

DIASPORA AND DIPLOMACY: CHINA, INDONESIA AND THE COLD WAR,

1945-1967

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Taomo Zhou

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DIASPORA AND DIPLOMACY: CHINA, INDONESIA AND THE COLD WAR,

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Taomo Zhou, Ph. D.

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Grounded in multilingual governmental and private sources, this dissertation redefines twentieth-century China beyond the territorial boundary of the Chinese nation-state. Even though China and Indonesia are not neighboring countries with geographic borderlines, the existence of approximately 2.5 million ethnic Chinese in Indonesia gave rise to an invisible and porous social frontier that could be transgressed more easily and oftentimes accidentally, especially during a period when the Chinese Communist Party's regime legitimacy was challenged by its Nationalist rival. At the level of the Chinese state's relationship to the overseas Chinese, Chinese political elites used transnational migrant networks and the global circulation of media to rally popular support and affirm political legitimacy. At the level of the overseas Chinese's relationship to the Chinese state, the ethnic Chinese were active participants in civic campaigns launched by the pro-Chinese Communist and pro-Chinese Nationalist factions in Indonesia. Both sides claimed that all ethnic Chinese owed their loyalty to China's sole legitimate center—Beijing according to the Communists or Taipei according to the Nationalists. At the level of state-to-state diplomacy, this continuous politicization of the ethnic Chinese shook the foundation of the Sino-Indonesian strategic partnership. The ethnic Chinese's daily social and political practices, as well as their ideological beliefs and emotional ties, limited high politics between the Chinese and Indonesian Governments.

By connecting transformations in state-diaspora, diaspora-state and state-to-state relations, and by combining theoretical insights from the China-centered approach, overseas Chinese studies, transnationalism and diplomatic history, my dissertation builds a new conceptual

framework for a transnational China that is vigorous and dynamic not only within its geographic boundaries but also beyond. Ultimately, I argue that the global emergence and embrace of the People's Republic was not one historical moment within China but a set of temporally and geographically expansive processes that involved the Chinese Communist Party's adaptation to a new relationship with the overseas Chinese, a new type of political struggle against its old rival the Nationalists, and a new international geopolitical environment.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Taomo Zhou specializes in modern Chinese as well as modern Southeast Asian history. She has long-term interests in the nexus of international relations, migration, and political movements. Taomo's enthusiasm for these topics stems from her experiences growing up in a migrant family in Shenzhen, a Special Economic Zone at the frontier of China's economic reforms and opening. Before coming to Cornell, she spent her intellectually formative years studying China's relations with the outside world at Peking University, Waseda University and the London School of Economics and Political Science, and became dedicated to studying China from transnational perspectives. Taomo is a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese, is fluent in English, and has advanced mastery of *bahasa Indonesia* and intermediate mastery of Japanese.

Taomo has published two peer-reviewed journal articles on the interactions between China and Indonesia during the Cold War period: "Ambivalent Alliance: Chinese Policy towards Indonesia, 1960-1965," *The China Quarterly*, volume 221 (March 2015), pp. 208-228, and "China and the Thirtieth of September Movement," *Indonesia* 98 (October 2014), pp. 29-58. In addition to conducting her own research, Taomo served as the co-chair of the Graduate Student Steering Committee of the East Asia Program at Cornell. Outside of her academic work, Taomo devoted her time to community building as a live-in advisor at Hasbrouck Apartments, an on-campus, family-oriented housing complex for graduate students.

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## A NOTE ON ROMANIZATION

The Chinese names and terms used in this dissertation are generally given in the pinyin system of Romanization, but there are some exceptions. Most of these exceptions are alternative Romanizations of historical figures' names that have become widely used or are difficult to recognize in pinyin, such as Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek. In addition, Romanization other than pinyin has been used for place names of cities such as Hong Kong and Taipei as well as for Chinese Indonesian names such as Siauw Giok Tjhan as well as terms such as "Pao An Tui." To avoid confusion, a table at the end of the dissertation lists each personal name and term first in pinyin, then in other Romanizations, and finally in Chinese characters.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ANRI	<i>Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia</i> (Indonesian National Archives)
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CFMA	Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives
G30S	<i>Gerakan 30 September</i> (Thirtieth of September Movement)
PKI	<i>Partai Komunis Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Communist Party)
PRC	People's Republic of China
RI	<i>Republik Indonesia</i> (The Republic of Indonesia)
ROC	Republic of China

## INTRODUCTION

On a day in June 1955 at the Tanjung Priok harbor in Jakarta, 24-year-old Liang Yingming (梁英明) was about to leave his de facto motherland where he was born and raised for his de jure motherland which he had been dreaming about since childhood. Before departure, in the company of his father, he verified by signature on the back of his Indonesian birth certificate that he was never going to come back to this country. He then boarded the ship, where there were over a thousand young people like him—Indonesian-born Chinese high school graduates who planned to return to the People's Republic of China (the PRC) for higher education. The scene was merry, cheerful and even celebratory. No tears shed, but only smiling faces; no sad goodbyes, but only happy exclamations of “see you in Beijing!” Those on board threw colorful long narrow paper strips towards the shore, which would be caught by friends and family standing there. These colorful paper strips, with one end held by those on board and the other held by those on the shore, filled up the empty space between the ship and shore. They tightened as the ship started to move and finally broke.<sup>1</sup>

Fifty-seven years later, on a mid-summer afternoon in Beijing, Liang, a professor emeritus of International Studies of Peking University, recounted that scene to me with sparkling eyes. That life-defining moment was fresh in his memory as if it was just yesterday. In his days back in Indonesia, Liang was a star student at a Chinese-language high school sympathetic to the PRC, the Ba Cheng Middle School (*Sekolah Pah Tsung*, 哩城中学) of Jakarta. He was recruited by his high school teachers to the underground organizations of the Chinese Communist Party (the CCP). After his graduation in 1950, he followed the CCP's instruction and became a high school teacher himself in order to assist the Party's campaign against the pro-Chinese Nationalist elements in Indonesia in the realms of education and propaganda. The lessons he gave on Marxist interpretation of modern Chinese history were remembered by his students for a long time. One month before his departure, he worked with the Chinese Embassy in

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<sup>1</sup> Liang Yingming, interview by author, Beijing, July 21, 2013.

Indonesia to protect Premier Zhou Enlai against potential sabotage by the Chinese Nationalists at the Afro-Asian conference in Bandung. After his return to China, part of what he had been dreaming was realized: he received a college education and later had a successful academic career. Yet the history and his personal life took unexpected turns: in China, there were political campaigns, a great famine and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution; in Indonesia, there were the Thirtieth of September Movement (*Gerakan 30 September*, hereafter referred as “the G30S”), the following regime change and the resulting violence and institutionalized discrimination against the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. His family’s original plan of joining him in Beijing fell apart as the economic conditions worsened in China and the relations between the two governments deteriorated after the G30S. The day at Tanjung Priok harbor turned out to be Liang’s final farewell to his father, who passed away due to a heart attack in 1963.

What made China the center for Liang and his fellow Indonesian-born Chinese in their political lives and the anchor of their spiritual worlds at the time? If their hearts belonged to China, are their life experiences and the larger historical processes they witnessed part of Chinese history? If Chinese history transcended the country’s geographical domain, how significant was this history for China?

### **Three Kinds of Chinese History outside of China**

The end of World War II marked the beginning of another era of overall military conflicts in both China and Indonesia. In China, the wartime collaboration between the Nationalists and the Communists failed, leading to a full-blown civil war (1945-1949). In Indonesia, which used to be the most important colony for the Netherlands, the country resisted the Dutch attempt at re-colonization and thereby set off a full-fledged struggle for national independence. In 1949 Indonesia achieved its formal independence. In the same year, the Russian-backed Communists won Mainland China from the hands of the US-backed Nationalist Party. The Communists established the PRC with its capital in Beijing. The leader of the Nationalist Party at the time, Chiang Kai-shek, evacuated his government to Taiwan and made Taipei the “temporary capital” of the Republic of China (the ROC). The newly independent Republic of Indonesia

switched its diplomatic recognition from the Chinese Nationalist Government to the Chinese Communist Government in 1950.

From the standpoint of the Chinese diaspora in Indonesia, the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be summarized as follows: In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese residents in Indonesia numbered approximately two and a half million. During its rule, the Chinese Nationalist regime claimed all the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia as its lawful citizens. However, with the signing of the Sino-Indonesian Dual Nationality Treaty in 1955, Beijing no longer automatically recognized all persons with Chinese bloodlines as PRC citizens and encouraged the Chinese living in Indonesia to choose Indonesian citizenship. From 1959 to 1960, a large-scale crisis broke out when the Indonesian governmental decrees revoked the licenses of non-citizen Chinese to operate retail business in the countryside. In the face of this challenging situation, Beijing chose to send out a fleet to bring ethnic Chinese back to China. A small scale anti-Chinese riot took place in 1963. In the nationwide anti-Communist campaign initiated by Suharto after the G30S in 1965, a significant number of the ethnic Chinese population were either massacred, arrested and imprisoned, or directly pressured to leave the archipelago, even though some of this ethnic minority collaborated with the Indonesian Army.<sup>2</sup> In total, an estimated 200,000 Chinese responded to the above-mentioned campaigns by leaving Indonesia and returning to China.

Contextualized in chronologies from both the perspectives of the nation-state and the diaspora, Liang's story reveals that Chinese history happened outside of China in three spheres. At the level of the Chinese state's relationship to the overseas Chinese, Chinese political elites from both the Nationalist

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<sup>2</sup> Against the perception that the Chinese Indonesian were particularly targeted for violence, Robert Cribb and Charles A. Coppel argue that the Chinese were not killed on the same scale as the indigenous during 1965-1966. See Robert Cribb and Charles A. Coppel, "A Genocide That Never Was: Explaining the Myth of Anti-Chinese Massacres in Indonesia, 1965-66," *Journal of Genocide Research* 11, no. 4 (December 2009), 447-465. Cribb and Coppel's argument is confirmed by more recent research by Yen-ling Tsai and Douglas Kammen on the Chinese in Medan. See Yen-ling Tsai and Douglas Kammen, "Anti-communist Violence and the Ethnic Chinese in Medan, North Sumatra," in Douglas Kammen and Katherine McGregor eds., *Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia: 1965-1968* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2012), pp. 131-155.

Party and the Communist Party achieved considerable success in mobilizing the Chinese in Indonesia. The Chinese Nationalist Party used its well-established overseas organizations to exert transnational control and influence over the ethnic Chinese in Indonesian society. Meanwhile, by dispatching left-wing intellectuals, mostly undercover party members, from Mainland China to the Indonesian archipelago, the CCP demonstrated its effectiveness at penetrating local Chinese communities. To many young Chinese like Liang, intellectual engagements with these Chinese communists marked a moment of political awakening and their first systematic exposure to both classical and Chinese Marxist philosophy, which had a definitive impact on their future lives.

At the level of the overseas Chinese's relationship to the Chinese state, ethnic Chinese like Liang were active participants in civic campaigns launched by the pro-Chinese Communist and pro-Chinese Nationalist factions in Indonesia. Both sides claimed that all ethnic Chinese owed their loyalty to China's sole legitimate center—Beijing according to the Communists or Taipei according to the Nationalists. Throughout the 1950s, the politicized ethnic Chinese in Indonesia took part in the competition between the pro-Beijing and the pro-Taipei blocs, or between the Red and the Blue, in the realms of media, civic association and education.

At the level of the state-to-state relationship between the governments of China and Indonesia, the rise and fall of the Sino-Indonesian alliance formed the historical backdrop of Liang's personal narratives. The Bandung Conference of 1955, which Liang had first-hand experience with, offered the PRC an opportunity to initiate collaborations in the formerly colonized countries in Asia and Africa. From the late 1950s to early 1965, China and Indonesia became close diplomatic partners with shared aspirations to replace the bipolar world structure dominated by Moscow and Washington with a more equitable international order with autonomy for Third World countries. Moreover, the Communist Party of Indonesia (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or the PKI) sided with Beijing after the Sino-Soviet split.<sup>3</sup> But

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<sup>3</sup> The PKI was the third largest communist party in the world after the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

this remarkably cordial quasi-alliance ended abruptly in 1967, mainly due to the Suharto regime's accusation that China was involved in the G30S.<sup>4</sup> Liang's connections with his family members in Indonesia were cut off due to the suspension of diplomatic ties between Beijing and Jakarta.

Is there an analytical framework that would allow historians to integrate transformations in state-diaspora, diaspora-state and state-to-state relations into one coherent story? Four strands of existing scholarship—the China-centered approach, overseas Chinese studies, transnationalism, and diplomatic history—have potential analytical power that is worth considering for this purpose.

### **Four Analytical Lenses**

The term “China-centered” was coined by Paul Cohen in his 1984 critical appraisal of American writing on Chinese history.<sup>5</sup> Cohen was dissatisfied with the “implicitly condescending” means that many American historians use to analyze changes in Chinese history.<sup>6</sup> This type of work, in Cohen’s view, presents a version of Chinese history that remains static until the coming of the West. In contrast, Cohen argues that “China must be seen as a vigorous and dynamic society, alive with change of every sort.”<sup>7</sup> He asks historians to assign agency to Chinese actors. In the China-Indonesia context, the China-centered approach enables us to see the similarities between the patterns of domestic and transnational political mobilization in the context of both the Chinese Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the “Red versus Blue” struggle in the Chinese communities in Indonesia crosses the 1949 divide

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<sup>4</sup> In the context of Beijing-Jakarta relations in the early 1960s, “alliance” and “ally” are used as broadly-defined terms, referring to alignment or strategic cooperation rather than having the usual connotation of treaty-bound security commitments. As discussed in detail in the later part of this article, Indonesia was an important ally in this sense in Beijing’s anti-imperialist intermediate zone.

<sup>5</sup> Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984 and 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> See Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1962); Donald Gillin, “Peasant Nationalism” in the History of Chinese Communism,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2 (February 1964), pp. 269-289; Lloyd E. Eastman, “Facets of an Ambivalent Relationship,” in Akira Iriye ed., *The Chinese and the Japanese* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 275-303; Chalmers Johnson, “Peasant Nationalism Revisited,” *China Quarterly* 72 (December 1977), pp. 766-785.

between “Republican” and “PRC” history and draws our attention to historical continuities before and after the founding of the PRC—one of the thematic intellectual concerns of China-centered historians.

However, from the perspective of China-centered historians, Chinese history is irrevocably confined within China’s territorial borders. For decades, China-centered historians have rightly trimmed down to size the roles that Westerners played in the key events of domestic Chinese history. But at the same time, they have also marginalized overseas Chinese actors, especially in the debate on the Revolution of 1911. While the first generation of American scholarship focused on the role of Western-educated Sun Yat-sen and the Honolulu-based Revolutionary Alliance (同盟会 *Tongmenghui*), a later generation of China-centered scholarship as represented by Mary Wright, Chuzo Ichiko and Joseph Esherick shifted the focus back to the change of internal social dynamics in China.<sup>9</sup> The role of the overseas Chinese, while heavily emphasized by earlier historians, recedes into the shadows. Additionally, the existing China-centered literature on political mobilization does not include much discussion on how communal politics could obtain its own dynamics beyond the control of the state.

Scholars in the field of overseas Chinese studies have been protesting strongly against the China-centered approach. For example, on the 1911 Revolution, Singaporean historian Yan Qinghuang repeatedly accuses the China-centered historians of minimizing the role of the overseas Chinese. Yan contends instead that the Western-educated Sun was the undeniable leader and the Honolulu-based Revolutionary Alliance the mainstream organization of the 1911 Revolution. And he further argues that the overseas Chinese have “natural” patriotic feelings towards the “motherland,” and the overseas Chinese nationalism was an organic extension of Chinese nationalism at home.<sup>10</sup> Yan’s view is shared by Victor Purcell, who links the changing dynamics of the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia in the

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<sup>9</sup> Mary C. Wright, "Introduction," and Chuzo Ichiko, "The Role of the Gentry," in Wright, ed., *China in Revolution* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 1-63 and 297-317; Joseph W. Esherick, *Reform and Revolution in China: The 1911 Revolution in Hunan and Hubei* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> Yan Qinghuang, *The Overseas Chinese and the 1911 Revolution: with Special Reference to Singapore and Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1976).

1930s and 1940s to the mass campaign against Japanese aggression within China.<sup>11</sup>

These assertions by scholars in the field of overseas Chinese studies help us contextualize the direct organizational connections between China's political centers (Beijing or Taipei) and ethnic Chinese communities, as well as the transplantation of the ideological struggles from China to Chinese societies in Indonesia. However, in opposition to the contention of these scholars, the changing political landscape of the Chinese communities in Indonesia demonstrates that the national orientation of the ethnic Chinese was a product of the mobilization efforts by both the Nationalists and the Communists rather than an organic replica of domestic Chinese history.

In the past decade, the China-centered approach has been increasingly challenged by trends in historical scholarship towards transnationalism. From the perspective of the proponents of transnational history, the China-centered approach allows historians to focus excessively on the Chinese nation-state in isolation from the movements of people, ideas and commodities across national boundaries. This narrow view blinds historians to the significance of the networks, institutions and processes that constitute connections across different political entities.<sup>12</sup> Since the early 2000s, there has been a growing body of scholarship that transnationalizes what it means to be "Chinese." In Adam McKeown's study of Chinese migrant networks, he focuses on the connectedness of local institutions such as family, clan, native place and surname associations on a global scale.<sup>13</sup> In *Flexible Citizenship*, Aihwa Ong highlighted ethnic Chinese's strategic use of cultural and political identities in an age of late capitalism.<sup>14</sup> Most recently, an edited volume entitled *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* uses *Quotations from Chairman Mao* as

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<sup>11</sup> Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Modern Malaya* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 1960).

<sup>12</sup> C. A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyer, Wendy Kozol and Patricia See, "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (December 2006), pp. 1441-1464.

<sup>13</sup> Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

a fresh lens to re-examine the history of the twentieth-century China and the rest of the world.<sup>15</sup>

The transnational approach has the potential to facilitate analysis on human mobility and information fluidity between China and Indonesia during the Cold War. Liang's story reveals that the Red-versus-Blue rivalry carried over into Indonesia on a far wider scale than has previously been noted. As a result, throughout the 1950s and the early 1960s, many *totok* Chinese in Indonesia lived, breathed and reenacted an already concluded Chinese civil war. Their communal lives synchronized with the rhythm of politics centered in either Beijing or Taipei; their spiritual worlds pivoted on the fluctuating tides of campaigns in Mainland China or contentions and conflicts across the Taiwan Strait. Methodologically, the transnational approach empowers us to see that in this all-encompassing competition for influence and legitimacy, both Beijing and Taipei took advantage of the worldwide circulation of print media, school textbooks, movies, documentaries, music, and political calendars as well as the transnational networks of intellectuals, business and political elites, and military personnel.

However, transnationalism discourages engagement with the debates and issues in the field of modern Chinese political and social history. Transnational scholars would contest the basic idea of "Chinese history" given that their goal is to destabilize the nation-state as the primary framework for historical writing. From their standpoint, what happened within and beyond China are both parts of a worldwide phenomenon. The refusal of specialists in transnational studies to engage with nation-state-centered high politics limits its applicability to the China-Indonesia case. While the transnational approach helps us gain a better understanding of how the "Red-versus-Blue" struggle took place in light of cross-border exchanges, it cannot tell us why Beijing failed in its diplomatic relations with Jakarta after the pro-Beijing factions achieved overwhelming victory among the Chinese communities in Indonesia.

Alongside the growth of transnational scholarship, the field of international history with a focus on China is burgeoning. In the past decade, the opening of Chinese archives has made it possible for

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<sup>15</sup> Alexander C. Cook ed., *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

historians of Chinese foreign relations to better situate the PRC's experience in the expanding field of the Cold War international history.<sup>16</sup> Diplomatic historians of the PRC have made significant contributions to the field by offering an insider's view of the formulation of Beijing's foreign policy during the Cold War.<sup>17</sup> The history of Chinese foreign relations convincingly shows that Chinese history reaches far beyond China's territorial borders. The perspectives of diplomatic history are indispensable in reconstruction of the governmental relations between China and Indonesia. However, this growing body of scholarship is confined largely to the policymaking processes by elites in Beijing and to the structure of the highly centralized state under Mao Zedong.

Diplomatic history informs us of the strategic logic behind Chinese leaders' decision making in bilateral relations with Jakarta. China's leaders had considerable success at achieving their goals. During the Sino-Indonesian honeymoon period between 1960 and 1965, Beijing's alliance with Jakarta was one of the most important strategic partnerships of the PRC in the Afro-Asian world. From late 1964 to September 1965, Beijing used much of its political leverage to push for a scenario that suited its best interests in Indonesia—an adamant leftist government led by Sukarno and the PKI jointly, with the right-wing undermined or eliminated—by offering military aid and medical support to President Sukarno and the promise of nuclear-technology transfers. However, Beijing was not able to make an actual impact on political developments in Indonesia in 1965. Therefore, diplomatic history alone cannot help us comprehend why Sino-Indonesian diplomatic relations were suspended and the ethnic Chinese persecuted after the G30S even though China played no substantial role in the coup.

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<sup>16</sup> For methodology and status of the field of Cold War international history, see Odd Arne Westad, "The New International History of the Cold War: Three (Possible) Paradigms," *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2000), pp. 551-565; and Westad ed., *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> China's experience during the Cold War has become a burgeoning academic field in the past decade. For representative works, see Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Niu Jun, "1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China's Foreign Policy," *Cold War International History Project Working Paper*, No.48, 2005, available at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/NiuJunWP481.pdf>; Lorenz Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split, 1956-1966: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, *After Leaning to One Side: China and Its Allies in the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

## **Transnational China**

Each of these four bodies of scholarship can offer some valuable insights into the three-level interactions between China and Indonesia, but none of these methods alone has the explanatory power to help us comprehend the whole picture. By connecting state-diaspora, diaspora-state and state-to-state relations and by combining theoretical insights from the China-centered approach, overseas Chinese studies, transnationalism and diplomatic history, this project constructs a new narrative. Even though China and Indonesia are not neighboring countries with geographic borderlines, the existence of Chinese communities in Indonesia gave rise to an invisible and porous social frontier that could be transgressed more easily and oftentimes accidentally, especially during a period when the Chinese Communist Party's regime legitimacy was challenged by its Nationalist rival. The CCP's transnational political mobilization efforts in the pre-1949 period contributed to both its success in ultimately winning over the hearts and minds of the majority of *totok* Chinese in Indonesia by 1959 as well as its failure in constructing a strategic partnership with the Indonesian Government by 1965. Many ethnic Chinese experienced the establishment of the PRC as a moment of national pride and a promise of protection and elevation of social status.<sup>18</sup> The PRC's overseas campaigns against the ROC during the Cold War reinforced the longstanding sense of racial and cultural superiority harbored by a considerable number of ethnic Chinese, rendering them increasingly insensitive to the tensions and threats perceived by the *pribumi* population and the Indonesian Government.<sup>19</sup> This was accompanied by the Indonesian Government's perception of the Chinese minority as disloyal and destabilizing. This continuous politicization of the ethnic Chinese led to the deterioration of ethnic relations and shook the foundation of the Sino-Indonesian partnership.

By following the new narrative I propose, this dissertation demonstrates three major dynamics of

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<sup>18</sup> See for instance, Zhu Kaixun, "Yi xinan bianchui" [Remembering the southwestern frontiers], *Fujian Qiaobao*, April 6, 2007; Liang Yingming, "Yi Yajiada Shenghuobao" [Remembering the Sheng Huo Bao of Jakarta], Qian Ren and Liang Junxiang eds., *Sheng Huo Bao de huiyi* [Memories of Sheng Huo Bao] (Guangzhou: Shijie tushu chuban Guangdong youxian gongsi, 2013), pp. 55-56.

<sup>19</sup> *Pribumi* literally translates to “sons of the land” and refers to the population groups that are considered as natives of Indonesia. Indonesians of Chinese, Arab and Indian descent are excluded from the category of *pribumi*.

a transnational China. First, how Chinese political elites used transnational migrant networks and global circulation of media to rally popular support and affirm political legitimacy. Second, how the Chinese side of the Cold War politicized the territorially dispersed ethnic Chinese communities in a synchronized way. Third, how high politics could be influenced or even limited by the diaspora's daily social and political practices, as well as their ideological beliefs and emotional ties. Ultimately, this dissertation argues that the global emergence and embrace of the People's Republic was not one historical moment within China but a set of temporally and geographically expansive processes that involved the CCP's adaptation to a new relationship with the overseas Chinese, a new type of political struggle against its old rival the Nationalists, and a new international geopolitical environment.

In this study, I shift the focus from China-centered history to transnational China, an analytical framework that facilitates discussion of the power relations among units both below and beyond the nation-state: individuals, subnational civic associations as well as the government and transnational networks. By looking at the dual processes of the Chinese state's mobilization of overseas Chinese and ethnic Chinese's active engagement in subnational politics, I ascribe agency to both state and individual actors. This project thus situates state-society relations in modern Chinese history in a transnational context where diverse resources and public spaces were available for social forces to gain momentum and for individuals to gain autonomy and thereby demonstrates the possibility of redefining twentieth-century China beyond the territorial boundary of the Chinese nation-state.

### **Source Material and Outline of Subsequent Chapters**

My dissertation draws from multilingual governmental and private sources. An important part of the governmental documents presented here was obtained during a brief period of opportunity. In November 2008, the Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives declassified for the first time Chinese diplomatic documents

produced during the years between 1961 and 1965.<sup>20</sup> The collection is comprised of documents generated from different levels of the government, ranging from minutes of meetings between top-level Chinese leaders and foreign visitors to lower-level communications between Chinese embassies and consulates abroad and in Beijing. However, in summer 2013, the Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives re-classified the main body of its collection, a decision that restricted almost all of the documents used in this paper. Only a very small number of Chinese scholars have published works in Chinese based on these documents and nothing has been published in English.<sup>21</sup> Besides this body of fresh but currently inaccessible official records in Beijing, I also use governmental evidence from the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (*Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia* or ANRI) and *Academia Historica* of Taiwan. In addition to official sources, my dissertation is built upon oral history interviews with retired diplomats, former political prisoners, communist exiles, and migrants who returned from Indonesia half-a-century ago and are now scattered on “Overseas Chinese Farms” (华侨农场) in rural South China.<sup>22</sup>

My dissertation reconstructs the multi-level sociopolitical interactions between China and Indonesia based on these diverse sources. Chapters 1 and 2 look into state-society relations. Chapter 1 describes how the Chinese Nationalist Party spread its influence deep into the Chinese communities across the major islands of Indonesia. Chapter 2 shows how the Chinese Communist Party developed its underground offices, which were hidden behind the counters of pastry shops, Chinese medicine companies, soap factories, bookstores, and wineries in the archipelago. Chapters 3 and 4 transition to discussions on society-state relations. Chapter 3 traces the processes in which Taipei continued to

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<sup>20</sup> This is the second batch of materials declassified at the Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives. The first batch of declassified materials includes documents produced during the years of 1956-1960, which were made available to the general public in June 2006.

<sup>21</sup> See Zhou Taomo, “Huaqiao wenti de zhengzhi xuanwo” [The turbulences caused by the overseas Chinese issue], *Lengzhan guojishi yanjiu* [Cold War International Studies] 9 (Summer 2010), pp. 155-174; and Li Yiping and Zeng Yuleng, “1958-1965 nian Zhongduo dui Yinni de yuanzhu” [Chinese aid to Indonesia, 1958-1965], *Nanyang wenti yanjiu* [Research on Nanyang] 3 (2012), pp. 27-36.

<sup>22</sup> Overseas Chinese Farms were established as an institution to provide a means of living for the returned overseas Chinese, mainly from Malaya, India, Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia. The returned overseas Chinese were given land to build homes on and to grow tea, sugar cane, pepper and tropical fruits.

challenge Beijing over the legitimate representation of “China” in relation to both the Indonesian Government and the ethnic Chinese through informal channels. Chapter 4 examines how the ethnic Chinese became energetically involved in the competition between the pro-Chinese Communist and Nationalist factions in Indonesia in the three key areas commonly known as “the three treasures of the overseas Chinese society”—the Chinese-language newspapers, civic associations, and Chinese-language schools. Chapters 5 and 6 explore the relations between the Chinese and Indonesian Governments with the ethnic Chinese communities in the middle. Chapter 5 depicts how the Indonesian political elites observed, interpreted and responded to the politicization of the Chinese communities. The final chapter examines how the PRC adopted a moderate attitude towards the anti-Chinese movements in Indonesia and clarifies Beijing’s actual influence over the PKI and the turn of events in Indonesia in 1965. The epilogue situates the rupture of the Sino-Indonesia strategic partnership in the radicalization of Chinese foreign policy and rise of mass political movements in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution. Ultimately, my dissertation builds a new conceptual framework for a China that is vigorous and dynamic not only within its territorial boundaries but also beyond.

## CHAPTER 1

### **Night Ghosts at the Dawn of National Independence: The Chinese Nationalist Party and the Overseas Chinese in Indonesia, 1945-1949**

#### **Introduction**

In the darkness of night in late May 1948, a note was secretly attached to the door of Chung Hua Tsung Hui (中华总会) of Kedungbanteng in Central Java. It read:

Look out! Beware!

Hi Chinese brothers!

You are in Indonesia.

You will die and be buried in the soil of Indonesia.

You are living a rich and peaceful life because of help from the Indonesian people.

You manage to live because you obtain water, food and produce from Indonesia.

But what kind of contribution are you making to Indonesia?

Where is the proof that you want to unite with the Indonesian people?

I am warning you! Beware!!

Do not wait for social revolution!

Try to really understand the teachings of Dr. Sun Yat-sen!<sup>1</sup>

A few weeks later, a similar incident happened in East Java, where the number of crimes such as robbery and blackmail against the local Chinese community had been increasing. An Indonesian Police report concluded: "Because the safety of the Chinese is one of the responsibilities of the government, our government should issue laws and regulations to protect them. The government should take firm actions and pay special attention to the safety of all the Chinese...It is not just a matter of police control but also a

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<sup>1</sup> "Tekgram masalah Cina mengenai resolusi bi chung hwa chung hwee di Jambi; resolusi bangsa Thoa di Balige; seruan perkumpulan buruh Tionghoa di Aceh Timur untuk setia pada pemerintah Republik," May 28, 1948, Inventaris Arsip Kementerian Penerangan Republik Indonesia (RI), 1945-1949, no. 208, *Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI)*.

matter of the Indonesian Government's position on the ethnic Chinese.”<sup>2</sup>

The years between 1945 and 1949 marked a volatile period in both China and Indonesia. In China, a full-blown civil war broke out between the ruling Chinese Nationalist Party and the oppositional Chinese Communist Party; in Indonesia, the Indonesian Republican military forces (*Tentara Negara Indonesia* or the TNI) adamantly resisted the Netherlands' attempt at re-colonization, leading to a full-fledged struggle for national independence. During the Indonesian National Revolution (1945-1949), the ethnic relations between the Chinese and the *pribumi* deteriorated and the Chinese became a frequent target of violence. In June 1946, *pribumi* mobs looted the possessions of the Chinese residents in Tangerang, 25 kilometers west of Jakarta.<sup>3</sup> According to a Shanghai-based newspaper, *Qiaosheng Bao* (侨声报, The Voice of the Overseas Chinese), more than 13,000 Chinese fled from Tangerang in the aftermath of the riot. These refugees were “gravely concerned the tragedy that happened in Tangerang would repeat itself and extend to other regions.”<sup>4</sup> In January 1947, 250 ethnic Chinese died and more than 1,000 were injured during a four-day battle between the Dutch and the TNI in Palembang, South Sumatra.<sup>5</sup> The Chinese business quarter, together with 300 residential houses owned by the local Chinese and the building of the ROC consulate, were burned down.<sup>6</sup> In July 1947, in Boemajoe, West Java and in Tjilongok, Central Java, altogether over 300 Chinese were allegedly killed by the TNI by being stabbed with sharpened bamboo sticks, being burned, or being tied up with ropes and buried alive.<sup>7</sup> The head of

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<sup>2</sup> “Laporan dari Sekretariat Perdana Menteri bagian Kepolisian Jogja yang diterima dari Kementerian penerangan mengenai kiriman-kiriman surat dari ‘Hantu malam’ yang ditujukan pada segenap bangsa Tionghoa,” July 26, 1948, Inventaris Kabinet Perdana Menteri RI Jogyakarta 1949-1950, no 145, *ANRI*.

<sup>3</sup> “Interview with Dr. Tan Eng Oen, accountant,” November 1, 1950, box 2, series II, G. William Skinner Papers, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

<sup>4</sup> “The overseas Chinese in Java are still waiting for rescue,” July 25, 1946, *Qiaosheng Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0581.

<sup>5</sup> “Ministry of Defense Naskah Pidato Kementrian Pertahanan tanggal August 5, 1947 tentang kedudukan golongan asing terdiri dari Tionghoa, Arab dan India yang bukan WNI di Indonesia,” August 5, 1947, Inventaris Arsip Kementrian Pertahanan RI, no. 65, *ANRI*.

<sup>6</sup> “Innocent Overseas Chinese in Palembang brutally killed,” February 22, 1947, *Qiao Sheng Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0581.

<sup>7</sup> “Surat-surat bulan Agustus 1947-Agustus 1948 tentang penduduk Tionghoa di Indonesia,” November 3 and 12, 1947, Djodja Documenten, no. 213, *ANRI*.

the Netherlands East Indies Visual Information Service, Niels Alexander Douwes Dekker, used his lenses to capture the plight of the Chinese. His photos depict charred corpses, deserted houses, helpless refugees, and protests by the ethnic Chinese with slogans such as:

The Republic of Indonesia slaughtered the ethnic Chinese!

Indonesians have raped Chinese women!

The Republic of Indonesia has betrayed the Chinese!

The Republic of Indonesia has murdered the Chinese!

The Republic of Indonesia is the cradle of Fascism!

We want protection from such beasts!

We demand the surrender of the Japanese deserters and war criminals who are now directing Indonesian atrocities against the Chinese!<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Boxes 19, the Niels A. Douwes Dekker Papers, 1944-1946, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. There is no exact information, unfortunately, attached to this as well as the two other pictures, probably due to the chaos of war and the need to transfer these sensitive materials out of Indonesia near the end of the Dutch-Indonesia conflict. Dekker himself explained: “I took thousands of pictures and made the arrangements for the taking of tens of thousands more. The Pacific War blew away ninety percent and the chaos of the revolution blew away the remnants of official and private collections. The end of 1949 was characterized by a nervousness rising to panic due to a fear that the nationalists would persecute fellow Indonesians who had been cooperative with the Dutch. This led to a general action to wipe out all possible traces that could be considered as compromising. My Indonesian and Indochinese personnel informed me that they wanted to get rid of the pictorial material by burning. I was compelled to accept boxes of unsorted and mostly uncaptioned materials as personal belongings.” See Anne L. Schiller, “An Introduction on the Dekker Papers,” *Documentation Newsletter*, Volume XIV, Number 2, Fall 1988.



Figure 1, Ethnic Chinese protesting during the Indonesian National Revolution, untitled and undated photo from an album named “Chinese Atrocities,” box 19, folder 11, the Niels A. Douwes Dekker Papers, 1944-1946, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

What contributed to the rampant violence against the ethnic Chinese during the Indonesian National Revolution? By looking beyond the tumult and chaos of war and the internal social dynamics within Indonesian society, this chapter seeks to answer this question by examining the transnational connections between the Chinese communities in Indonesia and the Chinese Nationalist Government in Nanjing and the evolving structure of international relations in the post-World War II Asia Pacific.

#### **Background: The Chinese in Indonesia**

Scholars have usually recognized two distinct, but not mutually exclusive, sub-groups within the Chinese community in Indonesia: the *peranakan* (Chinese already partly assimilated into Indonesian society) and *totok* (descendants of comparatively recent immigrants who remained primarily oriented towards their country of origin—China). As Phillip Kuhn notes, the massive migration at the turn of the century,

triggered by domestic economic difficulties, political instabilities and foreign invasion, not only increased the number of Chinese in Indonesia (or “the Dutch East Indies” at the time), but also caused significant demographic change. In many places in Southeast Asia, *totoks* began to outnumber *peranakans*. The increased number of *totoks* became a potential audience for Chinese-language print media, and subsequently, targets of political mobilization. Furthermore, the Japanese invasion of China gave rise to overseas Chinese activism for national salvation.<sup>9</sup> In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, approximately half of the Chinese residents in Indonesia were *totok* or the new immigrants who maintained close ties to mainland China.<sup>10</sup>

Despite Indonesia’s pronounced ethnic diversity, the Chinese minority stood out as a distinctive “foreign” (*asing*) group that had no territorial roots in the country. Part of the indigenous perception of the Chinese as a suspicious “out-group” has its origins from the Dutch colonial era, when the Chinese sometimes served as the mediators or tax collectors between the Dutch and the indigenous people. In a letter to the Muslim General Bai Chongxi (白崇禧), who served as the ROC’s Minister of National Defense and the Chairman of the Chinese Islamic League at the time, *peranakan* politician Siauw Giok Tjhan (蕭玉灿) admitted that the Republic of Indonesia had inherited “racial prejudices” from the Dutch, although the new nation was “trying hard to abolish them.” Siauw attributed the racial discrimination

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<sup>9</sup> Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), p. 250.

<sup>10</sup>In a report to Beijing dated in February 1956, the PRC embassy in Jakarta estimated that the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia numbered approximately 2.7 million. See “The basic situation and tendencies of Indonesia,” February 25, 1956, *Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives* (hereafter “CFMA”), 102-00055-02. A research report by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office completed in 1960 suggested that there were a total of 2,090, 630 ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. See Cai Renlong, *Chidaoxian shang de jiayin* [Footprints on the Equator] (Hong Kong: Xianggang shenghuo wenhua jijinhui, 2014), p. 21. On the Taipei side, the estimation in 1953 was around 2 million. See “The new changes in the overseas Chinese issue in Indonesia,” September 21, 1953, from dossier “The nationality issue of the overseas Chinese,” *Academia Historica*, 020-010807-0026. The integration of the earlier generations of Chinese migrants into Indonesian society (through adaptation of local languages and cultural practices) complicates the definition of Chinese for census purposes. The Dutch census of 1930 suggested that there were 1,233, 214 Chinese in the Dutch East Indies. But there was no population census regarding the ethnic Chinese in the Republic of Indonesia (including both the foreign Chinese and Chinese Indonesians) during the 1950s and 1960s. In large part to avoid possible political unrest resulted from racial profiling, the Indonesian census avoid touching on any ethnic information in its census. However, there was information on foreign Chinese (those who did not obtain Indonesian citizenship) in the early 1970s. The Statistical Year Books of Indonesia shows that there were 1, 029,488 foreign Chinese by the end of 1971; and 1,039,029 foreign Chinese (including 958,335 with PRC citizenship, 79,816 with ROC citizenship and 878 “stateless Chinese”) by the end of 1973. See *Statistik Indonesia* [Statistical Yearbook of Indonesia] (Jakarta: Biro Pusat Stati, 1975).

against the ethnic Chinese to their economic position “as middle-class shopkeepers.”<sup>11</sup> Though a considerable portion of the Chinese, prominently in the most densely populated Java, achieved business success, throughout the Indonesian archipelago the Chinese were engaged in a broader range of occupations in varied economic conditions. Nevertheless, a stereotypical portrayal of the Chinese as a wealthy trading community was widespread, rendering them vulnerable to economy envy.<sup>12</sup> During the Indonesian National Revolution as well as the early years of the Republic of Indonesia, the ethnic Chinese still faced difficulties in being accepted as indigenous, although many of the *peranakan* Chinese were not significantly distinguishable from the *pribumi* on linguistic or cultural terms.

### **The Chinese Nationalist Party’s Policy towards the Overseas Chinese**

In June 1947, a Mr. Wu Qinming (吴钦明), an elderly *totok* Chinese man living in Batavia, put forward a petition to the ROC government via its Consul General Jiang Jiadong (蒋家栋), requesting a formal recognition of his son Wu Lixin (吴立信)’s death as “a soldier’s sacrifice of life for the nation” (为国家牺牲之将士).<sup>13</sup> Wu Lixin was born, raised and, eventually, killed in Indonesia. Yet Wu Qinming firmly believed that Lixin devoted his life wholeheartedly to the cause of the faraway motherland—the ROC. The Wu family’s national orientation demonstrates the Chinese Nationalist Party’s systematic penetration into Chinese societies in the Dutch East Indies in the early twentieth century. Historically, the Party’s own development was closely associated with Western-educated Sun Yat-sen, the Honolulu-based Revolutionary Alliance, and the financial contributions of the overseas Chinese during the 1911 Revolution.<sup>14</sup> The Nationalist Party valued the overseas Chinese as its “rightful human capital,” who should be managed through a systematic global network. In 1924, an Overseas Party Affairs Department

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Charles A. Coppel, *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 5-29.

<sup>13</sup> “Petitions from the families of Lin Chuan and Wu Lixin,” July 16, 1946-October 12, 1947, *Academia Historica*, no. 020000000249.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, see Jianli Huang, “Umbilical Ties: The Framing of the Overseas Chinese as the Mother of the Revolution,” *Frontiers of History in China* 6, no. 2 (2011), pp. 183-228.

was established and placed directly under the supervision of the Chinese Nationalist Party Central Committee.<sup>15</sup> The Chinese Nationalist Party built overseas branches on almost all the major islands of Indonesia to oversee the Chinese emigrants' financial connections to their native places as well as to supervise Chinese-language education, which included indoctrinating the students with Chinese Nationalist Party ideology and promoting Chinese culture.

During World War II, General Zheng Jiemin (郑介民), who served as the ROC's representative at the Allied Forces' headquarters in the Southeast Asian theatre, established the underground Fu Hsing Society(复兴社) in Indonesia for the purpose of intelligence gathering. Up until the time of his murder, Wu Lixin had been working under General Zheng's leadership as an intelligence officer for the Chinese Nationalist Party. Upon completing high school education in Tegal, Central Java, Wu returned to Guangzhou, the Wu family ancestral home, and entered the Republic of China Military Academy. In the late 1930s, Wu was recruited by the Bureau of Investigation and Statistics (军统) and was dispatched back to Java for underground resistance operations against the Japanese in 1942. He was murdered by a colleague, Colonel Lin Chuan (林川), due to conflicts of interests, and buried in the backyard of their secret meeting point. Wu's remains were discovered by the Japanese *Kempeitai*, his murderer Lin was captured and the underground Chinese Nationalist Party intelligence network in Central Java was exposed.<sup>16</sup> Though born and buried in Indonesia, Wu devoted his life to the Nanjing government's expansive system of control, mobilization and intelligence collection among the overseas Chinese communities in Indonesia.

But the impending independence of Indonesia prevented the Chinese Nationalist Party from continuing its control over the Chinese in Indonesia. In June 1946, Chinese residing in areas occupied by the TNI began to feel the pressure to pledge allegiance to the emerging Republic of Indonesia. According

<sup>15</sup> Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, p. 267.

<sup>16</sup> "Petitions from the families of Lin Chun and Wu Lixin," July 16, 1946-October 12, 1947, *Academia Historica*, no. 020-00000-0249.

to the nationality law of the Republic of Indonesia, anyone born within its territory would automatically become a citizen. And in times of war, the Republic of Indonesia was eager to enlist the financial support from the ethnic Chinese communities in its military struggle against the Dutch. In 1946, the Republic of Indonesia's representatives in Cheribon, on the north coast of Java, required the local Chinese to invest in state bonds as part of their obligations as Indonesian citizens.<sup>17</sup> In response, the Nationalist Government in Nanjing urged the Chinese in Indonesia to repudiate their Indonesian citizenship as soon as possible.<sup>18</sup>

The Republic of Indonesia authorities protested against Nanjing's persistent efforts to maintain its jurisdiction over the ethnic Chinese. A direct confrontation between the two sides broke out in November 1947, when the ROC Vice Consul Niu Shu Chun( 纽树春 New Shu Chun), demanded that the government of the Republic of Indonesia thoroughly investigate the whereabouts of 150 missing Chinese from Salatiga, Central Java. In his reply, the Indonesian Minister of State, Dr. M. Daroesman contended that the Nanjing Government had no authority over these missing Chinese because the majority of them were Indonesian citizens:

I fully consider that all Overseas Chinese have two Nationalities according to the Chinese laws on nationality but those Chinese who take the nationality of the State in which they live will fall under the jurisdiction of that State. Needless to add that all Chinese residing in Republican territory and who obtain the nationality of the Republic of Indonesia, will fully be considered as Indonesian nationals and the cases affecting them will entirely be treated as domestic matters of the Republic.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "Influenced by the Indonesian Nationality Law, the Nationality of overseas Chinese has become a problem our consul general is now seeking advice from the ROC Government," June 6, 1946, *Min Zhu Bao* [The Democratic Daily], Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0581.

<sup>18</sup> "Special attention, our fellow countrymen in the Dutch East Indies," April 19, 1947, *Zhongyang Xinwen* [Central News Daily], Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0582.

<sup>19</sup> "Surat-surat bulan Agustus 1947-Agustus 1948 tentang penduduk Tionghoa di Indonesia," November 3 and 12, 1947, *Djodja Documenten*, no. 213, *ANRI*.

From the perspective of the newborn Indonesian republic, the activism of the ROC embassy and consulates among the Chinese community was an interference in its domestic affairs and a breach of its sovereignty. In a 1948 report, the Indonesian National Police accused the ROC embassy and consulates, Chinese Nationalist Party branches, and ROC-affiliated Chinese associations of functioning as “a state within a state.”<sup>20</sup> The report complained that although the Indonesian Government had been mobilizing all available resources to protect the safety of the Chinese, this ethnic minority still had no faith in the Indonesian state. For instance, the Chinese who fell victim to violence would seek assistance from the Chung Hwa Tsung Hwi (中华总会), which was working in close collaboration with the Nanjing Government, rather than turning to the Indonesian police. The Republic of Indonesia believed that the propaganda efforts of the Nanjing Government, which portrayed the Republic of China as one of the major five world powers and a source of unconditional support for the overseas Chinese, shifted ethnic Chinese’s national orientation away from Indonesia.

### **The Chinese Nationalist Government’s Attitude towards the Indonesian National Revolution**

In the realm of international relations, with the Dutch and the British as its allies during World War II, the Nanjing government was reluctant to give diplomatic recognition to the Republic of Indonesia, and urged the ethnic Chinese to stay neutral in the Dutch-Indonesian conflict.<sup>21</sup> In conflict zones, many Chinese households hung the national flag of the ROC to demonstrate their neutrality, oblivious to the increasing sense of distrust among the *pribumi* population.<sup>22</sup> The Nanjing Government identified the Netherlands, the United States, and the British Commonwealth Forces as protectors of its overseas nationals, while

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<sup>20</sup> “Kepolisian Negara Bagian PAM: Laporan tentang golongan Tionghoa, Indo Belanda, India dll.,” August 18, 1948, Inventaris Arsip Kepolisian Negara RI 1947-1949, no, 741, *ANRI*.

<sup>21</sup> “A Report on my recent survey in Indonesia by Chen Kewen (陈克文),” June 1952, “Miscellaneous dossier on Indonesia,” *Academia Historica*, 020—010899—0036. As will be explained in the next chapter, Chen was a special envoy of the ROC government in Taiwan to make contacts with Indonesia in search for informal relations. He noted in his report that “because of the belated recognition of the Republic of Indonesia by our government, the Indonesian Government was resentful and usually vented their dissatisfaction towards the overseas Chinese.” See also “Naskah Pidato Kementerian Pertahanan tanggal 5 August 1947 tentang kedudukan golongan asing terdiri dari Tionghoa, Arab dan India yang bukan WNI di Indonesia,” August 5, 1947, Inventaris Arsip Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, no. 65, *ANRI*.

<sup>22</sup> “The overseas Chinese in Java are still waiting for rescue,” July 24, 1946, *Qiaosheng Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0581.

regarding the armed forces of the Republic of Indonesia as the main perpetrators of crimes against the Chinese.<sup>23</sup> A Xiamen-based newspaper *Jiangsheng Bao* (江声报, Sound of the River) made blunt accusations: “Some Indonesian scoundrels took the chance to rob, rape and kill the Chinese. The cruelty of these atrocities could not be described in detail.”<sup>24</sup> Some voices within the Republic of China even blamed the Dutch and the British Commonwealth Forces for failing to preempt the Indonesian National Revolution. One article published in *Qiaosheng Bao* contended:

After the Japanese surrender in August 1945, the Chinese, who suffered greatly from Japanese occupation, looked forward to the arrival of the Allied Forces like the desert craves the rain. If the Allied Forces had deployed its troops in a speedy fashion, the Chinese would not have gone through such a traumatic experience. Because the Allied Forces were slow in restoring order, the Japanese had the time to secretly transfer their weapons into the hands of soldiers in the troops of the Republic of Indonesia. One has to remember that when the government of the Republic of Indonesia was first established in 1945, there was neither well-organized military forces nor weapons. Now with the Japanese military supplies, the Indonesian struggle for national independence is lively and widespread!<sup>25</sup>

A Chinese journalist who returned from Medan to Xiamen in September 1946 wrote: “the Indonesian people are poorly educated and extremely immature in politics. Their political parties and factions are too numerous to mention individually. These parties and factions wasted all their energy and

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<sup>23</sup> After the Japanese surrender, the Netherlands was critically weakened from World War II in Europe and did not return as a significant military force until early 1946. The British Commonwealth troops were responsible of restoring order after the Japanese surrender while the Dutch getting prepared for reclaiming the sovereignty of Indonesia.

<sup>24</sup> “Briefings on the conditions of Chinese in the Dutch East Indies,” September 13, 1946, *Jiangsheng Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0581.

<sup>25</sup> “The ROC Consul General to Batavia, Jiang Jiadong, is too ashamed to face the overseas Chinese again,” July 30, 1946, *Qiaosheng Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0581.

resources in internal conflicts.”<sup>26</sup> The article reflected the mentality of the Nanjing government and many ethnic Chinese in Indonesia: whereas the Republic of China emerged out of World War II as a great power, Indonesia was a “semi-civilized” nation, which would be better served by the rule of Western colonizers than through national self-determination.<sup>27</sup>

While Nanjing deemed the Indonesian National Revolution the cause of the plight of the Chinese minority, the leaders of the Republic of Indonesia tried to persuade the ROC that it was the Dutch aggression that endangered the peace and security of the Chinese communities. In November 1947, in an effort to win the support from the Republic of China at the United Nations, Sukarno wrote to the Chinese consul general:

Before the arrival and the recent actions of the Dutch troops in Indonesia, there was no sign whatsoever of the Chinese population being deprived from their life and property. I am convinced that the only effective way to ensure the wellbeing of the Chinese in Indonesia is to support the demand of the Republic of Indonesia that the UN will take effective measures in promoting the withdrawal of Dutch troops from Republican territory.<sup>28</sup>

But contrary to Sukarno’s request, the Republic of China used its status as one of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to assist the Dutch. The ROC supported a resolution that empowered the Dutch allies, the United Kingdom and the United States, to mediate the conflict, granting The Hague breathing space.<sup>29</sup>

Against the above-mentioned backdrop of international relations, the Chinese Nationalist

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<sup>26</sup> “Briefings on the conditions of Chinese in the Dutch East Indies,” September 14, 1946, *Jiangsheng Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0581.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> “Surat-surat bulan Agustus 1947-Agustus 1948 tentang penduduk Tionghoa di Indonesia,” November 3 and 12, 1947, Djodja Documenten, no. 213, *ANRI*.

<sup>29</sup> “Overseas Chinese and Indonesia’s Independence,” August 23, 1947, *Nanqiao Ribao* [南侨日报, The Chinese Southern Diaspora Daily], Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 333.

government and the governing authority of the Republic of Indonesia were unable to find a common ground for negotiations on the ethnic Chinese issue. While Nanjing refused to relent in its opposition to Indonesia's national independence movement, Yogyakarta showed no intent to make any sacrifices for the protection of the ethnic Chinese during its violent march towards independence. In a fierce combat in Bandung in March 1946, the TNI adopted a “scorched earth policy” and burned down much of the southern half of the city, including 600 houses owned by the local Chinese. The ROC consul general publicly condemned the TNI for conducting “deliberate assaults on the Chinese.”<sup>30</sup> In late July 1947, an hour after a radio station in Yogyakarta announced that all property owned by foreigners would be burnt to ashes if the Dutch continued their aggression, the ROC consul general warned the TNI not to further damage Chinese property. He asserted that such actions would only hurt the reputation of the Republic of Indonesia and isolate this newborn republic from international support.<sup>31</sup> In November 1947, in a letter addressed to the Indonesian Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense, the ROC’s vice consul general protested against the TNI’s decision to place mines, dynamite and other incendiary materials in Chinese factories and houses. While the ROC diplomatic representatives held that these measures caused great psychological disturbance and unrest among the Chinese communities, the Indonesian side insisted that such practices were of great strategic importance.<sup>32</sup> The Republic of Indonesia was determined to win its independence regardless of the cost inflicted on the Chinese or of the resulting troubled relationship with the Chinese Nationalist Government.

### **Pao An Tui and the Escalation of Ethnic Conflict**

Stalemates in negotiations via government-to-government channels prompted Nanjing to support the establishment of Pao An Tui (保安队), which started as a group of volunteer night guards (巡夜团) in

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<sup>30</sup> “The Speech by Consul General Jiang Jiadong,” July 27, 1947, *Da Gong Bao*[大公报], Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0582.

<sup>31</sup> “Consul General Jiang Jiadong condemned scorched earth policy,” July 27, 1947, *Da Gong Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0582.

<sup>32</sup> “Surat-surat bulan Agustus 1947-Agustus 1948 tentang penduduk Tionghoa di Indonesia,” November 3 and 12, 1947, Djodja Documenten no. 21, *ANRI*.

the Chinese community but later became the pioneer regiments that performed “preparatory works” for the Dutch military forces during the Indonesian National Revolution. For instance, in October 1947, the Indonesian Government received reports that the Chinese inhabitants of the town of Bagan Si Api Api of Sumatra had “secretly established and trained a strong Pao An Tui unit armed with tommy guns and pistols.” Together with the local branch of the Three Principles of the People Youth League (三民主义青年团), a youth organization under the Chinese Nationalist Party, Pao An Tui blocked the TNI from entering the town and seizing control.<sup>33</sup> Pao An Tui consisted entirely of the ethnic Chinese and it was involved in physical violence against or even murders of members of indigenous groups. As a result, Pao An Tui members were viewed by the *pribumi* as collaborators with the Dutch and were oftentimes targeted by the military forces of the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>34</sup> Indonesian media accused Pao An Tui of being “the Chinese spirit of the Dutch.”<sup>35</sup>

The Nanjing government regarded Pao An Tui as a necessary evil of the ransacked Chinese communities during the chaos of war. Nanjing’s Deputy Foreign Minister George K.C. Yeh (叶公超) publicly announced that Pao An Tui was “the best way so far to handle the threats faced by the Chinese in Indonesia.”<sup>36</sup> The Nationalist Government believed that Pao An Tui represented spontaneous efforts by the ethnic Chinese for self-protection, as neither the Dutch, the Republic of Indonesia, nor the Nanjing Government proved capable of safeguarding their lives and property.

While Nanjing was convinced that “Pao An Tui is the only way out,” indigenous resentment

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> “Kepolisian Negara: Laporan, 20 April 1948 tentang pembunuhan seorang bangsa Tionghoa oleh Barisan Gerilya yang dipimpin oleh Sukemi; disertai lampiran,” April 20, 1948, Delegasi Indonesia no. 486, *ANRI*.

<sup>35</sup> “Surat-surat bulan Agustus 1947-Agustus 1948 tentang penduduk Tionghoa di Indonesia,” November 3 and 12, 1947, Djodja Documenten no. 21, *ANRI*.

<sup>36</sup> “Deputy Foreign Minister George K.C. Yeh spoke on the Pao An Tui issue,” November 2, 1947, *Da Gong Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 344.

against it built up.<sup>37</sup> The Indonesian Government discerned that “Pao An Tui is disliked by the Indonesian people everywhere...[T]he Indonesian people hoped that it would be disbanded soon.”<sup>38</sup> Pao An Tui also reinforced the *pribumi* distrust of the Chinese community. A report by the Indonesian Ministry of Information described the Chinese as an apathetic and “passive” ethnic group who cared “only about making business profit through trade” with no interest in politics.<sup>39</sup> While the indigenous people were fighting for the freedom of their nation, the Chinese were reportedly involved in “hoarding food such as rice through the help of Dutch military forces.”<sup>40</sup> In his letter to the ROC General Bai Chongxi, *perenakan* politician Siauw Giok Tjhan wrote that some of the Chinese involved in Pao An Tui regarded themselves as “the most loyal subjects of Queen Wilhelmina,” and were unaware of the fact that their activities contradicted Sun Yat-sen’s philosophy of the Three Principles of the People. Siauw asserted that the activities of Pao An Tui “facilitated the Dutch agents to instigate troubles (*sic*) for the benefits of Dutch colonial policy, but resulted in the loss of Chinese lives and property and in damaging the Republic of Indonesia.”<sup>41</sup>

The Indonesian Government protested against Pao An Tui through direct communications with the Nanjing Government. The Indonesian Ministry of National Minorities urged Nanjing to recognize that Pao An Tui’s activities would “facilitate the Dutch to provoke undesirable clashes between the TNI and local Chinese inhabitants’ armed forces.”<sup>42</sup> The letter referred to these ethnic conflicts as a “civil war” that needed to be put to an end by joint efforts from both Yogyakarta and Nanjing. In his letter to the ROC consul general, Sukarno called for the abolition of Pao An Tui because it was part of the “Dutch

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<sup>37</sup> “The bloody debts of Chinese in Indonesia,” February 21, 1949, *Da Gong Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 344.

<sup>38</sup> “Kronologi mengenai golongan Tionghoa di Jawa Barat, Jawa Tengah dan Jawa Timur,” May 25, 1948, Inventaris Arsip Kementerian Penerangan RI 1945-1949, no. 205, *ANRI*.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

colonial policy in the past and in the present to stimulate feelings of suspicion, in particular between the Indonesians and the Chinese inhabitants.<sup>43</sup> The Indonesian authorities asked for Nanjing's cooperation in eliminating "the treacherous acts of the Dutch" and "the existence of destructive misunderstanding between both of our peoples."<sup>44</sup>

### **Shifting Public Opinion among the Overseas Chinese**

The plight of the Chinese during the Indonesian National Revolution moved public opinion against the ROC government. In an editorial published in *Qiaosheng Bao*, the author accused the ROC government of disappointing the overseas Chinese by taking no action to stop the ethnic violence in Indonesia.<sup>45</sup> The same newspaper commented that the incapable ROC consul general in Batavia would probably be "too ashamed to face the overseas Chinese again."<sup>46</sup> While being granted the title of "the mother of revolution" in Nanjing's propaganda, the overseas Chinese were "orphans abroad" in reality.<sup>47</sup> The representatives of the ROC National Congress in the Dutch East Indies collectively submitted a petition to Chiang Kai Shek, requesting the ROC government to stop sitting idle while "watching the sons and daughters of China being slaughtered by foreign troops in a foreign land."<sup>48</sup>

Beyond criticism of Nanjing's inability to protect its overseas nationals, the Chinese in Southeast Asia began to reflect upon attitudes of Nanjing and the overseas Chinese own towards the Indonesian National Revolution. *Nanqiao Ribao* (南侨日报, The Chinese Southern Diaspora Daily) based in Singapore, argued that Nanjing's decision to oppose the Republic of Indonesia at the United Nations

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> "Overseas Chinese in the Dutch East Indies in Jeopardy: The Government is just standing by; how could one tolerate the massacre in Tangerang? The government disappointed the overseas Chinese! The last call for help from the returned overseas Chinese," July 21, 1946, *Qiaosheng Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0581.

