

Thirty Years Later: Preface to the Indonesian Edition

(Also attached to the new E-Book version of the original English Edition)

For many years it would have been impossible or very difficult to translate, print and circulate this book in Indonesia. Hence I am particularly thankful to *Komunitas Bambu* for its initiative to finally publish and for its professional implementation of the project, to Harsutejo Sutedjo for his skilful and committed translation, and to Teresa Birks for her careful fulfilment of most of the assistance in the translation that I was not competent to provide. I am also thankful to *Komunitas Bambu* for making available an electronic version of the English edition which has been out of print since long.

Because of the held back contribution to the Indonesian academic and public discourse, the *Komunitas Bambu* and I agreed that the book should ideally be published without any other changes than the correction of minor mistakes, to thus also serve as a document of what could not be consulted inside the country. Yet, while the book was for many years, as the translator put it, ‘very dangerous reading material’ for Indonesians, it was now also quite scary for me to go through the text. Given that the analyses were produced more than 30 years ago (first published in Swedish in 1982 and then in English in 1984), I was bound to detect a number of embarrassing mistakes and possibly also to find several of the analyses to be weak and incomplete in view of the new sources that have become available and the new studies that have been published.

But it could have been worse. So we held on to the decision to publish without any other polishing than the correction of obvious mistakes.¹ Even out-dated facts were left untouched. For instance, Indonesia’s population has increased, Papua is no longer called Irian Jaya and several people mentioned in the text have passed away. But, the reader will be aware of all that.

Also, of course, new sources and more detailed analyses of a number of problems are now available. In 2006, for instance, John Roosa proved that the party chairman Aidit was involved in the 30th September Movement.² Back in 1982 I was only able to conclude that there were strong indications to that effect. Similarly, we know much more now of the developments in the 1950s and early 1960s, about the massacres and about the character of the social and economic transformation after 1965. Finally, I would certainly be able to improve on some of the interpretations and theoretical critique and propositions in the book thanks to new studies and insights. But I am not aware of anything important that is wrong and any conclusions that should be substantively altered. So in this introduction, I just want to make five clarifications and to draw the attention to the ways in which the original approaches, analyses and conclusions might still make some sense, thirty year later.

¹ Special thanks to Teresa Birks, John Roosa and Harsutejo Sutedjo for helping me to detect mistakes.

² John Roosa, *Pretext for mass murder. The September 30th Movement and Suharto’s coup d’etat in Indonesia*, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.

On Stalin, Musso and Aidit

The first clarification is in spite of the fact that it only relates to the historical background and, thus, is not crucial for the major arguments in the book. During the last few years there has been a discussion on the basis of documents that have been declassified in Russia about the importance of directions from Moscow for the PKI.³ On the one hand it is argued that the old communist leader Musso did not return to Indonesia in 1948 with specific orders from Moscow, which many politicians and scholars have stated. On the other hand it is maintained that a few years later Stalin really did direct the policies of the new leaders including Aidit, who would thus have been less independent and pioneering than what has been argued in some books, some say including in mine.

In the case of Musso, my brief formulation that he carried along ‘Zhdanov’s line and Moscow’s new tougher view, which was partly influenced by the Chinese revolution’⁴ did not support the conspiratorial position about clear-cut directives from Kreml which Larisa Efimova has now proved to be invalid. It is true that I did not discuss the details; but that was because the only thing that was important to convey as a background for my purposes of analysing the problems of the renewed strategy and analyses after 1951-1952 was that Musso, with his own views and quarrels with other communist leaders, was interested in being designated in Indonesia as a legitimate conveyer of Moscow’s views and that he was inspired by the new ideas of a bi-polar world as well as by developments such as the Chinese revolution and the communist take over in Prague, from which he left for Indonesia a few months after the Gottwald coup.

In the case of Stalin, my points in the book that the PKI’s new policy in early 1952 was primarily driven by its own analyses of the situation in Indonesia, that the party was also a pioneer internationally and that Moscow was not very interested in Indonesia⁵ has obviously been possible to interpret to mean that I also argued that the party was theoretically innovative and that Stalin’s views were not important, but that is not so. It is good that Larisa Efimova has now proved that Stalin engaged personally in advising the PKI leaders that they should tune down their extreme positions and focus on people’s daily problems and on demands for so called bourgeois democratic land reforms (in terms of land to the tenants against ‘remnants of feudalism’) rather than also discussing more radical demands. But to reach a balanced conclusion of what made PKI change its line in 1951, it is also vital to recall that Moscow had come to focus more on India in trying to gain new friends (such as Nehru) after the Chinese revolution and during the war in Korea. Similarly one needs to consider that Stalin’s advice to the PKI was also not as decisive for the party as in the case of India.⁶ And in any case there was only a written message in February 1951, which, moreover, was sent via the Chinese party, which did not forward it until quite later. And the very meetings in Moscow regarding Indonesia

³ Larisa M. Efimova, “Who Gave Instructions to the Indonesian Communist Leader Musso in 1948?,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 31, 90 (July 2003): 171–189; and “Stalin and the Revival of the Communist Party of Indonesia,” *Cold War History* 5, 1 (February 2005): 107–120, and Larisa M. Efimova, with introduction by Ruth T. McVey, “Stalin and the new program for the communist party of Indonesia”, *Indonesia* 91 (April 2011): 131-163.

