



The Great Mosque at Demak, North Java, during the campaign for the 1955 general elections. Photo: Claire Holt.

CLASS, SOCIAL CLEAVAGE AND INDONESIAN COMMUNISM*

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Interest conflicts among social classes provide the foundation upon which communist theories of revolution are constructed, and the strategic formulations of communist parties place heavy reliance upon class factors as motors of their political development. To a greater or lesser degree, however, specific communist movements have been affected in their strategies by the operation of other social cleavages impinging on the political process. Thus in the Russian revolution, the "war or peace" issue was a vital element in Bolshevik calculations; in China, Vietnam and Yugoslavia, the national struggle played a critical role in shaping lines of division to some extent cross-cutting class loyalties. The implications of these interactions for the ideologies of the parties concerned is a complex study, but I think it is true to say at least that class issues in each case have always continued to occupy a prominent role.¹

In the case of the Indonesian Communist Party under the Aidit leadership (1951-1965), on the other hand, we probably have the most outstanding example among major communist parties of a trend away from class strategy. The strategic concepts of the PKI were cast in terms of class theory, particularly in the early years after the assumption of the Aidit leadership, but the theory was increasingly "bent" to accommodate the influence of other bases of social cleavage upon the PKI's political work. The fundamental reasons for this ideological shift, it will be argued here, are to be found in the specific features of Indonesian social structure and political history and, in particular, the weakness of class "contradictions" in comparison with other bases of social conflict.

Class formation and class differentiation along a property line of demarcation (or, in Marxist terminology, based on opposed relationships to the means of production) are a relatively recent development in Indonesia.² In pre-colonial society, when

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1. The varying emphases in Mao's thought are discussed in many works, of which mention may be made of Benjamin Schwartz' Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1951) and Stuart Schramm's Mao Tse-tung (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966).
2. The following passages on pre-colonial and colonial society will in fact be confined to Java where PKI strength was concentrated and its political fate largely determined. The

agricultural activity occupied a role of dominance even more pronounced than is the case today, all land in theory was under the sole disposition of the ruler. The farming population, however, had exclusive use of most of the productive land, either through periodic allocation by the village head acting on the basis of customary rules or through customarily acquired hereditary rights. The peasants' use of the land was subject to the payment of taxes in kind to the ruler and his agents, and the performance of labor and military services for them. The ruling groups--the nobility and the *prijaji* or official class--were urban-dwelling for the most part and derived their incomes from a share of the taxation and services levied upon the peasants. But these rights were not proprietary in nature; they pertained to offices which themselves were not hereditary as a matter of course. The status and authority of the ruling groups, therefore, did not stem from the ownership of the means of production, but from the exercise, in the sovereign's name, of politico-bureaucratic power over the population. In other words, the crucial social division between rulers and ruled was not one based on property, but on the positions each occupied in relation to the king. Needless to say, the sanction of coercion was available as required to buttress legitimacy. While, as Anderson points out,³ this system was not strictly patrimonial in the Weberian sense, it was much closer to that pole than to the "feudal" system as it developed in Western Europe.

There were differences of landholding among the peasantry, based upon a division between those who were deemed descendants of the village founders and those who derived from later immigrants. So far as can be determined, however, these distinctions were not of sufficient dimensions to produce marked inequalities of wealth or antagonisms of a class character. Village communal values with their strong egalitarian ethos, seem to have kept such distinctions within a narrow compass. Peasant antipathy was mainly directed towards the ruling groups, whose exactions on occasion were keenly felt, and found outlet in rebellions led by dissident nobles and officials, or messianic prophets generally animated by deviant religious beliefs. These "class" struggles, however, produced no stimulus towards basic social change; their aim was limited to local redress of grievances or the support of dynastic usurpers. Consequently, neither the social system nor the value system was significantly affected, and basic changes in the social structure came, when they did, as a result of exogenous pressures.

analysis is derived from the writings of Schrieke, Van Leur, Geertz and Furnivall in the main.

3. Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture," to be included in a forthcoming book edited by Claire Holt tentatively entitled Culture and Politics in Indonesia.

Dutch colonial occupation, particularly in its later phases, substantially modified the Javanese social structure. The Dutch retained the traditional system of rulership over much of the island, but subjected the sovereigns to the will of their own administrative hierarchy. Early in the nineteenth century, the nobility and the prijaji were debarred from gaining their living directly from the peasantry, and were converted into salaried officials of the colonial administration. This measure could be carried out with minimal economic or social effects because the role of the indigenous ruling groups was not intimately bound up with the productive system. Any peasant antagonism towards the indigenous ruling strata was now concentrated upon their role as political agents carrying out exactions on behalf of and parasitic upon the foreign occupier. Thus the social basis was laid upon which the contradictions between the peasantry and their traditional rulers would find their principal ideological expression in nationalism rather than class antagonism. Additionally, the inhibition against entrepreneurial orientations implicit in the social role and value system of the indigenous ruling strata was strengthened by the premium placed on administrative status under the colonial system.

The impact of a more developed economic system upon the traditional society initiated greater variety and complexity in the Javanese rural structure in some areas, and particularly in West Java. Here social differentiation increased, and a class of landlords emerged, but, while the available data is sparse and often contradictory, their numbers are usually accepted as having been small and the average size of their holdings modest, at least until the last few decades.⁴ In much of the island, however, what has been termed agricultural involution was the outcome--an economic and social "retrogression" characterized by the "shared poverty" system described and analyzed by Geertz.⁵ In these villages, social differentiation and the development of class cleavages were inhibited.

