

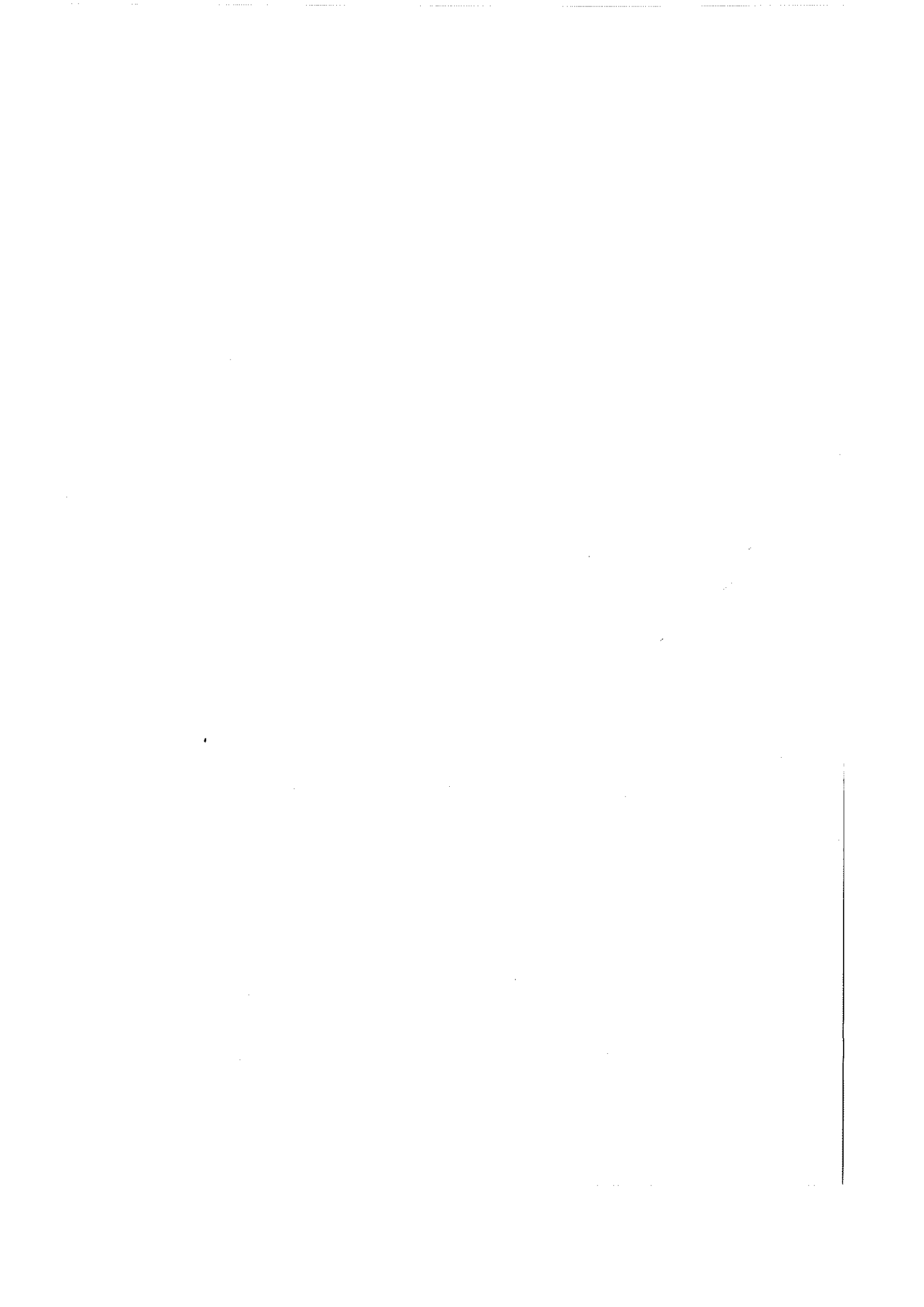
Indonesia

An Unfinished Revolution



A CWI Pamphlet

£1.50



AS WE GO TO PRESS:

Jakarta is once more reeling from bloody clashes between demonstrators and troops using tanks and live ammunition. In a crack-down against tens of thousands of unarmed protesters trying to reach the building where a session of the Suharto-era 'parliament' was meeting, at least twelve people have been killed and hundreds are reported to be badly injured. Eleven opposition activists have been arrested.

In the capital of Indonesia and elsewhere, students have been joined by workers and poor people in far larger numbers than even at the height of the movement in May which ended three decades of dictatorship.

They have faced vigilantes paid and armed by the government as well as the crack troops of the state. Interviewed by TV reporters, they have made it clear they are prepared to fight to the death. Sections of the armed

forces such as the marines have openly given their support, helping to clear a path through the army blockades in the centre of Jakarta.

A new phase of the Revolution has opened. The country's president of just six months' standing - BJ Habibie - is being told to go, along with his armed forces commander, General Wiranto. They have only aggravated the deep crisis that grips Indonesian society.

All the issues raised in this pamphlet come sharply into focus once again. They demand the urgent attention of activists and socialists around the world who are willing with all their hearts a victorious outcome to the unfinished revolution in Indonesia.

It is to the heroic workers and youth of that country that we dedicate this pamphlet.

London November 16th 1998



Indonesia

an

Unfinished Revolution

a **CWI pamphlet**

november 1998

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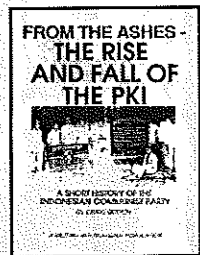
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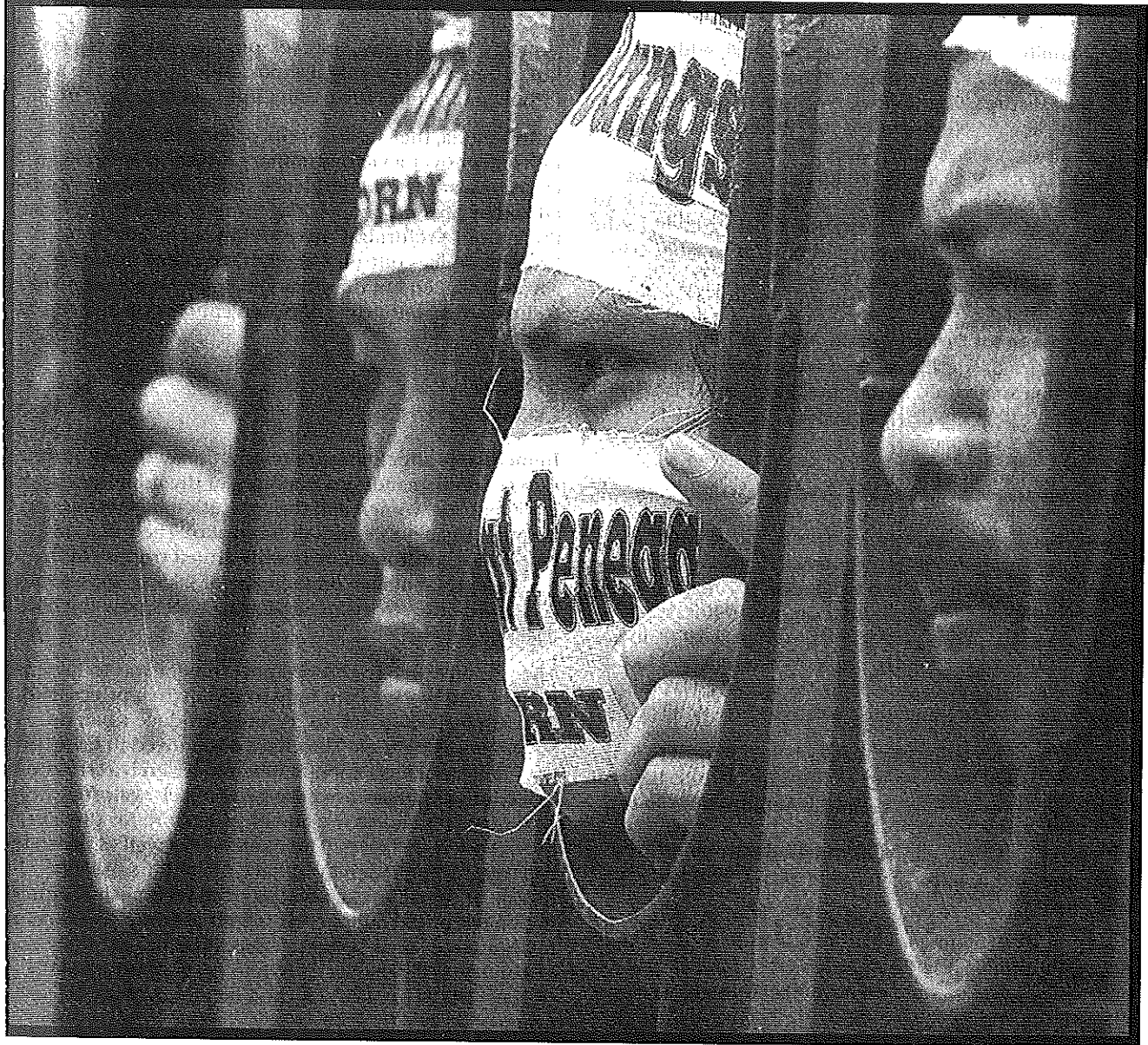
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Introduction



The first and most important step in the development of a new product is the identification of a market need. This is often done through market research, which can be conducted in a number of ways. One common method is to conduct focus groups, where a small group of people are brought together to discuss their needs and preferences. Another method is to conduct surveys, which can be distributed to a large number of people. Both of these methods can provide valuable insights into what consumers want and need. Once a market need has been identified, the next step is to develop a product that meets that need. This involves a process of prototyping and testing, where a small-scale version of the product is created and tested with a group of people. This allows the developer to see how the product is received and to make any necessary adjustments before moving forward with full-scale production.

By the way,

the first and most important step in the development of a new product is the identification of a market need.

has qualified as a leading authority on the subject of product development. He has written several books on the subject, including "The Art of Product Development" and "The Science of Product Development". He is also a frequent speaker at industry conferences and seminars. His work has been instrumental in helping many companies to develop successful new products. He is currently working on a new book, "The Future of Product Development", which will explore the latest trends and technologies in the field. He is also a member of several professional organizations, including the American Society for Quality and the International Society for Professional Product Development. He is a highly respected and sought-after expert in the field of product development.

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The Committee for a Workers' International, with affiliated sections, groups or members in more than 40 countries, regards the still unfolding revolution in Indonesia as one of the key developments of the present period. The felling of a decades-long dictatorship by a mass movement in May of 1998 shook the international capitalist class to the core. As the notorious 'Asian Crisis' spreads to the rest of the world, the devastation it has brought to the fourth most populated country is a pointer to what is in store elsewhere. So too is the response of the masses, moving as they have to take things into their own hands.

The only hope for further development in Indonesia and a whole series of so-called emerging countries lies in reconstructing society along socialist lines. Capitalism has failed. All it offers is a descent into actual barbarism.

Collapse, revolt and instability

For those whose much-vaunted free market system is crumbling about their ears, Indonesia has become synonymous with collapse, revolt and a dangerously unstable and unpredictable political situation. When Russia's currency and share prices plummeted in August 1998, in part as a result of the continuing downward spiral in the economies of East Asia and Japan, the spectre was raised of "An Indonesia, with nuclear weapons"!

As the currencies and share markets of Latin America, Europe and the United States are buffeted by the economic turmoil, those with the most to lose - the super rich owners of industry and of the banks - ponder their fate. How will the people who make them their millions react to the mass redundancies and impoverishment that confronts them?

Indonesia gives them good cause to fear the worst. It also offers to workers and other oppressed layers in every society, a glimpse of what their united strength can achieve. The lava of revolution has not yet cooled. The headiest days may have been those of May, when the youth of the nation occupied the parliament building and brought a dictator to his knees. But, "far more serious", as a Jakarta observer commented, was the wave of strikes and workers' demonstrations that swept the country.

While economic catastrophe invariably leads to political turmoil and uncertainty, Marxists see nothing automatic about the working class moving immediately into action. The onset of recession and slump undoubtedly leads to a questioning and a significant political radicalisation amongst certain layers of workers and especially young people. This was evident in Indonesia, where, as the situation turned dramatically from one of steady growth to sudden collapse, opposition to Suharto's continued rule became more and more vociferous. It also confirmed that the first reaction of workers in industry to a sharp economic crisis can often be to hold back from strikes and

protests. "If we fight", they reason, "We risk having no job". Then, after the initial shock, they can come to a different conclusion: "If we don't fight, we will have no job"!

In Indonesia, the victory of the predominantly student movement over a vicious military dictatorship, gave an enormous access of confidence to the millions of exploited and oppressed people. The "hunger for revenge" and the "spirit of reformasi" have still by no means been brought under control. Although the ruling class was severely shaken but not removed, the new government is still walking a tight-rope between concession and repression.

Workers

Immediately after Suharto's resignation, workers moved into action demanding a doubling of the minimum wage, equal pay for women and the restitution of subsidies on the nine basic necessities or 'sembako'. Their demonstrations were confronted by heavily armed troops - in the 'red belt' of Jabotabek on the edge of Jakarta, for example, and on the streets of Surabaya, Java's sprawling industrial second city.

The response of a frightened government was to increase the minimum wage - but only by 15%, when prices had gone up by 200%! - and to try and introduce a ban on large demonstrations. They have also moved to bring in new industrial legislation that would severely restrict the ability of workers to organise a fight back against retrenchment and all the injustices in store for them as the economy collapses. The moderate as well as the state-run trade union federations have proved themselves unable or unwilling to mobilise effectively against either the bosses or the regime that helps pass onto workers the full burden of their system's crisis. (The pro-market SBSI of Mukhtar Pakpahan is known to get support from the German CDU (Kohl's Party) and members of the US Congress).

Sporadic strikes and demonstrations have continued - of workers in engineering, textiles, electronics - in spite of over one-third of factories being out of production. Networks of trade union activists exist, holding meetings and conferences in secret. In the factories, mines and depots, the representatives of these independent 'unions' and workers' committees may not be formally elected but are recognised as leaders by their fellow workers, many of whom may not yet themselves be formal members. Strong independent unions are a vital weapon for defending workers in the face of crisis and mass unemployment

Students

The months-long protests of the students, having

achieved their immediate aim in May, temporarily subsided. The students drew breath and considered how much further they needed to struggle. There were sharp differences of opinion amongst them anyway as to what they saw as the ultimate goal. Those who had got closest to the workers and poor, wanted to link up the struggle to rid society of corruption and dictatorship with a broader struggle to eliminate poverty and exploitation altogether. Others had limited their horizons to simply cleaning up 'crony' capitalism and replacing it with a democratic 'free market' version, in which opportunities for participation in the economy and society were opened up to wider layers of the middle class.

But, as it has become clear that even the reforms promised by Suharto's successor, in the face of their 'revolution', have got stuck in the sand, the students have renewed their demonstrations. Every day there are protests demanding an end to the Suharto-era legislature, an end to the involvement in politics of the army ('dwi fungsi') and increasingly for President Habibie to resign.

This hapless successor to General Suharto, had the effrontery to suggest to the starving millions of his fellow countrymen, women and children that they should follow his example and fast for two days a week! The fact that a president can always find sufficient for his needs on the days when he is not fasting was not lost on protesting workers and farmers who demanded that rice be subsidised. Habibie then conceded a price subsidy - too little and too late. The vast stocks of rice being hoarded by vulture speculators waiting for higher prices are a provocation to starving families. No wonder the pattern of the recent period has been direct action - people taking what they regard as theirs by right, besieging banks, demanding nationalisation of all crony property even seizing opportunities for mass break-outs of the teeming prisons.

Half-measures in a crisis

President B J Habibie was fond of calling his friend and predecessor 'SGS - Super Genius Suharto'. Now he is keen to tell reporters that no-one should expect that he can wave a magic wand or "just go 'zingaboom' and everything is there!". Indeed, he seems as surprised as anyone to find himself still at the helm of what has become a very shaky ship of state. All the half-measures he has introduced - be it in relation to probing Suharto's mega wealth, devising new electoral laws, clipping the wings of the army etc. - are aimed at keeping every layer of society satisfied. In fact, they are more likely to irritate each of them by being totally inadequate.

With the local currency - the rupiah - having lost 80% of its value compared with the US dollar and with national production shrinking by between 15 and 20% this year, the economy is seizing up. Factories are at a standstill.



*Student demonstration, Surabaya, April 1998
Photo: Kerry Morgan*

Much of industry and agriculture has been disrupted beyond repair. Real wages are back to the level of 1965. The 'miracle' growth of the '80s and 90s, which took per capita income from \$70 - \$700, has turned into its opposite. Far from getting into the top ten economies in the world by the year 2005 - the declared aim of the dictator Suharto - Indonesia came to be universally regarded as a 'basket case'.

More than 80 million people, out of a 200 million population, can barely assure themselves even one meal a day. By the end of the year it will be more like 100 million. A recent newspaper report claiming a certain 'stabilisation' of the currency and 'improvements' in business prospects, stressed the fragility of the situation. It also brought home with one ghastly statistic, the human cost of economic disaster. Half of the country's children below the age of two are so undernourished that they have suffered irreversible damage to the development of their brains.

Television reports from Indonesia have shown children suffering from all the horrific symptoms of malnutrition associated with Africa - no flesh on their bones, swollen stomachs, vacant eyes. They have also shown swarms of desperate and starving people descending on onion plots or rice fields, being chased away by terrified farmers wielding bamboo poles, and swarming back again. Fields and plantations have been stripped bare, fish stocks raided and rice warehouses forced open.

The situation is rapidly deteriorating; the question is sharply posed: 'Who will re-plant and who will re-stock?'. Some urban and rural poor have invaded the estates and

even the golf courses of the rich and planted rice and other crops, agreeing to cultivate and distribute the produce on collective principles. These are, at present, a minority. Blind rage has led to the torching and destruction of buildings and equipment on palm-oil plantations, for example, where Suharto cronies still refuse to recognise the grievances of local people. The situation is crying out for a form of direct democracy and local decision-making that bring immediate results. In many areas, mass demonstrations, picketing or occupying government buildings, have forced out of office not only local governors associated with Suharto's corrupt regime, but even village head-men - mini Suhartos - accused of cronyism, nepotism and favouritism.

National Struggles

The fall of the Suharto dictatorship gave a huge boost to the struggles for liberation in the regions that have suffered the cruellest national oppression - Aceh, Irian Jaya, East Timor. Mass demonstrations forced the Habibie government to give the appearance of acceding to demands for the withdrawal of troops. In Aceh in August as the last divisions were supposed to be leaving the area, *agents provocateurs* were obviously under instruction to stir up riots and provide a pretext for the decision to be reversed.

In spite of one much publicised airlift of soldiers from East Timor, there are now more, rather than less, encamped in the territory - over 25,000 according to TV reports which have shown military landing craft spewing out hundreds of fresh troops onto the beaches of this half-island nation. East Timor has suffered the slaughter of one third of its population since the invasion of 1976 - one of the worst ever genocides in history.

Since the hated Suharto's departure, there have been huge demonstrations in the capital Dili and many other areas. Political organisations have come out into the open to pursue the struggle for national liberation to the end. Under the pressure of the movement, some rebel leaders have been released from prison. The most well-known - FRETILIN leader Xanana Gusmao - remains in a Jakarta jail, refusing on principle a deal on 'special status' for East Timor within Indonesia. He holds out for a referendum on self-determination, though he believes it may take five, or even ten years before it is held and should be under UN supervision. It is possible that even he underestimates the determination of his own people to achieve complete independence in the shortest possible time.

Chaos and the army

Today throughout Indonesia, conventional 'law and order' have broken down. In East Java hundreds of peo-

ple - human rights workers, young people and local Islamic leaders - have been killed by black-clad 'Ninja' assassins. In revenge, vigilante groups have turned into lynch mobs, carrying out summary executions. Ethnic and religious rivalries have been exacerbated by poverty and desperation but they are whipped up and used by the ruling class to divide and rule the population. In a predominantly Muslim country, Islamic fundamentalism in one form or another would move to fill the gap left by the breakdown of conventional authority and the absence of a revolutionary workers' party capable of uniting all the oppressed against the common enemy.

It is said that the army is the only force operational on a national basis. It is certainly still very much in evidence in political life. In the government's proposals for a 'reformed' parliament, the armed forces - ABRI - would still have 55 unelected seats. Although there is much talk about ABRI moving back into centre stage, the likelihood of a military coup is still small - at least over the next 6 - 12 months.

The army is discredited and now even officially blamed for provoking the riots which brought the widespread death and destruction to Jakarta in May. The International Herald Tribune reports in one province, armed clashes between rival military units.

Large elements of the army are impoverished and demoralised. Mining companies complain that the military, along with local officials are unwilling to intervene to stop thousands of miners digging gold and coal for themselves and selling it on the open market. "As they cannot feed the people," comments a Broken Hill Proprietary manager, "They're quite happy for the community to help themselves!" (And it is not only gold and coal that is being appropriated in this way...but whole forests full of teak!)

Socialist order or capitalist compromise

In situations of famine and crisis all kinds of committees spring up dominated by bourgeois and intellectual elements who appoint themselves but do little to overcome the powerful lobbies and corrupt practices which plague a poverty-stricken society. But the challenge before the leaders of the class struggle is to replace chaos and 'lawlessness' with an ordered but democratically controlled and practical way of planning the distribution and use of resources, starting with the most basic aspects of life. They need to encourage the election of councils to take over the task of feeding the population.

Elected representatives of the rural and urban poor, linking up with those of workers in the factories and offices, could begin to organise collectively the acquisition, production and distribution of food and basic necessities.

Such councils of action, similar to the soviets thrown up

in the course of the Russian Revolution, could mount a struggle to take all large estates, banks and industrial conglomerates out of the hands of capitalist cronies and landowners. Under the 'direct democracy' of a workers' and peasants' government, they could organise democratic workers' control and management of society. All that is on offer from the Habibie government, is new elections in May of 1999 and a presidential poll in December. Some doubt that either will be held. A new campaign to discredit the ideas of socialism and communism is under way and troops are preparing to crack-down on demonstrations outside the 'phony' parliament's meetings this month - November.