⁴ P.61 in the English edition.

⁵ P 51 and 72 in the English edition.

⁶ Andreas Hilger, Anna Locher, Shana Goldberg, Matthias Pintsch (eds), *Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security (PHP) Introduction, Indo-Soviet Relations Collection*, September 2008 www.php.isn.ethz.ch (accessed April 2011)

was in late 1952 and early 1953, i.e. almost two years after the major meetings with the Indians, and well after the PKI had altered much of its strategy. Hence, while it may now be added (thanks to Efimova) that Stalin engaged personally in advising PKI's new strategy, I think that the main points in my book in this respect remain valid: (a) that the most vital change of strategy in favour of less confrontation and more cooperation with the nationalists and Sukarno was because the party was once again facing repression and that the new leaders did not want to repeat Musso's mistake in 1948, but that they were young and of course also had to find a way of legitimating this new position ideologically, like Aidit had done when taking over the leadership in the party by inventing a trip to Vietnam and China and by now referring primarily to Lenin's *Left-wing Communism – an Infantile Disorder*; (b) that while PKI was not theoretically original it was indeed pioneering in quickly, innovatively and successfully implementing the renewed ideas in the communist movement, including, once again, in comparison with the then much more important Indian party; and (c) that the new PKI leaders tried to combine Lenin's tendency of emphasising actors' political positions in judging what alliances that the party should enter into with Stalin's deterministic formulas and some of the Chinese notions about comprador capitalists and main focus on the peasants.

The other four clarifications that I want to make are more important for the conclusions in the book. They concern the approach, the sources, and the basis for centralisation of surplus in agriculture by political means and through the state rather than by concentrating land, as well as the implications of the PKI's debacle for social democratic theory. These points will therefore be addressed in relation to the major question in this preface as to whether and how the analyses and conclusions in the book remain relevant.

Is it still valid?

What if any would be the academic and public relevance of this old book when the Party is no more there, when communism has lost out, when the political implications of Marxist analyses have been refuted (even if historical materialism has been accepted as an analytical tool), and when we know so much more about Indonesia and radical politics and social movements theoretically and empirically, including in comparative perspective? Maybe the book remains relevant as a contribution to the discussions of:

- (1) concerned scholarship,
- (2) comparative versus area- or cultural based studies;
- (3) *why* some PKI leaders were involved in the 30th September Movement; and
- (4) the implications of PKI's problem for Marxist inspired analysis and radical politics.

Let me discuss these points briefly, one by one.

1. Concerned scholarship

The book is about how a party and its related popular organisations tried to use Marxist theory to analyse the problems and options of reaching their aims by way of an efficient strategy. These were (and still are) contentious issues in academic and public discourse. A major dilemma is if it possible to combine engagement and solidarity with popular

aspirations on the one hand and uncompromisingly balanced and critical academic analysis on the other? My book was an attempt in this direction, and perhaps it may still be useful as an example, for good and for bad. Let me therefore clarify how I thought (and think) that such a combination is possible.

The orthodox academic position is that (a) the topic of basic- as opposed to applied research should only be decided with reference to what is needed in order to supplement or improve previous findings, and (b) that there is a need for analytical tools which are independent from the theories or strategies under review.

Partially my book took issue with this. I maintained that the topic of the research should first be selected instead on the basis of a public discussion of what is most important to focus on. Only thereafter should one consider, as usual, what theories and results are already available within this theme and take them as a point of departure for best possible contribution to both the public and the academic discourse.

In principle I would still defend this position. The identification of what problems should be studied is to a large extent shaped by relations of power and predominant perspectives and therefore scholars should resist it and carve out as independent positions as possible. Today it may be less important to criticise the orthodox academic position, given the increasingly common practice that politicians and activists, and technocrats and businesspeople set the agenda of the research in general, including, I am afraid, in Scandinavia. But even then I would argue that it is better to be explicit about the normative factors and to fight for the widest possible right of the scholars to conclude from public and academic discourses what questions should be addressed than to defend the orthodox position that the powerful establishment set the agenda is only a problem within applied research.