The ranks of the landless laborers vastly swelled as the population grew. Some of them were absorbed into the foreign

4. See Karl Pelzer, "The Agricultural Foundation," in Ruth T. McVey (ed.), Indonesia (New Haven: HRAF, 1963). Useful summaries of the available data, with somewhat divergent interpretations, are also to be found in: Donald Hindley, The Communist Party of Indonesia 1951-1963: a Decade of the Aidit Leadership (Canberra: Australian National University, 1961), pp. 4-5; and Justus M. Van der Kroef, The Communist Party of Indonesia: Its History, Program and Tactics (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1965), pp. 7-9.

5. Clifford Geertz, Agricultural Involution: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia (Berkeley: University of California, 1963) and other works.

estates as permanent or seasonal laborers; others took their way to the burgeoning towns and cities; those who remained in the environs of the village were either employed as day laborers by landlords and richer peasants or engaged as share-croppers-- in any case, they were fitted somewhere into the shared poverty system, with its characteristic mechanisms of coping with increasing population pressure by ever more labor-intensive use of the land.

Trading and manufacturing classes (mostly confined to small-scale activity) expanded, occupying a position intermediate between the Dutch companies and the mass of the Indonesian population. Dutch policy directed this activity predominantly into the hands of the ethnic Chinese, however, hindering the development of an indigenous bourgeoisie. Part of the activity of the small entrepreneur was channelled into money-lending in the villages, but the resulting relationship did not establish a class nexus between the quasi-capitalist and the peasant; to the extent that antagonisms were produced by money-lending operations, they sometimes took racial forms, and in addition no doubt gave rise to diffuse resentments in the villages against urbanites, "blood-suckers" and non-traditional ways. In many cases, however, the lender-borrower relationship was "traditionalized," the creditor entering upon the role of paternalistic protector or patron of his client.⁶

The Dutch virtually monopolized large-scale manufacture, estate management, mining and overseas trade and finance. They also introduced and administered modern means of communication. This in turn produced a small proletarian class, the foreign identity of whose masters also overlaid incipient class feeling with nationalism.⁷ Around these enterprises and the new or expanded urban complexes, there developed a wide network of petty artisanship, trade and services, upon which a large proportion of the urban population was dependent for fringe employment. These latter represent no more than a semi-proletariat in Marxist categorization, notoriously difficult to organize and imbue with social or ideological discipline.

Finally, Dutch measures also called into being a modern-style intelligentsia, almost exclusively out of the families of the nobility and the *prijaji*. This social grouping, aroused by Western-style education to the opportunities that modern life-ways opened up, but denied under the colonial system sufficient outlet for their material expectations and status aspirations,

6. Hindley, *Communist Party*, p. 8. But cf. Karl Pelzer, "Agricultural Foundation," p. 126.

7. In 1930, there were some 350,000 workers in industrial enterprises employing more than 10 employees. Douglas Paauw, "From Colonial to Guided Economy," in McVey, *Indonesia*, pp. 178-179.

formed the elite core of the nationalist movement in the twentieth century. The intelligentsia were by no means homogeneous in outlook, however, their inability to found a common vehicle for the national struggle largely reflecting the strength of ethnic, religious and cultural cleavages in the society at large. Notably, too, this "class" failed to elaborate any but the vaguest goals beyond the achievement of national independence, even its most "radical" elements resting content with an anti-colonialist, anti-capitalist "socialism," and deferring further consideration of social objectives until the attainment of independence.

The later period of Dutch rule, then, virtually created property-based class relationships and interests, and did so then only to a limited extent. In propounding his theory of revolutionary social transformation, Marx had implicitly conceived of class cleavage as encompassing the whole or the greater part of the society, subsuming other lines of social division. This is surely the inference to be attached to that resounding phrase from the Communist Manifesto, "The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle." He also stressed the hegemonic role of the ideology of the ruling class in any social system, and in particular the protracted character of the process by which the modern working class acquires class consciousness (that is, evolves from a "class-in-itself" to a "class-for-itself")--a process accompanied by many blind alleys of "false consciousness" before the exploited find the right road to their emancipation.⁸ From Marxian premises themselves, then, we would expect to find class cleavages at the time of Indonesian independence occupying a rather low rating in comparison with other, older and more deeply-entrenched social divisions, a number of which, for various reasons, were intensified in the late colonial and early independence years.

So far as the workers and peasants are concerned, the available evidence tends to confirm this expectation. Union organization among the industrial and estate workers began as early as 1908, but did not become a significant force until taken in hand and developed by nationalist groups, including the Marxists, in the latter part of the next decade. The "brittle" character of union organization, and the tendency of its leaders and followers to oscillate between messianic enthusiasm and passivity, provided one indication of the rudimentary level of class consciousness prior to independence. Another was the failure of the working class to throw up leaders from among its own ranks, and its reliance instead for guidance upon the urban intelligentsia, whose concerns were related more to nationalist

8. See, for example, Bottomore & Rubel, Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy (London: Penguin, 1965), pp. 93-95, 191-194.

and party goals than to class demands as such.⁹ The village laborer and the poor peasant, needless to say, were still further from freeing themselves from the traditional patronage relationships which provided their security and their prevailing frame of social reference.

