The revolution could not be led by the capitalists because the revolution was against them and thus it had to be by the work-

ing class. But having initiated the bourgeois democratic revolution against the bourgeoisie, the workers and peasants obviously would not stop there, and thus the tasks of the bourgeois democratic and the tasks of the socialist revolution were telescoped together - hence *permanent* revolution.

In turn, because of the impossibility of building socialism in one country, particularly an economically backward one, the revolution would ultimately have to spread internationally or face inevitable degeneration. Because of the imperialist domination of the world, there was no role for the colonial bourgeoisie. This was particularly so with the Indonesian bourgeoisie who were so weak and pathetic as a class that the major question was whether they even actually existed or not! What was incontestable was that those seedlings of a capitalist class that did exist were inextricably interlinked with feudal interests.

As Aidit himself wrote in frustration in 1964, "Indonesia's national bourgeoisie is still young and has many family ties with the landlords. One of its legs is capitalist while the other is feudal." Yet the PKI leadership put their faith in their "alliance" with them. In fact their analysis was based on the Stalinist two-stage theory of revolution and had little to do with the concrete reality of contemporary Indonesia.

According to Aidit, "The character of the Indonesian revolution at the present stage is bourgeois democratic and not proletarian socialist. But the bourgeois democratic revolu-



Aidit and Mao Tse Tung

tion in Indonesia is no longer one of the old type, or a part of the out-dated world bourgeois democratic revolution: it is one of a new type and a part of the world proletarian socialist revolution firmly opposed to imperialism. The Indonesian revolution is bourgeois in nature because it does not abolish private ownership of the means of production. This is manifested in the fact that it distributes land to the peasants and encourages the growth of the national bourgeoisie so that it may be free from dependence upon imperialism. It is also democratic in nature, because it is opposed to feudalism and fights for democratic rights for the Indonesian people as a whole" (17)

For all of Aidit's playing with words about "new types" and "old types" of bourgeois democratic revolutions, what it boiled down to was two distinct stages; firstly the bourgeoisie would come to power and then, after years (?), decades (?), even centuries (?), the working class and peasants would come to power. Yet as Aidit himself had pointed out, "The failure of the August 1945 revolution showed that the Indonesian bourgeoisie was unable to lead the bourgeois democratic revolution in the era of imperialism" Yet still, because all their theoretical education had been Stalinist, because of the authority of Moscow and Peking, and because of their growth in numbers, the PKI continued to base their strategy on 'alliance' with the national bourgeoisie..

As Rex Mortimer put it, "It has seldom happened that a party as large as the PKI has held a class fraction, the 'national bourgeoisie' in such high esteem, placed so many hopes upon it and accommodated itself to it, while knowing so little about it. "In essence the PKI leadership were putting their faith in people who were not 'allies' but were in fact *enemies* of the masses; this was why it was so dangerous.

Let us take stock: Ten and more years after independence and none of the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution had been accomplished. Feudal property relations were still intact, parliamentary democracy had been abolished, and instead of capitalist industry forging ahead the economy was in shambles.

The development of the economy that had taken place was undertaken by the *state*. But as Richard Robison explains, "...the development of state enterprises did not represent a concerted move towards socialisation, or indeed even nation-

alisation of the economy...the intervention of the state in the economy, to 1956, was heavily influenced by the idea that the state would provide the infrastructure for the development of a domestic capitalist class, operate enterprises that were necessary but beyond the capacity of national capital, and directly finance and protect a national (and by national was generally meant indigenous) bourgeoisie." And further. "Despite the concerted attempt by the state to build an indigenous bourgeoisie, *the growth of this class was not impressive.*

It was fundamentally the same economic idea underlying the Guided Democracy period but increasingly the historical ineptitude of the local capitalist class was becoming obvious. The Dutch concerns that the masses had seized could not be handed over to the local bourgeoisie because they were simply too weak, therefore they had to be nationalised. It was the concrete reality rather than the desires of those in power that governed the situation. Robison continues, "it is agreed by most commentators that by 1965...the domestic bourgeoisie had not advanced since the 1950s." (18)

But furthermore, what flowed from the two stage theory was the idea that the working class could not take industrial action against the national bourgeoisie because they were supposed to be in alliance. But this was not an *equal* alliance. Because it was supposedly the bourgeois democratic revolution then the interests of the bourgeoisie had to come first - the interests of the workers had to come second. As Rex Mortimer describes it, "... the entire emphasis ... was on the self-abnegating role of the workers and their political responsibilities toward other classes and the nation as a whole ...".(19) This was the most dangerous and ultimately the most fatal aspect of the whole situation.

