

THE DOWNFALL OF INDONESIAN COMMUNISM

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FEW major occurrences in recent history have been so quietly passed over as the violent destruction, in the past three years, of the world's largest non-governing communist party, three million strong and regarded by many in the first half of the sixties as the most likely candidate for leadership of the next communist power. The drama and dimensions of the bloodbath which accomplished this event have failed to draw to it either sensation or concern of a pronounced kind.

It is natural enough that Western governments, anxious to maintain and enhance the prestige of their new "stabilizing force" in Southeast Asia, should rejoice quietly in the acquisition and turn a blind eye to the methods by which it was secured. But the communist governments and press have been scarcely more vocal. In the case of the U.S.S.R., state interests (including a substantial financial stake in Indonesia) have dictated a mild reaction to the sanguinary liquidation of what after all was not a "brother party", but an adherent of the rival Chinese camp. The uncharacteristically muted protests of the Chinese Communist Party, on the other hand, may stem from preoccupation with the Cultural Revolution and may also indicate embarrassment in the ranks of the dominant party faction at this most spectacular failure of China's hopes of creating a new international grouping.

Socialists in the West, deeply absorbed in the Vietnam issue, have nevertheless been able to spare more attention for repression in Greece or Spain than for the vastly greater and more savage terror in Indonesia. On the whole, a good deal less is known of political events in a country which, despite its population size and strategic position in Southeast Asia, has attracted little notice on the Left since the days of the independence war against the Dutch.¹

Throughout its tempestuous and tragic history, Indonesian communism has displayed singularly idiosyncratic and unorthodox features. Reared in a country of great ethnic and cultural diversity, under the initial tutelage of a group of talented and individualistic Dutchmen, the movement from its outset was thrown heavily upon its own resources in fashioning an accommodation with a complex social and political environment. Thanks initially to the vigilance of Dutch colonial authority, and later to the vicissitudes of struggle, the PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*) was perennially subject to frequent and sudden changes in

its leadership. Until comparatively late in its career, access to Marxist and communist texts was difficult, even for the handful of its leaders familiar with a major European language. The great distance from Moscow, and the small place assigned Indonesia in the concerns of the Comintern, meant that it seldom received timely or relevant advice or instructions in its formative years. Between the time of its founding on an indigenous basis in 1920 and its first ordeal by fire at the hands of the Dutch authorities in 1926, the PKI was unable to achieve a substantial ideological coherence or an organizational discipline enabling it to act in a united fashion behind its fluctuating leadership, to which local groups of the party were often only tenuously linked. In spite of these handicaps, the energy and radicalism of the party soon attracted a considerable following on Java and, to a lesser extent, Sumatra, at a time when colonial rule was coming under its most determined challenge from a populace stirred up by rebellious Indonesian intellectuals.

The PKI made rapid progress among government workers, estate labourers, poorer townfolk and sections of the peasantry most directly affected by the disrupting inroads of a market economy upon the traditional society. Already by the early twenties it headed the largest political movement in the country, eclipsing the older and more moderate nationalist body, *Sarekat* Islam. Its success in penetrating the SI became the model for Comintern "bloc within" tactics in China, ironically at the very time that the PKI, in a flush of self-confidence, had abandoned its alliance with the SI leaders and siphoned off a large proportion of that body's adherents into its own more militant movement. But the inexperienced party was unable to control the volatile forces it had aroused. Gripped by utopian and messianic expectations, the restive followers of communism reacted with intense literalness to promises of emancipation, propelling the party into a series of collisions with the colonial power which culminated in the ill-fated insurrection of 1926. The Dutch suppressed the poorly co-ordinated rising with comparative ease, and with a severity which effectively put an end to the first phase of communist activity in Indonesia.²

A clandestine visit to Indonesia in 1935 by Musso, a survivor of the 1926 debacle residing in Moscow, led to the re-establishment of an underground leadership of the PKI, but the party did not again assume prominence in the independence struggle until after the Japanese occupation. It surfaced in October 1945, two months after the proclamation of Indonesian independence, one of a large number of parties which proliferated during the hectic years of the war of independence. The party found difficulty in devising a clearcut strategy to deal with the turbulent events then in progress. Its leaders were in fact dis-

tributed over a number of parties, and the shifting alliances to which they lent themselves appeared to owe more to considerations of immediate political advantage, and at times personal ambition, than to any basic concept of social revolution. Some of the most prestigious figures associated with the PKI were quite conservative in outlook, and little effort was made to extend the social basis of the national struggle or to mobilize the party's following for aims distinct from those of other groupings in the Republican camp.

By 1948, the position of the Republic had gravely deteriorated. Negotiations with the Dutch appeared to have led into a blind alley, each agreement arrived at merely forming the prelude to renewed Dutch "police actions" which further depleted the territory of the sorely pressed Republicans. Coming so close upon the ravages of the Japanese occupation, the independence war had aggravated suffering and uprooting to the point where social and communal tensions were at breaking point. Under these conditions, the degree of inter-party unity achieved in the 1945-47 period began to disintegrate. The influential Socialist Party split into right and left wings, the left joining a new oppositional alliance sponsored by the PKI. The latter, having previously been as deeply implicated as any other political grouping in the policy of negotiations, now denounced all dealings with the hated enemy and proclaimed a policy of all-out people's struggle for victory, relying on the support of the Soviet Union and the international working-class. The issue of "negotiations versus struggle" split the Republicans down the middle, with pronounced cold war pressures intensifying the division and its bitterness. The government led by the right-wing socialist Sjahrir and supported by President Sukarno and Vice-President Hatta, persisted in its attempts to reach a final agreement with the Dutch, and found the agitation of the opposition alliance threatening its prospects both of convincing the Netherlands of its authority and, what it regarded as equally vital, securing American benevolence towards the terms it sought.

The disunity penetrated deep into the ranks of the Republican armies, many of which were irregular forces loosely attached to ideological groupings within the political spectrum. Clashes between units became more common as the political climate worsened. At this critical juncture, Musso reappeared on the scene once more, this time armed with a blueprint for the conversion of the Indonesian national revolution into a "people's democratic revolution". Musso's New Road, which gave theoretical underpinning to the oppositional approach now adopted by the PKI, was adopted early in August and its titular author elected leader of a party consolidated by the ingestion of several associated political groupings. Before the programme could be put to the test, however, a new armed clash broke out between antagonistic

military units in Central Java. This time, however, the government chose to interpret the events as a communist insurrectionary bid; Musso, at that time on a political tour which had taken him to Madiun, in eastern Central Java, was apprised of Sukarno's broadcast calling for the suppression of the "revolt". He and other PKI leaders on the spot accepted the challenge, only to be overwhelmed in what shortly took on the colour of a communal conflict. Within a matter of weeks, the communists were once more crushed, most of their leaders killed and some 36,000 members and supporters imprisoned.³

In mid-1950, two survivors of Madiun arrived back in Indonesia from China and Vietnam, where they had spent the intervening months. Both had previously been prominent younger members of the PKI leadership. Aidit, aged 27 in 1950, son of a minor government official in North Sumatra, had been drawn into the nationalist movement in his mid-teens. He made the acquaintance of Marxism in 1943, but was also strongly influenced by the militant nationalism of Sukarno and Mohammed Yamin. He finally joined the PKI in 1946 and in 1948 became a member of the party's politbureau. M. H. Lukman, 30, came from a veteran communist family, and his early years were spent in Boven Digul detention camp in West New Guinea, where his father had been confined following the 1926 uprising and where the young Lukman became for a time a protégé of the future Republican Vice-President, Hatta. Aidit and Lukman became close friends during the Japanese occupation period, when both were active in nationalist youth groups, and the latter's activities and career up to 1948 closely paralleled those of his colleague.

No doubt fired with enthusiasm by their contacts with the victorious Chinese communists and the powerful Vietminh, Aidit and Lukman returned to their homeland with a mission to rebuild the shattered PKI and assert its leadership in the struggle for a fully independent and resurgent Indonesian. Together with Njoto, a 25 year-old PKI leader from East Java, and other dissatisfied younger PKI cadres, they had little difficulty over the next year in toppling a weak and dispirited party leadership and taking over command of the demoralized organization, now no more than 10,000 strong. With vigour and self-confidence, they set about the task of restoring its strength and capacity.