In any case, this study would never have been carried out without the freedom at the time of the individual academician at the Department of Political Science at the University of Uppsala to pick the theme on the basis of the primacy of the argument in both the public and academic discourse and to get basic funding on the basis of academic qualifications only.

With regard to independent analytical tools, moreover, my argument was (and is) that it is not just possible but also to the benefit of the best possible academic research to begin a study of a controversial thesis and strategy on their 'own terms' and to only apply independent analytical tools in the critique when this has been proved to be necessary. In the book, the point of departure was the identification of certain weaknesses in PKI's analysis. This had been done by relating problems of strategy to their roots in the underlying assumptions and studies of reality and by then comparing these theses with what was known about actual reality from independent research. Having located thus the problems, my argument was that the best possible academic study of such pros and cons of a party's analysis and strategy, or for that matter of any thesis, should *not* start from an alternative theoretical perspective. Rather it should begin by first finding out if the weaknesses that had been located in the analysis and strategy could have been overcome by using the same concepts and theory in a better way and with more of the information that was available at the time. Only if and when that was *not* the case was there a need to develop alternative concepts and theory.

In other words I suggested that it was not particularly fruitful to begin by applying an 'independent' non-Marxist theory to criticise a Marxist analysis. Irrespective of ones

own sympathies, one should instead first find out if a better analysis could have been carried out with a Marxist toolbox. Only thereafter, when one may have found that certain crucial factors and actual developments could not have been considered in a fruitful way – only then should one try alternative concepts and theories, and if necessary try to develop new. Meanwhile, the studies may thus also contribute to fair and constructive critique of (in this case) radical politics.

Of course some of the colleagues and activists who could not use my results for their own purposes have ignored my book or labelled it partisan. But given the lack of substantiation, I rest my case.

2. The pros and cons of comparative analysis in theoretical perspective

Research on Indonesia is dominated by area studies focusing on in-depth interpretations based on the knowledge of ‘local’ culture and language. Comparative and theory driven studies where interpretations are instead grounded in the knowledge of related developments (with similar or different outcomes) in other contexts are often looked upon with suspicion. What are the pros and cons of the latter? As my book might serve as an illustration, for good and for bad, this is where I want to make another clarification.

What constitute good research on political problems in Indonesia? To what extent does it have to be based on ‘primary’ sources (including notes from the field) and to what extent can it be based on interpretations of data and conclusions that other colleagues have already collected and arrived at as well as on the basis of comparative studies?

In my view the answer depends entirely on the problem that shall be addressed. As already argued, the identification of the problem should be based on what is relevant in the academic *and* public discourse. In this case there was no academic need to write yet another contextually rooted book about the problems of the PKI. David Hindley, Ruth McVey, Rex Mortimer and others had already done so. Of course, one should ideally have added in-depth historical accounts based on news clippings, additional documents and memories (by way of oral history). But during the 1970s when I collected most of my information this was next to impossible. Academically there was rather a need for systematic and transparent comparative analyses based on theories (i.e. concepts and systems of making interpretations and drawing conclusions) that were well accounted for. In the international public discourse, moreover, Maoism was widely subscribed to and the failure of the PKI was often said to be because it had not been Maoist enough. I was sceptical; and anyway the Maoist claim (which was also supported by some leading scholars and their disciples) called for a critical analysis of the Indonesian experiences in such a way that it would be possible to discuss the implications and lessons for others as well. So the conclusion was obvious: I should give priority to a comparative study.

Some of the consequences call for a few additional comments. The first was that I limited the empirical point of departure to the primary sources that were possible to get access to. These were party documents from congresses, meetings, magazines, newspapers that were available in libraries and international collections. It was also possible to draw on some sources that were accounted for in previous research, such as, in the case of Indonesia by Hindley, Mortimer and McVey, and internationally by Françoise Carrère d’Encausse and Stuart R. Schram.

Yet of course I would have liked to collect much more information from the field by way of documents and especially interviews. And finally I was able to add some few

interviews inside and outside Indonesia with well informed former activists and politicians. Because of the ignorance of these matters in Sweden and, most importantly, the difficult conditions in Indonesia, these interviews could however only be made at a relatively late stage of the research (around 1979 and 1980) when there was an opening in Indonesia and when a number of political prisoners had been released. The interviews were mainly to supplement the written sources and my interpretations of findings in the available literature, as well as to get comments on my preliminary analyses and if possible to add new information on the party's (and related movements') policies and politics. In the book it was impossible to disclose the names of most of these informants and I still hesitate to do so because of previous promises. The character of the informants was however indicated in the footnotes. And I guess that it is no secret that the most important initial guides included Carmel Budiardjo, Michael van Langenberg and Sitor Situmorang in addition to the late Joesoef Isak and Siauw Giok Tjhan. Once again, my sincere thanks to them as well as to all the other important informants and scholars that they introduced me to!