Why then was the PKI growing so rapidly? Because as Indonesia slid towards catastrophe the whole of society was polarising ... and on one side was the PKI. They were relatively untouched by corruption scandals rife at the time, and despite their policies they were at least perceived to be 'doing *something*' - they were the workers' traditional, and only, political voice. As Ruth McVey observed in the early 1960s, "The PKI is now virtually the only party worth considering as a major factor in Indonesia. The Masjumi and PSI were generally discredited as a result of the rebellion... and were finally outlawed in 1960. The Nahdatul Ulama and PNI have degenerated as or-

ganisations into little more than self-perpetuating patronage machines. Only Murba, a national-Communist Party ... has improved it's position : but it remains a splinter group at heart, a state of mind rather than a political organisation."

On the other side was the military. Their increasing prominence was a reflection of the weakness of not only the Indonesian bourgeois/feudal political parties, but more fundamentally, the Indonesian bourgeoisie itself. According to the two-stage theory this should have been the period where bourgeois democracy was in blossom yet so weak was the capitalist class that it's up-front representation had to be the military - the State forces - normally capitalism's last line of defence!

And then there was Sukarno - the classical Bonapartist balancing delicately in between.* By the early 1960s the class forces in Indonesia were assembling for the showdown. It was now only a matter of time.

Conditions for the masses were becoming impossible. "The late 1963 harvest in Java had been heavily depleted by the worst drought and rat plague in living memory ... Aidit himself in his report of December 1963 mentioned that "the people are now eating virtually anything edible" and in the following months various sources drew attention to misery on a huge scale. *Reuters* Newsagency reported on February 16th, 1964 that in Central Java, where the crop failure had been particularly severe, one million people were starving; in the district of Wonosari between two and six people starved to death daily; and the deputy governor of Central Java said that 12,000 people were being treated for malnutrition and 15,000 families had deserted their barren rice fields. *Antara* detailed that 18,000 people were starving in Bali and that there were serious rice shortages in South Sumatra. *Harian Rakjat* reported on February 18th that people were selling everything including their children."(20)

Land reform laws had existed since 1960 yet in practice noth-

*This is a Marxist term to describe the phenomenon of a society in crisis - a military police dictatorship, of one degree or another. When neither of the major class forces are in a strong enough position to hold power in their own right, there can arise a balancing act between the two. In such situations, an individual or group (often the military tops) in the leadership become partly elevated above the contending class forces and play them off against each other. In and of itself this is an inherently unstable situation. It is a common feature of ex-colonial nations. In the final analysis however a definite form of property relations is represented - in this case, bourgeois.

ing had changed. The peasants in frustration began taking over the land. The police, army and reactionaries in the rural areas responded with violence.