Apart from the state of the party itself, the new leaders faced a daunting array of political problems. Gone was the fluid political situation characteristic of the stage of revolutionary war, when the absence of a single ideological or institutional focus of national aspirations had left open considerable room for power competition. Now independence of a kind had been gained, the war had come to an end, and a new governmental power was taking shape, resting heavily on the Dutch-trained bureaucracy and a relatively experienced and con-

solidated army. To the PKI leaders, it was a "bourgeois" power, even a "compradore bourgeois" power, since they, along with a sizeable segment of the political public, regarded the terms agreed upon with the Dutch as nothing short of betrayal. But the fact had to be faced that the PKI had failed to win political hegemony in the "national liberation" period, and now in its gravely weakened state faced the task of challenging and supplanting a new ruling coalition of those very parties which had been largely instrumental in bringing about its destruction three years earlier. How was the PKI to mount its challenge; what was to be its mode of struggle?

It might have been expected that Aidit and Lukman, having witnessed the virtues of peasant warfare in China and Vietnam, would be disposed to think likewise in terms of armed agrarian revolution. Indonesia was an overwhelmingly peasant country, and its numerous and far-flung islands could conceivably be regarded as suitable guerilla terrain; at least as good, arguably, as Malaya and the Philippines, where communist insurrections at this time still offered promise of victory. In point of fact, however, neither Aidit nor his colleagues seem to have hesitated in rejecting this path. Aidit, in addressing himself to those in the party attracted by the example of armed revolution, stressed the differences in the respective circumstances of China and Indonesia, in particular the much greater extent and remoteness of the former's guerilla areas, and the possession by Mao Tse-tung's forces of a "friendly rear".⁴ There were, of course, other important distinguishing features of the two cases: Mao's guerillas operated in a country that lacked an effective centralized political and military power such as Indonesia now possessed, at least in rudimentary form; the Chinese communists from 1931 onwards were able to appeal to patriotic sentiment in favour of a resolute struggle against foreign aggressors, while Indonesia's phase of liberation war was over; the Chinese communists after 1927 were denied any legal avenue of struggle, and thus had little option but to take up arms, whereas despite Madiun the PKI was not legally proscribed and was permitted to take its place in the parliamentary arena after independence.

There were still other considerations which, although never adverted to, may have been even more decisive in inhibiting the youthful triumvirate from launching a do-or-die struggle in the villages and mountains. One was the searing recollections of 1926 and 1948, when promising PKI advances had been cut short by disastrous experiences of violence. Another was the fact that in this period sentiment in favour of national unity was immensely strong in the country and centred around the person of President Sukarno, widely revered as the father of independence; the most dynamic anti-unity forces were conservative and strongly anti-communist, so that the integrity of the Republic, not yet

regarded as securely guaranteed, was a "progressive" value with which the communists felt bound to identify themselves. Finally, there was doubt about the revolutionary potentialities of the Indonesian peasantry. Aidit was often in the coming years to criticize previous party leaderships for their lack of attention to the countryside, and to declare that the Indonesian revolution was first and foremost an agrarian revolution. But in 1951 and again in 1954, when the party's programme was adopted, he admitted that the party could go to meet the peasants only in the most cautious and tentative way, because of its lack of trained cadres or of detailed investigation in this crucial field.

In point of fact, no political party in Indonesia had paid much attention to the peasantry; neither in the eye of the political élites, nor in its own, had this vast mass of diligent food growers achieved the status of a political actor. The non-communist party leaderships and committees, formed in the main of urban intellectuals, officials, businessmen, religious functionaries, even radjahs and nobles, looked primarily to the urban dwellers as their publics, and relied upon village heads and other local dignitaries to deliver rural allegiance through the time-honoured channels of authority, deference to which has been seen as the prime norm in the traditional Indonesian value system. By colonial standards, the Dutch had interfered minimally with the centuries-old pattern of agrarian relations, adapting their exploitation and administration to it as far as possible and positively discouraging activities which threatened to disrupt it. Unlike the case of China, the traditional society, while strongly hierarchical in form, was not marked by great distinctions of wealth at the village level. Communal relations were still to some degree intact, and large landownership was the exception rather than the rule. The traditional rulers of Java, where two-thirds of the population is concentrated, were urban-dwellers, relying on bureaucratic power rather than upon landholding to enforce their will, and their incorporation into the Dutch colonial civil service reinforced their bureaucratic character and their separation from the land. The patterns of land use were and are exceedingly complicated, the poles of ownership and landlessness being mediated by a host of intermediary and interlocking relationships into which a mushrooming population was squeezed with ever more pronounced difficulty and strain. This system of "shared poverty", rather than a process of horizontal differentiation, was the more characteristic feature of the rural scene. It should be noted, however, that from the early part of this century the penetration of a market-oriented economy had been eroding the traditional fabric and promoting the emergence of class differentiations. The dislocating effects of the Japanese occupation and the war of independence accentuated this process, which was to gather speed and extend with inflation and economic crisis becoming endemic

after 1959. In the early fifties, however, the impact of these changes was not appreciated either by the political Clites or by the peasantry, leaving the immense reservoir of traditional values and attitudes still uppermost.⁵

Although the PKI under Aidit analysed the agrarian scene in strictly class terms, passing over traditional factors which were nevertheless to impress themselves upon it also, it is more than likely that the party leaders were more aware than they admitted of the passivity in the countryside and the consequent difficulty in making the peasants the base for an armed assault on the bastions of power. In any case, as we have noted, they repudiated the armed agrarian revolution unequivocally. With one major option thus foreclosed, the PKI had little practical alternative than to try to utilize the formal political system. A strategy of urban insurrection was clearly out of the question. Not only could the army's power be quickly and decisively concentrated in the cities, but the working-class, weakly nourished by a small number of large foreign enterprises and a host of petty manufactures and trades, was too untrained, dispersed and tradition-bound to figure in such a forlorn enterprise. The party received an instructive lesson regarding its vulnerability in the cities in August 1951, when a provocation staged against it in Djakarta was made the occasion for a governmental crackdown which set the communists back seriously for two years. From this, the PKI leaders drew the conclusion that they could not stage any urban action without the protection of an important power group.

In seeking to devise a strategy of open political contention, the PKI leaders fell back on Musso's *New Road*, which they elaborated into a programme adopted by the party at its Fifth Congress in 1954. Indonesia was defined as a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society. The national revolution of 1945-48 had been a bourgeois revolution of a new type, that is, one taking place in the era of the twilight of imperialism and the growing world ascendancy of the socialist camp, when it was now possible for pre-capitalist and semi-capitalist countries to bypass the capitalist phase and proceed via a stage of national democracy to socialism. The necessary ingredients for this transition were a strongly-organized and politically conscious working-class firmly united with an aroused peasantry and drawing together under its leadership a broad alliance of anti-imperialist and anti-feudal forces for the realization of democratic changes; chief among them radical agrarian reform, national development based on the primacy of the state sector, repulsion of imperialist control and influence, and democratic rights for the people. However, the programme declared, the national revolution had failed to achieve its objectives, owing to the treachery of the compradore bourgeoisie in conceding too much to the Dutch, and

deficiencies of the Communist Party itself, principally in failing to draw the peasantry into the revolutionary movement. The PKI, therefore, must take up these tasks anew. As imperialism and feudal remnants were still the main enemies, it was possible for the communists, relying first and foremost upon the organized strength of the workers and peasants, to create a broad alliance with the urban petty-bourgeoisie (including the intelligentsia) and the national bourgeoisie, under the hegemony of the working-class, since all these classes had a common interest in national development free from imperialist and feudal obstructions. The national bourgeoisie, by its nature, was a vacillating and unreliable ally, but with firm working-class leadership it could be kept on the revolutionary rails and its tendencies to compromise and betray the revolution thwarted. The communists must pursue a patient, flexible and protracted strategy toward these ends, taking advantage of any and every opportunity to advance its programme.⁶