The second consequence was that I limited most of my studies about the actual developments to secondary sources, i.e. to the findings of other scholars and to institutions such as the World Bank. Moreover, the focus and selection of what was deemed to be relevant information in these sources was based on the aim of finding out to what extent the assumptions and predictions of the communist movement had proved valid.

These ways of focusing and limiting the studies and the project made it realistic. But the third consequence was a number of drawbacks. The necessary priority to the analyses and strategies that could be documented meant that I could not study local and contextual implementation. It was impossible for political reasons in particular to collect more information in the field. And with very few exceptions it was unrealistic to carry out primary empirical studies of the actual developments. The best I could do in the latter case was to read as much as possible of relevant Indonesian *and* comparative studies and to make supplementary interviews with the most knowledgeable scholars. Hence it was more important to read yet some books and articles, and to ask yet a few scholars for supplementary information, than to study language and culture. Fortunately most informants and scholars understood and accepted this and were very helpful and patient. (But of course felt uncomfortable and later on redirected my research for many years to the Philippines and India. And when taking up comparative studies on Indonesia again, I gave priority to as close as possible cooperation with Indonesian scholars and activist researchers to get as close contextual information as possible, including in order to compensate for the problems of comparative studies and insufficient personal capacity.)

3. Why was Aidit involved in the 30th September Movement?

It has become increasingly common to explain PKI's collapse by stating that Aidit's betrayed the party and the movements when he secretly engaged in the adventurous 30th September Movement. This, however, is to avoid the more fundamental question of why he engaged in the manipulations in the first place. The major arguments in this book suggest that Aidit's involvement was rational, given the party's defunct strategy. Thus the fundamental problem was not his actions but why the strategy was ineffective.

The basic assumption for this conclusion was that a necessary (but of course not sufficient) condition for parties like the PKI and affiliated movements to be successful is that their Marxist oriented analyses of the economic and political dynamics and thus formed strategies are appropriate and fruitful. If there are no major problems with the analyses and strategies however, or if reasonably sufficient knowledge had simply not been available to develop such guidelines, one should at first hand search for explanations among harsh conditions such as neo-colonialism, the cold war, the strength and politics of the adversaries, and the perceptions and mistakes by leaders such as Aidit, even by way of constructivist approaches. But this was not the case.

The first major argument in the book is instead that Aidit's regression into the dynamics of the young militants' avant-garde politics of the 1940s (which at that time even included the kidnapping of Sukarno to make him proclaim Indonesia's independence) was not only an unfortunate individual mistake. More basically, and no matter how Aidit reasoned, some measures were necessary to weaken the anti-communist military leaders. Because in fact, while the party and its movements seemed quite successful on the level of rhetoric, their strategy since about 1958 of setting aside 'bourgeois democracy' and to link up instead with Sukarno's 'guided democracy', land reform and anti-imperialism had not really altered the balance of power but even strengthened the military's grip of the economy and the state.

The issue of democracy has been neglected for long in the debate about the failure of the PKI, the massacres, the rise of the 'New Order' as well as the struggle against it. In leftist circles the focus has rather been on the deficiencies of individual leaders, including and that they set aside 'proper' Maoist strategies. The conclusions in this book were not immediately useful to any of the contending parties and often ignored. More recently however, Max Lane has also pointed to the problem that the PKI gave up on democracy in the late 1950s and early 1960's by supporting Sukarno's 'guided democracy' and finally not even complaining about cancelled elections but also bolstering the prohibition of critical parties and politicians and even artists. Thus the party gave up on the 'bourgeois democratic' protection and the obvious change of winning elections and of isolating the army and preventing it from taking up leading positions in the economy and civil administration, as well as from getting the support of the political opposition and the United States.⁷

It would certainly have been difficult to abstain from the protection of Sukarno. But we know from India in the mid 1970s that while its old Communist Party held on to Mrs Gandhi's state of emergency and her protection in much the same way as the PKI

⁷ Not in Max Lane, *Unfinished Nation: Indonesia before and after Suharto*, London and New York: verso, 2008, but in his *Catastrophe in Indonesia*, London, New York and Calcutta: Seagull, 2010, especially pp. 41-51.

did, the more forceful break away Communist Party-Marxist linked up instead with a number of 'bourgeois forces' in support of democracy and weathered some repression while also mobilising popular support behind its own more radical social and economic reforms. And taken together this contributed to the termination of the emergency, to the defeat of Mrs Gandhi and to the fact that the Marxist party could lead a number of Left Front state governments in both West Bengal and Kerala.⁸ It is true that the Indonesian army was much more prepared to intervene in politics and repression than its Indian counterpart. But the lack of communist protection from Sukarno could possibly have been compensated, as already indicated, by broad political alliances that would have made it difficult for the army to gain full support of the political opposition and the West.