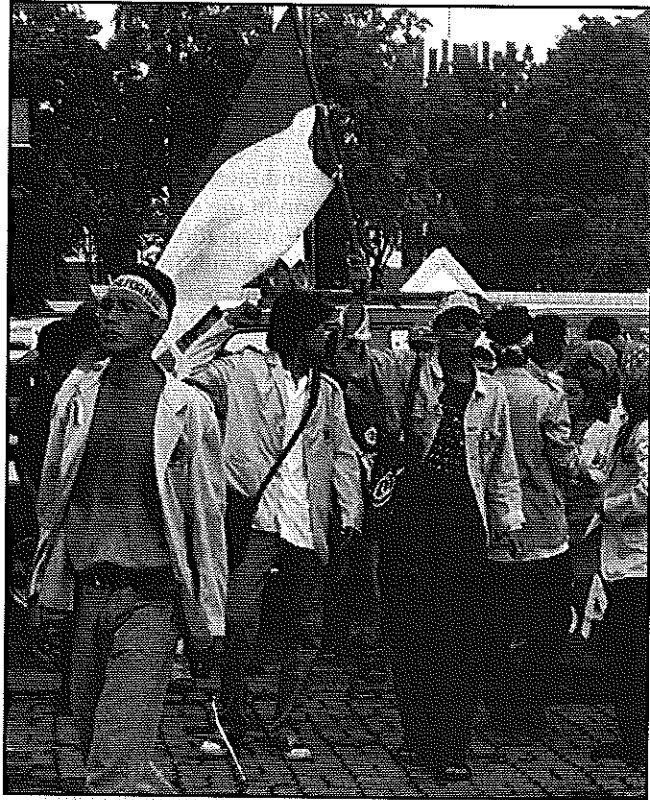
The seven person committee of academics, appointed to draw up reforms to the constitution, has agreed to proposals which contradict even the accepted norms of 'representative' democracy. To register, a party must have branches in half of the 27 provinces or get a million signatures on a petition! To be eligible to stand for a second time it must pass a 10% threshold in the election.

Yet, all these efforts to maintain the status quo are by no means assured of success. Laws severely restricting the right of assembly have already been over-ruled even by today's phoney parliament. They have seen that that in the present inflamed situation, they are anyway being disregarded and discredited. In the political ferment that has followed the end of the Suharto dictatorship, no fewer than 250 different new journals and newspapers have appeared on the scene. New radio stations have opened up and numerous new parties and organisations have come into existence. Eighty eight parties are applying to be legally recognised.

Parties and prospects

One of the most viable of them is the New Mandate Party (PAN) of Amien Rais - leader of the 28 million strong Muslim Muhammadiyah organisation and regarded as an important moderate opposition leader. Abdurrahman Wahid, known as Gus Dur, leads an even larger Muslim organisation - Nahdatul Ulama. He has also declared the setting up of a party - the National Awakening Party or PAB - which could line up with the Democratic Party of Indonesia (PDI) of Megawati Sukarnoputri.

In spite of being virtually illegalised, the Megawati wing of the PDI is widely expected to gain a massive vote at the elections when they eventually take place. It was able to hold a rally and conference in the party's traditional stronghold of Bali during the second week of October attracting up to 100,000 participants. In the colours of the party they formed a sea of red holding high massive banners and placards bearing portraits of their leader - Ibu or 'mother'. Roars from the crowd greeted her denunciations of corrupt cronies as she declared: "Parasites



have destroyed Indonesia over the last three decades. Now we must destroy the parasites."

Megawati is torn between the demands of the ex-generals and free market economists who have flooded into her party and the mass of her grass-roots supporters who are praying to her for some relief of their dire poverty. "She can't be both a leader of the elite and the poor", commented a western diplomat. While there are other contenders, like Amien Rais, for the position of 'leader of the opposition', it is widely said that, "What 'Mega' lacks in enthusiasm she makes up for in popularity". Many have the illusion that she can work miracles and turn the clock back to the days of her father - the first president of the newly independent Indonesia. Illusions, by their nature, are doomed to be shattered on the rocks of reality. Megawati has declared her allegiance to free market policies and taken an ex-general as deputy leader of the party, opening up the possibility even of an alliance with the old ruling party - Golkar.

The hopes and aspirations of the masses, aroused by the movement, are whipped to fever pitch by the appalling conditions they face. But, under any capitalist administration, however beneficent, they are doomed to be sorely disappointed, given the extent of the damage wrought on the economy by the Asian crisis and on political life by a brutal, three decades long dictatorship. No one single charismatic leader can solve these problems. No party that does not stand for a complete break with capitalism can begin the task of reconstruction with the chance of any lasting success.

As the global crisis seizes the world economy, the

prospects of robust growth in Indonesia are eclipsed. In the context of further stagnation in the economy, of break-down in social life and disintegration of the country, genuine democracy can only be built from below by a movement that sets out to transform society along socialist lines. That is the central contention of the Committee for a Workers' International.

Arguing the case

Important material is reproduced here to argue this case. It is aimed to throw light on the dramatic events of this year and offer an explanation of what is behind them and what is to follow in the near future. It includes elements of a programme which we hope accords with the needs and aspirations of the Indonesian people. It is not for academic debating circles but a contribution, we hope, to the urgent and very practical task of building a movement that can end the calamitous rule of capitalism in Indonesia.

The accounts and articles published in the papers and journals of the sections of our International, in particular those in the British monthly, 'Socialism Today', have drawn on first-hand material collected on visits to Indonesia this year by European members of the CWI - Anna Schneider, Anton Wilin from Sweden and myself. We had the privilege of meeting some of the most dedicated and self-sacrificing activists - youth from the campuses and working men and women from the factories. We experienced the fervour and thirst for revolutionary ideas that only a revolution can engender.

In our discussions, we were guided by what we had learnt of the many previous experiences of mass struggle and the combative traditions of the Indonesian working class - much of it from the invaluable short history "From the Ashes" reproduced on pages 11 to 28. The tight censorship operated by the military dictatorship, only partially eased since its figurehead was brought down, means few activists inside Indonesia have had access to the true history of their own heroic past and its bitter lessons. We discovered that Craig Bowen's pamphlet has been keenly studied on courses organised by the out-lawed, left-wing People's Democratic Party.

As it points out, the Indonesian Communist Party, formed in 1920, was the first in Asia. In the years after independence, it grew to become the third largest in the world. It was physically destroyed in 1965-66 when over one million activists and supporters were slaughtered by Suharto's crack troops.

Understanding the tragedy of those years not only gives an insight into today's events. It brings home how even the most promising of revolutions can be shipwrecked by fatal errors of leadership, notably in this case, the failure to declare a party, draw up a correct programme and give

a lead to the working masses.

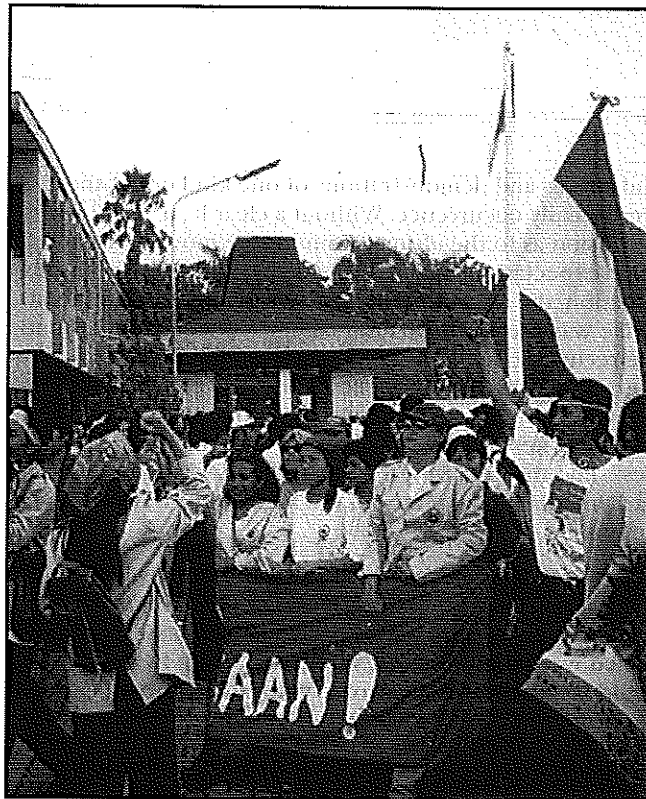
History often repeats itself, but never in every detail. Even under dictatorships, the battle of class forces continues. Some elements are weakened, others strengthened. The world situation today, and the fragile condition of the once-mighty army in Indonesia, rule out a bloodbath like that through which Suharto waded when he came to power. But, unless the momentum of the movement is maintained and a clear independent policy adopted by the leaders of the working class and oppressed layers, reaction could prepare a comeback. Since Suharto was removed by a persistent mass movement of unarmed people, he has still not been put on trial for the mass murder he conducted in the '60s nor for any of the later atrocities carried out during the 32 years of his rule.

Scores to Settle

The majority of the population in Indonesia has scores to settle with Suharto and his cronies. There are the relatives of the millions killed or 'disappeared' under Suharto's orders, the millions whose identity cards are still marked with the words 'political prisoner', the tens of millions who have laboured to create the massive wealth accumulated by him and his cronies and the tens more millions starved of the basic means of a decent life. Known to have utilised state power to enrich his own immediate family - said to be worth up to \$46 billion - the fallen dictator has recently appeared on national television claiming he has "not one cent" in a foreign bank! Those who are supposed to be investigating his wealth are drawn from the very same clique that was in power under this 'King of Thieves'. They will not want to push things further for fear of revelations about their own corrupt dealings!

The CWI argues that only a clean break with the past regime and with the whole system of capitalism - by its very nature corrupt and unjust - will lay the basis for satisfying the modest demands of the Indonesian masses. Only a genuine 'people's trial' of Suharto, a real purge of the army and government by a workers' and small people's government and the socialist re-construction of society will satisfy the strivings of the mass of the Indonesian population.

Democratic rights can and must be squeezed out of the present regime by the sheer force of the mass movement. But they will be limited and short-lived unless the system of organising society and the economy is changed. This involves mass struggle with the aim of eliminating private ownership and putting land, industry and finance to use for improving people's lives. An extension of the struggle for socialism to other countries would be not a distant goal but a vital necessity to prevent the return of outright reaction.



The case for this programme is made in the pamphlet 'Indonesia - The Revolution has Begun' included here on pages 29 to 41 produced in June 1997 by the Austrian section of the CWI. It was written by Anna Schneider who visited Indonesia less than one month before Suharto's resignation to discuss with participants in what were already dramatic events. It gives a political 'who's who' and 'what's what'. It outlines how the monetary crisis that hit Indonesia in mid-1997 turned into the profound social and political crisis of 1998 that hit the world's headlines.

Elements of revolution were already coming together and have yet to reach their full stature. Not one act but a process, revolution never develops in a straight line. It goes through numerous phases and stages. This does not mean that Marxists and leaders of the workers' movement should fall into the trap of limiting the struggle to 'bourgeois democratic' and 'socialist' stages. On the contrary, in countries where the bourgeois revolution has not yet been completed (see material on later pages of this pamphlet) and land reform, for example, urgently needs to be carried through, the only way it can be done is by eliminating capitalism. For the land-owners, bankers and industrialists, all tied up together in exploiting the labour of others, democracy is a luxury they cannot afford.

The example of Spain

The extensive writings of Leon Trotsky on developments in Spain during the period 1931-7 are instructive in this respect. They graphically illustrate what is at stake as the processes of revolution and counter-revolution unfold. A revolutionary period can begin with something like the internal collapse of a form of rule that has held sway for decades - constitutional monarchy, military dictatorship. It can pass through a period of weak government, short-lived regimes, riddled with crisis, forced to make concessions but awaiting the moment to reassert its control. It will see workers struggling at first in an uncoordinated and spontaneous fashion, suffering defeats and resolving to come back for more. Suharto's successor, Habibie, could well be taken for the Berlinguer of Indonesia - the 'Gateman of the revolution'.

Indonesia in the next period, may well see a development akin to the June days of the Paris Commune in 1871 in France or the July days of the Russian Revolution 1917. As Trotsky explained, the most militant workers, awoken to struggle may be initially defeated because of the scattered, partial nature of their movement. Then, learning from their mistakes, and still not prepared to tolerate the intolerable, they can push ahead towards a show-down with the ruling class, underestimating the obstacles that stand between them and victory. The most advanced layers may not be fully aware of the need to win the support of other layers or at least to neutralise opposition to a suc-

cessful bid for power.

A revolutionary party would launch a programme to rally the support of the masses around demands aimed at dispelling lingering illusions that the new 'democratic' representatives of the old ruling class are capable of solving even their immediate problems. A revolutionary party would also understand the need to conduct agitation aimed at winning over large sections of the army to refuse to fire on workers and students.

Throughout his writings on the Spanish Revolution, Trotsky urges the building and strengthening of directly representative committees of workers and poor peasants as an alternative to the bourgeois republican government that protects capitalist and landowner exploitation. At the same time he urges the building of a party to lead and coordinate the struggle. Every moment of lost time and lost opportunity means time and opportunity given to reaction. In Spain the dire consequences were the eventual victory of the fascism and the long night of the Franco dictatorship for more than 30 years.

As a contribution to the vitally important discussion on which way forward for the Indonesian revolution, a CWI statement, 'Indonesia - A Revolution Begun' was produced in June of this year and circulated it as widely as possible for information and discussion. It is reproduced on pages 43 and 58 of this pamphlet. Also included, on pages 59 to 60, is a small statement on 'The Need for a Revolutionary Party' used by representatives of the CWI in many meetings with activists in Indonesia in August. At the time of their visit, they found that the ferment in society had not abated. There was still a militant mood

and strikes and demonstrations of one kind or another were a daily occurrence. Without a clear lead, there was confusion as to the ultimate aims of the movement but huge expectations that a better deal could be won. In this situation, the idea of preparing at least a warning general strike was greeted with enthusiasm. United action around the recurring demands of the movement could pull together all the largely spontaneous struggles that are constantly breaking out all over the country: 'Down with Habibie!' 'Restore the subsidies on the nine basic necessities!' 'End the 'dwi fungsi' of the military!' 'No to the sham parliamentary democracy of the MPR!' 'Free trade unions'...

In the present highly charged situation, and given the state of the army (which always reflects society) it would seem that an attempt to use it against the masses in a concerted way would break it. Similarly, a coup by generals could well have the effect of a whip; an attempt at counter-revolution provoking a new surge of revolution, as in Portugal where the masses renewed their struggle to defeat the attempted coup by General Spínola in March of 1975. After a period, however, if no way is found of channelling the revolutionary energy of the masses, if no other force sets out to 'regulate' and reconstruct society along socialist lines - things could change. The favourable balance of forces could dissipate.

It is possible to envisage certain junior officers stepping in to the breach on the pretext of halting the disintegration of the country and instituting a form of avowedly 'progressive' military rule. A new government - even a Megawati government - could find them offering their services first of all to supervise the distribution of food and other essentials. Later they could move to 'pull back the political cover' in their direction. While not eliminating the capitalist mode of ownership and production, they might use the state and its forces to introduce a heavy measure of control - in society and in the economy. In order to protect Indonesian interests, they could adopt an anti-western stance and certain measures of protectionism as well elements of centralisation and planning.

One form of bourgeois bonapartism or another will persist, that is, a more or less overt military control over society aimed at holding the balance between the classes at the expense of basic democratic rights.

Whatever government is in power in Indonesia in the near future it will come under pressure to adopt protectionist measures along the lines of the exchange and capital controls adopted recently by Mahathir Mohamad in neighbouring Malaysia. It may follow the example of the South Korean and Japanese governments and nationalise certain key areas of finance and some of the more trouble-torn industries. Indeed, under the pressure of mass demonstrations and the demands of workers, the Habibie government has already been forced to take over certain

banks and industries that were run (and ruined) by Suharto cronies. It has also arranged rescheduling of some debts and increased the budget deficit.

In response to the Asian crisis, the governments of Hong Kong and Taiwan have both moved in the direction of state intervention in an attempt to inoculate their economies against the worst ravages of unfettered market capitalism. National bourgeois representatives will not be averse to using anti-imperialist or religious rhetoric to maintain their popularity when 'foreign' (especially US) capitalism is seen to be draining their economies. But nothing they do, while remaining on a capitalist basis, will save them from new bouts of collapse and disaster.

The World Bank, in a report to the new government of BJ Habibie and international investors, described Indonesia as being on the verge of bankruptcy. "No country in recent history", it declared, "Let alone one the size of Indonesia, has ever suffered such a reversal of its fortune". They could have added that no country in recent history has seen such political turmoil and the coming together of so many elements of revolution.

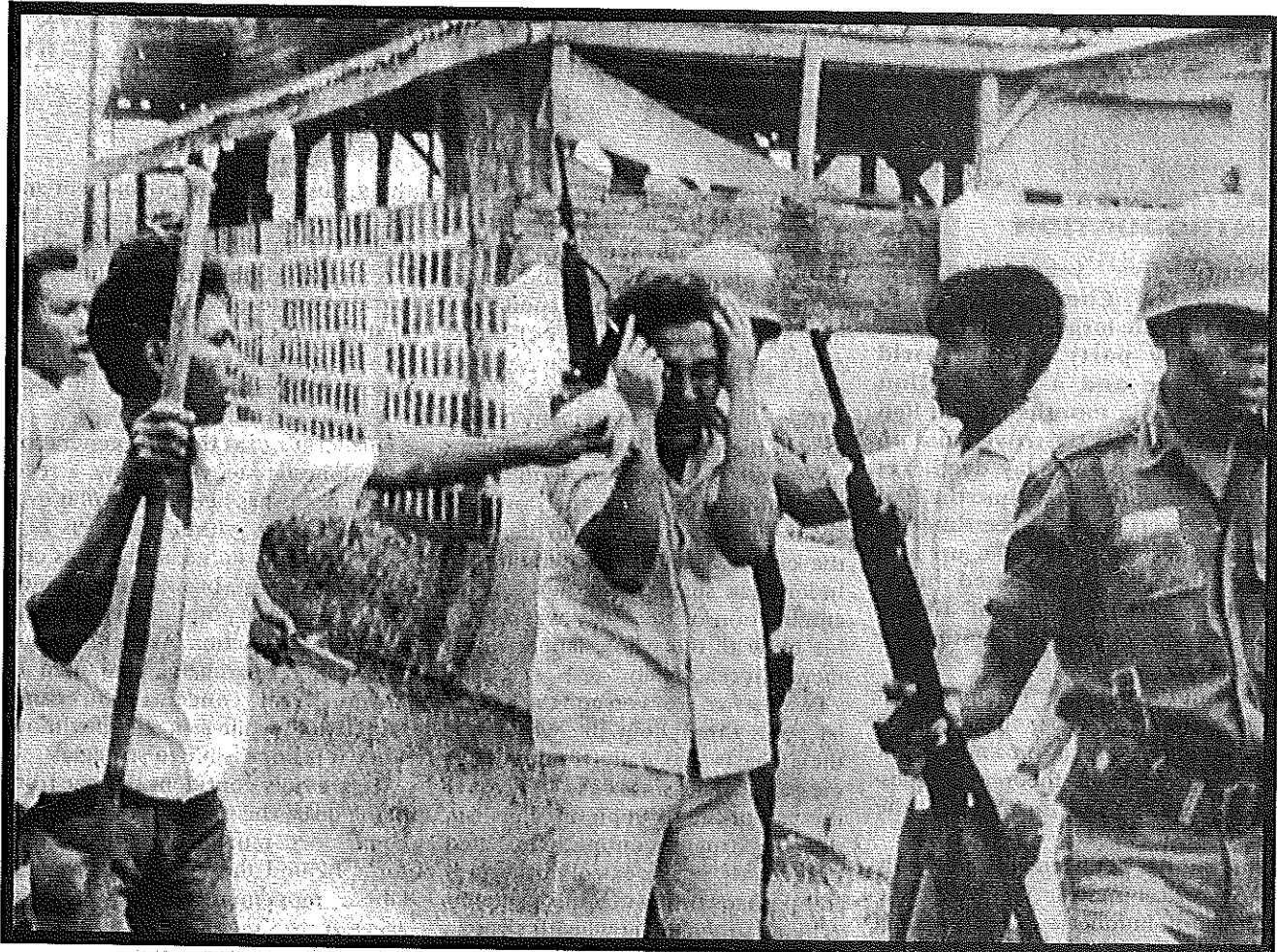
These will be accompanied by elements of vicious counter-revolution. There will be huge ebbs and flows as the contesting forces struggle for solutions in the interests of their own class. There will be big and contradictory changes in consciousness. But the key factor for harnessing the enormous energy and anger released by the breaking down of the Suharto dictatorship is the building of a revolutionary workers' party. The urgency of pursuing such a goal cannot be overstressed. The production of this pamphlet, it is hoped, will be a contribution to that process and towards bringing nearer the day when Indonesia's socialist revolution assures a lasting victory over poverty and reaction.

Kerry Morgan, November 1998

From the Ashes

The rise and fall of the PKI

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE PKI



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From the Ashes

The rise and fall of the PKI

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE INDONESIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

First published by Militant International Publications, Australia, September 1990

BY CRAIG BOWEN

AUTHOR'S 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 at 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.

Twenty five 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, particularly 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 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 vital 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 crucially important, 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 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 blow-

ing 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 had himself 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 stop it all off, the road was, "exclusive-

ly 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 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 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 (ISDV) was founded in

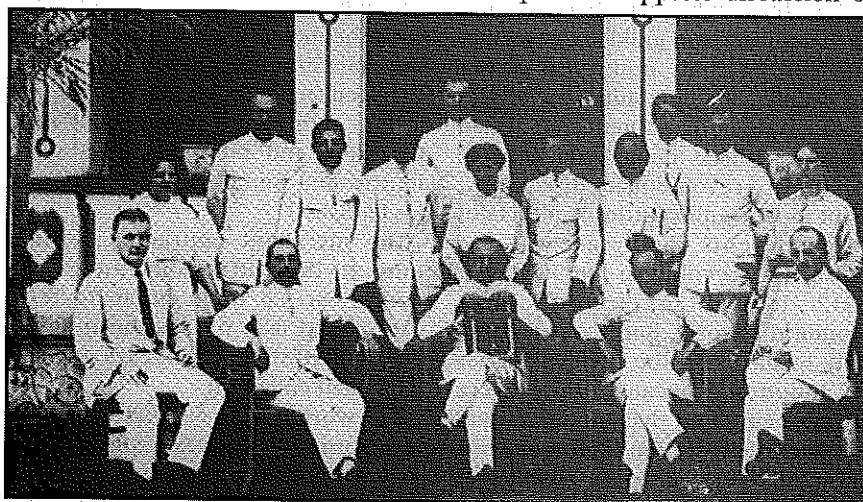
1914. From an original sixty members their numbers grew to eighty-five by the following year and they began to produce a paper... however it was in Dutch. This was because the vast majority of ISDV members were Dutch and despite the fact that poverty was increasing, they were not reaching the Indonesian masses.

By this time, in contrast - Sarekat Islam, a movement rather than a party - had 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 Tsar if only the Indonesians set their minds to it".

The government immediately set about prosecuting Sneevliet and attempted to suppress discussion of



ISDV members, Semarang, 1917

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 (SI) 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 heading rapidly in a revolutionary direction.

But most significant in its effects of all the events 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 social-

ist 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 to 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 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 over-

whelmingly 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 names, 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 method 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 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. (No doubt these factors 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, no

the rise and fall of the PKI

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 the 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. 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 1926, and Sumatra where the insurrection did not begin until early 1927, and was quickly smashed. Thirteen thousand 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 is 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



Het Vrije Woord - PKI Dutch language newspaper, 1920

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 revolution aimed not just at independence but also at drastic social change was... not limited to doctrinaire 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.

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 isolat-

ed backward country that had been weakened by three years of world war, ravaged by civil war, and almost brought to its 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 abandonment of Bolshevism itself.