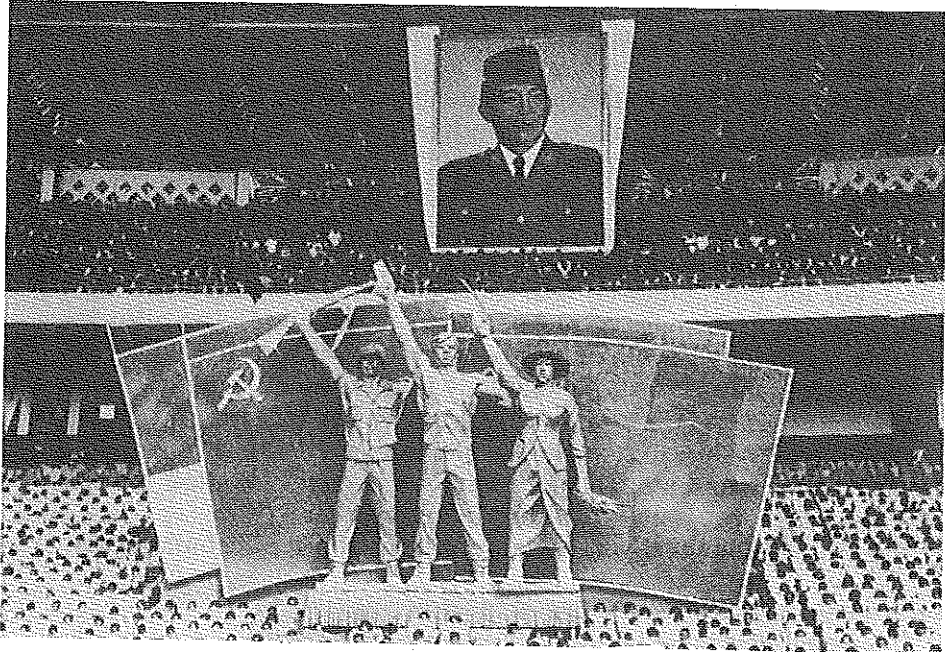
The country was in ruin, corruption and smuggling in the civilian and military bureaucracy were rife. Managerial inefficiency and corruption by the military had ruined the nationalised industries. Production had declined absolutely to below what it was on the eve of the Second World War. Indonesia had at one time been a rice surplus area. Now it was having to import 150,000 tons of rice every year. The tin and rubber export industries had dwindled away and only oil remained as an earner of dollars. The nation was heavily in debt to the world's banks and each year the budget deficit was doubling. The value of the rupiah had sunk to a hundredth of its legal value as the result of chronic inflation - in the six years to 1965 the cost of living increased by 2,000 per cent. At the same time it was reported that up to an incredible 75% of the State Budget was being spent on the armed forces.

For his part, Sukarno was more concerned with Indonesians developing "a sense of pride in their nationhood" - an affordable sentiment for a man living in a mansion surrounded by expensive works of art. To facilitate this "sense of pride" millions were spent on prestige buildings, new boulevards and grand statues in Jakarta. At the same time, an endless stream of speeches, slogans and acronyms, increasingly coated in left-wing rhetoric, issued forth from Sukarno:

Manipol/USDEK, - Manipol being the political manifesto



and USDEK an acronym made up of the initial letters of the 1945 Constitution, Indonesian socialism, Guided Democracy, guided economy and Indonesian identity. To these were added a host of others - *Ampera* (the Message of the People's suffering), *Berdikari* (standing on our own feet), *Tavip* (the Year of Living Dangerously), NEFOS and OLDEFOS (New Emerging Forces and Old Established Forces), *Nasakom* (union of Nationalism, Religion and Communism), the need to avoid textbook thinking, to return to the rails of revolution, the idea of continuing



PKI 45th Anniversary Rally, Jakarta 1965

revolution ..." (21), and so on and so forth.

Enthusiastically the PKI took up the chorus of these slogans. In the early fifties the PKI were calling Sukarno a "Japanese collaborator", a "perverter of Marxism" and a "semi-fascist". By the early sixties he was addressing PKI congresses. As Rex Mortimer puts it, "By 1963 the party's worship was becoming almost idolatrous. Despite the President's notorious disdain for, and ignorance of, economic affairs, it declared that the solution of ec-

onomic difficulties could safely be left in his hands A short time later (Aidit) bestowed the final accolade by describing the president as his first teacher in Marxism-Leninism."(22) In the end the PKI were arguing that Marxism and Sukarnoism were identical!

By August 1965 the PKI had become the third largest Communist Party in the world (only the Soviet and Chinese parties were bigger). *Three and a half million* Indonesians were members of the party. In addition, the different organisations affiliated to it - trade unions, peasant, youth, womens and cultural movements - claimed the support of probably 20 million people.

The international bourgeoisie looked on at the situation in Indonesia with increasing horror : it was commonly felt that the PKI were soon to take power. No matter what their policies may have been on paper, the concrete realities of the situation would force them to nationalise the economy as had happened in Cuba and China (as we have seen many sectors had been nationalised already) : The loss of Indonesia, the fifth most populated country in the world, would be an enormous blow to international capitalism, yet they were powerless to intervene.