Besides, it would not have been impossible for the communists to struggle for democracy while holding on to Sukarno and his reintroduction of the constitution of 1945 as well as to balance the elitist political parties with a system of interest based representation. As Max Lane points out,⁹ the constitution of 1945 allowed for human rights and elections; and by contrast to Lane I would also argue that it would have been possible to struggle for a combination of liberal and interest based democracy (such as in Scandinavia) instead of de facto accepting Sukarno's 'guided democracy', which Suharto could later on later on transform into patrimonial and military guided state-corporatism.

Yet, what remains unexplained is why PKI (and not just Aidit) gave up on democracy. This takes us to the second major argument in the book, which is that the problems of strategy in turn were based on poor analysis of the accumulation of power and capital in Indonesia and of how people would be able to resist it and build alternatives; poor analyses which in the final instance rested with the insufficiencies of the Marxist theories that were applied by the PKI.

To trace the root causes for the major strategic problems one needs to begin with PKI's tendency from the early 1950s and onwards to identify with Lenin the powerful actors that turned against imperialism and feudal-like structures in terms of a so-called revolutionary bourgeoisie – but to then upgrade these actors into Stalin's more rigid notion of national bourgeoisie. According to Stalin's deterministic formula, the 'national bourgeoisie' was more defined on the basis of businessmen and professionals in the economy with a supposedly 'objective interest' in turning against imperialism, fighting 'remnants of feudalism' and even promoting 'bourgeois democracy' because they had no other alternative, if they did not wish to become collaborators. The 'national bourgeoisie' (especially the so called big national bourgeoisie) would certainly hesitate, but when people found out about that, the communists would be able to shoulder the 'bourgeois democratic' mission and later on put socialism on the agenda. The problem with the equation however, was that in reality the somewhat entrepreneurial oriented actors were often close to the West and quite anti-communists while the nationalists were not very production oriented and used instead their radical politics and administrative power to

⁸ O. Törnquist, *What's Wrong with Marxism? Vol. 1: On Capitalists and State in India and Indonesia. Vol. 2: On Peasants and Workers in India and Indonesia.* New Delhi: Manohar, 1989 and 1991.

⁹ Lane 2010 op. cit. p.44; c.f. also O. Törnquist, *The Next Left? Democratisation and attempts to renew the radical political development project – the case of Kerala.* (with P.K. Michael Tharakan) NIAS, Copenhagen, 1995. (Also with the title "Democratisation and the Radical Political Project in Kerala" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXI: 28, 29, 30, 1996.)

enrich themselves. And when the supposedly progressive nationalists who were drawing on their positions in state and politics were taken aboard in PKI's calculations (supported by Moscow's new ideas in the late 1950s of 'non-capitalist development') as substitutes for the vacillating 'national bourgeoisie', most politicians, administrators and officers of this kind used instead radical nationalisations and monopolised control of state regulation, assets, credits, investments, prices and jobs as well as of labour and trade unions for so-called primitive accumulation of capital and appropriation of economic surplus.

These strategic problems in turn were due to weaknesses in basic Marxist theory. In Marx' model of the rise of classical private capitalism in Britain in particular, primitive accumulation of capital refers mainly to the appropriation of land and other means of production from peasants and artisans by strong private actors supported by the state. Thereby the basic means of production were turned into capital (that could be invested) and labour into commodities (that could be exploited), which enabled capitalist accumulation of capital. In Indonesia and many other post-colonial countries, most of the private dominant actors were too weak to act in a similarly forceful way. But that did not mean that they had to chose between on the one hand turning into lackeys of old colonisers and new imperialists, or on the other hand engaging in the 'national bourgeois' or 'non-capitalist' projects envisaged by the PKI. On the contrary: while not being able to dispossess most people of their land and other means of production, the dominating actors were any way capable of using politics, state and military coercion to accumulate indirect control of land, many small businesses and natural resources – and thus also much of the surplus produced in these sectors – as well as of course to nationalise and/or take advantage of foreign owned companies in addition to foreign aid. And while the PKI did initiate research (led by Ina Slamet) in the late 1950s and early 1960s which identified more complicated forms of exploitation and thus helped coining the concept of 'seven village devils' rather than landlords only, and when the leaders also picked up on the Chinese concept of 'bureaucratic capitalists' to characterise its new adversaries, the party never acknowledged the prime base of their adversaries was in the control of politics, state and coercion rather than in links to landlords and imperialists whom PKI continued to regard as the main enemies and tried to weaken by way of supporting Sukarno's land reform, nationalisation of foreign companies and generally radical nationalism.