<sup>46</sup> "Consul General Jiang returned to China due to the tragedy in Tangerang," July 30, 1946, *Qiaosheng Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0581.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

closed the door for reconciliation on the ethnic Chinese issue and led to the further deterioration of ethnic relations by “adding fuel to the fire.”<sup>49</sup> This newspaper contended:

Although they are not yet strong enough, the forces of the Republic of Indonesia show a firm determination that the Indonesian nation will not be conquered ever again by the Dutch. If we are not on the right side of history...the hatred between the Chinese and Indonesians will further deepen, and the overseas Chinese will see the Indonesians as their enemies and the Dutch as their friends. And the Indonesians will definitely regard the overseas Chinese as the “fifth column” of the Dutch. By that time, the Dutch will capitalize on the anti-Chinese mentality of the Indonesians by recruiting Chinese soldiers and using the Chinese to attack the Indonesians. Consequently, the Indonesians are going to slaughter the Chinese in retaliation. Can you imagine what a miserable scenario this would be? The Chinese would become as powerless as a piece of meat on the chopping block.<sup>50</sup>

In addition, the ROC’s promotion of Pao An Tui also evoked discontent among the overseas Chinese. A Chinese newspaper published in Hui’an (惠安), one of the major native regions of the overseas Chinese communities in Indonesia, criticized Pao An Tui for worsening the misfortune of the Chinese in Indonesia and for sowing the seeds for ethnic hatred in the future. The newspaper pointed out that the 1,000 firearms provided by the Dutch to Pao An Tui “were not enough to protect two million Chinese, but enough to arouse fear among the barbarians (土人).”<sup>51</sup> An article published in *Qiaosheng Bao* noted that a few narrow-minded Chinese-language newspapers in Southeast Asia used an ultra-nationalist and racist tone in an attempt to cater to the taste of their poorly educated and backwards

<sup>49</sup> “Overseas Chinese and Indonesia’s Independence,” August 23, 1947, *Nanqiao Ribao* [南侨日报, The Chinese Southern Diaspora Daily], Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 333.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> “Pao An Tui made the misfortune of the Chinese in Indonesia even worse,” 13 September 1947, *Haibin Ribao* [海滨日报, Haibin Daily], September 13, 1947, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 333.

readers. As a result, a portion of the Chinese population in Indonesia became dangerously biased and treated all Indonesians as vicious mobs.<sup>52</sup> The pro-Chinese Communist Party *Da Gong Bao*[大公报], reminded its readers that while the establishment of Pao An Tui was the “first time when the ethnic Chinese had their own military forces abroad,” it was not something worth being proud of because Pao An Tui put the ethnic Chinese in an even more difficult social position, where they had to “look for survival through a narrow crack” (在夹缝中求生).<sup>53</sup>

Disillusionment with the ROC government caused some Chinese in Indonesia to take a different political stance publicly. Some Chinese associations made resolutions in left-wing Indonesian newspapers and magazines such as *Madjallah Buruh Jogja*, *Madjallah Nasional Jogja*, *Kedaulatan Rakjat Djokja* to demonstrate their support for the newborn Republic of Indonesia while denouncing Pao An Tui and calling for its abolition. In their statements, these Chinese associations made loyalty pledges such as “Where there is the TNI, there is safety for the Chinese people,” “without the strength of the government of the Republic of Indonesia, there will not be any peace for the Chinese,” “World opinion is siding with the Republic of Indonesia,” and “the ROC consul general should make an official announcement that the safety of the Chinese is guaranteed by the Republic of Indonesia.”<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, some leaders of the Chinese community took a completely different approach from Nanjing towards the citizenship issue. Siauw Giok Tjhan, a prominent Chinese Indonesian politician, formulated the idea that the Chinese should be integrated into a modern, multi-ethnic Indonesian nation-state. “Chinese” as a racial category should be separated from one’s national orientation. During the Indonesian National Revolution, Siauw, together with other Chinese oriented towards the Republic of

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<sup>52</sup>“Overseas Chinese in Sumatra”, October 9, 1946, *Qiaosheng Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 333.

<sup>53</sup>“Chinese cannot stay neutral,” 24 August 1947, *Da Gong Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 33.

<sup>54</sup> “Dukungan terhadap republik Sekretariat Delegasi Indonesia dari Kementerian Penerangan: Resolusi Golongan Tionghoa, 3 Pebruari 1948 tentang dukungan terhadap Pemerintah Republik; disertai surat pengantar,” February 3, 1948, Delegasi Indonesia 1957-1951 no. 360, *ANRI*.

Indonesia, organized the Chinese Youth Force (*Angkatan Muda Tionghoa*) and the Chinese Volunteer Force (*Pasukan Sukarola Tionghoa*), both of which joined Indonesia's struggle for independence against the Dutch. In opposition to the members of Pao An Tui, leaders of these Chinese militia groups believed that "peace would not arrive in Indonesia until Indonesia achieved its independence; and enmity would not disappear in Indonesia until the Dutch forces leave." Wen Jingduo (also known as Tony Wen, 温敬多), a Chinese Indonesian politician active in the government of the Republic of Indonesia, also shows this attitude towards citizenship among Indonesia-oriented Chinese. In 1947, Wen, as one of the leaders of the Chinese Volunteer Force in Solo, met with a British officer from the headquarters of the Allied Forces in Southeast Asia. The British officer asked Wen if he carried a Chinese passport himself and whether the Chinese Volunteer Forces would fight for Indonesia's independence even if some of its members remained Chinese citizens. Wen replied: "Of course I am a Chinese person, but under the Indonesian citizenship law, I will become an Indonesian citizen...at least 80% of the Chinese in Indonesia will become Indonesian citizens just like me."<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

In January 2013 in Medan, North Sumatra, I met a leader of the local Chinese community, Mr. Liao Zhangran. Among his many titles, he is the president and founder of the Asia International Friendship College (棉兰亚洲国际友好学校), a tri-lingual (Chinese, English and *Bahasa Indonesia*) college that has close ties to China. A second-generation Chinese who has a native-level command of Mandarin, he was Chinese linguistically and culturally but committed to Indonesia politically. As a nine-year-old whose family members participated in Pao An Tui in 1947, Mr. Liao witnessed how infighting broke out between Chinese groups that supported the Indonesian National Revolution and those were opposed to it. He also saw how the scorched earth policy rendered thousands of Chinese homeless. As a little boy, Mr. Liao was resentful towards the troops of the Republic of Indonesia. However, today he has fully

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<sup>55</sup> "Hasil percakapan Tony Wen dengan Letan Kolonel Ratcliffe tanggal 13 September 1947 mengenai pendapat penduduk Tionghoa terhadap situasi politik dan militer," September 13, 1947, Djogja Documenten 1945-1949, no. 272, *ANRI*.

reconciled with the bitter aspects of the past. He now believes that the Nanjing government, rather than the Indonesian Revolutionary government in Yogyakarta, was responsible for the suffering of the Chinese. “All revolutions involve sacrifices,” he said, “and the Chinese suffered during the Indonesian National Revolution not because of the cruelty of the Indonesian troops but because of the nature of war itself.” Mr. Liao believed that there were quite a number of ethnic Chinese who openly supported Indonesia’s struggle for independence. But Chinese participation in the Indonesian National Revolution has been totally erased from the official narratives. According to Mr. Liao, such unfair treatment of the Chinese was a result of the ROC’s policies: “The leaders of China at the time could not tell right from wrong” (当时的领导人不明是非).<sup>56</sup>

This chapter depicts the mosaic of national orientations among individuals. It also demonstrates the penetration of Nanjing’s state power into Chinese communities in Indonesia during a turbulent period when both China and Indonesia were experiencing political transitions. The Nanjing Government remained committed to the right of blood, insisting that citizenship should not be determined by place of birth but by bloodline. The Chinese Nationalist Government’s proactive measures to strengthen its ties with the overseas Chinese decreased the ethnic Chinese’s identification with the Republic of Indonesia, increased the ethnic tension between the Chinese and the *pribumi*, and contributed to the outbreak and continuation of ethnic violence against the Chinese. The Chinese Nationalist Government failed to foresee an important trend in the post-World War II world: the boundaries of the nation-state, rather than race, ethnicity or cultural heritage, would become the most important parameter for people to identify themselves by. At the same time, some Chinese in Indonesia started to formulate a more sophisticated and progressive understanding of citizenship, as they foresaw the coming of a new age of state building.

Aside from Indonesia-oriented ethnic Chinese who were critical towards the Chinese Nationalist Party’s approach towards citizenship, a Chinese literature critic who was seeking refuge in the jungles of

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<sup>56</sup> Liao Zhangran, interview by author, Medan, January 9, 2013.

Sumatra also had different opinions on the nature of Indonesian National Revolution and the issue of ethnic relations. Ba Ren (巴人 or “Common Man”) was an undercover member of the Chinese Communist Party who later became the PRC’s first ambassador to China. Together with a group of Chinese left-wing intellectuals, Ba Ren relocated to North Sumatra during the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia, was involved in underground resistance against the Japanese and later became an important activist in diasporic politics after the Japanese surrender. In July 1947, Ba Ren was arrested by the Dutch. He reflected on his arrest in his memoir: “I am prepared to go to a Dutch jail, so that the *pribumi* of Indonesia will understand that the Chinese people are also making sacrifices for the Indonesia Revolution.”<sup>57</sup> Chapter 2 will reconstruct the process through which the Chinese Communist Party, driven by motivations similar to and ideologies different from its Nationalist rivals, built its networks in Chinese communities in Indonesia during the 1940s.

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<sup>57</sup> Ba Ren, “Zai waiguo jianlao li” [In the foreign prison], *Ba Ren wen ji huiyilu juan* [Collected Works of Ba Ren: Memoirs] (Ningbo: Ningbo chubanshe, 1997), pp. 424-425.

## CHAPTER 2

### “The Motherland is A Distant Dream”: The Chinese Communist Party and the Overseas Chinese in Indonesia, 1942-1949

#### Introduction

In April 1945, in a small, remote village named Surabeia located in the middle of the rainforests of Sumatra, Ba Ren (巴人 or “common man”),<sup>1</sup> an undercover member of the Chinese Communist Party and a well-regarded writer of his time, had just survived a typhoid infection. While recovering, Ba Ren spent most of his time reading works in English, Japanese and *bahasa Indonesia* on Indonesian history. He wrote in his memoir: “While working, I immersed myself in the fragrance of the Indonesian earth, feeling like I could tap the pulse and hear the cries of the souls of the Indonesian people. When I got tired with reading, I composed my long poem in praise of Indonesia in my 4 by 5 square meters bedroom.”<sup>2</sup> The poem, at its completion in 1952 after Ba Ren finished serving as the first PRC ambassador to Indonesia, was entitled *The Song of Indonesia* (印度尼西亚之歌).<sup>3</sup> In these more than 2,000 lines of verse, an economically and politically independent Indonesia emerged in Ba Ren’s vision, with the ethnic Chinese as part of this new multi-ethnic nation:

There are five million of my countrymen living all across your country,  
They are as diligent as bulls and horses, as savvy as foxes,  
They are as conservative as the black earth, as tough as ironstone,  
They are all vagrants from an ancient empire.

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<sup>1</sup> “Ba Ren” is the penname of Wang Renshu (王任叔). He was better known with this penname in Indonesia, or as “Pak Barhen” (uncle Baren). During Japanese occupation, he adopted an alias He Xiusheng (何秀生).

<sup>2</sup> Ba Ren, “Zai Silabaye cun” [In Village Surabeia], in *Ba Ren wen ji huiyilu juan* [Collected Works of Ba Ren: Memoirs] (Ningbo: Ningbo chubanshe, 1997), p. 406.

<sup>3</sup> Ba Ren revised the poem for four times and the manuscript was finalized in 1952. However, the poem was never published during his lifetime. It was discovered by Ba Ren’s son Wang Keping (王克平) after his death and published for the first time in 1984 in a Chinese-language academic Journal *Nanya yu Dongnanya ziliaoyanjiu* (Research Materials on South Asia and Southeast Asia), vol.5, no. 19.

They look for food on your land; and they also aspire to settle here;

To them, the motherland is a distant dream.<sup>4</sup>

In the Cold War generation of scholarship on the PRC's relations with overseas Chinese, it was assumed that the CCP came to power with little knowledge or experience in this area. According to Stephen Fitzgerald, the CCP "had not thought very deeply" about nor was it "very much concerned with the overseas Chinese" before coming to power in 1949.<sup>5</sup> However, Ba Ren's special tie with Indonesia supports the assertion put forward more recently by Glen Peterson, suggesting that "the CCP had already developed significant interest in and multiple links to Chinese communities overseas in the decades leading up to the Party's national triumph in 1949."<sup>6</sup> Like the Chinese Nationalist Party, the CCP had been long interested in rallying political and economic support from Chinese overseas. However, unlike its Nationalist rivals, the CCP lacked the formal diplomatic channels, as well as comparable financial and organizational resources, to build connections abroad. Given these limitations, what were the CCP's strategies for expanding its influence among the Chinese diaspora? This chapter aims to answer this question by examining the CCP's mobilization of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia during the Japanese occupation and the Indonesian National Revolution, with a focus on Sumatra.

### **The Chinese Communist Party's Policy towards the Overseas Chinese**

The CCP's endeavor to attract support from overseas Chinese communities started during the First United Front of the Nationalist and Communist Parties.<sup>7</sup> In February 1924, one month after the Nationalist-

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<sup>4</sup> The last line is a metaphor: the "lurking whales in the deep sea" refers to the Japanese, Dutch and other imperialists. Ba Ren, "Yinni zhi ge" (Song of Indonesia). In *Ba Ren wen ji shige xuba juan* [Collected Works of Ba Ren: Poems and Forwards] (Ningbo: Ningbo chubanshe, 1997), p. 346.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Fitzgerald, *China and the Overseas Chinese: A Study of Peking's Changing Policy: 1949-1970* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. x.

<sup>6</sup> Glen Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People's Republic of China* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> The strategy was inspired by the Comintern advisor Hendricus Sneevliet. Sneevliet was a founding member of the Indies Social Democratic Association (IDSVA), which later became the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI) or Indonesian Communist Party. In 1920 Sneevliet attended the second congress of the Comintern in Moscow as a representative of the PKI. Lenin was impressed enough by him to send him as a Comintern representative to China. Under the name "Maring," Sneevliet played a role in the formation of the CCP and he was present at the first congress of the CCP in July 1921 when the CCP was formally established. For a biographical account of Sneevliet, see Michael Williams, "Sneevliet and the Birth of Asian Communism," *New Left*

Communist alliance was formalized, the Nationalist Party established its Overseas Bureau (国民党海外部) with working staff from both parties as well as CCP members and left-wing Nationalist members placed in key positions.<sup>8</sup> In January 1926, Xu Suhun (许甦魂), an overseas Chinese from Kula Lumpur and a CCP member since the Party's founding in 1921, was elected Chief Secretary of the Overseas Bureau. For the purpose of training overseas Chinese cadres, the Overseas Bureau established an Overseas Chinese Movement Training Institute (华侨运动讲习所) modeled after the famous Peasant Movement Training Institute (农民运动讲习所) in Guangzhou organized by Mao Zedong and Peng Pai (彭湃). The Institute's inaugural class of 80 students commenced in November 1926 for a three-month course.<sup>9</sup>

The Japanese invasion of China gave rise to overseas Chinese activism for the cause of national salvation. And the CCP seized this opportunity to increase its influence among the overseas Chinese independently. This more assertive stance was in line with the decision of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1936, which encouraged the CCP to adopt a “united front” policy and to cooperate with bourgeois forces. From its new base in Yan'an, the CCP began to establish direct links with Chinese communities abroad. In 1938, with permission from the British authorities, the CCP established the Eighth Route Army liaison office in Hong Kong (香港八路军办事处). The office was headed by Liao Chengzhi (廖承志), who later rose to the Minister of the Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs of the PRC. Liao worked closely with the Hong Kong-based China Defense League (保卫中国同盟) headed by Sun

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<sup>8</sup> Review, Iss. 123 (September-October 1980), pp. 82-90. See also Tony Saich, *Origins of the First United Front in China: The Role of Sneevliet (alias Maring)* (Boston: Brill, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People's Republic of China*, pp.17-18; Ren Guixiang and Zhao Hongying, *Huaqiao huaren yu guogong guanxi* [Overseas Chinese and the Relations between the Communist and Nationalist Parties] (Wuhan: Wuhan chubanshe, 1999), p. 93.

<sup>9</sup> Xu Xiaosheng, *Huaqiao yu diyici guogong hezuo* [Overseas Chinese and the first United Front between the Communist and Nationalist Parties] (Guangzhou: Jinan daxue chubanshe, 1993), pp.74-76.

Yat-sen's widow, Song Qingling (宋庆龄).<sup>10</sup> Besides channeling financial and material resources from the overseas Chinese communities back to China, the Eighth Route Army liaison office in Hong Kong established a significant media presence of the CCP in this “in-between place” of the global Chinese migration network.<sup>11</sup> A series of CCP-controlled news agencies and publishing houses enabled the communists to reach out to Chinese in Hong Kong and beyond, thereby strengthening the communists’ stance in the emerging propaganda war against the Chinese Nationalist Party. In 1939, the newly established Southern Bureau of the CCP Central Committee (中共中央南方局) in Chongqing became the highest policy-making agency in overseas Chinese affairs, with CCP leaders Zhou Enlai and Ye Jianying as the key figures in charge.

Under the organizational framework of the Southern Bureau and the Eighth Route Army liaison office in Hong Kong, the CCP’s construction of a united front with the overseas Chinese relied heavily on the flow of CCP members from Mainland China to Southeast Asia. Some of them fled to Southeast Asia to escape the purge by the Nationalists or the Japanese, whereas others were dispatched by the Party to promote its ideology abroad. Most of them found jobs as teachers and journalists, leaving behind them the legacy of a strong network of pro-PRC schools and print media in Indonesia. For instance, Zhang Guoji (张国基), a Hu’nan native who had Mao Zedong as his sponsor when he joined the CCP in 1927, spent substantial time between the 1920s and 1950s teaching at Chinese-language schools in Java and North Kalimantan. His students included Chinese Indonesian Situ Meisheng (司徒眉生), who served as President Sukarno’s personal assistant and Chinese-language interpreter.<sup>12</sup> In 1940, the Party dispatched Hu Yuzhi (胡愈之), journalist, critic, and the translator of Edgar Snow’s *Red Star over China*, to

<sup>10</sup> Huang Weici, “Dui huaqiao he gang’ao tongbao de tongzhan gongzuo” (United front work on overseas Chinese and fellow countrymen in Hong Kong and Macau), in *Nanfangju dangshi ziliao: tongzhan gongzuo* (Historical materials of the Southern Bureau: On the United Front) (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1990), pp. 374-387.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Sinn, “Moving Bones: Hong Kong’s Role as an ‘In-Between Place’ in the Chinese Diaspora,” in David Strand and Sherman Cochran ed. *Cities in Motion: Interior, Coast and Diaspora in Transnational China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 248-249.

<sup>12</sup> Yuan Houchun, *Yige “canyu chuangzao lishi de huaren”: Situ Meisheng chuanqi* [An ethnic Chinese who participated in the making of history in Indonesia: a biography of Situ Meisheng] (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2006), p. 10.

Singapore to serve as the editor of *Nanyang Shang Bao* (南洋商报), a leftwing Chinese-language daily owned by Tan Kah Kee. In December 1941, after the outbreak of the Pacific War, Hu organized the Wartime Mission of Chinese Intellectuals in Singapore (星洲华侨文化界战时工作团) together with several other left-wing intellectuals who followed the CCP's instruction to relocate to Southeast Asia for united front work among the overseas Chinese.<sup>13</sup> The Wartime Mission established a “young cadre training program” (青年战士干部训练班) for the purpose of preparing the left-wing Chinese youth to participate in anti-Japanese militia groups in the future. It also organized propaganda teams to mobilize the ethnic Chinese to resist the Japanese through public speeches, theatrical performances and popular music.

### **The CCP and Political Mobilization of the Chinese during the Japanese Occupation**

In early February 1942, shortly before the fall of Singapore into Japanese hands, Hu Yuzhi, Ba Ren and other members of the Wartime Mission of Chinese Intellectuals in Singapore boarded a motor sampan bound for Sumatra.<sup>14</sup> Among them, Ba Ren, who spent a total of five and a half years in Indonesia in the 1940s, kept a detailed account of his “life of exile.” Ba Ren became an underground CCP member in 1925, involved first in intelligence work when he infiltrated into the Chinese Nationalist Party office in Guangzhou. After his cover was blown, he left for Shanghai and took up a leading role in the League of Left-Wing Writers (中国左翼作家联盟). In March 1941, Zhou Enlai instructed Ba Ren to leave Shanghai for Hong Kong and to be prepared for further travel to the United States, where he would take charge of the publication of pro-CCP Chinese-language media. However, due to difficulties in obtaining travel documents, Ba Ren was reassigned to Singapore, where he took up a teaching position at the Nanyang Overseas Chinese Normal College (南洋华侨师范学院) and became a frequent contributor to

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<sup>13</sup> A fuller list of left-wing intellectuals who travelled to Sumatra during World War II includes: Ba Ren; Shen Zijiu (沈滋九); Yang Sao(杨骚); Zheng Chuyu(郑楚云), Wang Jiyuan(王纪元), Gao Yunlan(高云览), Wang Jinding (汪金丁), and Shao Zonghan (邵宗汉).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

the pro-CCP print media.



Figure 2. Ba Ren (sixth from the right in the front row) and the teachers from the Zhonghua Middle School of Siantar, North Sumatra, 1946. Huang Shuhai ed., *Xianda Zhaopian* (Photos from Siantar) (Beijing: Hong Wenquan Foundation, 2008), p. 43.

In February 1942, Ba Ren and women's rights activist Lei Derong (雷德容)<sup>15</sup> left Singapore for a small village named Sungai Sempit in north Sumatra. Ba Ren and Lei pretended to be a couple and spent four months with the family of a local Chinese peasant, Ren Sheng (任生). In this village isolated from the ongoing war and politics, Ba Ren's life was not threatened by the Japanese occupation of Sumatra. He observed the conditions of the Indonesian countryside and the status of the ethnic Chinese with the eyes of an anthropologist and recorded in the tone of a revolutionary poet. Vivid images emerge from his writings: a bamboo house built next to a red creek in the color of blood; the “primitive fire”

<sup>15</sup> In Indonesia, Lei also adopted an alias, Liu Yan(刘岩). Ba Ren and Lei Derong pretended to be as a husband and wife when they first arrived in Sumatra, but fell in love during their life in exile and became a real couple.

radiating from the eyes of a young *pribumi* wife of an elderly Chinese husband; Ba Ren himself singing nationalist songs from Northeast China while learning how to grow crops in the Sumatra jungles; and most of all, the almost static life of Chinese peasants and their apathetic attitude towards the distant motherland.<sup>16</sup>

In August 1942 in Payakumbuh, West Sumatra, Ba Ren and Lei reunited with Hu Yuzhi and renowned writer and poet Yu Dafu (郁达夫), who used to work as a literary editor for *Xing Zhou Ri Bao* (星洲日报 or *The Singapore Star Daily*) of Singapore. Using a fake identity as “Boss Zhao,” Yu Dafu started a brewery business with the help of the locals. And Ba Ren disguised himself as one of Boss Zhao’s employees.<sup>17</sup> In October and November 1942, Ba Ren and Lei Derong relocated again to Siantar and Medan. In these two major cities of North Sumatra with a large concentration of ethnic Chinese, they began to interact intensively with the local anti-Japanese organizations run by educated Chinese youth. Before their arrival, under the influence of the wartime mass mobilization back in China and the national salvation movement among the overseas Chinese, the left-wing youth in Sumatra established two underground societies: the Anti-Fascist Alliance of the Chinese in Sumatra (苏门答腊华侨反法西斯同盟) and the Chinese Association against Enemies (华侨抗敌协会). Meanwhile, a “Good Earth Bookstore” (大地书店), with a rare supply of smuggled classical Marxist works as well as CCP pamphlets, became

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<sup>16</sup> Ba Ren, “Rensheng jiqi zhouwei de yiqun” (Rensheng and those around him), In *Ba Ren wen ji shige xuba juan [Collected Works of Ba Ren: Poems and Forwards]* (Ningbo: Ningbo chubanshe, 1997), pp. 131-198. Originally published in 1950 by Haiyan shudian in Shanghai.

<sup>17</sup> Later Yu Dafu was forced to help the Japanese military police as an interpreter when it was discovered that he was one of the few "locals" in the area who could speak Japanese. In 1945, he was arrested by the Kempeitai when his true identity was finally discovered. It is believed that he was executed by the Japanese shortly after the surrender of Japan. Yu left behind him a peranakan Chinese wife who was at the time heavily pregnant with their daughter. During his years in Indonesia, Yu Dafu assisted the Malaya Communist Party through his social network in Payakumbuh. See Xia Yan, “Yi Da Fu” (In memory of Dafu), 20 September 1985, *Renmin Ribao*; Hu Yuzhi, “Wo zai kangzhan shiqi de jingli”; Zhang Chukun, “Huiyi liuwang zhong de Yu Dafu” (in memory of Yu Dafu in exile), in Nanxing wenhua houdai zuotanhui cankao ziliao huibian (Reference materials for meeting among descendants of the intellectuals who travelled to the south) (Xiamen: Shenghuowenhua jijinhui, October 2013), pp. 45-62; Yu Feng, “Yu Dafu—gaiguan dinglun de wanqi” (Yu Dafu—some conclusions drawing from his last years”, in Nanxing wenhua houdai zuotanhui cankao ziliao huibian, pp. 63-70. Yu Meilan (郁美兰), interview by author, Xiamen, October 24 and 25, 2013. Ms. Yu Menlan was the daughter born after Yu Dafu’s death.

the base camp for the underground activities of these two organizations.<sup>18</sup> Ba Ren was invited to serve as the mentor for the young people who were passionate about resisting against Japanese occupation but lacked experience.

Ba Ren was keenly aware of the different attitudes towards the coming of the Japanese among the Chinese and the *pribumi*. The Chinese were more staunchly against Japanese colonialism due to the suffering of war back in Mainland China. The *pribumi* tended to take a much softer position, possibly under the influence of the “Djojobozi Prophecy.” This Javanese myth predicted that after a long period of subjection by a white race, a yellow race from the north would drive out the whites and free Indonesia.<sup>19</sup> In Ba Ren’s analysis, the resistance against Japanese colonialism could not succeed unless the Chinese joined hands with the *pribumi*. He noticed that in Indonesia the Chinese population was concentrated in the cities. Therefore, Ba Ren contended that it would be impossible for the Chinese in Indonesia to follow the steps of the Chinese in Malaya and start a guerrilla war based in the countryside all by themselves. He concluded: “It was imperative for the Chinese to cooperate with the *pribumi* during and after the anti-Fascist war.”<sup>20</sup>

So as to attract more *pribumi* participants, under Ba Ren’s suggestion, the Anti-Fascist Alliance of the Chinese in Sumatra changed its name to a more ethnically inclusive “People’s Anti-Fascist Alliance in Sumatra” (苏门答腊人民反法西斯同盟).<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, Ba Ren encouraged the Chinese youth to become proficient in *bahasa Indonesia* and to familiarize themselves with the social, political,

<sup>18</sup> Huang Shuhai, “Yinni Subei huaqiao kangri douzheng gai lue” [Brief history of the anti-Japanese struggles among the overseas Chinese in North Sumatra in Indonesia] in Huang Shuhai ed., *Wang buliao de suiyue* [Times that cannot be forgotten) (Beijing: shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2003), pp. 2-10. Mr. Huang was a left wing youth from Siantar who later served as a PRC diplomat.

<sup>19</sup> Ba Ren, “Zai faxisi lianyu zhi huo zhong xinsheng” [Rebirth in the inferno of Fascism], in Zhou Nanjing ed., *Ba Ren Yudunixiya—jinian Baren (Wang Renshu) danchen 100 zhounian* [Ba Ren and Indonesia—In memory of the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Ba Ren a.k.a. Wang Renshu] (Hong Kong: Nandao chubanshe, 2001), pp. 204-250. Originally published in Ba Ren, *Yindunixiya Jindaishi* [A Modern History of Indonesia] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> Ba Ren, “Yindunixiya geming guangan” (Observations and Opinions on the Indonesian Revolution), in Zhou Nanjing ed., *Ba Ren Yudunixiya*, p. 257. This manuscript was believed to be written by the end of 1947, and revised in early 1950s, but was never published during his lifetime. It was discovered by Ba Ren’s son Wang Keping (王克平) after his death and published for the first time in 1983 in *Nanya yu Dongnanya ziliaoyanjiu* [Research Materials on South Asia and Southeast Asia], vol.5, no. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 222.

economic and historical conditions of the country. While serving as the senior advisor to an underground news bulletin affiliated with the People's Anti-Fascist Alliance, *The Progressive Weekly* (前进周报), Ba Ren requested that the Chinese youth communicate the information and ideas from the news bulletin in local languages to the *pribumi* working class.<sup>22</sup>

In search for a new path for resistance against the Japanese through a coalition between the Chinese and the *pribumi*, Ba Ren urged the Chinese youth to look for the underground organizations of the Indonesian Communist Party (the PKI). However, after a yearlong search, no connections could be made with the PKI or any of its peripheral groups. As a result, the People's Anti-Fascist Alliance turned instead to the Malaya Communist Party and Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) and sent a batch of cadres to Malaya for the first time in early 1943. The contact with MPAJA helped the People's Anti-Fascist Alliance expand its branches along the East Coast of Sumatra. And in return, the People's Anti-Fascist Alliance in Sumatra raised funds for MPAJA.<sup>23</sup>

While actively engaged in underground political organizations, Ba Ren and Lei also had close interactions with the youth through civil associations such as a newspaper reading group, a household management reading group,<sup>24</sup> and a fitness and book club.<sup>25</sup> Ba Ren and Lei regarded these youth as "seeds of the anti-Japanese struggle" who were passionate and dedicated but immature. And they nurtured these ethnic Chinese youth by sharing their knowledge about Marxism and their personal experiences of underground work. At their meetings Ba Ren gave informal lectures on the Marxist theory of social development, Mao Zedong's theory on New Democracy, Ai Siqui's (艾思奇) *Philosophy for the Masses*

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> A youth group targeting young women organized by Lei, with a focus on discussions of women's roles in Indonesian society. See Huang Fulian, "Yi Liu Yan yu Xianda jiazheng dushuhui" (In memory of Liu Yan and the household management reading group in Siantar), in Huang Shuhai ed., *Wang buliao de suiyue*, pp. 89-91.

<sup>25</sup> This left-wing group appeared publicly in the name of Chinese youth basketball team and raised funds from overseas Chinese businessman to support the reading groups and other underground anti-Japan activities. See Xiao Fei, "Huiyi Xianda jianshen dushuhui de huodong pianduan" [In memory of the activities at the fitness and book club in Siantar], in Huang Shuhai ed., *Wang buliao de suiyue*, p. 87.

(大众哲学), and analyses on current political affairs. He also led discussions on left-wing literary works such as *How the Steel was Tempered* by Nikolai Ostrovsky, *Corrosion* (蚀) by Mao Dun (茅盾) and *The Family* (家) by Ba Jin (巴金). One former youth activist recalled: “Ba Ren used the stories drawn from progressive literature to encourage the youth to make the right choices in their own personal lives. At the same time, Ba Ren also boosted the young people’s confidence in the victory of resistance against the Japanese by his in-depth analysis of world affairs.”<sup>26</sup> During these meetings, Ba Ren was often “chain-smoking” while “speaking with a strong Zhejiang accent about the progress of the War of Resistance back in China or providing historical anecdotes in a cheerful and humorous tone.” Lei, with a warm smile on her face, would “serve the young people tea and coffee and gently add a few comments at the end.” Another former activist remembered: “[T]heir sincere and genuine attitude had a great impact on our ways of thinking and our emotional state, leading us to a more practical way for carrying out the anti-Japanese struggle.”<sup>27</sup>

The activities of the ethnic Chinese underground political organizations and civil societies came to a sudden halt when the Japanese initiated a heavy-handed crackdown in September 1943. With information obtained from a defector, the Japanese arrested and executed many members of both the People’s Anti-Fascist Alliance and Chinese Association against Enemies. Ba Ren, Lei and other leaders of the organizations fled to the countryside with logistic support from a well-connected underground network.<sup>28</sup> To protect its remaining members, the People’s Anti-Fascist Alliance adopted the principle of one-on-one communication to minimize the unnecessary exposure of identities. The organization also established a number of secret meeting points, all located inside a chain of soap factories managed by its

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Xiao Fei, “Yi Ba Ren Liu Yan zai Xianda de liuwang he zhandou shenghuo” [In memory of the life of exile and struggle of Ba Ren and Liu Yan in Siantar], in Huang Shuhai ed., *Wang buliao de suiyue*, p. 78.

<sup>28</sup> Ba Ren, “Zai faxisi lianyu zhi huo zhong xinsheng,” pp. 228-229.

members.<sup>29</sup> Between March 1944 and August 1945, ten soap factories were established in North Sumatra, spread out in Siantar, Kisaran, Pangkalansusu, Bukittinggi, Brastagi, Perboungan, Sibolga, Lubuk Pakam, Pantai Cermin, and Pulao Raja (Raya). These soap factories provided shelter for the members of the People's Anti-Fascist Alliance who were already listed as “most wanted” by the Japanese. The factories also formed a transportation network, through which funds, print materials, and secret documents were circulated. In the words of a former member, “this transportation network was like blood vessels, through which the activities of the People's Anti-Fascist Alliance flowed smoothly like blood.”<sup>30</sup>

With the help from one of his former students at Nanyang Overseas Chinese Normal College, after a detour that involved several layovers at soap factories, Ba Ren and Lei finally resettled in the village Surabeia, where orangutans outnumbered humans.<sup>31</sup> Ba Ren adopted a new fake identity as an unsuccessful Chinese businessman who decided to return to farming due to the chaos of war. In his memoir, he jokingly called himself “the commander-in-chief of cats, dogs and chickens,” as the flimsy bamboo hut he and Lei were staying in got overcrowded with all of these animals.<sup>32</sup> With a limited source of protein, they sometimes resorted to eating bats.<sup>33</sup> Yet despite the remoteness of their location and absence of any modern transportation or communication tools, resources such as financial aid, stationary, books, pamphlets and the typhoid medication that saved Ba Ren's life still made their way deep into the rainforest through the underground network.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Former members explained that they chose to use soap factories as a cover up because Soap production required neither high technological skills nor a large sum of investment. In addition, it was a comparatively lucrative business in the region. Last but not the least, most of the soap factories were located in the suburban areas, far away from the scope of surveillance by the Japanese. See Lin Jian, “Yi Fanmeng jiaotong lianluo zhan de jianli jiqi fazhan guocheng” (In memory of the establishment and development of the transportation network of the People's Anti-Fascist Alliance in Sumatra), in Huang Shuhai ed., *Wang buliao de suiyue*, pp. 68-76.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>31</sup> Li Guohai (李国海), who appeared with the nickname “Ah Jin” (阿金) in Ba Ren's memoir.

<sup>32</sup> Ba Ren, “Linren Men” (Neighbors), in *Ba Ren wen ji huiyilu juan*, p. 310.

<sup>33</sup> Xiao Fei, “Huiyi Xianda jianshen dushuhui de huodong pianduan,” pp. 86-88.

<sup>34</sup> Lin Kesheng, “Huainian Baren tongzhi” [In memory of Comrade Ba Ren], in Zhou Nanjing ed., *Ba Ren Yudunixiya*, pp. 457-462.

Two years of life in the village of Surabeia had a transformative impact on Ba Ren’s thinking. Through everyday socialization, he developed close interpersonal relationships with his *pribumi* neighbors and a deeper understanding of inter-ethnic relations in Indonesia. As a devoted communist, Ba Ren believed that “class struggle will break down the stonewall between different ethnic groups.”<sup>35</sup> In his memoir, he wrote about the gradual disappearance of ethnic divisions after rubbing shoulders with the *pribumi* residents in Surabeia on a day-to-day basis:

It was as if I had forgotten my own nationality, as if I had no idea which country I originally came from. I was like an invader in this village where the Chinese, Javanese and Malay peacefully co-existed. I saw how diligent the Chinese were, and how idle the Javanese were. Almost all of the Chinese were comparatively well-off, whereas the Javanese and Malays had always been struggling to make ends meet. So the Javanese and Malays often used some seemingly witty schemes to take advantage of a Chinese newcomer like me. But their attempts were childlike, adorably awkward and naïve. I felt like I could reach out my hands and touch their warm hearts. But I always felt like there was some distance between me and the diligent Chinese peasants, the smart Chinese businessmen and intellectuals, no matter how friendly they were to me.<sup>36</sup>

Ba Ren’s affinity for the *pribumi* peasants around him was translated into a strong emotional attachment to the land of Indonesia and its people and a commitment to the cause of revolution in Indonesia. In his long poem *The Song of Indonesia*, a product of his Surabeia days, Ba Ren described himself as “a pawn of revolution” and “a third-class poet” who would embrace Indonesia in his arms together with his motherland. Ba Ren wrote:

Besides my own motherland, my worker brothers,

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<sup>35</sup> Ba Ren, “Yinni zhi ge,” p.320.

<sup>36</sup> Ba Ren, “Linren Men,” p. 333.

I care the most about your destiny.

I used to farm in your land,

And I smelled the fragrance of the soil of my motherland when I was hoeing.<sup>37</sup>

From Ba Ren's point of view, Indonesia was on the frontier of the global anti-Fascist struggle, but defeating the Japanese alone was far from the ultimate goal of the more thorough social revolution that he envisioned. Ba Ren was confident that "the flame of nationalist revolutionary struggles is going to light up the East" and that Indonesia's destiny "was connected to the whole globe."<sup>38</sup> In his imagination, he saw "the pictures of proletarian leaders on the walls of coolie laborers' dormitories all over Sumatra."<sup>39</sup>

He wrote in *The Song of Indonesia*:

Social revolution formed a new network across the boundaries of capitalist empires;

We, as the oppressed nation and class, are connected to and echoed in this network;

We have to fight this battle to dissemble the old network;

So as to establish a new network that is coherent, clear, free and equal.

Leaning towards the left will not be your fatal wound,

Why are you afraid? Why are you hesitating?

Only an assembly of the revolutionary masses is the solution to your disease that is beyond cure."<sup>40</sup>

Before Ba Ren finished his *Song of Indonesia*, the news of Japanese surrender arrived in Surabeia. Ba Ren was ready to leave for Medan to restart his political work. He had already foreseen the Dutch plan to reclaim colonial rule and was determined to devote himself to Indonesia's struggle for national independence. Ba Ren left Surabeia for Medan first while Lei stayed for a little longer to host a farewell

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<sup>37</sup> Ba Ren, "Yinni zhi ge," pp. 287-288.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.362 and p. 369.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 355

banquet for the whole village. She killed and cooked all the chickens they raised together. Over food and drinks, Lei revealed the couple's true identities, told the villagers about the work they did in the Anti-Fascist Alliance, and called upon the villagers to fight for Indonesia's independence. Shocked at first, their *pribumi* neighbors were quick to connect the dots in hindsight. One said: "The *bapak* does not look like a peasant, and *nyonya* seems very well-educated. The Japanese invasion united the Indonesians and the Chinese. We became brothers." Another requested: "Please send us letters from Medan! We might be able to come and visit you. We are good neighbors, aren't we?" A Chinese youth who came to assist Lei for relocation replied: "The Chinese and Indonesians are good neighbors forever!"<sup>41</sup>

### **The CCP and Political Mobilization of the Chinese during the Indonesian National Revolution**

The beginning of the Indonesian National Revolution coincided with the outbreak of a full-scale political and military confrontation between the Chinese Nationalist and Communist Parties. This rivalry spilled over to the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. According to Ba Ren's observation, in North Sumatra in the late 1940s, the Chinese community was divided into three groups: the "democratic and progressive" (民主进步) elements were sympathetic and supportive towards both the Chinese communists and Indonesia's struggle for national independence; the "reactionaries" (反动派) remained loyal to the Chinese Nationalist Government and had a condescending attitude towards the Indonesian people's struggle for national independence; and last but not the least, a large number of the apolitical Chinese population "only cared about their own economic well-being."<sup>42</sup> To attract support from the last group of non-committed ethnic Chinese, the Chinese Communist and Nationalist affiliates in Indonesia launched a battle in the arena of print media as well as in political and civic associations. In early 1946, the CCP's *Xinhua Daily* and the left-wing Chinese Democratic League's *The Democratic Daily* were banned during an anti-communist purge in the Nationalist Government's wartime capital of Chongqing. Later in the

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<sup>41</sup> Ba Ren, "Linren Men," pp. 365-366.

<sup>42</sup> Ba Ren, interview by Muhammad Radjab, Siantar, Sumatra, July 14, 1947. In Muhammad Radjab, *Tjatatan di Sumatera* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1949), p.66.

same year, playwright Xia Yan (夏衍), who used to work together with Ba Ren in the League of Left-Wing Writers in Shanghai, was dispatched by Zhou Enlai to Southeast Asia, with the mission of “obtaining information on the progressive elements in the cultural sector” and “promoting the principles of the CCP among the leaders of the Chinese communities.”<sup>43</sup> Shortly after Xia Yan’s arrival in Southeast Asia, *The Democratic Daily* revived in Medan, with Ba Ren and other left-wing Chinese intellectuals on its editorial board. Via the *The Democratic Daily*, Ba Ren and his colleagues tried to instill sympathy and respect for the Indonesian Revolution in the minds of the Chinese in Indonesia. The Chinese Nationalists in North Sumatra thus accused the *The Democratic Daily* of “colluding with the barbarians” (通番) and of betraying the interests of the ethnic Chinese. Public accusations were followed by assassination attempts, one of which left the Manager General of *The Democratic Daily* permanently disabled.<sup>44</sup> The Chinese Communist and Nationalist Parties also competed for control over local Chinese associations in North Sumatra. And as the Chinese Communist Party gradually gained the upper hand in the civil war back home, the underground Chinese communists in Southeast Asia also started to challenge the overseas presence of the Chinese Nationalist Party more aggressively. Starting from 1946, the CCP managed to place some of its undercover members into leadership roles in ethnic Chinese societies. For instance, Ba Ren became the consultant of the Overseas Chinese Association (华侨总会) in Medan.

A focal point of the contest between the Chinese Communist and Nationalist affiliates in Indonesia was their different understandings of the cause of ethnic tension between the Chinese and the *pribumi*. While the Nationalists believed the military forces of the Republic of Indonesia committed violence against the Chinese and fanned ethnic hatred among the indigenous population, Ba Ren believed that the longstanding economic structures in Indonesian society were the root of the problem. Using a Marxist analytical framework, Ba Ren contended that the tension between the Chinese and *pribumi* was a class issue rather than an ethnic one. It was the working class *pribumi* against the Chinese capitalists,

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<sup>43</sup> Xia Yan, “Yi Da Fu” [In memory of Dafu], September 20, 1985, *Renmin Ribao*.

<sup>44</sup> Lin Kesheng, “Huainian Baren tongzhi,” pp. 457-462.

rather than the *pribumi* against the Chinese ethnicity as a whole.<sup>45</sup> Drawing from his own experience of living among the *pribumi*, Ba Ren believed that “ordinary Indonesian working people have always been very friendly to the Chinese, and they seem to harbor no ethnic hatred.”<sup>46</sup> Ba Ren interpreted the frequent robberies committed by working class *pribumi* against Chinese shop owners during the Indonesian National Revolution as “a form of resistance against economic oppression.”<sup>47</sup> In the meantime, Ba Ren held that the ethnic Chinese businessmen were “responsible for the corruption and chaos in Indonesia,” because they had “formed an alliance with Indonesian army officers to smuggle weapons.”<sup>48</sup> In Ba Ren’s opinion, Indonesia could only develop its industries by nationalizing the capital of the ethnic Chinese in the future.<sup>49</sup>

Ba Ren was sensitive to the increased discrimination and attacks against the Chinese during the Indonesian Nationalist Revolution, and he strongly opposed the Chinese Nationalist Party’s promotion of Pao An Tui as the answer to the ethnic problem. At the beginning of the Indonesian National Revolution, Ba Ren noted: “the conditions are substantially different from the Japanese colonial period...[W]hile war continues, some have started to blackmail the Chinese businessmen behind the scenes...”<sup>50</sup> In the summer of 1946, with support from the Allied forces, the Dutch established control over Medan and drove the military forces of the Republic of Indonesia out of the region. With consent from the Nanjing Government, the local Pao An Tui accepted weapons from the Dutch and provided the Dutch troops with assistance. Ba Ren was furious at such arrangements, as he sarcastically commented:

[T]he Pao An Tui has made its best efforts in this war: sometimes it fought side by side with the

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<sup>45</sup> Ba Ren, “Yindunixiya geming guangan” p. 258.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp.314-315.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 262-263.

<sup>50</sup> Ba Ren, “Zai waiguo jianlao li,” p. 422.

Dutch forces; other times it even went ahead of the Dutch in chasing away the remaining Indonesian revolutionary troops. Its contributions should be dutifully recorded! The Dutch were most satisfied when the Pao An Tui marched into the countryside and cracked down on all the potential guerrilla bases among the Indonesian people. The benevolent Dutch are using the bloody hand of the Pao An Tui to conquer a ‘primitive nation’!<sup>51</sup>

According to Ba Ren, in order for the ethnic conflict to deescalate, the Chinese in Indonesia had to reflect upon the equally vicious dynamics of Chinese racism against the indigenous population. In his 1947 manuscript on the Indonesian National Revolution, Ba Ren cited Engels’ comments on the Second Opium War, when he called upon Western observers to respect the Chinese people’s struggle for national self-determination instead of ladening the war with “overbearing prejudice, stupidity, learned ignorance and pedantic barbarism.”<sup>52</sup> Ba Ren then proceeded to a comparison between Chinese and Indonesian history and a call for the Chinese to support the Indonesian National Revolution:

Every Chinese...should be grateful to Engels for granting our nation and people the right to live; for encouraging us to defend this right by expelling the invaders via a ‘barbaric’ struggle that was ridiculed by the so called ‘civilized people.’...the Chinese people’s history of struggle is written with blood and sweat. If we compare this history written with blood and sweat to the heroic struggle that the Indonesian people are currently carrying out, how could we join the Dutch in accusing the Indonesian people of being barbaric and cruel? We need to evaluate the current struggle in Indonesia in light of the nation’s stage of development; we also need to empathize with the Indonesian people given that we have also overcome tremendous difficulties in our own struggles. All the Chinese with a conscience, how could you serve as the pawns of the Dutch

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 423.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 253-254. The original version of Engels’ “Persia-China,” *New York Daily Tribune Articles on China, 1853-1860*, May 20, 1857, available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/06/05.htm>.

who murdered our fraternal ethnic groups? The Dutch imperialists are the mastermind of colonial exploitation in both Indonesia and China. The Chinese people and the Indonesian people are comrades-in-arms in the same struggle.<sup>53</sup>

To nurture this sense of solidarity between the Chinese and *pribumi* was the goal of Ba Ren's political activities during the Indonesian National Revolution. In 1947, during an interview with Indonesian journalist Muhammad Radjab, Ba Ren openly made a statement that the "progressive and democratic" group within the Chinese society harbored no resentment when they experienced or witnessed a disturbance or any other destructive behavior by the *pribumi* during the revolution in Sumatra. Ba Ren said: "When a nation is going through political and social revolution, it is understandable that chaos will occur."<sup>54</sup> As in the past, Ba Ren tried to facilitate dialogue between different ethnic communities. Ba Ren advised the Chinese left-wing civil associations of workers, women and youth to establish contact with their Indonesian counterparts. On May Day of 1946, the left-wing Chinese associations and their Indonesian counterparts jointly paraded through the streets of Medan in support of the Indonesian National Revolution. The left-wing Chinese associations also distributed flyers in *bahasa Indonesia*, urging the *pribumi* to stop anti-Chinese actions and to focus on forging a multi-ethnic alliance for an "anti-imperialist, anti-Fascist, anti-Feudalist national revolution and national independence movement."<sup>55</sup>

The work that most powerfully embodied Ba Ren's vision of a class struggle that transcended ethnic divisions was a play entitled *Wu Zu Miao* (五祖庙 or *Temple of Five Ancestors*). First appearing on stage in Medan, the play was written because of a request by the members of the New China Drama

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>54</sup> Ba Ren, Interview with journalist Muhammad Radjab on 14 July 1947 in Siantar, Sumatra. In Muhammad Radjab, *Tjatatan di Sumatera* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1949), p.66.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 257.

Club (新中国剧艺社), one of the left-wing Chinese civil associations active in Medan.<sup>56</sup> Ba Ren found his inspiration in a real historical event that took place on a Dutch-owned tobacco plantation in Dili (which is Medan today) in 1871. Five Chinese laborers working there started a revolt and killed the Dutch foreman, which led to death sentences for all of them in the local Sultan's court. The legend went that on the day when they were executed, Medan was hit by a strong storm. Elderly Chinese believed that a god in heaven was crying for the five Chinese heroes who died alone in a foreign land. After the storm ended, the leaders of the local Chinese community buried the bodies of the five laborers and built a “temple of five ancestors” in their honor. In the forward to the play, Ba Ren wrote: “The Gayos, Bataks, Malays and Chinese were fighting a battle collectively because they were all exploited and enslaved. No matter how primitive their means, their struggle fundamentally reflected the significance of the anti-imperialist alliance among different ethnic groups. This struggle started as the Chinese coolie’s revenge. The Chinese coolies inspired the Gayos, Bataks and Malays...now we can argue that the five heroes enshrined at the “temple of five ancestors” lit the torch of multi-ethnic anti-imperialist struggle in Dili.”<sup>57</sup>

By bringing the dead back to life, Ba Ren hoped to give a wake-up call to all the overseas Chinese, especially the businessmen who had made their fortune off the land of Indonesia but had grown indifferent towards the toll of their economic success on the Indonesian working class. Ba Ren wrote:

...[T]he Chinese have obviously become the middle class. Under the wings of the imperialists, they infiltrated the Indonesian peasant economy via usury loans, which further deepened the gulf between the Chinese and the indigenous people. Although they have also suffered from oppression by Western imperialists and resistance from the indigenous businessmen in Indonesia, their middle class status in the Indonesian economy cannot be easily shaken. After World War II,

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<sup>56</sup> It later went through three major revisions in the 1940s, the 1950s and during the early years of the Cultural Revolution. Ba Ren changed its title first to “Five Coolie Laborers who were hanged” (五个被吊死的苦力), and then to “The People who Lit Up the Torch” (点起火炬的人们). “Bianxuan shuoming” (Note of the selection of works), in *Collected Works of Ba Ren: Plays*, p. 459; Ba Ren, “Wu Zu Miao” (Temple of Five Ancestors), in *Ba Ren wen ji xiju juan* [Collected Works of Ba Ren: Plays] (Ningbo: Ningbo chubanshe, 1997), pp. 245-246.

<sup>57</sup> Ba Ren, “Wu Zu Miao,” pp. 244-245.

they are still dreaming of the good old days—they wanted to continue their comparatively well-off life under the protection of Western imperialists. They are not willing to gain a deeper knowledge of the Indonesian National Revolution. In other words, they cannot see that if they support the Indonesian revolution with the free capital in their hands, their business can be transformed to light industry, which will facilitate the peaceful coexistence of the Chinese and the indigenous groups. They [the Chinese businessmen] are unwilling to recognize this fact. Some of them even served as pioneers for the imperialists during colonial conquest, and they did harm to the Indonesian National Revolution. This is the tragic fate of the Chinese: they won the opportunity to achieve business success by using the earnings of the blood and sweat of their ancestors.<sup>58</sup>

In the play, Ba Ren projects a Marxist analysis of historical development onto the original legend. The story is set in rural Sumatra where the land used to be collectively owned, and the heads of villages democratically elected.<sup>59</sup> These “people’s communes” were at the primitive stage of communist development, and it was the arrival of Western imperialism that derailed them from this original trajectory of development, which would have led by successive stages to communism. In the play, Ba Ren showed that the flow of Western capital, building of plantations, and influx of Indian and Chinese coolie laborers fundamentally changed the social landscape of Sumatra. Their shared sufferings ultimately brought the working class together across the dividing line of ethnicity. Ba Ren embodied these ideas in conversations between characters of different ethnicities: one of them was Sjahrir, a well-respected Malay who functioned as the “Party Secretary” of the village. When talking about the cruelty of the Dutch plantation owner and foremen and possible plans for revolt, Sjahrir said: “Without the participation of the Chinese coolies, nothing can succeed.”<sup>60</sup> In dialogue with Sjahrir was a Gayo character named Sharon, a

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<sup>58</sup> Ba Ren, “Wu ge bei diaosi de kuli” [Five Coolie Laborers who were hanged], in Zhou Nanjing ed., *Ba Ren yu Yindunixiya*, p. 120.

<sup>59</sup> Ba Ren, “Wu Zu Miao,” p. 300.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

head laborer who always carried a *kris* on his waist. Sharon made a metaphor: “Struggle is the best call. Destiny is like an iron chain that connects the Malays, the Bataks, the Gayos, and the Chinese coolies. Once you pick up one end of the chain and start shaking it, the whole chain will move as a whole.”<sup>61</sup>

In his representations, Ba Ren put forward the Marxist argument that since imperialists’ capital permeates throughout the world, the revolution of the proletariat should also be a global phenomenon that transcends national boundaries. In other words, the Chinese working class should not see themselves as sojourners and thereby distance themselves from the proletarian struggle in Indonesia. Rather, they needed to fully devote themselves to the struggle since revolutions in different nations were all interconnected. One of the five rebels, Chen Bingyi (陈炳益) said to the other four Chinese laborers when they made a blood vow in front of Tua Pek Kong (or Dabo Gong 大伯公) before the revolt: “We are all Chinese and we all have the same destiny. Back in China, the Manchu barbarians sat in the emperor’s dragon chair; and the foreign devils ruled our nation. In Nanyang, the foreign devils take charge too. It was as if we were in the Buddha’s palm: no matter how much headway you make, you remain within his hand.” Another main Chinese character, Hei Er (黑二), a smart young man who speaks fluent Malay and other local languages, reinforces the same idea when he says: “The Bataks, the Malays, and the Gayos are all starting revolts. They can no longer continue to suffer from oppression. There are tens of thousands of Chinese like us, shall we also be part of the revolt? The poor all over the world share the same heart! If we combine our efforts with the barbarians (番人), we will win the world over to us!”<sup>62</sup> Both the Dutch plantation owner and the Chinese rebels tried to win the talented and capable Hei Er over. But in the end, Hei Er opted for the side of the laborers. As he passionately called out: “We have to fight wherever we live. It does not matter if it is Dili, Malaya, Java or China. The world belongs to us—the laborers!

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

Fight!”<sup>63</sup>

The theme that class distinction overrides the identification with culture and ethnicity plays out in the interpersonal relations of the main characters. One of the villains in the play is Gao Sheng (高升), a Chinese overseer who works for the Dutch by oppressing the Chinese as well as other ethnic groups. In the play, the Dutch plantation owner introduces him as “one of our fellow countrymen,” “an obedient servant of the Dutch,” and “a participant in the coolie trade.” When the Dutch overseers are discussing methods to control the discontented laborers, Gao supports the idea that military forces should be involved: “You can reason with civilized people; but for the barbarians you can only rely upon big sticks.”

<sup>64</sup> The climax of the play also demonstrates that class can unify people more powerfully than ethnicity. Before the five heroes are executed, Sjahrir is the one who delivers their last dinner. Hei Er, who is also hunted by the Dutch, says to Sjahrir: “[H]ow could I thank you enough? Only the poor and the distressed understand the feelings of one another. Although you are Malay, we are Chinese, our hearts are connected.”<sup>65</sup> In prison, Sjahrir says to the five Chinese laborers at their last dinner:

...[Y]ou are innocent. I know, there is a big, thick, and hairy arm that captured you without notice. This arm is so powerful, and it captured you as easily as grasping a handful of beans. This arm waved from north to south, and the hand let go of you. Therefore, you landed in my country just like beans sown into a foreign earth. Mother earth of this land is as loving and benevolent as mothers everywhere. You were supposed to grow, blossom and bear fruit here. You were also the sons of our mother earth. But our mother earth is a victim too. This big, thick, and hairy arm sapped all her milk and blood...Our mother earth is exhausted, and therefore cannot give you any

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 278-279.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 354.

reward.<sup>66</sup>

The play was well received among the local Chinese communities as well as the Indonesian Republican troops and guerrilla fighters because it pulled together multiple threads: inter-ethnic alliance, worldwide struggle against imperialism, and working-class solidarity. It was put on the stage 20 to 30 times at more than 10 different locations in North Sumatra. At the time the city of Medan was occupied by the Dutch while the surrounding area was under the control of the forces of the Republic of Indonesia. Travelling between the zones controlled by the Dutch and the TNI would involve intense, time-consuming inspections. Yet as the play gained popularity, whenever the TNI soldiers or guerrilla fighters heard the name of the New China Drama Club, they would escort the actors, actresses and staff across border passes.<sup>67</sup>

The translations and adaptions of the play contributed to its success. Though written in Mandarin Chinese, on the stage the actors used Hokkien mixed with a variation of Malay spoken by ethnic Chinese peasants, which could be easily understood by the *pribumi* audience.<sup>68</sup> Due to logistic difficulties, all Gayo and Malay characters were removed except for a Malay young woman who had a romantic relationship with Hei Er. Although Ba Ren was very concerned about this change, this sole *pribumi* character managed to win the hearts of the audience through beautifully performed *pantun* songs and *rongeng* dances, the typical folk melody and dance in North Sumatra. A chorus affiliated with the New China Drama Club would sing Indonesian revolutionary songs before each performance to demonstrate the Chinese support of the Indonesian National Revolution.

In July 1947, Ba Ren was arrested by the Dutch due to his mobilization efforts among the Chinese communities for the cause of Indonesian National Revolution. The community of left-wing

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid p. 355.

<sup>67</sup> Xu Ru'an, "Wang Renshu jiqi Wu Zu Miao" [Wang Renshu and his *Temple of Five Ancestors*], in Zhou Nanjing ed., *Ba Ren yu Yindunixiya*, pp. 484-492. The author used to be the editor of *The Democratic Daily*, and was one of the persons in charge in the "New China Drama Club."

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

Chinese intellectuals in Indonesia and Singapore strongly protested against Ba Ren's imprisonment. A left-wing Chinese-language magazine based in Singapore, *Below the Winds* (*Feng Xia* or 风下), published an op-ed which argued: "Sympathizing with the Indonesian people's revolutionary struggles should never be regarded as a crime. The reactionaries deviously framed Baren with the assistance from the Dutch. And the Dutch cruelly and unjustifiably arrested one of its own anti-Fascist allies. We cannot tolerate such brutal behavior towards an outstanding Chinese intellectual."<sup>69</sup> But Ba Ren was mentally prepared to use his self-sacrifice to change the *pribumi*'s perception of the ethnic Chinese as apathetic or even resentful towards the Indonesian National Revolution. He wrote: "I will prepare a basin of clean water for the bloody hands of the overseas Chinese, so that they can clean their hands."<sup>70</sup>

## Conclusion

In mid September 1947, Ba Ren, released from the Dutch prison, boarded a ship from Sumatra to Hong Kong. In his memoir, he recorded a conversation with an "open-minded, progressive Chinese gentlemen." Ba Ren's fellow passenger commented on ethnic relations:

How could the overseas Chinese continue to live on in Indonesia? There are 40,000 Chinese in Medan, even if 2,000-3,000 of them were able to return to China, all the rest of our fellow countrymen could only stay in Indonesia. Medan of course is not the land of the Chinese. Therefore, do we have the right to shout out slogans such as "The troops of the Indonesian Republic should never return to East Sumatra?" How could our descendants continue to live there? ... [T]he Chinese would be doomed if soulless people continue to run wild in Indonesian society!