It would take too long to examine the many ambiguities and deficiencies in the programme, reflecting as it did the schematic abstractions about pre-capitalist societies typical of international communist formulae, and the inadequate grasp which the PKI leaders as yet had upon their social reality. Despite its official status in the PKI during the next fourteen years, the programme was to undergo extensive modification in practice under the pressure of actual political needs as the leaders saw them. Its most crucial weakness—the failure to advance any plausible strategy by which working-class hegemony was to be achieved over social strata already entrenched in political power without their forcible overthrow—very soon became a practical problem for the party, its response to which initiated a process of dilution of the revolutionary perspective that was to have decisive significance. The programme had assumed the party's ability to rally other parties and social groups to its banner of national democracy, but the organizational weakness of the communists, contrasted with the strong parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forces already in existence, soon persuaded the PKI leaders that this prospect was at best a long-term one, which must be preceded by a diligent effort to enlarge the ranks of the party and its associated mass organizations. The leaders were greatly impressed by the value of numbers, no doubt reasoning that in a peaceful parliamentary strategy this was the most effective means of making their weight count in the political process, and also seeing in mass support strong elements of protection and bluff in a climate where the mystique of the *rakyat* or people was constantly appealed to.

The PKI's expansion campaign met with outstanding success, party membership rising to 100,000 in May 1952, 165,000 by the time of the Fifth Congress in March 1954, and over one million by the end of

1955. Inevitably, recruiting standards were loose in the extreme. The initial drive was directed towards the towns, and in particular the members of PKI trade union affiliates, and confirmed the existence of considerable dissatisfaction among the urban strata with the fruits of independence. The energy, radical tone and oppositional character of the PKI made a strong appeal to all those who felt left out of the benefits largely accruing to the intimates of the governing parties, and their disappointed hopes of immediate material betterment, benign government, and the continuance of that spirit of social solidarity and shared sacrifice associated with the years of independence, led them to seek the new meaning and purpose provided by the ideological certainties and organizational cohesiveness of the communists.

Another development of great moment, this time in the parliamentary sphere, further enhanced the PKI's prospects and induced a still more radical revision of its approach to the united national front. Since 1949, governmental power had been shared by two constellations clustered around the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI) and the Masjumi. Both parties had certain characteristics in common—leadership strongly larded with Dutch-educated intellectuals and officials of patrician background, strongly Clitist attitudes towards the masses of the people, and tendencies towards cliquism and patronage politics. Beyond these, however, their outlooks were widely divergent and inherently antagonistic. The PNI had as its muscle the *prijaji*, the bureaucratized gentry of Central and East Java, where the party's strength was concentrated. The *prijaji*, whose ways of life and thought stemmed from the values enshrined by the inland kingdoms of pre-colonial Java, had been consolidated in their prerogatives of authority by incorporation into the Dutch administration, and the PNI accordingly was entrenched among the civil bureaucracy inherited by the new republic. With the aid of this bureaucratic lever, the PNI reached out through traditional channels to tap the support of the *abangan*, the majority of Javanese proper whose nominal adherence to Islam but lightly concealed a deep-rooted aversion to the lifeways of more orthodox Moslems; the *abangan* had evolved a syncretic religious outlook blending Islamic, Hindu and animistic strains and representing the "little tradition" in the distinctive culture of the great Hinduised kingdoms of fact and legend, Madjapahit and Mataram. Deference to authority being, as we have already stated, a cardinal feature of this value system, the *abangan* were by conditioning and shared attitudes the clientele of the *prijaji*. In terms of practical policy, the PNI was oriented towards a statist society, defence of the interests of the importing region of Java, an assertive nationalism, and a permissive official attitude towards religion.

The Masjumi, on the other hand, was the political vehicle of

modernist Indonesian Islam, militant in the faith and intolerant of variants. Islam had found its earliest and most convinced adherents among the trading elements in Indonesian society, and the Masjumi was inclined towards the entrepreneurial sector of society, the more "progressive" and well-to-do peasants and landowners, the reforming religious teachers and indeed all those to whom their religion represented a challenge to the social inertia sanctified by the values of the bureaucratic strata. The Masjumi attracted the allegiance of the more reformist-minded *santri*, the orthodox Islamic element in Javanese society which together with the *abangan* form the two great competing streams or aliran in this community.⁷ But Masjumi's greatest strength lay in the Outer Islands (that is, all the islands outside Java), where Islam's conquests had been more decisive. In terms of practical policy, Masjumi stood for liberal economic policies, the defence of the exporting regions outside Java, a pro-Western and anti-communist bias, and the establishment of an Islamic state.⁸

Coincident with the revival of the PKI, the strains within the parliamentary coalition began to reach breaking point, and the PNI and Masjumi each began to cast around for additional allies to enable it to oust its rival. The eye of the PNI fell upon the PKI, which had already given signs both of its willingness to support the PNI in isolating the most strongly anti-communist parties and its desire to be considered as a responsible and patriotic national party. An alliance was gradually formed over the years 1952 to 1954, giving the PNI its required parliamentary majority and the PKI the protection it needed to pursue its expansion at the grass-roots level. The lines of a broad united national front began to crystallize; it was assimilated by the PKI into the framework of its programme by dubbing the PNI the "national bourgeoisie" and the Masjumi and its allies the "compradore bourgeoisie".

However, the form in which the united front was emerging was significantly different from that envisaged in the party programme. In place of PKI hegemony over a broad anti-imperialist, anti-feudal movement, the communists now accepted the role of junior partner in a coalition dominated by the "bourgeois" PNI. To achieve their programmatic aim, they would somehow have to reverse these roles without sundering the alliance. In point of fact, although the PKI in time was to outdistance the PNI in numbers and mass support, the shape of future political developments was to prevent the party from ever fully escaping from its subordinate and dependent relationship with the power-holders. Viewed in a traditional frame, the PKI was being inducted, by the *prijaji*, to some extent at least into the vertical aliran pattern of socio-cultural conflict in Java, a process aided by its espousal of a peaceful path to socialism, its playing down of class issues, and the

application of its policies and tactics in such a way as to attract a following in all layers of society. Symptomatic of this process was the gradual displacement, between 1955 and 1959, of the party's emphasis on radical agrarian reform, in recognition of the harm which a class campaign in the countryside would bring to its political alliance and its "mass party" building."

The association with the PNI brought tangible benefits for the PKI, helping it to overcome the legacy of Madiun and to gain wider acceptance as a party devoted to the national interest and the popular welfare. At the same time, its agitation and propaganda were still sufficiently radical and critical of government failings to maintain a momentum of growth. Relations with the PNI continued to improve as the government repudiated the restrictive terms imposed by the Dutch on the republic and launched into a vigorous international campaign to establish Indonesia's prestige abroad as a leader of the uncommitted nations and a militant opponent of colonialism and war. As Indonesia's relations with the West noticeably cooled, so did those between the government, on the one hand, and the communist states and the PKI, on the other, grow warmer.

The first big harvest of PKI policies was reaped at the first national elections in late 1955. The elections were approached enthusiastically by the populace, being regarded as a ritual cleansing of the body politic of all the ills that had accumulated since independence, burying the great expectations of the revolutionary years under a morass of party strife and self-seeking, corruption and stalemate. That they failed to produce these results was one of the major factors contributing to the subsequent fall of constitutional democracy. In another respect, too, the elections were to have far-reaching consequences. For the first time, political campaigning was carried in a massive way to the countryside, involving the peasants in the rancours of the political élites, hardening communal divisions by reinforcing them with political identifications, and in turn projecting primordial issues back on to the national political scene. The fragile web of national unity sagged under the shock.