The PKI, after a brief period of efflorescence in the twenties, was effectively destroyed as an organization with mass connections following its abortive uprising against the Dutch in 1926, and did not re-emerge till after the outbreak of the national revolution in 1945. Then it quickly undertook the organization of the urban and estate workers, and, to a lesser extent, the village laborers and peasantry, mainly in the areas under Republican control. Union and peasant organizations with PKI influence appear to have been first in the field and to have gained a good deal of head start on the other political parties.¹⁰ This was not a time, however, for placing emphasis on class agitation. The PKI, largely made up of urban intelligentsia and *pemuda* (alienated youth), was part of a national coalition facing a desperate struggle to realize common national aspirations, and the accent of the Party's work therefore was upon moderation and cooperation with its revolutionary partners. In any case, only a small part of the industrial undertakings in the country were in Republican hands, and their operations were badly disrupted by the war. A significant change in party alignments and the character of political conflict in the Republican camp took place in 1948 under the stress of cold war pressures affecting the nationalist struggle. Communist tactics changed accordingly, and the PKI moved towards a more militant oppositional posture. After the adoption of Musso's *New Road* resolution in August, the PKI proceeded to tighten up its organization and to stimulate anti-governmental feeling among its followers. Its main reliance, however, was placed upon armed units whose grievances stemmed from a threatened demobilization.

In contrast to the direct approach which the PKI used in organizing the workers, its access to the peasantry (such as it was) seems predominantly to have been via channels of patronage, kinship and traditional influence.¹¹ Such an operational technique was not calculated to bring out latent class tensions in the countryside, but then it was doubtless dictated by the very

9. See Everett D. Hawkins, "Labor in Transition," in McVey, Indonesia, pp. 257-258, and, more generally, Ruth T. McVey, The Rise of Indonesian Communism (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1965).

10. Selosoemardjan, Social Changes in Jogjakarta (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1962), pp. 166-168, 172-173.

11. Ibid., pp. 169-171.

weakness of class factors in the villages.¹²

The Madiun affair brought this phase of PKI activity to an end, and in itself revealed something about the level of class consciousness among the lower strata. Although the PKI had by now a substantial trade union organization attached to it, the working class in general did not come to the Party's aid in its time of travail.¹³ Of equal significance, the conflict in the rural areas developed, not along class lines, but along the line of *santri-abangan* cleavages.¹⁴

In January 1951, the Aidit leadership group took over the shattered PKI and began to construct the elements of the strategy it was to pursue over the next fourteen years. The difficulties facing the young communist leaders were formidable. For the Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Yugoslav communists, war and national revolution had provided great opportunities for establishing their leadership of the forces of national salvation. But in the Indonesian case, by contrast, the communists had profited only temporarily from these conditions, and had been all but destroyed in their contest with opposed political forces. Far from emerging from the independence struggle with strong nationalist credentials, they were if anything

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12. Selosoemardjan, Social Changes, pp. 177-179, refers to a BTI (Barisan Tani Indonesia, Indonesian Peasants Front) initiative in land sharing in the Gunung Kidul region of Central Java, but from his brief description of the incident it appears to have owed more to millenarian traditions than to class consciousness.
13. See George McT. Kahin, Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1952), p. 266; Hindley, Communist Party, p. 133. Cf. PKI Chairman Aidit: ". . . in the second half of 1948 the counter-revolution succeeded in misleading some Communist supporters, whose numbers were quite considerable at that time." (World Marxist Review, Vol. II, No. 7 (July 1959))
14. See Robert Jay, Religion and Politics in Rural Central Java (New Haven: Yale University, 1963), pp. 96-97. Santri-abangan (lit. white-red) schism which rends the ethnic Javanese has its origins in the uneven impact of Islam on Java, as a result of which a minority of Javanese think of their religion as their main point of cultural reference, while the majority, although nominally Moslem, derive their values and religious practices from the traditions of pre-Islamic Javanese culture. The lifeways of each are often intensely repugnant to the other, despite the fact that the traditions are in fact intermingled among both. Generally on this subject, see Clifford Geertz, The Religion of Java (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1960), esp. pp. 121-130. Generally the "more Islamic" or santri tended to be anti-PKI.

suspect on this issue. In their comeback, they had to contend with power groups which themselves enjoyed the prestige and legitimacy deriving from their leading role in the national struggle, and in addition now disposed of significant governmental and power resources.

Social unrest and dissatisfaction certainly existed as a possible base for gathering support: the revolution had unsettled the pemuda generation especially, stirring in them diffuse resentments, undermining the hold of traditional repositories of authority, and arousing high expectations for the era that was to follow upon independence. The governmental elite was neither able to satisfy their expectations nor provide them with an integrative frame for their restless energies. This discontented mass was strongly susceptible to ideological appeals, but the conditions for converting their disenchantment into class outlook and action were anything but favorable.

As the PKI leaders read the situation, a strategy of armed agrarian revolution was ruled out by Party weakness and division, its lack of extensive ties with the peasantry, and the nature of rural schisms. Where was the Party to find a sufficiently powerful appeal that would alienate the peasantry from the ruling groups? How could it fend off the attacks of the army in overcrowded Java with its good system of roads, where the overwhelming bulk of its support was concentrated? Where would it set up rural bases, when the few areas suitable for such emplacements were mostly santri strongholds? Where would it find sanctuary, or a ready source of outside aid? Some Party cadres apparently favored abandoning the cities in favor of preparations for peasant armed struggle;¹⁵ but, although there were some areas where they may have found a following among squatters on government lands and estate workers, the long-term potential of such a strategy was hardly encouraging to a Party that had only recently been dealt a shattering blow by military and religio-cultural forces.