Ba Ren replied: "This is the tragedy of the Chinese. There is a big Chiang Kai Shek in the motherland;

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<sup>69</sup> Ming Lun, "Zao Helan daibu de Ba Ren" [Ba Ren under arrest by the Dutch], *Feng Xia* [Below the winds], Issue 89 (August 1947).

<sup>70</sup> Ba Ren, "Zai waiguo jianlao li," pp. 424-425.

and there are countless little Chiang Kai Sheks overseas.”<sup>71</sup>

This chapter treats Ba Ren as the embodiment of the emerging strategies and ideology underlying the CCP’s policy towards the overseas Chinese in Indonesia. To the Chinese communists, the support from the overseas Chinese would bring material benefits as well as validation of its political legitimacy worldwide. In terms of strategy, whereas the Nanjing Government could rely upon well-established institutional structures, including the ROC embassy, consulates and overseas branches of the Chinese Nationalist Party, the Chinese communists had to depend on an informal and flexible web of interpersonal connections. The node of this network was a community of left-wing intellectuals who migrated from Mainland China to Southeast Asia during World War II. They laid a solid foundation for the growth of pro-Chinese Communist print media and schools and sparked the minds of ethnic Chinese youth whose political consciousness developed during both the Japanese occupation of Indonesia and the Indonesian National Revolution. The CCP’s mobilization during the 1940s contributed to the continuous politicization of the Chinese youth after Indonesia’s independence. In terms of ideology, the Chinese communists believed that the shared grievances and aspirations of the oppressed working class would help the ethnic Chinese and the *pribumi* overcome racial prejudice. The ultimate solution to the ethnic problem was for the ethnic Chinese to devote themselves, politically and economically, to Indonesia’s struggle for national self-determination.

After his arrival in Hong Kong, Ba Ren founded an “Indonesia Research Group” (印尼问题小组) under the CCP’s bureau of foreign relations. Some of the left-wing youth who used to work closely with Ba Ren in Indonesia followed him and contributed their linguistic skills and local knowledge to the CCP’s policy making in the realm of overseas Chinese affairs.<sup>72</sup> In August 1950, Ba Ren returned to Indonesia as the first PRC ambassador. The following chapter will demonstrate how Ba Ren, with his

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 465-466.

<sup>72</sup> Wen Liu (温流), interview by author, Xiamen, October 23, 2013. Mr. Wen Liu was a member of the Indonesia Research Group in Hong Kong. He later joined the Foreign Service and was stationed in the PRC embassy in Jakarta in 1952-1955 and 1959-1962.

new identity as the highest-ranking diplomatic representative of a recently established communist regime, became embroiled in the complicated dynamics of political struggle against the “countless little Chiang Kai Sheks” in Indonesia.

## CHAPTER 3

### Red versus Blue I: The Battle between Two Chinas, 1949-1959

#### Introduction

In 1950, before Ba Ren embarked on his assignment as Beijing's first ambassador to Jakarta, his memoir of the years in the Sumatran jungle was published. In the afterword to the book, Ba Ren told the story of an impoverished ethnic Chinese peasant, Ah Lu (阿魯), and his wife, who made a living by selling their own babies. Reflecting on the situation, Ba Ren wrote:

How is their life now? The liberation of China is not the liberation of the lives of little earth worms like them on a foreign land. “When Tangshan (唐山) grows stronger, what is the benefit for me Ah Lu?” These words from Ah Lu were once again ringing in my ears. The son of the earth wants the liberation of the land where his roots are...Without the profound enlightenment that he gave me, I would not have jumped into the “sea of fire” of the Indonesian Revolution after the Japanese surrender in August 1945 and “incinerated” myself. Neither would I have been expelled from Indonesia...I want to present an outline of millions of working people among the overseas Chinese to the people of New China. In my fifty years of life until now, leaving aside my early years of ignorance, almost one-sixth of my productive time has been spent in this vast “land below the winds”... On these islands dotted on the Pacific at the end of the world, there are millions of working people who shared the same smell of sweat and earth with me. Ten million of them are overseas Chinese, who have been torn and eaten by a trapped wild animal. This is the biggest source of my sorrow.<sup>1</sup>

Cherishing the memory of living side-by-side with the *pribumi* in the past and the hopes of liberating the overseas Chinese from their suffering in the future, Ba Ren returned to “the land below the

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<sup>1</sup> Ba Ren, ““Rensheng jiqi zhouwei de yiqun’ xiaohou ji” [Afterword of *Rensheng and Those around Him*], In *Ba Ren wenji shige xuba juan*, pp. 487-489.

winds” and found himself in an ever more unstable political situation. In Indonesian domestic politics, the organizational infrastructure remained under construction while different ideological strands—mainly the anti-communist Islamic groups and the left-wing parties—competed for power. Meanwhile, within the Chinese communities, the end of military confrontation within China proper marked the beginning of another Chinese war overseas. Having lost the civil war, Taipei continued to challenge Beijing over the legitimate representation of “China” in relation to both the Indonesian Government and to the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. How did Ba Ren and the Chinese leadership in Beijing respond to these challenges given that the Nationalists had a longer history of development abroad and had accumulated more human and social capital in the Chinese community in Indonesia? This chapter examines the struggle between the Red (the Communists) and the Blue (the Nationalists) from a top-down perspective, focusing on decision-making by political elites on both sides.

### **Backdoor Diplomacy: Taipei Reconnecting with Jakarta**

As an ally of the Netherlands, the Chinese Nationalist Government sided with the Dutch during the Indonesian National Revolution and did not give diplomatic recognition to the newborn Republic of Indonesia. After Indonesia achieved its formal independence in December 1949, the Chinese Nationalist regime changed its policy. The ROC dispatched one of the senior politicians in the Chinese Nationalist Party, Wu Tiecheng (吴铁城) (1888-1953), as the special envoy to Jakarta to explore the possibility of establishing diplomatic contact.<sup>2</sup> However, the Chinese Nationalist regime’s friendly gesture seemed to have come too late. In 1950, the Republic of Indonesia became one of the first countries to grant diplomatic recognition to communist China.

The initial bilateral relations between Beijing and Jakarta were tortuous. Despite the fact that the Indonesian political elites shared China’s experience of anti-colonial struggle and its belief in the principle of national self-determination, the perception of the PRC by these elites, especially those from the right-

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<sup>2</sup>Qiu Zhengou, *Sujianuo shidai Yinni pahua shishi* [Historical facts of the anti-Chinese movements during the Sukarno era] (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1995), p. 5.

wing spectrum, was shrouded by suspicion of or even aversion towards communism. This gap between the official status of Sino-Indonesian relations and its reality is reflected in the fact that whereas the first PRC ambassador, Ba Ren, arrived in Indonesia in August 1950, the Indonesian side initially designated only a charge d'affaires to Beijing. The first Indonesian ambassador to the PRC, Arnold Mononutu, did not hand his credentials to Mao Zedong until October 28, 1953.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, while technically abiding by the “One China” policy and recognizing Beijing as the only legitimate government of China, Jakarta granted permission to the vice consuls general of the ROC, Nu Shu Chu (纽树椿) and Zhu Changdong (朱昌东), as well as to their families to continue living in Indonesia as commoners, against diplomatic protocol.<sup>4</sup> Such arrangements allowed the Chinese Nationalist Party apparatus in Indonesia to continue operating and its cadres to retain their prominent social and economic positions and to remain politically active on behalf of the Chinese Nationalist Government in Taipei.

In light of the discrepancy between Indonesian policy towards the two Chinas on paper and in reality, Taipei saw great promise in reclaiming regime legitimacy and strengthening national security through befriending this most populous country of Southeast Asia. Due to its geographical proximity to the island of Taiwan, Southeast Asia was a strategically important region for the Chinese Nationalist regime in exile. In particular, the Chinese Nationalist leaders were interested in collaboration with anti-communist political forces in Southeast Asia. For instance, in July 1949, before formally relocating his government to Taiwan, the Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai Shek visited the Philippines and had discussions with President Elpidio Rivera Quirino about the possibility of a pan-Asia anti-communist alliance among Taipei, Manila and Seoul.<sup>5</sup> The historical legacy of the Chinese Nationalist Party’s expansion in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia, also made Taipei confident in being able to realize

<sup>3</sup>Lian Zhengbao, Wang Jingtang, Huang Taopeng eds., *Jiemi waijiao wenxian: zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianjiao dang'an: 1949-1955* [ Declassified documents on PRC’ establishing diplomatic relations with other countries: 1949-1955] (Beijing: Zhongguo huabao chubanshe, 2006), p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>“Berkas tentang permintaan bekas Konsul di Tiongkok Nasionalis Tuan New Shu Chun tetap tinggal di Jogjakarta,” May 6, 1950, Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1962, ANRI.

<sup>5</sup> Unlike Indonesia, the Philippines officially recognized the ROC as the sole representative of China until 1975.

this strategic goal. The Chinese Nationalist Party established its Southeast Asian regional headquarters in Batavia (Jakarta today) in 1928, which oversaw 19 branches all over the Dutch East Indies.<sup>6</sup> The number of the Chinese Nationalist Party members and sympathizers further grew with the arrival of party loyalists and ROC diplomats stationed abroad during the Chinese Civil War and after the communist takeover. The scale of Chinese Nationalist organizations and party members in Indonesia was the largest worldwide, exceeding those of Hong Kong and other countries in Southeast Asia.<sup>7</sup>

The rise of the Sukiman Cabinet (April 27, 1951–February 25, 1952) dominated by the Masyumi Party (*Partai Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia*, or the Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations), a major Islamic and anti-communist political party in Indonesia in the 1950s, opened up a window of opportunity for Taipei to expand its influence. In early 1951, the Chinese Nationalist Party branch in Jakarta reported to Taipei that the Indonesian intelligence service was interested in sharing information for anti-communist purposes.<sup>8</sup> The Sukiman Cabinet later invited ROC intelligence personnel to visit Indonesia for assistance in “maintaining internal security.”<sup>9</sup> In June 1951, the Chinese Nationalist Party branch in Jakarta provided Taipei with an optimistic evaluation of Indonesia’s international outlook: “Despite the current political instabilities, the Indonesian Government probably will not take a ‘left turn’ and join the Soviet bloc. The anti-communist politicians and political groups are all hopeful that informal relations will be established between the ROC and Indonesia.”<sup>10</sup>

In the name of anti-communism, Taipei joined hands with the Masyumi Party to combat the CCP

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<sup>6</sup> Wen Guangyi, Cai Renlong, Liu Aihua, and Luo Mingqing, *Yindunixiya huqiao shi* [History of overseas Chinese in Indonesia] (Beijing: Haiyang chubanshe, 1985), p. 433; Huaqiao Zhi editorial board, *Yinni huqiao zhi* [General records of overseas Chinese in Indonesia] (Taipei: Huaqiaozhi editorial board, 1961), p. 161.

<sup>7</sup> Xu Zhenzhen, *Yindunixiya huaren zhong de qin Taiwan qunti: jingyu yu yingdui* [The pro-Taiwan Chinese communities in Indonesia] (PhD Dissertation, Xiamen University, 2008), p. 46.

<sup>8</sup> “A letter from Zheng Yanfen and Li Pushen,” December 8, 1950, from dossier “The citizenship issue among the overseas Chinese in Indonesia,” *Academia Historica*, 020–010801–0018.

<sup>9</sup> “A Letter from Zheng Yanfen to Ye Gongchao,” December 8, 1950, from dossier “The citizenship issue among the overseas Chinese in Indonesia,” *Academia Historica*, 020–010801–0018.

<sup>10</sup> “A Letter from Chen Kewen to Xue Shouheng,” June 26, 1951, from dossier “A miscellaneous collection on Indonesia,” *Academia Historica*, 020–010899–0036.

and the PKI despite the fact that these two communist parties had tenuous connections at the time.

Although available archival materials cannot confirm whether the ROC had dispatched agents from Taiwan, it is evident that the already existing Chinese Nationalist networks in Indonesia were engaged in the anti-communist campaign initiated by the Sukiman Cabinet in August 1951. In a report to Taipei in September 1951, Zhu Changdong, the former vice consul general of the ROC in Indonesia, reported to Taipei that in Jakarta “a secret central commission” with the codename Liu Dexian (刘德贤) had been actively involved in Indonesian politics.<sup>11</sup> This underground organization stayed in direct contact with and received strong support from the overseas Chinese commission, the Third Team of the Central Party Committee of the Chinese Nationalist Party and the ROC Foreign Ministry in Taipei. Initially, Liu Dexian was founded from the bottom up as a response from the pro-Taipei Chinese to the arrival of the PRC diplomatic mission. Its ten core members were intellectuals, businessmen, and former diplomats who were loyal to the Chinese Nationalist Party and committed to the expansion of the Party’s influence among the overseas Chinese by any means.<sup>12</sup> According to Zhu, in 1951, the Indonesian Government frequently asked for Liu Dexian’s assistance in purging the pro-Beijing ethnic Chinese and in undermining the influence of the PRC embassy and consulates in local Chinese societies.<sup>13</sup>

As a result, in the anti-communist purge of 1951, more than 15,000 people, mostly alleged PKI members and sympathizers as well as a sizable number of pro-Beijing ethnic Chinese, were arrested and

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<sup>11</sup> “Report from Zhu Changdong,” September 28, 1951, from dossier “A special collection on Indonesia,” *Academia Historica*, Taipei, 020—010801—0018.

<sup>12</sup> The names of the committee members are: Wu Shenji (吴慎机), Chen Xingyan (陈兴砚), Wen Juming (温菊明), Guo Meicheng (郭美丞), Qiu Yuanrong (丘元荣), Liang Xiyou (梁锡佑), Zhang Xunyi (章勋义), Ma Shuli (马树礼), Zhu Changdong (朱昌东). Zhu put down the following information on the founding of Liu Dexian in his report to Taipei: “We remember that when the communist bandits established diplomatic relations with Indonesia, around 10 patriotic (pro-Taiwan) leaders of the Chinese society secretly got together to discuss the local political situation, as well as how to gain control of the Chinese associations and schools and to prevent these organization from being used by the communist bandits. The central Nationalist party branch in Jakarta coordinated with branches in other parts of Indonesia, and they collaborated with the Chinese business and retail associations to reinforce anti-Communist propaganda and to conduct civil diplomacy.” “Report from Zhu Changdong,” September 28, 1951, from dossier “A special collection on Indonesia,” *Academia Historica*, 020—010801—0018.

<sup>13</sup> “Report from Zhu Changdong,” September 28, 1951, from dossier “A special collection on Indonesia,” *Academia Historica*, 020—010801—0018.

imprisoned without a fair and thorough investigation.<sup>14</sup> For instance, underground Chinese Communist Party members including Wang Jiyuan (王纪元), the editor-in-chief of the pro-Beijing *Sheng Huo Bao* (生活报), and Yang Xinrong (杨新容), the principal of the pro-Beijing Xinghua School (新华中小学) in Jakarta, were arrested and later deported in 1952 and 1953 respectively.<sup>15</sup> Zhu Changdong wrote to Taipei triumphantly:

With assistance from us, the Indonesian Government arrested a large number of communists for the purpose of maintaining internal security. In the past few months, approximately 1,000 communists were arrested, among which 216 were Chinese communists and sympathizers. 19 of these Chinese communists have done all kinds of evil. The Chinese society is overall very glad.<sup>16</sup>

Having capitalized on the Islamic political forces' attack on the Indonesian left wing to achieve its own goal of undermining Beijing's influence, Taipei started to contemplate the possibility of building informal governmental relations. In September 1951, the Chinese Nationalist Party branch in Jakarta noticed signs of possible rapprochement in public discourse.<sup>17</sup> The *Keng Po* (竞报 or *Jing Bao*) of Jakarta, the most largely circulated Chinese-owned Indonesian-language daily (25,000 copies), advocated in an editorial that the Indonesian Government should weigh the possibility of recognizing the Chinese Nationalist Government. The report recommended that as a transitional step, Jakarta could consider recognizing one China (Beijing) juridically (*de jure*) and the other China (Taipei) factually (*de facto*).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Xu Tiantang, *Zhengzhi xuanwo zhong de huaren* [Overseas Chinese in political turmoil] (Hong Kong: Xianggang shehui kexue chuban gongsi, 2004), p. 625.

<sup>15</sup> Cai Relong, *Chidaoxian shang de jiayin*, pp. 380-385. The author is a professor emeritus at the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University. He was born in West Kalimantan and used to be a pro-Beijing student activist in Jakarta before returning to China in 1953. This is his memoir. Yang Xinrong is his father-in law.

<sup>16</sup> "Report from Zhu Changdong," September 28, 1951, from dossier "A special collection on Indonesia," *Academia Historica*, 020-010801-0018..

<sup>17</sup> "Letter from Jakarta to Xue Shouheng," September 17, 1951, from dossier "A special collection on Indonesia," *Academia Historica*, 020-010801-0018.

<sup>18</sup> *Keng Po*, September 17, 1951 (Film 898, Kroch Asia). Cited in "Letter from Jakarta to Xue Shouheng," September 17, 1951, from dossier "A special collection on Indonesia," *Academia Historica*, 020-010801-0018.

Yet in addition to the hopes brought by Sukiman Cabinet's staunch stance against communism and friendly attitude towards the ROC, the leaders in Taiwan were driven by the fear of losing control over the ethnic Chinese. After the Chinese Nationalists' defeat in 1949, the overseas Chinese became an important source of support for Taipei's mission to "recover the motherland." Chiang Kai Shek honored the pro-Taipei overseas Chinese as the epitome of "loyalty" and "righteousness" in a "complicated political environment." Chiang praised them for "giving the people and soldiers of the Free Motherland tremendous spiritual support" and "giving the traitors and degenerate elements a powerful blow." And in Chiang's view, the role they played in the rivalry against Beijing was "more significant than that during the years of the War of Resistance against the Japanese."<sup>19</sup>

Taipei's overall goal in the control and management of the overseas Chinese was to "undermine the influence of the Chinese Communist Party branches abroad and the PRC embassies and consulates."

<sup>20</sup> In 1951, the Overseas Party Affairs Department of the Chinese Nationalist Party designed a set of detailed strategies for the promotion of an "anti-Communist, anti-Soviet, national-salvation movement among the overseas Chinese": to assist in the education of the overseas Chinese; to spread the ideology of the Chinese Nationalist Party among ethnic Chinese students; to attract the younger generation to join the Chinese Nationalist Party organizations overseas; and to encourage the overseas Chinese to invest in Taiwan.<sup>21</sup> The Chinese Nationalist Party central committee in Taipei dispatched supervisors to enforce these plans.<sup>22</sup> The Chinese Nationalist Party assigned Zheng Yanfen (郑彦棻) as the head of the Overseas Chinese Committee. Zheng used to hold prominent positions such as the General Secretary of

<sup>19</sup> Chiang Kai-Shek, "Speech at the Conference for Global Overseas Chinese Affair," 1952, Taipei, cited in Fan Yame, *Lun 1949 nian yihou Guomindang zhengquan de qiaowu zhengce* [On Guomindang regime's overseas Chinese policy after 1949] (MA thesis, National Taiwan University, July 2005), p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> "The outline of the Chinese Nationalist Party's overseas affairs," approved on April 18, 1951, in the Party History Committee of the Chinese Nationalist Party ed., *Zhongguo Guomindang dangwu fazhan shiliao—zhongyang gaizai weiyuanhui ziliao huibian* [Historical documents of the development of the Chinese Nationalist Party] volume 1 (Taipei: Jindai zhongguo chubanshe, 2000), p. 334.

<sup>21</sup> "The core missions of the Party's mission in 1950," approved on January 11, 1951, the Party History Committee of the Chinese Nationalist Party ed., *Zhongguo Guomindang dangwu fazhan shiliao*, pp. 337-338.

<sup>22</sup> "The outline of the Chinese Nationalist Party's overseas affairs," pp. 225-231

the Party Central Committee during the Nationalist rule in Mainland China and had close relations with Chiang Ching-Kuo, the son and successor of Chiang Kai-shek. The deputy chairperson working underneath Zheng was Li Pusheng (李朴生), a Sumatra-born Cantonese. Li's personal connections to Indonesia provided the Chinese Nationalists with more extensive social networks to mobilize.

With Jakarta switching its diplomatic relations to Beijing, Taipei was greatly concerned that the ethnic Chinese who remained loyal to the Nationalist government would have no choice but to register as PRC citizens and place themselves under Beijing's protection. Under the provisions of the Round Table Agreement of 1949, all Indonesian-born Chinese could automatically obtain Indonesian citizenship or they could repudiate Indonesian citizenship before December 27, 1951 and register with their own consular authorities in Indonesia if they wanted to retain their own nationality.<sup>23</sup> Shortly before the nationality selection deadline in December 1951, Taipei received quite a number of communications from pro-Taipei Chinese in Indonesia expressing their anxiety over the ambiguity of their national status. These ethnic Chinese complained that the provisions of the Indonesian nationality law of 1949 put them "in limbo": they were unwilling to become Indonesian citizens because of the fear that they would not be granted the same rights as the *pribumi*, but, at the same time, they were confused about the existence of two Chinese Governments in both Mainland China and Taiwan.<sup>24</sup>

In the hope that the pro-Taipei ethnic Chinese would be given legal protection within Indonesia and travel documents with the same functions as passports abroad, Taipei made a great effort to establish informal relations with Jakarta. The June 16, 1951 issue of the *Tian Sheng Ri Bao* (天声日报), the Chinese Nationalist Party organ in Jakarta, published an interview with the Director of the Division of Minority Races at Indonesia's Ministry of the Interior. The Director was quoted as stating:

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<sup>23</sup> G. William Skinner, *Communism and Chinese Culture in Indonesia: The Political Dynamics of the Chinese Youth* (August 1962), Kroch Asia Library, Cornell University. p.18.

<sup>24</sup> "Letter from Chinese Association in Madium to the Foreign Ministry of the ROC," July 18, 1951, from dossier "The nationality issue of the overseas Chinese," *Academia Historica*, 020-010807-0026.

Chinese residents in Indonesia who neither wish to become Indonesian citizens nor desire to be subject to Chinese communist jurisdiction may register with the diplomatic or consular agencies of a third power which maintains friendly relations with both the Government of the Republic of China and the Government of the Indonesian Republic. By doing so, these Chinese will obtain papers which entitle them to Chinese citizenship with continued allegiance to the Government of the Republic of China. At present, the Philippine Embassy in Djakarta would be an ideal choice to assume this task. As an alternative, arrangements may also be made through the United Nations.<sup>25</sup>

But the proposal that a third power or the United Nations take over the protection of the anti-Communist Chinese nationals could only be realized if Jakarta granted diplomatic recognition to Taipei.<sup>26</sup> For that purpose, Taipei mobilized its transnational networks to assess the center of political power in Indonesia via Chen Kewen (陈克文) (1898-1986), a senior Nationalist politician. In 1927, at the Peasant Movement Institute in Wuhan, Chen worked together with Mao Zedong as the Secretary of the Department of Peasant Affairs of the Chinese Nationalist Party Central (国民党中央党务农民部秘书).<sup>27</sup> Chen later assumed important positions such as the Chief of the Overseas Party Affairs Department and the Secretary-General of the Legislative Yuan. By the end of the Chinese Civil War, Chen migrated to Hong Kong and worked as a high school teacher and editor of an anti-communist biweekly entitled *The Free Man* (自由人). Although no longer active in politics, Chen's personal networks made him a valuable mediator for behind-the-door negotiations between Taipei and Jakarta. On the one hand, he had his longstanding friendship with Li Pusheng (李朴生), the deputy chair of the overseas Chinese committee of

<sup>25</sup> *Tian Sheng Ribao*, June 16, 1951, cited in "The nationality issue of the overseas Chinese," *Academia Historica*, 020-010807-0026.

<sup>26</sup> "Agreed minute of the conversation among Tang Liangli, Chen Kewen and Xue Shouheng," December 1, 1951, "A miscellaneous collection on Indonesia," *Academia Historica*, 020-010899-0036.

<sup>27</sup> Chen was very critical towards Mao, accusing him of using the peasants and workers for his own interests, rather than assisting and supporting the peasants and workers as the Chinese Nationalist Party policy line proclaimed. See Chen Kewen, "Mao Zedong and the Peasant Movement Training Institute," in Chen Fong-ching ed., *Chen Kewen riji 1937-1952* [Diary of Chen Kewen, 1937-1952] (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2012) volume 2, pp. 1397-1398.

the Chinese Nationalist Party in Taipei. On the other hand, Chen also had a close relationship with Tang Liangli (汤良礼, Thung Liang Lee, also known as Tubagus Pranata Tirtawidjaya) (1901-1970), an old schoolmate of Chen's and personal assistant to the Foreign Minister of the Sukiman Cabinet Achmad Soebardjo.

Tang's life experience vividly exemplifies the intertwined nature of modern Chinese and Southeast Asian history. Born in Java, Tang was educated in Europe and published extensively in English. After leading the Chinese Nationalist Party's Communications Office to Europe, Tang returned to China and became the chief English language spokesman and private secretary for Wang Jingwei (汪精卫) (1883-1944), the leader of the non-Communist left-wing within the Nationalist Party and a long-time rival of Chiang Kai Shek. In this position, Tang enabled Zhou Enlai, the leader of the Communist Party who was hunted by the Nationalist Party authorities, to escape from Shanghai with the assistance of a Western friend. After the collapse of Wang's regime, Tang was arrested by Chiang but soon released for reasons that remain unclear. In 1949, Tang resettled in Indonesia by adopting Indonesian citizenship and working as a local businessman.<sup>28</sup>

Given Tang's murky background, his motivation for forging the Taipei-Jakarta informal diplomatic connection is dubious. His decision to invest time, energy, and social capital could be purely based on his close personal relationship with Chen, and/or his economic speculation that this could be a profitable business. During his preliminary meetings with officials from the Foreign Ministry in Taipei, Tang offered a disclaimer that he was "not acting in any official capacity" and his role was simply as "the personal adviser of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia."<sup>29</sup> Tang proposed that in order to expand its influence, the ROC should maintain regular contact with Jakarta by establishing a commercial agency

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<sup>28</sup> Lawrence Kessler, "Reconstructing Zhou Enlai's Escape from Shanghai in 1931: A Research Note," *Twentieth Century China* 34, no. 2 (April 2008), pp. 112-131.

<sup>29</sup> "Agreed minute of the conversation among Tang Liangli, Chen Kewen and Xue Shouheng," December 1, 1951, "A miscellaneous collection on Indonesia," *Academia Historica*, 020—010899—0036.

in Indonesia, a proposal to which Taipei responded positively.<sup>30</sup> In his letter to Chen dated January 1952, Tang wrote: “I understand that the real Chinese nationals are largely against Peking, but they need enlightenment. And for this great resources are needed. Many have to be persuaded.” Tang probably took this project to enlighten “the real Chinese nationals” in Indonesia as a business opportunity rather than an ideological mission. For one thing, he did not seem to be shy in requesting monetary rewards. In a letter to Chen, Tang put forward an enquiry about a special fund from the Nationalist Government that amounted to USD 50,000, which he claimed should be at his disposal.<sup>31</sup> When Chen passed Tang’s request onto the Foreign Ministry in Taipei, the ROC Foreign Ministry denied the existence of such a promise and condemned Tang’s behavior as “unfathomable” and “contradictory.”<sup>32</sup>

The questionable employment of Tang in Taipei-Jakarta negotiations attests to the serious limitations the Chinese Nationalists faced in recovering their international status after losing the Chinese Civil War. Between March 29 and May 12, 1952, Chen Kewen, upon Tang’s invitation, took an unsuccessful trip to Indonesia with the mission of building informal diplomatic ties. At the time Achmad Soebardjo, Taipei’s most important potential ally in the Indonesian Government, had already resigned as the Foreign Minister. The proposal of a third party taking over the protection of pro-Taipei ethnic Chinese was not approved by the Indonesian Government. Chen wrote in his diary near the end of his stay in Jakarta:

Now that Indonesia has changed its cabinet and it became impossible to carry out our plan. ...[M]y current trip has bad timing as the previous cabinet was dissolved and the new cabinet has not yet been fully stabilized. I thought I would take this opportunity to observe the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> “Letter from Tang Liangli to Chen Kewen,” January 25, 1952, “A miscellaneous collection on Indonesia,” *Academia Historica*, 020—010899—0036.

<sup>32</sup> “Letter from Xue Shouheng to Chen Kewen,” February 20, 1951, “A miscellaneous collection on Indonesia,” *Academia Historica*, 020—010899—0036.

change in local political situations and to see whether I could make an effort to improve bilateral relations. But now my distress is rising and I can only persevere. My anxiety is beyond words.<sup>33</sup>

Theoretically, Indonesia recognized only the PRC as the sole legitimate center of China; but, in reality, Jakarta's attitude towards Taipei and its policy regarding the national status of the pro-Taipei Chinese had been ambivalent. Meanwhile, Jakarta's Taiwan policy vacillated in accordance with the political orientation of the ruling party. Despite Taipei's efforts to establish a stable connection with Indonesian authorities, the structural constraints within the post-World War II international order rendered it extremely difficult for Taipei to achieve such a goal via official channels.

### **Detachment from Diasporic Politics: Beijing Making Policy Adjustments**

Although the Chinese Nationalists were unable to reconnect with the Indonesian Government on official terms, Taipei's alignment with the Sukiman Cabinet in the 1951 anti-communist purge caused great damage to Beijing. Besides losing the key support of the pro-Beijing group, the PRC also was embroiled in a diplomatic crisis. During the anti-communist purge, the PRC ambassador Ba Ren allowed Wang Jiyuan (王纪元), a prominent Chinese left-wing journalist and the editor-in-chief of the pro-Beijing *Sheng Huo Bao* (生活报), to take refuge in the embassy without permission from Beijing. Ba Ren's decision led to the Indonesian Government's accusation of Chinese interference in Indonesian domestic politics.

Ba Ren's extensive social network and his revolutionary internationalism, both of which greatly contributed to his successful wartime mobilization among the Chinese in Indonesia, turned out to be a burden that impeded the PRC from conducting state-to-state diplomacy in the post-colonial era. Ba Ren's past caught up with him in unexpected ways. He published an article in 1948 that advocated for the overthrow of the Indonesian Government on the grounds that it did not represent the people. Although the article was signed with a pseudonym, it did not take long for the Indonesian intelligence agency to find

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<sup>33</sup> Chen Fong-ching ed., *Chen Kewen riji 1937-1952*, volume 2, pp. 1315-1316.

out that the author had become the PRC ambassador. A former colleague of Ba Ren's commented years later: "... it is a cardinal sin for an ambassador to publish political comments on the country in which he or she is stationed. It can always be interpreted by the host government as a form of intervention in its internal affairs."<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, shortly after taking office, Ba Ren offended the Indonesian authorities by mobilizing the pro-Beijing ethnic Chinese associations in a campaign to expand the PRC's diplomatic apparatus in Indonesia. Although Indonesia switched its diplomatic recognition from the Chinese Nationalist regime to the Communist regime, the same old fear about the ROC embassy and consulates functioning as "a state within a state" carried over. And this fear was exacerbated by the new anxiety over communist penetration. Thus, in the early 1950s, the Indonesian authorities were reluctant to allow the PRC to expand its diplomatic mission. In response, Ba Ren encouraged the pro-Beijing Chinese associations all across Indonesia to put forward petitions to the Indonesian authorities, claiming that it was necessary for the PRC to establish more consulates than any other country in order to care for the large number of its nationals residing in Indonesia. However, the influx of petition letters to Indonesian Government offices only reinforced Jakarta's suspicion of the close ties between the ethnic Chinese and Beijing.<sup>35</sup>

In January 1952, Ba Ren was dismissed. After returning to Beijing, Ba Ren submitted a "self-criticism" to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, in which he described himself as having made "serious political and disciplinary mistakes," which were "equal to crimes." He wrote:

As an ambassador, I failed to fully realize that I represent my country and the head of my state. I acted as if I was first and foremost a sympathizer with the Indonesian Revolution. In addition, I

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<sup>34</sup> Huang Qiuyun, "Kejing keai de meng xiucái—zūnian Ba Ren tōngzhī" [Remembering comrade Ba Ren], November 16, 1985, *Wenyi Bao* (文艺报).

<sup>35</sup> "Berkas mengenai permohonan dan perjinan kepada Duta Besar RRT untuk membuka konsulat-konsulat di Indonesia oleh beberapa organisasi kemasyarakatan Tionghoa di Sumatera Utara, Sumatera Timur dan Aceh," Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1970, *ANRI*; "Berkas Kementerian Luar Negeri mengenai pembukaan Konsulat-Konsulat RRT di Indonesia," Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1990, *ANRI*; "Surat dari Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI mengenai kegiatan politik dan kebudayaan orang Tionghoa sejak Kedutaan Agung RRT di Indonesia," Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1977 *ANRI*.

have always believed that “Overseas Chinese youth are the bridge to the Indonesian Revolution.” I failed to give priority to establishing formal diplomatic relations with the Indonesian Government.

Whenever issues regarding the overseas Chinese came up, I purely emphasized our mission of “protecting the rights of overseas Chinese.” I regard whatever the overseas Chinese requested as their natural rights. My thinking encouraged the already-existing Han chauvinist tendencies among the overseas Chinese. The overseas Chinese thought of themselves as the people of a strong nation and thought of us [the PRC diplomats] as the representatives of a strong nation.<sup>36</sup>

The diplomatic crisis in 1951 that resulted in the dismissal of Ba Ren sparked heated discussions in the policy making circle in Beijing. Many were critical not only towards Ba Ren’s personal working style but also towards the policy that Ba Ren embodied. In their understanding, Ba Ren supported the continuation of dual citizenship and thereby assigned two revolutionary missions to the overseas Chinese. Not only did they have to fight for their own liberation from the Chinese Nationalists, they also had to assist the indigenous people in liberating themselves from the Western imperialists.<sup>37</sup> While validating the contribution of this “dual citizenship, dual mission” principle to the Communist Party’s war efforts against Japanese invasion, the Chinese Communist Party leadership was also acutely aware of the change of international political structure and of its own transition from a revolutionary force to the ruling party of China. The Party leadership concluded that these changes necessitated that Beijing prioritize state-to-state diplomacy over its commitment to the international communist movement and its connections to the overseas Chinese.

Thus in contrast with Taipei, Beijing started a new policy initiative of dissolving all the Chinese Community Party branches abroad in 1952. From May to July 1951, the Overseas Chinese Committee (中

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<sup>36</sup> Ba Ren, “Ziwo zongjie” [summary of one’s own work], unpublished manuscript provided by Ba Ren’s son, Wang Keping (王克平).

<sup>37</sup> Zheng Junyi, *Guiqiao Peng Guanghan de wangshi jinshi* [The past of returned overseas Chinese Peng Guanhan] (Hong Kong: Xianggang shehui chubanshe, 2005), p. 291.

侨委), the Foreign Ministry (外交部) and the International Bureau of the CCP (中联部) jointly carried out a major overhaul of their policies towards the overseas Chinese. The director of the International Bureau of the CCP, Wang Jiaxiang (王稼祥), set a pragmatic and moderate tone for the policy discussions. Wang made it clear that in the post-World War II era, the fundamental principle of the international communist movement was that there should only be one communist party in each country so that the cooperation among different communist parties would not breach any country's sovereignty. Since Indonesia and many other Southeast Asian countries had already achieved their national independence, the overseas branches of the CCP should not only suspend their activities, but also be revoked completely. The ethnic Chinese who opted for PRC citizenship should refrain from participating in any political activities in their country of residence. If they did, their political activities would be considered by the local government as a direct foreign intervention. In that case, the Chinese embassies and consulates would not be able to protect them. Moreover, they would very likely implicate the ethnic Chinese who opted for local citizenship and worsen overall ethnic relations.<sup>38</sup>

In January 1952, the CCP Central Committee issued “directions for overseas nationals,” stipulating a timeline for the dissolution of CCP organizations among the overseas Chinese, ranging from youth groups and semi-underground civic associations to underground party headquarters abroad. The CCP Central Committee encouraged its cadres working in these organizations to voluntarily return to the PRC, with promises of recognition for their work overseas and of reassignment to new posts at home. This transition would not be overseen by the International Bureau of the CCP but by the Overseas Chinese Committee, an organizational shift that demonstrated the central leadership’s determination to completely shut down political activities among the overseas Chinese. Later in the year, top Chinese leaders, such as Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, officially informed the foreign heads of states visiting

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

China of this decision.<sup>39</sup>

From the standpoint of the leaders in Beijing, dissolving the overseas branches of the CCP was the first step towards settling the national status of the overseas Chinese, and, in a broader sense, towards improving the PRC's relations with Southeast Asian countries. Befriending these countries was of particular strategic importance to Beijing's goal of breaking down the diplomatic isolation it faced in the early Cold War era. As the next step, Beijing decided it would not inherit the right of blood principle from the Republican era and would adopt the right of soil principle instead. In 1955, the Sino-Indonesian Dual Nationality Treaty was signed in Bandung, Indonesia. Beijing no longer claimed that all persons with Chinese blood were automatically citizens of China and encouraged the Chinese living in Indonesia to choose Indonesian citizenship.

Before signing the treaty, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai made a speech in Bandung to leaders of the ethnic Chinese community who were concerned about being "abandoned" by "the motherland." Zhou emphasized that the ethnic Chinese owed primary loyalty to their home state, Indonesia, rather than to China. He used a metaphor in which the ethnic Chinese were like the PRC's daughters who were married off and settled in a new household. Zhou said some foreign governments had qualms about the ethnic Chinese, worrying that they might be used by Beijing as a communist fifth column that would engage in subversive activities. A clear boundary had to be drawn and only by doing so could communist China win trust from other countries.

### **Deeper into Diasporic Politics: Taipei's Response**

Holding firm to the right of blood principle, Taipei denied the validity of the Dual Nationality Treaty, which, in its opinion, had no impact on the legal status of pro-ROC Chinese residing in Indonesia. The ROC government promised to continue its protection of the lawful rights of its nationals overseas,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 297.

regardless of whether the ROC had diplomatic relations with the country they were residing in. Zheng Yanfen (郑彦棻), the head of the Overseas Chinese Committee of the Chinese Nationalist Party, said during a press conference: “The majority of the Chinese living in Indonesia are anti-communist. They do not recognize the puppet regime in Beijing, neither are they willing to accept a status as ‘stateless people’ in Indonesia.”<sup>40</sup> Taipei accused the Indonesian Government of forcing the pro-Taipei Chinese to register themselves as the nationals of the PRC against their free will, thereby violating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Despite the loss of diplomatic recognition from countries such as Indonesia, the ROC kept its membership in the United Nations (UN) until 1971. Taipei thus threatened Jakarta with retaliatory actions at the UN.<sup>41</sup> Zheng also condemned the conclusion of the treaty as “an important step in the Communist bandits’ conspiracy to infiltrate Southeast Asia.”<sup>42</sup> He warned that by “ushering the wolf [i.e., the Chinese Communists] into its own house,” the Indonesian Government should be prepared for the grievous consequences of its “suicidal behavior.”<sup>43</sup>

However, within the Chinese Nationalist Party there were initially different opinions on how to end the uncertain status of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. The ROC representative at the UN, Jiang Tingfu (蔣廷黻), expressed in a report to Taipei in 1951 that it was time for the ROC to change its nationality law, which was based on the right of blood. Jiang held that “the time had come for the Chinese in Southeast Asia to try to protect their rights as citizens of the countries where they resided,” and “a new policy freeing the Chinese from the bonds of blood might facilitate the establishment of better relations between Chinese and local people in all of Southeast Asia.”<sup>44</sup> Jiang’s proposal was consistent with the UN charter and based on respect for Indonesia’s sovereignty and jurisdiction over its people.

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<sup>40</sup> “Indonesia and the Chinese Communists signed the ridiculous dual nationality treaty,” May 2, 1955, *Xingdao Ribao* (星島日报), Overseas Chinese Clippings Collection, Hong Kong Baptist University.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> “Record of (Jiang Tingfu’s) Conversation with Donald Gilpatrick,” July 24, 1951, from dossier “The nationality issue of the overseas Chinese,” *Academia Historica*, 020-010807-0026.

However, since the Chinese Nationalist leadership in Taipei was eager to reclaim its political legitimacy via tighter control over the Chinese diaspora, Jiang's approach was never given serious consideration.

However, the Chinese Nationalists who were witnesses and participants in the fierce battle against Beijing in Indonesia had different ideas. Respect for Indonesia's sovereignty was not their top priority. Qiu Zhengou (丘正歐), the editor-in-chief of the Chinese Nationalist Party organ in Indonesia, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao* (天声日报), held that the ethnic Chinese should remain China-oriented politically and maintain Chinese (ROC) citizenship. Qiu wrote: "once one obtains foreign [non-Chinese] citizenship, naturally life in a foreign country will become easier. But one will then be bound to an identity as a citizen of a foreign country and will have to fulfill obligations such as military service and national education. In this way, ultimately those who choose foreign citizenship will be assimilated into the foreign society they reside in. Therefore, taking foreign citizenship will do more harm than good to the overseas Chinese. I personally believe that one can take foreign citizenship if it is a matter of life and death. If a choice can be made, one should strive to maintain ROC citizenship. The rule of thumb is that one should adamantly reject the illegitimate citizenship of the communist bandits."<sup>45</sup>

Qiu ignored the fact that it was technically impossible for the pro-Taipei Chinese to obtain status as ROC citizens in Indonesia—they would either be rendered stateless or would have to take PRC citizenship. Along the same line with Qiu, the Chinese Nationalist Party branch in Jakarta called upon the pro-Taipei ethnic Chinese to take Indonesian citizenship just for formality and to remain Taipei-oriented politically. In this way, the pro-Taipei Chinese could use their Indonesian citizenship as a tool in the battle against the Chinese communists. The Indonesian authorities prohibited non-citizen Chinese from participating in any political activities. Thus by obtaining Indonesian citizenship, the pro-Taipei Chinese would be entitled to the rights unavailable to non-citizen Chinese and able to engage in activities such as

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<sup>45</sup> Qiu later became a scholar in overseas Chinese studies after being deported from Indonesia and relocating to Taiwan. See Qiu Zhengou, *Huaqiao wenti yanjiu* [A study of overseas Chinese issue] (Taipei: the institute of the Department of Defense, 1965), p. 8.

promoting pro-Taipei education, expanding pro-Taipei ethnic Chinese associations, boycotting citizenship registration at the PRC embassy and consulates, etc.<sup>46</sup>

Most important of all, Indonesian citizenship would enable Chinese Nationalist Party cadres to carry out covert actions more easily in the archipelago. According to PRC intelligence, Taipei infiltrated Indonesian governmental departments—such as the Office of the Attorney General, National Intelligence Service, and the Department of National Security—with agents who obtained Indonesian citizenship as cover.<sup>47</sup> Evidence from the ROC corroborates this. As the regime in exile was in a precarious position, the ROC took a more assertive approach to the competition against the PRC in Indonesia, with seemingly little concern about offending the Indonesian authorities with intervention. For instance, the aforementioned secret central commission of the Chinese Nationalist Party in Indonesia, Liu Dexian, declared that one of its major goals was to build close interpersonal relationships between its members and leading figures in Indonesian anti-communist political parties, the Indonesian army—the archenemy of the communists—and American diplomats in Indonesia and the Philippines. There was even special funding for networking with these “local friends” by providing banquets and other kinds of entertainment.<sup>48</sup>

By taking covert actions, the Chinese Nationalist loyalists tried to seize every possible opportunity to shift the tide in Indonesian politics. For instance, in August 1953, Ali Sastroamidjojo from the Indonesian Nationalist Party (*Partai Nasionalis Indonesia* the PNI) took office and formed a cabinet that consisted mostly of left-wing politicians from his party and excluded those from the Masyumi. The new political environment was difficult for the Chinese Nationalists, who often relied on cooperation with right-wing political forces in Indonesia. Under such circumstances, Taipei and the pro-Taipei Chinese

<sup>46</sup> “Telegram from Team Three, Central Committee for Party Reform, Chinese Nationalist Party,” January 30, 1951, from dossier “The nationality issue of the overseas Chinese in Indonesia,” *Academia Historica*, 020-010807-0025.

<sup>47</sup> Overseas Chinese Research Association ed., *Yafei diqu huaqiao qingkuang jieshao* [An introduction to the overseas Chinese in Asia and Africa] (Beijing: Huaqiao wenti yanjiuhui bianyin, 1955), pp. 65-66.

<sup>48</sup> “Zhu Changdong reports from Bangkok on the establishment of a secretive group in Indonesia,” September 28, 1951, from dossier “A special collection on Indonesia,” *Academia Historica*, Taipei, 020-010801-0018.

were eager to see the fall of the Ali Sastroamidjojo cabinet and the rise of a new Masyumi-dominated political landscape.

Taipei made an audacious attempt to overthrow the Ali Sastroamidjojo cabinet and was confronted with a serious backlash when the plan failed and its behind-the-scenes maneuverings were exposed. In September 1954, four members of Liu Dexian, Zhang Xunyi (章勋义), Zhu Changdong (朱昌东), Chen Xingyan (陈兴砚),<sup>49</sup> and Qiu Yuanrong (丘元荣), were arrested by the Indonesian authorities. These four prominent pro-Taipei figures were accused of having “endangered peace and order in Indonesia.” Although the exact reasons for their arrest was not revealed, the media speculated that, at a dinner party that included Mohammed Natsir, the leader of the oppositional Masyumi Party, they discussed a conspiracy to overthrow the Ali Sastroamidjojo cabinet with the support from Taipei-affiliated terrorist groups and the American embassy in Indonesia.<sup>50</sup> The Indonesian Supreme Court Justice Sudhi Ranjan Das accused them of conspiring to overthrow the cabinet, accumulating financial resources to rig the general election, and manipulating governmental agencies. Sudhi Ranjan Das announced: “These foreign elements are doing tremendous harm not only to the Ali Sastroamidjojo cabinet but also to the independence of Indonesia.”<sup>51</sup> The Indonesian media interpreted the incident as “the climax of the confrontation between the two antagonistic political forces from China.” They commented that “Zhang’s political activities on behalf of the Chinese Nationalist Party had crossed the line.”<sup>52</sup>

The PRC embassy and consulates adopted a moderate policy during the events surrounding the arrest of Zhang Xunyi and other Chinese Nationalist Party cadres. Beijing was aware that it could not

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<sup>49</sup> Chen is known as “the king of salty fish” as he ran a successful business in this particular product.

<sup>50</sup> *Harian Rakyat*, October 7, 1954, cited in Overseas Chinese Research Association ed., *Yafei diqu huqiao qingkuang jieshao*, p. 68.

<sup>51</sup> Wu Shiheng, *Indonesia* (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1956), p. 56.

<sup>52</sup> “Examining the expulsion of Zhang Xunyi from the perspective of diplomacy,” March 16, 1955, *Xin Bao*.

simply take this chance to aggressively undermine the Chinese Nationalists because of the involvement of multiple stakeholders—the Masyumi, the anti-communist figures in various Indonesian governmental agencies, and the US diplomatic mission. The Foreign Ministry in Beijing requested that the PRC embassy in Jakarta “practice vigilance and prudence,”<sup>53</sup> with the following detailed instructions: “The Indonesian Government’s decision to arrest the Chiang bandits is closely related to local political struggles. The situation is extremely complicated, therefore our embassy should not explicitly show our attitude...[T]he local Chinese-language newspapers should only cite from Indonesian language sources. We should avoid commenting on the recent events”<sup>54</sup>; “We could never take the expulsion of Zhang Xunyi as the beginning of the Indonesian Government’s changing attitude towards the United States and the Chiang agents. Usually, the Indonesian authorities would not consider the patriotic ethnic Chinese as less threatening than the United States and Chiang Kai Shek’s agents. We also could not take for granted that the improvement of Sino-Indonesian friendly relations would necessarily mean less restrictions upon and discrimination against the patriotic ethnic Chinese by the Indonesian authorities.”<sup>55</sup>

By adopting a cautious attitude, Beijing wanted to take this opportunity to win trust from the Indonesian Government as well as to win the hearts and minds of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. In October 1954, the Indonesian authorities announced their decision to expel Zhang Xunyi from Indonesia, indicating that he must be sent back to Beijing since Zhang had declared himself a Chinese citizen and Indonesia only recognized the PRC.<sup>56</sup> In response, the PRC not only promised to issue an entry permit to Zhang but also repeatedly made the vow that “once he arrives in New China, as long as he starts with a clean slate, the government will give him an opportunity for a new life.”<sup>57</sup> By doing so, Beijing aimed to

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<sup>53</sup> “Response to the expulsion of Zhang Xunyi,” October 14, 1954, *CFMA*, 118-00271-01.

<sup>54</sup> “Our attitude towards the Indonesian Government’s decision to arrest the Jiang bandits,” October 29, 1954, *CFMA*, 118-00271-01.

<sup>55</sup> “Response to the expulsion of Zhang Xunyi.”

<sup>56</sup> “On rescuing Zhang Xunyi, one of the leaders of the overseas Chinese communities in Indonesia who was expelled,” October 17, 1954, *Academia Historica*, 020—010807—0069.

<sup>57</sup> “On issuing entry visa to Zhuang Xunyi,” October 9, 1954, *CFMA*, 118-00271-011.

consolidate its status as the sole legitimate center of China by extending its sovereignty over all the Chinese, regardless of their political orientation. In other words, by demonstrating leniency towards Zhang and other Chinese Nationalist cadres, Beijing sent a message to the overseas Chinese that even those who used to be loyal to Taipei or were still sitting on the fence would be supported and protected by Beijing. Furthermore, Beijing saw value in Zhang Xunyi for propaganda purposes. Beijing calculated that if Zhang defected and “revealed the crimes of the US and the Chiang agents,” Taipei would be more isolated in the international arena.<sup>58</sup> The PRC Foreign Ministry instructed that all the pro-Beijing Chinese-language newspapers in Indonesia should make it clear that anyone except Chiang Kai Shek would be welcomed in Mainland China if they were to “forsake darkness and to come into the light” (弃暗投明).<sup>59</sup> In an effort to attract all ethnic Chinese who were not openly anti-Communist and to expand the PRC’s united front among the overseas Chinese, the PRC embassy in Indonesia advised the pro-Beijing ethnic Chinese to be low-key in their activities and to avoid any kind of hostility against the pro-Taipei groups.<sup>60</sup>

In December 1954, Zhang and other Chinese Nationalist Party cadres were deported from Indonesia to Taiwan. In its attempt to overcome the obstacles to connecting with the Indonesian Government by adopting an interventionist approach, Taipei ironically alienated itself from Jakarta and benefited its archenemy—Beijing. Although the turnaround of the situation was not optimal for Beijing, during the political uproar of 1954, Beijing took the opportunity to improve its relation with Jakarta by gaining advantage from Taipei’s breach of Indonesian sovereignty. In addition, as shown below, mutual strategic interests drew Beijing and Jakarta into a more substantial collaboration in international relations.

### **Peace Offensive: Beijing Winning Jakarta’s Support**

Parallel with the vortex of foreign intervention and political conspiracy in 1954 in Indonesia was the First Taiwan Strait Crisis. In September 1954, armed conflict broke out between the governments of the PRC

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> “Response to the expulsion of Zhang Xunyi.”

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

and the ROC over the islands off the shore of Zhejiang province between the Chinese mainland and the main island of Taiwan. The ROC was forced to abandon these islands, which, strategically, were regarded as a stronghold to recover the mainland and, symbolically, as the gateway to Chiang Kai Shek's native province of Zhejiang. However, in order to create a peaceful atmosphere for the first large-scale Asian-African conference in Bandung in 1955, the Chinese Communist Party leadership decided to de-escalate the conflict.

Beijing's show of restraint in the first Taiwan Strait Crisis as well as in the competition against the ROC in Indonesia was a reflection of the shift in the PRC's overall foreign policy. In the initial years after the establishment of the PRC, Beijing upheld the doctrine of spreading international communist revolution. But starting from 1952, Beijing reoriented its priority towards the construction of an international united front, particularly among Third World countries. Indonesia was categorized as a "bourgeois nationalist" country in the standard Marxist analytical lens commonly used by the Chinese Foreign Ministry. In the early 1950s, Beijing observed that "although all the cabinets claim that they carried out an independent foreign policy, they all received economic and military aid from the United States, and they were unfriendly towards China and the Soviet Union. They threw themselves at the American imperialists."<sup>61</sup> But after the policy shift in 1952 and the Bandung Conference of 1955, the central leadership in Beijing became convinced that countries like Indonesia shared the same colonial past and the same aspiration for a more equitable international order and therefore should be treated as potential allies. Befriending Indonesia was also part of Beijing's strategy to counterbalance US influence in Southeast Asia, especially given the creation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) with the participation of two large Southeast Asian countries allied with the US—Thailand and the Philippines—in 1954.

The Bandung Conference, held in Indonesia in 1955, was a platform for Beijing to appeal to Afro-Asian countries and to expand its international united front in formerly colonized parts of the world.

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<sup>61</sup> "The basic situation and tendencies of Indonesia," February 25, 1956, *CFMA*, 102-00055-02.

On the diplomatic level, the PRC successfully blocked the ROC from participating in the conference and managed to attend as the only legitimate representative of China. But Taipei was persistent in challenging Beijing via sabotage. The Chinese Nationalist Party's intelligence organization in Hong Kong made an abortive attempt to assassinate Zhou Enlai by installing an explosive in the aircraft chartered by the PRC delegation for the trip to Bandung. Evidence suggests that Zhou knew of the plot beforehand and secretly changed his travel plans, though he did not stop a delegation of lesser cadres from taking his place.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to sabotage in the air, Taipei also made plans for attacks on the ground in Indonesia. The day before the Chinese delegation arrived in Bandung, an anonymous letter signed by "a former assassin who has changed his heart" arrived at the Chinese Embassy in Jakarta. The letter read:

To Whom It May Concern:

I ask for the attention of the PRC Embassy in Jakarta. The Chinese Nationalist Party branch in Jakarta has assembled a death squad, consisting of 28 middle and low ranking military officers, targeting the head of the Chinese delegation, Zhou Enlai. Everyone was issued a silent pistol and 200,000 rupiahs provided by the American Embassy and was promised for another 200,000 rupiahs bonus if the assassination was successfully carried out. Anyone who succeeds in shooting Zhou Enlai will be awarded an additional 400,000 rupiahs. We have conducted a thorough investigation of the conference venue. I urge the Chinese Embassy to take all possible measures to ensure the safety of Zhou.

April 16, 1955<sup>63</sup>

According to the intelligence gathered by the PRC Embassy in Jakarta, Zhang Xunyi, the senior

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<sup>62</sup> Steve Tsang, "Target Zhou Enlai: The 'Kashmire Princess' Incident of 1955," *The China Quarterly* 139 (September 1994), pp. 766-782.

<sup>63</sup> Zhu Yi, *Wanlong jiaoxiangqu—jinian yafei huiyi wushi zhounian* [Symphony at Bandung: Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Bandung Conference] (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 2005), p. 17.

Chinese Nationalist Party cadre who was at the center of the political turmoil in 1954 and exiled to Taiwan as a result, secretly returned to Indonesia shortly before the Bandung Conference to supervise the mission to assassinate Zhou Enlai. Zhang was said to be working with the Chinese Nationalist terrorist organization “Blood and Iron Group” (铁血团), with support from the United States.<sup>64</sup> After receiving this message, the PRC Embassy immediately informed the secretariat general of the Indonesian Foreign Ministry, requesting tighter security measures. At the same time, the PRC Embassy also mobilized pro-Beijing ethnic Chinese to protect Zhou and the rest of the PRC delegation. In the end, Taipei’s sabotage plan failed.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, these assassination attempts turned international public opinion against Taipei and further marginalized and delegitimized the ROC regime. The investigation of the plane crash and of the assassination threats during the Bandung Conference received support from the British authorities in Hong Kong and the Indonesian Government. Zhou Enlai made the following comments on the ROC’s sabotage activities during a meeting with the Indonesian Premier Ali Sastroamidjojo: “These incidents speak to the fact that Chiang Kai Shek and his loyalists have exhausted their path. They have no reservations about doing the most despicable things.”<sup>66</sup> Zhou urged Ali Sastroamidjojo to talk to Taiwan’s main sponsor and protector, the United States: “People around the world are watching the US providing improper and unethical support to such an ugly and filthy political group.”<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile, through the charismatic Zhou Enlai, the PRC successfully built up a nonbelligerent

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 18. The Iron and Blood Group was initially founded in 1912 as the Republic of China’s Iron and Blood Group for the Northern Expedition (中华民国北伐铁血团). Later this organization merged with the other troops in the Northern Expedition. This group was expanded into Chinese societies in Southeast Asia during World War II. For its development in Thailand, see Li Enhuan, *Dongnanya huaren shi* [A history of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia] (Taipei: Wunan tushu, 2003), pp. 411-412.

<sup>65</sup> Chen Yushan and Chen Shaojing, *Yuan Geng zhi mi* [The myth of Yuan Geng] (Guangzhou, Huacheng chubanshe, 2005), p. 89. Yuan Geng (袁庚) was appointed as the Consul General of PRC in Jakarta in 1953. A veteran of the resistance against Japanese in Guangdong, Yuan later became the pioneer of reform in Shenzhen from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. He was in charge of the intelligence work before, during and after the Afro-Asian Conference of 1955.

<sup>66</sup> “The second meeting between Premier Zhou Enlai and the Indonesian Premier Ali Sastroamidjojo,” May 28, 1955, *CFMA*, 204 – 00014 – 03.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

image among the Afro-Asian nations. The Chinese leadership used the stage at the Bandung Conference to contextualize the competition with Taipei in the larger geopolitical structure of the Asia-Pacific region and framed it as an issue of territorial integrity. By comparing Taiwan to West Irian, over which Indonesia was in a heated dispute with the Netherlands, Zhou tactfully consolidated the PRC's governmental relations with Indonesia.<sup>68</sup> Due to the Dutch use of it as one of the most notorious colonial prison camps, West Irian occupied a central place in the folklore of the anti-colonial struggle and became a sacred site in the national imagination.<sup>69</sup> In the Joint Statement of the Premier of China and the Prime Minister of Indonesia issued on April 28, 1955, both sides "expressed deep sympathy with and support for the efforts of either country to safeguard its own sovereignty and territorial integrity."<sup>70</sup> Zhou Enlai stated to Ali Sastroamidjojo: "China and Indonesia had the same suffering. West Irianian People are Indonesian people, just like people in Taiwan are Chinese people... We are very willing to support Indonesia's struggle to recover its sovereignty over West Irian."<sup>71</sup> When interviewed by Indonesian journalists in June 1955, Zhou Enlai said:

The Chinese people and the Indonesian people have both long suffered from colonialism. The peoples of our two countries have both recently acquired national independence. Furthermore, they are both still struggling to safeguard their own sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Chinese people are striving for the liberation of Taiwan, while the Indonesian people are striving for the restoration of West Irian. Given these common experiences, our two peoples naturally

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<sup>68</sup> West Irian is the western half of the island of New Guinea, which used to be under the colonial control of the Netherlands. Dutch and Indonesian leaders failed to reach an agreement about the sovereignty of West Irian at the Roundtable Conference in 1949. During the 1950s, the Dutch government began to prepare West Irian for full independence as the Dutch persisted in emphasizing that the local Papuans had developed cultures and languages totally different from those of the Indonesians. This was deemed as a blatant assault on their sovereignty by Indonesian leaders, who regarded West Irian as an integral part of their country.

<sup>69</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 176-177.