The PKI surprised and alarmed its opponents and allies alike by its strong showing in the elections, in which it chalked up 6,176,914 votes or 16.4 per cent of the total (as against 22.3 per cent for the PNI, 20.9 per cent for the Masjumi and 18.4 per cent for the Nahdatul Ulama) and won 39 parliamentary seats in a house of 257. It was immediately apparent from the figures that the Moslem and non-Moslem votes (to put the matter in greatly simplified form) of the major parties were almost equal, a sharp reminder of the deep cleavage in the country. What was equally apparent was that both the PNI and the PKI were "Javanese" parties, the latter obtaining no less than

88 per cent of its votes on this island.¹⁰ Two years later, at local elections, the PKI's Java vote rose by 35 per cent, and it also registered substantial increases on its small 1955 tally in those Outer Islands where polling was conducted. The party had clearly gained from its carefully cultivated image of respectability and from its electoral alliance with the PNI. In addition, its freedom from the taint of parliamentary self-seeking attaching to the parties that had been in government, the superiority of its campaigning and organization, and its championing of the economic plight of estate labourers, poor townfolk and small and landless peasants, were factors contributing to its success. But analysis of the returns showed unmistakably that PKI votes were concentrated within the *abangan* electorate of Central and East Java, and that it had made little inroad on the *santri* following of the Masjumi or the NU. Since both the PNI and the PKI were competing for the *abangan* vote, the latter's gains in 1957 were largely at the expense of its senior partner and provoked bitter recriminations which threatened to put an end to the alliance and drive the PKI once more into dangerous isolation. The communists responded to the threat with caution and appeasement, and before long the conflict was superseded by one of greater proportions.

The neglect or repudiation by the governing PNI coalition of the values and interests espoused by the political "outs", and in particular the feeling in the Outer Islands that their needs were receiving scant consideration from a Java-dominated administration, fed the accumulated resentments stirred up by the elections. At the same time, the continued decline in parliamentary performance prompted mounting cries for decisive action to "put the revolution back on the rails". Anti-parliamentism found an especially strong echo in the army officer corps, whose senior ranks had always considered themselves one of the principal custodians of the revolutionary bequests, with a civic as well as a military mission to perform. Not for the first time, army disaffection found expression in conspiracies and power plays which only internal disunity prevented from having more drastic results.

Out of the ferment and intrigue there emerged one authoritative voice expressing what many felt and proposing lines of solution. The President, Sukarno, long frustrated by the restrictions of his constitutional role and consumed by his vision of an Indonesia united in pursuit of national greatness, stepped from the sidelines to the centre of the stage in late 1956 with proposals for "burying the parties" and the discredited "50-per-cent-plus-one democracy". He was well-fitted for his solidarity-building role. Widely revered as the father of independence, an orator of consummate skill, it was he more than any other who had articulated the utopian goals of the revolution—a just and prosperous society founded on traditional methods of consultation

and consensus, uniting the major ideological streams in the country, and devoted to the welfare of the *marhaen*, the "little man" who to Sukarno typified the ethos of the people. These populist concepts¹¹ gained added power through Sukarno's ability to express them simultaneously in two "languages"—a modern political idiom of diverse ideological origins, appealing to the semi-sophisticated urban audience; and an imagery taken from the *wajang* plays, the repository of Javanese wisdom, of potent appeal to the more traditionally-minded and in particular the rural *abangan*.¹²

Sukarno's self-proclaimed "revolutionary romanticism", his studied contempt for the humdrum concerns of prosaic administration, and his constant reiteration that only a determined national will was necessary to overcome the country's problems and capture its destiny, struck responsive chords among a populace who longed for a straightforward panacea for its troubles. His ideas for rescuing the nation were never spelled out with great clarity, probably because they represented more an attitude than a programme, and also because, despite his resounding rhetoric, Sukarno was a cautious and conservative politician, adept at manipulating and reconciling factions and binding them to his purposes. In any case, the army leaders, his partners in the overthrow of the parliamentary system, were ready with a more defined structural framework, and the rest of the edifice of Guided Democracy was gradually devised over a period of years, with due accommodation of the pressures from various élite groups. The dismantling of the parliamentary system went ahead in an atmosphere of crisis created by the outbreak in early 1958 of full rebellion in the Outer Islands. The involvement of Masjumi and other opposition politicians in the rebellions simplified the problems of imposing the new conformity, depriving the compromised parties themselves of political leverage and ultimately legality, and, upon the suppression of the revolts, reluctantly reconciling the Outer Islands to the fact of Java's economic and political domination.

The interment of the parliamentary system, just when it was beginning to pay them such dividends, posed an agonising dilemma for the communists. They could hardly welcome a situation in which the army, alongside the President, would become the arbiter of politics and watchdog over party activity. On the other hand, a combination of the army's physical power (well demonstrated in the campaign against the rebels) and the President's popularity seemed to them too powerful to oppose, especially at a time when a large part of the country was controlled either by the fiercely anti-communist insurgents or equally anti-pathetic regional army commanders wielding wide powers under martial law decrees. The party following had been reared on a moderate political diet, and was thoroughly unprepared for a life-and-death

struggle of such unequal proportions, at least in the short term. As the harassed PKI leaders saw it, the choice lay between "Guided Democracy or military fascist dictatorship", and in this fix the lesser evil had to be embraced, not just grudgingly but with a great show of joy and enthusiasm, if the party was to obtain recognition and security under the new dispensation. Hence the PKI came out as the most vociferous and fervent supporter of the President's plans, while endeavouring to obtain their implementation in terms which would preserve its utmost freedom of action.

There was one strong card in the PKI pack. Sukarno had become disillusioned with the PNI for its resistance to his concepts and control, and its failure to capture the masses. He had no desire to become a prisoner of the generals, with whom he had long been in conflict, and his distrust of them grew in proportion as their power was augmented by their victories over the rebels, their acquisition of new military hardware, and their assumption of extensive administrative and economic powers under the state of emergency. (Military officers had also assumed control over Dutch enterprises acquired in December 1957, and later nationalized, following a flare-up in the West Irian sovereignty dispute.) Lacking a political machine of his own, Sukarno had been attracted by the dynamism and massed detachments of the PKI, and its endorsement of his own militant anti-imperialist postures persuaded him that it could serve as an instrument for counter-balancing the army's pressures upon him. For its part, the PKI saw the obvious advantages to be gained from presidential protection—in keeping the army at bay, consummating the defeat of its worst political enemies, and holding the door open for its insatiable drive for popular support and for entry into the government. It joined with other parties in persuading the president to retain the party system (in somewhat simplified and emasculated form), and to hold general elections within the near future. (The promised elections were in fact repeatedly postponed, a contrivance now being repeated under General Suharto's régime). In return, the PKI gave Sukarno its wholehearted support, especially in his foreign policies, which coincided with the communists' belief that the more closely Indonesia drew to the communist bloc the greater were its chances of elbowing room for itself in the state machine. The new situation was one demanding great tactical skill on the part of the PKI leaders: to stay close to the President and, while according primacy to his ideological commands, to mobilize behind an interpretation of them that would enhance its own position; to keep the army from its throat while maintaining a tempo of activity on behalf of its following; and to gain greater leverage at the top without uniting the established power-holders against it. In the ensuing years, they were to acquire considerable expertise in tightrope walking.

The period 1959–61 was the most difficult in the PKI's adjustment to the new power structure. It was obliged to test by action the limits of its permitted freedom under conditions of declining material welfare and maximum army control. After a series of skirmishes, the army in July 1960 came down hard on the party following a trenchant criticism by it of the government, and it finally fell to Sukarno to ease the burden thrust upon it. The PKI leaders drew a number of lessons from this close call: they must abjure the class struggle (at least in its provocative form of urban agitation), avoid general attacks on the government which could lead to isolation, make maximum use of Sukarno's formulations and of non-communist fronts as a cover for its own demands and pressures, and pursue towards the armed forces a devious and patient policy of penetration and division. Above all else, however, the communists began to appreciate the possibilities of using Sukarno's nationalist, anti-imperialist crusades as a dynamic of growth. To the President, the advancement of Indonesia's real or imagined national interests was only part of his attraction to a vainglorious foreign policy. He was fascinated by the pageantry, the revolutionary rhetoric and the grandeur accompanying bold gestures on the international stage. Last but not least, he was not ignorant of the salutary effect of a constant crisis atmosphere in international affairs in dampening down internal dissensions and diverting attention from domestic failings. The "uninterrupted revolution", as he called his crusade, formed a heady recipe for social cohesion, on which the tenuous unity of Guided Democracy, and the primacy of his own role in it, to a considerable extent depended. By its very nature it required a continually escalating tempo to keep the centrifugal forces in play, lest the constituent elements fly apart. The pseudo-revolutionism of his symbols and "confrontations" in fact masked thoroughgoing social conservatism and prodigious economic mismanagement, and for a long time managed to contain their political effects, where a concerted attack on the failing economy would have opened up dangerous social fissures and alienated crucial power groups.

