

# Indonesia's PKI: Background Report

A Roundup by W.R.

Before the so-called "coup" of October 30, 1965 most U.S. radicals knew nothing about the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and its struggle, although it was the largest Communist party in countries still under capitalist control. A combination of anti-communism and racism kept Americans ignorant.

Since October 30, 1965 there has been scant improvement. The Moscow-liners are afraid to report about Indonesian developments because it was the policy they currently advocate that was responsible for the murder of over 500,000 Indonesian communists and radicals by the Suharto-Nasution fascists. (And it was Soviet guns that the fascists used.)

We on our part have had to overcome this legacy of ignorance. In the past we have published a number of important items from the PKI. In this issue we publish a very important document, the recently adopted new program.

In order to make Indonesian events clearer for W.R. readers this background information has been prepared.

1. The population of Indonesia is about 105 million, with about 70 million living in Java alone. The PKI had its traditional strength in Central and East Java, and North Sumatra. Starting with about 10,000 members in 1951, the PKI numbered 1 million members within 10 years. By 1965, it had grown to a membership of about 3 million with 20 million supporters in mass organizations it led. These groups included the trade union organization SOBSI with about 3.5 million members, the Indonesian Peasant Front (BTI) with 9 million members, 1.5 million members in the youth organization Pemuda Rakjat and an equal number in the women's organization Gerwani.

2. The general line of the PKI during the period of D.N. Aidit's leadership (1951-1965) is summed up by this quote from the PKI program as revised by the Sixth Congress in 1959: "the working class can fulfill its historical mission in a democratic state where parliament and other institutions are reformed, given a really democratic content and constituted according to the wishes of the people." The peaceful road or the parliamentary road "is a possibility, one that we must persistently strive to transform into a reality." The Seventh Congress (1962) further emphasized this point.

3. Given this general approach the party leaders considered numbers all-important. Numbers equalled strength. As party chief Aidit

said in Peking on September 4, 1963: "The more powerful the party is, the more capable it will be in establishing the national united front... If our party is small other classes will not pay any attention to us..."

The ideology of the party members was significant to the leadership only insofar as it affected discipline. (Aidit said in a report to the Central Committee plenum on May 11, 1965: "The strengthening of discipline is primarily a problem of further strengthening proletarian ideology.") This ideology was to be induced in party members primarily through training sessions, and not through class struggles (which the general line barred). But the training was in nationalism not in Marxism. Except at the higher party school run by the Central Committee itself the emphasis of all study in the PKI was the study of Indonesian nationalism and not Marxism or problems of class struggle. Aidit asserted in an article published in 1959 in the British Communist Party's organ Marxism Today that "a person who has read only Marxist books cannot possibly be called a Marxist theoretician." An Indonesian could not "become a conscious revolutionary in present-day conditions without studying and understanding the writings of the leading personalities of the Indonesian Revolution." He cited two books by Sukarno as examples.

In addition to this, the fact was that the bulk of the rank and file did not receive any formal instruction, and had a very limited understanding of Marxism-Leninism.

4. The PKI leaders were guided by their concept of the united front in developing the activities of the mass organizations they led. The PKI cultivated a nationalist image. It worked closely with the Nationalist Party, (PNI) the most important party of the national bourgeoisie which was led by Sukarno, and also with a left wing offshoot of PNI named Partindo. They placed particular emphasis on developing good relations with Sukarno himself, because they regarded him as having extraordinary influence over the Indonesian people and especially over the Javanese. The PKI supported Sukarno's policies, propagandized his slogans and backed his rallies. As Sukarno and Aidit became closer the PKI's prestige and influence increased and so did its membership. And so did its patronage-dispensing power. Aidit and his two chief deputies, Lukman and Njoto were given Ministerial posts, although kept from any real power.

As a result of this the state administration (the PKI was, naturally, very strong on provincial and local levels) became the leading political force for the PKI. Of course this made it very difficult to develop any kind of militant class struggle. Militancy could only be developed in national struggle, as in the Confrontation against Malaysia. The PKI became a leading exponent of patriotism.