<sup>70</sup> "The second meeting between Premier Zhou Enlai and the Indonesian Premier Ali Sastroamidjojo," May 28, 1955, CFMA, 204 – 00014 – 03.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

have sympathy and concern for each other.<sup>72</sup>

Beijing's strategy of evoking a shared pursuit for territorial integrity was well received by the Indonesian leaders. During his visit to Beijing after the Bandung Conference, Ali Sastroamidjojo offered to mediate between China and the US for the de-escalation of the Taiwan Strait Crisis. The Indonesian Premier made a pledge to the Chinese leaders: "West Irian is as important to Indonesia as Taiwan is to China."<sup>73</sup> In 1956, Sukarno visited China as the first head of state from the Republic of Indonesia. During his trip, Sukarno was greatly impressed by the effectiveness of China's highly centralized political system. Sukarno openly expressed his admiration for China under the collective leadership of the Communist Party, praising the People's Republic for "entering a glorious period with a great future stretching beneath its feet" and "catching up with the developed world at an amazing speed."<sup>74</sup> This experience might have inspired him to replace constitutional democracy with the more authoritarian system of "Guided Democracy" in Indonesia in 1959.<sup>75</sup> Sukarno's visit also elevated bilateral relations to a new level: The CCP organ *The People's Daily* issued an editorial entitled "The Friendship Bridge between China and Indonesia" after Sukarno's visit, characterizing the Sino-Indonesian relations as "a friendship between two nations fighting for independence."<sup>76</sup>

### **Regional Rebellions: Taipei's Intervention Angering Jakarta**

The ties between Beijing and Jakarta were strengthened further in 1958, when Taipei, with the backing of Washington, became their common enemy. Shortly after the Bandung Conference, China and Indonesia went through almost parallel processes of domestic political instability and increased tension in foreign affairs. In the spring of 1957, Mao, who was convinced that the CCP cadres had grown attached to their

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<sup>72</sup> "Premier Chou En-lai's answers to questions put by Indonesian correspondents," June 2, 1955, CFMA, 204-00014-05.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> "President Sukarno's foreign visit was extremely fruitful and was widely praised by Indonesian newspapers," October 19, 1956, *Renmin Ribao*; "President Sukarno delivered a speech to the Chinese people," October 16, 1956, *Renmin Ribao*.

<sup>75</sup> Hong Liu, *China and the Shaping of Indonesia, 1949–1967* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011), pp. 205–30.

<sup>76</sup> "The bridge of friendship between China and Indonesia," October 15, 1956, *Renmin Ribao*.

privileges, launched the “democratic consolidation of spirits (*minzhu zhengfeng* 民主整风) campaign.”

This campaign against bureaucratism, subjectivism and factionalism was soon followed by the “anti-rightist movement” (*fan youpai yundong* 反右派运动), resulting in a tense domestic political atmosphere. Subsequently, the Great Leap Forward (1958–1961), the original aim of which was to accelerate the pace of the modernization of China’s economy, resulted in three years of catastrophic economic recession. These domestic political movements had a profound impact on China’s foreign relations. The pragmatic and moderate policy defined by the Five Principles for Peaceful Co-existence (*heping gongchu wu xiang yuanze* 和平共处五项原则) in 1954 was interrupted. In the spring of 1958, Beijing adopted a much more aggressive attitude towards Taipei. Despite its efforts in the previous years to negotiate via civic channels with top Chinese Nationalist leaders, Beijing initiated a second round of military confrontation (known as the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis<sup>77</sup>) by the shelling of the islands of Quemoy and Matsu in August 1958.

Around the same time, the regional rebellions in West Sumatra and North Sulawesi, supported mainly by the United States and the Chinese Nationalists in Taiwan, threatened to tear Indonesia apart. This crisis originated in the economic disparities between Java and the outer islands of Indonesia. Though rich in natural resources of great strategic importance such as rubber, coconut and petroleum, the islands of Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sulawesi received a much smaller share of state revenue than the most densely populated region, Java, where the Indonesian central government was located. In 1951 and 1952, voices that openly accused Java for “exploiting the outer islands as the authoritarian center” started to emerge in the political discourse in Sumatra and Sulawesi.<sup>77</sup> And the government in Jakarta was slow in addressing these grievances. In the following years, political entities led by local military men—the Banteng Council (*Dewan Banteng*) in central Sumatra and the Charter of Inclusive Struggle (*Piagam*

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<sup>77</sup> “Foreign Minister Chen Yi’s meeting with the Indonesian ambassador on the regional rebellions and Indonesia’s request to purchase rice from us,” March 2, 1958, *CFMA*,105—00366—02.

*Perjuangan Semesta Alam* or “Permesta”) in North Sulawesi—started to oppose this “Javanese exploitation” by smuggling rubber and dried coconut through barter trade via Singapore and Manila, deliberately avoiding inspection by the Indonesian central government. After Jakarta issued an ultimatum demanding an end of barter trade by February 1958, the regional dissatisfaction exploded into an anti-government revolt, culminating in the establishment of the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (*Pemerintah Revolucioner Republik Indonesia* or PRRI) in Sumatra in opposition to the Indonesian central government in Jakarta.

When discussing the regional rebellions with the Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi, the Indonesian ambassador argued that the popular discontent caused by longstanding regional economic stratification was exacerbated by Western anxiety over Indonesia’s drift to the left. In the ambassador’s words, “the Dutch, American, and British imperialists had shared economic interests with the rebel government through their possession of petroleum companies and large plantations.”<sup>78</sup> These Western countries claimed that “the Indonesian central government in Jakarta is sympathetic to communism or even communist itself and the rebel government is anti-communist.”<sup>79</sup> The Indonesian ambassador informed Chen Yi that “the Banteng Council and Permesta had direct contacts with the SEATO headquarters in Singapore and Manila.”<sup>80</sup>

Aiming to replace Indonesia’s political leadership, the Eisenhower administration launched what was then the largest US covert operation since World War II, involving not only the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) but also the US Navy and a camouflaged American air force.<sup>81</sup> Washington used the island of Taiwan to deliver the rebels material and technical support, including light and heavy weapons, fighter planes and petrol for aircrafts, as well as pilots and artillery instructors. Many soldiers from the rebel

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Audrey R. Kahin and George McT Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia* (New York: New Press, 1995), p. 1.

areas in Indonesia were sent to Taiwan for training purposes. American pilots from the Civil Air Transport (CAT), owned by the CIA and stationed in Taiwan, flew combat missions for Permesta.<sup>82</sup>

Taipei's direct support of the rebels in Sumatra and Sulawesi infuriated Beijing. On May 15, 1958, the PRC issued an official statement to express its "grave concern" over "the outrageous and unlawful acts of the American imperialists" in Indonesia:

It seems necessary now to emphasize the gravity of the situation resulting from the fact that the United States is using China's territory of Taiwan, which it occupies, as a base and the Chiang Kai-shek clique as a tool to carry out increasingly aggressive interference in the international affairs of Indonesia. The continued development of this situation will inevitably give rise to very dangerous consequences. The Chinese Government and people fully support the just struggle of the Indonesian Government and people in defense of their national sovereignty and independence and against imperialist intervention. The Chinese Government has already supplied the Indonesian Government with cotton goods and rice on credit, and it is prepared to give further assistance within its ability as requested by the Indonesian Government...Should the United States fail to stop at once its interference in the internal affairs of Indonesia, it will certainly eat the bitter fruit of its aggression and provocation.<sup>83</sup>

The statement was suspected to be an ultimatum demanding an immediate suspension of American military activity via Taiwan. It was speculated that otherwise Beijing would dispatch volunteer troops to Indonesia, as it did during the Korean War. The possibility of Chinese military involvement in Indonesia had been on the radar of Asia-Pacific observers for quite some time. When clarifying the clause on mutual support for safeguarding territorial integrity in the Sino-Indonesia Joint Statement of 1955,

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<sup>82</sup> "Minute of Vice-Foreign Minister Zhang Hanfu and the Indonesian ambassador," April 29, 1958, *CFMA*, 105-00366-01.

<sup>83</sup> *Peking Review* vol 1, no. 12, May 20, 1958, pp. 21-22.

Zhou Enlai stated that “mutual support” was confined to “political and moral support for each other.”<sup>84</sup>

As for Beijing’s 1958 statement, David Mozingo claimed that, according to his interviews with Indonesian Foreign Ministry officials, the PRC promised to send “volunteers” upon Jakarta’s request.<sup>85</sup>

New evidence from the PRC shows that Beijing might have paid lip service to Jakarta in order to deter America’s and Taiwan’s further involvement in Indonesia. First of all, Beijing was extremely cautious and did not issue the aforementioned official statement after the Soviet Union openly showed its attitude.

As early as February 1958, Sukarno put forward a request for Beijing to issue “a warning against Western intervention in Indonesian politics.” After close consultation with the Soviet government, the Chinese

Foreign Ministry decided that “such a statement would be improper” because “it could be used by enemies within and outside Indonesia to oppose the Indonesian Government.” It was only after the conflict intensified that Beijing, following Moscow’s lead, issued the statement.<sup>86</sup> Secondly, Beijing deliberately took an ambiguous position on whether or not it would enter the conflict. After the Chinese governmental statement was issued, Chinese diplomatic missions in Indonesia, Afghanistan, the

Netherlands, and India all reported to Beijing about foreign speculation on Chinese military intervention in Indonesia. The Chinese Embassy in Jakarta observed that the Indonesian authorities “used the statements by the Chinese and Soviet governments to pressure the American imperialists to retreat from

Indonesia.”<sup>87</sup> Both the Chinese diplomatic missions in Afghanistan and India alerted Beijing that the local governments “wrongly accused us of interfering in Indonesian domestic politics by dispatching volunteer forces” and recommended clarification via official channels. However, these suggestions were turned down by Beijing. In a telegram to the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi in early June, the Chinese leadership revealed its careful calculations: “our side should not officially deny offering volunteer

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<sup>84</sup> “Premier Chou En-lai’s answers to questions put by Indonesian correspondents,” June 2, 1955, *CFMA*, 204-00014-05.

<sup>85</sup> Mozingo, *Chinese Policy toward Indonesia, 1949-1967*, p. 146, Mozingo quoted interviews with representatives of Indonesian Foreign Ministry, June-July 1961.

<sup>86</sup> “Indonesian President Sukarno requested the Chinese Government to issue warning against Western intervention in the domestic affairs of Indonesia via the PKI,” February 24—April 12, 1958, *CFMA*, 105—00363—01.

<sup>87</sup> “Different countries’ responses to our government’s public announcement against foreign intervention in the domestic affairs of Indonesia,” May 19-June 6, 1958, *CFMA*, 105—00363—07.

military to Indonesia because the Americans are testing our boundaries.”<sup>88</sup>

In addition to rhetorical support and supply of commercial goods such as cotton and rice, Beijing also offered military aid to Jakarta for its counter-rebellion efforts. In March 1958, Chen Yi told the Indonesian ambassador: “Whenever the Indonesian Government and President Sukarno need help, as long as you propose it to us at the proper time, the Chinese Government is always willing to provide unconditional help.”<sup>89</sup> A military procurement delegation from Indonesia paid a secret visit to Beijing and delivered letters of gratitude from President Sukarno and Premier Djuanda to Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai respectively.<sup>90</sup> This secretive delegation brought back from Beijing an offer of 20,000,000 USD worth of military equipment for the Indonesian army, navy and air force.<sup>91</sup> In early 1959, the Indonesian ambassador thanked Beijing during his meeting with Chen Yi: “We are grateful for the support from the Chinese Government, especially the military aid...the aid was especially valuable to us because it was provided in our time of need.”<sup>92</sup> In 1960, Sukarni, the newly arrived Indonesian ambassador to China, told the Chinese leaders that “the Indonesian people would never forget” Beijing’s military aid in 1958.<sup>93</sup>

Beijing’s adamant support for Jakarta’s efforts to undermine the regional rebellions posed an imminent threat to the Chiang Kai Shek regime in Taiwan. On May 22, Chiang had a meeting with the US ambassador to Taiwan, Everett F. Drumright, during which Chiang “appeared to be in dead earnest” and “spoke with emotion at times.” Chiang referred to the situation of the rebel forces as “deteriorating”

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<sup>88</sup> “Different countries’ responses to our government’s public announcement against foreign intervention in the domestic affairs of Indonesia,” May 19-June 6, 1958, *CFMA*, 105—00363—07.

<sup>89</sup> “Foreign Minister Chen Yi’s meeting with the Indonesian ambassador on the regional rebellions and Indonesia’s request to purchase rice from us,” March 2, 1958, *CFMA*, 105—00366—02.

<sup>90</sup> “Minute of the meeting between Vice-Foreign Minister Zhang and the Indonesian ambassador,” April 29, 1958, *CFMA*, 105-00366-01.

<sup>91</sup> Fan Zhonghui, *Jiangjun, waijiao jia, yishu jia—Huang Zhen zhuan* [General, diplomat, and artist—a biography of Huang Zhen] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2007), p. 377.

<sup>92</sup> “Foreign Minister Chen Yi’s meeting with the Indonesian ambassador on the regional rebellions and Indonesia’s request to purchase rice from us,” March 2, 1958, *CFMA*, 105—00366—02.

<sup>93</sup> “Minute of the meeting between Vice-Foreign Minister Zhang Hanfu and the Indonesian ambassador,” October 14, 1960, *CFMA*, 105-00416-02.

and said it would “become hopeless within one week unless substantial help was received meantime.” Chiang said he received an urgent request from the rebel forces for military equipment, and he proposed to send a marine regiment and an aircraft squadron to assist them. Chiang predicted that if Indonesia was allowed to come under communist control, Taiwan’s strategic position in the Asia-Pacific would be precarious, the prestige of the US would be gravely affected, and the worldwide situation would turn in favor of the communists. Chiang vowed that if Beijing used the Taiwan Strait area to move troops or supplies into Indonesia, he would immediately order his forces to attack them.<sup>94</sup> On May 23, the ROC Ministry of Defense made an official statement declaring that “it would regard the presence of any Chinese Communist troops or the so-called ‘volunteers’ in the South China Sea as a threat to the security of Taiwan and would reserve its freedom to take whatever actions necessary to interdict the movement of such troops or ‘volunteers.’”<sup>95</sup>

But the events in Indonesia took a downward turn before the two Chinas could stage a face-off in the archipelago. On May 18, 1958, an American pilot was shot down while carrying out missions for Peresta. The incident turned Indonesian public opinion against the US, gave rise to a dramatic diplomatic dispute and resulted in an American policy shift. With Washington retracting its support from the rebel forces, the central government in Jakarta regained control over west Sumatra and north Sulawesi in early 1960. Taipei’s growing support of the regional rebels burned its bridges with the central government in Jakarta. In 1958, the Indonesian authorities pronounced all Chinese Nationalist Party branches and affiliated organizations illegal.

## Conclusion

The January issue of *Time* magazine in 1951 includes a report on “Uncle Barhen [Ba Ren],” an

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<sup>94</sup> “Telegram From the Embassy in the Republic of China to the Department of State,” May 22, 1958, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1958-1960, vol. XVII, Indonesia, p. 194.

<sup>95</sup> “Announcement of the Ministry of Defense,” May 23, 1958, from dossier “Reports on Indonesia from the Foreign Ministry,” *Academia Historica*, 020-010899-0043.

ambassador who was “handicapped by a lack of diplomatic dignity”:

At dinner parties in Chinese homes, Uncle Barhen sometimes leaped up shouting, "Down with the Kuomintang!"<sup>96</sup> Down with the reactionaries!" He had a disturbing habit of drinking from a bottle in public, shocked fellow guests at a presidential party by taking a hefty slug when the others were raising their glasses in a toast. He addressed a public meeting with a cigarette dangling from his lower lip.

Last week Uncle Barhen's past seemed to be catching up with him. Indonesians had discovered that he was the same Wang Jen-shu who wrote a book in 1948 advocating the overthrow of the Indonesian Government on the ground that it did not represent the people. President Soekarno's government has been rounding up copies of the book. It is waiting for the ambassador to make just one more boner before asking Uncle Mao to recall Uncle Barhen.<sup>97</sup>

This report precipitated the dismissal of Ba Ren and reflected a path full of twists and turns that Beijing took to adapt itself to international norms in governmental relations. While Ba Ren personally failed to make the transition from an advocate of social revolution in Indonesia to a professional diplomat, Beijing succeeded during the 1949-1958 period in transforming itself from a revolutionary force that prioritized the connectedness of international communist movements to a promoter of the principle of non-interference and of Afro-Asian solidarity. Beijing's shrewd strategy of extracting itself from diasporic politics effectively triumphed over Taipei's proactive interventions in Indonesian politics through back channels. This battle between the Red and the Blue on the margins of Greater China was central to the mission of both Beijing and Taipei: to claim political legitimacy as the sole representative of China and the genuine homeland of the overseas Chinese.

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<sup>96</sup> Referring to the Chinese Nationalist Party.

<sup>97</sup> "Uncle Barhen," January 22, 1951, *Time* vol. 57, issue 4, p. 34.

From the perspective of diplomatic history, this chapter demonstrates that Beijing achieved much more success than Taipei in forging amicable governmental relations with Jakarta. The following chapter will shift to the perspective of the communal politics of the Chinese diaspora and will look at the undercurrents beneath state-to-state diplomacy: how the ideological division between the pro-Beijing and pro-Taipei blocs became the central theme of the social and political lives of the *totok* Chinese in Indonesia.

## CHAPTER 4

### Red versus Blue II: The Chinese Community Divided, 1949-1959

#### Introduction

On December 27, 1949, the Netherlands formally recognized Indonesia's independence. The day that marked the end of Indonesia's war for national independence signaled the beginning of a battle over national symbols in Chinese communities all across Indonesia. In the early morning in Jakarta, the editors of the pro-Beijing Chinese-language newspaper *Sheng Huo Bao* (生活报) hoisted the Five-star Red Flag of the PRC side-by-side with the Indonesian national flag, which infuriated those who remained loyal to the Chinese Nationalist regime and recognized only the Blue Sky, White Sun and Red Earth Flag of the ROC. In protest, these supporters of the Chinese Nationalist Party rallied support from the Indonesian police.<sup>1</sup> A former editor of *Sheng Huo Bao* gave an account of the dispute in his semi-autobiographical novel *Underneath the Red and White Flag* (红白旗下 or Hong Bai Qi Xia):

Around 9am, four or five armed Indonesian police came, angrily requesting to see the person in charge. They demanded that the Five-star Red Flag should be taken down. The editor-in-chief of the newspaper was threatened at gunpoint. Some ethnic Chinese who sympathized with *Sheng Huo Bao*'s stance protested in *bahasa Indonesia*, "Don't touch our national flag!" "If you are going to lower the Five-star Red Flag, you will have to lower the Red-and-white Flag!"<sup>2</sup> But the Indonesian police forcibly lowered the Five-star Red Flag anyway.<sup>3</sup>

On the same morning in Semarang, Central Java, a team of Indonesian police raided the office building of the pro-Beijing Chinese civic association the Xin You Society (新友社), where the Five-star

<sup>1</sup> Weng Xihui, "Biography of the patriotic leader of the overseas Chinese in Indonesia, Weng Fulin," Qian Ren and Liang Junxiang eds., *Sheng Huo Bao de huiyi* (Guangzhou: Shijie tushu chuban Guangdong youxian gongsi, 2013), p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> Referring to the Indonesian national flag.

<sup>3</sup> Hei Ying, *Hong Bai Qi Xia* [Underneath the red and white flag] (Hong Kong: Chidao chubanshe, 1950), pp. 1-3.

Red Flag of the PRC was flying together with the Indonesian national flag.<sup>4</sup> In Singkawang, West Kalimantan, under the burning tropical sun, Indonesian police officers climbed to the top of the roof of a pro-Beijing Chinese-language school to tear down a Five-star Red Flag. The principal of the school as well as the chair of the student union were later detained by the local authorities.<sup>5</sup> In 1950, while Taipei blamed Jakarta for “unjustly forbidding” the pro-Taipei Chinese from hoisting the Blue Sky, White Sun and Red Earth Flag, Beijing was anxious over the fact that in major cities such as Surabaya, Bandung, Pontianak and Semarang, those who flew the Nationalist flag outnumbered those who put out the PRC flag. In 1959, the American embassy in Jakarta discerned that the Indonesian authorities were still struggling to curtail the situation under which the pro-Beijing elements could “remind Indonesians of their power in society” by brandishing their five-starred flags.<sup>6</sup>

How could this “flag war” among the Chinese in Indonesia outlive the Chinese Civil War in Mainland China by a decade? The “flag war” is a metaphor for the power struggle within the Chinese community in Indonesia as well as for the inner conflict in the hearts and minds of individual ethnic Chinese. With the arrival of the post-colonial era, the ethnic Chinese had to face the difficult decision of nationality. In this chapter, I will first look at how the ethnic Chinese’s citizenship selection processes evolved from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. Then I will proceed to examine how the pro-Chinese Communist and Nationalist factions in Indonesia competed for influence in the three key areas commonly known as “the three treasures of the overseas Chinese society” (华社三宝 or Hua She San Bao): the Chinese-language newspapers, civic associations, and Chinese-language schools.

<sup>4</sup> Li Xuemin, “Mr. Zheng Manru devoted his youth to the motherland and the progressive and righteous affairs among the overseas Chinese,” *Sheng Huo Bao de huiyi*, pp. 295-308.

<sup>5</sup> Huang Zhenling, “We raised the Chinese national flag in Indonesia fifty years ago,” *Qiao Yuan*, Issue 5, 2005, p. 6; Hong Rongxing, “As a returned overseas Chinese from Indonesia remembers,” *Qiao Yuan*, Issue 6, 2006, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup>“John W. Henderson, Consul for Political Affairs, US Embassy, Jakarta, to the Department of State Washington D.C., April 6, 1959, “copies in dossier “Chinese Communist Party’s activities in Indonesia,” *Academia Historica*, 020-010809-0001; “Ambassador Chen Zhiping consults the Foreign Ministry on requesting the Indonesian Government to allow the overseas Chinese to hang the national flag,” from dossier “The nationality issue of the overseas Chinese in Indonesia,” *Academia Historica*, 020-010807-0025.

## The Conundrum of Citizenship

The communist victory in China and the formal independence of Indonesia in 1949, as well as the arrival of a new Cold War international order, required the state authorities to translate “Chinese” from a racial or ethnic label into the legal category of citizenship. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, the Republic of Indonesia announced in 1949 that all Indonesian-born Chinese could automatically obtain Indonesian citizenship or they could repudiate Indonesian citizenship before December 27, 1951 and register with their own consular authorities in Indonesia if they wanted to retain their own nationality (also known as “the passive system”).<sup>7</sup> However, instead of bringing the nationality issue to a close, the two-year nationality selection period between 1949 and 1951 revealed a kaleidoscope of emotions among the ethnic Chinese. In early December 1951, armed with chairs, thick jackets and “astonishing spirits,” groups of ethnic Chinese camped outside a local court to make sure they would not miss the opportunity to repudiate Indonesian citizenship.<sup>8</sup> Young students busily navigated their way through the overcrowded Indonesian courts to secure their PRC citizenship status, as they longed for the opportunity for college education back in China. Glimmers of hope shone in their eyes when they received the legal documents, and “they were relieved as if a big stone on their chests has been removed.”<sup>9</sup> Whereas some rushed to opt for PRC citizenship, others agonized over which option to choose. Many ethnic Chinese engaged in commerce found it a cruelly painful decision to make and advocated for *de facto* dual nationality. They needed Indonesian citizenship rights for business purposes, while they were terrified by the prospect of a perpetual disconnection from “the land of their ancestors (祖宗国).” Having chosen Indonesian citizenship, they nevertheless demanded that “the motherland should never abandon their moral

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<sup>7</sup> Skinner, *Communism and Chinese Culture in Indonesia*, p.18.

<sup>8</sup> See for example, “The overseas Chinese repudiate Indonesian citizenship,” December 10, 1951, *Xin Bao*; “Overseas Chinese repudiate Indonesian citizenship one after another,” December 11, 1951, *Xin Bao*; “More and more overseas Chinese repudiate Indonesian citizenship, December 17, 1951, *Xin Bao*; “The number of overseas Chinese who repudiate Indonesian citizenship is increasing day after day,” December 19, 1951, *Xin Bao*. In Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0329.

<sup>9</sup> “Overseas Chinese rushed to repudiate Indonesian citizenship from all across Indonesia,” December 3, 1951, *Xin Bao*. Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0329.

responsibilities to protect the overseas Chinese.”<sup>10</sup>

A confluence of push and pull factors shaped the ways in which the ethnic Chinese conceived their citizenship choices. Among the Chinese who repudiated Indonesian citizenship, ethno-centric nationalism oriented towards the PRC played an important role in their decision-making. A longstanding sense of racial and cultural superiority was reinforced by the pride in New China and the prosperous future it promised. Moreover, many *totok* Chinese had the vision of sojourning temporarily in Indonesia while hoping to ultimately return to their native land. In the meantime, many ethnic Chinese were still afflicted by persistent worry about the Indonesian Government’s treatment of ethnic minorities. Having barely shaken off the bitter memories of ethnic violence during the Indonesian National Revolution, the Chinese sensed a new wave of fear and uncertainty about their future in light of the political campaigns and nationalist economic policies of the newborn Republic of Indonesia. An op-ed published in May 1950 in the *Sishui Da Gong Shang Bao* (Da Gong Shang Bao of Surabaya 泗水大公商報) captured the doubt and fear that were haunting the Chinese community:

Due to differences in cultural heritage and lifestyle, even after the overseas Chinese take Indonesian citizenship, they will still be distinct from the Indonesian people, which will result in the problem of ethnic minority status [in Indonesia]. Progressive and liberal forces on the political scene are needed for the proper resolution of the problem of ethnic minority status. But currently Indonesia is in a state of chaos...if a Fascist figure came into power, those without Indonesian citizenship would surely be alienated; those [ethnic Chinese] with Indonesian citizenship would still suffer. The German Jews during the Holocaust is an obvious example.<sup>11</sup>

Many ethnic Chinese were targeted due to their alleged affiliation with communism during a state-sanctioned anti-communist campaign in August 1951. Though most of the ethnic Chinese arrested

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<sup>10</sup> “On nationality issue,” May 10, 1950, *Sishui Da Gong Shang Bao*. Cited in The Overseas Chinese Research Institute ed., *Yindunixiya huqiao wenti ziliao* [Materials on the issue of overseas Chinese in Indonesia] (Beijing: Xinhua shudian, 1951), p. 50.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

during the campaign were *totok* Chinese involved in pro-Beijing activities, a prominent *peranakan* Chinese journalist and community leader, Liem Koen Hian (林群贤), was also arrested based on allegations of participating in communist organizations. Despite his earlier inclination towards Chinese nationalism and his sympathy towards socialist New China, in the early 1950s Liem essentially became an Indonesian nationalist, working closely with founding fathers such as Sukarno and Hatta and advocating for political alliance across racial boundaries for the cause of a united Indonesian nation.<sup>12</sup> Upon his release, Liem repudiated Indonesian citizenship, which he had espoused for the past twenty years. From Liem's point of view, his experience during the anti-communist campaign was evidence of the fact that the Indonesian Government still treated the non-*pribumi* differently from the *pribumi*. Liem spoke to the press about his grave disappointment with the Indonesian Government: "Even if we took Indonesian citizenship, we could still be massacred."<sup>13</sup>

Besides political persecution, the overseas Chinese were also discouraged by the increasingly grim economic realities they faced. The Indonesian state harbored an image of the Chinese as exploiters who capitalized on the rich natural and human resources of Indonesia while being apathetic towards the country's future development. Prompted by these feelings of distrust, Jakarta took measures to curtail the flow of Chinese capital by stipulating that after the nationality selection period ended, only those who opted for PRC citizenship were eligible to transfer money to China. With no legal channel to send remittance, Chinese who acquired Indonesian citizenship devised informal arrangements. In May 1952,

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<sup>12</sup> Leo Suryadinata, *Eminent Indonesian Chinese: Biographical Sketches* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1978), pp. 84-85. Liem was anti-Japanese imperialism. He was detained when Japanese occupied Java but he was soon released. After Indonesia gained its independence, Liem was appointed a member of the Indonesian Central National Committee (1946) and a member of the Indonesian Delegation to the Renville Conference (1947). As time passed, he became more interested in the Communist Movement in China. He translated Gunther Stein's book *The Challenge of Red China* published it in June 1949 predicting the victory of the communists over the Kuomintang. In 1950 he reestablished a multiracial political party, the Persatuan Tenaga Indonesia (The New PTI) advocating Indonesian nationalism. A year later (1952) he died in Medan identified as a businessman who had held Chinese citizenship.

<sup>13</sup> "Liem Koen Hian on why he repudiated Indonesian citizenship," December 17, 1951, *Xin Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 0329.

two ethnic Chinese were charged with organizing underground international money transfers.<sup>14</sup> In another case that took place in 1953, ethnic Chinese peasants in North Sumatra clashed with the police when forced to relocate by the local authorities.<sup>15</sup> These incidents reinforced the sense of insecurity among the overseas Chinese and served as living evidence for Liem's and Da Gong Shang Bao of Surabaya's argument that Indonesian citizenship could not protect the ethnic Chinese from falling victim to ethnic discrimination or save them from their destinies as "the Jews of the East."

During the first round of the nationality selection period between 1949 and 1951, how many ethnic Chinese chose PRC citizenship by repudiating their Indonesian citizenship? At present, there is no accurate data to answer this question. The estimates range from 250,000 to 630,000. On the high end, the information collected by the Chinese Communist regime in Beijing matched with that by the Chinese Nationalist regime in Taipei, suggests that by the end of the two-year period in December 1951 around 25% of the 2.5 million ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, or 620,000-630,000 persons, repudiated Indonesian citizenship.<sup>16</sup> On the low end, Donald E. Willmott has calculated, based upon figures from various newspapers and government reports, that the number of Chinese who lost Indonesian citizenship through repudiations was between 250,000 and 350,000, or 10%-14% of the total Chinese population in Indonesia.<sup>17</sup>

It is noteworthy that many ethnic Chinese' decisions were circumscribed by institutional constraints and a lack of information since Indonesia had just emerged from their war of independence.

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<sup>14</sup> "The Indonesian Government does not allow the overseas Chinese to send remittance back to their family in China; two ethnic Chinese was charged of running a 'secret bank,'" May 7, 1952, *Sheng Huo Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 04105.

<sup>15</sup> "Special forces in Medan shot Chinese and Indonesian peasants," April 29, 1953, *Xi ng Zhou Ri Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 04105.

<sup>16</sup> Cai Renlong, *Chidaoxian shang de jiayin*, p. 21; and "Miscellaneous dossier on Indonesia," *Academia Historica*, 020-010899-0036. Mozingo cited interview information from the Department of Justice (in 1961) that "somewhere between 600,000 and 700,000 or approximately 40% of the local-born Chinese, had formally rejected Indonesian citizenship. See Mozingo, *Chinese Policy toward Indonesia*, pp. 95 and 105.

<sup>17</sup> Donald Willmott, *The National Status of the Chinese in Indonesia, 1900-1958* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2009), p. 91.

Wartime relocation placed many ethnic Chinese in remote regions that were insulated from the circulation of news and beyond the reach of state governance. Many ethnic Chinese were completely unaware of the nationality law passed at the Roundtable Conference. For those who had knowledge of it but were without court services in their place of residence, the difficulties in transportation and the sheer cost of travelling prohibited them from going through the legal procedure in major townships or cities.<sup>18</sup> Although technically the Indonesian citizenship law stipulated that the local-born ethnic Chinese could abandon their Indonesian citizenship starting on December 27, 1949, many regions did not start accepting applications until 1951 due to political instability and a lack of staff immediately after the transfer of sovereignty. Given these limitations, some courts set daily or weekly quotas for the repudiation of Indonesian citizenship.<sup>19</sup> In West Kalimantan, where there was a large concentration of ethnic Chinese, certain courts decided to assign one day per week for the repudiation of Indonesian citizenship.<sup>20</sup> In addition, illiteracy or lack of *bahasa Indonesia* language education prevented many ethnic Chinese from submitting the required paperwork. Moreover, many did not understand the importance of preserving legal documents and thus experienced great difficulty in providing all the required documents for repudiating Indonesian citizenship: birth certificates, residence permits, marriage licenses, tax records, etc.<sup>21</sup>

The fact that many ethnic Chinese did not have the chance to make their citizenship choices based on complete information and free will gave rise to a discrepancy between national allegiance and *de facto* citizenship status. The Indonesian Government found this situation alarming, since it wanted only the ethnic Chinese who were truly loyal to the cause of the Indonesian nation to become citizens of this newborn republic. One of the reports commissioned by the Indonesian Prime Minister's office noted:

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<sup>18</sup> The Overseas Chinese Research Institute ed., *Yindunixiya huqiao wenti ziliao*, p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> Cai Renlong, *Chidaoxian shang de jiayin*, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Thousands of Chinese took the opportunity (before December 27, 1951) to reject Indonesian citizenship. It is unknown how many thousands of Chinese were unable to reject Indonesian citizenship. But we can speculate that the number of those who missed the opportunity is much larger than that of the people who rejected Indonesian citizenship before December 27, 1951. So now in Indonesia there are still Chinese who remained Indonesian citizens even though they themselves did not intend to do so, and the number of this group is not small.<sup>22</sup>

The ethnic Chinese who did not repudiate their Chinese citizenship technically possessed dual citizenship: They obtained Indonesian citizenship via the passive system of nationality selection in 1949-1951, while maintaining until 1955 their Chinese citizenship according to the *jus sanguinis* (right of blood) principle. In total, approximately one million ethnic Chinese were eligible for PRC citizenship.<sup>23</sup> The Indonesian Government sensed a threat to national security in the face of the presence of a large number of Chinese who were theoretically still under the jurisdiction of Beijing. The same Indonesian governmental report expressed the fear that dual nationality would be an invitation for unwanted foreign intervention: “[I]t would be very improper if representatives of a foreign country intervened in the domestic politics of our country through foreign citizens living here.”<sup>24</sup> Therefore, in the early 1950s, the Indonesian Government was disposed towards decreasing the number of Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent by switching the nationality selection principle from a passive to an active one.

The Indonesian Government's inclination converged with the pro-PRC *totok* groups' hope to reclaim Chinese citizenship, since many of them missed the opportunity to repudiate Indonesian citizenship in the period between 1949 and 1951. In 1951, the Overseas Chinese Research Institute (华侨

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<sup>22</sup> “Berkas mengenai perjanjian antara RI dengan RRC tentang Dwi Kewarganegaraan beserta pengantar,” July 3, 1956, Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2144, *ANRI*.

<sup>23</sup> Mely G. Tan, “The Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia: Issues of Identity” in Leo Suryadinata ed. *Ethnic Chinese as Southeast Asians* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1997), p. 35; Donald Willmott, *The National Status of the Chinese in Indonesia, 1900-1958*, p. 91.

<sup>24</sup> “Berkas mengenai perjanjian antara RI dengan RRC tentang Dwi Kewarganegaraan beserta pengantar,” July 3, 1956, Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2144, *ANRI*.

问题研究会) under the supervision of the PRC government published a report based on discussion sessions held at pro-Beijing *totok* Chinese associations in regions with large ethnic Chinese populations: Singkawang, Pontianak, Bangka Island, Surabaya, Bandung, Semarang, Cheribon, Medan and Siantar. The majority of the ethnic Chinese whose voices appeared in the research report regarded the existence of dual citizenship as both a source of conflict and a disadvantageous arrangement that required the ethnic Chinese to “fulfill their obligations to both countries while receiving protection from neither side.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the report claimed: “[E]xcept for an extremely small number of people, the vast majority of ethnic Chinese prefer the active system.”<sup>26</sup> The Overseas Chinese Association in Cheribon (井里汶侨总) described the passive system as an institution that “imposes Indonesian citizenship on the ethnic Chinese given the technical difficulties in rejecting Indonesian citizenship.”<sup>27</sup> The Overseas Chinese Association in Surabaya explicitly framed the citizenship issue as “not a question of choice, but one of accepting or rejecting Indonesian citizenship.”<sup>28</sup>

Although Beijing wanted to end the existence of dual nationality in order to win trust from the Indonesian Government and thereby stabilize bilateral relations, it did not intend to maximize the number of Chinese nationals among the diaspora community in Indonesia. On the contrary, Beijing tried to urge the ethnic Chinese to make citizenship choices not out of ethno-centric nationalism but based on pragmatic considerations. For instance, the Overseas Chinese Research Institute’s report suggested that overseas Chinese from different economic backgrounds should make different choices:

For laborers [a large number of workers in tin-mines in Belitung and Bangka as well as plantations in Sumatra], once they take Indonesian citizenship, it will be easier for them to fight for their rights and benefits through collective actions organized by the labor unions. But if they

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> The Overseas Chinese Research Institute ed., *Yindunixiya huaqiao wenti ziliao*, p. 53.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

have a family and land back in China and they want to maintain a Chinese lifestyle, it would be better for them to choose Chinese citizenship. For peasants and businessmen, the citizenship choice will depend on whether Indonesia's land property laws and economic policy make a distinction between *pribumi* and non-*pribumi*. As for students of Chinese-language schools, they should maintain Chinese citizenship because the majority of them want to return to China for higher education.<sup>29</sup>

*Sheng Huo Bao*, the organ of the CCP in Indonesia, encouraged the ethnic Chinese to overcome ethno-centric nationalism and opt for Indonesian citizenship:

Overseas Chinese should base their citizenship choices on their life plans—whether they want to reside permanently in Indonesia or they plan to return ultimately to China... We have to correct the deep-rooted feelings of racial superiority among the ethnic Chinese. We should not think that by opting for Indonesian citizenship, we would lose face. This is wrong. Friendship can be forged among people of the same socio-economic class but from different ethnicities. Class solidarity should be prioritized over nationalism.<sup>30</sup>

On April 22, 1955, the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and his counterpart, Indonesian Prime Minister Ali Sastroamidjojo, signed the China-Indonesia Dual Nationality Treaty. The treaty marked two fundamental changes. Firstly, Beijing officially abandoned the right of blood principle and adopted instead the right of soil principle. In other words, Beijing no longer claimed that all persons with Chinese blood were automatically citizens of China. Secondly, Indonesia changed from a passive system to an active one: ethnic Chinese would not become Indonesian citizens unless they completed the required legal procedures. The two parties agreed that all Chinese descendants who wanted to give up their Chinese nationality had to go through procedures to formally abandon their Chinese citizenship at the Chinese

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> "Overseas Chinese making their decisions on nationality," *Sheng Huo Bao*, May 9, 1950, cited in *Yindunixiya huqiao wenti ziliao*, p. 52.

embassy or consulates. Vice versa, whoever wanted to maintain their Chinese citizenship also needed to go through procedures to abandon his or her Indonesian citizenship at Indonesian governmental agencies.

In the Chinese communities in Indonesia, the Dual Nationality Treaty had huge repercussions: The majority of the ethnic Chinese supported the treaty, whereas a number of PRC-oriented *totok* as well as Indonesia-oriented *peranakan* strongly opposed it. The PRC-oriented *totok* who opposed the treaty were mostly from an older generation with strong national identification with China. Some even cried when reading the news about the Dual Nationality Treaty, exclaiming that “the motherland has abandoned us!”<sup>31</sup> The *peranakan* opposition came mainly from Siauw Giok Tjhan and Baperki (*Bandan Permusjawaran Kewarganegaraan Indonesia* or the Consultative Body for Indonesian Citizenship) under his leadership. As a friend of Liem Koen Hian, Siauw was a *peranakan* Chinese community leader devoted to the cause of Indonesian national revolution and advocated Chinese integration into Indonesian society. At the same time however, Siauw, like Liem, was attracted to Marxism since an early age and was sympathetic towards socialist New China and proud of its accomplishments. Siauw sent his children to China to study and maintained cordial relations with the Chinese Government.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless Siauw objected to the change from a passive system to an active one in the Dual Nationality Treaty on the grounds that the change would cause many ethnic Chinese to lose their Indonesian citizenship. During Zhou Enlai’s visit to Indonesia in April 1955, Siauw had a 5-hour meeting with Zhou, during which he elaborated on his position:

Although many *peranakan* have Chinese blood, they were born and raised in Indonesia and their family planted their roots in Indonesia two or three generations ago. Some of them have already participated in local politics by means of running for office, working as parliamentary members or governmental officials, and representing Indonesia at international conferences and sports events. Some of them were given land in rural areas, and they received the same treatment from

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<sup>31</sup> Liang Yingming, interview by author, Beijing, July 21, 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Chen Zhongde (陈仲德 Chan Chung Tak, son of Siauw Giok Tjhan), interview by author, Hong Kong, September 18, 2013.

the Indonesian Government as *pribumi* peasants. It is self-evident that they are Indonesian citizens, and they should not be required to make decisions about citizenship.<sup>33</sup>

In a memorandum submitted to the Indonesian Government in May 1955, Baperki stated that “the manuscript of the Sino-Indonesia Dual Nationality Treaty contains some ideas that need to be reviewed carefully. Otherwise the treaty would cause serious consequences.” First and foremost, Baperki held that “the manuscript intends to reduce the number of Indonesian citizens among the Chinese descendants to as few as possible.” According to Baperki, the active system would cause “mass denationalization,” which referred to the loss of Indonesian citizenship among ethnic Chinese who had been and intended to continue living in Indonesia. Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Chinese, particularly those who lived in remote rural areas, might lose their Indonesian citizenship due to lack of information and thereby encounter difficulties in obtaining business permits, receiving public education, etc. Baperki cited a case during the 1949-1951 nationality selection period in which the entire Chinese population of the village Kembang-sari-Bali, or “flower essence of Bali,” rejected Indonesian citizenship due to the rumor that Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent would not receive a proper traditional Chinese-style burial ceremony upon death. All of a sudden, hundreds of families that had been settled for several generations in Kembang-sari-Bali and had never been outside of their home village became foreigners (*asing*).<sup>34</sup> In addition, Baperki asserted that the Dual Nationality Treaty would cause unnecessary confusion about the national allegiance of ethnic Chinese who had long been active on the Indonesian political scene by serving as party leaders, parliamentary members or cabinet ministers. Their political roles in the Republic of Indonesia should automatically speak for their citizenship status, and they should not be required to make their choice of citizenship again. Siauw said to Zhou Enlai during their meeting: “I am a member of the Indonesian parliament, and Indonesia is my motherland. China is not the place where I live; it is my

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<sup>33</sup>Zheng, *Guiqiao Peng Guanghan de wangshi jinshi*, p. 300.

<sup>34</sup>“Berkas mengenai perjanjian antara RI dengan RRC tentang Dwi Kewarganegaraan beserta pengantar,” July 3, 1956, Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2144, *ANRI*.

native country (祖籍国).”<sup>35</sup>

Siauw’s suggestion of recognizing the ethnic Chinese active in Indonesian politics as having implicitly renounced their Chinese citizenship was accepted by the Chinese Government and later included in the Dual Nationality Treaty. After his discussion with Siauw, on the morning of April 27, Zhou announced to representatives of the Chinese community, journalists, and Indonesian officials: “Today I told the Indonesian Foreign Minister Soenario: China will never regard those who work as cabinet ministers or parliament members in Indonesia as people with dual citizenship.”<sup>36</sup> An exchange of notes was announced on June 3 as a supplement to the Dual Nationality Treaty. This document acknowledged that due to their social status and political roles, some of the overseas Chinese in Indonesia had “self-evidently” renounced their Chinese citizenship and thus did not need to go through the formal procedure to opt for Indonesian citizenship.<sup>37</sup>

The Sino-Indonesian Dual Nationality Treaty was ratified in China by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress on December 30, 1957. However, the ratification process at the People’s Representative Council of Indonesia (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* or DPR) was delayed until December 1960.<sup>38</sup> Between January 1960 and January 1962, those who were considered to have dual citizenship had to complete the legal procedures required for their citizenship choices. By the end of the second selection period, as many as 390,000 ethnic Chinese, or approximately two-thirds of those with rightful claims to Indonesian citizenship, renounced their Chinese citizenship.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Zheng, *Guiqiao Peng Guanghan de wangshi jinshi*, p. 301

<sup>36</sup> Zhu, *Wanlong jiaoxiangqu*, p. 49

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>39</sup> Leo Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesian, the Chinese Minority, and China*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1992), p. 170. According to official sources, about 65% opted for Indonesian citizenship, while according to Chinese leaders the proportion was between 70 and 90 percent. See Mackie and Coppel, “A Preliminary Survey” in Mackie eds., *The Chinese in Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1976), pp. 11 and 214. Thus, one can assume that the legal status of the ethnic Chinese was finally settled in 1962. Mely G. Tan, “The Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia: Issues of Identity” in Leo Suryadinata ed. *Ethnic Chinese as Southeast Asians* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1997), p. 35.

Siauw's suggestion of maintaining the passive system in order to protect the ethnic Chinese from losing their Indonesian citizenship rights was not accepted in the Dual Nationality Treaty. As Siauw foresaw in the early 1950s, the active system created barriers to many ethnic Chinese obtaining their rightful status as Indonesian citizens, especially during the Suharto era (1966-1998). Until today, the Citizenship Institute of Indonesia (*Institut Kewarganegaraan Indonesia*), a legal aid organization that assists people of foreign origins with their citizenship issues, is still handling cases of ethnic Chinese who were denied Indonesian citizenship. In one extraordinary case, an ethnic Chinese female born in 1969 had been "stateless" for 33 years and was then issued a PRC passport in 2002, although she has never travelled outside of Indonesia and did not speak Mandarin Chinese. She was registered by the Indonesian authorities since her birth as a WNA (*warga negara asing* or alien), because her father was born in China and maintained his PRC citizenship until his death. The active system gave the Suharto regime a pretext for explicit ethnic discrimination by deliberately blurring the line between "ethnicity" and "citizenship." At Indonesian governmental offices under the New Order regime, it was almost inevitable that a Chinese Indonesian would be asked the question of "*orang apa*" (loosely translated into "who are you?/where are you from?"). If he or she responded "*orang Cina*" (Chinese), he or she would be marked out as "alien" even though "*orang Cina*" could have meant "Chinese Indonesian" rather than "Chinese citizen."<sup>40</sup>

In retrospect, the policy-making circle in Beijing recognized that the decision to switch to the active system was made based on insufficient and biased information. The staff members from the PRC's Overseas Chinese Committee (中侨委) became aware later that they failed to comprehend the diversity of opinions among the ethnic Chinese. Their focus was on the "patriotic leaders of the Chinese community" (those who were strongly pro-Beijing) and the older generation who had strong emotional ties to Mainland China. In other words, they marginalized or even ignored the opinion of Indonesia-oriented *peranakan* Chinese, such as Siauw, and the younger generation who saw their future in Indonesia.

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<sup>40</sup> Eddy Setiawan (head of Institut Kewarganegaraan Indonesia), interview by author, Jakarta, March 20, 2013. "Kasus Tjhia Ay Ay," no. 079/KKWN/IKI/VII/2009, Institut Kewarganegaraan Indonesia.

Moreover, they failed to anticipate the technical difficulties in policy implementation. As a former diplomat who used to work at the Chinese embassy in Jakarta reflected, it was impossible for all ethnic Chinese to go to the Chinese embassy or consulates or the Indonesian governmental agencies for the citizenship selection procedures. More often than not, the elderly, usually with strong emotional ties to China, would make a decision on behalf of the entire household and thereby override the younger generation, who were more inclined towards adopting Indonesian citizenship.<sup>41</sup>

Before Dec 1949	Dec 1949-Dec 1951	April 22, 1955	Jan 1960-Jan 1962
China (ROC): <i>jus sanguinis</i>	First phase of nationality selection. China (ROC) maintained <i>jus sanguinis</i> principle—all ethnic Chinese with Chinese bloodline were considered as Chinese citizens.	China (PRC) and Indonesia signed Dual Nationality Treaty. Those who were considered to have dual citizenship had to declare in a court of law that they rejected Chinese citizenship if they wanted to opt for Indonesian citizenship, or vice versa. China switched its citizenship law from <i>jus sanguinis</i> to <i>jus soli</i> . And Indonesia switched from passive system to active system.	Second phase of nationality selection.
Indonesia: <i>jus soli</i>	Indonesia maintained <i>jus soli</i> and passive system—all ethnic Chinese born in Indonesia would automatically become Indonesian citizens.		

Table 1. Two phases of nationality selection

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<sup>41</sup>Zheng, *Guiqiao Peng Guanghan de wangshi jinshi*, pp. 300 and 302.

Total number of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia by early 1950s	Ethnic Chinese eligible for the PRC citizenship before the signing of Dual Nationality Treaty in 1955	Ethnic Chinese who became PRC citizens through repudiation of Indonesian citizenship during 1949-1951	Ethnic Chinese who became PRC citizens through repudiation of Indonesian citizenship during 1960-1962
2-2.5 million	1 million	between 250,000 and 630,000	390,000

Table 2. Demographics of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia according to citizenship status

### **Capitalists Devoted to Communist China**

The political landscape of the Chinese society in Indonesia after 1949 was characterized by contention between the supporters of Beijing and Taipei and the wavering of the non-committed in the middle. Among the *peranakan* group, the majority were proud of the domestic developments in the new socialist China but unsure whether it was merely a satellite state of the Soviet Union. Many adopted a wait-and-see policy, pragmatically calculating to what extent they could look to Beijing for protection. A large portion of the *totok* population, especially teachers and students at the Chinese-language schools, were enthusiastically pro-Beijing.<sup>42</sup>

The *totok* community's enthusiasm for the communist regime reflected the fact that the CCP had recognized the importance of winning the hearts and minds of the overseas Chinese early on and had been strategically channeling financial resources for propaganda purposes. As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, compared with its Nationalist rival, the Chinese communists had less experience as well as fewer human and financial resources available for the expansion of their influence in Indonesia. Yet the core of the CCP's presence in Indonesia—the left-wing intellectuals, such as Ba Ren, who immigrated during the Japanese occupation—was able to make up for this gap by ironically joining hands with the local Chinese

<sup>42</sup> "Interview with Mr. Hsieh Shan-ts'ai, CNA correspondent," Jakarta, November 7, 1950, box 2, series II, G. William Skinner Papers, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

capitalists. *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*, the organ of the Chinese Nationalist Party in Indonesia, published an editorial entitled “The Destiny of Left-Wing Industrialists and Businessmen” in June 1952, in which the author observed that:

[T]he so-called progressive elements are mostly factory-owners, entrepreneurs, rice and fabric merchants, as well as bankers. They usually possess large amount of capital and should be categorized as the capitalist class...whereas those who run small businesses or belong to the working class usually align themselves with the righteous side [the Chinese Nationalist regime].<sup>43</sup>

This paradoxical compatibility between capitalism and communism started to emerge during the Japanese occupation period when the Chinese Communist Party started to develop its underground offices hidden behind the counters of pastry shops, Chinese medicine companies, soap factories, and wineries in the archipelago. The most important CCP-controlled enterprise at the time was a bakery named “Big Unique Cake Factory” (大不同蛋糕厂). In 1943, Yang Xinrong (杨新容), one of the founding members of the CCP’s underground branches in Indonesia, started the bakery business in Jakarta, which soon successfully expanded to other parts of Indonesia. This chain of pastry factories not only provided the left-leaning youth with a sustainable source of income but also safe venues for underground resistance against the Japanese.<sup>44</sup>

The experience with the “Big Unique Cake Factory” gave the CCP leadership in Indonesia the confidence to build a more comprehensive economic organization to finance its political activities in the future. Yang Xinrong, Wang Jiyuan (王纪元) and Huang Zhougui (黄周规) together founded Big China Trade Ltd. (大中贸易有限公司), managed it in a modern corporate style, and made it into a hub of financial resources for the CCP’s development in Indonesia. With 40 stakeholders altogether, the Big

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<sup>43</sup> “The destiny of left-leaning merchants,” June 27, 1952, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*.

<sup>44</sup> The alumni society of the overseas Chinese school of Jimei, the Overseas Chinese University of Jimei eds., *Mianhuai yu jingyang: jinian Jimei qiaoxiao Yang Xinrong laoxiaozhang danchen yibai zhounian* [Celebrating the one hundredth birthday of Yang Xinrong, the president of the overseas Chinese school of Jimei] (2007), p. 8.

China Trade Ltd. raised 200,000 Indonesian rupiah as its start-up fund. No one was allowed to hold more than 60% of the shares so as to prevent manipulation. The company's business covered a wide range of commercial products, including pepper, rubber, cane sugar, and coffee. The managerial board decided that once the company started to make a profit, money would be used for the development of pro-Beijing Chinese-language education, the expansion of left-wing print media, and the expansion of influence in Chinese civic societies.<sup>45</sup> During the Red versus Blue struggle in the 1950s, the board members of Big China Trade Ltd. used their monetary power to seize schools previously under the control of the Chinese Nationalists and to convert them to the pro-Beijing bloc. One of the Big China Trade Ltd. founders, Yang Xinrong, assumed the position of principal of the pro-Beijing Xinhua School of Jakarta (新华学校). The other two founders, Wang Jiyuan (王纪元) and Huang Zhougui (黃周规), were crucial figures of the CCP organ *Sheng Huo Bao* (生活报). The pro-Beijing civic association also used the personal networks and social capital of the Big China Trade Ltd. board members to collect donations. During the anti-Chinese campaign in 1959-1960, the Big China Trade Ltd. assisted the Chinese embassy and consulates in Indonesia in arranging the repatriation of the persecuted Chinese.<sup>46</sup>

Besides Chinese Communists running businesses for revolutionary purposes, there were also successful businessmen who became attracted to the Chinese communist regime and voluntarily devoted their financial resources to the cause of the PRC. For instance, Wang Dajun (汪大均), a Chinese businessmen who owned the Tiger Brand Biscuit Company (利克力士虎标饼干厂) and *Bank Buana* (宇宙银行 or Universal Bank), was one of the major investors of *Sheng Huo Bao*.<sup>47</sup> Weng Fulin (翁福林) was another well-known “red capitalist.” Weng purchased a Chinese style residence in Jakarta, with traditional architectural design and built with materials imported from China, with plans to turn it into a

<sup>45</sup>Yang Qiusheng, “the Big China Trade Company that united the patriotic and democratic overseas Chinese in Java,” in Qian Ren and Liang Junxiang eds., *Sheng Huo Bao de huiyi*, pp. 61-65.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>“Humble life, colorful life—reknown leader of the Chinese community in Indonesia, Wang Dajun and his family,” Qian Ren and Liang Junxiang eds., *Sheng Huo Bao de huiyi*, pp. 309-313

cinema. But the PRC Charge d'affaires, Zhong Qingfa (钟庆发), approached him and pledged to preserve the original building for the use of the PRC diplomatic mission. Weng gave up the idea of building a cinema, donated the residence to the Chinese diplomatic mission and the money for the cinema project to two pro-Beijing schools.<sup>48</sup> During the anti-communist purge in August 1951, Weng was arrested and interrogated. He was repeatedly questioned as to whether he was a communist himself and whether that was the reason behind his decision to donate a property he purchased to the Chinese embassy. Weng replied: "I am not qualified as a communist. I belong to the capitalist class, the real communists are those who belong to the working class."<sup>49</sup>

"How is it that the wealthy capitalists in Southeast Asia can support a communist government in China?"<sup>50</sup> G. William Skinner asked in the early 1950s, after extensive fieldwork in the Chinese community in Indonesia. Skinner quoted the answer from Kwee Kek Beng (郭克明) a *peranakan* Chinese journalist who acquired Indonesian citizenship in 1950 but remained proud of socialist New China: "[T]here is no necessary contradiction between the New Democratic Government and capitalism if it is not imperialist. And communism in China does not mean that it is coming here [Indonesia], while the Chinese businessmen here welcome the support and protection that a strong Chinese Government, of whatever political coloration, can give them."<sup>51</sup> Ang Jan Goan (洪渊源), a *peranakan* Chinese community leader and the editor-in-chief of the pro-Beijing *Xin Bao* (新报) expressed the view that "politically, most of the Chinese community are ready (as in the past) to accept any government in power in China and to rejoice in a strong and powerful united China." He used the following metaphor: "The overseas Chinese may be considered shareholders in the Chinese Government.

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<sup>48</sup> Weng Xihui, "Biography of the patriotic leader of the overseas Chinese in Indonesia, Weng Fulin," Qian Ren and Liang Junxiang eds., *Sheng Huo Bao de huiyi*, p. 242.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> "Interview with Mr. Kwee Kek Beng, Peranakan Businessman," Jakarta, November 10, 1950, box 2, series II, G. William Skinner Papers, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

They can't hope to achieve voice in selecting the Managers (governmental leaders) or deciding policy of the company, but they do hope for their share of the dividends (protection from the home government.)”<sup>52</sup> Theoretically, how did the CCP leadership in Indonesia reconcile the contradiction between the economic status of their capitalist supporters as well as their own capitalistic business activities with their communist ideology? In a special New Year's issue of *Sheng Huo Bao*, Zheng Chuyun (郑楚耘), one of the left-wing intellectuals who migrated from Mainland China to Indonesia together with Ba Ren, commented on this dynamic between the Chinese communist regime and the ethnic Chinese capitalists. In Zheng's view, the ethnic Chinese capitalists were also “exploited and oppressed by the Western imperialists.” The constraints and oppression they faced in Indonesia made them eligible members of an overseas Chinese anti-imperialist patriotic united front (华侨反帝爱国统一战线). This united front among the overseas Chinese welcomed “anyone who has a heart loyal to the motherland” regardless of his or her past political affiliations or class background.<sup>53</sup> The CCP recruited allies and accumulated resources in the broadest sense for the expansion of its power overseas. Pragmatism had become an essential part of the CCP's ideology.

### “Media Warfare”

	How they addressed themselves/ their sympathizers in the diasporic community	How they addressed their opponents
Chinese Communists	Progressive 进步 Patriotic 爱国	Reactionary 反动 White Chinese 白华 Chiang Bandits 蒋匪 蒋帮 蒋

<sup>52</sup> “Interview with Mr. Ang Jan Goan, Editor of *Sin Po*,” Jakarta, November 9, 1950, box 2, series II, G. William Skinner Papers, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

<sup>53</sup> Zheng Chuyun, “On the overseas Chinese patriotic, anti-imperialist united front,” January 1, 1951, *Sheng Huo Bao*, in Zheng Binbin ed., *Zheng Chuyun wenji* [Collected works of Zheng Chuyun] (Guangzhou: Shijie tushu chuban Guangdong youxian gongsi, 2013), p. 56.

		贼党棍
Chinese Nationalists	Loyal 忠贞 Righteous 正义	Red / Communist/Mao Bandits 赤匪 共匪 毛贼

Table 3. Terms used in the propaganda war between the pro-Chinese Communist and pro-Chinese Nationalist factions in Indonesia

Chinese-language media was a major battlefield in the confrontation between the pro-Beijing and pro-Taipei blocs. Historically, the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed rapid expansion of the number of Chinese-language press alongside the rise of overseas Chinese nationalism. *Xin Bao* (新报 or Sin Po), the Chinese Indonesian newspaper that enjoyed the widest circulation in the 1950s (18,000 for its *bahasa Indonesia* edition and 25,000 for its Chinese-language edition), targeted *peranakan* Chinese who identified themselves with China. *Xin Bao* portrayed China as the protector of the overseas Chinese. This newspaper advocated the unity of the *peranakan* and the *totok*, encouraged *peranakan* children to obtain Chinese education and favored participation by the overseas Chinese in the politics of China rather than the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>54</sup> *Xin Bao* remained neutral between the Chinese Communists and Nationalists throughout the Chinese Civil War until the communist forces crossed the Yangze River and occupied Shanghai and Nanjing.<sup>55</sup> On the day the PRC was formally established in Beijing, *Xin Bao* changed from the Minguo calendar to the Gregorian calendar to express its open support for the new communist regime.<sup>56</sup> *Xin Bao* thereafter became very sympathetic to the PRC in its reports and maintained its Chinese nationalist position on issues such as citizenship choice.

The organ of the Chinese Nationalist Party in Indonesia, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao* (天声日报), had the

<sup>54</sup> Leo Suryadinata, “A history of Chinese-language newspaper in Indonesia and national identification,” in *Sheng Huo Bao jinian congshu shoufa yantaohui wenjian huibian* [Collection of papers presented at the conference on *Sheng Huo Bao*] (Xiamen, October 22-23, 2013), pp. 21-29.

<sup>55</sup> “Report on the status of the overseas Chinese from our embassy in Indonesia,” September 3, 1950, CFMA, 118-00356-03.