The desperation of their thinking is shown in a memorandum to the Rand Corporation, in which key American policy advisor (and CIA operative) Guy Pauker wrote, "Were the Communists to lose Sukarno as a protector, it seems doubtful that other national leaders, capable of rallying Indonesia's dispersed and demoralised anti-Communist forces, would emerge in the near future. Furthermore, these forces would probably lack the ruthlessness that made it possible for the Nazis to suppress the Communist Party of Germany a few weeks after the elections of March 5th 1933 The enemies of the PKI including the remnants of various right-wing rebellions, the suppressed political parties, and certain elements in the armed forces, are weaker than the Nazis, not only in numbers and in mass support, but also in unity, discipline and leadership."(23) (This was the thinking of international capitalism - "Where are the Nazis when you need them?").

On the night of September 30th 1965 things came to a head. Six generals of the high command were kidnapped and killed by a small force of middle-ranking military officers and a number of locations in Jakarta were seized. Army units under General Suharto rapidly crushed the 'coup' attempt in the capital, although



PKI 45th Anniversary poster

fighting continued for several weeks in Central Java. The 'coup' and the killing of the generals were blamed on the PKI.

The killing of PKI members and sympathisers began. At first there was enormous confusion. Most observers thought there would be civil war. As the *Economist* pointed out on the 16th October, "The most significant party in the country can hardly be driven underground without the risk of civil war." And indeed there was a civil war - but only one side was fighting.

Time magazine reported on December 17th, 1965 that "Communists, red sympathisers and their families are being massacred by the thousands. Backlands army units are reported to have executed thousands of Communists after interrogation in remote jails. Armed with wide-bladed knives called *parangs*, Moslem bands crept at night into the homes of Communists, killing entire families and burying the bodies in shallow graves.

The murder campaign became so brazen in parts of rural East Java, that Moslem bands placed the heads of victims on poles and paraded them through villages. The killings have been on such a scale that the disposal of the corpses has created a serious sanitation problem in East Java and Northern Sumatra where the humid air bears the reek of decaying flesh. Travellers from those areas tell of small rivers and streams that have been literally clogged with bodies. River transportation has at places been seriously impeded."

The New York Times Sunday Magazine on May 8th, 1966, reported a schoolteacher in a village near Jogjakarta as having said, "My students went right out with the army. They pointed out PKI members. The army shot them on the spot along with their whole family; women, children. It was horrible ..." The *NYT's* correspondent, Seth King, commented, "Surabaya, capital of East Java and long a centre of Communist activity, is laced with turbid canals. Since last October, one of the more grisly tasks of local householders living beside the canals has been to get up each morning and push along the bodies caught near their garden landings." (24)

In Bali, which had been the fastest growing centre of PKI organisation, the killings became so indiscriminate that finally the army stepped in to control them. And the CIA, not known as a humanitarian organisation, itself wrote, "In terms of the numbers killed, the anti-PKI massacres in Indonesia rank as one of the worst mass murders of the twentieth century ...".

Within four months between half a million and a million people, the cream of the working class, the best and brightest of Indonesian society, were slaughtered. The culmination of the PKI's two-stage theory of revolution was vicious counter-revolution with no stages!

But what was most incredible about the whole situation, was that the PKI, the third largest Communist Party in the world, with 20 million supporters was wiped out, *virtually without resistance*. As Rex Mortimer explains, "A dispersed and shattered leadership seems to have lost all capacity to rally the party or cope with the decimation of it's ranks. Sticking to the last to the hope that Sukarno would pull their irons out of the fire, the leaders went into hiding and became to all intents and purposes, deactivated. Illustrative of the paralysis that afflicted the cadre forces of the party is the following account by a PKI member and



Aidit and Sukarno, September 1965

wife of a Central Committee functionary of the way she and her husband reacted in the weeks and months following the coup :

"After September 30th, we went on with our work for some days in the normal manner, but no one with whom we came in contact was able to inform us as to what had happened or what

we were expected to do. As the atmosphere in Jakarta grew worse, we just sat at home and waited for instructions. My husband had been given no guidance about what to do in such an eventuality. We did not expect things to turn out so badly ; we thought there would be a setback for the party but that eventually it would be sorted out by Sukarno.

That is why the party disintegrated so rapidly. There were no orders and no one knew who to turn to or who to trust, since arrests had started and we knew there had been betrayals ... (Party leaders) sent word just to wait and I know that a party leader's wife was sent to see Sukarno."(25)

Sukarno.....it all rested on Sukarno.