The consequences for PKI's strategy were devastating. The 'national bourgeoisie' and the state leaders that stood behind or at least accepted Sukarno did not act as expected. When the communists constrained militant labour activism to build a social pact with the 'national bourgeoisie' and supposedly progressive nationalists in the state apparatuses, little happened in terms of dynamic investments and growth, only in severe economic mismanagement and crisis. And protests against looting and corruption resulted in repression and the risk of losing Sukarno's protection. When the communists mobilised more and more people for nationalisation of foreign companies and anti-imperialist policies in general to thus undermine the strength of the so-called bureaucratic capitalists (because their power was supposed to rest with foreign capital and Western powers), the leading military in particular continued to nationalise and to gain control for their own purposes of more foreign companies and state resources. And when the communists primarily supported the idea of winning a majority of the population by demands for Sukarno's land reform to stop concentration of land and undermine the

strength of the landlords, there was not much concentrated land in the hand of a few landlords to distribute; and it was very difficult to avoid infightings among small landholders, tenants and labourers who were subject to the complicated means of exploitation, including by the 'seven village devils'.

In the book I try to specify the political roots of these odd means of exploitation in terms of primitive accumulation of capital to centralise surplus rather than to concentrate land (the means of production) and turning peasants into labourers and investing capital; and I would still hold on to the distinction. Yet I could have spelt out more clearly why Slamet's fine research and the concept of 'seven village devils' did not solve the problem because the political roots of the complicated forms of exploitations remained unclear and Sukarno's land reform was still given priority to. And given that some formulations could have been more exact, I also like to make another clarification by emphasising that although it is true as I write in the book that parts of the centralisation of surplus was made possible by the predominance of small and often unviable farms, this is of course not the main factor but rather that patrons, strongmen and others had gained political, administrative and related powers to dominate and exploit the small producers (and traders). This argument comes out more clearly in a follow up study (which was also published in 1984) on how the previous comparatively benevolent and constrained extraction of surplus through political and administrative resources had become brutalised after 1965/66 with the support of the state.¹⁰ My conclusion was therefore that the main enemy for most people within agriculture had become the state and those in command of it rather than landlords and strongmen with their main base in their own properties and in private-capitalist oriented production.

So in short the basic problem was not that Aidit betrayed the party and engaged in secret and adventurous elite struggles but that there were rational reasons to do something extraordinary because the fundamental party strategies had been undermined, which in turn was based on insufficient Marxist tools to analyse the predominant post-colonial primitive accumulation of capital and appropriation of surplus thanks to the monopolisation of politics and state and the instruments of coercion; and this in turn paved the way for the rise of authoritarian capitalism under Suharto.

What are the theoretical and political implications?

4. Challenges of critical analyses and radical politics

Indonesia and the PKI was a critical case for Marxist oriented theories and strategies. The PKI was strong and innovative. Indonesia was not an unusual context. The party made use of mainstream Marxist analyses and strategies that were supposed to be valid in similar contexts; and the same applied to for instance Maoist' critics. So if one found that the dilemmas and the destruction of the party and the mass movement were related to elements in any or several of these perspectives it would be a robust indication of what was wrong with the theories and strategies in general. Later on empirical evidence from

¹⁰ O. Törnquist, *Struggle for democracy - a new option in Indonesia?* Report on contemporary Indonesia within the project "Problems of radical political strategy under the rise of a new capitalism. South and Southeast Asia in a comparative perspective", Uppsala: The Akut-series no. 33, Uppsala University 1984.

comparative studies suggested also that the Indian and Philippine communists had experienced similar difficulties in various ways and contexts.¹¹

To recapitulate, the theory was that dynamic capitalist development was blocked by colonialism, imperialism and their local compradors and feudal-like allies in countries like Indonesia. Consequently a ‘national bourgeoisie’ and nationalist politicians and state officials were expected to fight these hindrances and even open up for ‘bourgeois democracy’ to gain popular support. And when these leaders vacillated and people got frustrated, the communists would be able to assume leadership. But all this was challenged by the fact that many of the allies proved able instead to get unintended communist support for building post-colonial capitalism without massive concentration of land but by monopolising politics and state resources and the instruments of coercion and thus also taking advantage of foreign companies and repressing labour in general and finally communists in particular. Moreover, although this primitive accumulation of capital and appropriation of surplus was no secret it was difficult to acknowledge and analyse. As compared to the paradigmatic European cases of capitalist development that formed the basis for PKIs Marxist toolbox, the primitive accumulation was more political and state driven as well as more indirect and relying on centralisation of surplus more than on investment in production, especially within agriculture and in relation to small scale business.