For its part, the PKI, restrained in its oppositional activity, badly needed an alternative vehicle for mass agitation if it was to escape the withering process afflicting the other political parties in the unpropitious authoritarian atmosphere of Guided Democracy. Sukarno could call the anti-imperialist tune, but the PKI was in the best position to assemble and parade the band. The campaign to rid West Irian of the Dutch and established Indonesian sovereignty over it, which reached its peak in 1961–62, established the virtues of radical nationalism as an alternative dynamic, enabling the party to recover a good deal of the Plan and self-confidence drained from it between 1959 and 1961; it also served to enhance the prestige of the party, expanding its circle of allies and impressing upon the political public its organizational

capacities. It could press with greater weight its claim for a share in governmental power under Sukarno's Nasakom formula.¹³ One negative result of the West Irian campaign was a strengthening of the army's weaponry by massive deliveries of Soviet equipment, but this was probably more than outweighed in the eyes of the PKI leaders by the graduated withdrawal of martial law powers and action taken by Sukarno to neutralize some of the most outspokenly anti-communist generals.

With the successful conclusion of the West Irian campaign, it appeared for a time that pressure upon Sukarno from his advisers would lead to a belated concentration upon economic problems, in the form of an American-prompted stabilization scheme. The PKI leaders were quick to scent the danger of a swing to the right in the government, accompanied by the imposition of still heavier economic burdens on the mass of the people. Their case was that imperialist-dictated financial schemes never solved basic problems, and only resulted in political subordination on the part of the recipients of "aid". The ills of the Indonesian economy, they asserted, would only be overcome by the formation of a Nasakom government, to which the people would rally and so create a government-mass force capable of purging the productive forces of corrupt, profiteering and inept officials and initiating a planned attack on the key economic tasks. The stabilization scheme, inaugurated in May 1963, brought such steep cost-of-living rises in its train that the PKI found its campaign being joined on all sides; before long the proponents of stability were drowned in the storm of a new "confrontation", this time against the newly-formed federation of Malaysia. Once more the nationalist caravan began to roll, this time on an accelerating slope. The communists threw themselves into the struggle with furious abandon, clearly establishing their lead in the patriotic van by a series of demonstrations and raids on embassies, campaigns for volunteer militia battalions, takeovers of foreign properties, production drives etc. United States' support for the new federation gave the party a long-awaited opportunity to bring home to Indonesians the menace of this "Enemy Number One" and its accomplices in the country; American interests began to come more and more into the PKI's line of fire, beginning with a campaign to ban U.S. films and going on to rampages against libraries, peace corps teams, "decadent" music and dances, and American-owned properties.

The PKI was careful to minimize the military side of the anti-Malaysia campaign. The last thing it wanted was to bring glory to the army, still less a revival of the martial law powers. It sought and, by virtue of Indonesia's logistics weakness if nothing else, secured a low-level military effort overshadowed by a highpowered drive to arouse the nation's economic, political and spiritual resources of struggle, in

which sphere it could and did shine, while its opponents and even its powerful friends faced criticism for their wealth and self-aggrandisement.

The PKI's Malaysia effort took on a new theoretical dimension in the context of the Sino-Soviet dispute. The Indonesian communists' domestic policies, we have suggested, followed very closely the Soviet doctrine of "national democratic revolution", with a local application which if anything veered further to the "right". In the fifties this had involved no obvious conflict with Chinese communist theories, since for most of that period the Chinese subdued their advocacy of armed revolution in favour of efforts in competition with the Russians to woo the neutralist states. But the emergence into the open of the bitter differences between the two communist giants threw ideological issues of great moment into the ring. The PKI at first adopted an attitude of studied neutrality towards the disputants, placing its major emphasis on the right of individual communist parties to decide freely their own affairs without interference, a position of vital importance to it in its relations with other Indonesian political tendencies. Gradually, however, the appeal of Chinese international theories as a justification of its own radical nationalism, and a complement to its domestic class collaboration, combined with Soviet heavy-handedness to steer it decisively into the Chinese camp. Selectively adopting those aspects of CPC doctrines which confirmed its own policies, the PKI enthusiastically endorsed the centrality of the contradiction between imperialism and the states of Africa, Asia and Latin America, the notion of the villages of the world surrounding the metropolitan cities, and the inevitability of wars of liberation. Together with Sukarno, who also was drawn both to Chinese international theories and to the value of a political alliance with China, the PKI leaders enhanced their own role in the anti-imperialist struggle by asserting that the main centre of world contradictions lay in Southeast Asia, where the lifeline of imperialism would be cut, and that it was Indonesia's role to wield the biggest knife.¹⁴

Under the intoxicating influence of the anti-Malaysia struggle, the PKI now reached the summit of its popularity and vitality. From its official positions in the panoply of Guided Democracy institutions, the party created an impression of irresistibility in its surge towards making itself indispensable to the régime. Every effort of its military and civilian opponents to stem its advance by creating rival organizations or casting suspicions on its loyalty foundered on the twin reefs of the party's polemical and organizational skills and the President's partiality. Signs of hubris among the leadership began to appear, expressed most noticeably in a variety of complacent voluntarist slogans, such as the bizarre declamation that "the heart is stronger than the stomach", used to

dismiss claims that the Mayalia confrontation was causing too great hardship to the masses. But still its target of entry into the Cabinet eluded it. Nor could its successes in having its enemies purged from official positions conceal the element of formalism in these "retoolings". The scope of Sukarno's authoritarianism was wide, but its weight was generally light. His own reluctance to appear as a tyrant, combined with the strong social ties linking those in power with those outside the charmed circle, created the strange situation in which men officially branded "outlaws" continued to wield considerable influence as advisers of military leaders, high officials and even ministers. Trying to theorise the content of this intriguing political system, Aidit produced a confused and confusing variant of a CPC thesis: the Indonesian state, he declared, was a state with both a pro-people's aspect and an anti-people's aspect; "today the popular aspect has become the main aspect, meaning that it guides the course of the political development in the state power. . . . However, (the anti-people's aspect) is still the dominant aspect . . . but in any case the state in the Republic of Indonesia as a whole is now led by the forces which represent the interests of the people. . . . State power is still dominated by those forces which defend imperialist and feudal interests." It was the task of the communists to develop the pro-people's aspect and weaken the anti-people's aspect by "revolution from above and below."¹⁵

The singular relation of the PKI to the structure of Guided Democracy led some academic writers to conclude that the communists had been "domesticated" or emasculated by Sukarno, becoming devoid of the capacity for decisive independent action and therefore converted into a pliant instrument of his will.¹⁶ Advanced prior to the "great leap forward" in PKI political influence after mid-1963, the argument was highly plausible. Even after that date it could still be contended that the party's gains were more apparent than real since, despite the 2½ million party members and the 16 million or more members of mass organizations in 1964, it was as far as ever from obtaining purchase on the power structure, as dependent as ever upon its "bourgeois" patrons for protection from the impregnable army. More difficult to accommodate in the theory, however, are the developments which were taking place in the countryside and which also reached their crescendo in the years 1963-65.