Flowing from their theory of alliance with the national bourgeoisie and following the eclipse of all the political parties, the PKI had come to the conclusion that Sukarno himself, an individual, now represented the national bourgeoisie. But Sukarno had no mass movement. Had he represented something solid, a powerful class interest, his demise in no way would have been so rapid. It was not Sukarno but the *army* that ultimately represented the interests of the national bourgeoisie, along with the forces of feudalism and imperialism - all interwoven together. On the other side of the class divide were the PKI representing the workers and peasants and when these great class forces finally cracked apart, Sukarno simply toppled into the crevice.

For the third time in less than 50 years the PKI had been bloodily crushed. The rank and file of the PKI were caught completely by surprise,* yet it is quite possible that Aidit knew in advance of the plan to kidnap the generals. It illustrates the whole approach of the leadership - deals at the top rather than mobilisation of the masses. This is the key point.

Let us recall: Aidit's criticism of the PKI leadership during the independence struggle had been that the Party, "... abandoned po-

*This was particularly so given Aidit's bizzare "two-aspect theory" of the state on which the party had been 'educated'. As the underground PKI themselves put it in 1966, "According to this 'two-aspect theory' a miracle could happen in Indonesia. Namely the state could cease to be an instrument of the ruling oppressor classes to subjugate other classes, but could be made the instrument shared by both the oppressor classes and the oppressed classes. And the fundamental change in state power...could be peacefully accomplished by developing the 'pro-people' aspect and gradually liquidating the 'anti-people' aspect." In essence this was really just the classical reformist approach.

litical, ideological and organisational freedom and did not attach sufficient importance to it's activities in labour and peasant circles. These were the reasons why the revolution failed ...". History repeats itself.

But let's go back one generation more, back to the very foundation of the PKI itself. Had not the *right-wing* of the ISDV opposed the raising of class questions and spoken of the need for "...unity of the native population groups necessary for the achievement of national independence and freedom..." Did not this therefore mean support for the national bourgeoisie? Had the right-wing not split from those who went on to form the PKI precisely over this question?

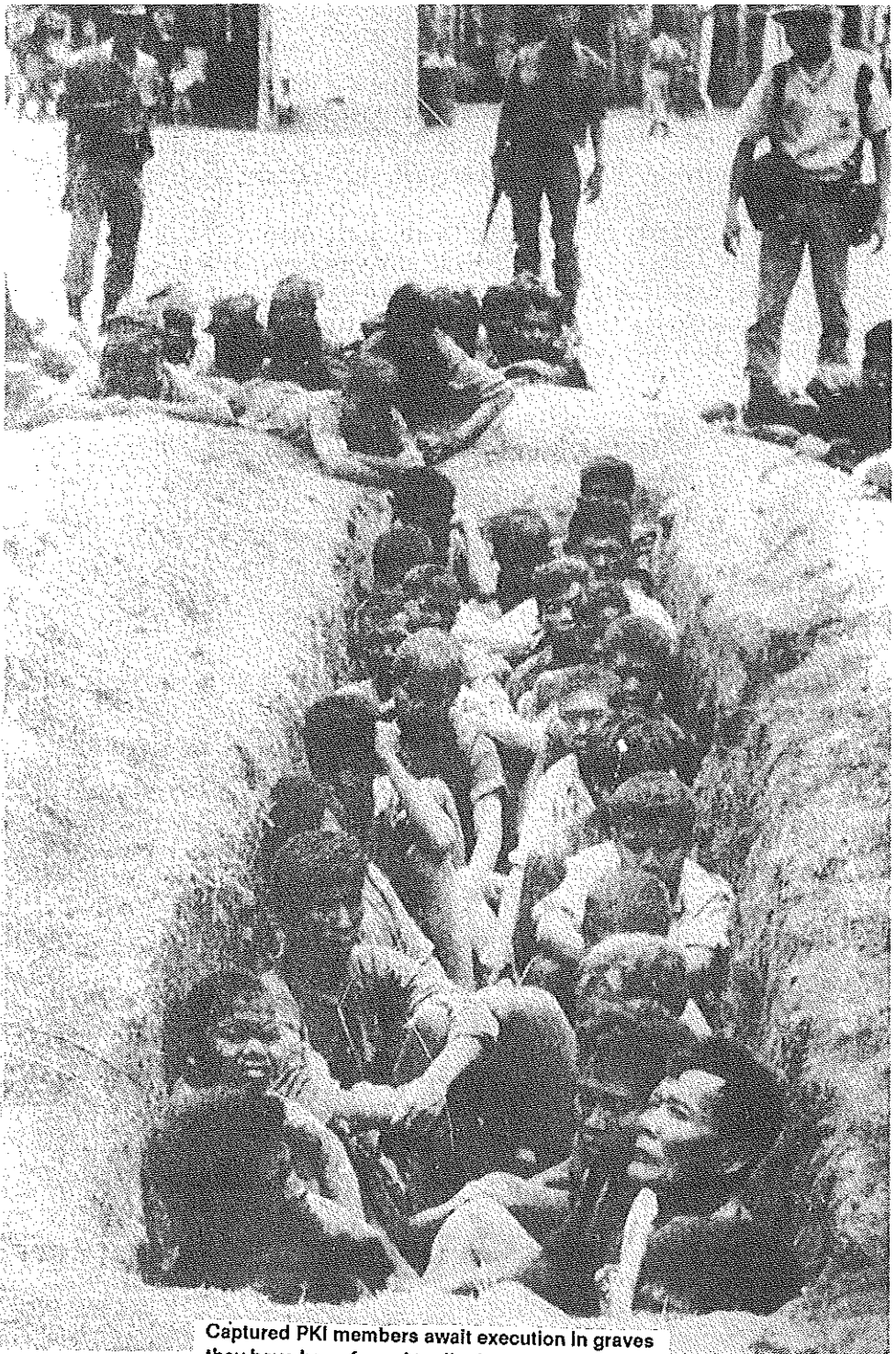
Had not the Tjokroaminoto faction of Sarekat Islam condemned 'sinful' (by which they meant 'foreign') capitalism, whilst supporting native capitalism?