The prospects for oppositional activity based on the workers in the cities and towns were no more enticing. The Sukiman Government responded to a wave of union militancy in 1950-51 with a punishing series of raids on PKI and union cadres in August 1951, as a result of which the Party was politically isolated and its organizational efforts set back for one to two years.¹⁶ The workers at this time showed little preparedness to

15. See Aidit's "Report to the Fifth Congress of the PKI (1954)," Problems of the Indonesian Revolution (Bandung: Demos, 1963), p. 254.

16. See Herbert Feith, The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1962), pp. 187-191.

defend their arrested leaders.¹⁷ In view of the small size of the proletariat, its undeveloped state of class and political consciousness, and its vulnerability to governmental and army repression, the PKI leaders decided that the Party needed a top political alliance for the purposes of protection, even at the price of modifying drastically its reliance on class issues as a means of attracting support and exerting pressure in the political arena.

The decision was undoubtedly made easier for the PKI leaders by reason of their own radical nationalist orientation, acquired as pemuda leaders in the national revolution, but there was also a persuasive logic to it. On the one hand, the resources for an anti-elite struggle were demonstrably weak. On the other hand, the nature of intra-elite struggle, and the cleavage factors which nourished it, offered the Party possibilities of achieving the protection and opportunities for expansion it required. No doubt the leaders estimated at the time that, once the PKI's initial weakness was overcome, they would be able to revitalize the class struggle.

In the absence of strong class pressures, political parties and mass organizations organized their followings largely along lines of religious and cultural cleavage. The major elite groupings aggregated these cleavage bases, but intra-elite conflict also owed a good deal to differences in political values and styles, and to the divergent socio-economic interests which they encompassed.¹⁸ The latter were a very important source of conflict, particularly between the Masjumi, with its clientele of santri businessmen and Outer Islands export producers, and the PNI, with its base among the Javanese civil bureaucracy and the patronage it extended to a group of predominantly Javanese importers. Governmental and parliamentary disagreement over exchange rate policy and the role of foreign capital in the economy during the fifties expressed this divergence of interests. However, two aspects of this interest conflict need to be noted. In the first place, it ran parallel to, rather than cutting across, *aliran* (ideological and cultural streams) schisms, and thus became enmeshed with the value contestation at the ideological level. In the second place, the nature of the interest conflict was such that it served PKI purposes only within the context of the kind of nationalist alliance it was pursuing, and not in a class struggle context.

Hence, there was nothing "artificial" about the prominence of primordial issues in the political struggle, in the sense that they were merely whipped up by the elite factions as a

17. Hindley, Communist Party, p. 134.

18. These differences are discussed by Feith, Decline of Constitutional Democracy, pp. 129-143.

means of social control. There was no homogeneity among the elite to support such an interpretation, and the issues themselves not only had long historical antecedents, but were aggravated as a result of the traumatic social disruption caused by war and revolution.¹⁹

While groups among the political elite did manipulate social unrest for purposes of social control and their own advantage, they did so as actors whose values were themselves tied in with those of larger publics. While it is arguable that too low a rating has often been accorded to *economic interest* as a factor in the struggle among competing elite factions, no "single factor" theory of political conflict will suffice to interpret the complex and clouded history of the period.

The political process may be studied substantially in terms of elite group contest because, social unrest notwithstanding, the terms within which these groups set political conflict, and the control they exercised over its manifestations, were not challenged to any significant degree. The major exception--the Darul Islam rebellion (the extraordinary tenacity of which cannot be explained without reference to class-based differences) --nevertheless arose out of the same pattern of primordial and value conflicts which was expressed through the elite divisions. The PKI formed another exception, but only a partial one. On the one hand, the Party's mobilization of the workers and peasants potentially challenged the elite-centered nature of the political struggle, and its ultimate aims, in Lev's words, "threatened the entire social and political order."²⁰ But, on the other hand, neither the PKI leaders nor their followers were immune to the issues which sundered the elite formations. Specifically, the more that the Sukarnoists expressed their ambitions in radical nationalist slogans emphasizing "national unity" and "the uncompleted revolution," the more they plucked at sentiments shared by the pemuda generation which provided the leadership and cadre core of the Communist Party. The PKI leaders could not have swum against this stream, even if they had wanted to, since there existed no alternative basis upon which their movement could have gained headway against governmental and military hostility. As a result, in return for protection and a measure of freedom at the grassroots level, the

19. For a discussion of the factors involved in the frequent phenomenon of primordial "backlash" after independence in the third world, see Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution - Primordial Loyalties and Civil Politics in the New States," in Geertz (ed.), Old Societies and New States (Berkeley: University of California, 1963):

20. Daniel S. Lev, The Transition to Guided Democracy: Indonesian Politics, 1957-1959 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1964), p. 171.

PKI was obliged to moderate its class appeals and underwrite the "revolutionary" legitimacy and power claims of the Sukarnoists. PKI intervention in the political struggle thus tended to reinforce rather than transform the character of the elite-dominated contest.