But to return to Indonesia, by the time of the 1926/27 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 preoccupied 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 being 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 slaugh-

tered.

Given Moscow's lack of attention, it should however be noted that, according to Semaun, 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 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 increased 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 Provincien mutinied briefly, seized 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 1925 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 right again. In perhaps the Comintern's most glaringly demented phase, having destroyed the revolutionary possibilities in China through

AWAS! ... AWAS! PROGRAMMA

PENTING!

Perhatikanlah pada tanggal perspektifnya

"KORBAN PERTJINTA-AN"



ENTREE PRIJZEN:

Loge	1.75	Klas III	1.00
Klas I	0.75	Klas IV	0.20
Klas II	0.50	Klas V	0.10

DAHLIA - OPERA

(dari bahasa Opera Westrop)

KRAMATPEIK - BATAVIA - C.

Ini malam dan
Malam berikutnya
Mumpetloedjoeka.



Miss Roek dan Mr. Zainal

dalam (Jeter)...

GAGAK-SOLO

Tjetera pentjoeri gentlemen
jeng amat menentj hani

Liatlah Mr. Zainal sebagai
Lord - Lirer Indonesia!

Dengarlah njanjan' jany
merdoe!

Acteurs dan actrices jany
djempol.

Datanglah jang sores-sores.
djangan sempat
kehadian tempat!

TV 1930/31

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)

leaning on capitalist elements, the Stalinists veered diagonally in 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 were their policies. The Socialist Parties, Labour Parties, Social Democratic Parties internationally, many of them 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 consequences 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 the 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 British Trotskyists explained: "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 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' policy 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 also independence for the colonies of Dutch imperialism - ie Indonesia. At the same time, the expatriate Indonesian students' organisation, Perhimpunan, which was now controlled by the Communists, dropped the word "Merdeka" 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 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 from the Dutch to help fight the Japanese, they were told this was "impossible".

An interesting contrast with the official PKI line is provided here by the position of Indonesian communists still prisoners from the 1926/27 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 (as a result of being in prison for the previous decade and a half), they were not at all happy with the idea of a bloc with Dutch colonialism.

The comments of Rupert Lockwood, at that time a leading Australian Stalinist, are very revealing: "Though advised by the CPA (Communist Party of Australia), the PKI...at first made



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



Women during the Independence struggle

sectarian errors 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, and resisted co-operation with the NEI (Dutch) Government-In-Exile. (11)

The fundamental ideas of the communist movement were now regarded as "warmed-up clichés".

But the CPA persisted and won out. Their 'advice' manifested itself in the old PKI leader Sardjono, "Setting an example", (as Lockwood so inimitably put it) "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 in late 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 fascist 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 not only the PNI, but even the right-wing Moslem party, the Masjumi.

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 fascist 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 proved 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 bravely against the British invaders at Surabaya.

"In bravery, devotion, and administrative skill, they have astonished the world, including those imperialist vandits, 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 own and 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 'anatical' 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 actually rearmed them, and 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".

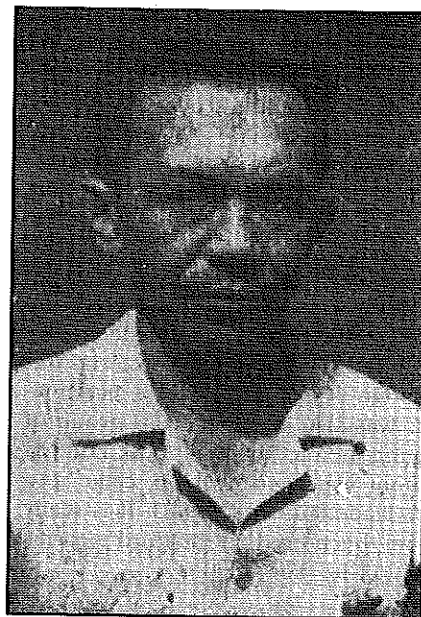
In the mid 1950s, Aidit, reflecting on the failure of the PKI to capture the leadership of the independence struggle, wrote: "During the revolution, the Party abandoned political, ideological and organisational freedom and did not attach sufficient importance to its activities in labour and peasant circles. 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".

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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 per cent unemployment, the continued existence of feudal relations on the land, and the absence of any visible benefit from independence. It is interesting to note that 70 per cent 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 per cent 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. 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.

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the rise and fall of the PKI

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 bravely against the British invaders at Surabaya."

"In bravery, devotion, and administrative skill, they have astonished the world, including those imperialist vandits, 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 own and 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."

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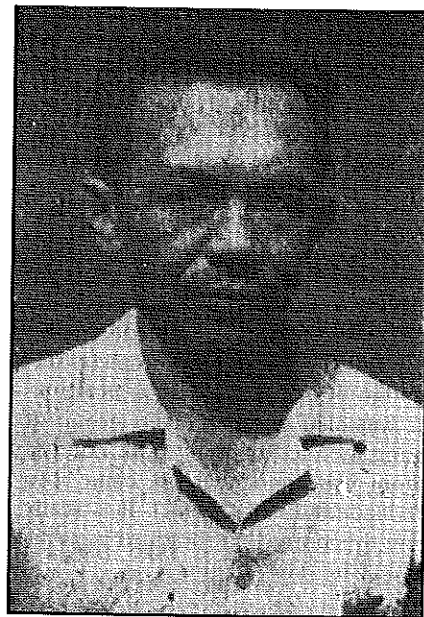
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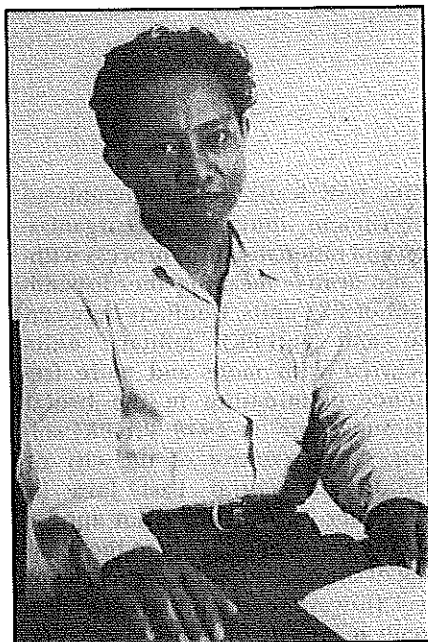
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ed the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution, which were:

A thoroughgoing land reform, giving land to the peasants which in turn could create a viable internal market.

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 (Europe, America etc) roughly by the end of the nineteenth century. However they had not been completed in the colonial and ex-colonial countries. Thus with the advanced capitalist countries increasingly dominating the entire world in imperialist fashion, for the colonial and ex-colonial nations a third task was added:

The overthrow of direct rule by imperialism, and even after that was achieved, the overthrow of the economic stranglehold exercised by imperialism.

Put simply, these measures were what was necessary to transform Indonesia from a backward agricultural nation into a modern capitalist economy. 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 interests by the rising national bourgeoisie in each of the different countries - using the masses to do their fighting for them. Was this to be the case in Indonesia? What role was the working class to play? Let us backtrack briefly.

In the very early 1920s, when the Communist International had been a healthy organisation, an extremely important discussion took place within its 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 also more exactly, 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. Thus 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 its 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 working 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 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 that existed in Indonesia.

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



Aidit and Mao Tse Tung



Sukarno

bourgeois democratic revolution in Indonesia is no longer one of the old type, or part of the outdated 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, 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 nationalisation 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' (business operators) 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 dis-

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credited as a result of the rebellion... and were finally outlawed in 1960. The Nahdatul Ulama and PNI have degenerated as organisations into little more than self-perpetuating patronage machines. Only Murba, a national-Communist Party... has improved its 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 its 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". In the following months, various sources drew attention to misery on a huge scale.

"Reuters news agency 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 treat-

ed 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 nothing had changed. The peasants in frustration began taking over the land. The police, army and reactionaries in the rural areas responded with violence.

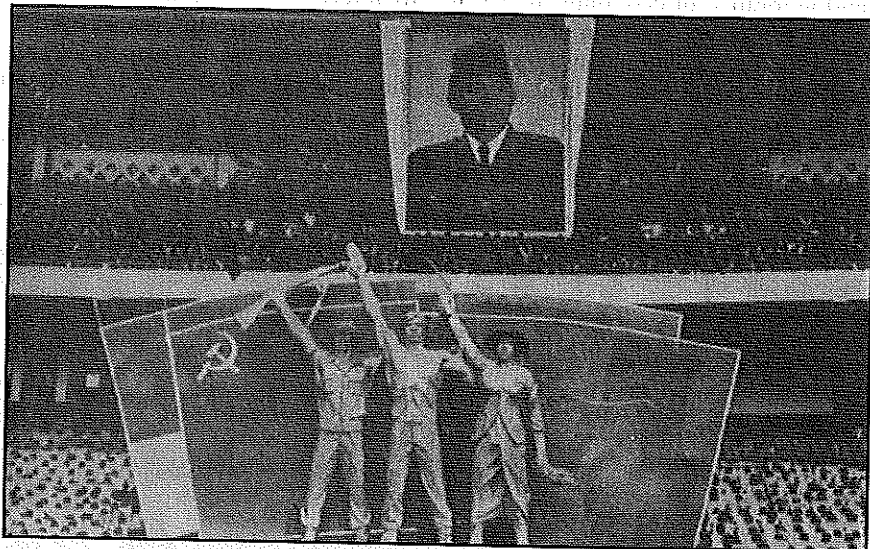
The country was in ruin, corruption and smuggling in the civilian and military bureaucracy were rife. Managerial inefficiency and corruption by the military had ruined the nationalised industries. Production had declined absolutely to below what it was on the eve of the Second World War. Indonesia had 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 new acronyms - increasingly coated in left-wing rhetoric - issued forth from Sukarno. One such was Manipol/USDEK. "Manipol being the



PKI 45th Anniversary Rally, Jakarta 1965

**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 is in a strong enough position to hold power in its own right, there can arise a balancing act between the two. In such situations, an individual or a 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 was a common feature of ex-colonial nations. In the final analysis however a definite form of property relations is represented - in this case, bourgeois.*

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political manifesto and USDEK an acronym made up of the initial letters of the 1945 Constitution i.e. Indonesian socialism, Guided Democracy, 'guided economy' and Indonesian identity". (21) To this 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 revolution...", and so on and so forth.

Enthusiastically the PKI took up the chorus of these slogans. In the early '50s the PKI were calling Sukarno a "Japanese collaborator", a "perverter of Marxism" and a "semi-fascist". By the early '60s, 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 economic 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, women's 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 the 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 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 a 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



PKI 45th Anniversary poster

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 its 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 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.



Aidit and Sukarno, September 1965

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 - small wonder given Aidit's bizarre "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.

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 political ideological and organisational freedom and did not attach sufficient importance to its 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 mean '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 base 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 4th February, 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 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 slogan, 'Jakarta is approaching'".(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 not have been decisive.

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 away their chance for the leadership of that struggle.

Likewise during the 1960s there was no question but that Indonesia was



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

the rise and fall of the PKI

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 'NIC's 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 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 per 1000 live births) 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 purg-

ing 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 guerilla 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, may well be 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 disar-

ray of the movement. But there are even more serious dangers on the horizon.

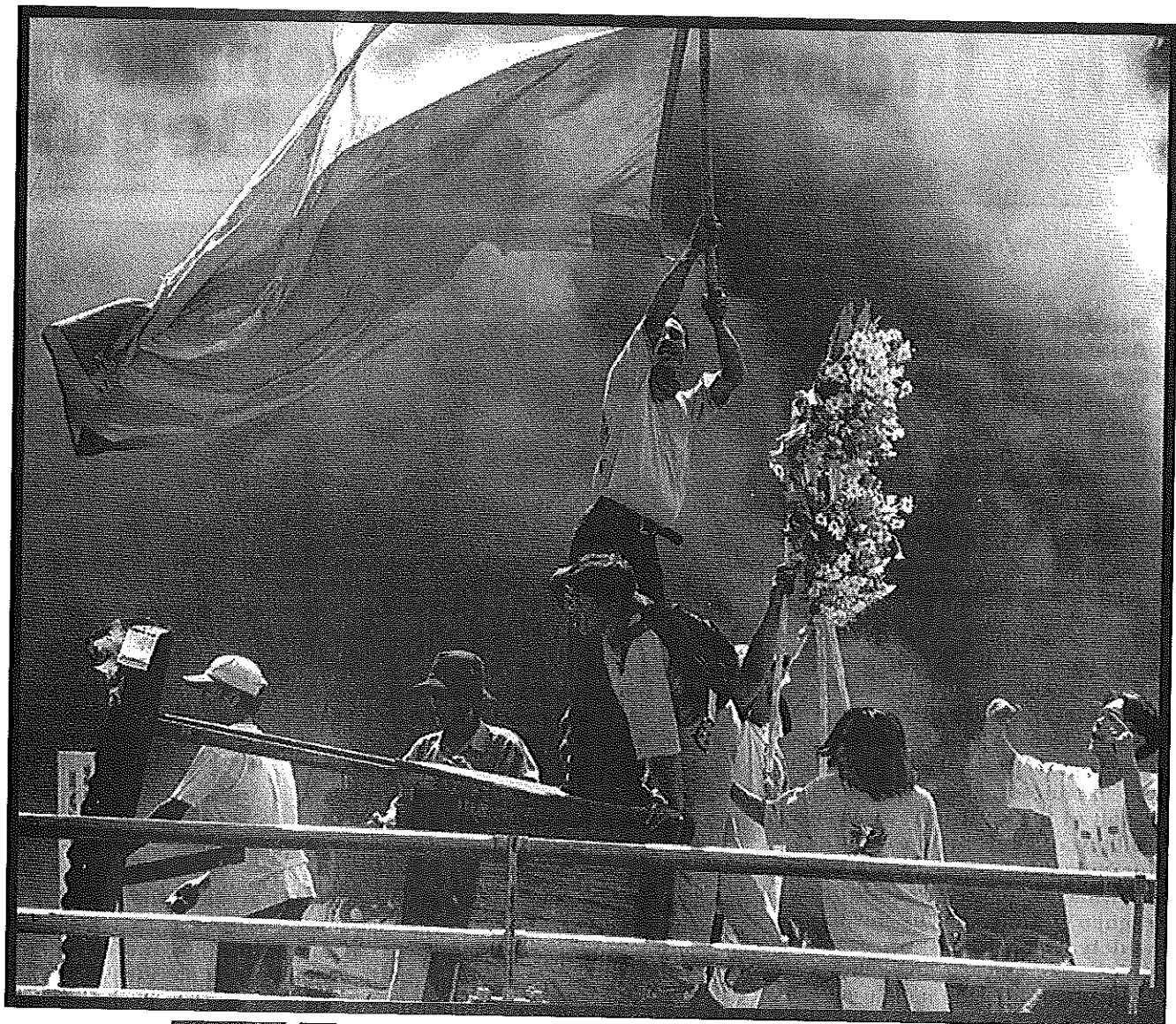
Many people in Indonesia pose today as 'democrats' and 'friends of the people', tomorrow there will be many more. Some of them have very bloody hands. When the working class movement does rise again, it is crucial that it does not mistake its enemies for its friends.

The winds of revolt are blowing through Indonesia once more, and once more it is the youth who are at the forefront. The past 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 together 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. Allsa 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. JM 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. DN 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



The Indonesian Revolution has begun

The Indonesian Revolution has Begun

Written by Anna
Schneider

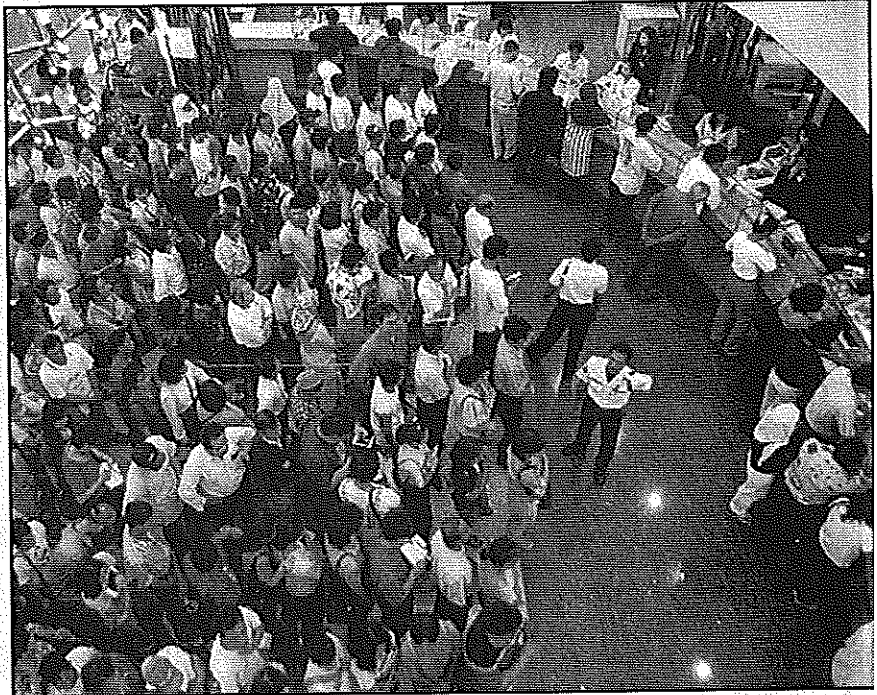
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Author's Introduction

The Indonesian islands have gone from being seen in the rest of the world simply as a holiday paradise to appearing more and more often in the headlines of the world's press. First it was in the 'business pages', when, as a result of the crisis, the economy collapsed. Then, when the dictator Suharto had to resign after months of protests, Indonesia regularly appeared in the more widely read pages of foreign news.

The more than 200 million people who live in Indonesia are still confronted with enormous social and economic problems, and there are still few democratic rights. After the collapse of the Stalinist states in 1989/90, the propagandists of capitalism celebrated the 'End of History'. But in 1998 the youth and working people of Indonesia have reopened the book of history - the history of oppressed people and their struggle for liberation.

This pamphlet tries to give a brief overview of the social and economic crisis in Indonesia, against the background of the mass movement of the recent months and weeks.



Bank queues as the financial crash hits Indonesia

'Asian Fever' ignites a revolution!

In the 1980s, the states of south-east Asia came to be seen as model economies. The strong economic growth of the 'Asian Tigers' stood as incontrovertible proof that the capitalist system had not only outlived its Stalinist counterpart, but was also able to assure a bright future for mankind.

This dream collapsed like a house of cards when, in the Summer of 1997, the currencies and economies of the region began to collapse one after the other, leading to an international crisis on the stock exchanges. The boss of the US National Bank, Greenspan, at first called the process 'healing changes'. But the 'Asian Fever' quickly spread to affect the whole world economy.

The background to all this is a fundamentally weakened world economy. It is hardly in a strong position to withstand such shock waves. In the USA the economy is growing by only 3%, in Japan 1.5% and in the EU by

1.7%. The average growth rate of the capitalist states was a weak 2.8% per annum in the '80s and it has fallen even lower to only 1.8% in the '90s. Compared to the post-war boom (1950-1973), when growth was at 4.5% per annum, these rates are extremely low. Compared to what consumers can buy, production is too high. World Capitalism is in a crisis of over-production and over capacity.

On this basis, the further shrinking of the markets causes massive problems for a more and more export-oriented and inter-linked world economy. Cuts in public spending have made the demand for goods in the imperialist countries decrease as well as the inability of the crisis-stricken East Asian countries to pay for imports from them. The effects of the crisis are therefore not limited to one region, but are international.

For the states in south-east Asia, the crisis means a drastic loss in value of their currencies, the closure of factories and companies, mergers of

banks and the selling off of the national economy. For the people in these countries this means the loss of millions of jobs, a rise in inflation, wages going down and prices going up.

In Indonesia the economic and social crisis has led to a crisis in the political system too. The full impact of the Asian crisis on the world economy is yet to unfold. But it has already brought about an Indonesian revolution!

The weak foundation of the Indonesian economy

Indonesia was a Dutch colony from the 17th century. In the 19th century the ruling class in the Netherlands lived well on the wealth that could be squeezed out of Indonesia. The islands' most attractive goods were spices and several other agricultural products. The people of Indonesia had to suffer extreme exploitation on the plantations and in the textile industry.

Even after the political indepen-

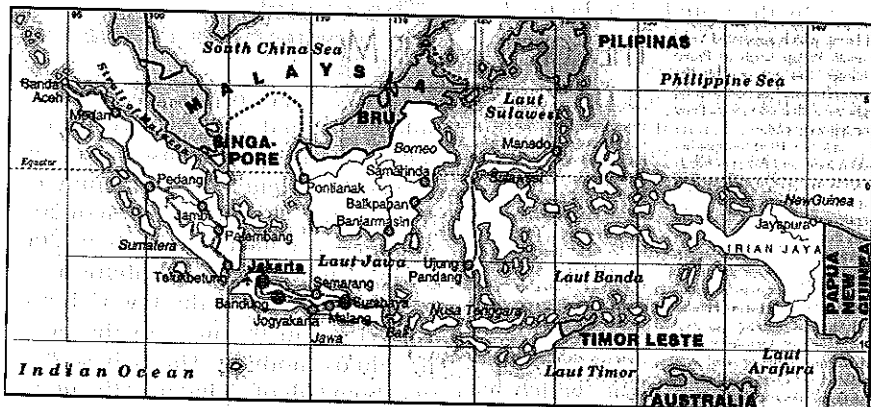
dence of Indonesia was achieved in 1945, it was still an economically dependent country. Suharto started to stabilise the economy after he gained power in a military coup in 1965. From the early '70s onwards, the country's economy started to grow strongly and the 'New Order' regime of Suharto produced a new layer of rich - 'orang kaya baru' (OKB) - who formed the social foundation of the regime.

The basis for the economic growth was oil and gas on the one hand (Indonesia was the world's eighth largest oil producer and could make high profits during the oil boom) and, on the other hand, 'development aid'.