The Aidit leadership of the PKI had effectively reverted to these ideas. Yet it was precisely in the struggle *against* these ideas that the PKI had developed in the first place! The wheel had come full circle.

In 1960 Aidit stated explicitly that the "class struggle was subservient to the national struggle", yet in reality this had been PKI policy from at least the time that Musso had arrived back in Indonesia from Moscow in 1935. The history of the PKI is in many ways a history of the international Communist movement itself. Obviously there were certain local peculiarities (such as the reliance on one man - Sukarno) but the underlying theoretical basis that led the PKI to such a position emanated initially from Moscow.

Even following the Moscow/Peking split, when Indonesia came to side with the Chinese, both Moscow and Peking were putting forward the idea of "alliance" with the national bourgeoisie. Certainly from the 1930s onwards much of the blame for what happened in Indonesia can be laid squarely at the doorstep of international Stalinism.

What happened in 1965 was all the more incredible when one considers that in the last few years it was the Chinese Communist Party that had become the mentors of the PKI. The same Chinese Communists who themselves had been obliterated 40 years earlier, precisely for putting their faith in an alliance with the national capitalists. The parallels even extended to certain details. In an eerie replay of China in the 1920s, the PKI on Feb-



Captured PKI members await execution in graves they have been forced to dig themselves, Central Java

ruary 4th, 1961, handed "the authorities" a list of party members, including addresses, position in the party and date of entry into the party.(26) Even bourgeois observers in Indonesia at the time were drawing the parallel between the Indonesia of the 1960s and the China of the 1920s.

But the tragedy did not stop there. Less than a decade later in Chile the labour movement was smashed and the best of the working class slaughtered for following exactly the same policies. Indeed, "... the US backed overthrow of the Allende government in Chile occurred under the the slogan, 'Jakarta is ap-



As two men await certain death, a soldier bayonets those at his feet -
October 1965

proaching".(27) As is the case with Chile, the CIA were intricately and bloodily involved with the destruction of the PKI. But their effect should not be exaggerated. Just as in Chile, in Indonesia it was the mistakes of the PKI leadership that were crucial. Without those mistakes the efforts of the CIA would have been futile.