These considerations set problems for any view which sees as *the* central issue in post-independence politics a threat to the elite posed by the social unrest which the PKI in part expressed.²¹ This unrest would only have posed a distinct threat to the elite if the dissatisfied (or a substantial portion of their number) had apprehended social circumstances and their own interests in terms significantly different from those in which intra-elite conflict was couched. Not only was this not the case, but neither the PKI nor any other prospective counter-elite saw the possibility of gaining advantage by attempting to organize social unrest in ways which cut right across the intra-elite pattern of conflict.

In particular, such a view must resolve the question of why significant sections of the elite were prepared to ally themselves with the PKI against other competitors and, after these competitors were eliminated from immediate power considerations, continued to sponsor the Party under Guided Democracy. Was it because these groups were convinced that they had the PKI leaders "tamed"? Or was it rather that they were confident that the PKI could not use its following to threaten the elite's position? Or again, were these groups themselves torn between the desire to assure their own dominance, and their attraction to the dynamic vigor of the PKI and the possibilities for national resurgence offered by communist prescriptions? Once again, the problems hardly seem reducible to a single explanatory factor, any more than the elite can be regarded as homogeneous.²²

The three main elements in the PKI's strategy were: 1) The cultivation of the closest possible relations with the dominant anti-Islamic nationalist groups (in particular, the PNI and President Sukarno). The original object of this alliance was primarily protection. Later, as other avenues of obtaining

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21. This view is advanced by David Levine, "History and Social Structure in the Study of Contemporary Indonesia," Indonesia, No. 7 (April 1969).
22. The disposition to regard problems of revolutionary change as explicable in terms of one central knot of "contradiction" which, once it is untied, will unravel all the other knots in the social structure, particularly belongs to the Leninist and Maoist variants of Marxism. The success of their revolutionary strategies in their own countries does not oblige us to accept the universal validity of their theorem.

power were cut off, the Party came to view it as holding the prospect of bringing it a share in governmental power under the Nasakom formula, from which it could, with the backing of mass pressure, enlarge its position in the political structures and eventually achieve hegemony either by invitation of, or a short sharp struggle with, its partners. 2) The accumulation of the largest possible membership and organized support. In part, this massive following was to be used as a "bluff" in order to enhance the Party's value as an ally and to ward off threats to it; additionally, it became an instrument for keeping the momentum of nationalism alive in tune with Sukarno's preoccupations. So long as the parliamentary system subsisted, the large mass following was highly relevant to PKI power concerns, but it is doubtful that the PKI leaders seriously expected to be allowed to obtain power through the ballot-box. In terms of the strategy, the size of the following was more important than its quality or "proletarian" composition, although of course these were also sought as far as was compatible with the more basic considerations. 3) According ideological primacy to symbols associated with nationalism and national unity. Concentration on these issues enabled the PKI to appeal to the widest common denominator of mass support and elite sentiment, and it tended to structure situations in such a way as to strengthen the position of all "radical" anti-Western groups as against their opponents.

The strategy was presented as a class alliance, uniting the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie against their common enemies, imperialism and its domestic agents, the compradore bourgeoisie, and feudalism. In reality, however, it was essentially a political alliance between the radical nationalists among the elite and the communists. Increasingly, PKI formulations began to recognize this fact more obviously, abandoning class concepts in favor of terminologies reflecting the politics of accommodation. The general trend may be represented by the following modes in which the PKI presented its political analyses:

The identification of the Party's political allies and opponents with incongruent social formations. The PNI, for all its bureaucratic, anti-entrepreneurial orientation, was treated as virtually equivalent to the "national bourgeoisie," while the Masjumi, which approached as closely as was possible in Indonesian conditions to a party of the "national bourgeoisie," was bracketed together with the PSI as "the compradore bourgeoisie."^{2 3}

23. Usually the attribution was implicit in the way the PKI described the respective "class" forces. But occasionally it was more explicit, as when Lukman referred to the PNI as "the main representative of the national bourgeoisie."
World Marxist Review, Vol. II, No. 8 (August 1959).

The adoption, in preference to class categories, of the Maoist formula of "left, right and middle forces," the infinite flexibility of which arises from the fact that each constituent element in the formula is itself capable of being divided in turn into "left, right and middle forces," and so on.²⁴

The acceptance of the three aliran of Nasakom as the substantial foundation of the "united national front."²⁵

The posing of the political struggle in terms of a conflict between a united people of all social strata, and foreign or foreign-dominated elements.²⁶

Class analysis did not disappear altogether, and in specific conditions (such as the land reform campaign of 1964-65) it regained some prominence. The overall tendency, however, was to jettison it or to attach class labels to non-class concepts. Likewise, while the Party used class appeals to some extent in mobilizing support, its massive following was mainly built up along other lines--identification of the Party with the cause of national unity and national revolution; association with prestigious organizations and individuals; welfare activities of various kinds; identification with "modernism"; the use of patronage relationships, especially in the villages; propagation of the achievements of the communist states; the attraction of a "total" philosophy; the prestige of a party free of corruption and demoralization, and knowing where it was going, etc.