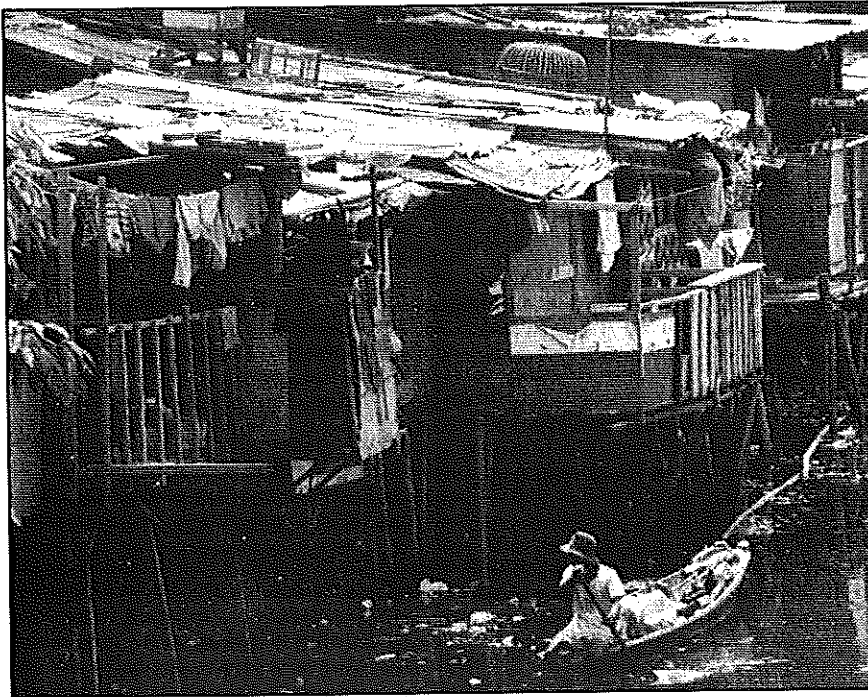
In the early '70s, oil exports were about 30% of the gross domestic product (GDP); in 1991 just 11%. On the one hand, income went down, due to the decline of the oil price. On the other hand, the volume of extraction has had to be reduced to such an extent that Indonesia will most probably be importing oil by the turn of the century. The development aid that used to be a large part of the

Would the development to a healthy, capitalist country have been possible?

In relation to the so-called "Third-world" countries, this question comes up time and again. What is the reason for poverty in these countries? Is it an accident that the rulers are just not capable and not prepared to build up the economy, but instead steal the wealth of the country for their own benefit? Would it therefore be possible for a 'sensible' government to build up a healthy, capitalist economy, which could provide for the mass of the population a living standard which can be compared with that of Europe? All these states are former colonies, which are still very much dependent on their former colonial 'masters' and other imperialist states. They are exploited by them because of their cheap labour and forced to sell them cheap raw-materials. An independent development of these economies is not, or at least only to a certain extent, encouraged by imperialism. From its point of view, these countries can serve as export-markets, but must not be allowed to become competitors with their own goods. The development of an independent, national capitalist class is excluded. The ruling class in these states is, due to their historical development, tied closely to and dominated by the ruling class of the imperialist states. Countries like South Korea are exceptional. Here an economically totally underdeveloped country was deliberately developed through massive, favourable treatment from the USA given for essentially political reasons during the 'Cold War'.



Map of Indonesia (note Timor Leste is East Timor)



Housing for the poor

state income (1973-74: 17.4%; 1993-94: 15.3%) was not to the benefit of the whole population. It went, directly or indirectly, into the pockets of Suharto's family and friends.

Since the 1980s, the country has seen a boom of investment. Indonesia became interesting for foreign capital, with investors being more than willing to ignore the bloody regime of Suharto. Especially foreign direct investment grew strongly. Between 1988 and 1992,

Income:

Because of the economic crisis, average Gross Domestic Product per haed per annum has dropped in Indonesia from \$1,000 to \$300. The minimum wage is 5,750 rupiah, less then one dollar a day. Although since July 1997 the rupiah has heavily lost its value and although there was a dramatic increase in prices, the minimum wage has remained that low. Women can earn as little as 1,500 rupiah (plus one meal) for working all day in the paddy fields. For comparison: a tin of milk costs half a dollar, to go on the tram a few hundred rupiahs and a meal in a fast-food snack-bar 2-4,000 rupiahs.

1,395 deals were made worth over \$30.6 billion - more than during the whole 20 years before. In 1996, the IMF placed Indonesia in 7th place amongst all the economically developing countries.

But this economic growth was based neither on the development of an independent national economy nor on a corresponding demand for goods within the country. The economic system is, in addition, entirely corrupt, with enormous amounts of money vanishing into unknown holes. Therefore, additional loans have been taken out since the beginning of the '80s. This is accompanied by a drastic growth of the country's debts. In the early '90s, already one quarter of the money spent by the state had to be used to pay creditors.

'Krismon' - the crisis of the monetary sector, which led to a devaluation of the national currency (rupiah) by more than 80% - will lead to an estimated decline in the economy of 10% (until now). Inflation is already at 35% and a rise to 100% is feared.

With the onset of the crisis in south-east Asia, the devaluation of the rupiah and the corresponding growth in foreign debt (which has to be paid back in US-dollars), the private economy became virtually

unable to make repayments. It has foreign debts of about \$70 billion. The state is on the road to bankruptcy too. It has debts of over \$70 billion abroad (of which \$59 billion are due to be repaid this year) compared with only a small amount of reserves - less than \$10 billion in hard currency at the beginning of 1998.

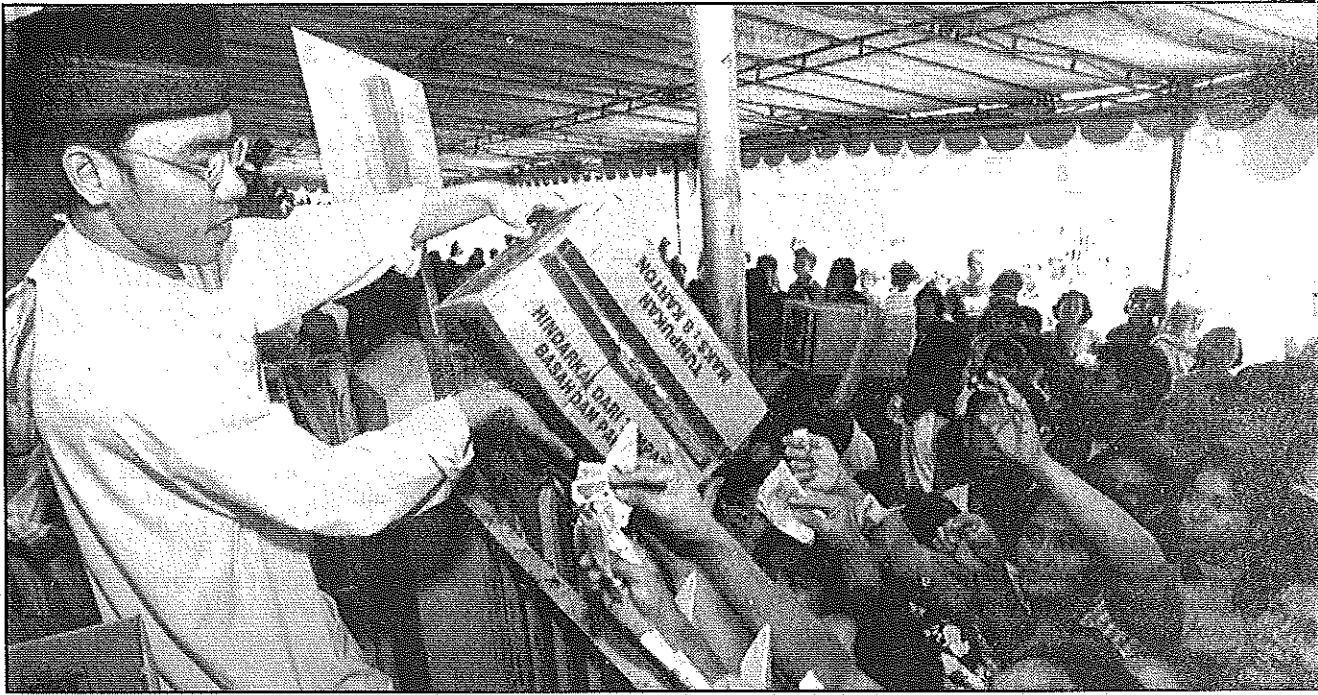
The IMF 'helps'

The enormous financial difficulties of Indonesia summoned the International Monetary Found (IMF) onto the scene. It offered credits of \$43 billion, but linked them to a set of conditions. These conditions included dissolving the monopolies owned by Suharto's clan, a purge of the banks, the revision of the budget for 1998/99 and cuts in public spending. The IMF made these conditions in accordance with the interests of the imperialists. The purpose was not to undermine Suharto let alone to help the movement but to improve the conditions for foreign capital. In this way the Indonesian economy was to be opened up for foreign investors. The cuts in public spending, which include the halting of construction projects and the reduction of subsidies, hit the broad masses of the population hard. Suharto tried to get the IMF to make some concessions, even using mock anti-imperialist rhetoric.

The social consequences of the crisis

In the 32 years of his government, Suharto turned the country into a self-service shop for himself, his family and his friends. The economy of the country with a population of 200 million was controlled by about 200 people. Indonesia's distribution of wealth is extreme - the few rich are very rich and the mass of the poor has almost nothing. The richest 20% get about half of all income; the poorest 25% only about 5%!

After the crisis started in the sum-



Panic buying as prices rocket

mer of 1997, the situation grew even worse. Millions of Indonesians live below the poverty threshold, which is set at less than one dollar a day and this number is continually growing. Before the crisis, the jobless rate was 12%; since it started, another 4 million jobs have been lost. In the cities, the number of jobless has doubled since July 1997. (Anyone is counted as employed if he/she works more than 3 hours a week). These 'new' jobless are in addition to about 35

million Indonesians who were already 'underemployed' one year ago (i.e. got less hours of work than they needed). In the past, these people could go to Malaysia or Saudi Arabia as immigrant workers, but now, as the whole region is in a crisis, this option does not exist any more.

Simultaneously, prices for basic food such as rice and oil rose by about one third. In the beginning of May, a further sudden rise of prices occurred. Under the pressure of the IMF, subsidies for prices were partially abandoned or reduced. This caused the price of petrol, needed by 60% of the population to get to the work (on their motor scooters etc.), to rise by 71% - a trigger for new protests.

A social safety net does not exist in Indonesia. The national health service is free but transport and medicine have to be paid for by the patient, causing it to be beyond the reach of huge sections of the population. Even middle class people complain that now, due to the crisis, they cannot afford necessary operations. The infant mortality rate is correspondingly high (7.1%), as is the mortality rate for children (11.1%). Diseases like malaria are still a problem for large sections of the population.

The students initiate the struggle

The economic crisis led to a political crisis in Indonesia. Suharto was safe, as long as he could count on economic growth; but the economic breakdown in the summer of 1997 marked the beginning of the end of his rule. Already in 1997 the first disorders occurred. On the island of Flores, a temporary state of emergency was declared. In February 1998, a protest movement started,

How do the students organise?

Beside the official structures - the 'senates' - independent structures were built at the universities, often called simply 'Committees'. The most militant and active students are organised in these Committees. The headquarters of the resistance - some on a university basis, some even on a faculty basis - are called 'Posko'. There the students sit, day and night, and discuss the next steps in their struggle, but also about strategy and tactics. 'Workers' organisers' are sent from here, to go to the workers to spread the movement.

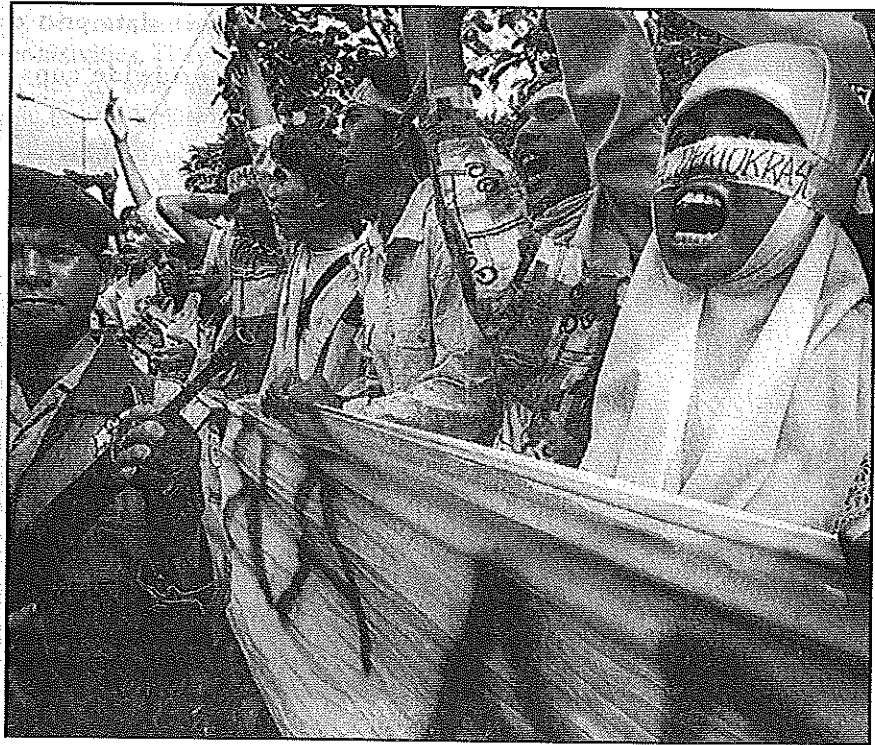
Education:

School starts at the age of seven with six years of primary school. After this should follow three years of middle and three years of high school. The university takes five years although, due to the high fees, only 1 % of young people can afford to study. Some of the 300 universities are public but most of them are private and religious (mainly Islamic and Christian).

Over half Indonesia's population is under 25. The youth suffer disproportionately from mass unemployment. The rate of unemployment is 16 % officially, unofficially much higher. Child labour is not uncommon.

Racism against Chinese people

One element of the events which was widely mentioned in the European press was the attacks on Chinese people. About 3% of the population are Chinese; around 10% have Chinese relatives. Originally the Dutch colonialists promoted Chinese people many of whom became part of the ruling class. A big part of the economy came to be controlled by Chinese - some sources mention up to two-thirds. The state's position on the issue is contradictory. On the one hand, some Chinese belong to the elite and are therefore close to the regime. On the other hand, as a form of intimidation and control, the use of the Chinese script is banned as are Chinese books and newspapers. Many Chinese people were amongst the 1.5 million victims of Suharto's blood bath in 1965 - simply because they were Chinese, and therefore, in Suharto's logic, "communists". One of the principles of his rule was always 'divide and rule'. Suharto's son-in-law Prabowo, (ex-)chief of the strategic command Kostrad, stirred up racist tendencies and riots in the last months of Suharto's rule, to divert attention from the Suharto clan and to provide excuses for making brutal attacks.



Student demonstrators demand reform, 1998

growing wider and more political. The roots and the centre of this movement were inside the universities.

Students in Indonesia are a part of the elite and come predominantly from rich families and the military. Despite that, there are many among them who do not want to accept the current social and political situation. As in other Asian countries, it is an Indonesian tradition for students to organise movements that fight for the mass of the repressed and exploited too.

In 1974, up to one million people participated in student protests and the state reacted with the 'Malaril' law, which prohibited any political activity inside the universities. In the beginning of 1998, as the protests of the students started, the law was reversed. Demonstrations were then only allowed inside the universities. This was an attempt by the regime to isolate the students' movement from the rest of the population. Suharto hoped that, once the students got tired of demonstrating, the movement would dissolve by itself.

The movement widens

But the movement grew stronger

and stronger and it became more intense and political and spread into other parts of the population. It had been started as a protest against the devastating results of the crisis, especially against the massive price rises and against 'korupsi', 'kolusi', 'nepotisma'. But it quickly grew into a political movement, demanding 'reformasi' and even 'revolusi'. 'Down with prices!' soon became 'Down with prices; down with Suharto!' Besides social improvements, several political changes were demanded, mainly including a set of democratic rights.

In mid-May the military tried for a last time to get control of the movement, offering a 'Dialogue'. But the attendance at their meeting of April 18 was poor; the most active and radical students boycotted it. They organised a simultaneous meeting elsewhere with about 3,000 delegates from the most important universities of Java attending in order to discuss and plan the next steps of the struggle.

The students knew their limitations and tried to widen the movement. They travelled between the universities and tried to build up a network. They tried to come out of the campuses or to mobilise people from

other layers to the demonstrations inside their campuses. The police did everything to prevent the widening of the movement. Before demonstrations the whole area would be systematically closed off, so that nobody could see what was going on.

Nevertheless the percentage of non-students in the demonstrations went up steadily. For example, in Solo (eastern Java) in April, already one third of the demonstrators were non-students. They were housewives, bus-drivers, street singers (prosecuted by the regime because of their critical songs), the 'urban poor' (the city population, who live from hand to mouth and survive as petty criminals and street traders) and, in growing numbers, workers. In the industrial town of Surabaya in eastern Java, famous for its textile workers' strike in 1994, delegations of workers joined the various demonstrations. On May the first, joint meetings of workers and students took place in the universities.

On attempts to leave the campus, several violent clashes with the

police occurred. The 'polisi' were equipped with truncheons, rubber bullets, tear-gas and even with live ammunition; the students with 'Molotov cocktails' and with their hatred of the regime.

On May 12th, the protests escalated, after the police fired into a demonstration at the elite Trisakti University in Jakarta, killing several students. According to students from Jakarta, 13 were killed, 7 suffered critical injuries and 41 were still missing days after the demonstration. They became known as 'sacrifices to change'.

A huge revolt followed, forcing Suharto to resign only a few days later. More than 500 men and women died in those days, called 'chaos and anarchy' by the press. People were plundering and starting fires. Even pogroms against Chinese people occurred. Often they were aimed against the property of the ruling clique, including Chinese people like Lim Sioe Liong, one of the richest men of Indonesia.

One student from Jakarta comment-

A demonstration in Yogyakarta, April 1998

The demonstration is very lively. Every delegation from another faculty or university is welcomed by the speakers. When a group of housewives comes on to the campus to participate in the demonstration, the square in front of the main building of the Gadjah Mada University is filled with enthusiastic applause and shouting. The students of the Faculty of Philosophy wear red headbands. One of them explains: "In February, during the hunger strikes we had white headbands. White for purity. We wanted to show that we are normal people and that it is Suharto's regime that forces us to take these steps. But then we changed it. Now we wear red headbands. Red is the colour of blood. Now we are fighting back."



Habibe, with Suharto right behind him

From Habibe's 'maiden' speech

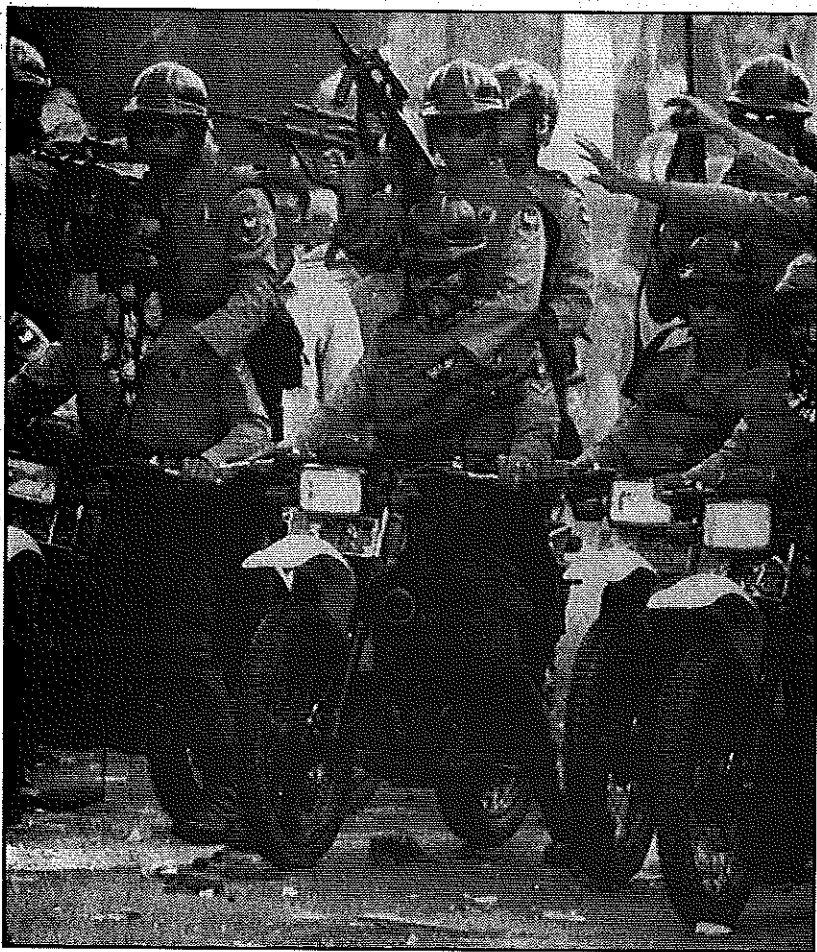
"Finally, let me say a few words to Mr Suharto who has just announced his resignation as president. As a nation that upholds lofty cultural values, we will not forget his service and dedication, which not only safely guided our republic during the difficult times from 1965 to 1968, but also ensured the success of national development so that we could reach the take-off stage and achieve a higher standard of living than that of three decades ago... Therefore, on my own behalf and that of the government, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the second president of the Republic of Indonesia, Haji Mohamed Suharto, for all his services and dedication to the nation and the country."

ABRI - the armed forces

The armed forces - ABRI - consists of the army, the air force, the navy and the police. ABRI assisted General Suharto in coming to power in 1965. In Indonesia the military have - officially - a political role. Through their "Dwi fungsi" (double-function) they are part of the administration. Each military command supervises all political activity in its respective area.

Besides this, ABRI plays an active role in the economy and is involved in a number of businesses. Their argument is: "We make profits to meet the non-budgetary expenses of ABRI." Altogether they have 5-600,000 armed men. Amongst those are many in the most politically strategic forces - Kostrad, Kopassus, the Jakarta military command, the Siliwangi command and the Diponegoro command. The Indonesian army is one of the biggest in south-east Asia. But in relation to the population (200 million) and compared with other international examples, the Indonesian army is relatively small.

Two wings exist inside the army. On the one side are the hard-liners - the 'green fraction' which bases itself more on Islam, stirs up racism and stands for harder repression. This wing was led by Suharto's son-in-law Prabowo, until recently chief of Kostrad, then Kopassus. In relation to a possible coup it is this wing that is the most dangerous. On the other side is the 'red and white' fraction (named after the national colours) around the army chief Wiranto. It represents the more 'moderate' forces who looked for a 'dialogue' with the students to de-escalate the situation.



ed: 'I want to underline that the riots are not racist or sectarian. Despite it is correct that the people often ignite cars, houses and shops belonging to Chinese during the riots, this reflects the anger of the people against the government. The shops of the Chinese are ignited, because the social differences in the society are growing.'

The international airport of Jakarta was packed with foreigners, desperate to leave the country. The IMF advisers, whose demand to drop the subsidy for petrol was one of the decisive reasons for the rebellion, were also leaving the country as fast as possible.

Suharto tries to react to the movement by reshuffling his government, but it's too late. As a result of the mounting protest, on the 21st of May, Suharto resigns.

New President; Old Regime

As the last action of his 32 year long rule, dictator and president Suharto appointed his political pupil, Habibie, as his own successor. The 61 year old Bakharuddin Jusuf Habibie has been closely connected to Suharto since the 1950s. He started his career as a member of the Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), which was founded in 1990 in order to support Suharto.

Habibie's accession to the presidency means there is no real change of direction. But it was made as a concession to the movement, in order to take the wind out of its sails. The new cabinet under Habibie differs from the old Suharto cabinet only by a very few names. But Suharto was increasingly being called upon to resign by former leading army officials and his own intellectual elite in the last months. And in the last days, even the 'parliament' called upon him to resign. It seemed to be the wiser choice for him to resign and to retain his economic power via his puppet Habibie. The newspaper, the

'Jakarta Post' quotes Suharto: 'I am going to be a 'pandito' (a ghost, a wise man)' He was aiming to continue his rule in the background.