<sup>56</sup> Leo Suryadinata, *Yinni huaren: wenhua yu shehui* [Chinese in Indonesia: culture and society] (Singapore: Singapore Society of Asian Studies, 1993), pp. 126-127.

second largest circulation after *Xin Bao*, which amounted to approximately 13,000.<sup>57</sup> *Tian Sheng Ri Bao* was vocal in its opposition against the communist regime in China. *Tian Sheng Ri Bao* accused the Chinese communists of being “traitors to the motherland” who undermined authentic Chinese culture with their communist ideology. The Chinese Nationalist propaganda emphasized the distinction between “the motherland” and “the communist regime”: “We oppose the communist government in Beijing out of our love for the motherland.”<sup>58</sup> Immediately after the establishment of the PRC, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*’s editorial on October 4, 1949 condemned the PRC as “a satellite state and a cheerleading clown of the Soviet Union.” It predicted that the future of the PRC would be “dim,” with “barely any prospect of sustainable development.” Taipei also denied the legitimacy of the communist regime in world politics: “any rational government that pursued justice in international affairs would never grant the PRC diplomatic recognition.”<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao* urged the overseas Chinese to bear in mind that their own economic interests were “incompatible with those of the communist regime.”<sup>60</sup> One editorial argued that the business-minded ethnic Chinese in Indonesia fell into the category of capitalist “exploiters” and would not only suffer the confiscation of their land and property back home, but their family members who remained in China would also become the targets of political cleansing.<sup>61</sup> *Tian Sheng Ri Bao* rallied the overseas Chinese, saying: “It would be suicidal for you to embrace the rule of the Chinese Communist Party.”<sup>62</sup>

However, in contrast to its intense remarks bashing the communist government in Beijing, *Tian*

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<sup>57</sup> “Interview with Mr. Hsieh Shan-ts’ai, CNA correspondent,” Jakarta, November 7, 1950, box 2, series II, G. William Skinner Papers, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

<sup>58</sup> “The recognition that the overseas Chinese should obtain,” November 6, 1950, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*, in *Tian Sheng Ri Bao shelun xuanji* [collected editorials from *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*] (Jakarta: Harian Thien Sung Yit Po, 1951), pp. 106-108.

<sup>59</sup> Qiu Zhengou, *Huaqiao wenti lunji* [Collection of works on the overseas Chinese issue] (Taipei: Huagang, 1978), pp. 172-173.

<sup>60</sup> “The recognition that the overseas Chinese should obtain,” November 6, 1950, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*, in *Tian Sheng Ri Bao shelun xuanji*, pp. 106-108.

<sup>61</sup> “The overseas Chinese is the target of the Chinese communists’ political cleansing,” June 26, 1951, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*, in *Tian Sheng Ri Bao shelun xuanji*, pp. 134-136.

<sup>62</sup> “The recognition that the overseas Chinese should obtain,” November 6, 1950, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*, in *Tian Sheng Ri Bao shelun xuanji*, pp. 106-108.

*Sheng Ri Bao*'s attitude towards the pro-Beijing groups in Indonesia was initially conciliatory. In fact, in the period immediately after the PRC's independence, the Chinese Nationalists in Indonesia were accommodating, with some of its prominent members contemplating the idea of approaching the pro-Beijing groups with friendly gestures. A *Tian Sheng Ri Bao* editorial on June 26, 1950 called for unity among different factions in the Chinese community:

The struggle between the two blocs is like family members drawing swords on each other (同室操戈). Most of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia merely want to make a living. No one came overseas with the goal of promoting political movement. The pro-Beijing and pro-Taipei factions can co-exist peacefully. Either side can uphold their own political beliefs freely, which does not necessarily involve attacking those who disagree with them. Between the Chinese Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party, the victory in the long term will go to the party that succeeds in safeguarding the freedom of the Chinese people and the independence of the nation, as well as making our country strong and prosperous.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the Communist Party leadership's ideological commitment to fully expand the united front among the Chinese in Indonesia, the pro-Beijing groups in Indonesia were unable to take advantage of this window of opportunity and win the wavering Chinese Nationalist loyalists over to their side. In Jakarta, Zhang Xunyi (章勋义), a prominent Chinese Nationalist Party member, hung the Five-star Red Flag in the office building of his association. Zhang, together with two other senior Chinese Nationalist leaders in Indonesia, Qiu Yuanrong (丘元荣) and Liang Xiyou (梁锡佑), quietly participated in the welcome ceremony for the first PRC ambassador to Indonesia, Ba Ren. But the pro-Beijing bloc dismissed these friendly gestures as "ingratiating" and "opportunistic."<sup>64</sup> Similarly, in Medan, when the

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<sup>63</sup> "On the so-called working committee," September 16, 1950, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*, in *Tian Sheng Ri Bao shelun xuanji*, pp. 100-101

<sup>64</sup> "The haunting ghosts of Majoor and Kapiten," September 16, 1950, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*, in *Tian Sheng Ri Bao shelun xuanji*, pp. 102-106.

pro-Taipei group showed interest in the welcome ceremony for the PRC Consular General Shen Yiping (沈一平), the pro-Beijing ethnic Chinese required that “Chiang bandits and their followers should write letters of apology before joining us.”<sup>65</sup>

Infuriated and humiliated, the pro-Taipei groups turned aggressively against the pro-Beijing groups. In a *Tian Sheng Ri Bao* editorial published in September 1950, a pro-Taipei group asserted that despite their anti-communist stance, they cherished the hope for a strong China and “looked forward to the arrival of Ambassador Wang because he would help protect the interests of the overseas Chinese in general.” The pro-Taipei group criticized the non-cooperative attitude of the pro-Beijing bloc:

Only a very small number of ethnic Chinese are strong believers in a particular political ideology. Most make their decisions based on pragmatic considerations. Overseas Chinese civic associations are not political parties. These associations should include people from across the full political spectrum and should accommodate different political ideologies. The pro-Beijing associations are shutting their door to many of them.<sup>66</sup>

Years later, the policy-making circle in Beijing concurred with the pro-Taipei bloc’s critique and even used the same metaphor to describe the pro-Beijing bloc’s unwillingness to open up a space for reconciliation and collaboration:

At the time [immediately after the founding of the PRC], many patriotic overseas Chinese associations were ultra-leftist and closed their doors. These associations did not take the initiative to win over the wavering Chinese Nationalist loyalists in order to break down the pro-Taipei bloc. Rather, these associations rejected everyone affiliated with the Chinese Nationalist Party by

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<sup>65</sup> Overseas Chinese Research Association ed., *Yafei diqu huqiao qingkuang jieshao*, p. 55.

<sup>66</sup> “The haunting ghosts of Majoor and Kapiten,” September 16, 1950, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*, in *Tian Sheng Ri Bao shelun xuanji*, pp. 102-106.

launching non-stop attacks.<sup>67</sup>

Such inflexibility could also be found in the political discourse in pro-Beijing media. In contrast to *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*'s separation between a firm ideological stance against the CCP and a moderate attitude towards the pro-Beijing elements in Indonesia, *Sheng Huo Bao*, the CCP organ in Indonesia, adopted a non-reconciliatory approach towards both the Chinese Nationalist Regime in Taipei and the pro-Taipei groups in Indonesia. *Sheng Huo Bao*'s founders regarded Indonesia as the front of the battle between the Red and the Blue among Chinese diaspora globally. Before the end of the Chinese Civil War, Wang Jiyuan, underground CCP member and one of the founders of *Sheng Huo Bao*, depicted the Chinese political world in black and white:

The mission of overseas Chinese newspapers is to encourage every Chinese to care for the politics in the motherland. It is not enough just to care about the development of one's own native village or native town. We have to expand the range of our interests and concerns to the whole motherland, including both its bright side and its dark side. Now the motherland is experiencing a struggle between the forces of democracy and those of dictatorship. It is a war between right and wrong, good and evil, and we have to pick our side. The most important thing for a journalist is his or her moral stance. If one just sits on the fence and avoids making a decision, one would be an opportunist.<sup>68</sup>

It was with this picture in mind that the founders of *Sheng Huo Bao* envisioned the newspaper's mission among the overseas Chinese. First and foremost, it intended to bring enlightenment to the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia by replacing their "feudalist thoughts and traditional ideas that centered on clan and native place associations" with communist ideology and patriotism oriented towards socialist new China.

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<sup>67</sup> Overseas Chinese Research Association ed., *Yafei diqu huaqiao qingkuang jieshao*, p. 55.

<sup>68</sup> Wang Jiyuan, "The responsibilities of ethnic Chinese journalists at present," in Wang Yixia ed. *Wang Jiyuan wenxuan* [Collected works of Wang Jiyuan] (Guangzhou: Shijie tushu chuban Guangdong youxian gongsi, 2013), p. 88.

To achieve this goal, it would “disseminate information on the socialist construction back in the motherland” and “debunk the shameless lies of the Chinese Nationalists.” It also planned to channel financial resources from overseas Chinese to aid the reconstruction of the national economy back home.<sup>69</sup>

With a circulation of approximately 8,000, *Sheng Huo Bao*’s influence was limited to overseas Chinese who were supporters of or sympathizers with the CCP and planned to maintain their Chinese citizenship. *Sheng Huo Bao* could not represent the voices of those who intended to integrate into Indonesian society and to ultimately “plant their roots in the local soil.”<sup>70</sup> Although it supported Indonesia’s War of Independence based on Lenin’s theory of imperialism, *Sheng Huo Bao*’s attitude towards Indonesia had been one that was distant, unenthusiastic, and sometimes even condescending. For instance, before the Dutch-Indonesian Roundtable Conference, *Sheng Huo Bao* published an editorial, urging Indonesia to “learn from more advanced cultures and ideas, not to isolate itself and stagnate by refusing to make progress.”<sup>71</sup> *Sheng Huo Bao* treated Indonesia as an “other” while addressing China as “our country” or “the motherland.”

*Sheng Huo Bao* focused predominantly on domestic developments within China and China’s relations with the outside world. Among the 1,858 editorials published between October 1945 and November 1959, 44% were on domestic affairs in China, 32.9% on the PRC’s foreign relations, and 23.1% on the Indonesian economy and Indonesian politics and the status of the ethnic Chinese.<sup>72</sup> *Sheng Huo Bao*’s overwhelmingly positive reports on the PRC parroted Beijing’s propaganda line. It portrayed the PRC as simultaneously a prosperous socialist country with remarkable achievements in agriculture and industry and an ideal destination for overseas investment, with a burgeoning economy and lively

<sup>69</sup> Weng Xihui, “Biography of the patriotic leader of the overseas Chinese in Indonesia, Weng Fulin,” in Qian Ren and Liang Junxiang eds., *Sheng Huo Bao de huiyi*, pp. 232-234.

<sup>70</sup> “Interview with Mr. Hsieh Shan-ts’ai, CNA correspondent,” Jakarta, November 7, 1950, box 2, series II, G. William Skinner Papers, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

<sup>71</sup> “On the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia,” August 4, 1949, *Sheng Huo Bao*.

<sup>72</sup> Liang Yingming, “The historical significance of *Sheng Huo Bao*,” in *Sheng Huo Bao jinian congshu shoufa yantaohui wenjian huibian*, p. 11.

markets.<sup>73</sup> During the Great Leap Forward, *Sheng Huo Bao* reported on imaginary victories in the PRC's domestic production. It introduced to the overseas Chinese the People's Commune, where food, clothes, medical care and education were all free. It promised its readers in Indonesia that “[t]here is no need to worry that your family and relatives back home will suffer financial losses after joining the People's Commune.” “The People's Commune is a bridge from earth to heaven” and “a road to Great Unity.”<sup>74</sup> It also tried to convince its readers that “[t]he traditional belief that peasants are at the mercy of the forces of nature should be abandoned. In the near future, the Chinese people will have over 500 kilograms of grain and more than 50 kilograms of pork per capita per year.”<sup>75</sup> It even sang the praises of the mass steel campaign in which small backyard furnaces had a disastrous impact on the environment.<sup>76</sup>

Parallel with this beaming pride in the PRC's achievements, *Sheng Huo Bao* also exuded a strong antipathy towards the Chinese Nationalist elements in Indonesia, the Chinese Nationalist regime in Taipei, and the United States, “the most devious enemy of all the people who are oppressed in the world.” Mirroring *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*'s strategy of delegitimizing the Chinese communist regime by framing it as a puppet of the Soviet Union, *Sheng Huo Bao* accused the Chinese Nationalists of being “the lapdogs” of the American imperialists.<sup>77</sup> *Sheng Huo Bao*'s anti-American propaganda flared up after the outbreak of the Korean War. An editorial at the time warned the ethnic Chinese that the US was “in the process of taking the same old aggressive track as the Japanese imperialists did in the old days” while the overseas Chinese had not yet “thoroughly understood the vicious nature of American imperialism.” *Sheng Huo*

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<sup>73</sup> See a series of editorials on *Sheng Huo Bao*: “A year of peaceful construction,” January 4, 1950; “The rapidly developing economic construction of the motherland,” April 12, 1950; “The economy of the motherland marching towards prosperity,” June 21, 1950; “The lively markets all over our country and the prosperous economy,” August 7, 1952; “The Chinese people can combat natural disaster,” August 11, 1954; “The victory of socialist reform,” Januart 17, 1956; “Our motherland has a bright future,” July 5, 1957.

<sup>74</sup> “The great victory of the policy line of our socialist construction,” December 19, 1958, *Sheng Huo Bao*.

<sup>75</sup> “The logics behind the Great Leap Forward,” August 7, 1958, *Sheng Huo Bao*.

<sup>76</sup> See a series of editorials on *Sheng Huo Bao*: “The progress of our country evidenced by the increase of steel production,” September 3, 1958; “Marching towards the happiness of all of our countrymen,” August 20, 1958; “Cheerfully discussing the People's Commune,” November 19, 1958; “Joining the People's Commune means taking the road to happiness,” December 11, 1958.

<sup>77</sup> Zheng Chuyun, “On the overseas Chinese patriotic, anti-imperialist united front,”pp. 51-56.

*Bao* saw the anti-American propaganda as the top priority for constructing the overseas Chinese united front.<sup>78</sup>

Following the movement to “resist the US and assist Korea” back in China, the pro-Beijing bloc in Indonesia started a “campaign against poison” (拒毒运动 *judu yundong*), which called upon all those who claimed loyalty to Beijing to boycott American cultural products and media.<sup>79</sup> Left-wing ethnic Chinese youth were the most passionate participants in this movement. One ethnic Chinese student wrote to *Sheng Huo Bao*:

Today the American imperialists are on the verge of death. Their culture is in decline too. The films produced by the big bosses from Wall Street are serving the ruling class only. It defends the capitalist system as well as imperialism. It numbs the working class’s hatred of reality with romanticism and eroticism so as to delay class struggle. It promotes a narrow version of “America first” nationalism. All American movies are poisonous.<sup>80</sup>

Besides *Sheng Huo Bao*, during the 1950s and 1960s the most widely circulated PRC propaganda magazine in Indonesia was the *China Pictorial* (中国画报). Many ethnic Chinese youth were devoted readers of this magazine. They looked forward to its arrival every month, and some would even go to the embassy if the latest issue was not delivered on schedule to ask for it. This colorfully illustrated magazine projected the PRC as a land full of babies with chubby and rosy cheeks. Similar to *Sheng Huo Bao*, while the Great Leap Forward resulted in three years of catastrophic economic recession, the *China Pictorial* reported only on the People’s Canteen, which offered free meals. The *China Pictorial* blinded many young ethnic Chinese from grim realities and kindled an aspiration to ultimately return to the

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Zhang Yijun, “Anecdotes from the past,” in Li Gongwo laoshi jinian teji [A special issue that memorializes teacher Li Gongwo] (Hong Kong: Alumni society of the Medan Middle School, 2008).

<sup>80</sup> Qian Ren, “I will never watch the movies made by the American imperialists,” in Qian Ren, *Qian Ren zaoqi shiwenxuan* [Collected works on the earlier poems and essays of Qian Ren] (Guangzhou: Shijie tushu chuban Guangdong youxian gongsi, 2013), p. 35.

motherland.<sup>81</sup> In addition to the *China Pictorial*, print media published outside of Indonesia—such as the magazines *New Observation*(新观察) and *Learning*(学习) as well as the newspaper *Da Gong Bao* (大公报) of Hong Kong—were made available through a chain of circulation established by pro-Beijing businessmen.<sup>82</sup>

Weng Fulin, the businessman who donated his property for the use of the PRC embassy in Jakarta, played a major role in marketing PRC movies and documentaries in Indonesia. A professionally-trained artist himself and the owner of several art and movie studios, Weng established South Star Pictures (南星影业公司) in Jakarta, a film company that focused on importing “progressive movies” from the PRC and the Soviet Union. South Star Pictures managed screenings of the documentary *The Birth of New China* (新中国的诞生), a 1949 production on the Chinese Civil War from the communist perspective, at the Chinese embassy and consulates as well as at cinemas and Chinese-language schools all across Indonesia. Like *The Birth of New China*, the majority of movies that came through South Star Pictures in the 1950s promoted nationalism oriented towards socialist New China through depictions of it during the Chinese Civil War or in the face of foreign aggression. *One Million Brave Soldiers Crossing over to Southern Yangtze River* (百万雄师下江南), *Fighter in White* (白衣战士) and *Iron Soldiers* (钢铁战士) reaffirmed the legitimacy of the CCP by portraying the Chinese Civil War as a battle between the brave and righteous communist forces and the moribund and corrupted Nationalist Government. *Guerrilla on the Plain* (平原游击队), *Concentration Camp in Shangrao* (上饶集中营) and *The Story of the Heroine Fighter Zhao Yiman* (赵一曼) traced the rise of the CCP back to the Second Sino-Japanese War. After the outbreak of the Korean War, South Star Films imported *The Battle of Shang Gan Ling* (上甘岭), which praised the heroism of Chinese volunteer soldiers in the fateful struggle against the US. Besides war-

<sup>81</sup> Lin Shangzhi and Lin Shangyi, interview by author, Fuzhou, Fujian Province, May 26, 2013; Zhang Meiping and Chen Yongji, interview by author, Shuangdi Overseas Chinese Farm, Shima county, Longhai city, Fujian Province, June 9, 2013.

<sup>82</sup> Liang Yingming, “The historical significance of *Sheng Huo Bao*,” in *Sheng Huo Bao jinian congshu shoufa yantaohui wenjian huibian*, pp. 6-16.

themed movies, class-themed *The White Haired Girl* (白毛女), which highlighted the suffering of the oppressed peasant class in the “feudalist old society,” won instant popularity among the ethnic Chinese as well.<sup>83</sup>

Weng devised a set of shrewd business strategies to promote PRC films in Indonesia. He managed to have these movies released mainly in upper-class movie theaters, where the owners were usually reluctant due to concerns over the attendance rate and the political risks involved. To attract business partners, Weng offered a significantly larger than normal share of profits to theater owners while promising to reimburse unsold tickets. His only request in return was that all PRC movies had to be screened three days in a row. And if the reception was good, the screening period had to be extended to a week. Weng’s methods worked as PRC movies soon became an important part of the cultural life of the *totok* Chinese.<sup>84</sup> Here again, the paradoxical alliance between ethnic Chinese capitalists and socialist China triumphed in Indonesia.

### **Embattled Civic Associations**

Even before the victory of the Chinese Communist Revolution and the formal independence of Indonesia, the CCP members working on the archipelago had already started envisioning a social revolution in the Chinese communities. Wang Jiyuan, a key figure in CCP underground organizations and one of the co-founders of CCP organ *Sheng Huo Bao*, openly advocated for the reconfiguration of the traditional social structure that centered on leadership by Kaipitiens and Majoors. Wang compared these ethnic Chinese figures entrusted by the Dutch to manage this minority group to “tribal chiefs” and proposed the abolition of these “insulting titles.” Wang urged the ethnic Chinese to replace “the feudalistic, tribal-chief style of rule by the Western colonizers” with a “new, modern, and democratic organization based the principle of

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<sup>83</sup> Weng Xihui, “Biography of the patriotic leader of the overseas Chinese in Indonesia, Weng Fulin,” in Qian Ren and Liang Junxiang eds., *Sheng Huo Bao de huiyi*, p. 242.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

self-determination.”<sup>85</sup>

To achieve this goal, Wang proposed that first and foremost, the ethnic Chinese would need to play a more active role in politics. He pointed out that, in the past, due to the constraints imposed by the Dutch colonizers, Chinese activities in Indonesia were confined to business. However, with the coming of the end of Western domination, the ethnic Chinese were “no longer under pressure to hide our real intentions like a timid daughter-in-law in a feudalistic household.”<sup>86</sup> Secondly, Wang believed that the clans, as well as the native-place and surname associations had become outdated and needed to be integrated into an organization that oversaw the welfare of all the ethnic Chinese regardless of their clan or surname affiliations or native place.<sup>87</sup> Fostering cohesion across these traditional lines of social division would help decrease the internal tension among the ethnic Chinese. The ethnic Chinese could then focus on combining their talents and energy to improve their social status in Indonesia.<sup>88</sup>

In addition to the idea of social revolution in the Chinese communities, the CCP exported to Indonesia the same social mobilization pattern it used in urban areas back in China. The structure of the CCP operation in Indonesia was in an onion shape: the core—the underground CCP branches—were surrounded by layers of left-leaning “peripheral mass organizations” (群众性外围组织), which took the forms of book clubs, drama clubs, sports teams and study groups. For instance, in Semarang, Zheng Manru (郑曼如), CCP underground party member who migrated to Indonesia around the same time as Ba Ren and served as an editor at *Sheng Huo Bao* in the early 1950s, was the architect of the reconfiguration of Chinese society. In order to prevent the “feudalistic” native place associations from reviving and being used by the Chinese Nationalists after the Indonesian National Revolution, Zheng founded the Xin You Society (新友社) in December 1945. Its main goal was to shape the political orientation of the ethnic

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<sup>85</sup> Wang Jiyuan, “Fly the flag of anti-feudalism,” in Wang Yixia ed. *Wang Jiyuan wenxuan*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>86</sup> Wang Jiyuan, “On the Chinese Chamber of Commerce,” in Wang Yixia ed. *Wang Jiyuan wenxuan*, p. 9-11.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

Chinese so as to gain more leverage in the battle against the Chinese Nationalists. Initially, the Xin You Society offered free Chinese-language classes to ethnic Chinese youth. It distributed popular Marxist philosophy reading materials such as Ai Siqui's (艾思奇) *Philosophy for the Masses* (大众哲学), the pro-Beijing *Wen Hui Bao* (文汇报), published in Hong Kong, and the magazine *Below the Winds* (风下) edited by underground CCP member Hu Yuzhi in Singapore.<sup>89</sup>

While the newly established CCP-dominated organizations strived to carve out a social space for a CCP political presence, the Chinese Nationalists were also actively defending their territory. In 1946-1947, the Chinese Nationalist Party Branch in Semarang, as well as the Sanmin Zhuyi Youth League (三民主义青年团) under it, followed Chiang Kai Shek's call to "crack the communists" by carrying out militia-style parades every day and by distributing Chiang's *Destiny of China* (中国之命运) in Central and East Java.<sup>90</sup> The showdown between the two sides happened on December 27, 1949, when the Dutch formally transferred sovereignty to the Republic of Indonesia. The Xin You Society flew the Five-star Red Flag of the PRC side by side with the Indonesian national flag, while the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (中华总会) of Semarang under the control of the Chinese Nationalist Party raised the Blue Sky, White Sun and Red Earth flag of the ROC. The Xin You Society protested strongly and later announced its withdrawal from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Having openly "declared war" against its rivals, the Xin You Society started to take aggressive steps towards squeezing the Chinese Nationalists out of Semarang. It held a grand reception to celebrate the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Indonesia in April 1950 and organized torch parades with pro-Beijing Chinese shouting slogans such as "Support new China!" and "Down with Chiang Kai Shek!"<sup>91</sup> The Xin

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<sup>89</sup> Li Xuemin, "Mr. Zheng Manru devoted his youth to the motherland and the progressive and righteous affairs among the overseas Chinese," in *Sheng Huo Bao de huiyi*, pp. 295-308.

<sup>90</sup> Li Xuemin, "Mr. Zheng Manru devoted his youth to the motherland and the progressive and righteous affairs among the overseas Chinese," in *Sheng Huo Bao de huiyi*, pp. 295-308.

<sup>91</sup> Ding Jian and Xiaowen, *Qiandao zhi guo yue canghai: qiaoling He Longchao zhuan* [Watching the tides of history on the Indonesian archipelago: A biography of a leader of the overseas Chinese community, He Longchao] (Beijing: Zhongguo huaqiao chubanshe, 2004), pp. 121-122.

You Society soon expanded and formed a coalition with other pro-Beijing Chinese organizations such as the Overseas Chinese Workers' Union (华侨职工会), the Teacher's Labor Union (教师工会), and the Teechow Labor Union (潮侨工会). The Xin You society also helped establish the pro-Beijing Xin You Elementary and Middle Schools (新友中小学).<sup>92</sup> It organized community events according to a political calendar synchronized with Beijing: for example, Children's Day celebrations were held annually on June 1 and Women's Day celebrations on March 8. On its seventh year anniversary, the Xin You Society put on a drama entitled "Growing through Struggle" (在战斗里成长), telling stories of how ethnic Chinese youth were groomed and trained for the battle against the "reactionary" Chinese Nationalists.<sup>93</sup>

A similar turf war took place in Jakarta. In December 1945, underground CCP members Yang Xinrong and Huang Zhougui founded the Chinese People's Livelihood Society (中华民众生活社) together with pro-Beijing businessman Weng Fulin and *peranakan* Chinese doctor Kwa Tjoan Soey (柯全寿). Similar to the Xin You Society, the Chinese People's Livelihood Society was an alliance across traditional groups defined by native place, surname or profession. After the establishment of the PRC on October 1, 1949, the Chinese People's Livelihood Society took assertive steps to challenge its rival organization, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (雅加达中华总会) of Jakarta under the control of the Chinese Nationalist Party. A telegraph congratulating the newly established Communist government in Beijing contained signatures from 66 civic associations collected by the Chinese People's Livelihood Society, deliberately displaying to the Nationalist loyalists the wide range of support the PRC received among the Chinese in Jakarta. In November 1949, one of the Chinese People's Livelihood Society leaders, Yang Xinrong (杨新容), founded the Working Committee for the Promotion of Establishing Diplomatic Relations between China and Indonesia (雅加达促进中印(尼)建交工作委员会). This

<sup>92</sup> Li Xuemin, "Mr. Zheng Manru devoted his youth to the motherland and the progressive and righteous affairs among the overseas Chinese," in *Sheng Huo Bao de huiyi*, pp. 295-308.

<sup>93</sup> Zheng Manru, "Speech at the ceremony celebrating the seventh anniversary of the establishment of Xin You society of Semarang," in Zheng Binbin ed. *Zheng Manru wenji* [Collected works of Zheng Manru] (Guangzhou: Shijie tushu chuban Guangdong youxian gongsi, 2013), pp. 64-66.

working committee called upon ethnic Chinese all around Indonesia to pledge loyalty to Beijing and to recognize the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China. According to a report by the Chinese embassy in Jakarta, 145 Chinese civic associations took part in the activities of this organization, whereas 45 civic associations staunchly opposed it.<sup>94</sup> After the establishment of diplomatic relations between the PRC and Indonesia in April 1950, the working committee changed its name to the Working Committee for the Celebration of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between China and Indonesia (雅加达庆祝中国印尼建交工作委员会). This renamed organization started rounds of heated campaigns that aimed to seize the leadership of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce from the hands of the Chinese Nationalists. However, up to March 1952, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Jakarta remained under the tight control of the pro-Taipei bloc and publicly pledged loyalty to the Chinese Nationalist regime. The pro-Beijing bloc therefore started their own organization, the Federation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (雅加达中华侨团总会), openly in opposition to the pro-Taipei Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

In the Red versus Blue conflict in Jakarta, the complicated relationship between the pro-PRC activists in Indonesia and the policy-making circle in Beijing started to emerge. On the surface, the two groups shared the same goal of undermining the influence of the pro-Taipei group in Indonesia. When the pro-Beijing bloc failed to gain control of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Jakarta, the PRC's diplomatic mission was gravely disappointed and frustrated: "The Chinese Chamber of Commerce is an organization with deceptive legitimacy, occupied by the Chiang bandits...yet the Indonesian side still holds that this organization represents all the ethnic Chinese as a whole."<sup>95</sup> But when the pro-Beijing groups requested the Chinese embassy in Jakarta to condemn this organization as illegitimate and to publicly announce the newly established Federation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce as the sole

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<sup>94</sup> "Report on the status of the overseas Chinese from our embassy in Indonesia," September 3, 1950, *CFMA*, 118-00356-03.

<sup>95</sup> "Patriotic leaders of the overseas Chinese communities asked our government not to recognize the illegitimate Chinese Chamber of Commerce," April 23, 1952, *CFMA*, 118-00163-01.

Chinese association recognized by the embassy, Beijing refused.<sup>96</sup> The PRC Foreign Ministry advised its embassy in Jakarta to keep a cautious distance from the Red versus Blue struggle:

The establishment of the Federation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce is beneficial to the united patriotic front among the overseas Chinese. At the same time, however, the struggle between the progressive forces and the Chiang bandits is going to be more acute. It would be premature for our embassy to publicly announce our stance. The key issue is how to do practical work through the Federation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, so that we can unify and educate the overseas Chinese and isolate the illegitimate Chinese Chamber of Commerce. The Federation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce should serve as a platform through which we gradually win over neutral or backward overseas Chinese civic associations. Our embassy and consulates should not come forward publicly.<sup>97</sup>

Although the PRC Embassy in Jakarta did not officially endorse the Federation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the fact that PRC diplomacy in Indonesia heavily relied on support from this organization speaks to its unique status. Though a civic association in name, the Federation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce acted as the mediator between the PRC and the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia: it provided assistance to ethnic Chinese to negotiate with the governments of their native places when the PRC started to nationalize private property; it helped the ethnic Chinese to reconnect with relatives whom they had lost contact with back in the Mainland; it facilitated the second nationality selection process as a semi-official representative of the PRC embassy in Jakarta. During the 1955 Bandung Conference, the Federation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce functioned as a special brigade that safeguarded the security of the PRC delegation headed by Zhou Enlai, shielding it against

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> “Reply to Consul Zhong Qingfa’s proposal not to recognize the illegitimate Chinese Chamber of Commerce,” May 16, 1952, *CFMA*, 118-00163-01.

threats of sabotage by the Chinese Nationalist elements in Indonesia.<sup>98</sup>

The ambiguous nature of pro-Beijing civic associations and the entanglement of governmental relations and civil affairs in ethnic Chinese communities were criticized by the pro-Taipei bloc. The Blue camp predicted that “the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Indonesia could bring both happiness and disaster to the ethnic Chinese.”<sup>99</sup> From the perspective of the pro-Taipei groups, the leaders of the Red camp seemed to have forgotten that “Indonesia obtained its own independence and was not liberated by the communists.”<sup>100</sup> Ironically, although the CCP underground leadership denounced titles such as Majoor and Kapiten provided by the Dutch colonizers to ethnic Chinese community leaders as “oppressive” and “feudalistic,” their own efforts to revolutionize the traditional clan-based structure of Chinese society through PRC-style political mobilization were regarded as “the haunting ghosts of Majoor and Kapiten” by their Nationalist rivals.<sup>101</sup>

### **Contentious Campuses**

The Red versus Blue confrontation also permeated the realm of Chinese-language education. The Japanese occupation period witnessed a rise of Chinese nationalism among the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia. It was also during this period that Chinese-language education experienced substantial growth, thereby strengthening relations between the overseas Chinese and Mainland China via cultural ties. Due to the Japanese ban of Dutch and other Western schools, many *peranakan*, who used to receive Dutch education in the past, turned to Chinese-language schools and became “*totokized*” through extensive exposure to China language and culture.<sup>102</sup> This trend of development continued after

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<sup>98</sup> Hong Yuanyuan, Liang Yingming trans., *Hong Yuanyuan zizhuan* [The autobiography of Hong Yuanyuan] (Beijing: Zhongguo huaqiao chuban gongsi, 1989), p. 204.

<sup>99</sup> “On the so-called working committee,” September 16, 1950, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*, in *Tian Sheng Ri Bao shelun xuanji*, pp. 102-104.

<sup>100</sup> “The haunting ghosts of Majoor and Kapiten,” September 16, 1950, *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*, in *Tian Sheng Ri Bao shelun xuanji*, pp. 102-106.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Leo Suryadinata, “Indonesian Chinese Education: Past and Present,” *Indonesia* 14 (October 1972), p. 63.

Indonesia's independence. In 1949, there were 816 Chinese-language schools, and the total student population was 227,608; by 1958, the number of schools rose to 2,000, with a total student population of 420,000.<sup>103</sup>

The growth of Chinese-language education in post-independence Indonesia went hand in hand with the political struggle between the pro-Beijing and pro-Taipei factions. On the one hand, just as with their vision of reforming the native-place-based civic associations, the CCP wanted to reorganize the Chinese educational system by abolishing the traditional clan-based schools. They wanted instead to establish schools in which the left-leaning teachers involved in CCP underground operations in Indonesia would take charge.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, the pro-Taipei leaders wanted to keep Beijing's influence out of the schools. Immediately after Indonesia's independence, many well-established schools remained in the hands of pro-Taipei groups who insisted on orienting the schools towards Taipei. Through their media propaganda, the Chinese Nationalists warned parents against sending their children to the pro-Beijing schools, where the education was heavily politicized and "the so-called progressive teachers included improper questions in the exams to pollute the pure hearts and minds of their students." According to *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*, pro-Beijing teachers would ask their students questions such as "'Who is the most devious imperialist in the world?' If a student answered that it was the United States, he or she would get full marks; if a student answered that it was the Soviet Union, he or she would lose points." In addition, "the teachers forced the students to sing revolutionary songs."<sup>105</sup>

As a result, the teachers and students in Chinese-language schools became drawn into the intense, sometimes even violent, political struggle between the Red and the Blue. In schools dominated by the pro-Taipei faction, many pro-Beijing teachers were dismissed. For instance, the left-wing media *Sheng*

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<sup>103</sup> Cai Renlong, *Chidaoxian shang de jiayin*, p.115.

<sup>104</sup> Wang Jiyuan, "Fly the flag of anti-feudalism," in Wang Yixia ed. *Wang Jiyuan wenxuan*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>105</sup> "Chinese-language schools should be free from party politics," *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*, April 21, 1950, in *Tian Sheng Ri Bao shelun xuanji*, p. 97.

*Huo Bao* claimed that in Semarang, Central Java, some pro-Beijing teachers were fired due to their political activism while others were physically attacked.<sup>106</sup> In this city with a heavily concentrated Chinese population, the Chinese Nationalists took advantage of the political vacuum that appeared after the Japanese surrender and established a Chinese Education Association (中华教育协进会), an umbrella organization that intended to merge all the schools that existed before World War II into one system under its control.<sup>107</sup> The pro-Taipei groups tried to indoctrinate the students with the political ideology of the Chinese Nationalist Party. But this attempt was confronted with harsh resistance from the pro-Beijing groups. In October 1950, a wave of student protests broke out. At the weekly assembly of the Overseas Chinese Middle School of Semarang (三宝垄华侨中学), students violated the school rules by singing the national anthem of the PRC and raising the Five-star Red Flag. When the school principal tried to stabilize the situation, he was surrounded by left-wing students and forced to repeat the slogan “Long Live New China.” When the principal announced the decision to dismiss these “problem students,” the students left their classrooms to start a parade on the streets, shouting slogans such as “Strongly oppose the Chinese Nationalists’ control of the Chinese-language schools!”<sup>108</sup> In Siantar, North Sumatra, the two blocs became embroiled in a power struggle over the control of Zhong Hua School (先达中华学校), which involved both legal prosecution and violent physical conflict (the pro-Beijing bloc accused the pro-Taipei bloc of breaking into the school office by breaking the doors with axes and forcibly hanging the portrait of “Devil Chiang” on the office wall).<sup>109</sup> In Palembang, South Sumatra, pro-Beijing students participating in a parade in celebration of the PRC’s National Day were attacked by pro-Taipei groups armed with wooden sticks, knives, farming tools, glass bottles, and stones. The confrontation was most

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<sup>106</sup> “Teachers at the Chinese-language schools of Semarang on strike, opposing the principal’s decision to dismiss teachers without proper reason,” October 15, 1950, *Sheng Huo Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 05239.

<sup>107</sup> Li Xuemin, “Mr. Zheng Manru devoted his youth to the motherland and the progressive and righteous affairs among the overseas Chinese,” *Sheng Huo Bao de huiyi*, pp. 295-308.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> “Teachers at the Chinese-language schools of Semarang on strike, opposing the principal’s decision to dismiss teachers without proper reason,” October 15, 1950, *Sheng Huo Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 05239.

dramatic when Chinese Nationalists hidden inside a local restaurant threw dishes, forks and spoons at the pro-Beijing students who happened to be passing by. The students who held the Five-star Red Flag were reportedly injured and hospitalized.<sup>110</sup>

Around the same time in Jakarta, the pro-Beijing and pro-Taipei factions were also competing fiercely for control of educational resources. In a report from September 1950, the Chinese Embassy in Jakarta observed that the progressive elements had been making significant progress in exerting their influence.<sup>111</sup> It is impossible to verify this claim with other sources. Most likely, the two blocs were almost neck-and-neck in this battle in the early 1950s. Among the five major secondary schools in Jakarta, the oldest one, Ba Hua Middle School (巴华中学) was unaligned and neutral; Zhong Hua Middle School (中华中学) and Ba Cheng Middle School (吧城中学) were pro-Beijing; and Advanced Business Polytechnic or Gao Shang (高商;高级商业专科学校) and Zhong Zheng Middle School (中正中学) were pro-Taipei. Drawn from Skinner's extensive survey conducted in the early 1950s, the table below lists the history of the schools, political orientations of the teaching staff, teaching materials used and the placement information for the graduating classes of each of these five schools.

Political indoctrination was conducted in almost all Chinese schools. Skinner discovered that the ideological stance of the school had a fundamental impact on the political orientation of its students.<sup>112</sup> And “the irrevocable gulf between the two Chinas” made it difficult for students to stay apolitical or neutral.<sup>113</sup> One story that I repeatedly heard in oral history interviews with ethnic Chinese who received Chinese-language education at the time was that the children from the pro-Beijing schools were called “red butts” by the pro-Taipei students, whereas children from the pro-Taipei schools were called “blue

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<sup>110</sup> “The patriotic Chinese school students in Palembang participated in the National Day parade holding the national flag; they were attacked by the Jiang bandits and several were injured,” October 5, 1952, *Qiao Xun Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 05239.

<sup>111</sup> “Report on the status of the overseas Chinese from our embassy in Indonesia,” September 3, 1950, *CFMA*, 118-00356-03.

<sup>112</sup> Skinner, *Communism and Chinese Culture in Indonesia*, p. 62

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 55

butts” by the pro-Beijing students; they would fight in the streets.<sup>114</sup> Skinner concluded: “by the time Chinese students in Jakarta have reached the final year of middle school, they have been directly exposed to extensive and protracted political pressures. Most of them have already made several important political decisions, while many are political activists. Only a minority are as naïve politically as the average American college freshman.”<sup>115</sup>

Ba Hua Middle School (巴华中学) non-partisan	Ba Hua was the oldest Chinese community school in Indonesia. Founded in 1900 by the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan (中华会馆), it was the first manifestation of the pan-Chinese awakening in Indonesia. Ba Hua was an educational pioneer in many ways: it was the first Chinese school to begin instruction in the Chinese national language, the first to offer English as a foreign language, and the first to introduce Indonesian as a language of instruction. Ba Hua had come to attract more peranakan students than any of the other Chinese schools in the sample. There was less political content in the instruction given at Ba Hua than in that of any other Chinese school in the sample. Ba Hua tended to go along with Indonesian Government’s recognition of Beijing and to treat the PRC as the only Chinese Government officially seen to exist.
Zhong Hua Middle School (中华中学) Strongly pro-Beijing	Zhong Hua was founded in 1939. Skinner noted that Zhong Hua’s “magnificent physical plant and facilities, completed in 1951, would be the envy of many liberal arts colleges in the United States.” The teaching staff was almost entirely pro-PRC. The only daily newspaper to be found in its library in 1957 were <i>Harian Rakjat</i> , the organ of the PKI, and the two most strongly pro-Beijing of the Chinese papers, <i>Xin Bao</i> and <i>Sheng Huo Bao</i> . Chairman Mao’s portrait adorned every classroom. Every year, over a quarter of its graduates went to the PRC for higher education.
Ba Cheng Middle School (吧城中学) Pro-Beijing	Ba Cheng was the largest of the Chinese-language middle schools in Jakarta. The principal Ba Cheng, Situ Zan (司徒赞) also served as the president of the pro-Beijing Federation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. In 1957, it was expected that about one fifth of the graduating seniors would continue their studies in the PRC. The orientation of Ba Cheng, while less militantly communist than Zhong Hua, was no less wholeheartedly favorable to the communist regime.
Advanced Business Polytechnic or Gao Shang (高	Gao Shang had the smallest student body among the 5 schools. The school was officially oriented toward Nationalist China, and its teaching staff consisted largely of Nationalist loyalists. This orientation was clear in the classroom instruction, although straight Chinese Nationalist propaganda was not a

<sup>114</sup> Lin Shangzhi and Lin Shangyi, interview by author, Fuzhou, Fujian Province, May 26, 2013.

<sup>115</sup> Skinner, *Communism and Chinese Culture in Indonesia*, p. 4

商;高级商业专 科学校)  Pro-Taipei	significant component of instruction. Over one-quarter of its graduates in 1957 went to Taiwan to further their studies.
Zhong Zheng Middle School(中正中 学)  Strongly pro- Taipei	Named for Sun Yat-sen and founded by Chinese Nationalist leaders, Zhong Zheng was in many ways the right-wing counterpart of Zhong Hua. Communist press was banned in its library. The portraits of Chiang Kai-shek were as ubiquitous at Zhong Zheng as those of Mao Tse-tung were at Zhong Hua. Around two fifths of its annual graduating class normally proceeded to Taiwan for advanced study.

Table 4. The political orientation of the five major Chinese-language middle schools in Jakarta. Source: G. William Skinner, *Communism and Chinese Culture in Indonesia: The Political Dynamics of the Chinese Youth* (August 1962), Kroch Asia Library, Cornell University.

The CCP underground branch infiltrated the schools through civic associations as well as semi-secrective and completely underground youth leagues. The openly active pro-Beijing civic associations took the form of basketball teams and drama clubs. One semi-open organization was the Young Overseas Chinese Study Society (华侨青年学习社), in which ethnic Chinese youth gathered together to read theoretical works on communism such as Ai Siqu's (艾思奇) *Philosophy for the Masses* (大众哲学) as well as Mao Zedong's *On New Democracy* (新民民主主义论) and *On Coalition Government* (论联合政府). The underground Communist youth league was the New Democratic Comrades' Association (新民主主义同志会). After China and Indonesia established bilateral relations, one of the consuls stationed at the Chinese embassy in Jakarta was in charge of the management of the underground CCP branches and youth leagues. The connection between the CCP leadership in Beijing and its underground organizations in Indonesia was the Investigative Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (中共中央调查部), the intelligence and counter-intelligence organ of the CCP. In the late 1940s up until 1952, the New Democratic Comrades' Association recruited ethnic Chinese students with outstanding grades, organizational skills, and a strong ideological inclination towards communism. Once accepted as a formal member, they were required to follow the communication protocols of the CCP's clandestine operations. The newly recruited underground CCP member could only have single-line

contact with his or her direct supervisor, who would pass down instructions and information about general policy with regard to Sino-Indonesia relations and PRC's relations with the ethnic Chinese community. Many ethnic Chinese youth recruited to the New Democratic Comrades' Association later found their way into the Chinese civil service and served the PRC through their local knowledge and language skills. For instance, Chen Lishui (陈丽水), Wen Liu (温流) and Huang Shuhai (黄书海) were all Indonesian-born ethnic Chinese who later became the first generation of Indonesian interpreters at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC.

The New Democratic Comrades' Association was a cradle for future CCP cadres. For instance, Liang Yingming, whose life story appears in the introduction, was recruited to a CCP undercover branch in Jakarta. This branch consisted of three people: Liang, Liang's fellow classmate in Jakarta Cai Renlong (蔡仁龙),<sup>116</sup> and Mr. You, the supervisor of the branch and Liang's sponsor when he joined the Party. A left-leaning graduate from Ba Hua School, You traveled to Hong Kong and met with Lian Guan (连贯), the Party Secretariat of the CCP branch in Hong Kong. You wanted to take the pilgrimage to the communist Mecca of Yan'an, but was encouraged by Lian to return to Indonesia and expand the party's organization among the overseas Chinese community. You's family had been running a Chinese medicine business for several generations. He used his family's Chinese medicine shops as a cover for secretive CCP activities. Liang and Cai would come to an underground CCP branch office hidden behind the counter of the You family's Chinese medicine shop for weekly meetings, where they learned from You the most recent policy of the Party and took instructions. The members of the underground branches of the CCP in Indonesia were promised that their seniority in the Party would be calculated based on the date they joined the Party in Indonesia and all the work they had accomplished overseas would be filed in dossiers that would follow them when they ultimately returned to China. They were reassured that the organization of the CCP underground groups in Indonesia was identical with that back in China, and they

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<sup>116</sup> Cai married the daughter of the leader of the CCP underground operations in Indonesia, Yang Xinrong(杨新容). Cai returned to China with his wife and wife's family, and served at the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office in Beijing before finally landing on an academic career in Southeast Asia studies at Xiamen University.

would enjoy rewards and benefits in accordance with the contributions they made to the Party overseas.<sup>117</sup>

When Beijing made the decision to dissolve all CCP overseas branches in 1952, the existing branches in Indonesia stopped their recruitment efforts while the existing Party members remained dependable human resources with which the PRC could advance its interests in the archipelago.

## Conclusion

Reflecting upon the Red versus Blue confrontation, Liang characterized it as “an extension of the Chinese Civil War”: “The two sides had different political beliefs. Both sides loved China. One side loved the PRC; the other the ROC. One side believed that socialism could save China; the other side believed that Sun Yet-san’s Three Principles of the People could save China. Nowadays people no longer care about the ideological differences that used to define the line between the two blocs. These ideological differences simply faded away.”<sup>118</sup> Between 1949 and 1959, the confrontation between the pro-Beijing and the pro-Taipei blocs dominated the communal life of *totok* Chinese in Indonesia, permeating the realms of media, civic associations and education and taking forms ranging from debates in newspapers to legal disputes to physical conflicts. In contrast with Beijing’s moderate attitude towards governmental relations, the pro-Beijing faction in Indonesia took an aggressive approach in the competition against the Chinese Nationalist loyalists with strong confidence that history was on its side. In the early 1950s, the improvement of China’s domestic economic conditions reassured the overseas Chinese of the credibility of the new communist regime.<sup>119</sup> The reports on the imaginary achievements of the Great Leap Forward gave them an unrealizable dream of prosperity. Through the 1950s, intense revolutionary nationalism oriented towards Beijing was on the rise among the *totok* Chinese.

In this intensely politicized atmosphere, the *peranakan* group’s identification with the Indonesian

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<sup>117</sup> Liang Yingming, interview by author, Beijing, July 21, 2013; Liao Yumei, interview by author, Dongge Overseas Chinese Farm, Fuqing, Fujian Province, July 26, 2013.

<sup>118</sup> Liang Yingming, interview by author, Beijing, July 21, 2013.

<sup>119</sup> “Report on the status of the overseas Chinese from our embassy in Indonesia,” September 3, 1950, *CFMA*, 118-00356-03.

nation was intermingled with an urge to maintain ties with China. Ang Jan Goan, the pro-Beijing *peranakan* community leader and editor-in-chief of *Xin Bao*, held that the ethnic Chinese did not properly distinguish between race and nationality. He proposed that the Chinese could be racially and culturally Chinese while remaining good Indonesian citizens, but that they must retain their identity as Chinese and their connections with China.<sup>120</sup> In a parliamentary speech in 1950, Siauw Giok Tjan, the leader of Baperki and advocate for the ethnic Chinese's integration into Indonesian society, nevertheless criticized the Indonesian Government's ban on the Five-star Red Flag. Siauw contended: "in no way could the problem be solved by forbidding Indonesian citizens from raising two national flags."<sup>121</sup>

Socially and emotionally, the Beijing-versus-Taipei rivalry estranged the ethnic Chinese from the indigenous population, rendering their already precarious status even more vulnerable. Particularly, the pro-Beijing Chinese were living a social and political life synchronized with Beijing, which was extremely alarming to the Indonesian Government and the indigenous population. The following chapter will investigate how this spillover of the Chinese Civil War shaped the Indonesians' impressions of the Chinese as disloyal and destabilizing, culminating in the Indonesian Government's decision to revoke the aliens' ability to operate retail businesses in the countryside in 1960 and the resulting massive return of ethnic Chinese to China.

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<sup>120</sup> "Interview with Mr. Ang Jan Goan, Editor of *Sin Po*," Jakarta, November 9, 1950, box 2, series II, G. William Skinner Papers, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

<sup>121</sup> *Xin Bao*, August 4, 1950, cited in Twang Peck-yang, "Political Attitudes and Allegiances in the Totok Business Community, 1950-1954," *Indonesia*, 28 (October, 1979), p. 78.

## CHAPTER 5

### A State within a State: Indonesian Perception of the Chinese Community, 1949-1959

#### Introduction

In a letter dated in March 1952, the Office of *Peranakan* and Foreign Nationals Affairs (*Kantor Urusan Peranakan Bangsa Asing*, or UPBA) of the North Sumatra Province reported to the Interior Ministry (*Kementeri Dalam Negeri*) in Jakarta:

In North Sumatra, the differences between the left-wing Chinese (pro-Chinese Communist Party) and the right-wing Chinese (pro-Chinese Nationalist Party) is rather significant and sharp...in light of these conflicts, we felt that the Chinese were given too much freedom and acted as if they were in their motherland. They should not have had the opportunity to actively promote the political agendas of their native country (China). As “guests,” they should respect the laws and regulations of this country...It is time to act more decisively against foreigners who are politically active in our country.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to their “disrespect” for their host country’s national sovereignty, what made the Chinese minority the unwelcomed “guests” was their allegedly dominant economic position, which was used by the Indonesian state to account for the plight of the *pribumi*. A letter from the Indonesian Attorney General to the Prime Minister’s Office dated October 1958 claimed: “[T]he socio-economic position of the ethnic Chinese is one of the causes of the overall socio-economic problems of the Indonesian nation in general.”<sup>2</sup> The Indonesian Government thereby decided to launch national economic policies that would enable the state to confiscate portions of property and wealth controlled by the Chinese and to undermine Chinese business presence in fields such as light industry, import and export,

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<sup>1</sup> “Kabinet Presiden RI: surat-surat tanggal 26 Maret 1952 tentang kegiatan orang-orang Cina di Indonesia,” March 26, 1952, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1806, *ANRI*.

<sup>2</sup> “Surat dari Mahkamah Agung kepada Perdana Menteri mengenai kedudukan sosial-ekonomi orang Tionghoa dalam RI pada saat ini,” October 23, 1958, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2342, *ANRI*.

and retail.<sup>3</sup>

The previous two chapters have shown, from the top-down lens of diplomatic interactions and the bottom-up perspective of transnational social history respectively, how the Chinese Civil War spilled over into Indonesia. How, then, did the Indonesian state understand this “Red versus Blue” struggle? And how did the state’s perception influence the position of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesian society? Mirroring the structure of Chapter 4, this chapter will answer these two questions by first analyzing Indonesian governmental surveillance on the PRC diplomatic mission in Indonesia as well as on “the three treasures of the overseas Chinese communities”: the Chinese mass media, civic associations and Chinese-language education. I will then discuss the Indonesian state’s evaluation of the economic power of the ethnic Chinese and its strategies to contain the flow of Chinese capital.

### **The Dubious Diplomats: Indonesian Perception of PRC Diplomacy in Indonesia**

On August 15, 1950, at a lively reception attended by hundreds of ethnic Chinese in Jakarta, Ba Ren, the first PRC ambassador to Indonesia, started his address to “his beloved countrymen” (*para bangsaku yang tercinta*) by condemning the Chinese Nationalists. Also present at this occasion were observant Jakarta municipal police who alerted the Prime Minister’s Office about Ba Ren’s “aggressive behavior.” The police noted that Ba Ren spent substantial time discrediting the Chinese Nationalist Government as “a traitor that dashed the overseas Chinese’s hope in their nation’s future.” Moreover, under Ba Ren’s leadership, the Chinese Embassy had been circulating brochures containing slogans such as “fight for the consolidation of the people’s victory” (*berjuang untuk memperkuat dan mengembangkan kemenangan rakyat*).<sup>4</sup>

In the eyes of the Indonesian state, the PRC ambassador’s wartime experience of mobilizing the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> “Surat dari Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI mengenai kegiatan politik dan kebudayaan orang Tionghoa sejak Kedutaan Agung RRT di Indonesia,” August 15, 1950, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1977, ANRI.

ethnic Chinese, especially the youth, made him living evidence of Beijing's ambition to export communism abroad. The Indonesian Government perceived Ba Ren as a professional revolutionary who "usually worked for the interests of the communist movement among the Chinese in Indonesia by establishing relations between the Chinese and Indonesian communist leaders."<sup>5</sup> Ba Ren's 1949 publication in Mandarin Chinese, *Indonesia: A Nation of A Thousand Islands* (千岛之国——印尼), was banned by the Mohammad Hatta Cabinet. Yet the ban itself did not fully dissipate the anxiety of the Indonesian Government. In 1950, after Ba Ren took office as the PRC ambassador, his writings were again translated and closely analyzed by the Indonesian political elites, who were alarmed by Ba Ren's sympathy towards the failed communist-led uprising in Madiun, Central Java, in 1948. Also known as "the Madiun Affair," this abortive attempt to seize political power through armed revolt convinced the PKI that the peaceful parliamentary road was a strategy more suitable to the political realities in Indonesia. In the historical narratives constructed by the anti-communist political forces in Indonesia, the Madiun Affair was indicative of the PKI's longstanding ambition to grasp state power, which culminated in the G30S. Ba Ren, however, lamented that the Madiun Affair was a missed window of opportunity to push the Indonesian National Revolution to "an entirely new level of development."<sup>6</sup> Ba Ren's view was interpreted by the Indonesian authorities as an endorsement of the use violence to foment communist revolution. In an analysis attached to the translation of the excerpt quoted above, the Indonesian officials commented:

[I]t is clear that Wang<sup>7</sup> approved the Madiun rebellion. Therefore, it is not surprising that under

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. The Indonesian Government believed that during his stay in North Sumatra in the late 1940s, Ba Ren helped establish relations between the Chinese Communist Party and the local communist organizations among the pribumi, such as the PKI and SOBSI (Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, All Indonesia Center of Labor Organizations). But it also admitted that the Indonesian Government had no clue what the connection was exactly about. As shown in Chapter 2, according to Ba Ren's own writings, the Chinese communists in North Sumatra made a few unsuccessful attempts to build connections with the Indonesian and Malayan communists. The Indonesian Government's conclusion probably was inaccurate.

<sup>6</sup> "Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI: surat-surat tanggal 6 Januari, Juli 1953 tentang China Demokratik League dan Perkumpulan Shaw Nien Erh T'ung Hui," January 6, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1852, ANRI.

<sup>7</sup> Ba Ren was referred by his official name "Wang Renshu."

the leadership of Wang, the China Democratic League<sup>8</sup> in Sumatra tried to paralyze the government of Indonesia, which in Wang's view was of a semi-colonial nature and needed to be liberated. In this case there was no difference between the China Democratic League and the Chinese Communist Party, as both assumed that the national revolution (struggle for national independence) was just a stage in the struggle against the imperialists. Such a struggle would only be considered perfect if the communists liberated the people from the rule of the imperialists and their followers (Sukarno-Hatta).<sup>9</sup>

Ba Ren offended the Indonesian Government by portraying the hard-won victory of the Indonesian National Revolution as incomplete and in need of further evolution into a communist revolution. Ba Ren, together with the Chinese diplomatic mission he headed, thus represented a strong foreign force that intended to reshape Indonesia's development according to the blueprint of global communism. This perception of communist China as an invasive actor with ambitions to bring about fundamental socio-political change in Indonesia was deeply entrenched in Jakarta's everyday observation of the PRC diplomatic mission. For example, in 1956, the Attorney General suspected the PRC Consul General in Medan, Liu Yamin (刘亚民), to be "an important member of the PRC's secret service active in Indonesia" with the "disguise" of a diplomat.<sup>10</sup> The Attorney General believed that the Chinese consulate in Medan forcefully exerted political influence over the Chinese population in North Sumatra.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, the Indonesian authorities also recognized the universality of the blurring of the line between diplomacy and espionage, as the report on Liu Yamin concluded that for the sake of efficiency, it is "common for foreign consulates to lead secret operations" and not unusual for staff members with

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<sup>8</sup> See chapter 2 on the development of China Democratic League in North Sumatra.

<sup>9</sup> "Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI: surat-surat tanggal 6 Januari, Juli 1953 tentang China Demokratie League dan Perkumpulan Shaw Nien Erh T'ung Hui," January 6, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1852, *ANRI*.

<sup>10</sup> "Surat dari Jaksa Agung Perdana Menteri mengenai adanya pengaruh komunisme di Medan dari perwakilan RRT," June 25, 1956, Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2258, *ANRI*.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

diplomatic immunity to carry out secret operations in Jakarta.<sup>12</sup> Yet the Indonesian authorities were nevertheless convinced that the threats from the PRC diplomatic mission were of a particularly grave nature and needed special attention.

Against the backdrop of the unfolding Cold War, Indonesia's sensitivity to the activities of the PRC diplomats was a reasonable response to the interventionist line of foreign policy adopted by the CCP immediately after it assumed power. In a letter dated November 1951, the Indonesian Attorney General called for the Prime Minister's attention to the Trade Union Conference of Asian and Australasian Countries held in Beijing in November 1949. In his opening remarks, Chinese leader Liu Shaoqi called upon the working class in Indochina, Burma, India, Indonesia and Malaya to stage armed struggles against imperialism.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, according to the Indonesian Attorney General's report, the Indonesian representative to this conference, Ali Harjono, referred to the Madiun Affair as "righteous rebellion" (*membernakan pemberontakan Madiun itu*) by the armed proletariats.<sup>14</sup> Radio Peking also promoted the idea that the Indonesian people were not satisfied with the leadership of the current government.<sup>15</sup>

Jakarta's fear of Chinese communist infiltration was exacerbated by unverified information. For example, in 1952, the Prime Minister's office, in its communication to the National Police, quoted a piece of news reported in the mandarin Chinese daily *Zhong Xing Ri Bao* (中兴日报) of Singapore, calling attention to an unconfirmed Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) military conference of Asian countries held at "the villa of Mao Tse-tung on the West Mountain of Beijing." This seemingly conspiratorial conference was attended by Chinese and Soviet leaders, along with "Cominform cadres

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Liu Shaoqi, "Opening remarks at the Trade Union Conference of Asian and Australasian Countries," November 16, 1949, in the CCP Central Documentary Research Department, ed., *Jianguo yilai Liu Shaoqi wengao* [Liu Shaoqi's Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1998), pp. 134-135.