Could the PKI have come to power? Yes, we believe - many times. Or let us put it more accurately - the objective conditions for taking power were ripe on many occasions. In the 1920s - leaving aside their organisational disarray - it is certainly questionable whether they were powerful enough. Tan Malaka believed the uprising of 1926 had been left too late and that more time was needed now to build up the Party's strength - that is probably right. However during the independence struggle it is quite clear that the PKI essentially handed their chance for the leadership of that struggle away.

Likewise during the 1960s there was no question that Indonesia was ripe for revolution. A significant indicator is always the attitude of international capitalism - and what was their attitude? It varied from alarm to panic! Let us also not forget that numerically the PKI in the 1960s was in a way more favourable situation than the Bolsheviks had been in 1917 for example. Yet in terms of political theory it was way behind. It was not numbers, but theory that was the PKI's problem. Obviously there are no guarantees of success, even if the most scrupulous attitude is taken towards theory, sometimes the conditions are just not right. We do not believe this was the case however in the Indonesia of the 1940s and 1960s.

It is not even excluded that the PKI could have come to power in the 1960s with Sukarno remaining as nominal head of government. But had they taken power (with or without Sukarno) it is inevitable given the policies of the leadership, that the resulting regime would not have been of a genuinely socialist nature - run by workers' democracy - but rather a deformed workers' state along the lines of China. Nevertheless, the elimination of landlordism and capitalism in the largest country in South East Asia would have been an enormous step forward and a mighty boost in confidence for the oppressed masses internationally.

Furthermore, Indonesia has the largest Moslem population of any country in the world. Had the PKI taken power in the 1960s

the whole pattern of events in the Middle East since then may well have been very different, not to mention India or Pakistan. In the South East Asia region itself, the repercussions of revolution in the largest country would have been enormous, and for Western imperialism the loss of the fifth largest country in the world, just a decade or so after losing China, would have been devastating.

Resurgence?

And what is the situation now? Since 1965 the embryonic native bourgeoisie has expanded and some have become very rich, yet Indonesia still has the lowest wage rates in South East Asia. In addition, there is no way in the world that Indonesia will develop to the point of being a Japan, or even a South Korea. It is simply too late.

As the Indian Marxists have pointed out, "The only capitalist countries which can claim to have developed from backward societies into fully developed industrialised societies in the post war period are Japan and the so-called 'Newly Industrialised Countries' of South East Asia (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong). In all these countries, it was fear at the example of the Chinese revolution which lay behind their development. The revolution was spreading to Korea, Vietnam and Malaya, and even in Japan revolution was a serious danger in the 1940s.

The capitalist class in these countries was incapable of breaking the power of the feudal landlords and carrying through the land reform without which industrialisation was impossible. In Japan, which despite its social backwardness was already a strong military imperialist power, it took American imperialism, in the form of General Macarthur at the head of its occupation armies, to over-rule the defeated Japanese warlords and impose a very drastic land distribution programme, at the same time financing industrialisation with huge dollar subsidies.

American imperialism imposed the same stringent land programme on occupied South Korea, as a defence against the spread of revolution from the Northern half of the peninsula. Again it was General Macarthur - in one sense the most progressive bourgeois this century! - who carried through this programme.

In Taiwan, Chiang Kai Shek's armies, fleeing from the revolu-

tion on the Chinese mainland, performed the same role, to stabilise their occupation of the island. Singapore and Hong Kong are really 'city-states', likewise based on off-shore islands, so the land question was not so formidable.

It is noteworthy that not one of the famous 'NICs' is a real country. They are all fragments splintered off from countries already over-run by revolution : counter-revolutions in exile! In no way can they be regarded as arguments in favour of the viability of capitalism."(28)

As far as land reform in Indonesia is concerned, developments have been in precisely the opposite direction. " Following independence there has been a continuing trend towards concentration of landholding and the consolidation of a landlord class. Often military and civilian officials have moved into this sector with capital accumulated outside the commercial world." (29)

80% of the 180 million people of Indonesia live at a minimum existence. Infant mortality in Indonesia is the highest of the ASEAN nations (87/1000), and 89% of the population do not have access to safe drinking water. As far as the democratic aspect of the bourgeois-democratic revolution is concerned, there is less democracy in Indonesia today than there was under Dutch colonial rule. The Indonesian bourgeoisie are clearly historically incapable of carrying out their own revolution.