What will the future hold?

Although Habibie is not enthusiastically supported by any layer of society, and is therefore seen as a temporary solution, he is connected with certain expectations from certain layers and groups. The military hopes to be able to control him and to stay in power thereby. The western powers hope for the situation to stabilise in order to secure their investments. The future has not yet been written, but one thing is for sure: Habibie is not interested in real democratic changes and he will not end the exploitation of the masses.

Habibie makes some concessions such as the release of political prisoners and the announcement of new elections (although it is neither clear when the election will take place nor who will be permitted to vote or stand) in order to save the ruling clique and their privileges.

A major source of concern is the 'ABRI', the armed forces. They seem to support, and are increasingly present in, the Habibie government. The wing around its commander, Wiranto, has been strengthened. He is as much a representative of the old regime as Habibie, but there could well be a 'reform government' in the next period, including more 'trustworthy' persons. Even if the representatives of the bourgeoisie turn their support to the pro-capitalist opposition that has been until recently suppressed, they will continue to control the economy. Such a 'democratic' government would try to keep the people quiet with some small concessions. But this changes nothing of the basic exploitation, which is even stronger now under the IMP's pressure.



Budiman Sudjatmiko, PRD leader, sentenced to 13 years for subversion, April 1997

The Peoples' Democratic Party - PRD

The PRD (Peoples' Democratic Party) is a young, left party which was founded on May 2nd, 1994. Mass organisations affiliated to the PRD were also set up. They organised workers (in the PPBI), students (in SMID), peasants (STN), artists (Jakar) and the urban poor. The PRD was very active in the student movement in 1995 and 1996 and also in the strike wave which took place in the same year. After the state's attacks on Megawati's PDI (Democratic Party of Indonesia) and the clashes of July 27th 1996, in which the PRD helped defend the PDI's headquarters, the PRD suffered heavy state repression and was banned. Since then, its members have had to work underground. Many of their leaders are in prison, like the chairman, Budiman Sujatmiko and the trade-union leader Dita Sari, who led a demonstration of 20,000 textile-workers in Surabaya on July the 8th, 1996. PRD member Andi Arief, chairman of the student organisation, SMID, was captured on March the 28th 1998 and only re-appeared 'in police custody' at the end of April. Many activists are on 'black lists' and are persecuted. Many have just "disappeared".

The PRD supports the PDI critically, because: "The PDI under Megawati has captured the people's hopes for change and democratisation from within parliament". The PRD rejects the label given them by the state as 'communist'. A reason for this might be that being openly communist in Indonesia means signing away your freedom, if not your life!

The PRD's programme calls for "The establishment of a fully democratic, multi-party, popular socio-democratic society in Indonesia". On the other hand, inside the PRD, strong sympathies exist for more revolutionary and socialist ideas. This is represented in a general criticism of capitalism. The PRD puts forward a number of democratic and economic demands including the demand for a minimum wage and for the right to organise freely.

The workers' movement

The total labour force in Indonesia is 86 million strong. About 15% work in the manufacturing and petrochemical sector, 35% in service industries and 50% in agriculture. The number of industrial workers has vastly increased in recent decades because of the industrialisation of Indonesia. At the beginning of the '90s there was a big rise in the number of working class struggles. In 1994 there was a total of 1,130 strikes - an increase of 350% in relation to 1993! In the same year there were 100 student demonstrations and 50 peasant actions.

There are three trade union federations in Indonesia - a legal state union (SPSI) and two illegal ones. The SBSI, whose chairman Muchtar Pakpahan was arrested on July 30th, 1996 is supported by the government of the USA. The PPBI, which is affiliated to the PRD, led a number of strikes in 1994 and has organised tens of thousands of workers.



The bourgeois opposition

A key player of the bourgeois-liberal opposition is Amien Rais, the head of the 28 million member Muslim organisation, Muhammadiyah. He did not participate in the mass protests against Suharto, partly even trying to stop them, as with the protests on Suharto's 're-election day' in March. Until shortly before Suharto resigned, Rais was giving him a period of grace of six months: 'Until October, to get a grip on the economic crisis'. Then on May 11th, he suddenly changed his tactics and publicly called for the president to resign. Then he declared himself leader of the opposition.

Rais is not only a close personal friend of Habibie, but also has close contacts with both General Wiranto and General Prabowo. He is not really opposed to the ruling clique. On the day Habibie became president, Rais offered him the same six-month 'ultimatum' or period of grace he had offered Suharto. Because of his clear pro-capitalist and 'western' orientation, he is the favourite of the big capitalist powers. He would be a guarantor for the protection of foreign capital's interests. In an interview for the Far Eastern Economic Review he declared: 'I say without doubt that the IMF is the only alternative.'

Another prominent figure is Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of the first president, Sukarno. Megawati is the leading representative of the Democratic Party of Indonesia (PDI), but she was removed as its president by an inner party rebellion instigated by the military in 1996. She has been very much in the background during the whole movement. She appeared in public only after the slaughter of students at the Trisakti University, where she mostly used references to the state philosophy of Pancasila and appeals to God. Her programme has little to offer.

Neither Rais nor Megawati can deal

Parliament and Parties

In the elections for the parliament, which take place every five years, 400 'representatives' are elected plus 100 who are appointed by the president (including 75 from the Armed Forces). The People's Consultative Assembly, MPR, with its 1,000 members (including 500 MPs, 147 representatives of the provinces, 253 from political organisations and from the army) meets every five years and elects the president and the vice-president. The president has extensive rights, including the right to issue decrees and to appoint ministers. There are three legal parties - Suharto's Party, Golkar, the PPP - Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party) and the PDI - Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (Indonesian Democratic Party). Megawati Sukarnoputri was the original leader of the PDI but she was deposed through an armed intervention by the regime in 1996. Today there are in reality two PDIs - one which was Suharto's puppet and Megawati's independent one.

with the social questions or solve the problems of the masses hit by the economic crisis.

The forces on the left

After the complete elimination of the PKI in 1965, there were almost no organised left forces in Indonesia for a long period. In more recent years, activists came together in the Democratic People's Party (PRD), founded in 1994 and then banned in 1996. These people declare themselves to be socialists. In the recent

months, the PRD has participated in the movement, obviously from the underground, and distributed hundreds of thousands of leaflets, demanding steps such as nationalisation.

But the socialist forces of Indonesia are still weak and are under enormous pressure. They not only have the task of widening and developing the workers' movement, but also of unmasking bourgeois leaders such as Rais and Megawati.

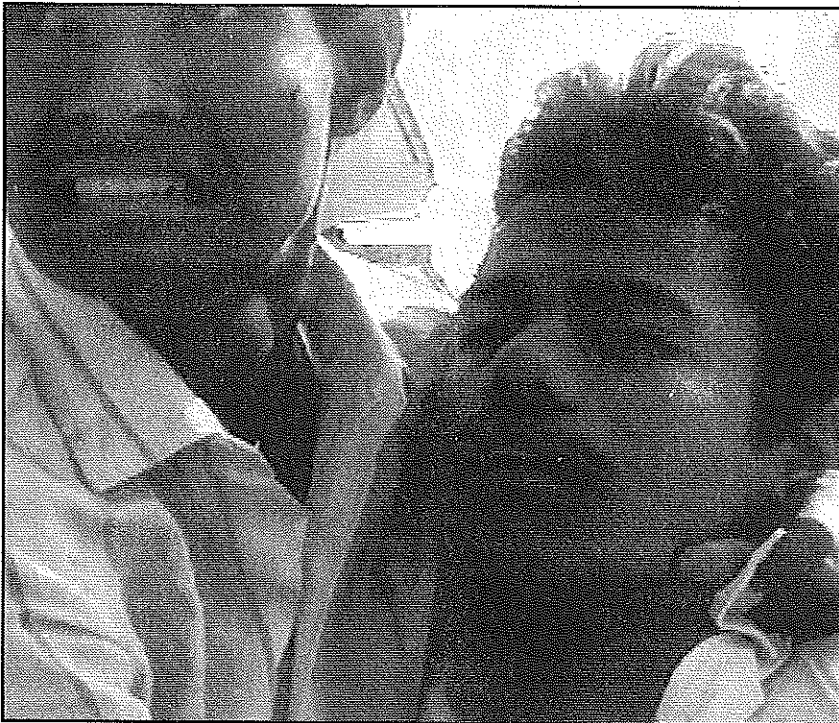
The revolution has only just begun

Suharto's end has come about at the same time as the collapse of the 'tiger economies' which until last year were able to represent capitalism as a viable system. Suharto had to go, but the crisis of capitalism is still horribly present for the masses in the whole of Asia.

Seeing their economy shattered, Indonesian workers felt helpless to change their destiny. Memories of the massacre in 1965 weigh like a heavy burden on the shoulders of the working class. Seeing the obvious weakness of the 'New Order' regime and the downfall of its founder, Suharto, the working class is daring to move in a more conscious way once more. Workers are starting to join the struggle again. In mid May, strikes took place in support of the movement. On the 12th and 13th, hundreds of public transport drivers in Bogor went on strike, hundreds of workers in Bekasi and more than a thousand workers in a cardboard fac-

East Timor

In 1975 Indonesian troops occupied East Timor. 200,000 people have been killed, which is more than one quarter of the population. Since then the military has ruled in a brutal way; every resistance is suppressed. FRETILIN is the main liberation organisation which is forced to work underground. The most militant students and the PRD support the struggle for self-determination. They declare that they are not only in favour of an end to the occupation of East Timor but "of fighting alongside the East Timorese for their right to determine their own destiny and to be independent".



Santa Cruz cemetery massacre, November 12th 1991

tory in Tangerang.

If democratic reforms are carried out in Indonesia, it will enable the workers to build unions more easily and, most importantly, a workers' party. This is even more important now in order to achieve any social progress in the severe crisis. They have to build their own representation and link up nationally and internationally. Only if the working class can administrate and control the economy and not a few national and international capitalists and if they can hold on to power, will there be real change.

The struggle of the students, workers and poor in Indonesia has not only been an inspiration nationally, but will have an enormous international impact. The workers of the whole region - the Philippines, South Korea, Japan - look towards

Indonesia. It is the first major revolutionary movement since the collapse of the Stalinist countries in 1989 and the first time for a long time that a movement has raised demands for nationalisation.

Other countries of the region have been hit hard by the crisis which has claimed not a few victims. The full extent of the crisis in Asia has not yet been felt but it has already ignited the beginning of a revolution in Indonesia. Many of the 'classic' ingredients of a revolution exist - a militant youth, wide layers of the population participating in the rising, a working class that has entered the struggle and last, but not least, crisis and dissension within the ruling class, which lurches between concession and repression. With all of these ingredients, revolution is most certainly still brewing!

Lessons of History:

Indonesia has had a tumultuous history in which the working class has played a significant role. (See: 'From the ashes - the rise and fall of the PKI')

For the 32 years that Suharto maintained power, the parliament - the 'House of Representatives' and the 'Consultative People's Assembly' - was nothing more than his marionette. Apart from the official party, Golkar, only two, not really independent, parties were allowed. Free trade unions were prohibited. Not even the official union federation - the SPSI - was allowed representation on every important issue. The president and the army - which officially has a dual function (a military and a political one) - held the power.

In March 1998, Suharto was elected

Suharto's Wealth

Born in 1921 in the countryside, Suharto is one of the ten richest men in the world today. The American business magazine, 'Forbes', estimated

Suharto's wealth at \$16 billion. His immediate family is believed to worth around \$46 billion. That corresponds to about 50% of the Indonesian GNP. His six children own numerous enterprises.

Indonesia is marked by extreme nepotism. Suharto's family and his cronies control key export industries and important sectors such as car production, chemicals, building and construction, toll-roads and big banks.

Furthermore, a number of major foreign companies have enjoyed a high level of collaboration with Suharto: General Electric, Hughes Electronics, Lucent Technologies, Hyatt Hotels (USA), Siemens, Deutsche Telekom (Germany), Sumitomo, NEC, Kia Motors (South Korea), ...



Suharto's family

president for the seventh time - every time without a rival candidate. Suharto's power was based on his military apparatus. It was equipped by the western powers who supported Suharto's regime as a strategic bulwark of western imperialist interests against the spread of 'communism' in the region.

In the 1970s, Suharto was confronted with a growing movement of resistance. In 1973/74 as well as in

A programme for struggle!

- Full democratic rights for all!
- The right for the working people, the oppressed and the youth to organise freely in trade unions, parties and other organisations!
- For democratic action committees in all areas, linked together in structures which can form the basis for a new, fully democratic political system. The working people, the oppressed and the youth must elect their own representatives who can run the economy and society!
- Dissolve all instruments of repression!
- For the right of full self-determination for all peoples within Indonesia!
- No to the imperialist IMF and its programmes. Open the books of the capitalists to show where all the money is!
- Nationalise, under democratic workers' control, the property of Suharto and his family, the banks and the 54 largest companies who control the economy and exploit the Indonesian masses.
- For a democratic socialist Indonesia which can set an example to the youth and working people around the world, as a real alternative to capitalism!



Protesters at the Indonesian Embassy in London, Britain, May 29th 1997



1978, massive student movements took place, the social bases of which were sections of the 'intelligentsia' and of the bourgeoisie. In the 1980s, along with the advance of industrialisation, workers started to organise themselves. Strikes for better pay and better working conditions took place and there were attempts to launch genuine independent unions.

With the launching of the PRD in 1994, a broad, left organisation combining different social strata was established. Within it were ranked numerous ardent, self-sacrificing revolutionaries. But of key importance to the further development of society, especially as a revolution gathers momentum, is a party with a clear analysis, programme and tactics for making conscious all the unconscious strivings of the working class. To put an end to exploitation and oppression in Indonesia, it is necessary to combine revolutionary practice with Marxist theory and to learn from history.

The task of Marxists is to develop appropriate slogans and demands which take into consideration the

needs of the people and which at the same time forge links to a socialist change in society - a transitional programme. It is not enough to develop a programme and leave it at that. It has to be permanently revised and suited to the level of consciousness of the participants in the movement. Consciousness during such a movement often changes rapidly.

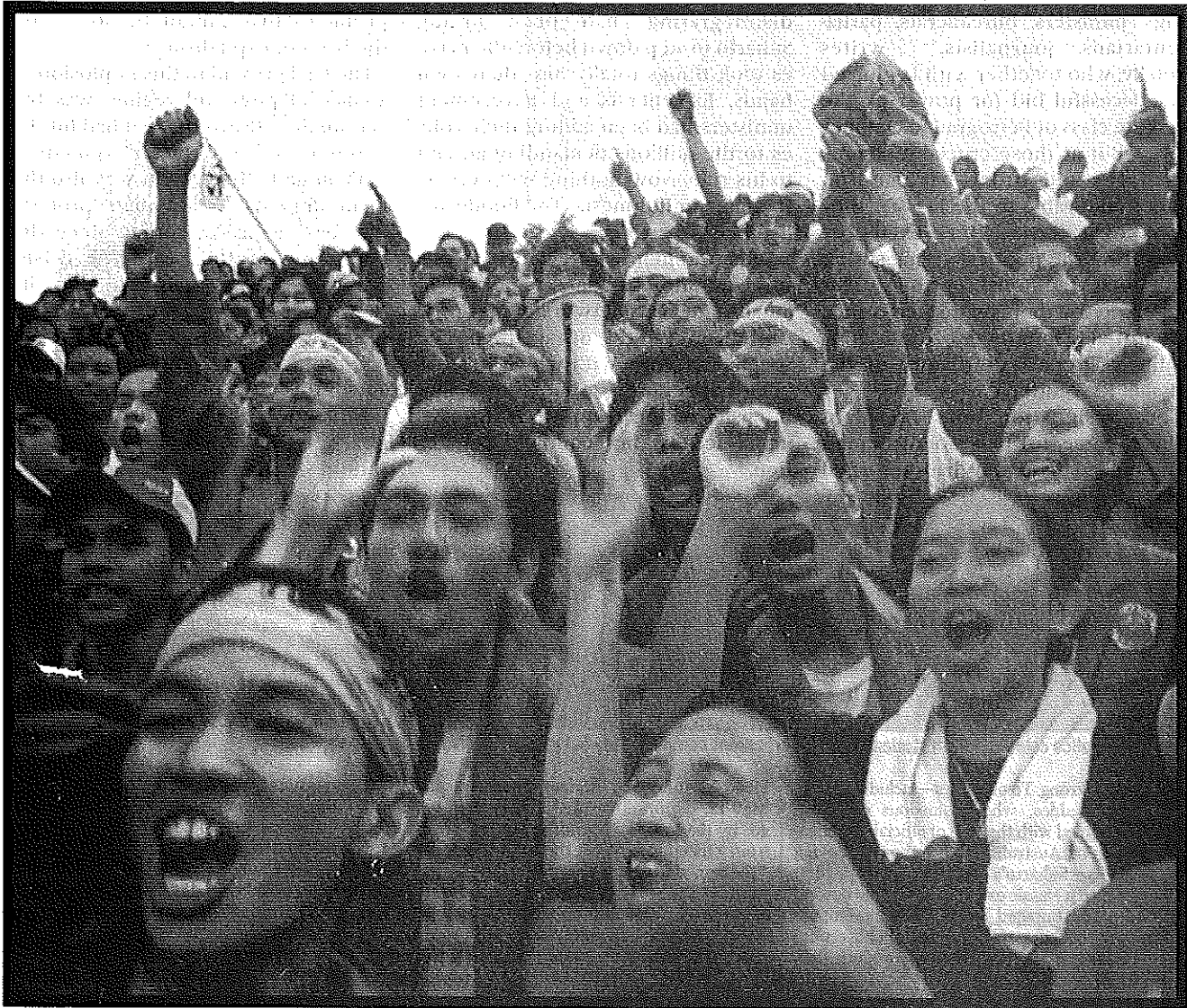
A transitional programme such as that put forward in these pages, must be subjected to scrutiny and detailed discussion. It has to explain why the capitalist system has to be overthrown and how a new social system can be built up. A socialist revolution is not a coup; it is not carried out by a handful of heavily-armed cadres but is supported by the majority of the active population. Different parts of the exploited and oppressed population will inevitably participate in it - the peasants, the poor in the cities and in rural areas and the working class. Nevertheless, it is workers who have the greatest experience in working together and organising resistance. They will play the leading role in a socialist revolution.

The working class is a strong force even in economically underdeveloped countries. In Indonesia 40 million people - that is 20% of the population - belong to the working class. To organise the working class and all oppressed layers in this struggle and to lead a revolt to a successful conclusion, the 'subjective factor' - that is to say the revolutionary party - is vital. This party must be an organisation which analyses and explains what is happening, which learns from past events and from history. It must be bold in its programme and its ideas and fearless in action.

The revolutionary party must strive to win the support of all struggling layers in society. It must combine everyday demands and measures with the perspective of changing society - with the need for power to pass into the hands of workers' representatives and those of all the oppressed in society. Only through a struggle to end capitalism on a national and international level can a new, socialist world be built

Statement from the CWI

June 1998



Indonesia - A Revolution Begun

Indonesia a Revolution Begun

The dramatic events of May 1998 in Indonesia have had, and will continue to have, enormous repercussions in Asia and throughout the world. They constitute a revolution begun. The removal from power of the longest ruling despot in Asia by a mass movement in itself was a revolutionary event.

"In ordinary times, ... history is made by specialists in that line of business - kings, ministers, bureaucrats, parliamentarians, journalists," writes Trotsky, who together with Lenin, led the successful bid for power by the working class of Petrograd in October 1917. "But at those crucial moments when the old order becomes no longer endurable to the masses, they break over the barriers excluding them from the political arena, sweep aside their traditional representatives and create by their own interference the initial groundwork for a new regime" (Preface to History of the Russian Revolution).

The resignation of President Suharto came just two months after a hand-picked Assembly had accorded

him a seventh five-year term as head of one of the most brutal regimes in history. Students in their thousands had occupied the very parliament building where he had been 're-elected' and declared their determination not to move until the dictator had gone.

The apparently all-powerful edifice had crumbled. The army had been riven with division. The head of the tame Golkar ruling party, now rapidly disintegrating, had been urging Suharto to step down before the masses took things totally into their own hands. Ex-generals and government ministers had been adding their voices to the millions demanding an end to his rule. Now nothing will ever be the same in Indonesia. The floodgates had been opened.

Today, a month after the famous three-minute resignation speech of Suharto, the vast network of his crony capitalism is still unravelling. The speed and scope with which this has been happening is a measure of the intensity of the revolutionary forces unleashed by the economic devastation.

The wave of strikes and workers' demonstrations that has followed the downfall of Suharto have already begun to change the class character of the revolutionary process that has been set off by the victory of a movement led primarily by students. A period has been opened up which puts the programme of socialism firmly on the agenda. The long-suffering population of Indonesia is beset by a myriad of social and economic problems that cannot be solved on the basis of capitalism.

The background to this implosion of a once all-powerful regime was the economic catastrophe that had hit the country and the bitter 'remedies' demanded by the IMF. It was also the main impetus to the mass protests that had been developing since the beginning of the year. The crisis, known locally as 'Krismon' since its first expression was in the currency meltdown of 1997, now involves the biggest industrial collapse suffered by any of the stricken Asian economies.

While not one of the 'Tigers' or Newly Industrialised Countries, Indonesia enjoyed at least two



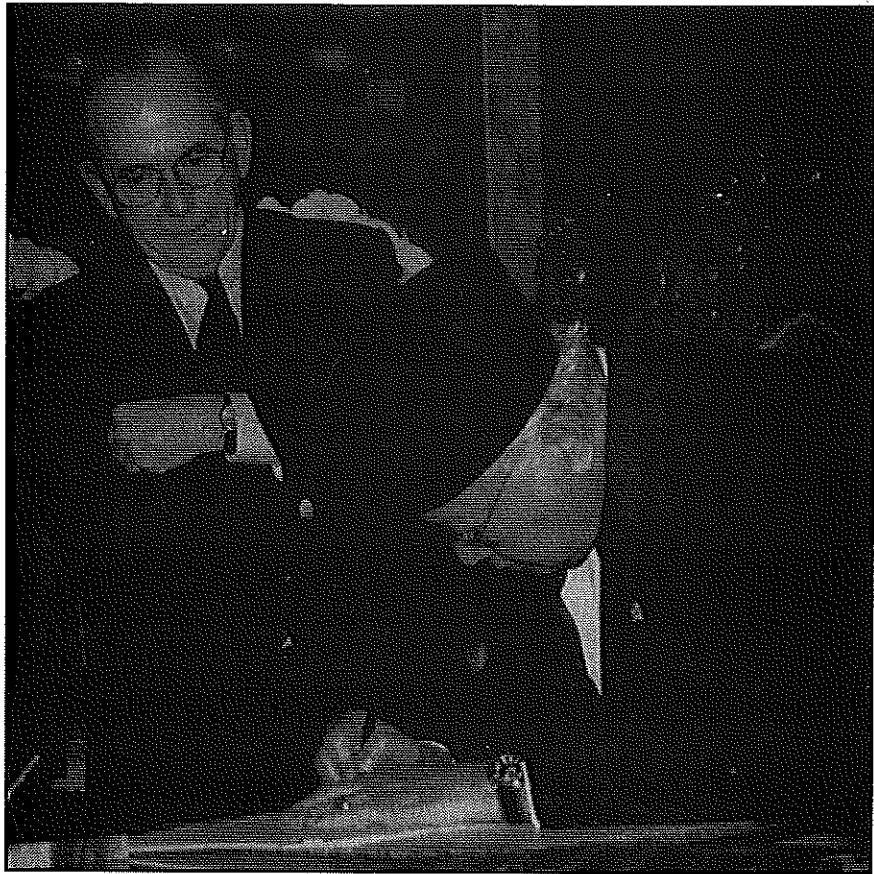
Demonstration against price rises in Jakarta, September 1998

decades of relatively healthy growth - around 7% per annum. Now it is the country that has been hardest hit by the generalised crisis in East Asia - a crisis of over-borrowing and over-production. The economic crisis in Indonesia rapidly sparked off a social and political crisis. Under Suharto, the working population of the world's fourth most populous country was being asked to shoulder the full burden of the collapse. The currency had fallen by 70%, prices had more than doubled and factories were closing their doors to millions of workers. Life became intolerable and the insatiable greed of the ruling clique became insupportable. An explosion of revolt was inevitable.