The effect of this policy on the trade unions is one U.S. workers will readily recognize. Although SOBSI had the support of about 60 percent of Indonesia's workers it was unwilling to antagonize either the government or the employers. Its chairman, Njono, declared in 1956 that its unions "always assist the national industrialists to overcome the difficulties facing them": they tended to make "just and reasonable" demands and seek a peaceful solution of disputes. SOBSI confined itself to "patriotic" actions against foreign interests. The average member was seldom moved to militancy, and had little reason to support PKI should PKI be forced out of the government.

5. Late in 1964 the PKI leaders decided that Sukarno (who was very ill) might die within a short time. They acted to convince Sukarno to neutralize the predominantly anti-communist army leadership, they tried to instill militancy in their own followers by organizing the peasants to seize land and the workers to seize foreign-owned factories; and they tried to train and arm members of the youth organization. Sukarno was uncooperative, but younger officers in the armed forces (an estimated 30 percent of the junior officers were PKI sympathizers) provided training programs and some weapons.

The army command organized itself against the PKI threat and reportedly established a "Council of Generals," which planned an anti-communist coup for the second week in October, 1965. Allegedly this coup plan was discovered by the head of the Presidential bodyguard, Lt.-Col. Untung, a PKI sympathizer. He organized a counter-coup and planned to strike first. According to this account, he consulted with Aidit after developing his plan. Aidit supposedly advised him not to strike first, but to wait in readiness, prepared to mount a crushing counter-blow after the generals struck so that public opinion would be with him. Untung reportedly rejected the advice, and on October 1, 1965 took over Djakarta radio and announced a "Revolutionary Council" was assuming power to forestall a coup. The six leading generals were arrested and immediately executed. The PKI wavered but soon came down in support of the "Revolutionary Council." The army command recovered, however, and led by Defense Minister Nasution and Gen. Suharto, Commander of the Strategic Reserve, crushed Untung's forces.

This was the famous "PKI coup." Immediately afterward a mass slaughter of communists (and anyone denounced as a communist by his enemies) started. The entire Political Bureau was reported murdered within the following year except for Jusif Adjitorop who was out of the country. It is reported, however, that a number of Central Committee members survived, and in East and Central Java the regional committees are still virtually intact.

In the period after Nasution-Suharto triumphed, (October 1965) but before they consolidated their dictatorship (March 1966) the PKI leaders (the Aidit leadership was still alive and at large) apparently decided their best hope lay with Sukarno and his ability to maneuver his old political coalition into power again. Subandrio, the foreign minister, was especially active in trying to organize a "Sukarno front." This made him the particular enemy of the military fascists, who used student and religious groups to whip up public opinion. By March, Suharto had made firm his grip on the armed forces and the period of maneuvering came to an end. The PKI was outlawed the day after Suharto had himself appointed President. Sukarno was placed under house arrest. A week later Subandrio and 14 other senior political figures from PNI and Partindo were arrested.

6. Throughout 1966 the PKI attempted to rally its remnants and figure out a new course. At this time the party was led by Sudisman, formerly fifth ranking leader in the Aidit leadership. Sudisman organized a new Central Committee and other leadership organs. In September 1966 the reorganized Political Bureau published an extensive self-criticism (See WR Vol. 1 No. 1) which repudiated the old program as revisionist and stated the path forward was to overthrow the fascist dictatorship through armed struggle. Sudisman was arrested in December 1966. The leadership was reportedly taken over by Oloan Hutapea.

7. In 1967 the PKI began recovering and started to undertake more and more activity. The center of communist activity was in Central and East Java. Part members were urged to abandon the cities and develop bases in rural areas. Self-criticism was extensively developed. The old idea of a mass party was rejected, and the concept of an activist group of quality able to mobilize the peasants to undertake armed struggle replaced it. In November 1967 a completely new political program was adopted. South Blitar in East Java became the concentration area. A Peoples Liberation Army (TPR) was founded, village guerrilla units set up and guerrilla detachments to operate in larger areas also established in many areas of West Central and East Java and Sumatra. A number of military schools were organized to give

instruction in attack tactics, the use of various types of arms and in tunnel warfare as developed by the Chinese and Vietnamese. The military writings of Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao were adopted as texts. Numerous tunnels were dug, some of which were discovered by fascist forces well stocked with ammunition, food, medicine, hospital beds and even new typewriters. Local military operations were begun. A number of mutinies were organized within the fascist army.