In addition the book concludes that even if dynamic capitalism was thus not blocked in countries like Indonesia (as it was assumed to be in most Marxist thinking at the time and in Stalin’s and Mao’s theses), the rise and uneven development of post-colonial capitalism differed of course also from Marx’ and Kautsky’s classical social democratic theories¹² that capitalism would spread to all sectors and areas, thus making imperialism progressive by generating modernity, a massive working class and finally paving the way for crises that would make socialist governance both possible and necessary. Today there is however a need for a final clarification. In much of the South, globalisation has paved the way for some democratic openings and economic growth, but also for huge imbalances and inequalities. By now there may thus be opportunities for the advancement of Bernstein’s revisionist social democracy, which was irrelevant in most parts of the global South in the early 1980s and therefore not mentioned in the book. The revisionists gave up on Kautsky’s deterministic logics in favour of democratic political transformation. This primacy of democratic politics proved most successful in Scandinavia from about the late 1920s. The strategy was to democratise the strong state apparatuses and to foster collective agreements between powerful employers’ and labour organisations on comparatively equal wages and universal welfare systems, all of which supported modernisation and rapid economic growth.¹³

Thirty years ago however when this was still irrelevant, the conclusion of the book (and a follow up study from 1984 of the emerging protests in Indonesia) was ‘only’ that the implication of the rise of rise of post capitalism was the prime importance of

¹¹ Törnquist 1989 and 1991 op. cit. and O. Törnquist. “Communists and Democracy in the Philippines”, *Kasarinlan*, 6:1-2, 1990 (also in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 6-13 July and 20 July, 1991).

¹² Vital parts of this position were most convincingly revived by Bill Warren at the time of first preparing this book in his *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism*, edited by John Sender. London: Verso, 1980.

¹³ C.f. for a current argument and more references, O. Törnquist, “Is social democracy being undermined?”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVI, No 15 April 9, 2011: 28-31.

struggle for democracy – as this would be the best way to fight against the political and coercive accumulation of capital and centralisation of surplus.

While the old radicals thought of substantial democracy as a distant aim that might develop when social and economic transformations and even revolutions had reduced the power of landlords and capitalists and their political and military leaders, this book argued thus that democratisation was necessary from the very outset. Democracy was not just fine but also the best way of fighting the rise of post-colonial capitalism given that it was based on political and often state-based monopolisation of the means of primitive accumulation, subordination and repression of people and appropriation of economic surplus. Also the book and the simultaneously published follow-up study¹⁴ suggested that increasingly many people in the country (from poor farmers, fisher folks, urban poor and labourers to those of the businessmen and middle classes and students that were not given special privileges by the regime) already turned against state-facilitated exploitation and repression. And the prognosis was therefore that increasingly many of them might thus come to share a basic interest in democratisation – and that these protests and this joint interest could partly be politicised and guided by pro-democratic groups.

Initially, however, democratisation was not on top of the dissidents' agenda. And as late as in the mid- and late 1990s most scholars and experts claimed that it was irrelevant.¹⁵ Some pointed to the predominance of Suharto's patrimonialism and the lack of a liberal middle class of the kind envisioned by Barrington Moore; others said that capitalist development was not threatened by pro-democrats or in need of democratic governance. But things changed and democracy became the major issue.

Yet, the remaining political as well as academic problem is that although my argument about democratisation was proven generally right it was also specifically wrong. The actual process was in the direction of formal and minimal democracy and privatisation of the state rather than real and substantial democratisation of politics and state that I had predicted. Aside from the interests of the dominant elite inside and outside the country, we do not yet know why the many people that turned against Suharto and asked for full democracy did not go ahead. Rather than aiming at democratising of state and politics, the real main focus of most activists was the dismantling of the state, dispersion of power to the market and larger sections of the elite on the central and local level as well as to widely defined citizen organisations (including religious and ethnic associations), and the primacy of liberal networking and lobbying rather than political and interest based representation. But why? The results from the book about the old popular movements' problems of theory and strategy were certainly plausible explanations for the unsuccessful attempts by activists related to for instance the People's Democratic Party (PRD) at restoring similar ideas and movements in more democratic forms. But again, the book did not help us understand very well why the radical democrats in various groups did not move ahead and develop forceful alternatives that made a difference.

Of course there are important clues. The book tells about the destruction of the entire popular movement, the rise of uneven development under post-colonial capitalism

¹⁴ Törnquist, *Struggle for Democracy...* op. cit. 1984.