The Asian crisis is far from over. It now threatens to drag the world economy into an actual slump of '29-31 proportions. (See CWI statements on the global economic crisis) Japan has gone into recession and currencies and shares continue their downward slide, with little respite. Similarly, the economic, social and political crisis in Indonesia is far from over. Its depth rules out the perspective of a period of stable democracy under capitalism. The situation remains very much as the London Financial Times described it two days after Suharto's resignation: "An Unfinished Revolution".

NATURE OF REVOLUTION

Revolution is not the same thing as insurrection. It is not one act, planned and organised by a revolutionary party but a process that unfolds over a period of time. It is marked by key events which can be seen as turning points or 'points of no return'. The downfall of Suharto, was a one such event - world-shaking in its repercussions but part of a process which will still take many new turns and twists. It was the culmination of a largely spontaneous and barely coordinated movement which, nevertheless, demands a painstaking analysis. (This statement should be considered in conjunction with material that has



Suharto signs IMF agreement

already appeared in *Socialism Today* - the journal of the British section of the CWI.)

Two of Lenin's four famous conditions for the successful overthrow of capitalism and landlordism had developed to breaking point. Irreparable splits had opened at the top of society and there was a ferment of revolt on the part of the middle layers. These were a reflection of the enormous pressure that had built up against the old order (ruling in the name of 'New Order!').

The other two factors - the preparedness of the working class to enter a fight to the finish and a revolutionary leadership known and trusted by a large section of the masses - were only beginning to develop. The majority of industrial workers remained observers and supporters rather than active participants in the movement. The 'subjective factor' - the most crucial - is the party which understands clearly the line of march of events and can harness the revolutionary energy of the masses for a concerted bid for power. Without it, a revolutionary crisis can end in

counter-revolution or at best a period of stalemate - of inconclusive but bitter struggle between progressive forces and those of outright reaction.

Many of the elements of revolution were present in the movement that resulted in the resignation of one of the world's most powerful and richest men. Although this did not, in itself, constitute a social revolution, the prerequisites for one will undoubtedly mature over the coming months and years.

SPLITS AT THE TOP

A crisis in society is reflected in a crisis of confidence at the very top and divisions of opinion on how to proceed. Things reach the point where a ruling layer cannot continue to rule in the old way. Its frailty becomes exposed often as the result of some natural or man-made calamity - famine, war, political scandal or even a panic run on a country's banks. Then some of its representatives will start to demand the most brutal measures to stem the tide of revolution. Others will be in favour of reform or concessions in order to stay at the

helm and avoid total shipwreck for their system.

The splits at the top of Indonesian society became plain for all to see as the regime lurched between repression and concession. At first it reacted to revolt from below in its habitual manner with the deployment of brute force to repress the movement. Then it switched to appealing to student leaders to come and 'dialogue' with representatives of the government - ministers, generals, civil servants - gathered together on April 18 in a North Jakarta circus building. The students preferred not to attend!

There had been more than two months of almost daily demonstrations on the campuses demanding an end to price rises and to the corrupt regime of the Suharto family. Some army commanders (who also control the police) began declaring that students had the right to demonstrate even outside the campuses, they represented the true conscience of the nation and so on. Others continued to order their troops to come down hard - to use tear-gas, rubber bullets and water cannon on occasion with fatal

results.

The fraternisation by student demonstrators, putting roses in the barrels of the soldiers' guns, was obviously a deliberate imitation of the actions of the masses in Portugal in 1974 after the mass defection by the army from the similarly crumbling dictatorship of Caetano. As time went on, it was only the most battle-hardened divisions like the hated Kostrad division, headed by Suharto's son-in-law, Prabowo Subianto, who were prepared to fire on peaceful demonstrators. General Wiranto, commander of the armed forces - ABRI - was only too aware that sooner or later the ranks would refuse to obey orders to defend the Suharto regime from the masses.

This was not 1965-66, when over a million sympathisers of communism were slaughtered by the army under Suharto's command. Nor was it 1989 in Beijing, China, when innocent students pleading for democracy were mown down by the tanks of a then-powerful Stalinist dictatorship. "We didn't want a Tiananmen Square in Jakarta", said tank platoon leader,

Lieutenant Misyanto, assigned to guard the National Monument near the presidential palace that day. "I warned all my soldiers, 'Don't shoot our people.' And they knew we wouldn't". (Newsweek June 1).

Lenin points to the need for the forces of the state to at least be neutralised, and, at best, won over to the side of the revolution through appeals to the ordinary soldiers who are themselves drawn from the ranks of the working class and the poor. Although in May of this year in Indonesia, as yet, there was no threat to change the nature of existing class property relations, nevertheless a revolution was underway in that ordinary people demanding change were about to depose a dictator. Before the end of April, ex-generals were already coming out openly for Suharto to step down. General Wiranto himself, one of Suharto's closest defenders in the past, was now working out how to effect the final 'coup de grace' that would allow state power to be transferred into more reliable hands from the point of view of the capitalist class.

MIDDLE LAYERS

The second condition for revolution that Lenin outlined was a ferment in the intermediate layers of society, becoming disaffected with the rulers but unsure who can offer a way out of the crisis. The students themselves are from this layer. They certainly lacked nothing when it came to revolutionary ardour. They invaded radio and TV stations, burned effigies and stamped on portraits of the dictator. They were fearless and prepared for a fight to the finish. Even now, a month after Suharto has gone, students are still seen demonstrating outside the parliament building. Only today it is Habibie's resignation they are demanding along with immediate elections and 'total reform'.

In mid-April, in Indonesia, broader and broader layers of the population were expressing their support for the demands of the students and participating in the protests. Professors,



Tiananmen Square massacre, June 1989

teachers and other academics were taking the platform at university demonstrations to declare their allegiance to the students' cause. Earlier in the year, famous artists, actors and writers had held their own protests outside the parliament building, demanding fair elections and no reelection of Suharto. They had been attacked by the police and a number of them arrested. The coming over to outright opposition on the part of such 'professional' layers can be an important indicator of a 'revolutionary' change in attitude, especially since dictatorships tend to insist on 101% loyalty from this layer.

This is by no means the first time in history that a movement of revolt led by students and intellectuals has shown the capacity to bring down governments. In 1960 in South Korea, for example, an almost exclusively student uprising brought down the US-backed regime of Syngman Rhee. However, not going further and involving the working class in a struggle against private ownership of industry and land, the way was left open for another bloody dictator, Park, to take his place.

WORKING CLASS

The movement in Indonesia this year also, in large part, lacked the third objective factor necessary for a successful social revolution. It is the entry of the working class into all-out action as a class. No longer prepared to live in the old way, they decide to engage the ruling class in a fight to the finish. In France in May 1968 a movement amongst students, viciously repressed by the CRS riot police, unleashed a 10 million strong general strike which came near to ending the rule of capital in Europe. In this respect, the May events in Indonesia 30 years later lacked that decisive element that can give a socialist character to a movement in a way no other class can.

There are a number of reasons for this. Not least was the fact that the majority of even the most active and 'conscious' students did not expect

the working class to join in and did not make a call for a political general strike. They have traditionally felt it is their responsibility in society to fight on behalf of the oppressed and poverty-stricken for justice and a better deal. They featured in their struggle the issues that most affected workers like the drastic increase in the cost of the nine basic necessities of life. They invited workers to the campus demonstrations, which they attended in ever larger numbers. Nurses and doctors who came to express their solidarity and listen to the rousing songs and speeches were joined by bus and taxi drivers and workers from the textile and shoe factories.

In discussions with international visitors, Indonesian workers would make it clear they knew exactly who their enemy was; their boss was often a relative or at least a crony of the old dictator. They thought opening their companies' books to inspection was a nice idea but the bosses would never agree to it. They also liked the idea of social ownership and democratic control by workers' representatives - the socialist alternative to making the workers pay for the bosses' crisis. They saw their struggle for more pay than the 5,750 rupiah minimum wage as a struggle against the whole gang.

Workers wholeheartedly supported the students and their fight to end 'KKN' - Korupsi, Kolusi and Nepotisma. "The cabinet is not a family business", declared a banner at the students' makeshift camp at the University of Indonesia. Here, on May 1st, 30 factory delegations from the nearby industrial area of Tangerang attended a four-hour forum on the campus. The next day they participated in a joint student and worker rally. Many of them were already preparing strike action.

Workers are decisive to the victory of socialism because of the way their consciousness is formed - in the process of collective work and collective protest. They see an injury to one as an injury to all. History shows them as the most progressive class in society. Their collective experience and

consciousness give them the capacity to build a new society - to draw up plans in accordance with the needs of ordinary people and organise production cooperatively.

The Indonesian working class has shown its combativity and preparedness to struggle on many occasions over the '70s, '80s and '90s. In March of this year there were already some big strike struggles in progress - of building workers, bank-workers, transport workers and civil servants. But this May, while longing to escape from their invidious position, teetering on the edge of destitution, they undoubtedly feared the consequences of entering into a political general strike.

Weighing on their minds and holding them back must have been the fear that this would lead inevitably to sackings but no new jobs would be available for them. Secondly they must have dreaded that coming into a head-on conflict with Suharto's military regime would mean a repetition of the bloodbath of 1965-66 that had brought him to power. A workers' party with a revolutionary leadership would see it as its main task to counter these fears and conduct a massive campaign to give workers the necessary confidence to fight. It would point to all the factors which indicate how weak the enemy really is and all the factors which serve to unite the movement against it and give it strength.

Now that the predominantly student movement has broken the log-jam, it has given workers a huge access of confidence. One demonstration in Yogyakarta towards the end of May was over a million-strong. Tens of thousands of workers have moved onto the scene. In the industrial city of Surabaya, in the first week of June strikes and workers' marches were a daily occurrence. Elsewhere, strikes broke out in a number of important companies including Garuda, the crisis-ridden national airline. Workers took to the streets demanding wage rises and an end to redundancies. This wave of labour protests and strikes,

seen as just a prelude to even greater unrest by Jakarta currency traders, prompted one of them to comment to a journalist: "This is more serious than the student protests!".

URBAN POOR

In the early stages, workers clinging to jobs may hesitate, pondering all the issues and weighing up the risks of getting involved. But the most downtrodden sections can erupt into action before them. A sudden price rise that makes the difference between surviving and going under can be what propels them into action. They will lash out, wreaking revenge on a system to which they feel no allegiance, which gives them nothing.

The small traders, small farmers and the vast layers of urban poor can constitute some of the most fearless fighters. They have often built quite powerful organisations and identified their struggle with that of the students and workers. They suffer daily harassment by the forces of the state as they are often forced to cross the borders of legality in order to scrape a living or build some kind of ram-

shackle home.

It would be wrong to idealise the urban poor as a homogenous revolutionary force, without recognising its backward, lumpen and openly racist layers. Some of the hunger riots started with raids on food shops but developed into violent attacks on all shops and shop-keepers - who are predominantly ethnic Chinese. On many occasions - some say actually goaded by the police - the anger of the most desperate was directed against all Chinese. The student activists involved in organising amongst the urban poor, strongly condemned any manifestations of racism and tried hard to counter it in their leaflets and propaganda.

It was clear, however, that many of the buildings torched in the explosion of anger on 13/14 May were picked out as special targets. 120 branches of the Bank Central Asia, in which two Suharto children had substantial shares, were burned to the ground. Looters trashed and looted warehouses belonging to Suharto's youngest son, Tommy, and gutted a mansion belonging to one of the pres-

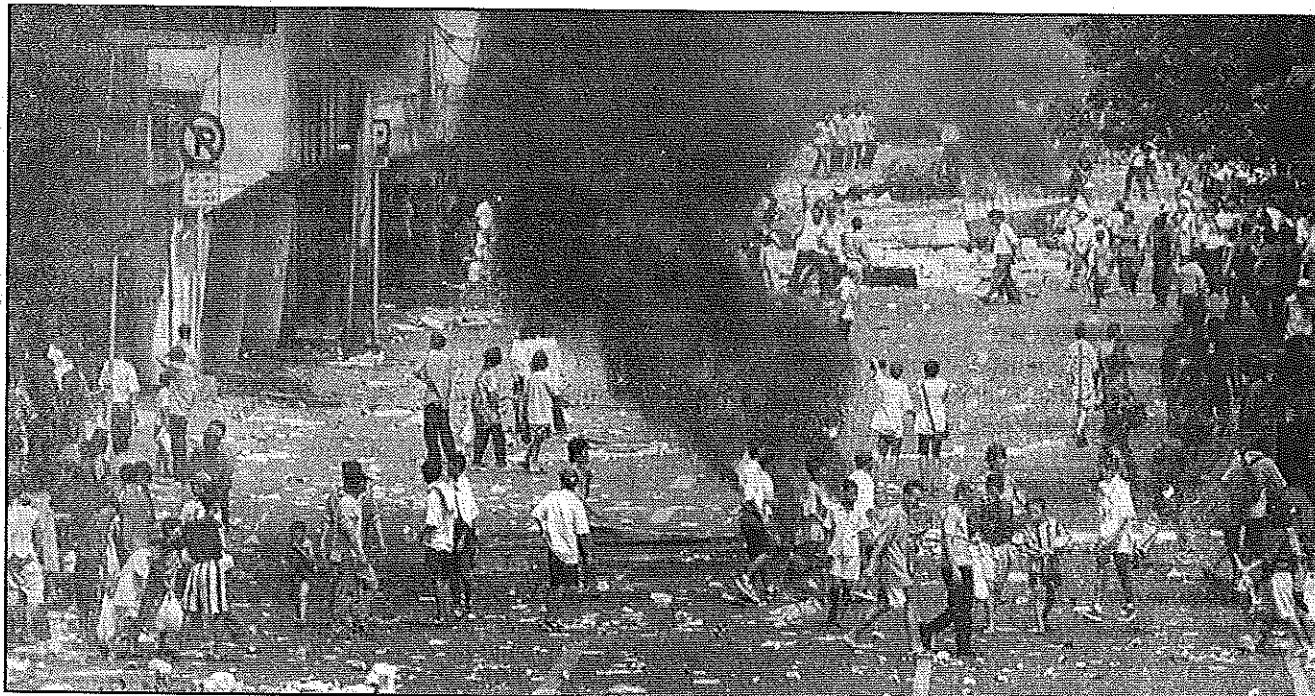
ident's closest business associates, Liem Sioe Liong, leaving behind an angry message scrawled on a wall:

'THE SMALL PEOPLE HAVE SUFFERED!'

Supermarkets became targets for people who had no hope of buying the basic necessities of life to feed their families. One newspaper reported a woman taking a basket of groceries from a shopper, saying "You can afford to get another one of these, I cannot even buy one!"

The ranks of the urban poor have been swelled by 'refugees' from the countryside where agro-businesses have been forcing the poor farmers off the land. They will include millions of industrial workers thrown out of work by the economic collapse in a country with not even a rudimentary social benefit 'safety net'. These workers will have brought with them the habits of thought engendered by capitalist production.

In any revolution, uprisings by the urban or rural poor can act as a spark for a more general movement of the working class. It can embolden the



A large crowd gathered in a street in Jakarta, Indonesia, during a riot in May 1998. The street is filled with people, some appearing to be looting or moving through debris. In the background, there are buildings, some of which appear to be damaged or on fire, with smoke rising. The scene is chaotic and captures the intensity of the civil unrest.

working class and inflame their fighting spirit. The working class - and in particular, its vanguard - if it adopts a clear class programme, can in turn inspire the 'small people' with the prospect of getting out of their misery. Taking land into public ownership would be the only way to free them from the exigencies of the landowner and ensure low rents. Nationalising banks as well as industry would lay the basis for providing cheap credit and basic supplies so that they could begin to live like human beings. If not, of course, layers of the urban poor can become prey for reactionary demagogues who can whip them up and use them as foot soldiers against the organised working class and the socialist movement.

LEADERSHIP

Elaborating a programme that accords with the needs of the situation is precisely the role of a revolutionary party. The fourth essential ingredient for a successful revolution against the dominating class is a leadership, like that of the Bolsheviks under Lenin in 1917, which is already known and trusted by a significant layer of the working class and understands in advance the course that revolution can take and what is at stake at every turn of events. It must be able to fashion, in a dialogue with the masses, the correct slogans of the hour that will lead to the overthrow of the oppressor class as a whole. A revolutionary party must play the role of midwife to the birth of a new society.

In Indonesia this May, as in the course of so many revolutionary upheavals in history, the subjective factor was not sufficiently developed to be able to see that task through. There was no shortage of personal courage displayed on the part of the numberless student fighters. They showed themselves totally dedicated to the struggle, adopting the slogan "Democracy or death!" They tried to link up on a national level but were severely hampered by their own inexperience and by heavy state repres-

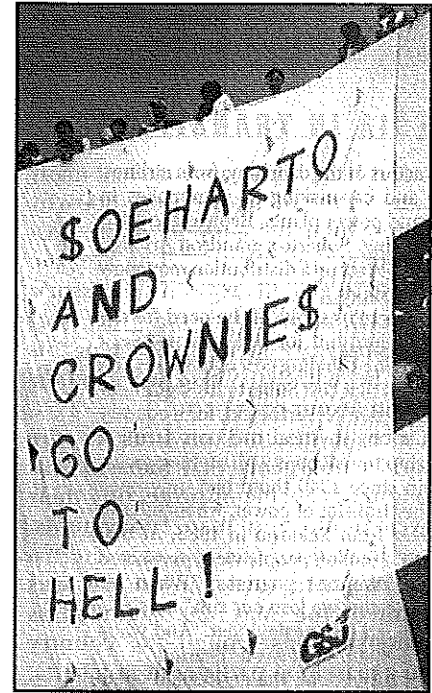
sion. They bravely faced the massed ranks of heavily armed troops whenever they tried to take their demonstrations beyond the bounds of the campus. They made direct appeals to them with leaflets: "Remove your uniforms; join with the people!"

But their movement, like every serious opposition to Suharto, had suffered a debilitating level of surveillance and persecution over a long period of time. Many of the leaders of SMID (the most radical of the Suharto-era student organisations) and of the youthful PRD (the left-wing People's Democratic Party) had either been arrested or 'disappeared' (kidnapped). Inside these organisations there were undoubtedly many who aspired to revolution and to socialism. Along with the union federation in which many ex-students had become worker-organisers - the PPBI - and the organisation of small farmers - the STN, the SMID and the PRD had been banned and the members driven underground.

The leader of a moderate union federation - the SBSI - Mukhtar Pakpahan had also been jailed. Only three stooge government-approved parties were allowed to function and a 'yellow' union - the SPSI. In a country that is nearly 90% Muslim, certain cultural and religious organisations were actually fostered by the regime. It would use one or other of them, in a cynical and sometimes ruthless manner, to counter opposition movements that might raise their heads - be they 'communist', 'socialist' or even from within the Muslim 'fraternity'.

LIBERAL BOURGEOIS

The radical liberal bourgeois elements of the Indonesian Democratic Party around Megawati Sukarnoputri had also been hounded by the military and accused of subversion. Megawati herself had been ousted from the leadership of the PDI by a military operation in July of 1996. In the battles which followed, over 100 people, including members of the PRD were killed and many seriously injured. Megawati, was seen by



a large layer of the population, and many on the left as the only figure who might be able to head a post-Suharto government. Her popularity stemmed from being the daughter of the first president of Indonesia, Sukarno - ousted by Suharto after the murder of (coincidentally) six generals in 1965. (See account in 'History of PKI' by Australian CWI member, Paul True.)

Today Megawati's support may well be ebbing. Although she spoke out vigorously for democratic elections at the time of the rigged 'Popular Assembly' in March, at the height of this year's protest movement, she remained remarkably silent. Only after the murder of the six students at the prestigious Trisakti University on May 12 did she feel compelled to appear in public to condemn the regime. She continues to say very little and "seems to want to wait for power to fall into her lap" (Economist June 13).

A fellow opposition figure, obviously anxious to fill Suharto's shoes, is Amien Rais. He heads a 28 million-strong Muslim organisation - Muhammadiyah - which, under Suharto was not allowed to develop into any significant political force. Rais personally seems to have survived without serious persecution, probably because his opposition to the regime

was, at best, luke-warm. He had many times let the dictator off the hook by lending him his support at the last minute. (Now he is calling for the people to give his chosen successor a chance!). Even during the process of choosing a president in March of this year, he withdrew his own candidature in favour of Suharto.

Once it became obvious to the world's bourgeois that Suharto was no longer capable of protecting their investments and loan repayments, they looked to Rais as a safe alternative. When a final show-down was planned for May 20, with mass demonstrations around the country and a march on parliament in Jakarta, he called for a million of his members to come onto the streets. Then, on the morning of the day itself, he called his supporters not to participate. His excuse? A supposed 'tip-off' from an inside source that the military deployed on the streets of the capital city would not stop at a bloody reckoning. And this at a time when the army was almost totally unusable against a mass movement. The shootings at Trisakti had been followed by

an explosion of anger in which hundreds of people had died. The ranks as well as the tops of the army were now sick of defending the regime.

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PRD)

Big demonstrations still went ahead in major cities like Surabaya and Yogyakarta as the masses came onto the streets. The students around the PRD and its tireless full-time workers correctly urged workers to down tools and join the struggle to bring down the dictatorship. Mobilisation for a general strike is an essential part of preparing for a revolutionary overthrow. On one day they distributed 100,000 leaflets.

Moderate students in the leadership of the movement opposed such a move, blocking the distribution of material making such calls for joint action with workers. They checked the credentials of all those going to the parliament building and allowed only students to join the occupation. They greeted Amien Rais and other 'democratic' leaders with enthusiasm

but the more far-sighted activists around the PRD were arguing for a thorough-going form of democracy - elected committees at every level of society to link up in a struggle for "total democracy".