<sup>14</sup> "Surat dari Jaksa Agung kepada Perdana Menteri mengenai pelarangan utusan dari Indonesia ke Konferensi Panitia Perdamaian Dunia karena dianggap pro komunis," November 9, 1951, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2028, *ANRI*.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

who disguised themselves as delegates to the ‘Peace Conference of Asia.’” Delegates from Indonesia were said to be present as well. The Conference was said to have resolved to establish working headquarters and training camps in Southeast Asia and to form a “camouflaged base in North Borneo to serve as a channel for close contact with Indonesian communist troops.”<sup>16</sup> Moreover, despite the lack of evidence, the Indonesian Attorney General was convinced that “the PKI was led by ethnic Chinese communists and had close relations with the Chinese embassy in Jakarta.”<sup>17</sup>

Admittedly, in the early years of the PRC, the CCP had a strong sense of moral obligation to spread its own revolutionary experience globally. In July 1949, Beijing and Moscow reached an agreement on the “division of labor” in promoting world revolution—the Chinese would take more responsibility in colonial and semi-colonial countries in Asia while the Russians focused on Eastern Europe.<sup>18</sup> In the aftermath of the Madiun Affair, surviving high-ranking PKI leaders, such as Alimin bin Prawirodirdjo, took sanctuary in the Red Capital of China, Yan'an.<sup>19</sup> But the Indonesian Attorney General had misinformation about the role of the ethnic Chinese in the PKI and exaggerated the Chinese Communist Party’s leverage over its Indonesian counterpart. After Aidit purged Tan Ling Djie (陈鄰如), ethnic Chinese were excluded from the leading cohort of the PKI, which can be understood as part of the PKI’s strategy to present itself as a nationalist party rather than a proxy of red China. According to the testimony of a former underground CCP member in Indonesia, the CCP’s underground organizations had no connection with the PKI or PKI affiliated organizations such as SOBSI or Permuda Rakyat.<sup>20</sup> The CCP’s undercover operations in Indonesia focused mainly on undermining the influence of the Chinese

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<sup>16</sup> “Surat dari Perdana Menteri kepada Kepala Kepolisian Negara mengenai Konferensi Militer Kominform dari Asia di Peiping,” October 20, 1952, Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2094, *ANRI*.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Shi Zhe, *Zai lishi juren de shenbian* [Standing besides a historical giant] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1991), p. 412.

<sup>19</sup> Alimin was given a Chinese name Wang Dacai (王大才) by Zhou Enlai’s wife, Deng Yingchao. Wen Liu and Zhang Wanfu, interview by author, Beijing, July 20, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Or “The People’s Youth,” was an Indonesian equivalent to the Communist Youth League of China.

Nationalists, with barely any overlap with the core agenda of the PKI.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, according to Beijing's assessment, the PKI had been a comparatively independent party whose connection with the CCP was loosely defined. The Chinese Foreign Ministry's evaluation of the PKI in 1959, when the rift between Beijing and Moscow surfaced, was written in an ambivalent tone: "On the one hand, the PKI emphasized independence, autonomy, and equality among Communist parties; on the other hand, it confirmed that the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] was the pioneer in the International Communist movement."<sup>22</sup>

Although neither the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia nor the CCP had substantial influence over the PKI, the political activism of the ethnic Chinese, on agendas unrelated to the communist movement inside Indonesia, ironically created an image of China as an external threat that would deeply infiltrate into the social fabric of Indonesia through the Chinese diaspora. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Beijing-oriented ethnic Chinese had distanced themselves socially and emotionally from the *pribumi* by living a political life synchronized with the PRC. Furthermore, this process of "transplanting" political ideologies and campaigns caused much fear and resentment on the part of the Indonesian Government. In December 1951, an anonymous letter, handwritten in Mandarin Chinese, was sent to President Sukarno:

Your Excellency President Sukarno,

I do not know for sure if Indonesia remains a semi-colonial country or still formally colonized by the Dutch. I'm saying this because Indonesian Customs and all other governmental agencies are still using Dutch in their official communications, as if this country is still ruled by the Dutch. Why wouldn't they use the written language of their own country? This is difficult for people to comprehend. Does Your Excellency think so? Please explain the reasons in detail in the

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<sup>21</sup> Liang Yingming, interview by author, Beijing, July 21, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> "Recent activities of foreign communist parties," May 11, 1959, *CFMA*, 105-00980-02.

newspapers for me. Please forgive me for bluntly raising these questions.<sup>23</sup>

This letter signed by “a citizen of the People’s Republic of China” could have struck the Indonesian authorities as an echo of Ba Ren’s characterization of the post-1949 Indonesia as incomplete in its social development. What made the PRC the most imminent threat to Indonesian national security was the existence of 2.5 million ethnic Chinese. This letter showed the possibility that many among this group could have been indoctrinated by Beijing into the Marxist theory of social development, thereby becoming convinced that they were obligated to make endeavors to facilitate Indonesia’s further development into communism.

While keeping the activities of the local ethnic Chinese and the Chinese diplomatic mission in Indonesia under close surveillance, the Indonesian authorities had also been collecting information on the structure of the PRC’s management of the overseas Chinese. The Indonesian political elites saw the PRC’s Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee (中华人民共和国华侨事务委员会) as in charge of “communist activities aimed at the Southeast Asian countries.”<sup>24</sup> According to them, its mission was “to promote propaganda inside China and among the overseas Chinese communities all over the world; to sell ‘victory bonds’ via the Bank of China; to offer ethnic Chinese youth a college education so that they would return to Southeast Asia upon graduation and serve as teachers at Chinese-language schools; to collect information; to organize ‘homecoming tourist groups’; and to strengthen the connections between the overseas Chinese and their native places.”<sup>25</sup> The Indonesian authorities observed that the leadership of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee consisted of people with strong overseas connections and important influence among the Chinese communities abroad, particularly among the Chinese in Indonesia.

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<sup>23</sup> “Surat kaleng tanggal 21 Desember 1951 tentang minta penjelasan mengenai status Republik Indonesia, dengan lampiran. N.B.: Bahasa Tiongkok dan terjemahan,” December 21, 1951, Kabinet Presiden RI, no. 1289, *ANRI*.

<sup>24</sup> “Surat dari Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI mengenai kegiatan politik dan kebudayaan orang Tionghoa sejak Keduduan Agung RRT di Indonesia,” August 15, 1950, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1977, *ANRI*.

<sup>25</sup> “Surat dari Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI mengenai kegiatan politik dan kebudayaan orang Tionghoa sejak Keduduan Agung RRT di Indonesia,” August 15, 1950, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1977, *ANRI*.

For instance, Liao Chengzhi (廖承志), the head of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee, was marked out by the Indonesian Attorney General as “once being the direct leader of Ba Ren”; Tan Kah Kee (陈嘉庚), the most venerated “red capitalist” who had a prominent position in the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee, was profiled as having “sought refuge in Java during World War II and subsequently building close relations with pro-Beijing ethnic Chinese community leaders and media proprietors Wang Jiyuan (王纪元) and Ang Jang Goan (洪渊源).”<sup>26</sup>

It is against this background that the Indonesian authorities found Ba Ren’s request to open up PRC consulates in the major cities of Indonesia invasive and potentially threatening. In his speech to the Chinese community in Jakarta in August 1950, Ba Ren announced: “The overseas Chinese in Indonesia, like the Chinese people within China, have their lawful rights and are under the protection of the Chinese Government. We promise that the ethnic Chinese’s interests will be protected.”<sup>27</sup> The establishment of consulates, from Ba Ren’s perspective, was the first step of living up to this promise to his fellow countrymen. Yet the issue of PRC diplomatic representation in Indonesia was inevitably intertwined with the citizenship negotiations. The Indonesian Government was concerned that, once established, the PRC consulates would function beyond their capacity as a diplomatic apparatus. The two sides were deadlocked. On the one hand, the PRC embassy in Jakarta insisted that the opening of PRC consulates was the prerequisite for the ethnic Chinese to freely make their citizenship choices. On the other hand, the Indonesian Government delayed the opening of PRC consulates because it believed that with the unresolved citizenship status of the ethnic Chinese, the total number of PRC citizens residing in Indonesia and the number of consulates needed to serve them remained unclear.<sup>28</sup>

Beneath this technical explanation was Jakarta’s fear that the PRC might become a colonial

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> “Surat dari Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI mengenai kegiatan politik dan kebudayaan orang Tionghoa sejak Keduduan Agung RRT di Indonesia,” August 15, 1950, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1977, *ANRI*.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

presence in Indonesia via its connections to the ethnic Chinese communities. As if totally ignorant of the potential backfire, Ba Ren exacerbated the tension by mobilizing Chinese associations all across Indonesia to petition for the opening of PRC consulates.<sup>29</sup> Ba Ren was also reported to have asked the Indonesian Prime Minister Mohammad Roem how many American and British consulates there were in Indonesia. Ba Ren continued pleading his case by emphasizing that the need for the PRC to open consulates was greater than any other country in the world because it was the native country of the largest number of Chinese expatriates.<sup>30</sup> Most likely, Ba Ren's comparison of the numbers of Chinese and British and American nationals living in Indonesia deepened the Indonesian state's distrust of the PRC. Due to the communist nature of the regime in Beijing and the economic status of the Chinese minority, the PRC diplomatic mission appeared as a nexus for the export of communist revolution and competing nationalism and for the movement of Chinese capital back to Mainland China.

### **The Silent War: Indonesian Perception of Chinese Art and Mass Media**

In a letter dated December 17, 1952, the Prime Minister's Office asked the Attorney General to "come up with a solution to prevent the possible interference in our national security caused by the political conflict between the ethnic Chinese who were inclined towards the People's Republic of China and those towards the Chinese Nationalist Party." The political activities of these two blocs were described as "gradually increasing," "undesirable," and posing "threats to the peace of our society and our national security."<sup>31</sup> According to findings by the Attorney General, socialist "mass art" had been used to mobilize the general population into political actions in the Soviet Union and China. In China in the early 1950s, songs, skits and dramas appeared with themes of land reform, the continuous struggle against the Chinese Nationalist

<sup>29</sup> "Berkas mengenai permohonan dan perjanjian kepada Duta Besar RRT untuk membuka konsulat-konsulat di Indonesia oleh beberapa organisasi kemasyarakatan Tionghoa di Sumatera Utara, Sumatera Timur dan Aceh," Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1970, *ANRI*

<sup>30</sup> "Surat dari Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI mengenai kegiatan politik dan kebudayaan orang Tionghoa sejak Keduduan Agung RRT di Indonesia," August 15, 1950, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1977, *ANRI*.

<sup>31</sup> "Surat dari Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI mengenai kegiatan politik dan kebudayaan orang Tionghoa sejak Keduduan Agung RRT di Indonesia," August 15, 1950, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1977, *ANRI*.

Regime in Taiwan, and the military confrontation against the United States in the Korean War. And these popular forms of art had been exported to Indonesia. Radio Republic Indonesia had already been conducting surveillance on Chinese songs, and the Indonesian National Police had compiled a list of songs to be banned in the near future.<sup>32</sup> The Indonesian authorities were also concerned about the public screening of “red films” imported from China, such as the documentary “The Birth of New China” (新中国诞生).<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, highly politicized Chinese-language theatre posed special challenges to the Indonesian authorities. In its communication with the Indonesian National Police, the Attorney General referred to a story in the pro-Beijing Chinese-language daily *Sishui Da Gong Shang Bao* from October 3, 1952:

At the Chinese-language school Sin Li, the school kids put on a play entitled “Liberate Taiwan and Capture Chiang Kai Shek Alive.” The audience laughed so hard that their stomachs hurt. The child who played Chiang Kai Shek was surrounded by a group of boys. When the little “Chiang Kai Shek” was finally caught, the kid who played this role was so confused and embarrassed that he was almost in tears because he felt that he had become a traitor against his country.

In this silent war (*perang tersembunyi*) something interesting happened. From the very beginning to the third act, one or two people among the audience, who appeared to be ordinary people, secretly left the theater while their seats were immediately taken by others.<sup>34</sup>

This seemingly casual reference at the end of the news story was an embarrassment to the Indonesian Government, because the mysterious audience members who left in the middle of the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> “Kejaksaan Agung kepada Perdana Menteri RI: surat tanggal 18 Pebruari 1953 tentang keributan dan serangan yang dilakukan oleh petani-petani Cina Tionghoa di Bindjei,” February 18, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1860, ANRI.

performance were actually undercover Indonesian national police. From the standpoint of the Attorney General, this encounter demonstrated that “monitoring Chinese plays is more important, necessary and challenging (because the plays involve more spontaneous interaction between the actors and the audience) than monitoring films.”<sup>35</sup> The Attorney General recommended that the National Police should “censor the plays by reviewing them beforehand and issuing permissions to those qualified, rather than by spying secretly on the spot.” The Attorney General’s report continued to describe this kind of “theatrical farce” as “taking place throughout Indonesia”:

These kinds of political activities did not receive permission from the Indonesian Government. In Chinese-language newspapers, there were ads for these plays as well as reviews. The Chinese seemed to show neither reservation nor regret about not obtaining permissions from the Indonesian Government.

The sad thing is that this kind of performance is frequently attended by Indonesian guests who are mostly high-ranking politicians. They will clap to express happiness and enjoyment over things that they do not fully understand. Needless to say, they are laughed at by the ethnic Chinese. The more urgent issue is that the youth, particularly those who are still in school, are under the influence of these plays. These theatrical troupes usually consist of people who are willing to travel all across large areas of our country to put on performances for the purpose of propagating the ideology of communist internationalism to people of other political beliefs. These troupes visit Chinese-language schools and perform for the ethnic Chinese students there. Moreover, during the holidays, some ethnic Chinese students will organize themselves into troupes and go visit the inland areas to spread political propaganda through dances and plays.

The worst thing in the above-mentioned situation was that the performers are usually mixed in terms of nationality—some of them are foreigners while a sizable number of others are

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Indonesian nationals. Because these theatrical plays are more often than not propaganda on behalf of a foreign country, we should put these works under close surveillance throughout their performance rather than merely censoring them preliminarily.

We need to remember that the peace and public order of our country is already very difficult to defend. We should take preventative measures towards these plays, which means that theatrical performances that propagate communist ideology should be prohibited for the sake of maintaining public order and safety...<sup>36</sup>

In the analysis quoted above, the Chinese-language theatres were perceived by the Indonesian political elites as a mobile propaganda machine that efficiently spread both communist internationalism and Chinese nationalism. The geographical mobility and interactive style of these performances caused a strong sense of insecurity on the part of the Indonesian state. And the mixed nationality statuses of the performers posed special challenges to the Indonesian Government in navigating the murky territory between the management of this ethnic minority and diplomatic relations with China.

In addition to theatrical performances, another front of this “silent war” was the Chinese-language newspapers. Similar to their response to the Chinese-language theatres, the Indonesian authorities were highly sensitive to Chinese newspapers that called for transnational solidarity either on the basis of Chinese ethnicity or for the cause of global communist revolution. Since 1950, the Indonesian authorities had been wary about left-wing Chinese print media such as *Xin Bao* (新报) and *Sheng Huo Bao* (生活报) of Jakarta, the *Democratic Daily* (民主日报) of Medan and *Li Ming Bao* of Pontianak (黎明报). An internal communication within the Indonesian Government dated November 1950 portrayed *Sheng Huo Bao* and *Li Ming Bao* as the “propaganda tools” of the PRC, which were used to “promote the importance of the PRC in particular and of communism in general”:

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

These two newspapers claim that their goal is to help expand the influence of the PRC among the Chinese community in Indonesia by assisting pro-PRC organizations in overtaking pro-Chinese Nationalist organizations and by deepening diplomatic relations between the PRC and Indonesia. These two newspapers also participate in organizing the annual PRC National Day celebrations. Both newspapers aim to form a “unified patriotic and democratic front among the overseas Chinese,” the *totok* as well as the *perenakan*, as both groups were encouraged to take PRC citizenship...*Sheng Huo Bao* and *Lie Ming Bao*<sup>37</sup> are involved in extraordinary activities (*luar biasa*) such as facilitating the ethnic Chinese youth’s return to China for educational purposes.

Both *Sheng Huo Pao* and *Lie Ming Pao* (Pontianak) were related to the communist daily *Nan Chiao Jit Pao* (南侨日报) in Singapore, which was published under the sponsorship of Tan Kah Kee, who is well-known and serves as the spokesperson of the PRC government. *Nan Chiao Jit Pao* also has connections with the Malaya Communist Party.<sup>38</sup>

From the perspective of the Indonesian Government, the local pro-Beijing print media, alongside politicized theatrical performances, functioned as part of the PRC’s overall scheme to spread communism in Southeast Asia. In December 1951, for the purpose of maintaining “the internal security of the state,” the Indonesian Attorney General started prosecutions against *Xin Bao*, *Sheng Huo Bao*, and the *Democratic Daily*.<sup>39</sup> The direct cause was that all three newspapers published a speech by He Xiangning (何香凝), the chairwoman of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee, addressed to the Chinese diaspora all over the world on the third anniversary of the establishment of the People’s Republic. He Xiangning

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<sup>37</sup> A different spelling of Li Ming Bao (黎明报).

<sup>38</sup> “Surat dari Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI mengenai kegiatan politik dan kebudayaan orang Tionghoa sejak Keduduan Agung RRT di Indonesia,” August 15, 1950, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1977, ANRI.

<sup>39</sup> “Indonesian Attorney General started prosecution against three Chinese newspapers in Jakarta,” December 27, 1951, CFMA, December 27, 1951.

called upon all the ethnic Chinese to unite across the division of clan or native place in a joint effort to get rid of the influence of “the lapdogs of the reactionary Chinese Nationalist Party.” These “Chiang bandits” were “the most devious enemies of the overseas Chinese” and the cause of “the sufferings of the overseas Chinese.”<sup>40</sup> He Xiangming said:

The most pressing task for the overseas Chinese now is to expose all the crimes committed by all these shameless hooligans, to expose their conspiracy to betray our country and ruin the lives of the overseas Chinese. The overseas Chinese need to clearly see the real evil face of these Chinese Nationalist bandits. The overseas Chinese can no longer be cheated by their superficial promises.<sup>41</sup>

Like Liu Shaoqi’s speech at the Trade Union Conference of Asian and Australasian Countries in 1949, He Xiangning’s 1951 speech reflected the aggressive line of foreign policy in the early years of the PRC, as well as the heightened sense of insecurity that emerged in the wake of Taipei’s continuous campaign to “recover the motherland.” The Red versus Blue struggle among the overseas Chinese communities was the key to Beijing’s international outlook at the time. This preoccupation with the competition against the Chinese Nationalists contributed to the PRC’s insensitivity to the tensions and threats perceived by the host countries of the overseas Chinese. The PRC embassy noticed that the Indonesian Attorney General regarded the struggle between pro-Beijing and pro-Taipei factions as “improper infighting.”<sup>42</sup> In a telegram to Beijing, the PRC embassy in Jakarta reported that the Indonesian Government “would also consider” a charge against the pro-Taipei *Tian Sheng Ri Bao*, while maintaining its neutral policy towards the struggle between the two factions.<sup>43</sup> Whereas the PRC embassy did not intervene in the matter openly, the pro-Beijing *Sheng Huo Bao* protested against the Indonesian Attorney

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<sup>40</sup> “He Xiangning called upon the overseas Chinese to be united for the love of the nation,” October 3, 1951, *Sheng Huo Bao*.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> “Indonesian Attorney General started prosecution against three Chinese newspapers in Jakarta,” December 27, 1951, *CFMA*, December 27, 1951.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

General. An editorial accused the Attorney General of unequal treatment of the two blocs since while heavy-handedly imposing a ban on the three “progressive newspapers,” the Indonesian authorities still allowed *Tian Sheng Ri Bao* to circulate.<sup>44</sup> But outright confrontation with the Indonesian authorities counterproductively reinforced the authorities’ suspicion of the left-wing Chinese-language media.

This perception of the PRC as an interventionist power was also reflected in a court case in Belitung, where the local Chinese Labor Association’s (中华劳工总会) comments on religion infuriated certain Christian groups. In early 1951, the monthly publication of the Chinese Labor Association of Belitung, *The Voice of the Workers* (工声 or Gong Sheng) published a piece about the Marxist theory on the creation of man by human labor. The publication’s inclination towards communism attracted much criticism from the local Christian groups, who later started a prosecution against *The Voice of the Workers* for its “disrespect for other people’s religious beliefs by insulting God”<sup>45</sup> and “ill intention against and disdain for the Indonesian Government.”<sup>46</sup> Under pressure from the local Chinese society, the Belitung court ultimately abandoned the case. In his comments on this incident a year later, the editor-in-chief of *The Voice of the Workers*, Zou Fangjin (邹访今), a self-educated ethnic Chinese journalist, remained unaware of the delicacy of the issue of religion. He scorned his prosecutors by calling them “the so-called sons and daughters of god” and “accomplice and lapdogs of the imperialists who were involved in all kinds of wicked deeds,” and reprimanded them for having “no courage to face reality and the truth.” He ridiculed the lawsuit by naming it “The Monkey Litigation” (猿猴诉讼), meant to mock the religious group for their unwillingness to acknowledge Darwin’s theory of evolution. In conclusion, Zou quoted an

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<sup>44</sup> “Berkas mengenai pengeluaran redaktur harian Buruh Tionghoa Kung Sheng di Bangka Belitung,” February 20, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2027, ANRI.

<sup>45</sup> Lai Yumei, “My late husband Zou Fangjin,” in Zou Jianyun ed. *Zou Fangjin Wenji* [Collected works of Zou Fangjin] (Guangzhou: Shijie tushu chuban Guangdong youxian gongsi, 2013), p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> “About the Monkey Litigation,” July 25, 1952, *Sheng Huo Bao*, in Zou Jianyun ed. *Zou Fangjin Wenji*, p. 27.

editorial in the CCP's *Liberation Daily* (解放日报): "Once blind faith in god is shaken, the blind faith in the exploitative ruling class will be shattered as well."<sup>47</sup>

Radical statements like this could be easily found in *The Voice of the Workers*, which caught the Indonesian central government's attention and was hence put under close surveillance. In the Attorney General's report to the President's Office, passionate messages that called upon the Chinese laborers to overthrow the dominance of the "white Chinese capitalists" (白华资本家) were translated and presented as evidence for the subversive nature of the Chinese media. For instance, in a special issue on International Workers' Day (May 1) of 1952, *The Voice of the Workers* published an editorial that urged the working class to "overthrow the oppressors" and "seize control of their companies":

Fellow laborers! [F]or the purpose of breaking the chains of slavery, we shall fight with the utmost determination and spirit! Fellow laborers! Wake up! Let us greet this red and glorious day of May 1...there is no social inequality in communist countries. There we no longer hear the cries of distress nor do we see the pain of unemployment. There we see only hearts burning with patriotism, love among different ethnicities, and good and happy people extending their warm hands to us...As shown in the newspapers, preparations for the celebration of this day are enthusiastically carried out at various places in Indonesia...The youth movement<sup>48</sup> is taking place not only within China but also in different places in Nanyang<sup>49</sup> and in all progressive countries all over the world.<sup>50</sup>

When commenting on the contents of *The Voice of the Workers*, the Indonesian Attorney General wrote:

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Refers to the youth movement of the PRC run by the CCP.

<sup>49</sup> Literally translated as "the South Seas," a Chinese term denoting the Southeast Asian lands surrounding the South China Sea.

<sup>50</sup> "Usul pengeluaran dari Indonesia agitator agitator dan redaktur redaktur harian buruh Tionghoa "Kung Sheng" di Biliton," May 5, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1866, ANRI.

This publication spread the Marxist theory that the workers are the creator of the world. They have a right over the material world they produce. Religion is the opium of the people and is used by the government to numb and thus oppress the working class. The workers have to be engaged in the great struggle against the capitalists, which is the most important struggle.

Furthermore, the threat the Indonesian Government perceived in Belitung was particularly acute due to the demographics of the region. Unlike Java, where the ethnic Chinese flourished in business, Belitung had a large number of Chinese engaged in manual labor at local mines. Thus, the ways in which the Chinese Labor Association of Belitung organized the Chinese workers into collective action looked suspiciously similar to the historical process of mass mobilization during the Chinese Communist Revolution. As a result, in 1953 the police of Belitung put forward a request to the Central Government in Jakarta, hoping to “expel the Chinese editors and agitators” of *The Voice of the Workers* from Indonesia.<sup>51</sup> But the Attorney General considered it “inappropriate” to expel the five “Chinese editors and agitators” within a short period of time.<sup>52</sup> In reply to the police of Belitung, the Attorney General wrote:

Although we understand the reasons behind the Belitung Police Department’s request to expel the editors of Kung Sheng,<sup>53</sup> we should not forget that if these “outsiders,” who are leaders of the laborers in Belitung, were expelled, the labor organizations would find excuses to continue their activities. We have to remember that the leaders of the labor movement as well as the editors of *The Voice of the Workers* are all foreign citizens residing in Indonesia. We are facing the startling fact that not only that these foreigners are spreading political propaganda dangerous to our country, but also that the PRC is masterminding the spread of information, which is beyond the control of the Indonesian Government. The PRC is agitating the ethnic Chinese by using teachers

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<sup>51</sup> “Berkas mengenai pengeluaran redaktur harian Buruh Tionghoa Kung Sheng di Bangka Belitung,” February 20, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2027, ANRI.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> A different Romanization of “The Voice of the Workers.”

and journalists for propaganda purposes in Indonesia to win support from the Chinese community. The leaders, agents and agitators of communist China in foreign countries including Indonesia all receive instructions from the PRC government in Beijing. Everywhere they play the role of people liberated by the communists and are thus obligated to pay their patriotic duty to spread love for New China. They try to convert people who are apolitical or who are “reactionary”—supporters of the Chinese Nationalist regime in Taipei.<sup>54</sup>

The Indonesian Attorney General reasoned that *The Voice of the Workers*, with its guiding principles of patriotism oriented towards the PRC as well as communist internationalism and the rule of the working class, must have received instructions from the PRC Government. Although existing evidence cannot disprove that the PRC state agencies were in direct command of the Chinese Labor Association of Belitung, it is highly probable that the organization was a grass roots one. The activism of this organization and its publication did not seem to be under the direct supervision of Beijing. It was, more likely than not, an organic outgrowth of the PRC’s overall strategy of expanding influence among the Chinese in Indonesia.

### **Watching over a Volcano: Indonesian Perception of Chinese Civic Society**

The activism of left-wing Chinese civic associations in regions outside of Java oftentimes aroused concerns on the part of the Indonesian central government in Jakarta over communist infiltration as well as border security and immigration control. For instance, in December 1952, the Indonesian Attorney General had discussions with the police of West Kalimantan about a case of political violence across the border between Indonesia and Malaya. According to the information obtained by the Indonesian Attorney General, around 300 to 500 Chinese from West Kalimantan entered Sarawak in small groups for the purpose of rescuing ethnic Chinese in the Malaya Communist Party who were arrested by the Sarawak police. This action was planned and led by the Chinese from West Kalimantan (mainly from the cities of

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<sup>54</sup> “Usul pengeluaran dari Indonesia agitator agitator dan redaktur redaktur harian buruh Tionghoa ‘Kung Sheng’ di Biliton,” May 5, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1866, ANRI.

Pontianak and Singkawang). This group obtained arms through connections with the Chinese Association of Singkawang (山口洋中华总会). But, at the end of the day, the attack failed, mainly because the promised help from the Malaya Communists did not materialize.<sup>55</sup> The Indonesian Attorney General commented:

This incident should be understood within the long historical trajectory of the situation in West Kalimantan. This area is vast. A large number of its population is ethnic Chinese, and the village chiefs are ethnic Chinese as well. There is a significant perception among these ethnic Chinese that the Indonesian Government has no presence. They do not understand the reality of the Indonesian Government's jurisdiction nor do they acknowledge it aloud. These ethnic Chinese behave as if they were living in part of China. Of course, such a situation can be easily used by elements with ill intentions against the State of Indonesia. In reality, the ethnic Chinese have taken advantage of this situation.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to the Chinese Association of Singkawang, also on the periphery of the Indonesian territory and on the Indonesian state's watch list was the Ling Ming She (黎明社) of West Kalimantan, the China Democratic League (中国民主同盟), the Overseas Chinese Laborer and Peasant Association (Sarikat Buruh Tani Tionghoa Seberang Lautan) of Sumatra, and the Federation of Chinese Laborers (中華劳工会) in South Sulawesi. From the perspective of the government in Jakarta, these ethnic Chinese civic associations not only ignored national boundaries by building transnational ethnic connections but also placed Indonesia's outer islands within the dangerous international communist network.

With the ongoing Malayan Emergency, the Indonesia state sensed that its state sovereignty had been compromised on the frontiers of Kalimantan and Sumatra, where undocumented immigrants, or

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<sup>55</sup> "Kejaksaan Agung kepada Perdana Menteri RI: surat tanggal 18 Februari 1953 tentang keributan dan serangan yang dilakukan oleh petani-petani Cina Tionghoa di Bindjei," February 18, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1860, ANRI.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

“dark immigrants” (*imigrasi gelap*) as the Indonesian Government named them, had been traversing the porous borders. In addition to Chinese from West Kalimantan crossing over to Sarawak, there was also flow in the opposite direction: ethnic Chinese Malaya communists seeking refuge on Indonesian territory. After being captured, one ethnic Chinese allegedly affiliated with the Malaya Communist Party, Liu Kha Hin, told the Indonesian Police that he and his comrades planned to “stay for less than a year and then return to Sarawak to continue the struggle.”<sup>57</sup> In another case, police in Sanggau, West Kalimantan, detained five ethnic Chinese from Kucing, Sarawak. They claimed to be students from Zhong Hua Middle School (中华学校) of Kucing who fled to West Kalimantan out of fear of being arrested and prosecuted by the British authorities due to their sympathy with the PRC. According to them, one of their teachers and two of their schoolmates had already been detained by the British for their political orientation.<sup>58</sup> Another group of ethnic Chinese from Malaya who were detained by the Kalimantan police allegedly confessed that “they had an enduring love for the PRC because the PRC did not discriminate between the rich and the poor and development has been faster and stronger than ever before.”<sup>59</sup> There were also a number of politically minded immigrants coming from Singapore. In one case, the Indonesian authorities detained a *totok* Chinese male fluent in *bahasa Indonesia* heading towards East Java in September 1951. In an interrogation by the police, he said he was from Singapore and entered Indonesia to “carry out tasks entrusted to him by the Government of the PRC.” Although “he did not explain his task clearly,” the Indonesian Government speculated that he was going to serve as a teacher at the Chinese-language schools and to “propagate communism to the students” through methods such as “using geography textbooks that denounced the Indonesian Government.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> “Laporan dari Jawatan Kepolisian mengenai imigran etnis Tionghoa yang masuk ke Indonesia secara illegal,” January 10, 1952, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2404, *ANRI*.

<sup>59</sup> “Surat dari Menteri Dalam Negeri kepada Menteri Luar Negeri mengenai imigrasi gelap di Sumatera,” June 12—August 5, 1952, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2413, *ANRI*.

<sup>60</sup> “Laporan dari Jawatan Kepolisian mengenai imigran etnis Tionghoa yang masuk ke Indonesia secara illegal,” January 10, 1952, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2404, *ANRI*.

Despite having deported these undocumented Chinese immigrants, the Indonesian Government could hardly be assured of border security. The Attorney General remarked that inspecting the activities of the above-mentioned “foreigners”—referring to both the ethnic Chinese of PRC citizenship on its own territory (West Kalimantan) and the ethnic Chinese under foreign jurisdiction (in Sarawak)—was like “watching over a volcano that could erupt violently at anytime.”<sup>61</sup> In addition to “the absence of rules and guidelines” for handling this kind of infraction, the Indonesian authorities were also wary of “the onset of shock among the ethnic Chinese who were oriented towards the PRC,” which “would distract people and make it difficult to carry out formal investigations.” To the Indonesian officials, the “Chinese politics” that brought the two regions together despite national boundaries was an imminent threat that was sometimes difficult to decipher, as reported by the West Kalimantan Government to Jakarta:

In all the communist activities in Kalimantan, the ethnic Chinese play the most important role. In all the governmental departments in the vast region of Kalimantan, which is dominated by the Chinese, the most challenging issue is that the civil servants lack the ability to understand the Chinese language (either spoken or written). For this reason, it is necessary for us to enroll some of our staff in Chinese language and Sinology courses.

The communist nature of the insurgencies in Sarawak further encouraged the Indonesian Government to link its frontier issues to the global Cold War. Upon reflection, the Indonesian Attorney General commented: “[T]hese militant communist activities have to be understood against the larger backdrop of international relations.” The Indonesian officials had already been visualizing Indonesia as a “falling domino”:

We already know about the close relationship among the communist movements in Sarawak, Malaya and Indonesia. If communist movements achieve success in Sarawak, it would be easy

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<sup>61</sup> “Kejaksaan Agung kepada Perdana Menteri RI: surat tanggal 18 Pebruari 1953 tentang keributan dan serangan yang dilakukan oleh petani-petani Cina Tionghoa di Bindjei,” February 18, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1860, ANRI.

for communism to spread over to Indonesia, especially through a region as vast and easily penetrable as West Kalimantan. We have to keep in mind that from the standpoint of the Communist International, the Republic of Indonesia is a “semi-colonial country, an accomplice of imperialism.” In its view, such a country must be transformed into a communist state, peacefully or violently if a peaceful solution is not possible.<sup>62</sup>

The picture seemed to look even grimmer when additional signs of threat were identified:

The Government of the Philippines announced that Indonesia would be a milestone for the spread of communism in the region. Communist agents could easily break into the Philippines from Indonesia via maritime routes...[M]oreover, we should keep in mind that there are ships of unknown origin that sail in some places in the waters of Indonesia.

Interestingly, the officials in West Kalimantan held that the first step towards regaining control of Chinese politics on the ground and safeguarding the porous border between Indonesia and Malaya was to bring in national symbols of Indonesia: “The portrait of the President and the white-and-red flag<sup>63</sup> should be popularized. The residents should be fully aware of the presence of the Indonesian Government.”<sup>64</sup>

Similar to the case of Kalimantan, Cold War geopolitics heavily influenced the Jakarta Government’s evaluation of the threat in Sumatra. The Indonesian Attorney General remarked:

We do not have enough evidence to prove that Sumatera was listed as the number one area for communist China’s dark politics (*politik gelap dari kaum komunis Tiongkok di negeri ini*)...We have to keep in mind how Sumatra is close to Malaya and how far it is from Java (where the

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<sup>62</sup> “Kejaksaan Agung kepada Perdana Menteri RI: surat tanggal 18 Pebruari 1953 tentang keributan dan serangan yang dilakukan oleh petani-petani Cina Tionghoa di Bindjei,” February 18, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1860, *ANRI*.

<sup>63</sup> Referring to the Indonesian national flag.

<sup>64</sup> “Kejaksaan Agung kepada Perdana Menteri RI: surat tanggal 18 Pebruari 1953 tentang keributan dan serangan yang dilakukan oleh petani-petani Cina Tionghoa di Bindjei,” February 18, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1860, *ANRI*.

Central Government is located and would be the last stronghold against communist actions).<sup>65</sup>

In addition to geographical proximity to Malaya, Jakarta regarded the vulnerability of Sumatra as a result of Ba Ren's wartime legacy. The China Democratic League, established and developed by Ba Ren and his fellow left-wing Chinese intellectuals who sought refuge in North Sumatra during the Japanese occupation, was seen by Jakarta as the vehicle through which the expansionist ambitions of the PRC could be realized. Besides Ba Ren, Wang Jiyuan, one of the founders and editor-in-chief of *Sheng Huo Bao*, was described as having “supported the development of the China Democratic League” and “enjoyed a close relationship with Wang Ren Shu”<sup>66</sup> through their promotion of red propaganda.<sup>67</sup> The Indonesian Government report quoted Wang Jiyuan saying that “the PRC did not want to transplant its system to another independent sovereign state...[I]t only wanted to give support to the local communist party.”<sup>68</sup> And alarmingly, the China Democratic League had “deeply infiltrated the labor and peasants’ unions of Sumatra...[T]he two sides have been working closely.”<sup>69</sup>

The Indonesian state considered the China Democratic League as “a cover organization for the CCP” that “spread communist ideology among the youth and the so-called ‘working intellectuals’” according to “orders from the PRC.” In a letter to the Supreme Court, the Indonesian Attorney General characterized the China Democratic League as follows: “The China Democratic League (CDL) is an organization led by a foreign country. It wants to liberate this country from imperialist elements. This liberation must be achieved through the Communist International because the success of national independence was regarded as incomplete.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> “Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI: surat-surat tanggal 6 Januari, Juli 1953 tentang China Demokratie League dan Perkumpulan Shaw Nien Erh T'ung Hui,” January 6, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1852, ANRI.

<sup>66</sup> aka Ba Ren.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

In addition to its function as a tool with which the PRC penetrated into Indonesian domestic politics, the Indonesian state was alarmed by the growth of the China Democratic League after the transfer of sovereignty in 1949. It noted that the China Democratic League initially “only established branches in Medan and Palembang.” In the early 1950s, however, the China Democratic League had expanded to Bagan Si Api Api, Pulau Halang, Sinaboy and Ujung Simbur. Furthermore, “there are secret reports that suggest that the China Democratic League has established branches on the island of Java, but we do not have evidence to prove it.”<sup>71</sup>

While warily watching overseas extensions of PRC political associations such as the China Democratic League, the Indonesian Government had also been closely monitoring labor and peasant organizations that emerged locally among the ethnic Chinese. One example was the Overseas Chinese Laborer and Peasant Association (*Sarikat Buruh Tani Tionghoa Seberang Lautan*) in East Sumatra. The Indonesian Government believed that the representatives of this organization masterminded the “unrest and attacks by hundreds of Chinese peasants” in Bindjei, East Sumatra, in January 1953.<sup>72</sup> Yet according to the Chinese-language press, the peasants were indignant when the local authorities tried to forcefully relocate them in order to make space for an agricultural experiment.<sup>73</sup> But the Indonesian authorities insisted that the “agitated” peasants provoked the East Sumatran police. Jakarta was further appalled by the fact that many ethnic Chinese peasants involved were not Indonesian citizens. The Attorney General commented: “[T]he activities of foreign nationals, especially the citizens of the People’s Republic of China, have grown increasingly intense. They disregard their obligations as ‘guests’ of our country and

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> “Kejaksaan Agung kepada Perdana Menteri RI: surat tanggal 18 Februari 1953 tentang keributan dan serangan yang dilakukan oleh petani-petani Cina Tionghoa di Bindjei,” February 18, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1860, *ANRI*.

<sup>73</sup> “Special forces in Medan shot Chinese and Indonesian peasants,” April 29, 1953, *Xing Zhou Ri Bao*, Clippings on Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, Library of the Research School for Southeast Asian Studies, Xiamen University, no. 04105.

they show no respect for the sovereignty of the government of Indonesia.”<sup>74</sup>

According to records from the Indonesian Government, many of the non-citizen Chinese active in the Overseas Chinese Laborer and Peasant Association “did not have proper immigration documents or letters that legally validated their residence in Indonesia” (*surat tanda menetap*). In a case closely resembling that of West Kalimantan, the Indonesian state found the ethnic Chinese—some of whom opted for Indonesian citizenship while others did not—were living as if they were in “a state within a state.” The Attorney General was irritated by the fact that the Chinese had “their own villages, their own schools... governed by their own committees.” Disturbed by the high degree of autonomy the Chinese enjoyed in the region, the Indonesian state tried to regain control by legally denying the ownership of the farmland claimed by these immigrants and accusing these ethnic Chinese peasants of “illegally cultivating the farmland.” Yet the Indonesian state’s heavy-handed policy was met with serious pushback—many Chinese peasants were catapulted into the embrace of the Overseas Chinese Laborer and Peasant Association. The Attorney General had the following comments on the success of the Overseas Chinese Laborer and Peasant Association:

This association is very much liked by the ethnic Chinese peasants because they hope to obtain protection of their land and homes...As a gesture of appreciation for the protection it offers, the ethnic Chinese peasants just swallow whatever propaganda this association promotes. They are not necessarily attracted by the ideologies of the PRC, but they want to make sure that their land and property are not confiscated by the Indonesian Government. This situation is exploited by the leading committee of the Overseas Chinese Laborer and Peasant Association, which consists of people who themselves have never farmed. They merely carry out political activities that have absolutely nothing to do with the interests of the peasants... In accordance with a speech given by the Director of the Overseas Chinese Committee of the PRC on October 8, 1951, the intention of

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<sup>74</sup> “Kejaksaan Agung kepada Perdana Menteri RI: surat tanggal 18 Februari 1953 tentang keributan dan serangan yang dilakukan oleh petani-petani Cina Tionghoa di Bindjei,” February 18, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1860, ANRI.

the Overseas Chinese Laborer and Peasant Association is to serve as an extension of the PRC, and its purpose is to transform the ethnic Chinese peasants in North Sumatra into people of the PRC loyal to their homeland.

Once again, He Xiangning's 1951 speech was regarded as a reflection of Beijing's expansionist ambition through the fifth column that consists of the overseas Chinese. In the eyes of the political elites in Jakarta, organizations such as the Overseas Chinese Laborer and Peasant Association were unequivocally both Chinese and communist. The Indonesian political elites were convinced that organizations like these could easily join hands with their *pribumi* counterparts. When profiling the East Sumatra Laborer and Peasant Association, the Indonesian Attorney General traced the organization's presumably questionable history back to 1948, when it hosted a conference in a room "decorated with the portraits of Sun Yat Sen, Karl Marx and Mao Zedong" in Medan.<sup>75</sup> It even put forward a request for permission from the North Sumatra Government to allow its members to "wear hammer and sickle badges," which infuriated the Attorney General. Moreover, the Attorney General recorded that the Overseas Chinese Laborer and Peasant Association made unsuccessful attempts to establish collaborative relations with the indigenous Joint Association of Peasants (*Gabungan Persatuan Tani*). It was, however, believed to have succeeded in maintaining close contact with the Port Workers' Union in Belawan (*Serikat Buruh Pelabuhan Belawan*). The organization's suspicious activities also included dispatching a telegram expressing moral support for the North Korean people to its leader Kim Il Sung and advocating labor strikes in solidarity with the automobile laborers in Hong Kong. In a letter to the Prime Minister's Office in February 1953, the Attorney General listed the Overseas Chinese Laborer and Peasant Association's openly announced commitments, including:

- a. Encourage workers and peasants to participate in politics to improve their social status; to struggle to help all the people around the world obtain and safeguard freedom of speech, press, and assembly.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

- b. Agree to act in solidarity with international peasant and worker organizations; to make progress together with the people of the PRC.
- c. Make connections with laborers and peasants in the Far East and the progressive people in the independent countries of the Far East.
- d. The workers and peasants should be patriots loyal to their own countries as well as internationalists who are eager to fight.<sup>76</sup>

If the limited reach of the Indonesian state fueled its concerns over the activism of Chinese civic associations on the outer islands of Kalimantan and Sumatra, the threats it felt at the nation's political center—the most densely populated island of Java—were more indicative of the formidable organizational power of Chinese society. Intelligence collected by the Indonesian Attorney General suggested that “the Chinese in Indonesia have been building organizations to increase the influence of the PRC among *totok* as well as *peranakan*.<sup>77</sup> In Java, the PRC-Indonesian Friendship Association (中印友好协会; Badan Pekerja Panitia Penyelenggaraan persahabatan RRT-RI),<sup>78</sup> Min Sheng Society (民生社) and Xin Sheng Society (新生社) of Jakarta, Da Zhong Society (大众社) of Surabaya, Nanhua Society (南华社) of Bandung, Li Society (力社) of Semarang, Sin Li Shih of Malang and Sin Tao Shih of Cirebon all appeared on the radar of the Indonesian Government.<sup>79</sup> For instance, the political elites in Jakarta viewed Xin Sheng Society (新生社) as “campaigning on behalf of the PRC” and suspected that it had “links to Singapore and potentially rich individuals.”<sup>80</sup> Moreover, the Indonesian Government was sure of the connection between the pro-PRC Chinese civic association in Java and the Indonesian communists:

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> “Surat dari Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI mengenai kegiatan politik dan kebudayaan orang Tionghoa sejak Kedutaan Agung RRT di Indonesia,” August 15, 1950, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1977, *ANRI*.

<sup>78</sup> “Kejaksaan Agung kepada Perdana Menteri RI: surat tanggal 18 Pebruari 1953 tentang keributan dan serangan yang dilakukan oleh petani-petani Cina Tionghoa di Bindjei,” February 18, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1860, *ANRI*.

<sup>79</sup> “Laporan S.I.: Laporan tentang organisasi Tionghoa ‘Shin Sheng Shih,’” December 1, 1953, Arisp Marzuki, SE 1945-1984, no. 511, *ANRI*.

The *Pemuda Rakyat* (People's Youth) under the PKI has close relations with the pro-PRC groups.

The Chinese often help *Pemuda Rakyat* find donations, come up with slogans or display their photos. The *Pemuda Rakyat* is going to organize a mass meeting in Jogjakarta. There might be many Chinese participants who would join backstage.<sup>80</sup>

The threat from the pro-Beijing civic associations manifested itself in a very symbolic and dramatic way every year on October 1, when celebrations including athletic competitions, parades, and receptions organized by a special committee of the Chinese associations took place all over Indonesia.<sup>81</sup> These celebrations, attended by the PRC ambassador or consuls general, usually took up a whole day. The ceremonies usually started with speeches delivered by dignitaries, the singing of the PRC national anthem, the chanting of slogans, lion dances and athletic competitions, followed by a parade of representatives of the local Chinese associations and Chinese students with a gigantic portrait of Mao Zedong held side-by-side with that of Sukarno, and an evening gala show performed by the students.<sup>82</sup> Ang Jang Goan, the chairperson of the Federation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (雅加达中华侨团总会), recalled that the pro-Beijing groups were not totally blind to the ethnic tension that these events might cause. In his memoir, he wrote that as part of the effort to “demonstrate solidarity with the Indonesian people,” the Federation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce organized similar celebrations on Indonesia’s Independence Day (August 17), at which thousands of Chinese students would parade in front of the Presidential Palace and perform Indonesian ethnic dances and songs for *pribumi* guests. Despite the Federation of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce’s intention to appeal to the *pribumi* population and the Indonesian Government, these events “still aroused unpleasant feelings among the Indonesian political leaders and intellectuals,” who were left with the impression that “the Chinese had lots of money to

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> “Surat dari Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI mengenai kegiatan politik dan kebudayaan orang Tionghoa sejak Keduduan Agung RRT di Indonesia,” August 15, 1950, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1977, ANRI.

<sup>82</sup> Chen Erli, “Celebrating the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Xin Hua Middle School of Surabaya,” in *Jinian Sishui xinhua zhongxue jianxiao liushiba zhounian tekan* [Special issue celebrating the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Xin Hua Middle School of Surabaya], collection of Perpustakaan Medayu Agung Surabaya, pp.37-40.

squander whereas the indigenous people were living in poverty.” Ang lamented: “It would have been better if the ethnic Chinese celebrated in their hearts only.”<sup>83</sup>

### **Red Scarves, Red Scare: Indonesian Perception of Chinese-language Education**

In 1953, the Indonesian Attorney General sent a report to the President on the Young Pioneers (少年儿童先锋队), a mass youth organization increasingly active in the pro-Beijing Chinese-language schools. In the PRC, the Young Pioneers were, and still are, a mass youth organization under the CCP. The Young Pioneers have been referred to as “Red Scarves,” which is the signature uniform item of its members. In the early 1950s, the Indonesian Attorney General’s attention was captured by the Young Pioneers’ public appearance in Sumatra at formal gatherings of ethnic Chinese, such as the establishment of the PRC consulate. For instance, the PRC consul general in Medan and his staff members attended the opening ceremony for a new building in Siantar together with 400 Young Pioneers in crisp white shirts and bright red scarves.<sup>84</sup> In addition to expressing dismay over the Five-Star Red Flag and the emblem of the hammer and sickle, the political elites in Jakarta carefully investigated the symbolism of the Red Scarves:

In Aceh the Young Pioneers wear white uniforms and red scarves. In Padang, the China Young Pioneers were established on May 24, 1952. The children dress in white and wear red scarves, while their teachers wear white shirts and black ties. They greet each other with the Young Pioneers salute, which consists of bending the right arm and raising the right hand directly above the head, with all five fingers pressed together, symbolizing the “five loves”—love for the motherland, love for the people, love for physical labor, love for science, and love for socialism. Their routine activities include patrolling the neighborhoods near their schools and overseeing public safety at night...

They sit in class wearing uniforms. They wear uniforms to participate in athletic events. They

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<sup>83</sup> Hong Yuanyuan, Liang Yingming trans., *Hong Yuanyuan zizhuan*, pp. 204-206

<sup>84</sup> “Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI: surat-surat tanggal 6 Januari, Juli 1953 tentang China Demokratie League dan Perkumpulan Shaw Nien Erh T'ung Hui,” January 6, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1852, ANRI.

dress in uniforms for excursions organized by the schools to places such as the beach and baths. They would take the bus or ride bicycles together, while singing patriotic songs. On these field trips, they usually encounter children from pro-Taipei schools. Such encounters usually prompt verbal attacks, which sometimes escalate into physical conflicts. At their schools, there are also posters about the popularity of the Young Pioneers in China and in Russia, with slogans such as “spreading the Young Pioneers’ spirits here.” Some Soviet films are shown dubbed into Mandarin Chinese. One example is the Soviet film “The Red Scarves” translated by the Eastern Film Co.<sup>85</sup> The film was approved by the plenary meeting of the film screening committee. Its target audience is young children. Two days before the film was released, an advertisement was published in newspapers, claiming that some school children were required to see this movie.<sup>86</sup>

The report drew the conclusion that “dressing in uniforms at school can be interpreted as a sign that the students are following a certain political ideology.”<sup>87</sup> The Indonesian state viewed the development of the Young Pioneers as systematic communist infiltration. The Indonesian authorities showed distaste for the communist-style political hierarchy even among small children:

The Xin Hua School(新华学校) in Perbaungan, East Sumatra, established the above-mentioned organization [the Young Pioneers] on March 29, 1952, with different ranks. They include the following categories:

The head of a section wears an armband of three white stripes; a section consists of 3 groups;  
The head of a group wears an armband of two white stripes; a group consists of 8-15 members;  
A member wears an armband of one white stripe.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> The Red Scarves is a Soviet film produced in 1948, about a schoolboy who was once expelled from the Young Pioneers transformed himself into a qualified Young Pioneers member with the help from his teachers, peers and family.

<sup>86</sup> “Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI: surat-surat tanggal 6 Januari, Juli 1953 tentang China Demokratie League dan Perkumpulan Shaw Nien Erh T'ung Hui,” January 6, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1852, ANRI.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

The Young Pioneers' expansion in Sumatra with impressive membership numbers and "almost perfect organizational structure" was interpreted as, once again, the legacy of Ba Ren's political activism in the region during the Japanese occupation and Indonesian National Revolution.<sup>89</sup> The Indonesian Attorney General's report revealed that the Young Pioneers were keeping a low profile in Java. Only one school in Jakarta had a few students wearing the red scarves to school, while at other Chinese-language schools the red scarves were basically "invisible."<sup>90</sup> Yet this did not assuage the Attorney General's suspicion, as shown in a report to the Indonesian President: "Perhaps this is the communist strategy so as not to alarm the important politicians of the Republic of Indonesia. We do not know for sure."<sup>91</sup> The Young Pioneers were perceived by the Indonesian Government as a thread in an expanding web woven by the PRC to tighten its connection to the Chinese diaspora. As the most rudimentary organization in the PRC's youth movement, the Young Pioneers were ranked beneath a cluster of pro-Beijing student organizations including the Federation of Chinese High School Students and the New Democratic Youth Group, both of which were transplanted directly from China and remained in close contact with its headquarters in Beijing. The Indonesian Government was alarmed by an open letter from the two organizations' head offices in Beijing written in Mandarin Chinese in February 1950, which called upon the Chinese youth to form a united front under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. "The members of the above-mentioned youth federations," the Indonesian Attorney General wrote, "are mostly students from pro-Beijing schools led by left-leaning figures of the Chinese community. They are indoctrinating the students with a progressive ideology of communism."<sup>92</sup>

The tools for this indoctrination were the textbooks and curriculum at the pro-Beijing Chinese-language schools. According to information obtained by the Indonesian authorities, the PRC government

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>"Surat dari Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI mengenai kegiatan politik dan kebudayaan orang Tionghoa sejak Kedutaan Agung RRT di Indonesia," August 15, 1950, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1977, ANRI.

was deeply involved in Chinese-language education in Indonesia. In Jakarta for instance, the PRC Consul General, He Ying (何英), facilitated the distribution of textbooks targeted to the overseas Chinese published in Mainland China. The veteran underground CCP member Yang Xinrong (杨新容) was in charge of educational programs. The Indonesian Ministry of Education kept a detailed inventory of revolutionary texts and songs taught at pro-PRC schools and imposed several unsuccessful bans on material imported from Beijing throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s. Among the texts banned were items that intended to impress the students with the glamour of a new socialist modernity, such as “How Great Our Motherland Is!”( 我们的祖国多伟大), “The Construction of a New China” (新中国的建设), “Building A New Tibet” (建设新西藏), “The New Atmosphere of the Countryside in Lower Yangtze” (江南农村新气象), and “People’s New Shanghai” (人民的新上海); those that were intended to promote communism, such as “Basic Readings on Politics for Youth” (新少年政治常识读本), “A Study on Stalin’s Theory of the Chinese Revolution” (学习斯大林关于中国革命地学说), “Teaching Materials on the Charter of the Chinese Communist Party” (中国共产党党章教材 ), and “The Great Mao Zedong” (伟大的毛泽东); those that were intended to shape political attitudes against the United States and the Nationalist regime in Taiwan, such as “We will Hoist the Flag of Victory in Taiwan” (要把胜利的旗帜插到台湾) and “How the American Imperialists Invaded China” (美帝怎样侵略中国); and those that were intended to create a national imagination centered on China proper, such as “A miniature map with the provincial divisions of the People’s Republic of China” (袖珍中华人民共和国分省精图).<sup>93</sup> The Indonesian Government was disturbed by the lack of emphasis on Indonesian language, history and geography at the pro-Beijing schools and found it striking that a Russian citizen was offering Russian

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<sup>93</sup> “Menteri PP & K: Surat keputusan-Surat Keputusan tanggal 24 Maret 1952-28 Pebruari 1957 tentang larangan terhadap penggunaan terbitan-terbitan berbahasa Cina dan mengajar di sekolah-sekolah Cina,” March 24 1952-February 28, 1957, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1805, ANRI.

language classes at a pro-Beijing school in Bandung.<sup>94</sup>

Like the theatrical performances described earlier in this chapter, the classrooms of Chinese-language schools were another “stage” on which the battle between the Red and the Blue unfolded in a dramatic fashion. The Indonesian Attorney General, the Ministry of Culture and Education, and the Municipal Police of various locations had been exchanging information on comically absurd conflicts among highly politicized schoolchildren. For instance, in April 1952, the local police started an investigation on an incident in which the ROC flag, the Indonesian national flag and the portrait of Sun Yat-sen were all polluted with excrement at a pro-Taipei school in Singakwang, Kalimantan. The main suspect was a boy named Ngu Fa Miau, who allegedly entered “the crime scene” the night before the incident occurred and wrote with chalk “down with the bald Chiang [Kai Shek]” on a desk.<sup>95</sup> In another case, a pro-Beijing teacher used corporal punishment with students who went to see an American movie. When the teacher asked them why they went to see the film, they allegedly shouted back: “Down with Mao Zedong!” These schoolchildren were forced to walk on the sports field non-stop for three hours and were ultimately suspended from the school.<sup>96</sup>

As shown in the previous chapter, the political elites in Jakarta were not reading too much into the students’ naïve behaviors. Their concerns were justified, as even some of the pro-Beijing Chinese themselves sensed discomfort. A graduate from a pro-Beijing Chinese middle school in Perbaungan, Sumatra, recalled being warned by more politically savvy pro-Beijing activists to stop labeling their student groups with the word “pioneer” as well as to discontinue their paramilitary exercises and

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<sup>94</sup> “Surat dari Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI mengenai kegiatan politik dan kebudayaan orang Tionghoa sejak Kedutaan Agung RRT di Indonesia,” August 15, 1950, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 1977, *ANRI*.

<sup>95</sup> “Surat dari Kejaksaan Agung kpd Menteri PP&K mengenai aksi politik yang tdk diinginkan di sekolah2 Tionghoa di Singkawang 10 April-12 Mei 1952,” April 10-May 12, 1952, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2057, *ANRI*.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

parades.<sup>97</sup> To exert more control over Chinese-language education, in 1952 the Indonesian Government promulgated regulations regarding the education of resident aliens and established a special department for inspection purposes. All the Chinese-language schools were required to register with the Ministry of Education. The regulations stipulated that *bahasa Indonesia* was mandatory at all schools.<sup>98</sup> The bar was raised further in 1955, when a new set of regulations required that a minimum of four hours per week be dedicated to instruction in *bahasa Indonesia* for students in the third grade and above and that over 25% of class time be devoted to Indonesian history and geography for students in the fifth grade and above. In November 1957, the Indonesian Government took legal action to restrict Chinese-language education to those who had irrevocably repudiated their Indonesian citizenship. In other words, ethnic Chinese students who opted for Indonesian citizenship were no longer allowed to attend Chinese-language schools. And teachers at the Chinese-language schools had to pass a proficiency exam in *bahasa Indonesia* in order to receive a teaching certificate and a working permit.<sup>99</sup> Later, the closure of all pro-Chinese Nationalist schools in 1958 after the clamp down on Taipei-sponsored regional rebellions further strengthened the position of pro-Beijing schools. Despite the Indonesian authorities' efforts to reconfigure Chinese-language education, students at the pro-Beijing Chinese-language schools continued to be politicized until the outbreak of G30S in 1965.

### **National Vigilance: Indonesian Perception of Chinese Economic Power**

From the PRC diplomatic mission to the communist youth groups, from politicized Chinese-language theatre to PRC-oriented textbooks and songs, “communist China’s dark politics” was viewed by Indonesian officials as “undesirable,” “dangerous” and “threatening to the peace and security of our

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<sup>97</sup> Zhang Yijun, “Anecdotes from the past,” in *Li Gongwo laoshi jinian teji* [A special issue that memorializes teacher Li Gongwo (Hong Kong: Alumni society of the Medan Middle School, 2008).

<sup>98</sup> Leo Suryadinata, “Indonesian Chinese Education: Past and Present,” *Indonesia* 14 (October 1972), pp. 49-71.

<sup>99</sup> Cai Renlong, *Chidaoxian shang de jiayin*, p.115.

country.”<sup>100</sup> Meanwhile, Chinese capital was seen as destabilizing the Indonesian national economy. In J.S. Furnivall’s analysis, in the colonial era, the Chinese served as middlemen between the modern economic sector controlled by the Dutch and the traditional sector (agricultural economy) dominated by the indigenous population.<sup>101</sup> W.F. Wertheim contends that in the 1930s indigenous entrepreneurs constituted approximately two percent of the Indonesian population.<sup>102</sup> The *pribumi* presence in the entrepreneurial class was much weaker than that of the ethnic Chinese. During the Indonesian National Revolution, this business-minded ethnic minority was under attack from *pribumi* groups that harbored doubt about their political orientation and envy for their comparatively privileged economic status. At the Round Table Conference of August 1949, the newly established government of the Republic of Indonesia formally declared that its economic policy was to favor the “economically weaker groups.”<sup>103</sup> In post-independence Indonesia, ethnic Chinese faced state-led policy initiatives designed to undermine their economic influence in sectors such as trade, transportation and manufacturing. The Indonesian Government calculated that by weakening the economic power of the ethnic Chinese, it would be able to spur economic participation by the “indigenous Indonesians” (*bangsa Indonesia asli*), which was essential to transforming the colonial economic structure into a national one, or, in other words, to complete the “Indonesialization” of the economy.

Against this backdrop, there was a wave of ethno-centric economic nationalism in Indonesia in the 1950s. In May 1954, the Chinese community panicked over rumors that non-citizen Chinese would be banned from *warung*<sup>104</sup> and other types of small-scale retail business in Indonesia. The anxiety was triggered in early May, when the Indonesia-oriented *Keng Po* (竞报) quoted both the Minister of

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<sup>100</sup> “Kejaksaan Agung kepada Presiden RI: surat-surat tanggal 6 Januari, Juli 1953 tentang China Demokratie League dan Perkumpulan Shaw Nien Erh T'ung Hui,” January 6, 1953, Inventaris Arsip Kabinet Presiden RI 1950-1959, no. 1852, *ANRI*.