¹⁵ Including the finest political scientists such as Harold Crouch, historians such as Robert Cribb and political economists such as Richard Robison.

and the problems of applying mainstream Marxism to develop better analysis and strategy. But it takes more to explain the new problems and options. I was privileged to be among those who made attempts in this direction from the mid-1990s by way of studies of the pro-democratic actors, the post-Suharto democracy movement, the state and dynamics of democratisation more generally and especially why the pro-democrats had been socially and politically marginalised.¹⁶ However, it still remains to analyse the activists' new efforts and experiences on the ground more closely and comprehensively in theoretical, historical and comparative perspective.¹⁷

Olle Törnquist, June 2011.

Appendix: Erratum in the English edition, corrected in the Indonesian edition

(The appendix that should follow here is only for the English preface that is to be made available electronically with the original English edition. Pls list all the errors that we have detected in the English version and which you have kindly corrected in the Indonesian version!)

Below are the notes about erratum that I have collected.

In addition the translator says: The translator says: " I am not in position to make correction on this matter, as it could be related to the writer's political point of view, except I am assigned to do so. What I have done to add a better information in brackets. I leave to Teresa and Uswa how to handle that."

Please follow up and make a list. Many thx!

- (a) 'Sukarno's bodyguard' (p.54, 224) should be 'the Presidential Guard'.
- p. 274 "Led by the chief of Sukarno's bodyguards, Lt Col Untung..." Untung was the commander of one of four battalions (which weren't really at battalion strength, just called that) of the palace guard. The overall commander was someone else.
- (b) fn. 3 on p.56 is wrong; it should read 'See above p. 18f.'
- (c) p.136 middle of the page: 'the church' should be taken away and replaced by 'the religious institutions';
- (d) p. 196: the first sentence on the page should begin with 'Meanwhile, the PKI's...';
- (e) p. 239 1st sentence in last para, should read 'It is true that it was **difficult** for the national...';
- (f) on p. 245, 3rd para, 3rd line it should be '...Islamic **'remnants of feudalism'** which...'
- (g) p.272: fn. 12 is partly wrong. It should only read 'Sen Gupta (1979)', i.e. the reference to fn 6 above shall be removed.
- (h) "Dhani". Dani always used Dani, not Dhani.

¹⁶ The still inconclusive first study, O. Törnquist "Civil society and divisive politicisation: experiences from popular efforts at democratisation in Indonesia" was published in Özdalga, E.; Persson, S. (eds.): *Civil Society, Democracy and the Muslim World*, Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute & Curzon Press, 1997. Then followed Arief Budiman and O. Törnquist, *Aktor demokrasi: Catatan Tentang Gerakan Perlawanan di Indonesia*, Jakarta; Institut Studi Argus Informasi, 2001, Stanley Adi Prasetyo, A.E. Priyono, and O. Törnquist with Teresa Birks et.al.) Jakarta and Copenhagen: Demos and NIAS Press, 2003, A.E. Priyono, Willy P. Samadhi and O. Törnquist with Teresa Birks et.al. *Making democracy meaningful. Problems and options in Indonesia*. Jakarta, Jogjakarta and Singapore: Demos, PCD Press, ISEAS, 2007, Willy P. Samadhi and N. Warouw (eds), *Building Democracy on the Sand*, Jakarta, Jogjakarta and Singapore: Demos, PCD Press and ISEAS, 2009, and O. Törnquist, Stanley Adi Prasetyo and Teresa Birks (eds), *Aceh: The Role of Democracy for Peace and Reconstruction*, 2 edition Jogjakarta and Singapore: PCD-Press and ISEAS, 2010. (Indonesian edition 2011).

¹⁷ Some sketches have been made in this direction in for instance John Harriss, Kristian Stokke and O.Törnquist (eds), *Politicising Democracy: The New Local Politics of Democratisation*, Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave 2004 and O.Törnquist, Neil Webster and Kristian Stokke, *Rethinking Popular Representation*, New York: Palgrave 2009; but much remains to be done.

(i). p. 63: "Aidit, Lukman Njoto and Sudisman ... All were in their mid-thirties..."

It seems like you're speaking about 1950-51 in this passage. At that time they were all in their late 20s to 30. Sudisman was I think the oldest of the group at 30 in 1950.

(j) There was a much more important mistake relating to Halim air base. "...by arresting the generals, moving them to the Halim airforce base, ..." (p. 224ff). the true fact was, "... moving them to Lubang Buaya, Pondokgede." Lubang Buaya **was** (and **is**) some kilometers outside the air base. Even to day you can check phisically the two separate places of Lubang Buaya [now museum] and Halim Perdanakusuma air base.

(k) "Suharto occupied the base [Halim] that evening" WRONG, PLS CORRECT: Suharto's troops didn't enter the base until Oct 2 morning.