And the PKI? Still the regime is shooting the old men, still it is purging the civil service of 'communists', more than 20 years after the PKI's last stand. But as to whether or not the Indonesian working class will politically re-form again under the banner of the PKI or whether it will be under another banner is hard to say.

But really that's not the key issue. It is the programme that the party adopts rather than the name which is the important thing.

Following 1965 there were sporadic reports, culminating in 1968, of surviving PKI groups engaging in guerilla activities. Yet guerillaism in Indonesia, as a focal tactic is doomed, simply by geographical factors. The island of Java was, and continues to be, the key to the whole country - *in the early 1960s, Java had a greater density of population per square mile than either Holland or Belgium.* And what was true in the 1960s is many times more true today given the population increase that has occurred since.

It is the working class in the towns and cities that is the key social force. That is not to say that at a later stage some form of gue-

rilla struggle in the Outer Islands is completely excluded *as a supplement to the work in the towns*. Furthermore, the 'armed struggle' in the sense of the *mass* of the workers being armed, is absolutely *vital* at a certain stage. But as a central tactic the road of guerillaism, or even worse, individual terrorist action, is a complete dead end. Indeed the occurrence of terrorist activities in the 1920s was an indication of the disarray of the movement. But there are even more serious dangers on the horizon.

Many people in Indonesia pose today as 'democrats' and 'friends of the people', tomorrow there will be many more. Some of them have very bloody hands. When the working class movement does rise again, it is crucial that it does not mistake its enemies for its friends.

The winds of revolt are blowing through Indonesia once more, and once more it is the youth who are at the forefront. The back pages of Indonesian revolutionary history are indelibly stamped with the imprint of youth - Semaun, Darsono, Tan Malaka, and millions more. Likewise today, it is those young men and women gathered together in the study circles and activist groups, now linking with the workers and farmers, that will form the core of the resurgence.

In Indonesia today workers' political parties are banned, real trade unions are banned, left-wing papers are banned, ideas are banned - particularly the ideas of Marxism. Yet for all the regime's banning it is precisely the ideas of Marxism that are being debated within the ranks of the young activist and study groups at this moment. And it is from this debate, as well of course as the ongoing active struggle, against this most vicious of all regimes, that the revolutionary cadre of tomorrow is being formed. It is to these heroic young revolutionaries that this pamphlet is dedicated.

Notes

1. Ailsa Zainnu'ddin - A Short History Of Indonesia - pg 165
2. Ruth McVey - The Rise of Indonesian Communism - pg 24
3. McVey - pg 274
4. McVey - pg 328
5. McVey - pg 333

6. McVey - pg 178/179
7. Marxist Workers' Tendency (ANC) - South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution - pg 28
8. Ruth McVey - The Development of the Indonesian Communist Party and its Relations with the Soviet Union - pg 2
9. J.M. van der Kroef - The Communist Party of Indonesia - pg 24
10. Ted Grant - The Rise and Fall of the Communist International - pg 19
11. Rupert Lockwood - Black Armada - pg 35
12. George McT Kahin - Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia - pg 160
13. Ruth McVey - ...relations with the Soviet Union - pg 8
14. Jeanne S Mintz - Mohammed, Marx and Marhaen - The roots of Indonesian Socialism - pg 102
15. Ruth McVey - ...relations with the Soviet Union - pg 8
16. Peter Taaffe - The 1925/27 Revolution (China - the Tradition of Struggle) - pg 7
17. D.N. Aidit - The Indonesian Revolution and the Immediate Tasks of the Communist Party in Indonesia - pg 14/15
18. Richard Robison - Indonesia: The Rise of Capital - pg 41/42
19. Rex Mortimer - Indonesian Communism under Sukarno - Ideology and Politics 1959-65 - pg 62
20. Mortimer - pg 300
21. John D Legge - Indonesia - pg 159
22. Mortimer - pg 88/89
23. Quoted by Peter Dale Scott in Ten Years Military Terror in Indonesia - pg 231
24. Ten Years - pg 14/15
25. Mortimer - pg 391
26. Mintz - pg 203
27. Ten Years - pg 15
28. Dudyora Horaata - Time to Change Course! Communists and the Indian Revolution - pg 25/26
29. Robison - pg 18

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