From 1959 onwards, the PKI had begun to revive its "anti-feudal" thesis and to expand its work among-the peasantry in earnest. Of greater moment, ostensibly at least, these activities were now aimed at the utilization and stimulation of class interests in the rural areas, paying special attention to the needs and demands of the poor and landless peasants.¹⁷ At first cautious and mild in its approach, the communist penetration of the villages could in its early stages be inter-

preted as but another step in enlarging its huge mass base, involving no break with overall political strategy. Gradually, however, the work began to take on a more militant character, fastening on the grievances of the poor and attacking the village exploiters—the so-called "seven village devils". Attention was given to recruiting and promoting cadres from the poorer peasantry, freeing the party's rural organization from the domination of richer elements attracted by its past policies. For the first time the party was stepping hesitantly but decisively outside *aliran* bounds, and, despite the lipservice paid to united front considerations, leaving little doubt that this was an independent endeavour in which the PKI was determined for once to play a hegemonic role. In retrospect, it appears more than likely that the party leaders, aware how much their future rested upon the uncertain longevity and vagaries of one man, had resolved not to pin all their faith on winning power by acclamation, but to construct piece by piece a firm stronghold in the villages from which they could at least strengthen their hand at the centre.

In 1959 and 1960, the government had been prevailed upon to enact two moderate measures of land reform, one providing for the redistribution by purchase of land over certain sizes (graduated according to the mode of its utilization), and the other guaranteeing to the sharecropper a minimum of 50 per cent of his produce. Initially the laws had little impact, owing on the one hand to resistance by those who stood to lose by them, and on the other to what the PKI attributed to a lack of interest on the part of the peasants themselves. PKI agrarian work was still on an empirical basis, and it was therefore in no position to analyse the structure of landholdings and village relationships in order to find the best means of tackling the problem of land reform. (The party undertook no detailed research of this kind until 1964; by this time the land reform campaign was already in full swing and the research, confined to Java, was clearly designed to provide retrospective validation of its policies). By 1963, however, the concentration on the peasantry was beginning to pay dividends: party organization was tighter and more class-conscious, considerable progress had been registered in winning over the small peasantry, who had been prepared by small actions and persistent propaganda to assert their rights under the land laws, and sharp economic decline was deflating the cushion of "shared poverty" which shored up traditional village relationships. Late in the year, a campaign of unilateral peasant actions to enforce the land reforms was under way in Java, eventually spreading to Bali, parts of Sumatra, and to a lesser extent the other islands.

The Djakarta élite groups watched the growth and unaccustomed aggressiveness of PKI activity in the countryside with mounting alarm,

and not even Sukarno's public support for the land reform could still the resentment triggered by a development which threatened to upset the delicate balance of political power. To these primary concerns was added the bitter opposition of officials, politicians and army officers who, under the stress of inflation, had invested newly-acquired riches in productive land. The real storm, however, burst in the localities themselves, where latent class and communal antagonisms overspilt the dikes in a rash of violent clashes, particularly widespread in East Java. Local branches of Nahdatul Ulama and its youth groups, where the influence of landlords and rich peasants was strong, figured prominently in the anti-PKI reaction, which was given overtones of a religious crusade by the denunciations of Islamic teachers. But the trouble was not confined to Moslem circles. In Bali and Central Java, where it represented the wealthier village strata, the PNI was drawn into the conflict, and army and civilian officials, elated by the anti-communist upsurge, added their support. Although evidence is scanty, it is probable that divisions along class lines appeared in some local organizations of the PKI and its Peasants' League also, while continued communal influences within the party are alleged to have distorted the application of land reform in some places.¹⁸

The PKI manoeuvred valiantly to stem the tide of reaction, blaming underground Masjumi activists for the troubles, appealing to the requirements of the law and the production potential of the reforms, calling on its basic organizations to appease the party's Nasakom partners, and trying to bring its movement under stricter control and give it greater selectivity. But the *djin* of *aliran* conflict was out of the bottle, and was not to be coaxed back so easily. It is likely that the PKI leaders had underestimated the boomerang effect of their campaign, and were not altogether unhappy when the President called a conference in December 1964 to try to take the heat out of the battle. The compromise agreed upon at the conference, that land reform should proceed but in a spirit of consultation and consensus, was interpreted by all sides as an endorsement of their positions but it is probable that from this time onwards the PKI was on the defensive in the villages, and that most of its militant statements thereafter were primarily designed to preserve the morale of its peasant activists in the face of the unassuaged Moslem upsurge. More emphasis in 1965 was given to welfare and cultural campaigns among the peasants, and the land reform drive lost a good deal of its sting.

The experiment in rural class agitation had been a mixed blessing for the PKI. A considerable number of peasants had entered on the road to class activity and class consciousness, which in the long run could prove of decisive importance for the party when a more propitious time came to resume its offensive in the countryside. But in the

short term (the only term to be granted to the Aidit leadership) the adverse consequences outweighed the gains—an intense anti-communist movement, with religious and communal overtones, had been aroused, and significant sections of the power groups had had their suspicions confirmed that the PKI had not been tamed.

The tensions produced by the land reform campaign added fuel to other fires of conflict. The economic crisis was growing steadily worse, breeding in its wake discontent, cynicism about the pretensions of the régime, and a variety of disreputable forms of self-salvation. Many years of economic neglect, high government spending on defence and prestige projects, and bureaucratic speculation on a massive scale had brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy, dissipated the extensive foreign aid it had received from both sides of the bi-polar fence, and set in train a disastrous snowballing inflation. The state enterprises and estates, the only modern sectors of the economy, had become a huge liability as a result of mismanagement and embezzlement; in many cases, the firms were treated by their managers more or less as feudal fiefs and the government, unable or unwilling to impose reforms, had begun to sell them off to the highest bidder. Private industry, starved of spare parts and raw materials, was working at 20 per cent or less of capacity. Trade and commerce, like private industry largely in the hands of Indonesian Chinese, had shrivelled under the impact of discriminatory treatment and official exactions, while the sealing of the Singapore outlet in the contest of confrontation had dealt a pulverizing blow to the extensive barter trade with the entrepot port. Transport and communications were in a shambles, rolling stock paralyzed for want of repairs, roads falling apart and trucks and buses littering the countryside for lack of spare parts. The grossly inflated and poorly paid civil service justified its existence and supplemented its meagre salary scales by imposing a mass regulatory interferences upon economic activity, which only a "fixer" could untangle. In some regions army commanders took matters under their control, supervizing trading activity without reference to Djakarta and using charges on the proceeds to supplement the incomes of their troops and, needless to say, themselves. Production of rice and other staples, while tending to rise slightly, fell a long way short of keeping up with the rate of population growth, compelling the government to spend precious foreign exchange on rice imports now averaging 1 million tons per year; even then, acute shortages were developing in some areas, with a consequent rise in the incidence of food deficiency diseases.

While a handful of officials, army officers and politicians made fortunes from the opportunities offered by their positions, and displayed conspicuously the luxuries acquired through illegal traffic in such foreign-derived status symbols as Mercedes Benz limousines, the great

mass of the population experienced every year yet greater difficulty in sustaining life. Government servants were compelled to supplement their incomes by impositions, small scale trading, or taking a second and even a third job, so that the writer in November 1964 had the distinction of meeting a pedicab driver who by day passed as a university professor! Workers in steady employment were relatively fortunate, but for the estimated 15 million urban unemployed each day was a desperate round of scavenging, begging and odd-jobbing. Judging by the steady exodus from the villages to the towns, at least in Java, conditions were hardly better there, where chronic indebtedness ensured that even a slight decline in the crop yield spelt ruin.