Implicit in much of the PKI's appeal was the conformity of its notions to traditional Javanese concepts and values. As Anderson has pointed out, for example, the projection of politics in terms of *rakjat* versus "alien," which infused the communist approach to the ongoing nationalist crusade, possessed pronounced resonance in a society where "the urge to one-ness"

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24. See Aidit's "Report to the PKI Sixth Congress (1959)," Problems, pp. 314-317. Cf. Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1954), Vol. III, pp. 194-203.
25. Lukman, Tentang Front Persatuan Nasional (Djakarta: Jajasan Pembaruan, 1962), pp. 34-35; Aidit, "Untuk Pelaksanaan Jang Lebih Konsekwen dari Manifesto Politik," Bintang Merah, July-August, 1960, p. 308; Aidit, Revolusi Indonesia, Latarbelakang Sedjarah dan Haridepannja (Djakarta: Jajasan Pembaruan, 1964), p. 72.
26. Aidit: "The form of the class struggle in Indonesia at the present time . . . is a struggle of all the Indonesian people who are revolutionary against imperialism (monopoly capitalism) and feudal remnants." Harian Rakjat, August 20, 1964.

is central to political attitudes.²⁷ The abangan of central and east Java adopted the PKI as a vehicle for their interests, consequently deepening the rift which lies at the root of Javanese society by giving religious and cultural divisions a politico-ideological dimension.

Persistent attempts were made by PKI leaders, especially in later years, to convert the basis of Party allegiance to one of class by means of ideological education programs, but the effort encountered great obstacles in the multi-class nature of the Party's composition, the influence of traditional categories of thought, the persistence of outlooks conditioned by non-class cleavages, the Party's own strategy de-emphasizing class, and (it would seem) a disposition on the part of its following to show little inclination for prolonged study unconnected with perceived achievement prospects. Generally, it may be suggested that, in the absence of pronounced experiential factors promoting a shift in value-orientations, the imparting of new ideas usually results in the selective incorporation of those ideas into the prevailing value structure, rather than to the transformation of the structure itself.

The PKI's strategy brought it substantial gains in the fifties, in that its numbers and support grew prodigiously, the Masjumi and PSI were widely discredited and ousted from formal power positions, the most radically anti-communist officers were cashiered for their part in the regional rebellion, the Party won wide respect for its nationalist fervor, and the President bestowed upon it his patronage and protection.

The line pursued by the PKI leadership aroused some opposition and misgivings within the Party's ranks, but the fact that there took place no significant breakaway inside the Party or among its following, is confirmatory of the view that social unrest was not to any important extent ideologically demarcated from the cleavage issues which formed the basis of elite conflict.²⁸

The PKI's advance along the parliamentary road was rudely cut short when, in 1957, Sukarno teamed up with the army to replace the constitutional structure by a more authoritarian political system. To what extent was the transition to Guided Democracy a reaction on the part of the elite to the threat of

27. Anderson, "The Idea of Power."

28. Indications of some restlessness in the PKI with regard to its political line were given from time to time by the Party's leaders. See B. O. Hutapea's "Report to the Seventh Congress (1962)," Madju Terus! Dokumen-dokumen Kongres Nasional ke-VII (Luarbiasa) PKI (Djakarta: Jajasan Pembaruan, 1963), pp. 248-249.

PKI domination of the parliamentary system? Here again, multiple-factor analysis appears more capable of providing explanations than a single focus. Defense of the constitutional system by the communists' most determined foes among the political parties hardly seems consistent with the view that the PKI's challenge was the single dominating factor in the political crisis of the time. Alongside it, and perhaps overshadowing it, was the bitter conflict between the regional forces and their allies, on the one side, and the central government and its allies, on the other. (This presentation greatly oversimplifies a complex aggregation of cleavage bases on both sides, but it will have to suffice for our purpose.) Among the chief proponents of Guided Democracy, there were undoubtedly some who regarded the blocking of PKI progress as a major calculation; others, including President Sukarno, can I think be considered as viewing the problem more in terms of a threat arising from a number of directions to the integrity of the nation under their leadership.

The destruction of the parliamentary and party system, which was serving it so well, came as a heavy blow to the PKI. Once again, however, the relation of forces appeared to the leaders to leave them no alternative but to accept the new dispensation. To have resisted the changes would have left the Party isolated and acutely vulnerable, sandwiched between the bitterly anti-communist regional forces on one side and the President-army combination on the other.

Could the PKI have distanced itself from the Guided Democracy developments, refusing to go along with the changes but not actively resisting them, and counting on a combination of governmental ineptitude and economic decline to bring about eventually a pattern of conflict that would enable it to overthrow the regime? Assuming that such a posture did not provoke immediate and drastic repression, the very least the Party would have had to contend with would have been the loss of a great part of its popular support, the takeover of its mass organizations by army and/or Presidentially-sponsored fronts, and a substantial growth in military power. It is difficult to see that its prospects of success in these circumstances would have been any brighter than they were a few years earlier.

There is little to suggest that the workers and peasants of Java reacted to the changes from a class viewpoint, or could have been persuaded to do so. To judge by their public responses, they were swayed in their appreciation of the issues by the charismatic and traditional appeals of the President, and generally aligned themselves in accordance with aliran cleavages as modified by the political leaderships.

With evident reluctance, but outward enthusiasm, the PKI leaders chose to embrace Guided Democracy, heartened by the promise of Presidential protection, the persistence of conflict

between army and President, and the decline in the power of their party competitors. With the introduction of Guided Democracy, there took place a neo-traditionalist revival on the political plane, with the ruling cliques of prijaji origin reverting more openly to the ceremonial styles and patterns of status politics of old Java, and waging a contest for court favor and perquisites very much as their forebears had done. Politico-bureaucratic roles again became more exclusively the hallmarks of prestige. At the same time, class did move up somewhat on the ladder of social cleavage. The concentration of major industrial and commercial functions in the hands of state officials after 1957, and the tendency for economic undertakings to be viewed as the appanages of those to whom their management was entrusted, now created the potential for direct conflict of interest between the workers and the "bureaucratic capitalists," as the PKI dubbed the new administrators.