Throughout the movement, the forces of the PRD had earned enormous respect for their energy and self-sacrifice. The youthful activists of the PRD indeed regard themselves as the most 'consistent democrats' in the mould of the illegal revolutionary Social Democrats of Russia before the 1917 revolution. Like them, they have close links with workers in important factories and a fine record of helping to organise strikes and demonstrations for better wages and conditions. Dita Sari and other trade union activists are in jail for such activity and deserve all the support they can get in their struggle for liberty and for a just society.

A revolutionary party must inscribe on its banner all the basic democratic rights. It must take up all the demands of the movement for freedom of speech and assembly, freedom to organise and to stand in elections, a free press and democratic and fair elections. These rights are a key aspect of the struggle. Conquering them would represent a huge advance for the workers' and students' movement. Democratic rights are not an end in themselves but facilitate the organising of an effective fight against capitalism. In today's economic and social climate, it is going to be an uphill battle to gain even partial democratic rights in Indonesia but advantage must be taken of every opening for building fighting organisations of labour.

A collapsing Indonesian capitalism will not allow workers to reap significant tangible results from a so-called democratic system. Unemployment is reaching the figure of 15 million, 31 million already work less than 35 hours and 7 million less than 14 hours. Production is forecast to drop by 20% this year and inflation reach 85% on average.

The IMF 'bail-out' is not aimed at



Amien Rais

they demand the resignation of Suharto's close friend and successor - Habibie. His regime is a regime of crisis. As a worker on one of the numerous angry demonstrations taking place throughout the country exclaimed to an International Herald Tribune reporter - "Money, money, money. No work, no Habibie!" (9 June). The new president could still go down in the history books as 'Habibie the Brief'!

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As they chant rhythmically for 're-for-ma-si' and an end to crony capitalism, many of the students imagine there is a clean, democratic form of capitalism under which everyone can share in the prosperity of society. This is an illusion. It has not been the case in any of the advanced capitalist countries during boom periods. It is hardly likely to apply in a country which is considered by most bourgeois observers to have "gone down the pan", as one of Jakarta's corporate lawyers put it (London Observer, 6 June).

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Any capitalists who take over from the 'cronies', will still be trying to make a profit out of the sweated labour of the working class. In the context of economic collapse and an aroused working class, they will be trying to get the working class to accept worse conditions. Foreign investors will only be 'persuaded' to 'risk' their capital if the price is low enough and if labour costs are held down. Private owners of industry and the banks will resist every demand for a bigger share in a shrinking cake - demands for sackings to be halted, wages to be raised, decent holidays to be established etc. They will not want strong organisations of the workers to be built and will support the continuation of heavy repression against them.

The experience of mass movements that have brought down dictators - the 'Edsa' revolution in the Philippines in 1986, for example, or the democracy movement in South Korea in 1987 - has demonstrated that if capitalism survives their downfall, democracy is by no means assured. The state is an 'executive committee' for protecting the interests of the ruling or owning class in society. A capitalist class will allow only those mea-

sures of democracy that it has to tolerate in order to avoid being overthrown. It will never allow the majority in society to make the decisions in a truly democratic manner precisely because it is in the minority. The majority would decide to distribute wealth and property in a much more equitable fashion!

The struggle for genuine democracy is inevitably tied up with the struggle for an end to capitalist rule - for socialism. A struggle for 'total reform' or for 'complete democracy' without making this clear will foster dangerous illusions in capitalism. It must be seen by the activists themselves as a struggle for socialism. Nothing short of that will fulfil the aspirations of the workers and youth who are making a revolution today. These are important issues to be discussed out in the ranks of the PRD and the wider movement.

STAGES

Some of the leaders of the PRD, including Budiman Sudjatmiko from inside prison, have argued that there are two stages to the revolution. The first aim is to ensure the coming to power of some coalition, involving figures like Megawati and Rais, as the forces of the proletariat are too weak and lack the necessary political consciousness to put their stamp on history. If these democratic leaders then

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In this situation, the bosses will demand sacrifice, sacrifice and yet more sacrifice from the rest of the population. The movement can force concessions from a regime still reeling from the force of the revolutionary upheavals but the achievement of thoroughgoing democracy or 'total reform' cannot be assured as long as

capitalism survives. Basic democratic rights will be only partially granted and a constant battle will be taking place to remove them. Real democracy can only exist where exploitation of the majority by the minority has been ended. Even in 'advanced democracies' in Europe or the USA, ordinary people are not allowed to participate in decision-making on a day to day basis. They can vote once every few years for someone who will do the deciding but will have no control over that representative.

Real participation and control would mean the regular direct election of representatives to committees like those envisaged by the PRD - in the workplace, the college, the office, the village, the depot and even the barracks. To be truly democratic, the delegates would need to be removable at any time that the people who chose them decided. They should not receive any extra pay or privilege for doing this job and would therefore not have a material reason for resisting being removed! There would need to be elections from these com-

mittees to local and regional and national bodies where broader decisions would be taken about how to run society and the economy would be made. This is basically what the soviets were and how a government of workers and peasants or a socialist government would be elected.

The democracy fighters around the PRD correctly argued for the formation of councils to conduct the struggle and an Independent People's Council to replace the phoney People's Assembly (the MPR). Such bodies, provided they were free of representatives of the exploiting classes, could become the vehicles for taking control in society and for constructing a new, classless society. That must be the goal of the movement. Such structures are not compatible with bourgeois rule. To be totally consistent, honest 'pro-people' revolutionaries cannot separate a struggle for democracy from a struggle for socialism. Capitalism, in whatever form, is a dirty, exploitative business and can only be protected by excluding the masses from real decision-making.

DEMOCRATIC CAPITALISM?

The students' demand for an end to corruption, collusion and nepotism was honourable and truly reflected the aspirations of the whole movement. Corruption in Indonesia was second only to that of Nigeria. Collusion between big business and the Indonesian military dictatorship was an international as well as national phenomenon. Nepotism was blatant in the inclusion of a number of Suharto's family in high office and in their ownership of one fifth of the country's wealth. By some estimates, his immediate family was worth more than the \$43 billion promised for Indonesia by the IMF - \$46 billion according to an estimate by a US researcher!

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betray the aspirations of the movement for democracy, he argues, the PRD would go into opposition. The party's manifesto actually argues for becoming "the opposition of the future".

There is a big difference between discerning stages or phases in a revolution and arguing that the task of struggling for genuine democracy should be separated from the task of ending capitalist rule. Mistaking perspectives for programme can lead to disaster.

It is one thing to have a realistic perspective that, this time round, the forces of the socialist revolution may not be sufficiently strong to lead to victory. But it is another matter to, in effect, give up in advance and regard socialist demands as being premature. The very crisis in society demands an intransigent struggle for an immediate alternative. People's Councils or coalition governments that involve advocates of free market capitalism will only draw those who represent the working class and urban and rural poor into a trap. They will end up demobilising their own forces and lending support to a regime that will, by its very nature, betray even their most modest demands and aspirations.

Lenin and Trotsky urged those who aspire to lead the working class not only to ensure its forces are kept separate and distinct from those of alien classes but also to avoid even temporary governmental alliances with them at all costs. The famous April Thesis was a strident denunciation of the idea that the representatives of capital should be allowed to make the running for years to come while the working class "matured". Lenin argued strenuously for an immediate struggle to win support for the idea of a workers' government and not a coalition with the political representatives of the 'democratic' bourgeois. The Mensheviks ruled on behalf of a feeble and dependent Russian capitalist class was tied into the imperialist war. Without breaking with capitalism, it would be impossible to fulfil

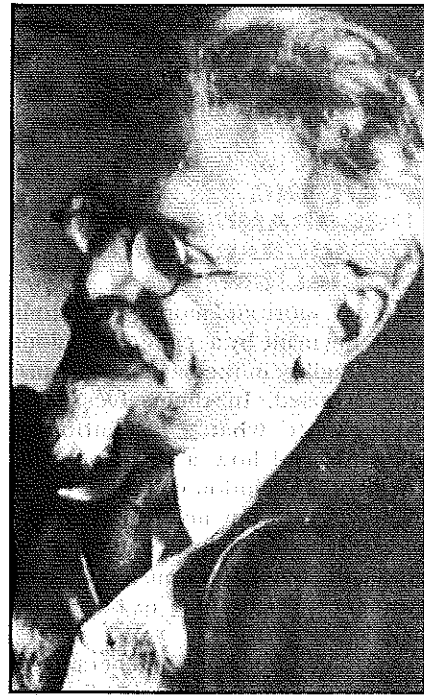
the demands of the workers and poor peasants who had made the February revolution - bread, peace and land!

The theory of permanent revolution elaborated by Trotsky even before this time had been that, under the leadership of the working class, the bourgeois democratic revolution in a backward country must 'grow over' in an uninterrupted way into the socialist revolution. The 'two stages' theory, rejected by the leaders of the only successful socialist revolution in history, was adopted by the Comintern under Stalin. It was used as a theoretical cover for Stalin's support for Chiang Kai-shek in the mid-1920s. This ended in such tragedy when the workers could have struggled independently and taken power in 1927.

It was applied again at the time of the Civil War in Spain and delivered the revolutionary proletariat of that country into the hands of the bourgeois democratic republicans. The latter, coming as they did from the same class stable as Franco, ultimately preferred the rule of fascists to that of workers and poor peasants.

Indonesian history holds one of the worst examples of the application of Popular Frontism - a policy which stems from the theory of two stages. It was collaboration with the bourgeois bonapartist government of Sukarno that was so fateful for the powerful Communist Party in the '60s. It was because of this that it was then, in 1965, unable to mobilise independently against the forces of Suharto who carried out the horrific massacre of over a million of its members and supporters.

It is wrong to imagine that every layer involved in a movement against dictatorship is in favour of a just and fair society. Representatives of the capitalist class can fight for 'democracy' and a clearing out of 'cronyism' only in order to give themselves more scope for reaping profits out of the labour of the working class. Fighting for every democratic reform, revolutionaries can enter into only temporary alliances with pro-capitalist politicians and even then keeping



Trotsky, elaborator of the theory of permanent revolution

their forces entirely independent and intact. The working class and other oppressed layers must be urged to develop their own forces and struggle independently for control over their own lives.

In Indonesia, concretely, this means no truck with the idea of a People's Front involving avowed supporters of the capitalist order. Along with Megawati, Amien Rais is an open supporter of market capitalism. In an interview published in the Far Eastern Economic Review (May 14) he also explained that there was no alternative to the deal with the IMF, which he calls a "necessary evil".

The struggle in Indonesia today cannot be limited to democratic demands, in order to allow for a period of capitalist development. Capitalism can only continue in Indonesia by demanding yet more sacrifices from the working class, the peasantry and the urban poor. But it can be seen by the sweep of the movement still continuing, that these layers do not want to give up the momentum of their struggle for fear that reaction will once again get the upper hand. It is the duty of revolutionary socialists to draw up a programme that will accord with the needs and aspirations of the oppressed classes and lead to a lasting victory of the revolution already begun.

FIGHTING PROGRAMME - FOR DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALISM

Each day, more and more concessions are being made by a regime conscious of its fragility in the face of a population aroused. In themselves, they demonstrate what a revolution is good for and how a regime threatened with revolution will scramble to make reforms but none of the measures Habibie has taken until now goes far enough. His 'transitional' government will continue to be racked by crisis.

Originally promising a general election for the end of 1999, Habibie has brought the date forward to May of next year, promising changes in electoral law. Invasions and occupations of town halls and other government buildings indicate that the electorate is not satisfied with the removal of Suharto from their lives. They want all the mini Suhartos in the form of the local governors to follow him!

Such an aroused movement is unlikely to accept a year's delay before people can freely elect new representatives. They know reaction is waiting for the movement to cool and will try to use the time to regroup its own forces. They want to clear out the old stooge 'parliament' and get a new constitution. An electoral commission, a 'triumvirate' or even a constituent assembly put together by the old ruling layer will not satisfy their demands.

At the time of the March sitting of the hand-picked MPR 'Representative Assembly' which voted Suharto back in power, demands were made for an alternative form of elections. Long before the mass protests developed this year, the PRD was making its call for People's Councils. Direct forms of representation involving workers and other oppressed layers, students and 'professionals' through workplaces, neighbourhoods, colleges would form a real alternative to the old state structures. The idea should be rejected of involving in such bodies even



Students on the steps and roof of the parliament building in Jakarta, May 19th 1998

apparently 'progressive' representatives of the bourgeoisie. They will end up defending the employers' and land-owners' 'fundamental' rights to continue exploiting the labour of others. 'Independent', 'sovereign' bodies, to draw up a new constitution and so on, must be independent of the class that has ruled and ruined.

Immediate, democratic and free elections are needed to an assembly which can decide on a constitution that will guarantee the rule of the majority in society - a truly democratic government of workers' and poor people's representatives.

In response to one of the most vociferous demands of the movement, for Suharto and his family to be put on trial, Habibie has been advised by a former economics minister to set up a "Philippines-style" government body to conduct a probe and deal with complaints - "The sooner the better...Then we can say: Stop, people, we have a committee to deal with it"! But any such body will not see things in the same light as those who have been persecuted by the dictatorship.

There are 1.4 million people whose identity cards brand them as ex-political prisoners. There are tens of millions who have been exploited directly by Suharto and his cronies - in their factories, in their timber yards or on their land. There are scores of mil-

lions more who have suffered horrific deprivation as a result of the intolerable raxes and price rises that their greed for profit has dictated. "Almost all Indonesians now resent Suharto in one respect: they feel robbed". (Economist, June 6)

Nothing is selling faster in Indonesia than photocopies of the latest revelations about the top family's involvement in over 1, 200 companies. They were making vast fortunes out of everything from hotels to telecomms, cars, toll roads and cloves. A Suharto grandson was even trying to get a distribution monopoly for school shoes! Those who have lived in outright poverty to feed this 'King of Thieves' and his brood will want them given the harshest of punishment. The other thieves around him will try to let him off the hook.

Suharto, his family and other cronies should stand trial before a people's court made up of elected representatives of workers, students and other consistent opponents of the regime. As demanded by the movement, all their assets, and those of the multinationals they did deals with, should be taken over by the state. Elected committees from the employees of their enterprises, banks and estates should have control over running them for the general benefit of society.

Friends, relatives and comrades of

imprisoned opponents of the regime staged mass pickets outside the notorious Cipinang and other jails. One by one, their doors have begun to open. First to be released were the moderate, pro-capitalist opponents of dictatorship - Mukhtar Pakpahan, leader of the SBSI trade union federation and another prominent 'dissident', Sri Bintang Pamungkas, chairperson of the Indonesian United Democratic Party (PUDD). Then came 16 East Timorese resistance fighters followed by three PRD/SMID leaders. All of this is welcome news but many hundreds more are left incarcerated for fighting against the Suharto regime.

All political prisoners must be released and all charges dropped. The truth must be told about the disappearances of activists. A tribunal of students, workers and other oppressed layers must be allowed to decide on the punishment of those responsible for their abduction and/or murder.

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The mass media must be free from all state interference. Writers, artists and ordinary people must enjoy the fullest freedom of expression provided they refrain from racism, sexism and the denial of the rights of others. For the nationalisation of all printing and broadcasting facilities and democratically decided access for all political groupings except fascists.

The defeat of a totalitarian regime is always followed by a mushrooming of parties and organisations. In Indonesia in June '98, new ones are being formed every day - some out of the numerous splinters of the ruling Golkar Party. A 'workers' party' has been set up by the old regime's stooge

union federation - the PSPI. But, while laws have been abandoned that restricted political parties to three tame ones approved by the dictator himself, Habibie has announced that any new party must accept the Pancasila state ideology which rules out socialism and communism.

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, well known for encouraging emerging labour movements to accept the ideology of capitalism, have claimed credit for getting Habibie to ratify the 1948 ILO convention which allows workers to 'freely organise'. But they will want tame organisations to develop that do not challenge the bosses' system.

The PRD and PRD-related organisations have not been un-banned and many of their leaders remain in jail. This leaves the field clear for pro-capitalist reformists like Mukhtar Pakpahan, already released from prison, to vie for the allegiance of a politically awakened working class. They will argue that there is no alternative to market relations and the role of trade unions is to bargain and negotiate within that system. Of course, unions can make big gains through negotiation when a capitalist economy is going forward but in a collapsing economy, there will be no gain for workers without struggle.

After decades of brutal wage slavery, the Indonesian working class needs fighting trade union and political organisations. They must be free to build them without interference from the state or organisations backed by imperialism

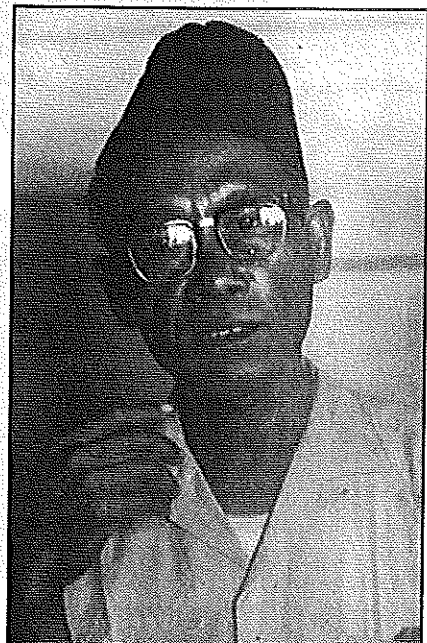
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But the military remains basically intact and still under the direction of a Suharto appointee, General Wiranto. It will not only continue to be used against opposition movements and oppressed nationalities. At a later stage, if the crisis remains unresolved, it could well step in - under the banner of 'national salvation' or some such pseudo-patriotic slogan - to establish once more an open military dictatorship.

There will not be a real change in the behaviour of the state forces until they have been totally dismantled. This in turn is impossible without a revolution in class relations. But the removal of the army from its dominant role in politics is an essential demand of the democracy movement.

No more police state methods! For an end to the 'dwi fungs!' of the army which allows them to dominate the

political scene. **Abolish the practice of appointing army tops to sit in parliament.**

The ranks of the army and police must have the right to organise unions and be encouraged to elect committees to investigate the record of their officers and to remove them from their posts where necessary. They must have the right to elect officers and to refuse to be used against workers, students or national liberation fighters.

The eventual resignation of the old Javanese dictator has given new hope to the oppressed peoples of various nationalities in their struggle against direct rule from Jakarta. This is especially true of those that have suffered virtual genocide at the hands of the Indonesian army - the Aceh of Northern Sumatra and the East Timorese. Dili, the capital of East Timor, has seen some of the biggest demonstrations since the Indonesian army invaded in 1975. At a packed 'meeting' with the Governor-general in June, shown on television worldwide, banner waving students and

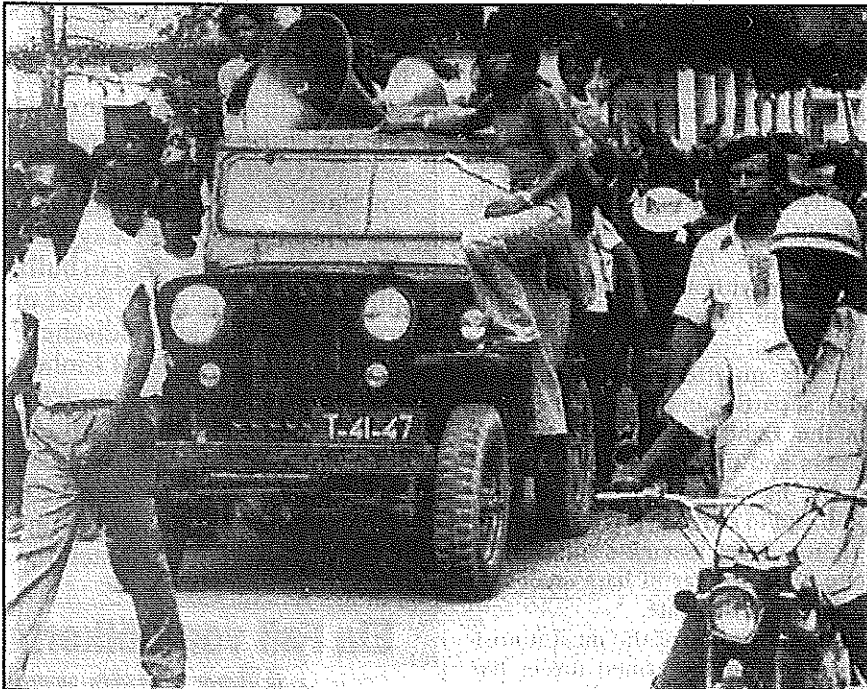
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The radical Indonesian bourgeois, who fear the break-up of this 17,000-islanded country, are showing themselves opposed to the basic democratic right of nations to self-determination. Megawati Sukarnoputri argues for keeping East Timor as the 17th state of Indonesia! Some 'democrats' are even arguing for reintegration with the old colonial power of Portugal!

The PRD argues for a referendum in East Timor to determine what the people themselves want but under the supervision of the United Nations. A free vote of the East Timorese people to determine their future is the minimum they are entitled to. But there is plenty of evidence that the UN acts only in the interests of the big imperialist powers and cannot be trusted. After the slaughter of one third of their number by the Indonesian army in the past 23 years, the population of East Timor is unlikely to settle for anything less than total independence.

End military rule in East Timor, West Papua, Aceh etc. Uphold the right of all nationalities to self-determination, up to and including independence. All forms of discrimination in the use of language must be abolished and the cultural and education rights of all ethnic and religious groups fully respected. Against all forms of discrimination - racial, sexual or religious - and against all chauvinist, nationalist and religious bigotry.