<sup>101</sup> J.S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939).

<sup>102</sup> W.F. Wertheim, *Indonesian Society in Transition* (The Hague/Bandung: van Hoeve Ltd., 1959), p. 14.

<sup>103</sup> John O. Sutter, *Indonesianisasi: Politics in a Changing Economy, 1940-1955* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Data Paper, 1959), vol. 3, p. 1017.

<sup>104</sup> Warung is a type of small family-owned business—often a causal shop, a modest restaurant or café—in Indonesia.

Economic Affairs, Iskaq Tjokroadisurjo, and the Minister of Finance, Dr. Ong Eng Die (王永利), on the government's plan to issue a new decree that would prohibit alien Chinese from working as hawkers, *warung* owners and small entrepreneurs. Reportedly, the decree had already been drafted and was awaiting Cabinet approval.<sup>105</sup> In order to calm the Chinese population, the PRC-oriented *Sheng Huo Bao* defended the role of the Chinese in the circulation of capital and commodities in Indonesia. A *Sheng Huo Bao* editorial argued that it was unwise for the Indonesian Government to target the Chinese because they were not imperialist exploiters as the Dutch were. The same editorial cited Siauw Giok Tjhan, who pointed out that the Dutch imperialists were fanning ethnic tension in order "to divert the attention of the Indonesian general public."<sup>106</sup> In June 1954, the Indonesian Government enacted new legislation that required all enterprises owned by alien Chinese in the rice and wheat processing industry to be transferred to *pribumi*. As a result, according to statistics obtained by the PRC embassy in Jakarta, the year of 1954 witnessed 50 cases of expulsion, mostly in North Sumatra and West Kalimantan. According to the same source, the majority of the ethnic Chinese affected were manual laborers, clerks, and peddlers. Before forcing the ethnic Chinese out of Indonesia, the Indonesian Government would deliberately detain them under grim physical circumstances without informing the Chinese consulates. The Chinese consulates considered this as a conspiracy on the part of the Indonesian Government to create the impression that the PRC did not care about its nationals overseas.<sup>107</sup>

Anti-Chinese sentiment continued to rise in the mid and late 1950s when more *pribumi* governmental officials started disseminating to the general public racist messages that Chinese capital was more detrimental to the Indonesian economy than the capital of the Dutch and other Western capitalists. The Chinese were accused of tax evasion, corruption and being "an exclusive group which

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<sup>105</sup> "Rumors about government ban of foreign ownership of warung and small enterprises," May 18, 1954, *Sheng Huo Bao*.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Overseas Chinese Research Association ed., *Yafei diqu huqiao qingkuang jieshao*, p. 55.

only looks after its own interests in an egotistic and materialistic manner.”<sup>108</sup> In July 1956, Assaat Datuk Mudo, one of the renowned politicians that led Indonesia’s struggle for national independence, started the “Assaat Movement” which called for the expulsion of the Chinese from Indonesia. In 1956 Assaat urged the government to protect the economic position of the *pribumi* through preferential treatment: “Native Indonesian citizens must receive special protection, in all their endeavors in the economic field, from competition by foreigners in general and the Chinese in particular.”<sup>109</sup> Against this backdrop, Taipei’s support for the regional rebellions in West Sumatra and North Sulawesi, as discussed in detail in Chapter 3, provided the Indonesian authorities a perfect opportunity to unleash systematic anti-Chinese actions that aimed at much more than the eradication of the influence of the Chinese Nationalist Party in Indonesia.

Interestingly, although Beijing’s official propaganda blamed the Chinese Nationalist regime and the pro-Taipei Chinese in Indonesia for all the economic behaviors deemed “improper,” the pro-Beijing Chinese merchants in Indonesia, or “the patriotic Chinese businessmen,” also worked in dangerous collusion with the Indonesian Army for illicit trade. In August 1958, the Ministry of Foreign Trade in Beijing issued a strongly worded warning:

Our commercial attaché reported that recently the Indonesian Army and some of the patriotic Chinese businessmen collaborated in large-scale smuggling of arms from Singapore. These two parties asked our Trade Team if they could buy 2 million yards of mosquito nets, 1 million barrels of nails, and large amounts of silk, porcelain and canned food. They requested that the delivery take place in Singapore and that the letters of credit be issued there. Our commercial attaché believes that this kind of smuggling could not be kept secret for long. The Indonesian people will strongly oppose such secret dealings once they are exposed to the public. In that case, the ethnic

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<sup>108</sup> V Hanssens, “The Campaign against Nationalist Chinese in Indonesia,” in B.HM. Vlekke ed., *Indonesia’s Struggle, 1957-1958* (The Hague: Netherland’s Institute of International Affairs, 1959), pp. 69-70.

<sup>109</sup> Assat, “The Chinese Grip on Our Economy,” Herbert Feith and Lance Castles eds., *Indonesian Political Thinking* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2007), p. 346.

Chinese businessmen will become the scapegoat and our government will suffer tremendous political damage.<sup>110</sup>

Admittedly, existing evidence is not sufficient to determine the nature of the partnership between these PRC-oriented ethnic Chinese merchants and the Indonesian Army. Yet it is likely that these Chinese businessmen were hedging their bets. Mindful of their precarious position in Indonesian society, they might have been savvy enough to seek protection by the army through sharing the profits of smuggling. While the Chinese student activists seemed to have adopted a clear-cut “Red versus Blue” outlook, the ethnic Chinese businessmen’s much more sophisticated worldview allowed them to flexibly cross over ideological divides. Commerce was also the field over which Beijing and the PRC diplomatic mission in Indonesia had the least control, largely due to the Chinese minority’s long history of business success.

The fluidity of the ethnic Chinese businessmen’s political attitudes and their hardcore pragmatism in forging an alliance between business and politics is noted in a small number of scholarly works.<sup>111</sup> But the Indonesian Government, especially of the anti-communist groups, neglected the economic autonomy of the ethnic Chinese. The anti-communist groups promoted a discourse that portrayed the Chinese businessmen as puppets being used by Beijing to fulfill its own strategic needs.<sup>112</sup> In a 1959 report from the Attorney General to the Prime Minister’s Office, the Indonesian authorities drew the following conclusions about domestic conditions in the PRC and the future direction of PRC policy towards the overseas Chinese:

1. The People’s Commune has failed.

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<sup>110</sup> “Urgent note on smuggling in Indonesia,” August 30, 1958, Bao’an District Archives, Shenzhen, 129—1—11.

<sup>111</sup> See for example, Twang Peck-yang, “Political Attitudes and Allegiances in the *totok* business community, 1950-1954,” *Indonesia* 28 (October, 1979), pp. 65-83.

<sup>112</sup> The anti-Chinese actions could be contextualized in the larger political struggle between the leftwing forces such as the PKI and the PNI which were friendly towards China, and the rightwing forces such as the Army and the Islamic parties (Masyumi), who found the Chinese an obstacle in the advancement of their economic interests. See Leo Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians, The Chinese Minority and China* (Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1978), pp. 128-144; J.A.C. Mackie, “Anti-Chinese Outbreaks in Indonesia,” in Mackie ed., *The Chinese in Indonesia: Five Essays* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976), pp. 77-138.

2. The PRC has been going through economic difficulties caused by the Great Leap Forward.
3. The PRC is evaluating the possibility of dispatching volunteers to Laos.
4. The PRC is looking for ways to increase remittance from overseas Chinese communities all around the world, especially in Southeast Asia, given the possibility of sending volunteer forces to Laos and that of another military confrontation with the Chinese Nationalists.
5. A source from Hong Kong claims that it has intercepted a report sent from the PRC embassy in Jakarta to Beijing, in which Beijing expresses its grave concern over the depreciation of Indonesian rupiah. In the black market of Hong Kong, the exchange rate of Indonesia rupiah dropped to 34 rupiah to one Hong Kong dollar. This report further offers suggestions on methods through which the overseas Chinese in Indonesia could quickly and safely transfer their capital out of Indonesia in order to prevent financial loss in case the Indonesian Government takes anti-Chinese measures.<sup>113</sup>

In the eyes of the anti-communist Indonesian political elites, what had been functioning as the lifeblood of the Indonesian national economy could be drained either to provide relief from the disastrous effects of the Great Leap Forward or to help fulfill Beijing's expansionist ambitions abroad. In another governmental report, the Indonesian authorities named internationally mobile Chinese capital "hot money" and showed a determination to track and control its circulation.<sup>114</sup> The Indonesian Government decided that the most effective solution to "the problem of the socio-economic position of the Chinese in the Republic of Indonesia at the present time" was to implement National Vigilance (*Kewaspadaan Nasional*) and Guided Economy (*Ekonomi Terpimpin*) policies.<sup>115</sup> These two policies required the seizure

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<sup>113</sup> "Surat dari Jaksa Agung Muda kepada Perdana Menteri mengenai sidang dari *Chinese Communist Political Bureau* di Peking," September 17, 1959, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2372, *ANRI*.

<sup>114</sup> "Surat dari Mahkamah Agung kepada Perdana Menteri mengenai kedudukan sosial-ekonomi orang Tionghoa dalam RI pada saat ini," October 23, 1958, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2342, *ANRI*.

<sup>115</sup> "Surat dari Mahkamah Agung kepada Perdana Menteri mengenai kedudukan sosial-ekonomi orang Tionghoa dalam RI pada saat ini," October 23, 1958, Inventaris Arsip Sekretariat Negara Kabinet Perdana Menteri Tahun 1950-1959, no. 2342, *ANRI*.

of property and wealth controlled by the Chinese Nationalists, empowered the government to curb Chinese presence in fields such as industry, import, and trade, as well as to exclude Chinese capital for the sake of promoting the growth of domestic enterprises.<sup>116</sup> Although officially the National Vigilance policy and the Guided Economy policy could only be applied to property related to “the subversive activities of the Chinese Nationalists,” the measures taken against the pro-Taipei Chinese soon developed into a full-fledged campaign against the entire Chinese community.

### **Conclusion**

Alarmed by interactive Chinese-language theatres, the steady flow of left-wing print media, the transnational circulation of revolutionary Chinese songs and textbooks and the proliferation of pro-Beijing mass organizations, the Indonesian state perceived the spontaneous political activism of the left-leaning ethnic Chinese as systematic infiltration by Beijing. The somewhat naïve, though sincere, political beliefs of the pro-Beijing Chinese sparked fear of an invasion of Chinese nationalism and communist ideology. The sometimes amusingly boisterous “Red versus Blue” struggle alienated the ethnic Chinese from the *pribumi*, resulted in real life tragedies in which the ethnic Chinese were economically harmed and politically persecuted. With their love for the PRC and commitment to communist ideology, many pro-Beijing youth who formed the foundation for political activism among the Chinese in Indonesia lacked the ability and skills to rationally analyze the political environment they were situated in. Having depended on the PRC-oriented print media and textbooks for their personal intellectual growth, they saw the world in black and white and were ignorant of the precariousness of their own position in Indonesian society. Their pure and innocent devotion to the cause of New China made them the most vulnerable participants in the unstable politics of the young Republic of Indonesia. To some extent, they were miniature versions of Ba Ren, the idealist ambassador who was dismissed. Their political activism further put into jeopardy the already precariously positioned ethnic Chinese, who were stereotypically portrayed in Indonesia as a wealthy trading community.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

The Indonesian authorities were so thoroughly disturbed by the “Chinese problem” because it involved a wide range of issues: border security and immigration control, economic stratification, foreign intervention and the threat of the global spread of communism. In the eyes of the political elites in Jakarta, nationalistic feelings oriented towards Beijing and passion for global communist revolution were two intertwined threads that connected the borderlands of Kalimantan and Sumatra to the volatile region of Malaya, which was infested with ethnic Chinese communists. This ethnic minority represented simultaneously devout and preachy communists, patriotic Chinese disloyal to Indonesia, and shrewd businessmen who caused the poverty of the *pribumi* and impeded the development of an independent Indonesian national economy. In May 1959, two Indonesian Government decrees precipitated a turbulent time for the Chinese minority. The first was a Ministry of Trade regulation revoking the trading licenses of aliens in rural areas by December 1959, and the second was a decree enabling regional military commanders to remove aliens from their places of residence for “security reasons.”<sup>117</sup> Six months later, Sukarno promulgated Presidential Decree No. 10, which commanded the suspension of Chinese retailers’ business activities in rural areas by January 1, 1960 and legitimized the takeover of foreign enterprises by indigenous merchants.<sup>118</sup> In the face of this large wave of discriminatory actions, the opposed identities of “Red” and “Blue” were conflated into one indiscriminate ethnic category in the eyes of the *pribumi*: the Chinese. The next chapter will examine how Beijing tried to maintain a strategic partnership with Jakarta despite the growth of anti-Chinese actions in Indonesia.

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<sup>117</sup> Mozingo, *Chinese Policy toward Indonesia, 1949-1967*, p.159.

<sup>118</sup> Zhou Nanjing and Kong Zhiyuan, eds., *Sujianuo zhongguo yindunixiya huaren* [Sukarno, China and the Chinese minority in Indonesia] (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Social Science Press, 2003), p. 58.

## CHAPTER 6

### Ambivalent Alliance: Chinese Policy towards Indonesia, 1959-1965

#### Introduction

As noted in the previous chapter, from 1959 to 1960, a major crisis arose when Indonesian governmental decrees revoked the licenses of non-citizen Chinese to operate retail business in the countryside.<sup>1</sup> Five years later, another crisis occurred in the aftermath of 30 September Movement. In the early morning of October 1, 1965, Indonesian army units from the presidential palace guard abducted and later killed six senior anti-Communist generals. Major General Suharto launched an effective counterattack the next day.<sup>2</sup> Recent research indicates that a clandestine group within the Communist Party of Indonesia (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or the PKI) plotted the coup. This group included the PKI chairman D.N. Aidit, but excluded other members of the politburo as well as the rank and file of the party. The coup aimed to remove the senior anti-communist generals, thereby paving the way for a communist hegemony in Indonesian politics.<sup>3</sup> In the aftermath of the abortive coup, Suharto initiated a nation-wide anti-Communist campaign that escalated into one of the worst mass murders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most widely accepted estimates are that more than 500, 000 people were killed. Suharto and the Indonesian Army under him also fanned ethnic tension and community violence against the ethnic Chinese. Furthermore, under the ensuing three-decade rule of Suharto, Chinese ethnicity was identified with communism. A number of discriminatory laws were passed: for instance, the ethnic Chinese were given a special designation on their citizenship cards and Chinese-language education was banned.

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<sup>1</sup> See Charles A. Coppel, *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp.37-38.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the coup and the massacres that followed, see Robert Cribb, "The Indonesian Massacres," in Samuel Totten, William S. Parsons and Israel W. Charny, eds., *Century of Genocide: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 233-262. For different interpretations on the coup in English language literature, see Arnold Brackman, *Communist Collapse in Indonesia* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1969); Benedict Anderson and Ruth T. McVey, *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965, Coup in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1971); Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); Victor M Fic, *Anatomy of the Jakarta Coup, October 1, 1965* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 2004); and John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: the September 30<sup>th</sup> Movement and Suharto's Coup D'etat in Indonesia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder*.

While the years between 1959 and 1965 marked two large waves of anti-Chinese movements in Indonesia, this period also witnessed the historical honeymoon period in the diplomatic relations between Beijing and Jakarta. Beijing regarded Jakarta as an important partner in the formerly colonized world. High-level official visits and cultural, educational, and economic exchanges between the nations reached a climax in the months before the coup of 1965. How could Beijing have remarkably cordial relations with Jakarta during a period that included major anti-Chinese movements in Indonesia? And what was the PRC's role in the Indonesian politics immediately before and during G30S? Shifting from the Indonesian political elites' perception of the ethnic Chinese to the CCP central leadership's strategic thinking, this chapter zooms out of the sociopolitical landscape of the Chinese communities in Indonesia and focuses on macro level analyses of Cold War geopolitics. To answer the questions above, the first section of this chapter will examine the dynamics of Chinese policy towards Indonesia from 1960 to 1965. The second section will clarify Beijing's actual influence over the PKI and the turn of events in Indonesia in 1965 by addressing the following four issues: Beijing's military aid to Indonesia's Fifth Force,<sup>4</sup> the potential transfer of nuclear materials and technology from China to Indonesia; Chinese medical aid to the Indonesian President, Sukarno; and the connection between the CCP and its Indonesian counterpart, the PKI. The first three issues concern the background of Sino-Indonesian relations in the lead up to the movement, while the final item is largely concerned with China's knowledge of and involvement in G30S itself.

### **Background: The PRC's Domestic Politics and International Strategy**

The period from the early to mid-1960s was a time of domestic tumult and international challenges for the PRC. In the immediate aftermath of the Great Leap Forward, as part of a critical reflection on domestic and international policies, the Chinese leadership established the principle of "actively opening up a new

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<sup>4</sup> A proposal to create a militia group of armed peasants and workers to augment the existing four branches of Indonesian armed forces: the army, navy, air force and the police.

horizon in foreign relations” (努力主动地在外交上开创新的局面) in January 1961.<sup>5</sup> However, such policy adjustment was short lived. In 1962, Wang Jiaxiang (王稼祥), the CCP International Bureau Chief who proposed that Beijing should endeavor to search for stability with major power players, was fiercely attacked by Mao.<sup>6</sup> With Mao denouncing any endeavor to ease international tensions as “rightist,” an international outlook that denied any possibility for détente or long-term peace emerged as the cornerstone of Chinese foreign policy.

The PRC’s policy towards Indonesia between 1960 and 1965 was a reflection of the general radicalization of its domestic and foreign policies. As Sino-Soviet alliance was coming to an end, Beijing began to shift its attention to the postcolonial nation states that could be potential new partners in an international front against both superpowers. China’s perception of former colonial countries, such as Indonesia under President Sukarno’s rule, had its origins in Mao’s conceptualization of the “intermediate zone” (中间地带), a perceived buffer between the two superpowers, which included many capitalist, colonial, and semi-colonial countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa.<sup>7</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, the concept of the “intermediate zone” gradually evolved into a line of strategic thinking that aimed to contest the Cold War bipolar international structure and reorganize the existing pattern of alignments. In 1964, Mao began to believe that a global war was imminent and a Third World alignment would bring about a decisive shift in world politics. He told a group of Indonesian visitors that “the Soviet Union emerged from the First World War; China and many other socialist countries came out of the Second World War; and imperialism will perish in a Third World War.”<sup>8</sup>

Indonesia was categorized as a “bourgeois nationalist” country in the standard Marxist analytical

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<sup>5</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan* [A Decade of Debate] (vol. 1) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1999), p. 234.

<sup>6</sup> Niu Jun, “1962: the eve of the left turn in China’s foreign policy,” Cold War International History Project Working Paper No. 48 (Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, D.C.:2005), pp. 29-36.

<sup>7</sup> Mao Zedong, “Talk with the American correspondent Anna Louise Strong,” in *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse Tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1971[1946]), pp. 345–351.

<sup>8</sup> “Conversation between Chairman Mao and Head of Indonesian Congress”, June 9, 1964, CFMA, 105-01336-02.

lenses commonly adopted by the Chinese Foreign Ministry. Yet since the early 1960s the archipelago was increasingly recognized by the top leaders in Beijing as a crucial ally in the intermediate zone. There was a greater convergence of interests and objectives between the two countries, with Indonesia also starting to pursue an actively anti-imperialist foreign policy in the early 1960s. The Chinese leadership was particularly attracted by President Sukarno's formulation that the world struggle was between the "old dying forces" (capitalism and imperialism) and the "new emerging forces" (nationalism and communism), a slogan that echoed Beijing's strategic thinking. Whether a regime was prepared to challenge the existing international order vigorously had become the most important criteria for China to judge whether a state was "socialist" or not. This underlying logic was reflected in Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi's conversation with his Indonesian counterpart Subandrio:

Ask the Soviets: What is socialism? Should it be the British Labour Party's socialism? Or the Vatican's socialism? Or Khrushchev's socialism? Or Lenin and Stalin's socialism? Or Mao Zedong's socialism? Which is it? President Sukarno firmly opposes imperialism and colonialism. Anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism will become socialism in the future! If one wants to build socialism, learn from Sukarno's socialism.<sup>9</sup>

### **The PRC's response to the anti-Chinese crisis and partnership with Sukarno**

On the macro level, Indonesia played an important role in the PRC's strategy in the Third World. Therefore, Beijing chose to adopt a constrained and cautious attitude in response to Jakarta's anti-Chinese actions. The central leadership in Beijing was unwilling to sacrifice stable relations with Sukarno in order to protect ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. During a meeting with the Indonesian ambassador in December 1959, Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi asked the ambassador to pass on the following words to Sukarno: "Vigilance against the imperialists' conspiracy to impair Afro-Asian unity is very important."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "Conversation between Vice Premier Chen Yi and Subandrio," January 24, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01910-05.

<sup>10</sup> "Conversations between Vice Premier Chen Yi and the Indonesian ambassador to China," December 9, 1959, *CFMA*, 105-00389-03.

Chen Yi claimed that the rising antagonism towards the PRC in Indonesia was a “cover” (幌子) for the American plot to overthrow the communist regime in China.<sup>11</sup> According to the Chinese policy makers, the most powerful weapon for crushing the American imperialists’ virulent scheme would be to strengthen Third World unity further.

However, Chinese diplomats on the ground in Indonesia were torn between their duty to serve the PRC’s overall strategic needs and their responsibilities to protect Chinese citizens in Indonesia who relied on the Chinese diplomatic mission for their personal safety and national pride. The Chinese diplomats faced a huge dilemma when Beijing decided to suspend its repatriation program. Beijing, out of frustration over its inability to resolve the anti-Chinese movements in Indonesia through diplomatic means, began to call back overseas Chinese in December 1959. By the summer of 1960, some 60,000 Chinese had left the country. Beijing had spent approximately US\$40 million on bringing the Chinese home.<sup>12</sup> The repatriation program was prohibitively expensive for China. Around August 1960, the PRC stopped calling back ethnic Chinese from Indonesia and urged potential repatriates to stay in the country. In order to avoid an outburst of anti-PRC feeling evoked by a sense of betrayal, Beijing instructed its diplomats in Indonesia to “direct the contradictions towards the Indonesian Government” through “persuasion by cadres.”<sup>13</sup> Between July and October 1960, the Chinese embassy cancelled 11 merchant fleets booked by Chinese societies in Indonesia for repatriation. The embassy reported that, after repeated instances of “moral education,” the vast majority of Chinese gathered in Indonesian ports waiting for passage to China had arranged for resettlement in Indonesia. However, by the end of September 1960, over 100,000 Chinese insisted on returning to the PRC even though they were no longer welcome. The Chinese embassy was confronted with emotional protests when Beijing renounced its previous stance on

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> “Conversations between Deputy Foreign Minister Geng Biao and Indonesian Chargé d'affaires ad interim,” November 29, 1960, *CFMA*, 105-00703-01.

<sup>13</sup> “Confidential attachment: briefings on the enforcement of the ‘more to stay, less to withdraw’ policy,” August 18, 1960, *CFMA*, 105-00708-02.

the repatriation campaign. There were large demonstrations against the PRC, and some ethnic Chinese even used threats of collective suicide to intimidate the Chinese diplomats.<sup>14</sup>

Despite its accommodating attitude on the surface, Beijing believed that Sukarno used the anti-Chinese campaigns between 1959 and 1960 in a bid to win support from certain indigenous groups that lost out in business to the ethnic Chinese. During his meeting with Mao Zedong in 1961, Sukarno declared that he personally thought “there is no ‘ethnic minority’ per se in Indonesia.” He was opposed to “the view that considers ethnic Chinese as minority, but also to the so-called conceptual distinction between ‘aboriginal’ and ‘alien’.” Sukarno took off his hat and pointed out his black hair to Mao: “It is hard to tell whether I am an ‘aboriginal’ or not, perhaps I have Chinese blood in me. Who can tell?”<sup>15</sup> To Beijing’s dismay, in May 1963, another wave of anti-Chinese riots broke out in Indonesia. The reoccurrence of anti-Chinese actions and the lack of strong measures against anti-Sinicism by the Indonesian Government convinced Beijing that Sukarno used the ethnic Chinese issue as a pawn with which to manipulate Indonesia’s domestic politics.

From the stance of the policy makers in Beijing, Sukarno’s complicity in the anti-Chinese movements exposed the “dark side and the double-dealings of the bourgeois nationalists.”<sup>16</sup> Yet Beijing nevertheless invested greatly in cultivating its relationship with the Sukarno government out of strategic considerations. While offering official support to Sukarno’s West Irian campaign in 1961 and *Konfrontasi* in 1963, Chinese foreign policy practitioners and decision-makers still regarded Sukarno with suspicion.

<sup>17</sup>In the summer of 1960, Sukarno’s campaign to reclaim West Irian as Indonesian territory reached a climax and received staunch encouragement from Beijing. By portraying Sukarno as a nationalist hero

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> “Conversation between Chairman Mao and Indonesian President Sukarno,” June 13, 1961, CFMA, 204-01469-02.

<sup>16</sup> “British relations with India and Malaysia,” January 31, 1964, CFMA, 110-01696-03.

<sup>17</sup> West Irian is the western half of the island of New Guinea, which used to be under the colonial control of the Netherlands. Dutch and Indonesian leaders failed to reach an agreement about the sovereignty of West Irian at the Roundtable Conference in 1949. During the 1950s, the Dutch efforts to prepare West Irian for full independence were deemed as a blatant assault on their sovereignty by Indonesian leaders.

who safeguarded Indonesia's territorial integrity in its propaganda, the PRC was attempting to rally support from Afro-Asian countries in order to offset the increasing animosity between China and India. China's relations with this important neighbor and former crucial ally in Asia deteriorated sharply after the Tibetan uprising in 1959, the exile of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama to India, and the subsequent serious border conflicts.<sup>18</sup> When Mao met Sukarno in June 1961, the chairman even tried to provoke antagonism between Indonesia and India by insinuating that the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, wanted to snatch the leadership of the anti-imperialist movement from Sukarno.<sup>19</sup> During a meeting with Subandrio in 1963, Liu Shaoqi openly dismissed India as a "chauvinist country," and Nehru as "no longer representative of Afro-Asian countries." Liu suggested that Sukarno should assume the leading role in Afro-Asian unity instead.<sup>20</sup>

While the top leaders in Beijing were singing Sukarno's praises as the pioneer of the worldwide anti-imperialist struggle in Beijing, the Chinese diplomats in Indonesia depicted Sukarno as a shrewd politician pitting the great powers against each other in their reports to Beijing. The Chinese diplomatic mission's first major disappointment with Sukarno occurred when Moscow began to bid for influence in Indonesia. In February 1960, the Soviet Union strengthened its ties with Indonesia through Khrushchev's visit to the country and the offer of a US\$250 million concessionary loan. Against the background of the widening rift between Beijing and Moscow, the Chinese embassy in Jakarta downplayed the actual impact of Khrushchev's visit. It reported back to Beijing that "the flamboyant welcoming ceremonies were superficial," and "Sukarno accompanied Khrushchev only to raise his own political status in international affairs."<sup>21</sup> Another memo concluded that Jakarta did not sincerely aspire to a genuine friendship with Moscow as "the ruling class in Indonesia wanted Khrushchev's money but not his

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<sup>18</sup> See Niu Jun, "1962: the eve of the left turn in China's foreign policy."

<sup>19</sup> "Conversation between Chairman Mao and Indonesian President Sukarno," June 13, 1961, *CFMA*, 204-01469-02.

<sup>20</sup> "Briefings on Subandrio's visit to China," January 13, 1963, *CFMA*, 204-01504-01.

<sup>21</sup> "Briefings on Khrushchev's visit to Indonesia," February 29, 1960, *CFMA*, 105-00713-01.

influence.”<sup>22</sup>

Eventually, Sukarno won the West Irian campaign as the United States exerted diplomatic pressure on the Netherlands to transfer the sovereignty of the region to Indonesia. However, Sukarno soon redirected the nation’s political interests to another crisis—the confrontation with Malaysia. Beijing strongly endorsed Sukarno by condemning Malaysia as a “neocolonialist scheme...produced by Britain, and masterminded by the US.”<sup>23</sup> The Chinese diplomatic mission in Indonesia observed how Sukarno vacillated between escalation and de-escalation in *Konfrontasi* and how he based his policy choices upon opportunistic calculations. For example, in early 1964, Sukarno declared a ceasefire and resumed the tripartite talks between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. In an intelligence briefing sent back to Beijing, the Chinese embassy in Indonesia suggested that Sukarno would “seek for common interests with the reactionaries in Malaysia and the Philippines.”<sup>24</sup>

The convoluted negotiation process between China and Indonesia over the Second Afro-Asian Conference (or the Second Bandung Conference) increased the Chinese embassy’s ambivalence towards Sukarno. The Second Bandung Conference was part of Beijing’s effort to compete with the perceived imperialists and revisionists for influence in formal colonial countries.<sup>25</sup> However, despite the persistent urging from Beijing, Sukarno seemed less enthusiastic about the Second Bandung Conference than about the conference of non-aligned countries, which Beijing regarded as its major rival. Sukarno co-founded the conference of non-aligned countries with the PRC’s three major nemeses in the Third World—Nehru of India, Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt. Until 1964, Sukarno preferred to join India and Egypt in maneuvering between the two camps than ally with China in

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> “Discussions with Singaporean Premier Lee Kuan Yew on the issues of the ‘Malaysia Plan’, the merger of Singapore and Malaysia and the Singaporean delegation’s visit to China,” May 23, 1962, *CFMA*, 105-01795-01; “Conversations among Premier Zhou Enlai, Vice Premier Chen Yi and the Indonesian ambassador to China,” March 19, 1964, *CFMA*, 105-01869-06.

<sup>24</sup> “On the issue of Malaysia,” February 2, 1964, *CFMA*, 110-01696-03.

<sup>25</sup> “On the Second Afro-Asian Conference,” September 18, 1962, *CFMA*, 105-01789-08.

confronting both superpowers. To China's relief, Sukarno was rejected at the conference of non-aligned countries in October 1964 owing to his policy of confrontation with Malaysia. In January 1965, Sukarno withdrew Indonesia from the United Nations in response to the United States' endorsement of Malaysia's entry to the UN Security Council. Increasing international isolation compelled Sukarno to move another step closer to the PRC. In 1965, at his last Independence Day ceremony before the 30 September Movement, Sukarno declared: "We are now fostering an anti-imperialist axis—the Jakarta-Phnom Penh-Hanoi-Peking-Pyongyang axis."<sup>26</sup>

The Chinese evaluation of Sukarno's position in Indonesian domestic politics was ambivalent as well. In 1959, Sukarno replaced constitutional democracy, a system which had suffered from inefficiency, political instabilities, and waning public support during the early years of Indonesia's independence, with "guided democracy."<sup>27</sup> This new institutional framework was a more authoritarian system largely defined by the delicate power dynamics between Sukarno and the Indonesian army.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, Sukarno heavily relied on the army's archenemy in domestic politics, the PKI, for organized public support. During the later period of the "guided democracy" and up until the G30S, the President's relations with the Indonesian communists became increasingly close, angering the Indonesian army. China became concerned about the possibility of internal unrest in Indonesia owing to the rising tension between the PKI and the Indonesian army and the country's rapidly deteriorating economic situation. In August 1964, the Chinese embassy reported to Beijing that "the right-wing elements and the imperialists were infuriated by Sukarno's turn to the left. They will attempt to topple Sukarno. The conflict between

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<sup>26</sup> Marshal Green, *Indonesia: Crisis and Transformation, 1965–1968/1990* (Washington, D.C.: The Compass Press, 1990), p. 36.

<sup>27</sup> The very idea of Guided Democracy was probably inspired by Sukarno's visit to China in 1956, during which he was greatly impressed by the progress in China and the effectiveness of the highly centralized political system there. On this see Liu Hong, *China and the Shaping of Indonesia, 1949–1965* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2011). Studies on Indonesian politics during this period include Daniel S. Lev, *The Transition to Guided Democracy, 1957–1959* (Jakarta: Equinox, 2009), J.D. Legge, *Sukarno: A Political Biography* (New York: Praeger, 1972), and Herbert Feith, "Dynamics of guided democracy," in Ruth T. McVey (ed.), *Indonesia* (New Heaven: Southeast Asia Studies, Yale University, by arrangement with HRAF Press, 1963), pp. 309–355.

<sup>28</sup> Feith, "Dynamics of guided democracy," p. 323.

subversion and counter-subversion will become more acute.”<sup>29</sup> An analytical report written at the end of 1964 suggested that: “Indonesia’s national economy has been deteriorating dramatically...Sukarno is distracting people from the grim economic conditions with the policy of confrontation [with Malaysia].”<sup>30</sup> From late October to December 1964, Chinese intelligence agencies in Hong Kong reported on rumors surrounding plots and coups against the government in Indonesia. One intelligence report sent back to Beijing in December 1964 noted that, according to information from the US consulate in Hong Kong, Sukarno’s health was in critical condition and the anti-communist army generals might make a move to seize power.<sup>31</sup>

### **Chinese Military Aid to the Fifth Force in Indonesia**

Beijing adopted a very cautious position during the anti-Chinese movements, preferring to prioritize its diplomatic relations with Indonesia over the protection of overseas Chinese. Yet with its diplomacy irreversibly “turning left” from 1962, Beijing took a more aggressive stance and engaged with the perilous Indonesian political scene shortly before G30S. In early 1965, China encouraged President Sukarno to establish the Fifth Force and initiated a military aid program to Indonesia. The decision was based on the Chinese leadership’s perception of increasing Western aggression in Southeast Asia rather than any prior knowledge that G30S was coming. In 1963 and 1964, China hosted two strategic planning meetings to promote revolutions in Southeast Asia. In late September 1963, Zhou Enlai went to Conghua, Guangdong province, to meet with communist leaders from Vietnam, Laos, and Indonesia. Present at the meeting were Ho Chi Minh and Le Duan of the Vietnam Worker’s Party, Kaysone Phomvihane from the Lao People’s Party, and Aidit of the PKI.<sup>32</sup> In his keynote speech, Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai proclaimed that Southeast Asia had become the key area of the international anti-

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<sup>29</sup> “Embassy in Jakarta on Sukarno’s Independence Day speech,” August 24, 1964, CFMA, 105-01233-02.

<sup>30</sup> “Reports on Vice Premier Chen Yi’s visit to Indonesia and Burma,” December 17, 1964, CFMA, 203-00592-04.

<sup>31</sup> “On a possible coup in Indonesia,” October 30-December 20 1964, CFMA, 105-01233-06.

<sup>32</sup> Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp.117-119.

imperialist struggle, announcing that “the basic mission of the revolutions in Southeast Asia is against imperialism, feudalism, and comprador capitalism.”<sup>33</sup> To accomplish this goal, Zhou recommended that the communist parties in Southeast Asia should, first, “win over the masses and expand their united fronts”; second, “go deep into the countryside, prepare for armed struggle, and establish base camps;” and, third, “strengthen the parties’ leadership.” In addition to offering the advice above, Zhou also clarified China’s role in the region: “as the reliable home front of the Southeast Asian revolutions, China has the responsibility to fully support anti-imperialist struggles in the region.”<sup>34</sup>

The inclusion of the PKI in this meeting was significant.<sup>35</sup> It indicated Beijing’s interests in fostering revolution in a broad area of Southeast Asia, rather than Mao’s attempt to urge the PKI to wage an armed struggle against Sukarno. On the contrary, China was encouraging the PKI to continue its united front with Sukarno, whose confrontation with Malaysia (known as the *Konfrontasi*) could be exploited by Beijing to counterbalance the Western powers in Southeast Asia. Through *Konfrontasi*, Indonesia aimed to block Britain’s plans to merge the remains of its former Southeast Asian colonies into the Federation of Malaysia. During the years between 1963 and 1964, Jakarta was on the brink of war with Malaysia, and its relations with Britain and the United States rapidly deteriorated. Beijing offered Sukarno enthusiastic support by promising to intervene militarily if the Western powers attacked Indonesia. In early 1965, Zhou announced that, as a true friend of Indonesia, China would not “stand by” if Western imperialists dared to invade Indonesia.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, although the Chinese revolution had always stood as a possible example to follow for the PKI to follow, the party’s position remained that armed struggle was not the best strategy in

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<sup>33</sup> Tong Xiaopeng, *Fengyu sishinian* [Forty years in all weathers], vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1996), p. 219.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*, pp.117-119.

<sup>36</sup> Zhou used the same strong wording as the declaration made before Beijing entered the Korean War, “*women buhui buguan*”[we will not stand by]. See “The second meeting between Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, Vice Prime Minister Chen Yi and Indonesian First Deputy Prime Minister Subandrio,” January 25, 1965, *CFMA*, 105—01910—02.

Indonesia. The PKI had been achieving political success using its united front strategy since the early 1950s. Even as the PKI tilted to China in the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, it did not change its basic position on the undesirability of armed struggle. The PKI's choice for taking the parliamentary road and making an alliance with Sukarno was also recognized by the CCP as a "correct policy line." When Aidit visited the Central Party School of the CCP in 1963, the head of the School, Kang Sheng, spoke on behalf of the CCP: "[U]nder the leadership of Comrade Aidit, the PKI has ingeniously combined the universal theory of Marxism-Leninism and the particular conditions of Indonesian revolution, [and] thereby developed its own systematic theory and policy, which in return enriched the development of Marxism-Leninism."<sup>37</sup> The two strategic planning meetings hosted by the Chinese leaders in 1963-64, then, probably were not intended to change the PKI's view of its strategic position in Indonesia.

In mid-January 1965, Aidit proposed to Sukarno the idea of the Fifth Force—a militia group of armed peasants and workers.<sup>38</sup> The PKI regarded the Fifth Force as a way to endorse Sukarno's anti-imperialist agenda, and to counterbalance the army. The PKI presented the idea as a way of support of Sukarno's Nasakom (*Nationalisme-Agama-Komunisme*, nationalism-religion-communism) formula.<sup>39</sup> Under this formula, even though the PKI would be sure that its members were well-represented in the soon-to-be-created militia, the nationalists (meaning, in effect, the Partai Nasional Indonesia, or the PNI) and the religious groups (meaning, in effect, the Nahdatul Ulama, or the NU) would also be included in the Fifth Force and thus armed as well. Thus, the creation of the Fifth Force would benefit the PKI, but not exclusively. Yet the PKI leaders envisaged that, in the long term, the Fifth Force would help the PKI gain an edge on their rivals and achieve a gradual ascendance to state power.

The Indonesian army strongly opposed the proposal for the Fifth Force, and was implicitly

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<sup>37</sup> "Comrade Aidit was invited to give a political report at the Central Party School," *Remin Ribao* [The People's Daily], September 3, 1963.

<sup>38</sup> *Harian Rakjat*, January 15, 1965. Aidit said that there were ten million peasants and five million workers ready to be armed. Cited in Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, p. 87.

<sup>39</sup> *Harian Rakjat*, 19 May 1965. Cited in Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, p. 87.

opposed to China's involvement in the matter. Despite the divergent domestic opinions on the Fifth Force, in late June 1965 a delegation of Indonesian volunteers was dispatched by Sukarno to visit China, North Korea, and Vietnam to learn about the militia in these three countries. The group was commissioned to gather information on how political institutions, power structure, chain of command, and ideology affected the mobilization and militarization of the masses. During their stay in China, the head of the delegation, a Colonel Willy Sujono<sup>40</sup>, revealed to his Chinese counterparts that there were a total number of 20 million people registered with Indonesia's volunteer troops, although, relative to Indonesia's population (about 105 million in 1965<sup>41</sup>), the portion remained still very small in his opinion. Some volunteers were sent to North Kalimantan to educate the masses, to open up wastelands, and to establish base camps. Willy Sujono said Indonesia could not arm the people all at once because the counter-revolutionaries would take advantage of the situation. Therefore, in Indonesia, the "improvement of the people's consciousness should come first, organization of the masses should come second, and militarization should be the last step."<sup>42</sup>

When receiving the delegation of Indonesian volunteers, the Chinese leaders took a more moderate stance. On June 29, 1965, General Luo Ruiqing, the chief of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Staff, told the delegation: "Whether you can follow the Chinese experience is a question only you can answer for yourself based on the situation in Indonesia. Our experience is just for your reference. Every country's circumstances are different. We all have to start from the specific

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<sup>40</sup> On the identity of Willy Sujono, according to an intelligence report about East Java translated by Ben Anderson, Sujono was the commander for Madiun area. The report complements him for being very firm in dealing with the PKI. See Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson, "Report from East Java," *Indonesia* 41 (April 1986), pp. 137 and 142. However, in a declassified report by a CIA agent, Richard Cabot Howland, Sujono was commander of Kediri area and had been a key informant for Stanley Karnow, a journalist who wrote in 1966 some of the best reports about the mass violence in the aftermath of G30S. Howland got his information from the American Baptists in Kediri, who suspected that Sujono had been sympathetic to the PKI before G30S and was just trying to avoid attacks in supporting the killings of the PKI members and sympathizers. See Richard Cabot Howland, "Lessons of the September 30 Affair," available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol14no2/pdf/v14i2a02p.pdf>, pp.23-26. I would like to thank John Roosa for generously sharing the information on Willy Sujono.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.populstat.info/Asia/indonesc.htm>, accessed July 15, 2014

<sup>42</sup> "Briefing on receiving the delegation of Indonesian volunteers," July 1-2, 1965, *CFMA*, 105—01689—07.

circumstances of our own country.”<sup>43</sup> When Zhou Enlai met with the delegation, he also emphasized that, geographically, Indonesia was very different from China. China lacked the experience of military operation on islands. Indonesia had to work out a method that suited its own situation the best.<sup>44</sup>

The question of the Fifth Force remained undecided before G30S. At his Independence Day speech on August 17, 1965, Sukarno promised that only “after considering the matter more deeply...I shall make a decision on this matter.”<sup>45</sup> The Indonesian air force, with fraught relations with the army, welcomed the idea of a fifth force. Its Commander, Vice Marshal Omar Dani, declared: “How tremendously our strength would be if the People, as the fifth force, were armed like the other four forces.”<sup>46</sup> Although no agreement had been reached on the Fifth Force, in the months before the G30S, around two thousand members of the PKI or PKI-affiliated organizations received a brief military training course for several weeks at Halim air base.

Whereas the idea of the Fifth Force stirred up much commotion in the public sphere, the Chinese arms deal was negotiated behind the scenes between the top leaders of China and Indonesia. In January 1965, Beijing voluntarily proposed to offer Indonesia small arms. During a meeting with a group of military personnel (including the commander-in-chief of the navy, chief of the police force, chief of the State Intelligence Agency, and the first assistants of the commander-in-chief of the army and the air force) who visited China together with Subandrio, Luo Ruiqing said: “Now we can produce in large quantity light weapons for the infantry. If you are in need of small weapons, we can help. If your navy or air force needs any spare parts, please feel free to send your staff over to China to have a look.”<sup>47</sup> During his

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<sup>43</sup> “Minute of the meetings between the Chief of the PLA General Staff Luo Ruiqing, Secretary of CCP Central Political and Legislative Committee Peng Zhen and the delegation of Indonesian volunteers,” June 29, 1965, *CFMA*, 105—01689—02.

<sup>44</sup> “Minute of the meeting between Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and the delegatin of Indonesian volunteers (on Afro-Asian conference and other issues), July 11, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01689-03.

<sup>45</sup> President Sukarno’s speech, August 17, 1965, Cited in Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, p. 93.

<sup>46</sup> *Harian Rakjat*, June 7, 1965. Cited in Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, p. 90.

<sup>47</sup> “Minute of the meetings between the Chief of the PLA General Staff Luo Ruiqing and the military personnel from the Indonesian delegation,” January 27, 1965, *CFMA*, 105—01910—07.

meeting with Subandrio, Mao Zedong also said: “The most important weapons are the light weapons...the crucial issue is to deal with the enemies within 200 meters.”<sup>48</sup>

Made on the government-to-government level, China’s original offer was probably designed with the whole country and all four services in mind. Ultimately, only the air force asked for the small arms. In February 1965, Subandrio informed Yao Zhongming, the Chinese ambassador to Indonesia, that “President Sukarno has agreed to accept the small arms offered by China.”<sup>49</sup> Subandrio said that the President would soon dispatch a special envoy for discussion on the technical details. However, the deal was set aside for four months, probably delayed by the heated debate on the Fifth Force. In late June 1965, a Commodore Andoko, who would later accompany Sukarno’s emissary for this secret deal, Dani, on a secret trip to China in mid-September, approached the Chinese military attaché in Jakarta and informed the latter that the Indonesian air force had decided to “militarize the people within the fifty kilometer parameter range of Halim Air Base.”<sup>50</sup> The purpose for the militarization program, according to him, was to “prevent destruction by imperialists and domestic subversives.”<sup>51</sup> Andoko also stated that the Indonesian air force would send planes to pick up the weapons, and requested that the Chinese military attaché consider how to deliver the weapons to the Indonesian air force directly. When the Chinese military attaché showed concerns and reluctance to do so, Andoko pressured him: “If one has to wait for a unanimous agreement among the four forces [army, navy, air force and the police], it will be too late.”<sup>52</sup> However, the Chinese military attaché insisted that a decision should be made by state leaders and carried

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<sup>48</sup> “Meeting between Chairman Mao Zedong and Indonesian First Deputy Prime Minister Subandrio,” January 27, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01910-04.

<sup>49</sup> “Briefings on the meeting between our ambassador to Indonesia Yao Zhongming and Indonesian First Deputy Prime Minister Subandrio,” February 11, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01319-05.

<sup>50</sup> “On Indonesian Air Force’s request for weapons to militarize the people living in the areas surrounding the Halim Airbase,” July 2, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01697-02. A circle centered on Halim with a diameter of 50 kilometers covers a large area. The air force was probably not planning on arming the people in the immediate vicinity of Halim airbase to protect the airfield. Andoko was most likely justifying the air force’s request for a large amount of arms.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

out through government-to-government channels.<sup>53</sup>

It seems likely that the Indonesian air force was using the protection of Halim airbase as a justification for its own request for small arms, which was made under the auspices of President Sukarno. Sukarno might have appointed Dani as his envoy to attend to the details of the deal precisely so that the air force would receive the weapons rather than the army, navy or police. Sukarno probably wanted to build up the air force, whose officers were considered as more loyal to him, to counterbalance the army, whose officers were less so. The Chinese side seemed to have understood fully that the arms were meant to support the air force in its struggle against the right-wingers in the army, and the protection of Halim was used as an excuse. In an analytical report written by the Chinese military attaché, which made no mention of Halim, the reasons for the Indonesian air force's urgent request were interpreted as the following:

- The air force wanted to use the chance to push for the militarization of all workers and peasants.
- The air force is preparing to respond to the sudden attack by the imperialists and destructions by the subversives.
- The air force is making long term plans for strengthening its power, especially against the scenario of a sudden attack from the right wing.<sup>54</sup>

The military attaché concluded that: "The embassy recommends that if the air force put forward its request via the Indonesian Government, we might consider fulfilling its request to a moderate extent."<sup>55</sup>

Despite Beijing's initial concerns over being approached by the air force alone, Zhou Enlai and

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Dani probably had reached at an agreement on September 17, 1965, in Beijing. During his visit to Indonesia in late August 1965, Chen Yi reassured Subandrio that “we can offer our weapons for free.”<sup>56</sup> On September 13, 1965, Dani met with the Chinese military attaché in Jakarta, announcing that the air force hoped to receive 25,000 pieces of small arms out of the total of 100,000 items that China offered to Indonesia. Dani repeated the claim that these weapons would be used to equip the workers and peasants near Halim Airbase. In addition, Dani emphasized that Sukarno had approved the air force’s request, together with the police force’s request for 20,000 items.<sup>57</sup> On September 16, the day when Dani arrived in Beijing, the Chinese embassy in Jakarta sent a telegram back to the Foreign Ministry: “The President and Subandrio had agreed on the small weapons deal [with regard to Dani’s request]. We can fulfill their [the air force’s] request for 25,000 pieces. But we suggest that we could deliver a little less than that.”<sup>58</sup>

There is no hard evidence confirming that the Chinese leaders in Beijing did take the advice from the embassy and give green light to the deal. However, available information indicates that Beijing was inclined to support the air force in strengthening itself against the right-wingers in the army. In general terms, the purpose of Dani’s trip was to “discuss the military aid to Pakistan, the cooperation among the air forces in China, Indonesia, and Pakistan, and our [Chinese] military aid to Indonesia.”<sup>59</sup> On the morning of September 17, Zhou Enlai had a three-hour meeting with Dani and the Indonesian ambassador to China, Djawato, the minutes of which have not been declassified. According to a published official record of Zhou Enlai’s diplomatic activities, Zhou expressed to Dani his concerns over the second Afro-Asian conference and his wish for further discussions on this topic with President Sukarno and Subandrio.

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<sup>56</sup> “The private meeting between Vice Premier Chen Yi and Indonesian First Deputy Prime Minister Subandrio,” August 22, 1965, *CFMA*, 105—01912—09.

<sup>57</sup> “Plans for receiving the Commander of the Indonesian Air Force, staff from the Pakistani Air Force and the name list of the delegation of Pakistani Air Force,” September 13, 1965, *CFMA*, 204—01123—02.

<sup>58</sup> “Plans for receiving the Commander of the Indonesian Air Force, staff from the Pakistani Air Force and the name list of the delegation of Pakistani Air Force,” September 16, 1965, *CFMA*, 204—01123—02.

<sup>59</sup> “Approval of Plans for receiving the Commander of the Indonesian Air Force,” September 15, 1965, *CFMA*, 204-01174-01.

<sup>60</sup> After Dani's return to Indonesia, Aidit secretly informed the Chinese embassy in Indonesia that Dani told him "the Chinese comrades recognize that it is very important to support Pakistan, but it is even more important to defend Indonesia." Dani was "very much touched," and thought the Chinese take on the situation was "absolutely correct."<sup>61</sup>

Even if the leaders in Beijing did approve the Indonesian air force's request, however, given the limited window of opportunity between Dani's visit and the outbreak of G30S, it would have been logistically difficult for the Indonesian air force to arrange for the receive the shipment. Dani was quoted as having said in his confession at the extraordinary military court (*Mahkamah Militer Luar Biasa*) that the Chinese leaders asked the Indonesian air force to make arrangements for the transportation of small arms since China was experiencing economic difficulties.<sup>62</sup> Although these court records are usually unreliable, this statement can be verified by the details of Commodore Andoko's meeting with the Chinese military attaché in late June 1965, as mentioned earlier in this paper. In addition, according to the former director of the Indonesian Nuclear Agency (Badan Tenaga Atom Nasional, or BATAN), Djali Ahimsa, who visited China between September 21 and October 6, 1965, he met Sri Mulyono Herlambang, from the Indonesian air force, in Beijing shortly before G30S. The latter claimed to have come with President Sukarno's private plane with a mission "to request the Chinese Government deliver the weapons it had promised earlier."<sup>63</sup> This piece of information suggests that the details of deal were probably not fully concluded, or at least most of the weapons under negotiation had not been processed for delivery (which involves at least time-consuming assembling and packing, aside from the paperwork)

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<sup>60</sup> Research Centre for Diplomatic History at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC), *Zhou enlai waijiao huodong dashiji* (The chronology of Zhou Enlai's activities in foreign affairs) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1993), pp. 477-478.

<sup>61</sup> "Analysis by our embassy in Jakarta on Indonesia's position of supporting Pakistan while opposing Indian aggression," September 25, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01679-04.

<sup>62</sup> Omar Dani, *Berkas perkara Omar Dani, ex laksamana madya udara dalam peristiwa Gerakan 30 September* (Djakarta: Mahkamah Militer Luar Biasa, 1966), p. 17

<sup>63</sup> Djali Ahimsa, interview by author, Jakarta, April 18, 2013. Djali Ahimsa could not recall the exact date of this meeting, but the earliest possible is September 22, 1965.

one week before G30S. Although one cannot fully deny the possibility that the Indonesia air force managed to ship some of the weapons from China to Indonesia, the under-armed status of the militia groups involved in G30S at the Halim air base suggests that the weapons most probably had not arrived in Indonesia.<sup>64</sup>

In addition, in term of quantity, the Chinese military aid lagged far behind that from the Soviet Union. During his visit to Indonesia in 1960, Khrushchev generously granted US\$100 million, one of the largest grants of Soviet foreign aid to a non-communist country at the time.<sup>65</sup> In the following years, Moscow supplied a significant amount of weapons for Konfrontasi.<sup>66</sup> According to report by the Chinese military intelligence agency shortly before G30S, between 1960 and September 1965:

...the Soviet Union had signed four military aid pacts that offered a total aid of US\$1,126,000,000. Between 1960 and 1963, Moscow provided navy and air force equipment worth of US\$950,000,000 USD. In 1964, the Soviets offered US\$176,000,000 worth of equipment to the Indonesian army, but some of the promised items had not arrived. Ninety percent of Indonesian air force equipment and 80 percent of Indonesian Navy equipment came from the Soviet Union.<sup>67</sup>

A Japanese intelligence agency, Mainland China Research Institute, estimated that the Soviet military aid to Indonesia ranged from US\$600,000,000 to US\$1,200,000,000, and made an assessment similar to Beijing—"80 to 90 percent of Indonesian air force and Navy equipment was supplied by the Soviet Union." Experts within the Mainland China Research Institute observed that "the Chinese aid cannot

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<sup>64</sup> See Anderson and McVey, *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965, Coup in Indonesia*, p. 21; Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>65</sup> Ragna Boden, "The 'Gestapu' events of 1965 in Indonesia: New evidence from Russian and German archives," *ijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (BKI) 163-4 (2007), p. 511.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> "Indonesia's relations with the Soviet Union," August 4-September 10, 1965, CFMA,105—01680—02.

compare with the Soviet aid, and seemed unable to catch its level.”<sup>68</sup> Archival evidence from the US also indicated that “[T]he Indonesian military establishment is almost totally Soviet-supplied.”<sup>69</sup> It is thus difficult to determine whether the Chinese military aid had any significant impact on Indonesian politics in 1965.

### **Potential Transfer of Nuclear Materials and Technology from China to Indonesia**

Aside from agreeing to supply small arms, in the early months of 1965, before G30S, China was contemplating a possible transfer of nuclear technology to Indonesia. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, China’s confrontation with the United States continued as its alliance with the Soviet Union was disintegrating. Beijing’s leaders made developing nuclear weapons a top priority, not only to improve its strategic position vis-à-vis both superpowers, but also to enhance the Chinese Communist Party’s claims of legitimacy at home, especially in the wake of the failure of the Great Leap Forward. Out of both domestic and international considerations, Mao and his comrades were eager to demonstrate that a developing country also had the capability to develop nuclear technology on its own. The first Chinese nuclear bomb was successfully detonated on October 16, 1964.

As a signatory of the 1963 Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty,<sup>70</sup> Indonesia’s initial reaction to China’s successful nuclear test was ambivalent. When the Chinese Ambassador Yao Zhongming met with Subandrio to probe Indonesian Government’s stance on China’s successful nuclear test, Subandrio offered only a few superficial congratulatory words before raising the sense of insecurity felt among

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<sup>68</sup> “The bandits’ relations with Indonesia, 1965,” October 1-December 31, 1965, *Academia Historica*, 02000001910A. “Bandit” was the standard reference to the communist regime in mainland China by the Chinese Nationalist regime in Taiwan. This is a piece of Japanese intelligence report which was shared with Taipei and translated into Mandarin by the Taiwanese Consulate in Osaka.

<sup>69</sup> “Indonesian Army Attitudes towards Communism,” November 22, 1965, *Foreign Relations of the United States* 1964-1968, Volume XXVI, Indonesia; Malaysia-Singapore; Philippines, no. 178.

<sup>70</sup> Indonesia signed the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty on 7 October 1963, in Moscow. The LTBT outlawed nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, underwater, or outer space, but did not restrict underground testing. Quoted from Robert M. Cornejo, “When Sukarno Sought the Bomb: Indonesian Nuclear Aspirations in the Mid-1960s,” *The Nonproliferation Review*, Summer 2000, p. 32.

Afro-Asian countries and his concerns over “pollution caused by radioactive dust and ashes.”<sup>71</sup> Given that these two issues were unrelated, Subandrio was probably using the environmental impacts of China’s nuclear test as an excuse to express Indonesia’s discontent. Subandrio furthermore explained, which was not soothing to Beijing’s ears, that if he mentioned how good and how marvelous China’s nuclear test was, others would say Indonesia was China’s “tail” and a member of the “Chinese bloc.” At the time, China had been protesting against the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which was regarded by Beijing as an arrangement made under the auspices of the Western imperialists. Although Beijing needed Jakarta’s support in this regard, Subandrio took a middle course on the issue. The Foreign Ministry in Beijing seemed resentful of Subandrio’s political savvy:

He [Subandrio] is collaborating with the imperialists and the revisionists in their conspiracy to oppose the nuclear test in China. It seems that Subandrio is not only trying to give us a hard time, but also to take the chance to start negotiating with the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>72</sup>

Subandrio’s lukewarm attitude would completely change later due to Sukarno’s passionate pursuit of a nuclear weapon and the prospects of obtaining supports from China. Indonesia’s Institute of Atomic Energy (Lembaga Tenaga Atom) was established in December 1958. Under the terms of a five-year bilateral agreement, the United States provided Indonesia with US\$491,000 in financial aid to develop its atomic research program for civilian use. A small 250-kilowatt research reactor purchased from the United States was installed at the Bandung Institute of Technology in 1961 and its construction was completed in 1964.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, the Soviet Union offered to build Indonesia two small research reactors. The first one was completed in Bandung in November 1962 and a deal to purchase

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<sup>71</sup> “The Indonesian Government’s Attitude towards our Proposal for a Summit Conference of All Countries of the World on the Complete Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, October 19-November 19, 1964, CFMA, 105-01870-01.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Department of State, “Agreement for Cooperation between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia concerning Civil Uses of Atomic Energy,” June 1960, TIAS no. 4557, *United States Treaties and Other International Agreements*, vol. 11, pt. 2. Daniel B. Poneman, “Indonesia,” in James E. Katz and Onkar S. Marwah, eds., *Nuclear Power in Developing Countries* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1982), pp. 183-185. Quoted in Cornejo, “When Sukarno Sought the Bomb,” p. 32.

another 2,000-kilowatt reactor was signed in January 1964.<sup>74</sup> Starting from 1964, as Indonesia's relations with both the Western and Socialist blocs became fraught with tension, Sukarno showed great interest in transforming Indonesia's limited, peaceful use of nuclear energy into nuclear weapons. Sukarno believed that this was the key to improving his country's international status. China indicated its intention to help Sukarno achieve such a goal three months after its first successful nuclear test. In January 1965, Luo Ruiqing said in a joking fashion to an Indonesian delegation: "[W]e have conducted explosion of a nuclear bomb. That involved advanced and complicated technology. But exploding a nuclear bomb does not mean that our troops have been equipped with nuclear weapons. Of course, you have not yet requested nuclear weapons from us."<sup>75</sup>

In late July 1965, at a meeting of the 36<sup>th</sup> Muhammadiyah Congress in Bandung, Sukarno announced, "In the near future we will succeed in making our own atomic bomb. The atomic bomb [is] not going to be used for aggression, but simply to maintain the sovereignty of our motherland in case of harassment or attack." Indonesian journalist Rosihan Anwar recorded Sukarno's announcement in his diary, with added comments: "Has Indonesia already achieved the high level of technological capability to make an atomic bomb? Or has Indonesia received assistance from the PRC, who had just detonated a nuclear bomb? Was the making of the atomic bomb secretly discussed between Subandrio, Zhou Enlai and Chen Yi during their repeated meetings in the recent months?"<sup>76</sup> It is possible that discussions on Chinese assistance to Indonesia regarding nuclear technology had been ongoing in the first half of 1965. And Sukarno probably decided to make the public announcement of Indonesia's nuclear ambition after securing Beijing's support.