In the countryside, too, an important change was effected as a result of the passage in 1960 of the land laws and communist efforts to get the government to implement them. By proposing the transfer to landless peasants of land in excess of certain sizes, and setting limits upon the amount of the crop payable to landowners under sharing agreements, these laws laid the ground for a struggle between the interests of the rural dispossessed and the wealthier village strata.

The PKI's experience was to demonstrate, however, that class was still too slender a reed to support a major bid to change the political balance of forces. The position of the industrial workers (only about 60 per cent of whom were enrolled in PKI-led unions) was still one of acute weakness in the face of a hostile army officer corps now having a direct interest (via the nationalized enterprises) in industrial peace and buttressed by martial law powers. A large part of the industrial labor force was still semi-rural in character, and a high proportion consisted of female workers.²⁹ In addition, workers in state enterprises were dependent to a considerable degree upon government allocations of food, while in private undertakings there often existed strong "paternalistic" relations between employer and employee. In conditions of accelerating economic crisis and declining production, the falling living standards of the workers, rather than promoting militancy, strengthened their long-standing preference for security.³⁰

29. Everett D. Hawkins, "Labor in Transition," Hindley, Communist Party, esp. pp. 154-156, Lance Castles, Religion, Politics and Economic Behaviour in Java; The Kudus Cigarette Industry (New Haven: Yale University, 1967).

30. Castles, Religion, Politics and Economic Behaviour, esp. pp. 75-84.

The PKI appeared for a time in 1959-60 to be moving towards a more uncompromising anti-government stance involving the promotion of union industrial action. In this period, its attacks upon the government were the most intransigent that had been expressed since the early fifties and distinct rumblings were heard from the leftwing labor federation SOBSI. The aim appears to have been to force the Party's admission to the Cabinet, but the army clampdown on the Party following its July 8, 1960 critique of the government, put a stop to this militant shift and convinced the PKI leaders that "class interests must be subordinated to national interests."³¹ Neither the consciousness of the Party's following, nor the mood of the workers, nor the general political climate and balance of strengths, was conducive to an offensive in the cities. Although primordial cleavages were initially dampened down somewhat by the blow struck at regional and santri interests, the intense nationalist symbolism of the regime obscured and discouraged the expression of class interests from below. In addition, official "retooling" campaigns and pseudo-radical slogans held out to the workers phantom promises of the remedying of their grievances.

After its early disenchantment with militant oppositional tactics in 1959-60, the Party adopted a new variant of its established strategy. Using nationalism as its major vehicle for mobilizing the masses and cementing political alliances, it sought to impress the President and his entourage with its indispensability in attaining their ends, and so to gain entry to the key power structures. Although by September 1965 the PKI had not succeeded in its prime objective of seizing major levers of bureaucratic power, it nevertheless had proved its versatility and resourcefulness in overcoming many of the disabilities from which it suffered in the early years of Guided Democracy and placing itself in the center of future power considerations. The Party's leaders by this time enjoyed very close personal relations with the President, to the point of arousing great envy among their rivals. It built up an enormous mass following, gained preponderant influence in the official mass vehicle of the regime (the National Front), extended its organization on a national basis, and won widespread recognition of its patriotism and political capacity. From 1963 onwards, it was able to have "rightists" removed from many power positions, though not to destroy the structures which sustained and supported them (the army, the bureaucracy, NU, Moslem mass organizations, informal political cliques, etc.). The President was pursuing an increasingly leftward course, culminating in the formation of an "international front" with China and sharp breaks with Western powers headed by the United States.

Meanwhile the PKI had not altogether abandoned its quest for a militant base of support that it could use as an aid in

31. Aidit, "Madju Terus Menggempur Imperialisme dan Feodalisme," Harian Rakjat, January 2, 1961.

persuading the elite to acknowledge its claims to a more decisive role in the regime. Already by 1959, this quest had begun to shift towards the countryside, where the weight of army power was less pronounced. The Party spent the next four years trying to strengthen the class character of its rural organizations and preparing the peasants to stand up for their rights under the land laws. By late 1963, it judged the time ripe for a class offensive in the villages, the first decisive turn to a struggle hinged on class cleavages. The result was the *aksi sefihak* (unilateral action) campaign of 1964-65. This was a sustained PKI attempt to mobilize the poor peasants and share-croppers to assert their rights under the land reform laws of 1960, the implementation of which had bogged down under the weight of bureaucratic inertia and the resistance of interested persons and groups. The "actions" ranged from holding a deputation, presenting a petition, or staging a demonstration, to the unilateral seizure of land by force and the refusal to pay the landowner more than a certain percentage of the crop.

A thorough study of the *aksi sefihak* campaign remains to be undertaken, and many aspects of it (including the extent to which the PKI leadership was proceeding on the basis of its own appreciation of political conditions, or was responding to pressures from its rural cadres) are still obscure, but I would hazard the following tentative conclusions about it:

The PKI succeeded in developing a sufficient degree of class solidarity among the village poor, predominantly those of abangan persuasion, to support a fairly extensive campaign on Java, Bali, and, to a lesser extent, parts of Sumatra.