Inflation was completely out of hand by late 1964. At that time the official rate of exchange was 516 *rupiah* to the U.S. dollar, but a rate of 4000 to the dollar could be obtained with the utmost ease on any street corner; three months later, with the official rate unchanged, the black market price was 12,000 to the dollar. But the President blithely refused to acknowledge the crisis, let alone risk a political showdown by attempting to apply corrective measures. The PKI, as helpless as the rest of the President's entourage to do more than complain and propose, veered from one tack to another, at one moment declaring that sacrifice was an ennobling aspect of the anti-imperialist struggle, at another calling for the execution of profiteers and speculators, and at yet another coming close to admitting that confrontation was an important factor in the decline. The one constant motif in its propaganda was that the corner would only be turned after a genuinely Nasakom government had been formed and the party's expertise and mass backing fully utilized. The PKI leaders still ruled out working-class industrial action in defence of its falling living standards, since any conflict with the state enterprise managements was bound to bring army intervention, and the problem in the private sector was not so much rates of payment as how to keep the workforce gainfully occupied. There is no evidence of rebellion against this restraint on the part of the PKI's trade union following; the political solutions advanced by the party seemed to convince a working-class still untutored in self-activity, repeatedly reminded of its responsibilities for the fate of the entire nation, and feather-bedded against the worst effects of the inflation by various subsidies in kind. The thrust of the communists, emboldened by a pronounced shift to the left by Sukarno and his Foreign Minister, Subandrio, was aimed at those of its political opponents who could be credibly loaded with the blame for the economic collapse. In this tactic, they were fortified by a widespread popular belief that, not Sukarno, but evil advisers in his midst, were bringing ruin upon the country. Cabinet ministers, officials and provincial functionaries were assaulted by the din of PKI-directed pres-

asures for their dismissal, which, while without substantial effects, deepened the insecurity and resentment of those who felt themselves to be slipping from presidential favour. The targets of the "retooling" campaigns were persistently linked with the kabir or bureaucratic capitalist, the (mainly army or ex-army) heads of state enterprises whose enrichment and mismanagement were notorious and who were accused by the PKI of being the dynasty sustaining all "counter-revolutionary" and anti-communist activity.

The solidarity of the power-holders began to crumble in the face of the radical swing to the left in government policies, and the impetus given to the new orientation by PKI mass agitation. A major source of division was the governmental alliance with China, consummated early in 1965. Welcome to some as a potent accession of strength to Indonesia and an embodiment of its anti-imperialist outlook, it was as strongly opposed by others as a violation of the country's former non-aligned policies and an affront to anti-Chinese prejudices. To many among the élite, China was a poor country which could not satisfy Indonesia's need for foreign aid, and so far as the army leaders in particular were concerned, could not replace American technical facilities or Soviet hardware. A new political polarization could be discerned by early 1965, demarcating those who were reluctantly coming to accept that riding at the head of the Presidentially-sponsored PKI bandwagon was the surest way to survive and prosper, from those who were determined to overturn the waggon. Among the former, the most influential was the ambitious Subandrio, whose intrigues against his rivals for the post-Sukarno succession began to influence the course of the purges. It is a matter of speculation to what degree PKI purposes were manipulated in this way for clique and personal ends, but its dependent relation upon those in power certainly provided opportunities for such manifestations. A last concerted attempt by military and civilian groups to throw up an organizational bulwark against the PKI—the shrewdly-styled Body for Promoting Sukarnoism—was answered with a Presidential ban and punitive action against its sponsors. The way seemed open for the "left" to speed up the downfall of its opponents. Amidst a crescendo of purge calls whipped up the PKI against politicians, administrators, academics and Moslem student organizations, the axe fell first upon the Murba Party (a small but influential party originally founded by the "Trotskyist" Tan Malaka) and then upon the anti-Nasakom wings of the PNI and NU.

By 1965, then, crisis and uncertainty pervaded the social and political scene, and prophecies of impending disaster gained wide circulation, ranging from "realistic" forecasts of a military coup to visionary forebodings of cosmic tragedy. A recession of solidarity feeling, caused by a stalemate in the Malaysia confrontation, threw the rising political

hysteria into stronger relief. Behind the obligatory platitudes of official ideology, the anti-communist current gained ground within an officialdom unreconciled to the sharing or surrender of its prerogatives and only too sensitive to charges of incapacity and self-interest. The PKI leaders, while confidently proclaiming in April 1965 the existence of a "revolutionary situation", were probably as nervous and edgy as anyone, though it is doubtful whether they fully comprehended the extent of the ranks closing against them. Some of the PKI leaders had softened in their views of the "national bourgeoisie", themselves the victims of a subtle "bourgeoisification" process brought on by the comforts attaching to their prestigious posts in the Guided Democracy complex. Others drifted along in a state of intoxication with the heady results of their activities. The leadership as a whole prepared for an assault on the enemy's most powerful bastion—the army's near-monopoly of the instruments of violence. Sukarno and the PKI had succeeded in utilizing inter-service rivalries to strengthen anti-army feeling in the air force, marines and police, but the much greater size and weaponry at the command of the generals presented them with their most difficult problem. To change the balance, a number of measures designed to weaken the hold of the generals were canvassed, including the reorganization of commands, the "Nasakomisation" of the services, and the creation of a fifth force of armed workers and peasants. These proposals, together with the fear that Sukarno was about to endorse the PKI as the legitimate carrier of his concepts and heir to his revolutionary bequests, must have brought home to the army general staff and its civilian allies, swelled in numbers by the purges of the past year, that their gun-power was in imminent danger of being pre-empted by a political *fait accompli*.

The dam burst on the night of September 30, 1965, when a group of army and air force conspirators captured and executed members of the army general staff and seized vital installations in the capital. There is no space here to examine the tangled skein of this highly controversial episode. It appears most likely that, when reports of the President's failing health gained currency in August, all sides looked to their defences in meeting an emergency unprovided for in the institutional fabric of Guided Democracy. One plot at least was not filed away when Sukarno's health recovered. The role of the PKI in the unsuccessful Untung coup is hotly disputed, but while the available evidence shows no credible participation by the majority of leaders, let alone the party organization as a whole, it is probable that Aidit, and some others acting on his instructions, were involved to some as yet undetermined extent.¹⁸ Whatever the reasoning behind Aidit's actions, he clearly underestimated the ability of the **generals** to identify the PKI with the coup, and the ferocity with which vengeance would

be exacted upon the entire organization and its sympathizers. Seemingly helpless in the face of the post-coup reprisals, the PKI leadership once more waited, this time in vain, for the outflanked President to save them from the deluge. When the army gave the signal which released a veritable orgy of violence, the PKI went under with incredible ease.

As with so much else surrounding these events, there is a good deal of argument and uncertainty about the mechanism and extent of the massacres which spread across Indonesia from mid-October 1965. There was no immediate, spontaneous explosion of violence; indeed, the first outbursts seem to have occurred only after the army had despatched reliable units to areas where the feelings of the populace, played upon by dramatizations of the murders of the fallen generals and a campaign to pin responsibility on the PKI, could be given free rein. Once the cue had been taken, however, and it became obvious to local enemies of the communists that they could expect both impunity and protection for their bloodlust, the rash began to spread rapidly and to take on the characteristics of a religious or communal pogrom in many places. In some areas, the army itself played the major direct role in the executions. In others, it provided the organization but allowed the actual killing to those whose long-nourished feelings of grievance or insecurity found an outlet against the indicated scapegoat.

No single motif can be traced. In West Java, where Moslem extremism had sustained a long rebellion against the government, the army kept the violence under strict control, possibly fearing that once released it would burst the permitted bounds. In East Java, where the carnage was frightful, Islamic religious motivation was at least an important reinforcing element. In Bali again, where the death ratio was highest but Islam has only a very small foothold, communal tensions of another kind have been advanced in explanation of the fury of the carnage.

Estimates of the total death toll vary between 100,000 and one million, the latter figure having been arrived at by a university investigation team acting under instructions from the Indonesian army. The most widely accepted estimate is half a million.

Indicative of the sense of political helplessness among the communists, possibly underlaid by a traditionalist fatalism, were reports of villagers being summoned to appear before the local military commandant and, knowing full well the fate awaiting them, meekly attending ceremonies climaxed by their decapitation with the *kris* of their neighbours.

Only a few captured communist leaders were brought to trial, and all were sentenced to death for alleged complicity in the coup. A number, including Aidit, Njoto and Lukman, were shot out of hand by

the army, thus ensuring that the official interpretation of events would go unchallenged by those best fitted to offer alternative explanations. The remainder of the party leadership form part of the inmates of the prisons and detention camps, whose total numbers are put between 80,000 and 300,000. Malnutrition and disease have been taking a heavy toll among these prisoners, many of them now incarcerated for over three years without trial. More ominously, it is reliably reported that the large-scale killing of prisoners was resumed in the latter half of 1968.¹⁹

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With the advantage of hindsight, it is tempting to conclude that the PKI leaders simply deluded themselves, mistaking the trappings of power for its reality and counting upon the peaceful surrender of a ruling clique whose exercise of their prerogatives was legitimized by a long historically-determined complex of traditional relationships, as well as by the new web of political structures evolved since independence. But such a neat conclusion does less than justice to the complexities of the process we have surveyed.