When Chen Yi visited Indonesia for the Independence Day celebrations in August 1965,

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<sup>74</sup> "The bandits' relations with Indonesia, 1965," October 1-December 31, 1965, *Academia Historica*, 02000001910A.

<sup>75</sup> "Minute of the meeting between the chief of the PLA General Staff Luo Ruiqing and delegation of Indonesian military (on future visits, the possible Chinese aids of equipment, and exchange of intelligence), January 24, 1965, CFMA, 105-01910-07.

<sup>76</sup> H. Rosihan Anwar, *Sukarno, Tentara, PKI: Setiga Kekuasaan sebelum Prajara Politik 1961-1965* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2006), p. 358.

Subandrio's attitude was strikingly different from nine months earlier. Subandrio told Chen Yi:

I only realized recently that it was wrong for Indonesia to sign the Limited Test Ban Treaty in Moscow in 1963...[T]he only way to avoid nuclear war and to safeguard homeland security is for more Afro-Asian countries to obtain nuclear weapons and to break the monopoly of nuclear technology by the Western imperialists and the Soviet Union. Indonesia is determined to build its own nuclear weapons. And Indonesia hopes that China would provide assistance in that regard, as well as in the realms of economic development and arms.<sup>77</sup>

After Chen Yi expressed his support and encouragement, Subandrio eagerly laid out a plan to send an economic delegation to China for more detailed discussions.<sup>78</sup> When Chen Yi met with Subandrio again privately a few days later, a more explicit assurance was given. When Subandrio brought up the issue of nuclear technology transfer, Chen Yi said, "We can give you help in this regard. If we do not give you assistance, we are not your true friend. To our knowledge, you have some foundations. Building a nuclear bomb is not a mission impossible, we can totally build it by ourselves. Both parties can discuss this issue secretly."<sup>79</sup>

In line with the agreement reached in the Chen Yi-Subandrio talks, an Atomic Energy Group affiliated to a sizable Indonesian Economic Delegation arrived in China on September 21, 1965. The Atomic Energy Group was composed of both military personnel and scientists, including Vice Air Marshal Sutopo and the former director of BATAN, Djali Ahimsa. The requests put forward by the group included:

- To visit laboratories and to understand the development of relevant research;

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<sup>77</sup> "Vice Prime Minister Chen Yi's visit to Indonesia and his meetings with President Sukarno, and etc." August 16, 1965, *CFMA*, 105—01324—03.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> "Vice Prime Minister Chen Yi's private meeting with the Indonesian First Deputy Prime Minister Subandrio," August 21, 1965, *CFMA*, 105—01912—09.

- To visit some chemistry laboratories, including laboratories where analyses on raw materials, such as uranium, take place, to understand the procedure of processing used fuel;
- To see how atomic energy is used for military purposes;
- To visit nuclear reactors that are already in use, including those for research purpose, for power supply purposes, and for other purposes; and
- To send staff to conduct research together with the Chinese experts.<sup>80</sup>

According to Djali Ahimsa, the off-the-record purpose of the trip was to receive substantial assistance from China for Indonesia's nuclear project. Most importantly, the group intended to bring back plutonium from China, which was part of the deal between Sukarno and the top Chinese leaders. Djali Ahimsa was confident that, with plutonium from China, Indonesian nuclear scientists would be capable of building a nuclear bomb. Meanwhile, the two sides also had tentatively scheduled a visit by Chinese nuclear scientists to Indonesia in 1966 for technical support. Tsinghua University and the Bandung Institute of Technology were discussing the possibility of collaboration in September 1965, but no technical staff from China had arrived before G30S.<sup>81</sup>

During their stay in Beijing, the Atomic Energy Group visited a research nuclear reactor at Tsinghua University, the nuclear physics laboratories at Peking University, and the No. 1 and No. 2 Institutes of Atomic Energy Research, and had discussions with scientists at all institutes. The group did not seem to have visited any military nuclear sites. On September 22, Zhou Enlai met with the group and said:

The purpose of this trip was to explore the possibilities of building basic nuclear projects for peaceful use [in Indonesia], for scientific research, industrial production, education, and etc. For a

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<sup>80</sup> "Briefings on Receiving the Atomic Energy Group of the Indonesian Economic Delegation, September 21-September 28, 1965, CFMA, 105-01323-02.

<sup>81</sup> Djali Ahimsa, interview by author, Jakarta, April 18, 2013.

wider range of collaboration, a decision needs to be made between the top leaders of our two countries. Once our Party and government make the decision, Vice Prime Minister Chen Yi and I will have discussions with President Sukarno when we meet at the Second Afro-Asian Conference.<sup>82</sup>

On the evening of September 30, 1965, just a few hours before G30S took place in Indonesia, Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi met with representatives of the delegation of Indonesia People's Consultative Assembly, which was invited to Beijing's National Day celebration. Indonesian politicians present at the meeting included Chairul Saleh, the speaker of Indonesia People's Consultative Assembly, and Ali Sastramidjojo, the chairman of the Indonesian National Party (*Partai Nasional Indonesia* or the PNI). A significant part of the meeting concentrated on nuclear issues.

Chairman Mao: ...Now, the world is not peaceful, so we need military forces and, moreover, the atomic bomb. Do you want to build atomic bomb?

Chairul Saleh: We would love to.

Chairman Mao: You should build one.

Chairul Saleh: We do not agree that nuclear weaponry should be dominated by a few big powers.

Chairman Mao: That's right. Two big countries in the world want to monopolize nuclear power, but we won't listen to them. We still create our own. However, we are currently at the beginning stage. The Americans sent out a message threatening that they will blow up our nuclear reactors. That will be the end of the world. Some people say, reactors can be blown off, but ideals cannot be blown up. Even if the first batch of nuclear reactors were blown up, people with ideals could build a second batch.

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<sup>82</sup> "Minute of the meeting between Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and the Indonesian Economic Delegation," September 22, 1965, CFMA, 105—01321—07. The Second Afro-Asian Conference was originally scheduled to convene in Algeria in June 1965, but was cancelled due to a coup in the host country. China and Indonesia were discussing postponing the Second Afro-Asian Conference before G30S took place.

Chairul Saleh: Yes, new ones could be built.

Chairman Mao: It was the secretary of defense of the United States who said that.

Chairul Saleh: Modern technology can no longer be monopolized by imperialists.

Chairman Mao: Yes, there should be no monopoly. All [technologies] should be open; all [countries] should be able to communicate [freely].

Chairul Saleh: Therefore we are very happy. Chairman Mao just said that China was only at the beginning stage of nuclear technology development. But for us, China creating its own atomic bomb is an event with great significance. We are greatly encouraged by this event spiritually and materially. This event will further encourage all the New Emerging Forces to build a new world.

Chairman Mao: You have to build up your agriculture and light industry first. And you need to find the raw material to build atomic bomb. Is there any in your country?

Chairul Saleh: I believe there is. Our current geographical survey has shown some positive signs. Now we are vigorously conducting survey and making use of the natural resources.

Chairman Mao: Do you have iron mines or coal mines? The resources in your country are richer than those of my country. You have huge amount of petroleum and rubber, both of which are rare in the world.

Chairul Saleh: That is true. Therefore we sent an economic delegation to China for the purpose of learning from China and fostering closer collaboration between the two countries. Developing iron industry and heavy industry are the most important tasks for Indonesia. We don't have large-scale ironmaking and steelmaking industries. In that aspect, we would be glad to build up these industries as soon as possible, if China is willing to offer us help.

Chairman Mao: This is totally workable. We surely can help you unconditionally.<sup>83</sup>

There is ambiguity in the sphere in which Mao offered “unconditional” support to Indonesia. In the context of the conversation, Mao’s offer could be interpreted either narrowly (steel industry) or broadly

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<sup>83</sup> “Minutes of Chairman Mao Zedong and Chairman Liu Shaoqi’s Meeting with the Indonesian Delegation,” September 30, 1965, CFMA, 105-01917-02.

(which would include nuclear assistance). The fact that Mao openly espoused the idea of a nuclearized Indonesia shortly before the coup took place is both significant and perplexing. Given Mao's sometimes highly unpredictable personal style in his conversations with foreign guests, it is very difficult to understand what exactly he meant and for what purpose he chose to bring up such a sensitive topic at such a sensitive time. (While there is no evidence that China played a significant role in the planning of G30S, top Chinese leaders knew in advance of Aidit's plan, as I will describe later.)

What is certain, however, is that G30S had fundamentally changed the course of Sukarno's quest for nuclear power as well as the potential Chinese assistance to Indonesia. Zhou Enlai originally planned to have a more extensive conversation with the Atomic Energy Group on October 2, 1965 to discuss the details of Chinese assistance to Indonesia.<sup>84</sup> However, due to the political changes in Indonesia, the official meeting was relocated to Zhou Enlai's private residence inside the Forbidden City. Zhou told the group members to wait and see what developed their country in the wake of G30S. When Djali Ahimsa asked about the possibility of visiting a uranium enrichment plant in Chengdu in southwest China, Zhou said he would try to make the arrangements. But there was no follow-up on this request.<sup>85</sup>

### **Chinese Medical Aids to Sukarno**

Besides military and nuclear aid, the PRC had also been providing medical aid to the Indonesian President in the early 1960s. Documents from China suggest that Sukarno's physical condition in 1965 was not as bad as some Western scholars speculated. Neither Beijing nor the PKI saw Sukarno's death as imminent before G30S. Sukarno probably had been seeing Chinese doctors since the early 1960s. During a meeting between the Indonesian ambassador to China, Sukarni, and the Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi in December 1961, Sukarni said that "Sukarno has been hiding from the United States that he sought help from China for his health issues. But now the United States already knows about it, and has

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<sup>84</sup> "Minute of the meeting between Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and the Indonesian Economic Delegation," September 22, 1965, CFMA, 105—01321—07.

<sup>85</sup> Djali Ahimsa, interview by author, Jakarta, April 18, 2013.

protested.”<sup>86</sup> The most intensive and highly controversial Chinese medical aid took place between November 1964 and September 1965, when a high-profile Chinese medical team provided Sukarno with diagnosis, prescriptions, and Chinese medical treatments such as acupuncture and herbal medicine.<sup>87</sup>

Beijing started to provide systematic medical care to the Indonesian President when reports and rumors on Sukarno’s deteriorating health started to circulate widely in the West in late 1964. By the end of October 1964, the Chinese ambassador to Indonesia, Yao Zhongming, reported back to Beijing that “the Western media has been reporting on the possible stepping down of Sukarno due to his health issues. However, there has not been any discussion in the Indonesian media. Neither was this issue mentioned by our friends [i.e. the PKI].”<sup>88</sup> Sukarno’s health information was disclosed secretly to media by doctors in Vienna, who discovered stones in the President’s right kidney and determined that he would die within the next three months if these stones were not removed via surgery. In November 1964, a Chinese medical team headed by renowned urologist Dr. Wu Jieping arrived in Indonesia and carried out a thorough medical examination on Sukarno. The Chinese medical team disagreed with the diagnosis from Vienna, claiming that it was cardiovascular problems, rather than kidney stones, that needed immediate attention. The treatment program the Chinese medical team designed for Sukarno proved to be highly effective. And the team left Indonesia in early January 1965, after Sukarno’s condition stabilized.<sup>89</sup>

In the months between winter 1964 and spring 1965, the improvement in Sukarno’s health strengthened his trust and confidence in the Chinese medical team, which became his regular health provider between early 1965 and the outbreak of G30S. Sukarno found the Vienna doctors’ suggestions

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<sup>86</sup> “An Extract of the report on Vice Prime Minister Chen Yi’s meeting with Indonesian ambassador to China, Sukarno,” December 22, 1961, *CFMA*, 105-01768-04.

<sup>87</sup> Sukarno seemed to have strong preference to a kind of capsule made of Chinese herbal medicine. He tended to overdose slightly (the prescription was five capsules per time, but Sukarno took six instead), which upset the Chinese doctors. “Prescriptions for Sukarno,” April 23, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01331-01.

<sup>88</sup> “On a possible coup in Indonesia,” October 30-December 20, 1964, *CFMA*, 105-01233-06.

<sup>89</sup> “Our medical team’s treatment for Sukarno and President Sukarno’s health conditions,” November 24, 1964, *CFMA*, 105-01234-01.

that he undergo surgery highly disagreeable and even unacceptable. He was delighted that the Chinese medical team was right—he did not need to have surgery for his kidney stones. Moreover, in April 1965, Sukarno discovered that his health information had been leaked to the Western media by the doctors in Vienna.<sup>90</sup> Thus, in both technical and political terms, the Chinese medical team became the most reliable choice for the Indonesian President.

The Chinese medical team treated Sukarno when he suffered a severe cerebral vasospasm attack in August 1965, which caused much commotion on the Indonesian political scene and was said to have led to the escalation of tensions before G30S. On the morning of August 4, Sukarno felt dizzy after he got up, and the vertigo became incapacitating after 8:00 am, accompanied by symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and sweating. At 10:00 am, the Chinese medical team was summoned to the Presidential Palace. In its first report back to Beijing, the Chinese medical team wrote: “As for now, it remains unclear whether the President’s conditions will deteriorate. Now we are giving him treatments, and there has been no sign that the President will be paralyzed. Please inform Aidit.” In a telegram dispatched a few hours later, the medical team wrote: “[W]e have diagnosed Sukarno as suffering from Meniere’s disease. As for now, there has not yet been thrombus forming due to cerebral hemorrhage. We expect a gradual recovery in short term, but we also need to be alert about possible thrombus formation and related complications in his heart and kidney.” The medical team requested Beijing to send a neurologist from China for a more detailed diagnosis.<sup>91</sup>

Sukarno’s sudden illness was extremely alarming to the Chinese leadership. On the morning of August 5, the Chinese Foreign Ministry instructed Ambassador Yao Zhongming to visit Sukarno, to pay close attention to any developments regarding his condition, and to “report back to the Foreign Ministry at all times.” At 1:30 pm of the same day, Zhou Enlai instructed the Ministry of Health to study carefully the reports on Sukarno’s condition that the Chinese medical team had wired from Jakarta the day before,

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<sup>90</sup> “Prescriptions for Sukarno,” April 23, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01331-01.

<sup>91</sup> “President Sukarno’s illness and our medical team’s treatment for him,” August 4, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01330-01.

to prepare the needed medicines, and to select two of the country's best neurologists who would fly to Jakarta together with the PKI chairman Aidit the very next day. At the time Aidit was visiting Beijing and originally scheduled to travel from Beijing to Hanoi on August 7. After being informed by Zhou Enlai about Sukarno's conditions, Aidit decided to cancel his trip to Vietnam and return to Indonesia on August 6.<sup>92</sup>

On the evening of August 5, after the arrangements for Aidit's return trip had been settled, the Chinese Foreign Ministry was relieved to receive news from Jakarta: the Chinese medical team reported that Sukarno's conditions had significantly improved since the morning, and he was "able to talk and laugh as usual and to have his breakfast." The Chinese medical team decided that the cerebral vasospasm attack was over, and there should be no long-term sequela. As for the future prospects for President Sukarno's health, the Chinese doctors were not optimistic: "[T]his attack reveals that arteriosclerosis [has] affected his whole body, including heart, kidney, and brain. His long term health condition is worrisome."<sup>93</sup>

Despite the Chinese doctors concerns, Sukarno himself seemed confident that he had fully recovered and soon resumed working. It seems to have been a strategic decision, given that the President's health issues had become a sensitive topic amid an already tense political atmosphere in Indonesia. On August 6, Sukarno told the Chinese doctors that he felt no discomfort and was ready to continue his preparation for the Independence Day speech. On August 9, Sukarno fully went back to his daily routines. On August 15, Chen Yi, who was invited to Jakarta for Indonesia's Independence Day celebrations, met with Sukarno. During the meeting, Chen Yi asked Sukarno to pay keen attention to his health, suggesting that Sukarno could ask someone to read the Independence Day speech for him if

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<sup>92</sup> "President Sukarno's illness and our medical team's treatment for him," August 5, 1965, *CFMA*, 105—01330—01.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

needed.<sup>94</sup> But Sukarno gave the speech himself on August 17 in order to avoid upheaval in the political scene. Chen Yi's Indonesian interpreter Huang Shuhai, who was at the Independence Day celebrations in Indonesia, observed that Sukarno appeared to be healthy and energetic while giving the speech and hosting Chen Yi.<sup>95</sup>

Notwithstanding these improvements, the Chinese medical team was frustrated with Sukarno's refusal to switch to a healthier life style. Since Sukarno's cerebral vasospasm attack was triggered by "mood swings caused by domestic conflicts," the Chinese doctors advised Sukarno to "reduce his workload and exercise restraint in his sex life."<sup>96</sup> But this advice fell on deaf ears. On August 20, the medical team reported that Sukarno "had the same old attitude towards medication and sex...[S]ince the afternoon of August 16, he had stopped taking tranquilizers and antihypertensive drugs himself." The Chinese medical team decided to leave Indonesia as long as this uncooperative patient's condition continued to stabilize.<sup>97</sup>

The medical team's decision to leave Indonesia was probably also affected by Beijing's concerns regarding the political implications of the presence of Chinese doctors by the side of the Indonesian President at such a critical time. When the Chinese medical team was dealing with Sukarno's sudden illness in early August, the Foreign Ministry emphasized that "we should let Sukarno's own doctors, Dr. Suharto and Dr. Lauw Ing Tjhiong, take charge. We can play an assisting role if we have the consent from Sukarno himself."<sup>98</sup> Yet, overall, Beijing's medical aid to Sukarno made itself highly susceptible to suspicions and accusations. In the 1990s, a Chinese-language magazine based in Hong Kong claimed that Zhou Enlai took Wu's mistaken diagnosis and thought Sukarno's health conditions were so critical that

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<sup>94</sup> "Vice Prime Minister Chen Yi's visit to Indonesia and his meetings with President Sukarno, and etc.," August 16, 1965, *CFMA*, 105—01324—03.

<sup>95</sup> Huang Shuhai, interview by author, Beijing, July 17, 2009.

<sup>96</sup> "President Sukarno's illness and our medical team's treatment for him," August 5, 1965, *CFMA*, 105—01330—01.

<sup>97</sup> "President Sukarno's illness and our medical team's treatment for him," August 20, 1965, *CFMA*, 105—01330—01.

<sup>98</sup> "President Sukarno's illness and our medical team's treatment for him," August 5, 1965, *CFMA*, 105—01330—01.

his life could end at any moment. Zhou replayed his fears to Aidit, who then decided to take preemptive action against the Indonesian army. Dr. Wu regarded these accusations as “ridiculous.” As he put it, “I have never made such reports to Zhou Enlai. Sukarno’s health conditions were not as bad as in some rumors. His life span proved this point. I can only ignore these slanders.”<sup>99</sup>

### **Connections between the Chinese and Indonesian Communist Parties**

Beijing can be proven to have reached out to Indonesia with offers of small arms, nuclear materials and technology, and medical care for the President, and it is reasonable also to raise the question of whether the Chinese leadership helped its Indonesian comrades design the plans for G30S. As the paragraphs below suggest, the Chinese leaders were aware of the PKI’s plan to thwart the anti-communist army generals from making a move to seize power. But Beijing remained uninvolved in the actual planning of G30S.

As early as mid-1963, the Chinese leaders perceived the situation in Indonesia to be full of tension and ripe for a power transition. In the words of Zhou Enlai, in Indonesia the most critical issue was that:

[N]asution, with the support from the United States and Chiang Kai-shek government in Taiwan, is trying by all means to overthrow Sukarno and replace him. This is a life-and-death struggle, which will continue. No matter what Sukarno’s attitude is, [the Indonesian revolution] will be born. In this new era in the history of Indonesia’s struggle against imperialism and feudalism, new configurations of power will occur. The speed things evolve depends on the relative power of the PKI and its strategies. [I] believe that the PKI has foresight and will be prepared.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Deng Li, *Wu Jieping zhuan* [A biography of Wu Jieping] (Hangzhou, Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1999). Quoted in Zhou Nanjing and Kong Zhiyuan, eds., *Sujianuo zhongguo yindunixiya huaren* [Sukarno, China and the Chinese minority in Indonesia] (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Social Science Press, 2003), pp. 419-440.

<sup>100</sup> “On the self-defense and self-protection during the anti-Chinese riots in Indonesia, and the deployment of contingency measures of our embassy in Indonesia,” June 23, 1963, CFMA, 105-01826-03.

On August 5, 1965, Aidit, his wife Tanti, and Jusuf Aditorop, the deputy party secretary of the PKI, had a meeting with Mao Zedong and other top Chinese leaders, including Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Peng Zhen, and Chen Yi. During the meeting, Zhou reported to Mao about Sukarno's poor health, and discussed the revised travel arrangements for Aidit's early return to Indonesia. Subsequently, both sides talked about the Indonesian army:

Mao: I think the Indonesian right wing is determined to seize power. Are you determined too?

Audit: (Nods) If Sukarno dies, it would be a question of who gains the upper hand.

Mao: I suggest that you should not go abroad so often. You can let the Number Two person (i.e. your deputy) [in your party] go abroad instead.

Audit: For the right wing, they could take two possible kinds of actions: First they could attack us. If they do so, we would have reasons to counterattack. Second, they could adopt a more moderate method by building a Nasakom government. Without Sukarno, it would be easy for the right wing to win the support of those who are in the middle in order to isolate us. The latter scenario would be difficult for us. However, no matter what, we have to deal with them. The United States advised Nasution not to initiate a coup. This is because if he initiates a coup, the left-wing would also take the same course of action. The Americans told Nasution that he should wait patiently; even if Sukarno dies, he [Nasution] should be flexible rather than [initiate] a coup. He accepted the suggestion from the Americans.

Mao: That is unreliable. The current situation has changed.

Audit: In the first scenario, we plan to establish a military committee. The majority of that committee would be left wing, but it should also include some middle elements. In this way, we could confuse our enemies. Our enemies would be uncertain about the nature of this committee, and therefore the military commanders who are sympathetic to the right wing will not oppose us immediately. If we show our red flag right away, they will oppose us right away. The head of

this military committee would be an underground member of our party, but he would identify himself as [being] neutral. This military committee should not last for too long. Otherwise, good people will turn [into] bad people. After it has been established, we need to arm the workers and peasants in a timely fashion.<sup>101</sup>

In the record of the meeting quoted above, Mao shifted the conversation to his own experience at the Chongqing Negotiations with the Chinese Nationalist Party. Given the historical background of the Chinese Civil War, Mao might have been making an oblique suggestion that Aidit should be prepared for both peace talks and armed struggles. Though the Chinese leadership's attitude remained unclear, it is evident that Beijing was informed of Aidit's plan, and at least did not object to it.

It is unlikely, however, that Beijing knew of the exact timing of G30S or participated in the planning. Indeed, October 1, 1965 probably was a nerve-racking day for the Chinese top leaders, who had to maintain their composure at the PRC's National Day celebrations despite the drastic changes in the situation in Indonesia. The first piece of news about G30S came to Beijing from the foreign media rather than from the Chinese embassy in Jakarta. Apparently, Beijing sent out a telegram to its embassy in Jakarta right after receiving the news, requesting clarifications. Yet a reply did not reach Beijing until more than a day later.<sup>102</sup> In other words, in the first twenty-four hours after G30S took place, Beijing completely lost contact with its embassy in Jakarta. The Associated Press, Agence France-Presse, and Reuters were the only sources Beijing had available. During his first official meeting with the Indonesian guests after G30S, Zhou Enlai told Chairul Saleh, Ali Sastramidjojo, General Wylyo Puspoyudo, and Ambassador (to China) Djawoto that "we have recently received several pieces of news reports from abroad. According to these reports, a Council of Generals staged an abortive coup, and the Guards of the

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<sup>101</sup> "Chairman Mao meets the delegation of the PKI," *Chinese Communist Party Central Archives*, August 5, 1965.

<sup>102</sup> "Minute of the meeting with Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and the delegation of the Staff College of the Indonesian Air Force," October 3, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01687-02. Zhou told the delegation of the Staff College of the Indonesian air force: "[W]e sent a telegram to our embassy in Jakarta the day before yesterday, but we have not received a reply yet." Yet in his talk with Chairul Saleh, he said some telegrams went through on October 2, 1965. See "Minutes of Prime Minister Zhou Enlai's second and third meeting with the delegation of Indonesia People's Consultative Assembly (on the domestic situation in Indonesian and the Afro-Asian conference)," October 1-4, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01917-01.

Presidential Palace captured those involved...The President is safe. And the Guards of the Presidential Palace formed a ‘Revolutionary Council’ to take control of the situation.” On October 2, some telegrams finally went through between Beijing and Jakarta, including one from the Chinese embassy confirming the safety of Sukarno. However, communication remained intermittent and the radio signals from the Chinese embassy were constantly disrupted. The New China News Agency’s (Xinhua) Jakarta office was completely blocked.<sup>103</sup>

In his talk with Chairul Saleh on October 1, Zhou’s interpretation of the role of the Revolutionary Council as responding to the attempted coup by the Council of Generals, rather than initiating G30S by itself, was intriguing. In a meeting in mid-November with the North Korean Prime Minister, Ri Ju-yeon, Chen Yi said that the leader of G30S, Untung, “was following Sukarno’s instructions.” He further explained: “There were supporters of Sukarno as well as spies from the army and right wing within the PKI. Sukarno’s supporters and PKI members were inside the army, too. It is difficult to understand what was going on.”<sup>104</sup> Given that both Zhou Enlai and Chen Yi were present at Aidit’s discussions with Mao on August 5, the two top Chinese leaders could be trying to protect the PKI as well as the CCP itself by hiding the fact that Beijing was informed of the Aidit’s plan ahead of time. It is also possible, perhaps probable, that the Chinese leadership was surprised by the swiftness of the PKI’s actions. Beijing might have been expecting a longer period of Sukarno-PKI collaboration, which would allow the PKI to buy more time for full-scale militarization. Thus, the way in which the PKI rushed to action probably had already made the situation look worrisome to Beijing. On October 2, the foreign policy making circle in Beijing had already learned that the Revolutionary Council had failed, and Suharto had taken control of the situation.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> “Minutes of Prime Minister Zhou Enlai’s second and third meeting with the delegation of Indonesia People’s Consultative Assembly (on the domestic situation in Indonesian and the Afro-Asian conference),” October 1-4, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01917-01.

<sup>104</sup> “Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, Vice Prime Minister Chen Yi’s second meeting with the Vice Prime Minister of North Korea,” November 11, 1965, *CFMA*, 106-01476-06.

<sup>105</sup> “On the 30 September Movement in Indonesia,” October 2, 1965, *CFMA*, 204-01389-04.

It seems that from the immediate aftermath of G30S to late October 1965, Chinese leaders were still hoping for the emergence of a progressive, left-leaning government, which would continue to rely on an alliance between Sukarno and the PKI. Beijing was cherishing high expectations for Sukarno to emerge as the game-changer. On October 3, when meeting with the delegation of the Staff College of the Indonesian Air Force, Zhou said he was relieved to hear President Sukarno's own voice in the broadcast at 2:30 pm on that day. By the end of the conversation, Zhou told the head of the delegation: "Please tell President Sukarno to take good care of his health for the sake of Indonesia's revolution."<sup>106</sup> On October 4, before Chairul Saleh set off for Jakarta, Zhou asked Chairul Saleh to convey the regards of the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party and the government, including Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Chen Yi, Peng Zhen, and himself, to Sukarno. Zhou said that "all of us have been listening to news about the situation in Indonesia from October 1 to October 3."<sup>107</sup>

Yet such friendly gestures took a sharp turn when conflicts broke out between staff members of the Chinese embassy and the Indonesian army at the PRC embassy compound in Jakarta, due to the former's refusal to lower the Chinese national flag to half-mast on the national memorial day to commemorate the army generals killed in G30S. The clash was followed by the Indonesian military's search of the dormitory used by the Chinese embassy staff and in the residence of Chinese engineers at the construction site of the Beijing-sponsored CONEFO building.<sup>108</sup> In the eyes of the Chinese leaders, Sukarno's failure to protect China's interests this time was a deal breaker, reflecting Sukarno's lack of both credibility and political prowess in the fast-changing political scene in Indonesia. Chen Yi said to the visiting North Korean prime minister, Ri Ju-yeon, in mid-November:

Sukarno wanted to mediate and then take control of the situation, but the leeway he had [was]

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<sup>106</sup> "Minute of the meeting with Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and the delegation of the Staff College of the Indonesian Air Force," October 3, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01687-02.

<sup>107</sup> "Minutes of Prime Minister Zhou Enlai's second and third meeting with the delegation of Indonesia People's Consultative Assembly (on the domestic situation in Indonesian and the Afro-Asian conference)," October 1-4, 1965, *CFMA*, 105-01917-01.

<sup>108</sup> "Chinese Government strongly protests against the Indonesian Army's violation of diplomatic protocols," *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], October 19, 1965.

extremely limited. From 1955 to the present, we have been collaborating with Sukarno for more than a decade. Our policy towards Sukarno has made great impacts among countries in Asia and Africa. We told him that he could use attacks on and search in our commercial office, Chinese experts' residence (referring to the Chinese engineers sent to Indonesia for the CONEFO building project), and consulates as a card to negotiate with the army and the right wing. He can win support from them. He is grateful.

Zhou Enlai said at the same occasion:

[W]e believe Sukarno and Subandrio are devoted to maintaining friendly relations with China...but the right wing wanted to destroy bilateral relations completely. The ethnic Chinese were also persecuted, suffering from robbery and illegal detention. Sukarno hopes that we will give him some more time. But time has passed already. He could only shake his head and sigh....[I]t is difficult to say how much Sukarno can do. I don't think he has much leverage.

Zhou further quoted King Sihanouk, who was living in exile in Beijing at the time:

King Sihanouk admits that the right wing is taking control of the situation in Indonesia, although they had no solid foundation of support among the people. But Sihanouk trusted Sukarno too much. He thinks Sukarno is able to overturn the situation. This is not accurate.<sup>109</sup>

Deeply disappointed with Sukarno, Beijing began to expect a full-fledged communist revolution in Indonesia beginning mid-November 1965. As Chen Yi put it bluntly in his conversation with Ri Ju-yeon: "Personally I think it will be a good thing if Sukarno is overthrown. Sukarno could mediate between the right and the left. But the future of Indonesia depends on the armed struggle of the PKI. This is the most important thing. It is definitive."<sup>110</sup> However, at the time Beijing had no clear picture of the situations in Central and East Java, and Sumatra, where communist forces were believed to be the

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<sup>109</sup> "Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, Vice Prime Minister Chen Yi's second meeting with the Vice Prime Minister of North Korea," November 11, 1965, CFMA, 106—01476—06.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

strongest. All direct communications between the PKI and the CCP had been cut off. Beijing was not able to receive any information directly from the PKI, or indirectly from North Korean or North Vietnamese embassies in Jakarta. There were PKI members coming to China from Jakarta, but the number seemed small and none of them had reliable information about the conditions outside of the capital. The Chinese leadership knew that there was an armed force of more than 10,000 in Central Java. And Beijing was confident that the PKI was building up its strength and had a good chance in the final showdown with the army because the party was believed to have control over the vast countryside and mountainous regions. Chen Yi strongly endorsed the PKI's armed struggle:

The PKI was most resolute in its anti-imperialist, anti-revisionist campaigns. It can definitely withstand this test. Obviously, the united front is not doing the PKI any good. The PKI should resolutely shift its policy to armed struggle...An overall revolution is inevitable in Indonesia. No matter what actions the United States and the right-wing forces will take, no matter what tricks Sukarno will play, fundamental issues need to be resolved. Indonesia is now at the eye of a storm, at the eve of a great revolution.<sup>111</sup>

With regard to China's response to the radical change in Indonesian domestic politics and subsequently in bilateral relations, Chen Yi and Zhou Enlai seemed to have different stances, as shown in their conversations with the North Korea's prime minister in mid-November 1965. Chen Yi's position was more aggressive, as he announced that China would not serve as a mediator in Indonesian politics. He claimed: "It would serve us the best if our ambassador is expelled, which indicates that there is hope for Indonesia's revolution. I hope the conflicts between the right wing and left wing will escalate." Zhou Enlai, on the other hand, was more cautious and diplomatic. He made a clear distinction between the two parts of the Chinese policy—one on state-to-state relations, the other towards the Indonesian revolution. For bilateral relations, Zhou said Beijing would continue to work with Sukarno as long as he was sincere, while continuing its strong protest against the army and other anti-China right wing groups. For intra-

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

communist-party relations, Zhou said: “We support our fraternal party [the PKI], but our support is within proper boundaries. It is the Indonesian people’s revolution, led by the Indonesian left wing. We cannot surpass them. Now the PKI has not yet made any public announcement. Therefore we cannot speak on its behalf.”<sup>112</sup>

The Chinese leadership’s great expectations were soon shattered. In December 1965, when Mao learned of the death of Aidit, who was gunned down in Central Java by Suharto’s troops, he wrote a poem:

Sparse branches stood in front of my windows in winter, smiling before hundreds of flowers  
Regretfully those smiles withered when spring came  
There is no need to grieve over the withered  
To each flower there is a season to wither, as well a season to blossom  
There will be more flowers in the coming year.<sup>113</sup>

The poem showed Mao’s confidence for a revival of the communist movement in Indonesia. However, with Mao launching the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution while Suharto solidifying his grips on political power through a cleansing of communists in Indonesia, bilateral relations plummeted to an extreme low. In the spring of 1966, Beijing started to openly oppose the Suharto regime after right-wing students’ group and the Indonesian army attacked the Chinese embassy in April. Radio Peking’s constant broadcasts of fierce protests towards an Indonesian audience escalated the tension and, ironically, granted the Indonesian army the opportunity to further extend its accusations of Beijing was involved in the G30S.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Mao, “Pusuanzi dao guoji gongchanzhuyi zhanshi aidi tongzhi” (In memory of Comrade Aidit, an international Communist fighter), December 1965, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/69112/70199/4763391.html>. Accessed July 20, 2008.

<sup>114</sup> “Awas Neo-imperialisme Kuning,” April 25, 1965, *Angkatan Bersendjata*. This editorial accused the PRC as a “new yellow imperialist” that interfered with Indonesian domestic politics, particularly through the unfriendly and insulting reports by New China News Agency (Xinhua) and Radio Peking.

The Suharto regime also accused Beijing of maintaining its connection with the PKI after G30S by secretly offering shelter to the PKI exiles. It is true that Beijing did make living arrangements for PKI members and affiliates who were in China when G30S took place, and those who later came to China from abroad seeking sanctuary, including PKI leader Jusuf Adjitorop, and Aidit's daughter Ibarruri and brother Asahan Sobron.<sup>115</sup> Because the timing of G30S coincided with the PRC's National Day celebrations, approximately 4,500 Indonesian visitors from various delegations (political, economic, military and cultural) were in different parts of China at the time of G30S. In Beijing alone, there were 28 groups totaling almost 500 people altogether. As Zhou Enlai said to Chairul Saleh on September 30, 1965, before the start of a national banquet, "You [Indonesian guests] will take up the largest percentage in the banquet hall tonight. I wish we could have Indonesian-speaking staff to attend to you at each and every table."<sup>116</sup> After G30S, the PRC adopted a generous policy towards the Indonesian visitors. On 4 October, Zhou Enlai said to the delegation of Indonesia People's Consultative Assembly, "It is difficult to find convenient ways of transportation in such a short time for so many people. We are willing to receive anyone who cannot leave immediately and provide any kind of amenity possible. If you want to travel in China, you are free to do so; if you want to leave, you are free to do so as well. We are willing to help in both cases."<sup>117</sup>

Among the Indonesian visitors, only a small number (mostly high-ranking government officials) were able to leave for Indonesia shortly after G30S, while a larger portion stayed in China for a more extended period of time. On October 2, the Indonesian air force sent a plane from Halim Airbase to

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<sup>115</sup> Ibarruri has written about her experience in China in Ibarruri Putri Alam, *Roman biografis Putri Alam, anak sulung D.N. Aidit* (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 2006). For analysis on this book, see David T. Hill, "Writing Lives in Exile: Autobiographies of the Indonesian Left Aboard," in Maureen Perkins ed., *Locating Life Stories: Beyond East-West Binaries in (Auto)Biographical Studies* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012), pp. 215-236.

<sup>116</sup> "Minute of Prime Minister Zhou Enlai's first meeting with the delegation of Indonesia People's Consultative Assembly (on the domestic situation in Indonesian and the Afro-Asian conference)," September 30, 1965, CFMA, 105-01917-03.

<sup>117</sup> "Minutes of Prime Minister Zhou Enlai's second and third meeting with the delegation of Indonesia People's Consultative Assembly (on the domestic situation in Indonesian and the Afro-Asian conference)," October 1-4, 1965, CFMA, 105-01917-01.

Beijing to pick up some delegates.<sup>118</sup> Vice Air Marshal Sutopo and nuclear scientist Djali Ahimsa were on board, and they arrived in Indonesia on October 6.<sup>119</sup> At the same time, however, the PKI members and sympathizers who were not able or not willing to leave for Indonesia were taken care of by the CCP. According to playwright and PKI member Utuy Tatang, who stayed in China between 1965 and 1974, those who had health concerns were mostly transferred to hospitals in Guangzhou, and later to a sanatorium in South China.<sup>120</sup> The healthy or the recovered ones were relocated to the Nanjing Military Academy, where they were drilled in Cultural Revolution propaganda and forced to carry on meetings for criticism and self-criticism, and attend study sessions on the works of Mao Zedong everyday.<sup>121</sup> Some witnesses mentioned that the PKI exiles received trainings on guerrilla-warfare strategies at the Nanjing Military Academy.<sup>122</sup> However, there are few written sources that can either confirm the existence of such training programs or inform us its beginning and ending dates. It is likely that the Chinese Government stopped the training in 1968 or 1969, when it became clear that the nascent armed struggles in South Blitar and Kalimantan had ended and the remaining PKI members had been decimated.

Most importantly, during the Cultural Revolution the exiles were instructed to reflect upon the “mistakes of the PKI” that led to G30S. And the conclusion they drew, which was probably an attempt to cater to the radicalized political atmosphere in China at the time, was that the PKI had sown the seeds for

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<sup>118</sup> Minute of the meeting with Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and the delegation of the Staff College of the Indonesian Air Force,”October 3, 1965, CFMA, 105-01687-02

<sup>119</sup> Djali Ahimsa, interview by author, Jakarta, April 18, 2013.

<sup>120</sup> Utuy Tatang, *Di Bawah Langit Tak Terbintang* (Jakarta, Pustaka Jaya, 2001), pp. 77-104. The sanatorium in South China Utuy Tatang mentioned might be the guesthouse for Southeast Asian communist exiles located in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province. Suar Suroso, interview by author, Nanchang, October 9, 2013. Suar Suroso, the former Secretary of the PKI’s youth organization *Permuda Rakyat*, arrived in Beijing from Moscow in 1967. The international branch of the CCP made arrangements for Suar Suroso and his family to settle in Nanchang.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., pp. 91-97. Utuy Tatang did not mention the name of “Nanjing Military Academy” explicitly, but he wrote that the city was commonly known as the fireplace or “*tungku*” of China (a nickname of Nanjing commonly known by the Chinese), and the place where was guarded by the Chinese military, with almost all Indonesian exiles dressed in Chinese military uniform. This deduction can be supported by my interview with Adam Wong cited later in the same paragraph.

<sup>122</sup> Adam Wong (Wang Jiming), interview by author, Hong Kong, September 16, 2013. Mr. Wong was one of the “41 patriotic ethnic Chinese youth” who were engaged in conflicts with the Army and local police in Medan. In early 1967, he and other “little overseas Chinese heroes” gave talks all around China (via arrangement by the International Branch of the CCP), including the Nanjing Military Academy.

its own destruction ever since it made the decision to give up armed struggle. The parliamentary road, with which the PKI had been achieving great success, was thus regarded as revisionist and a fatal choice.<sup>123</sup> Adam Wong (Wang Jinming), an ethnic Chinese who returned from Medan to China in 1966, visited the Nanjing Military Academy in early 1967. According to him, there were around 100 PKI members residing there, and almost everyone was eager to know about the situation in Indonesia and had “endless questions” regarding the cleansing of the PKI. Wong observed that the exiles, who were drawn deeply into the Cultural Revolution, broke into different political factions—there were those who were still loyal to Aidit, and those who had turned against Aidit either because they bought the argument about the “revisionist nature” of the parliamentary road, or they because they blamed Aidit’s recklessness for PKI’s fall. Following the call to “speak out freely” and to “air one’s views fully” during the Cultural Revolution, the two sides both wrote “big-character posters” and held heated debates.<sup>124</sup>

The Chinese Government changes its policy towards the PKI exiles in the late 1980s, when Beijing sought to normalize its relations with Jakarta. The official status granted to the PKI exiles was downgraded from “foreign guests of the Party”—a prestigious title in the Chinese context—to “residents of foreign origins.” Those who remained in China were given Chinese passports and national identity cards, and assigned to jobs in the civil sector.<sup>125</sup> When Qian Qichen, the Chinese Foreign Minister at the time, met with the Indonesian State Minister Murdiono for an ice-breaking talk in 1989, Qian explained China’s position this way:

We had noticed that Indonesia was particularly concerned about non-interference in internal affairs of other countries. I stressed that China had no connection with the Indonesian Communist Party—we did not even know whether there was such a party today. There had once been some

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>124</sup> Adam Wong, interview by author, Hong Kong, September 16, 2013.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Suar Suroso, interview by author, Nanchang, October 10 and 12, 2013. After the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, Suar Suroso was assigned to teach at a local university, and his wife, who was trained in medicine, at a local hospital.

Indonesians living in China, but most of them had left and probably only a few dozen remained. Some of these had retired; others were employed. We did not allow Indonesians living in China to engage in political activities.<sup>126</sup>

## Conclusion

During the Sino-Indonesian honeymoon period between 1960 and 1965, the Chinese central leadership made a great effort to form a strategic alliance with Indonesia in order to undermine the influence of the United States and Soviet Union in Southeast Asia. Indonesia was important to the PRC's "intermediate zone" strategy targeted at Asian, African and Latin American countries. With its unique combination of a friendly non-communist government, sizable overseas Chinese communities and large communist party, Indonesia provided China with an unusually good chance of pulling off a major Cold War breakthrough. In order to cultivate a sense of Afro-Asian solidarity with Sukarno, Beijing adopted a very cautious position during the anti-Chinese crises, preferring to prioritize its diplomatic relations with Indonesia over the protect of overseas Chinese. Beijing's Indonesia policy is a case that demonstrates well the radicalization of Chinese foreign policy in the first half of the 1960s. China denied any possibility for long-term peace and stability in the international system and vehemently condemned the Soviets' pursuit of détente with the United States. This general strategic thinking left little room for pragmatism and flexibility at the operational level of Chinese diplomacy in Indonesia.

From late 1964 to September 1965, Beijing used much of its political leverage to push for a scenario that suited its best interests in Indonesia—an adamant leftist government led by Sukarno and the PKI jointly, with the right wing undermined or eliminated. By offering military aid and the promise of nuclear-technology transfers, the PRC was hoping to take advantage of Sukarno's *Konfrontasi* with the Federation of Malaya and his eager pursuit of nuclear weapons. Ultimately, the Chinese leadership wanted to rally Sukarno's support for Beijing's efforts to weaken Western influence in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Beijing supported the proposal of the Fifth Force in order to help the pro-Sukarno forces

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<sup>126</sup> Qian Qichen, *Ten Episodes in China's Diplomacy* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), pp. 93-94.

(the PKI and the Indonesian Air Force) strengthen themselves against the right wing elements in the Indonesian Army. And by offering medical support to Sukarno, the PRC was able to monitor the President's health—Sukarno's condition became highly politicized before G30S—and to update the top PKI leaders with the most timely and precise information in this regard. Beijing was informed of Aidit's clandestine plan for G30S in advance, and most probably acquiesced to it. In the aftermath of G30S and during the Cultural Revolution, the CCP offered the PKI exiles shelter and means to make a living.

Beijing's actual impact on political developments in Indonesia in 1965 was very limited, however. The small arms the Chinese leaders offered to Sukarno for the Fifth Force had not arrived prior to G30S. The plan to transfer nuclear materials and technology was disrupted by G30S and never materialized. Sukarno's illness, persistent but not critical, did not directly trigger G30S. From late 1964 to early 1965, Aidit was probably making preparations for a political scenario without Sukarno. But immediately before G30S, it seemed most likely that some concerns other than an impending death of Sukarno rushed Aidit into action. Most importantly, Mao was not "the architect of the coup." A clandestine group within the PKI independently made the plan, which was then shared by Aidit with the top Chinese leaders in advance, and was carried out at a time that took Beijing by surprise. Last but not the least, the PKI exiles who stayed in China after G30S were mostly consumed with the political campaigns within the People's Republic during the Cultural Revolution, and thus unlikely to have joined the armed struggle of the remaining PKI members back in Indonesia.

## EPILOGUE

On May 6, 1967, 17 year-old Huang Huilan (黃惠蘭) boarded the ship Guanghua (光华轮) in Medan bounded for Guangzhou, South China. The Guanghua was dispatched by the Chinese Government to take back over a thousand ethnic Chinese expelled by the Indonesian Government in Aceh and North Sumatra in the aftermath of the G30S. The departure was a long awaited relief for many who witnessed the mass violence in 1965 and 1966. At the harbor of Medan, those on the ship bid farewell to friends and family on the shore, saying “See you in the motherland!” Tears were shed and the atmosphere was heavy with a mixture of conflicting emotions: the excitement of homecoming, sadness over separation, fear of uncertainties, as well anxiety about the unfolding Cultural Revolution back in China. Before the pro-Beijing Chinese-language school she attended—Mian Hua Middle School (棉华中学) of Medan—closed down in late 1965, Huang and her fellow classmates were immersed in the same revolutionary music and slogans used in political campaigns in the PRC. For instance, the popular revolutionary song that became a big hit during the Cultural Revolution, “Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman,” was translated into Indonesian and widely circulated.

Berlayar perlu juru mudi  
semua hidup oleh mata hari  
segar segar karena embun  
revolusi bersenjata mentari Mao Zedong<sup>1</sup>

After Huang boarded the Guanghua, intense “political education” started right away. The 5-day-6-night journey on the sea turned out to be a crash course on the Cultural Revolution. Huang and her fellow passengers were required to participate every evening in study sessions and to memorize “the three short essays written by Mao Zedong before the PRC was established” (老三篇) as well as *Quotations*

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<sup>1</sup> The English translation is: “Sailing the seas depends on the helmsman/ The growth of everything depends on the sun/ The plants were nurtured by the dews/ And revolution depends on the thoughts of Mao Zedong.” Huang Huilan, interview by author, Yingde Overseas Chinese Farm, Guangdong Province, August 17 and 18, 2013.

*from Chairman Mao Zedong.* Despite the preparation on the Guanghua and her engagement with China-oriented politics in Indonesia, Huang was utterly shocked and confused when she saw banners with slogans such as “Down with Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and Tao Zhu (陶铸)!” at Huangpu Port of Guangzhou at her arrival.<sup>2</sup> Political cleansing had never been part of Huang’s image of the Cultural Revolution when she was back in Indonesia.

As noted in my introduction, Liang’s departure signified a promising moment in the 1950s when the PRC was winning recognition as a rational, reasonable and responsible actor in international relations, whereas Huang’s departure marked Beijing’s entry to an era of complete radicalization of domestic politics and foreign relations. Indonesia was of great importance in the PRC’s turn towards the radical left in foreign affairs. In December 1963, in his political report to the second plenum of the seventh central committee of the PKI, Aidit proposed a theory that the world’s countryside would encircle the world’s cities.<sup>3</sup> This theory was incorporated into Lin Biao’s (林彪) widely circulated article, “Long live the victory of the people’s war,” two years later.<sup>4</sup> Lin proposed that the industrialized “world cities” in North America and Western Europe would be encircled by the uprisings of the developing “countryside of the world” in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This vision of China as the center of world revolution galvanized Beijing’s reckless handling of governmental relations with Indonesia after the G30S. On the ground, Yao Dengshan (姚登山), an ultra-leftist who enjoyed short-lived fame as the “red fighter diplomat” during the Cultural Revolution, mobilized local ethnic Chinese youth to confront the Indonesian army and right-wing student groups.<sup>5</sup> Yao himself disregarded diplomatic protocols by directly engaging in heated arguments with Indonesian army officers. By his order, the PRC diplomats

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> D.N. Aidit, *Set Afire the Banteng Spirit! Ever Forward, No Retreat!* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1964).

<sup>4</sup> Lin Biao, *Long Live the Victory of the People’s War! In Commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of Victory in the Chinese People’s War of Resistance against Japan* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> “Red fighter diplomat Yao Dengshan, Xu Ren, furiously condemned the horrifying crimes against China and the Chinese in Indonesia by the reactionary government,” *Renmin ribao*, 14 May 1967.

applied automobile oil to the flagpole in order to prevent the Indonesian army and right-wing student groups from snatching the PRC national flag.<sup>6</sup> The escalated tension culminated in violent physical conflicts between the two sides in the Chinese diplomatic compound in Jakarta, during which a Chinese diplomat suffered a gunshot through his lungs. The Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi commented on this incident: “The imperialists and the reactionaries fired at our comrades … the blood debts need to be paid back with blood!”<sup>7</sup> In the spring of 1966, Beijing started to oppose the Suharto regime through Radio Peking’s Mandarin and Bahasa Indonesia services. In April 1967, the Chinese foreign ministry issued “the strongest and most urgent protest” against the Indonesian Government’s maltreatment of PRC diplomats and “heartless persecution of the ethnic Chinese.”<sup>8</sup>

The volatile rupture of the Sino-Indonesian partnership reflected the paralyzed state of Chinese diplomacy and marked the beginning of fervent mass movements within China in the early stages of the Cultural Revolution. The *People’s Daily* labeled the turmoil in Indonesia as part of a “vicious anti-China, anti-Chinese wind all over the world” (国际反华的妖风) that required the Chinese people to further advance their revolution.<sup>9</sup> In late April 1967, over 600,000 citizens in Beijing protested in front of the Indonesian embassy. In August of the same year, mass organizations led by Red Guards from universities and middle schools violently attacked and severely damaged the Indonesian embassy, leading to retaliation from the Indonesian side.<sup>10</sup> The Chinese embassy in Jakarta suffered two massive attacks in August and October of 1967, suspending bilateral relations.

Moreover, in the PRC’s domestic political discourse, the ethnic Chinese embroiled in the

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<sup>6</sup> Kong Zhiyuan, interview by author, Beijing, July 18, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> “Comrade Chen Yi visited comrade Zhao Xiaoshou on behalf of the Central Committee of the CCP, Chairman Mao, and State Council,” *Shijie zhishi*, September 1966.

<sup>8</sup> Pu Weihua, “Ultra-left diplomacy during the Cultural Revolution,” *Er shi yi shi ji shuang yue kan* 95 (issue 6, 2006), pp. 36-45.

<sup>9</sup> “We have to debunk the new anti-China conspiracy of the reactionaries,” July 29, 1967, *Renmin Ribao*.

<sup>10</sup> Niu Jun, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo duiwai guanxi shi gailun* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2010), p. 204.

violence in Indonesia became symbols of the universality of the cult of Mao Zedong. In 1966, a clash broke out between pro-Beijing ethnic Chinese youth and the Indonesian military in Medan, resulting in the imprisonment of a group of 41 Chinese youth. After vehement protests from Beijing, the Indonesian authorities released them and sent them directly back to the PRC. Back in China, they were honored as the “41 young ethnic Chinese heroes.” In Beijing there was a welcome ceremony, which was attended by over 10,000 people. In 1967, they started a nation-wide tour to give speeches about how they relied on Mao’s thought to win the battle against the Indonesian reactionaries. The propaganda materials told their stories as follows: “While confined in the dark, noxious cells of the prison-house at the Medan base headquarters the young people studied and applied Chairman Mao’s works in a creative way. Inspired by the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung they braved violence and defied death and won brilliant victories in their heroic struggle against the reactionaries.”<sup>11</sup> In August 2013, on the Yingde Overseas Chinese Farm, Huang and her fellow returnees from Indonesia sang me the song composed in honor of the “41 young ethnic Chinese heroes”:

We are the overseas sons and daughters of the Chinese nation,

We are the youth of the Mao Zedong era,

We fought alongside the Indonesian people,

We continued our struggle in the prison,

Oh, my motherland, you are my biggest source of support!

I swear to you,

I will protect your glory and dignity,

at the price of my beautiful youth and my blood.<sup>12</sup>

This Indonesian connection to the Chinese Cultural Revolution stretched from the prisons of Medan, the ship Guanghua to rural Zhejiang Province, where the first PRC ambassador to Indonesia, Ba

<sup>11</sup> *Forty-one Red Hearts Are with Chairman Mao Forever* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1967).

<sup>12</sup> Huang Huilan and Chen Yinhua, interview by author, Yingde Overseas Chinese Farm, Guangdong Province, Aug 17 and 18, 2013.

Ren, was sent down for reeducation. Ba Ren remained deeply attached to Indonesia even after he was sacked from the position of ambassador in 1952. As if to seek solace from the harsh persecution and mental illness tormenting him, Ba Ren worked to revise the play he wrote during the Indonesian National Revolution—“Wu Zu Miao”(五祖庙 or “The Temple of Five Ancestors”). Ba Ren renamed the play “The Proletariat Who First Lit the Torch,” added new characters of ethnic Chinese Red Guards on a plantation in North Sumatra, long citations from *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong* as well as a new ending in which the ethnic Chinese Red Guards and the Indonesian people joined hands to burn down the plantation.<sup>13</sup> In 1972, Ba Ren passed away in destitution. In his will, he asked his family to bury half of his ashes in his native place and to scatter the rest at sea, so that the ocean waves would carry his spirits back to Indonesia.<sup>14</sup> Ba Ren was rehabilitated politically in 1979, and his *History of Pre-modern Indonesia* and *History of Modern Indonesia*—which were drafted during the turbulent years in the 1960s—were published posthumously and recognized as a seminal work of Indonesian studies in the Chinese-language.

On official terms, the story of Ba Ren, together with the tragedy that happened in Indonesia in 1965 and the collapse of the Beijing-Jakarta alliance have been deliberately erased from the historical memory of the general public in the PRC. However, the 200,000 migrants who resettled in China still carry with them vivid memories of their old social worlds in Indonesia as well as Indonesian cultural practices. Up until today, a dancing troupe active on the Yingde Overseas Chinese Farm in Guangdong has been frequently invited by the Indonesian consulate in Guangzhou to perform on behalf of Indonesia. The Xinglong Overseas Chinese Farm in Hainan has successfully transformed the cultural capital brought by the migrants into resources for developing the tourist industry. And overall, the growth of tropical products such as coffee, pepper and coconut on over 50 Overseas Chinese Farms all across South China changed the agricultural landscape of the region. The networks that connected the returnees to Southeast

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<sup>13</sup> Wang Keping, “Ba Ren and *Temple of Five Ancestors*,” *Xin wenzue shiliao*, issue 4, 2005, pp. 144-147.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Asia revived in the late 1970s and paved the road for China's economic reforms and opening to the world.

As this dissertation started with Chinese history taking place in Indonesia, it is coming to an end with previously unacknowledged Indonesian influences shaping the transformation of China from the mid-1960s to the post-Mao era. From the beginning of the Chinese Civil War and the Indonesian National Revolution to the coming of the Cultural Revolution in China and the authoritarian rule under Suharto in Indonesia, the human experiences in China and Indonesia were interconnected. The medium that brought the social histories of China and Indonesia together was the overseas Chinese. This dissertation reveals that the level of politicization of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia between 1945 and 1967 was much higher than previously noted. The Chinese had different faces in Sukarno's Indonesia: passive victims of racial discrimination as well as political activists who devoted the resources they had to the cause of China; pragmatic and shrewd capitalists as well as faithful supporters of a communist regime. They were acutely sensitive and responsive to the changing political landscape in Mainland China, and their political passion—which was closely related to their sense of self as an ethnic minority in Indonesia—might have even exceeded that of the PRC citizens back in China.

The larger geopolitical structure that brought the international histories of China and Indonesia together was the Cold War. This dissertation demonstrates that there were “two Cold Wars” going on in the China-Indonesia context: the “Red versus Blue” competition dominated the period between 1945 and 1960, and a political struggle that was more fully aligned with the Cold War division between the socialist East and the capitalist West emerged and escalated between 1960 and 1965. A major intellectual intervention of this dissertation was to present this Chinese side of the Cold War as centered on a struggle over the legitimate representation of China as a nation and a culture rather than on the bipolar pattern of alliance or the ideological competition between communism and liberal democracy. This attention to the legitimate center was so fundamental and essential to the ethnic Chinese on the ground in Indonesia that no one suspected its validity. As a result, the Chinese Civil War continued overseas despite Beijing’s efforts to de-politicize the ethnic Chinese in the 1950s.

By bringing in the dimension of human experience, this dissertation reconstructs the multi-level sociopolitical interactions between China and Indonesia, including those between top-level decision-makers and migrants on the ground, in contexts ranging from international relations to communal politics. I hope this dissertation will serve as the stepping stone for future work that also refuses to take the Chinese state as a given and is dedicated to exploring China's engagement with the rest of the world while the Chinese state was still struggling to define Chinese citizenship and locate the limits of mass mobilization.

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chubanshe, 2005.

## GLOSSARY

Ai Siqui		艾思奇
Ba Ren	also known as “Wang Renshu”	巴人（王任叔）
Chen Jiageng	Tan Kah Kee	陈嘉庚
Chen Linru	Tan Ling Djie	陈粼如
Chen Xingyan		陈兴砚
Chen Yi		陈毅
Deng Xiaoping		邓小平
He Xiangning		何香凝
Hong Yuanyuan	Ang Jan Goan	洪渊源
Huang Zhougui		黃周规
Jiang Jiadong	Tsiang Chia Tung	蒋家栋
Jiang Tingfu	Tsiang Tinfu	蒋廷黻
Ke Shouquan	Kwa Tjoan Soey	柯全寿
Lei Derong	also known as Liu Yan	雷德容（刘岩）
Liang Fengxiang	also known as Qian Ren	梁凤翔（千仞）
Liao Chengzhi		廖承志
Lian Guan		连贯
Lin Qunxian	Liem Koen Hian	林群贤
Liu Shaoqi		刘少奇
Mao Zedong	Mao Tse Tung	毛泽东
Niu Shu Chun	New Shu Chun	纽树春
Peng Pai		澎湃

Qian Qichen		钱其琛
Qiu Yuanrong		丘元荣
Siauw Giok Tjhan		萧玉灿
Situ Meisheng	Soeto Meisen	司徒眉生
Song Qingling		宋庆龄
Sun Yat-sen		孙中山
Tang Liangli	Thung Liang Lee or Tubagus Pranata Tirtawidjaya	汤良礼
Tao Zhu		陶铸
Wang Dajun		汪大均
Wang Jiaxiang		王稼祥
Wang Jiyuan		王纪元
Wang Jingwei		汪精卫
Wen Jingduo	Tony Wen	温敬多
Weng Fulin		翁福林
Wu Lixin		吴立信
Wu Qinming		吴钦明
Wu Tiecheng		吴铁城
Xu Suhun		许甦魂
Xia Yan		夏衍
Yang Xinrong		杨新容
Ye Gongchao	George Kung-chap Yeh	叶公超
Yu Dafu		郁达夫

Zhang Guoji	张国基
Zhang Xunyi	章勋义
Zheng Chuyun	郑楚耘
Zheng Manru	郑曼如
Zheng Yanfen	郑彦棻
Zhou Enlai	周恩来
Zhu Changdong	朱昌东
Zou Fangjin	邹访今

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Jing Bao	Keng Po	竞报
Sheng Huo Bao	Seng Hwo Pao	生活报
Tian Sheng Ri Bao	Thien Sung Yit Po	天声日报
Bao An Dui	Pao An Tui	保安队
Xin Bao	Sin Po	新报
Xing Zhou Ri Bao	Sin Chew Jit Poh	星洲日报