On June 8, 1968 the fascist forces mounted Operation Trisula, which was designed to destroy the PKI organization in South Blitar. The army command claimed on August 10 to have captured or killed 850 "PKI activists on various committee levels from Central to Section Committees" (Angkaton Bersendjata, army newspaper, August 10, 1968). The fascists claimed this included Oloan Hutapea and possibly 75 percent of his Central Committee. (But at the end of August, Antara news agency reported that the Greater Djakarta military commander stated a new Central Committee had been established.) In addition to the 850 higher echelon leaders captured or killed, another 506 persons allegedly on "lower echelon levels" were arrested. Also more than 400 officers and other ranks in fascist regiments stationed in East and Central Java were arrested. Despite these setbacks the armed struggle continues to develop.

8. Since 1962, when the PKI began opposing Soviet revisionism (while, as we have seen, maintaining a domestic revisionist program) the Soviet authorities have tried to destroy PKI and replace it with a leadership or a party dominated by them. Before, during and after the mass slaughter of communists by Nasution-Suharto the Soviets were the main source of supply for the fascist army. The Soviets even today provide this army with all its equipment and spare parts, ammunition, fuel and instructors and advisors although this army has no one to fight but communist revolutionaries. All

of this is given on credit.

In addition, when the fascists demanded in 1966 that the Indonesian students studying in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria who supported the PKI return home (to be murdered), the governments of these countries expelled the students. (With great difficulty most were able to escape to either Albania or China.)

The Soviets do their best, as "communists," to undermine the armed struggle. Making use of the revisionist who was formerly the Indonesian ambassador to Ceylon and who today lives in Moscow, Hanafiah, the Soviets beam extensive Indonesian propaganda over Radio Moscow. They also cause articles to be printed in Moscow-line publications in other countries. With great cynicism the Moscow puppets call themselves the "Marxist-Leninist group of the PKI." The Soviet propaganda states that China forced the PKI to make an adventurist coup and to continue to carry out an adventurist policy; that "the broad masses are not prepared for armed action; that the party should "strengthen the proletarian elements" in its ranks (its tendency being to "ascribe too much significance to the revolutionary spirit of the peasantry"); that the "revolution should be nursed carefully until it is ready to give birth"; that the task is to "forge a united left-wing front" capable of carrying on "a consistent struggle against pro-imperialist and anti-democratic reaction" (Article in the Prague journal Information Bulletin, October 1967, parts of which were rebroadcast over Radio Moscow in Indonesian). Completely falsifying the facts, Radio Moscow on July 12, 1968 claimed that armed struggle was "the same political line which brought the party to a heavy defeat."

Finally, the Soviet government has tried to cover its support of the Indonesian fascists by widely publicizing (from June 1968) its appeal that Suharto not murder five prisoners who had been members of the Aidit leadership.

## New Program of Indonesia's PKI

Introduction by Central Committee

From OISRAA Bulletin, \* Dec. 1968

The Self-Criticism of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Indonesia (P.K.I.) has most strongly criticized the opportunist and revisionist mistake made by the Party leadership during the period between 1951 and 1965. The essence of the mistake committed by the Party during this

\*OISRAA-Indonesian Organization for Afro-Asian People's Solidarity

period was the failure to carry out the principle of Marxism-Leninism on revolution, namely the seizure of political power by armed force.

The opportunist and revisionist mistake was reflected in the Party program that had been ratified by the Fifth Party Congress (1954) and, still more clearly, after the program had been revised by the Sixth Party Congress (1959) and the Seventh Party Congress (1962).