Having satisfied themselves of their inability to establish an armed revolutionary base by drawing a sufficiently large sector of the people outside the bounds of the post-independence political framework, the Indonesian communist leaders were obliged to come to terms both with it and the traditional social order, and to seek the transformation of these structures from within. In the event, they were required to make heavy concessions in order to build and hold their huge mass following and establish the secure political alliances their tactics demanded. In a sense they were trapped by their very success—as time went on, and their support and influence grew steadily, it became more and more difficult to envisage sloughing off all the impedimenta of achievement without the issue being forced upon them. Their often highly contrived political concepts and manoeuvres, their political opportunism and populist traits, reflected the basic weakness of their position—the absence of a class-conscious base of sufficient dimensions to enable them to escape dependence upon the *aliran* structure and the power-holding élite. Naturally, their ideology tended to make a virtue of necessity, especially as they climbed the ladder of respectability, and could only partially transcend the values of those with whom they were so closely connected.

So long as the communists operated within the dominant value systems, their energy and radicalism gained them wide acceptance and considerable influence. Once they attempted to move outside these systems, either by attacking the power-holders as an entity or by attempting to develop peasant class-consciousness, the vulnerability of

their position was exposed. Hence they sought both to conform and to transform, placing their reliance on two gradual processes of *change*—on the one hand, a progressive differentiation among the nationalist élite which would eventually leave them united with its most leftward-leaning elements, and on the other hand, a patient injection of class-consciousness into the small peasantry so as to erect a base strong enough to guarantee their supremacy. But these twin operations required three conditions—unerring judgment by the PKI leaders, tight *control* over their movement, and the *paralysis* of their opponents. Despite the skill with which they pursued their objectives, it was asking a lot to expect all three conditions to be fulfilled over a protracted period, especially one characterized by political formalism and intensifying economic and political crisis. As we have seen, the years **1964-65** revealed a falling down on all counts, and the consequences were not long in making themselves felt.

Could it have been otherwise? It has been argued that, with all the vicissitudes they would have endured over a long period, the PKI leaders would still have done better to have taken the plunge into guerilla warfare in **1951**. Leaving aside all the considerations which made the decision to disavow armed struggle virtually irresistible, and treating this purely as an abstract *proposition*, we can still arrive at no firm answer. There is no inherent invincibility in the armed road, as the Malayan and Philippine experiences demonstrate. It may turn out to be the only road for the Indonesian social revolution, but this is not to say that the Aidit period was the appropriate time to launch it. We can say with greater confidence that it is hard to envisage any later date at which the PKI could have turned aside from its peaceful path without incurring much the same consequences which overtook it in **1965**. The PKI leaders have also been condemned for their failure to create a reserve underground organization able to take over in the event of persecution. There almost certainly was a clandestine PKI apparatus, but it probably amounted to little more than a formality, bearing in mind the cramping atmosphere of state ideology, the inability to give even a small cadre force disciplined training in guerilla techniques, and a cultural impediment to conspiratorial secrecy which appears to afflict all but a small handful of politically-minded Indonesians.

Paradoxically, in the tragic aftermath of its demise, the first seeds of a more stable rebirth of the PKI may have been planted. In the course of its last years, divisions of a class nature did begin to manifest themselves in the countryside alongside and within the communal pattern. In the cities, too, the use of their positions by the politicians and bureaucrats to amass great wealth and take over the modern sector of the economy has given them more of the features of a capitalist

class, standing over and above the proletarianized masses of the urban population. The policies of the Suharto régime since 1965, resting heavily upon liberal economic doctrines and foreign capital penetration, and giving a long rein to exploiting elements in town and village, will strengthen these tendencies. But the communist recovery, if it does occur, will not be other than slow and painful. Army power rests heavily upon the land. The Moslem upsurge is not yet spent, and will almost certainly bring in its wake an *abangan* reaction, perpetuating communal strife and blurring class factors. Attempts by surviving PKI leaders to establish rural bases have so far been quickly and ruthlessly crushed by the military. At the moment, Indonesian communism has reached its lowest nadir.

NOTES

1. For a recent account of the intense political persecution in Indonesia, see *The Economist*, 30 November, 1968, p. 28.
2. The early history of the PKI is splendidly recounted in Ruth T. McVey's *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, (Ithaca, New York, 1967).
3. There is no adequate treatment of the PKI in the 1945-48 period, nor of the Madiun episode, but interpretations of the events can be found in George McT. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, New York, 1952); Ruth T. McVey, *The Soviet View of the Indonesian Revolution* (Ithaca, New York, 1957) and Donald Hindley, *The Communist Party of Indonesia, 1951-1963* (Berkeley, California, 1964).
4. D. N. Aidit, *Problems of the Indonesian Revolution* (Demos, 1963), pp. 82-83.
5. For a succinct description of Indonesian peasant society, and further references on the subject, see Herbert Feith, "Indonesia", in George McT. Kahin (Ed.), *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia*, 2nd Ed. (Ithaca, New York, 1963), pp. 189-193.
6. The 1954 programme is outlined at length in Aidit, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-279.
7. For discussions of the Javanese *aliran* and their political manifestations, see Clifford Geertz, *The Social Context of Economic Change: An Indonesian Case Study* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1956); and Geertz, "The Javanese Village", in G. William Skinner (Ed.), *Local, Ethnic and National Loyalties in Village Indonesia* (New Haven, Conn., 1959). See also W. F. Wertheim, "From Aliran Towards Class Struggle in the Countryside of Java", a paper delivered to the International Conference on Asian History, Kuala Lumpur, August 1968.
8. The Masjuma at this time also contained the more traditionalist and socially conservative Javanese Islamic groups, which in 1952 broke away and reformed the *Nahdatul Ulama* (NU), with its stronghold in East Java.
9. The progressive subordination of the peasant question is indicated in the following Aidit references: *op. cit.* pp. 252-53 (1954) and pp. 47-48 (1957); and Supp. to *Review of Indonesia*, Vol. VI, No. 6-7 (June-July, 1959), p. 12.
10. Hindley, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-29.

11. "Populism" is used here in the sense defined by Peter Worsley in *The Third World*, esp. at pp. 118-175.
12. For the central role played by the *wayang* in the dissemination of Javanese socio-cultural values, see Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe, Illinois, 1960); and Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese", *Indonesia*, Vol. I (Ithaca, New York, 1966).
13. NASAKOM, an acronym representing the three ideological streams of nationalism, religion and communism, was Sukarno's formula for national unity. The best general account of the Guided Democracy period, including the extensive symbolization of politics, is by Herbert Feith, "Dynamics of Guided Democracy", in Ruth T. McVey (Ed.), *Indonesia* (New Haven, Conn., 1963).
14. This theme was noted by the author from the Indonesian press during a visit to Indonesia in November 1964.
15. D. N. Aidit, *The Indonesian Revolution and the Immediate Tasks of the Communist Party of Indonesia*, (Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1964), pp. 42-43, 85-86.
16. See Donald Hindley, "President Sukarno and the Communists: The Politics of Domestication", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. LVI, No. 4 (December, 1962), pp. 915-26.
17. Supp. to *Review of Indonesia*, cited above.
18. Aspects of the land reform struggle, and its possible effects on subsequent political events, are dealt with in W. F. Wertheim, "Indonesia Before and After the Untung Coup", *Pacific Affairs*. Vol. XXXIX, No. 1 and 2, (Spring and Summer, 1966).
19. It is notable that both the main emigre factions of the PKI concede such involvement. See *Information Bulletin*, Documents of the Communist and Workers' Parties, Articles and Speeches, 18 (106) (Prague, 1967), pp. 40-65; and *Indonesian Tribune*, No. 1 (Tirana, November, 1966).