Bitter opposition arose to the *aksi sefihak* and the PKI among landowners and their clients. The opposition was stimulated and encouraged by *kijaji* (village holy men), Moslem organizations and many PNI local leaders. The religious sentiment of the *santri* was deliberately and effectively aroused against the "godless" who were threatening the lands of the *pesantren* (the Moslem religious schools, which in some cases did own quite a good deal of land, and in addition frequently served as "dummies" for Moslem landowners). Violent outbursts of Moslem resentment distorted the class character of the campaign and converted it in many areas into one of aliran discord.

Army and civilian authorities in local districts were generally on the side of the opponents of the *aksi*, either openly or tacitly. Traditions of village harmony and deference to authority also operated against the PKI.

Despite favorable intervention by the President, the anti-PKI forces appear to have gained the upper hand in the struggle; their long, pent-up passion and their solidarism, backed by local authority, made many peasants recoil from the discord which was fomented by the presentation of their demands.

By the PKI's own accounts, its rural organizations were by no means wholly committed to the aksi or disciplined in carrying it out. In 1964, PKI leaders were still complaining that wealthy elements at the local level were obstructing Party decisions.³² At the same time, critics of the PKI alleged that Moslem and PNI antipathy to the aksi was intensified by the PKI's "hypocrisy" in protecting its own landlord patrons from the effects of the land laws.³³

On the other hand, the Party's leaders became worried lest they had overplayed their hand. In May 1965, in the aftermath of the campaign, Aidit accused "some Party cadres" of having displayed impatience, adventurism and lack of concern for "national front" considerations.³⁴

The extent and violence of the Moslem upsurge seems to have come as something of a surprise to the PKI leaders. Yet it had been building up for some time. Political events from 1957 onwards had represented a major defeat for Moslem parties, business interests and religious concerns. Resentments rankled, particularly among the younger generation, who in reaction against the incapacity and compromising attitudes of their elders, developed a now-or-never spirit of uncompromising struggle against the communist advance, inspired by religious revivalism.³⁵ Communist and nationalist attacks on the HMI, the Moslem student organization, were one of a number of factors which led the Islamic youth to take to action in defense of their threatened interests, and the land reform issue, by adding to their insecurity, aroused them to violent attacks upon the PKI and allied organizations.

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32. PKI leaders expressed these views to me in November 1964. See also Asmu's Report to the National Conference of the BTI in September 1964, Suara Tani, No. 2, 1965.
33. I am indebted to Dr. Ruth McVey and Professor E. Utrecht for discussions which have helped greatly to clarify my understanding of the aksi sefihak campaign. Neither of them, however, is responsible in any way for the interpretation presented here. See also W. F. Wertheim, "Indonesia Before and After the Untung Coup," Pacific Affairs, Vol. XXXIX, Nos. 1 & 2 (Spring and Summer 1966), and "From Aliran Towards Class Struggle in the Countryside of Java" (Paper delivered at the International Conference on Asian History at Kuala Lumpur, August 1968); and (with special reference to Moslem reactions) Lance Castles, "Notes on the Islamic School at Gontor," Indonesia, No. 1 (April 1966).
34. See his report to the CC of the PKI, Harian Rakjat, May 12-14, 1965.
35. See Lance Castles, Religion, Politics and Economic Behaviour, pp. 67-68.

The PKI leaders, seeing feeling against them welling up in the PNI as well, and so placing their whole alliance strategy in jeopardy, were not altogether unhappy when a Presidentially-promoted compromise on the land issue was reached in December 1964. Thereafter, despite verbal offensives on land reform, the emphasis of the PKI's work shifted back to welfare and cultural questions. The aksi sefihak had stimulated class awareness in the villages, but this had not reacted to the Party's benefit; on the contrary, consciousness of their class interests had driven the landed elements in the Islamic parties and the PNI to mobilize aliran sentiment against the communists to a point where it posed serious dangers for them.

By early 1965, politics had become sharply polarized between those who were prepared to cooperate with the PKI, even to the point of sharing power with it, and those who were determined to block the communists' road. To many among the politically influential, there was a strong sense that "the revolution was moving ahead fast," in other words, that the future lay with Sukarno as head of the leftwing camp; additionally, polarization had brought many non-communist nationalists into a position where they had more to fear from the PKI's defeat than from its victory. Even among the PKI's allies, however, there were not a few who had private reservations about supping with the tiger, especially since they were not unaware of the fact that their way of life differed considerably from the ideals underlying communist moral discipline and, to a lesser extent, from the actual life-styles of the PKI leaders. As the year wore on, uneasiness about Sukarno's intentions and the country's foreign policy drift, compounded by the rundown in the momentum of Malaysian confrontation and drastic economic decline, manifested especially in a marked acceleration in the rate of inflation, induced a profound crisis in the society. The President, however, still held the political balance and he avoided or delayed taking those steps--admission of the PKI to administrative power positions, creation of a fifth armed force--which were being urged upon him from the left and which may have tilted the scales one way or the other. As rumors of Sukarno's ill-health gained currency, every faction began to look to their defenses; plot and counter-plot proliferated, and the soothsayers (traditional harbingers of dynastic collapse) were consulted with ever greater frequency. Time was running out on the PKI's patient strategy, and a class-based alternative had proved unworkable. The Party had hurdled most of the obstacles placed in the way of its climb to power, but it still had to contend with its longstanding enemies, the army generals, with their formidable machine of violence. The stage was thus set for the denouement of October 1, 1965.