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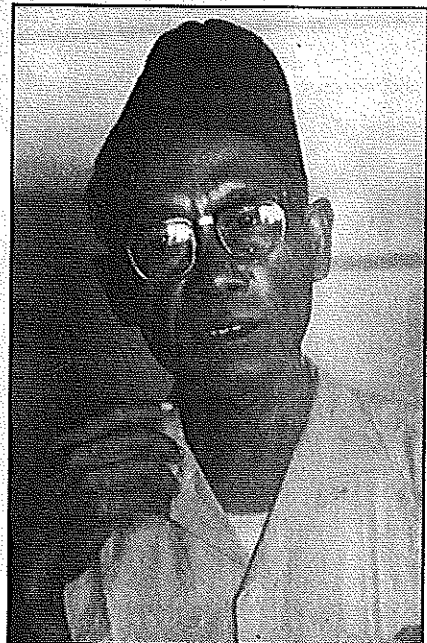
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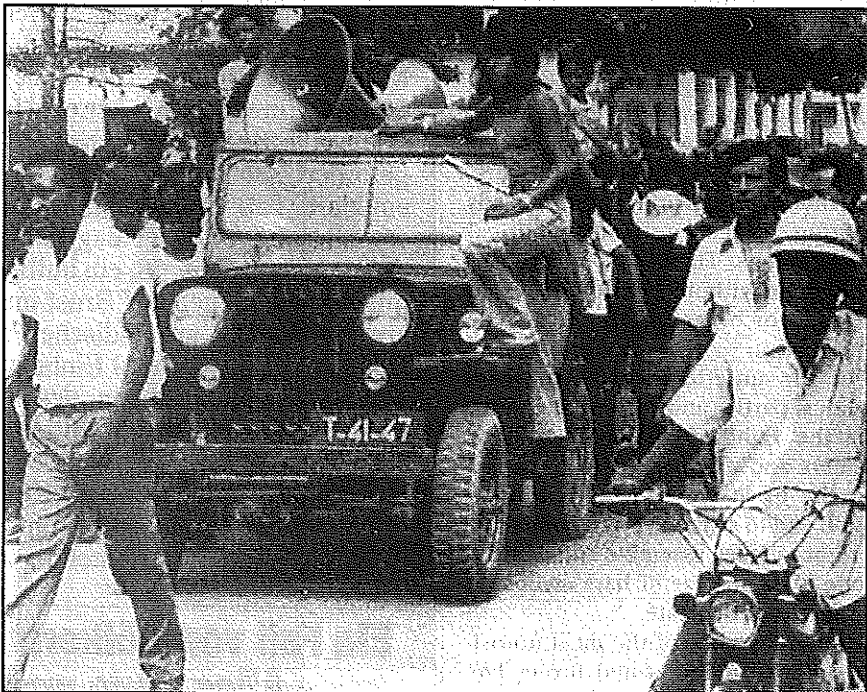
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The IMF demands that subsidies be withdrawn when inflation is already running close to 100%. Only the planned use of resources taken out of the hands of the capitalist class can rescue Indonesia from the edge of the economic precipice.

No to price rises. Restoration of all subsidies on the seven nine basic necessities.

Committees of workers and other consumers to control prices. Open the books of the retail industry, private companies, public enterprises and of the government itself.

No repayment of international debts. Down with the IMF!

Nationalise the top 20 conglomerates, expropriating the 200 private owners who dominate the lives of 200 million other members of Indonesian society!



Soldiers run from protesters, Dili, East Timor, 1994

For a plan of production democratically drawn up and controlled by elected representatives of the working people.

Reconstruct Indonesia's economy on socialist lines!

A week after Suharto's resignation, the Habibie government was forced to nationalise the Bank of Central Asia, the flagship of the Salim group after pouring in over \$1.5 billion to save it from its depositors! They had laid siege to it to withdraw their money, convinced that its owners - two of Suharto's family and one of his closest associates - Sudono Salim - would be running off with it if they got half a chance! After spending nearly \$2 billion to save it and six other banks, the government stepped in to nationalise it.

Nationalise all the major banks under workers' control. Make available cheap credit for small farmers and traders.

Famine could be overcome if seed and fertiliser were available at low cost and if cooperative methods of farming and forestry, under the control of the working people, were fully developed. The production of food for export while millions go hungry is a crime. Land should be the common property of the people, owned through the state, and not the subject of speculation and exploitation.

Land reform through expropriation of the big land-owners and the cash crop profiteers. Rent for land and for housing should be nominal. Homes for all through a massive house-building programme.

Millions of landless, homeless and jobless are available to undertake the tasks of rebuilding the Indonesian economy. Let them join the proletariat on decent wages, hours and conditions on a massive programme of public works. Only a democratically planned economy on the basis of public ownership would be able to develop fully all the human and natural resources of Indonesia. Only then would it be possible to abolish unemployment and to provide hospitals, schools and social support for all who need it. This is what socialism can and must mean. Capitalism as a system can never eliminate want and misery.

For a full and free health, education and welfare system.

For a government of workers and poor people.

No trust in 'progressive' supporters of market capitalism.

While of a different nature, the May events in Indonesia, taking place against a background of generalised crisis in the region, could turn out to be as significant as those of France 1968 - exactly 30 years earlier. Their immediate effect was a further bout

of sharp falls on the stock and currency exchanges of Asia. But the removal of one of the world's most corrupt rulers by a defiant mass movement has already had a big impact on the psychology of workers and youth throughout Asia and further afield.

The Japan Times of 29 May carried a report from China of increasingly bold calls to action against corrupt and brutal cadres. Posters were appearing in Beijing signed by workers from half a dozen provinces calling for immediate mass protests. "In 1989, protests were spurred by Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost in the old Soviet Union, and Indonesia could play the same role".

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long he can stem the tide of opposition with his nationalist rhetoric remains to be seen.

The unfinished Indonesian revolution has acted as a powerful impetus to revolutionary processes on a world scale. What was started by students under the red and white flags of the Indonesian nation could yet serve as a flashpoint for the socialist revolution throughout Asia and beyond. Within Indonesia the consciousness of the students as well as workers and other layers will be changing rapidly under the impact of the train of events they have set off. The thirst for ideas displayed by so many and their preparedness to sacrifice are both a test of the revolutionary nature of this movement and a harbinger of the successes that are to come.

For a socialist Indonesia and a federation of socialist states throughout Asia.

An unprecedented opportunity now exists for workers to pursue their demands and build their own organisations - trade unions and parties. An independent party of labour can develop rapidly in the hot-house conditions that exist. Committed Marxists, with the correct approach and orientation, can act as a catalyst in these processes. Because of the absence of the subjective factor of any significant size at the moment, the way the revolution develops will still present many obstacles and setbacks.

The task of the hour is to build a leadership worthy of the heroic Indonesian workers and youth. It is the role of a revolutionary party to unite all layers of the working class and the oppressed behind a programme of struggle for a socialist society. Energetic application now to these tasks and the working out of an effective programme for struggle will pay huge dividends in the future. The completion of the unfinished revolution with the victory of socialism in Indonesia would change the course of world history!



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Committees of workers and other consumers to control prices. Open the books of the retail industry, private companies, public enterprises and of the government itself.

No repayment of international debts. Down with the IMF!

Nationalise the top 20 conglomerates, expropriating the 200 private owners who dominate the lives of 200 million other members of Indonesian society!



Soldiers run from protesters, Dili, East Timor, 1994

For a plan of production democratically drawn up and controlled by elected representatives of the working people.

Reconstruct Indonesia's economy on socialist lines!

A week after Suharto's resignation, the Habibie government was forced to nationalise the Bank of Central Asia, the flagship of the Salim group after pouring in over \$1.5 billion to save it from its depositors! They had laid siege to it to withdraw their money, convinced that its owners - two of Suharto's family and one of his closest associates - Sudono Salim - would be running off with it if they got half a chance! After spending nearly \$2 billion to save it and six other banks, the government stepped in to nationalise it.

Nationalise all the major banks under workers' control. Make available cheap credit for small farmers and traders.

Famine could be overcome if seed and fertiliser were available at low cost and if cooperative methods of farming and forestry, under the control of the working people, were fully developed. The production of food for export while millions go hungry is a crime. Land should be the common property of the people, owned through the state, and not the subject of speculation and exploitation.

Land reform through expropriation of the big land-owners and the cash crop profiteers. Rent for land and for housing should be nominal. Homes for all through a massive house-building programme.

Millions of landless, homeless and jobless are available to undertake the tasks of rebuilding the Indonesian economy. Let them join the proletariat on decent wages, hours and conditions on a massive programme of public works. Only a democratically planned economy on the basis of public ownership would be able to develop fully all the human and natural resources of Indonesia. Only then would it be possible to abolish unemployment and to provide hospitals, schools and social support for all who need it. This is what socialism can and must mean. Capitalism as a system can never eliminate want and misery.

For a full and free health, education and welfare system.

For a government of workers and poor people.

No trust in 'progressive' supporters of market capitalism.

While of a different nature, the May events in Indonesia, taking place against a background of generalised crisis in the region, could turn out to be as significant as those of France 1968 - exactly 30 years earlier. Their immediate effect was a further bout

nal economic growth and workers were demanding their share of the wealth they had created. Today in Indonesia, industry is collapsing.

Marxists must support every struggle against redundancies and closures, for work sharing with no loss in pay and a living wage for all workers, including the unemployed and retired workers. Full retraining where required at the employers' expense. If the bosses and the government say they cannot afford it, let them open their books of account to inspection by workers' representatives. Firms which are bankrupt should have their assets turned over to the state and be run on cooperative principles.

The capitalists of America and Europe demand transparency so that they can see where the profits are being made and which companies to avoid buying. Workers in Indonesia say they should not have to pay for the debts their employers have incurred. There is enough wealth in the pockets of the crony capitalists to repay all the debts. Socialists would argue against paying good money to the international banking fraternity. If the cronies have robbed the working class to line their pockets, let their capital be used for the benefit of the whole of the working class.

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CWI statement

of sharp falls on the stock and currency exchanges of Asia. But the removal of one of the world's most corrupt rulers by a defiant mass movement has already had a big impact on the psychology of workers and youth throughout Asia and further afield.

The Japan Times of 29 May carried a report from China of increasingly bold calls to action against corrupt and brutal cadres. Posters were appearing in Beijing signed by workers from half a dozen provinces calling for immediate mass protests. "In 1989, protests were spurred by Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost in the old Soviet Union, and Indonesia could play the same role".

In Zimbabwe, as hunger riots, strikes and student demonstrations reached a crescendo, banners on protest demonstrations proclaimed: "After Suharto, it's one down, two to go" - meaning their own dictator, Robert Mugabe, and Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamed. With the Malaysian currency - the ringit - at its lowest for 20 years, Mahathir is conscious of the threat to his own position from the economic crisis and the contagion of revolution 'next door'. In an attempt to win favour with a discontented population, he has made his own denunciations of a 'New form of colonialism' - 'marauding market forces and western propaganda'. How

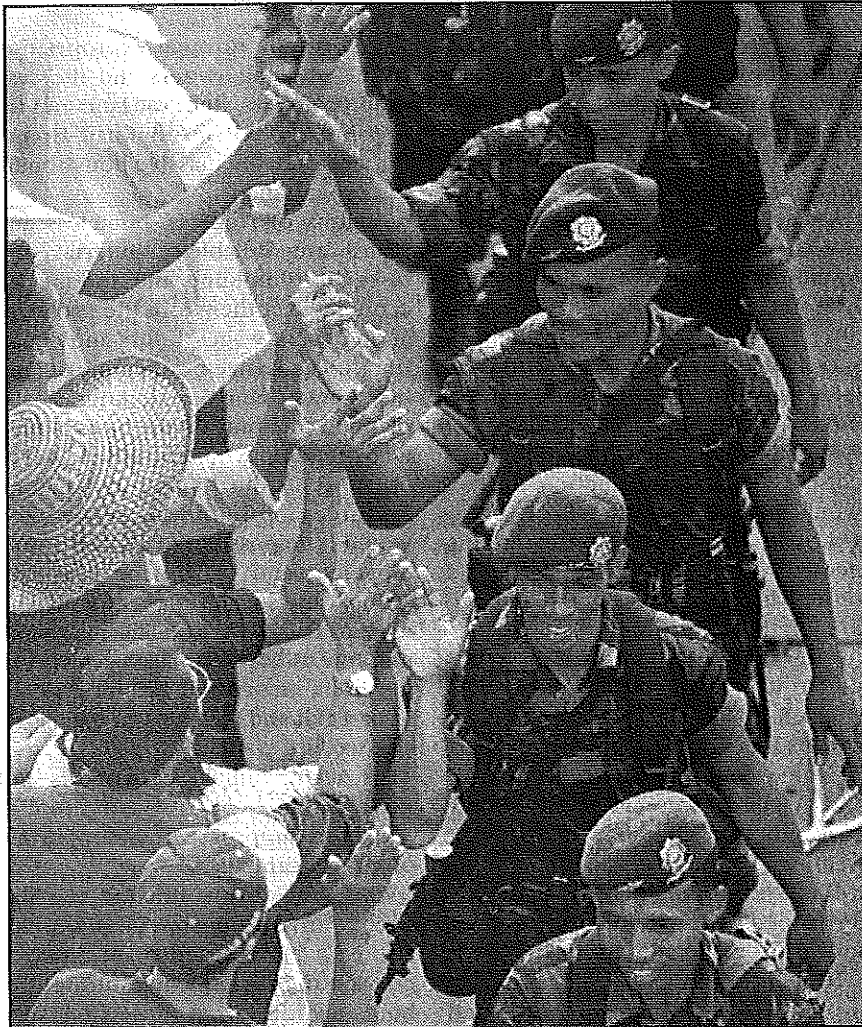
long he can stem the tide of opposition with his nationalist rhetoric remains to be seen.

The unfinished Indonesian revolution has acted as a powerful impetus to revolutionary processes on a world scale. What was started by students under the red and white flags of the Indonesian nation could yet serve as a flashpoint for the socialist revolution throughout Asia and beyond. Within Indonesia the consciousness of the students as well as workers and other layers will be changing rapidly under the impact of the train of events they have set off. The thirst for ideas displayed by so many and their preparedness to sacrifice are both a test of the revolutionary nature of this movement and a harbinger of the successes that are to come.

For a socialist Indonesia and a federation of socialist states throughout Asia.

An unprecedented opportunity now exists for workers to pursue their demands and build their own organisations - trade unions and parties. An independent party of labour can develop rapidly in the hot-house conditions that exist. Committed Marxists, with the correct approach and orientation, can act as a catalyst in these processes. Because of the absence of the subjective factor of any significant size at the moment, the way the revolution develops will still present many obstacles and setbacks.

The task of the hour is to build a leadership worthy of the heroic Indonesian workers and youth. It is the role of a revolutionary party to unite all layers of the working class and the oppressed behind a programme of struggle for a socialist society. Energetic application now to these tasks and the working out of an effective programme for struggle will pay huge dividends in the future. The completion of the unfinished revolution with the victory of socialism in Indonesia would change the course of world history!



Students and soldiers greet as the Suharto regime crumbles,

June 1998

The need for a Revolutionary Party



CWI Statement August 1998

Statement from the Committee for a Workers' International On the Need for a Revolutionary Party in Indonesia

August 1998

There is a ferment in Indonesian society. The bringing down of the corrupt and ruthless regime of general Suharto by a mass movement has opened the floodgates for all oppressed layers to demand a redress of their long-held and deeply felt grievances. The task of the hour is to build a fighting force that can bring lasting victory.

The movement, which culminated in the historic May 21st resignation, was largely uncoordinated and led by the courageous youth of the campuses. They had gained the support of practically every layer of society - their own lecturers and teachers, academics, doctors and civil servants, disaffected government ministers and ex-generals but also, in their millions, the poor and oppressed of town and country and the workers in the factories, in transport, in fuel, food and wood processing depots. Then it was tacit support; now there is a mood for direct action - occupations, pickets, strikes and demonstrations - to feed the family, to get a decent wage, to remove cronies, to win the right to national self-determination. Again, the movements are largely spontaneous. A mass party of the oppressed is absent.

The most combative organisations of resistance during Suharto's rule were brutally suppressed. Even today, many of their leaders remain in jail. But the situation cries out for a bold lead and a coordinated movement. A revolution has been begun, and the Habibie regime, including the army, is in crisis. Yet there seems to be no force, no leadership that can follow

up on the first victory.

A party is needed to unite the struggles of the different layers of the working class, the urban and rural poor and the oppressed nationalities. With a clear strategy, a preparedness to struggle for all basic democratic rights and with a programme of ridding society of crony capitalism once and for all, such a party could rapidly gather support and grow into a mass force.

While workers immediately displayed a huge access of confidence and moved into fearless action on issues like prices and the minimum wage, they came up against the forces of the state and the people they looked towards for a lead failed to give it. Instead of channelling all the pent-up energy into a coordinated offensive against the vacillating Habibie regime, they poured cold water on the movement. Pakpahan of the PSBI announced a moratorium on workers' demonstrations and Megawati called for leniency in relation to the ex-dictator, Suharto!

A workers' party, especially under the leadership of dedicated revolutionaries who believe in socialism as the only way out, would inscribe on its banner all the basic democratic demands of the movement and go further. It would mobilise around slogans that would capture the support of the masses.

It would call for the immediate trial of the 'King of Thieves' and his brood by a tribunal made up of workers, peasants, the urban poor and student

activists - the people they have exploited and persecuted over the years. Elections without delay to a constituent assembly, supervised by elected representatives of the movement. The release of all political prisoners and the dropping of all charges. The abolition of all restrictions on demonstrations, on the media and on the setting up of parties, trade unions and other organisations.

Such a party would also call for the immediate honouring of the basic right of all nationalities to self-determination, including complete separation, where a majority wishes it. For referendums to be held wherever an oppressed nationality demands it - East Timor, Irian Jaya, Aceh - supervised by workers, students and the poor people of those areas.

A leadership serious about carrying through the transformation of society would ensure that, through meetings of the party, all the pressures of the ruling ideology would be countered. Campaigns would answer all the propaganda of the ruling class aimed at intimidating workers into accepting the 'status quo'.

A far-sighted leadership would emphasise that the movement, though inchoate and scattered at present, still has enormous potential power. A workers' party could mobilise and organise all the angry layers of the oppressed in a movement that could wipe out every petty-fogging limitation to their rights. The new laws and the threats of an army clamp-down are the work of a frightened regime. The Habibie govern-

ment is in crisis, the army demoralised and discredited.

Workers and other oppressed people are looking for a political force to pursue their demands. They urgently need a party of their own, independent of the ideology of the bosses - of the market, IMF deals and so on. Such a party would take advantage of the weaknesses of the ruling layer, explain what is, and launch an organised offensive to end the rule of capitalists and big land-owners.

It is becoming clear that, in the context of the worst-ever economic situation with predictions of a 20% fall in production and 20 million thrown out of work, with industry left in private hands, there will be nothing but blood sweat and tears for the majority of the population.

It is not just a question of crony capitalism denying workers their rights to a decent life but capitalism as a whole. Its representatives in Indonesia and on a world scale are waiting to come back with their 'prescriptions' for a recovery - the abolition of subsidies on basic food and fuel, the lifting of restrictions on export of essential goods and a fire-sale of low-wage, high-profit enterprises. They are not against the maintenance in power of a strong state, prepared to suppress the demands of an aroused population and the trade unions and political organisations they create.

Workers have already shown they are not prepared to pay for a crisis that is not of their making. They, and,

at least of all, those who aspire to give a lead to the movement, should put no trust in parties or leaders who believe free-market capitalism can solve today's dire problems!

If working and poor people do not find or forge their own combat organisations and a party that unifies their struggles and gives a chance of victory, they will become dispirited. The prospect of suffering further deprivations will make them lose heart for the struggle. This would then give the enemy a chance to recover and reaction, even in the form of a new military coup, could triumph. The road to the socialist revolution would then be closed again for a whole period, in which it would become far more difficult to build a genuine party of labour, let alone a party of revolution.

The aim of all determined fighters must be: For an independent party of the working class and urban and rural poor. For regular mass meetings in the workplace, the campus, the neighbourhood, the village and even the army to discuss the issues of the hour and to prepare for a movement of general strike proportions. For the right of all organisations to put forward their views in these forums and for the election by these bodies of representative committees to link up on a regional and national level.

The movement must maintain an unrelenting struggle. Against price rises and for a decent minimum wage. Government (tax-payers') money must be spent on subsidies and services for the poor not on luxury housing and bail-outs for the 'fat cats'.

Against redundancies and closures and for the opening of all books of account. For the nationalisation under democratic workers' control of all failing businesses as well as the assets of Suharto and all major conglomerates, agro-businesses banks and finance houses.

The Committee for a Workers' International is firmly of the belief that only on the basis of public ownership of industry and land and a plan of production under democratic workers' management would it be possible to begin to rebuild the Indonesian economy. Jobs for all on decent wages and of no more than 35 hours a week duration could be allocated as desired through democratically elected representative committees. The needs and desires of working people of town and country could at last be made a priority and the conditions developed for their rapid fulfilment.

This, in the context of a revolution begun, is not a dream but a real prospect, even a necessity. The task is to build a party that has this as its strategic aim and not as a dim and distant goal for some time in the future!

We invite all those who agree to dedicate themselves to this task in the closest of contact with the parties and organisations of the CWI - in all continents and more than 40 countries of the world. Join us in an uninterrupted struggle for democracy and for the socialist transformation of society!

Join us / find out more about us:

The Committee for a Workers' International has affiliated parties and organisations in more than 35 countries on all continents. The way to contact our comrades differs from country to country. Some you can contact directly.

For others, it is easier to do it via the CWI offices in London.

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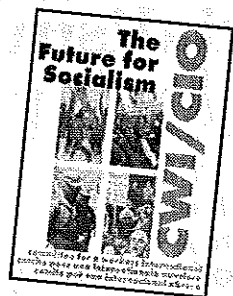
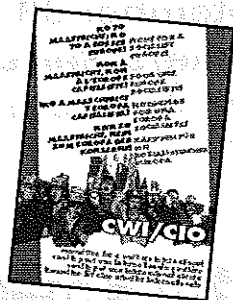
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Guevara: Symbol of Struggle by Tony Saunois

October 1997 was the thirtieth anniversary of the execution of Che Guevara. He was murdered by the Bolivian army in conjunction with the United States Central Intelligence Agency. His crime was to fight against oppression and exploitation. He was a self-sacrificing, heroic revolutionary. He remains a symbol of struggle for those who are fighting to defeat capitalism and imperialism. The CWI has produced this pamphlet to commemorate the anniversary of Che's death and assist workers, peasants and young people around the world in their struggle. There are many lessons which need to be learned from Che's struggle and the Cuban Revolution. This pamphlet discusses those experiences and their

implications they have in the fight to build a socialist society.

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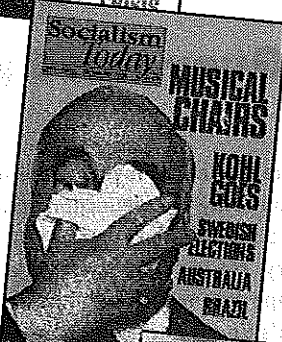
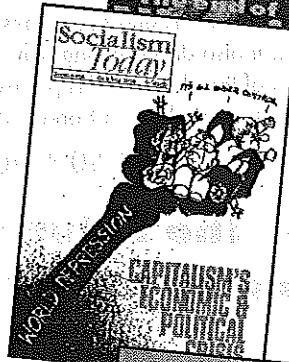
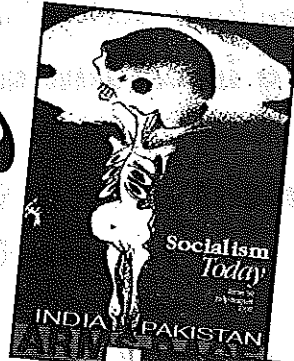


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Indonesia

An Unfinished Revolution



Ex-president Suharto in the background as successor Habibie takes office.

This pamphlet brings together important historical and contemporary material on Indonesia. It gives an insight into the momentous events of this year which erupted like one of the country's spectacular volcanoes. After months of mass protests, Asia's longest ruling dictator apologised to the nation and ignominiously bowed out.

Written by members of the Committee for a Workers' International, which brings together Marxists and socialist fighters from around the world, this pamphlet is essential reading for all those who want to see an end to capitalism and its crises and the construction of a new world through a struggle for the socialist alternative.

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