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The Cold War in Indonesia, 1948

Harry A. Poeze

Existing accounts of the Madiun incident or revolt of September 1948 suggest that it was a mainly domestic incident, with little direct link to international communism, whether through instructions or the international communist line. This paper argues that there were in fact strong links to both. The revolt was closely linked to the return of veteran communist Muso, who arrived from Europe after discussions with communists there, and with a mandate to help the PKI to reform its policies.

After the end of the Second World War, communication between the Soviet Union and the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI, Indonesian Communist Party) was complicated, difficult and for periods of time, non-existent. It fitted a pattern that can be discerned since the founding of the PKI, the first communist party in Asia, in December 1920. The PKI, then a legal party, joined the Communist International (Comintern) and was represented at Comintern congresses in the early twenties. Reports given at the congresses, articles in Comintern press and information to the responsible Comintern functionaries featured a mixture of rosy images, personal preoccupations and opportunistic adjustments. The Comintern was thus misinformed about developments. Its guidelines for PKI action also became blurred and distorted in transmission to Indonesia, to the extent that the PKI on the spot (increasingly fragmented because of Dutch repression), could select the policy which suited it best.

This gap between local action and international control can be seen in the events of November 1926 on Java and January 1927 on West Sumatra: armed uprisings, both easily quelled by the Dutch. The outcome for the PKI was disastrous. The party was prohibited, thousands of its members were arrested, and after extra-judicial procedures 1,300 were sent for an indefinite period to Boven Digul, an internment camp deep in the swamps of remote New Guinea. The chances for a PKI comeback seemed remote.

Information in Moscow on the fate of the PKI was scant and contradictory. To remedy matters Muso, a PKI leader who had fled Indonesia shortly before the 1926 uprising, was sent to Indonesia in 1935, to gain a reliable insight in the state of affairs of communism and rebuild the PKI. He stayed, secretly, for half a year, with Surabaya

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as his base. After Muso left Indonesia, his trusted comrades founded the PKI-Muda (Young PKI). Of the founders all but one were soon caught and exiled. The remaining leader at large, Pamudji, established a small network of followers. Great caution and a cell system limited further arrests. There was also, to some extent, communist influence in the legal leftist party Gerindo, led by Amir Sjarifuddin. In its own periodical the PKI followed Moscow's line: a People's Front should stop the advance of the totalitarian powers, Germany and Japan.

Shortly before the Japanese occupation of 1942–45, when Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union had become allies, the Dutch handed Amir Sjarifuddin a substantial amount of money to organise resistance against the Japanese. Amir, by then close to being a communist, shared his money with known PKI cadres, among them Pamudji. The Japanese secret police was successful in rolling up this amorphous network. Pamudji was executed, and Amir given a life sentence. Thus, the second PKI generation was eliminated.

A third generation emerged, inspired by the sense of belonging to a great world movement, and by awareness of a glorious PKI tradition. Japanese repression did not allow for much more than PKI survival: maintaining communication, finding hiding places, anti-Japanese propaganda and education. The party sustained heavy losses, but some bases survived.

The defeat of Japan saw the remaining leadership decide to keep the PKI at a low profile until further notice. But what the new international order would entail was unclear. What would be the position of the Soviet Union among the victorious Allies? Would cooperation and the People's Front line be continued? If so, to what purpose?

There was also the question of what would happen to the Republik Indonesia, proclaimed on 17 August 1945. An active and strong PKI might persuade the British and Americans to support reimposition of Dutch colonial control, damaging the survival chances of the infant Republik. Moreover PKI lacked a popular leader; Amir was still in jail, and other leaders abroad. Furthermore, a prominent PKI role in Indonesia would discourage the bureaucracy there from supporting the new Republik. The PKI was in need of time — it lacked leaders, members, money and weapons. The party did not know how many PKI members had survived the occupation, or where they were. The decision was therefore just to issue a pamphlet to support a national revolution. The name PKI was not mentioned in the text. In this way, the PKI disappeared from the political scene, except in Surabaya, where some radical pamphlets were circulated, opposing the policies and past record of the Republican leaders, Sukarno and Hatta.

Amir Sjarifuddin was back in Jakarta on 2 October to take up his task as Minister of Information. The facilities at his disposal were subsequently generously distributed to his fellow-leftists — jobs, transportation, money and authorisations.

The first information about international communist developments, meanwhile, was brought by three students, among them Abdulmadjid Djojoadhiningrat. They were flown in from the Netherlands, where they had been active in Dutch resistance against the German occupying power. In this respect they had collaborated closely with Dutch Social democrats, who became prominent in the first post-war coalition government. The Dutch expectation was that they might oppose the Republik, because of its Japanese 'smell' (Sukarno had 'collaborated' with Japan during the war). It did not

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turn out that way. They took sides with the Republik, probably because Amir was a cabinet member. Neither, however, did the arrival of the students from Europe bring any firm news of international communist policy. The dissolution of Comintern in 1943, in this respect, had led to worldwide confusion. A number of parties, including the American one, were discontinued in favour of broad People's Front organisations. The Dutch party seemed to be taking the same course, although there was considerable opposition. Only after a few months was it resolved to reestablish the Communistische Partij Nederland (CPN, Netherlands Communist Party), mainly because the Social democrats rejected cooperation with the communists. It was the end of 1945 before Moscow made its position clear — that communists should organise in their own parties.

The emissaries from the Netherlands were probably content with the pragmatic choice of remaining underground for the time being. The internationalist outlook of the Dutch comrades, of Amir and of Sjahrir, the new Prime Minister, did not meet with sympathy from many of the wartime cadres. The underground PKI was, however, influential in the socialist party that Amir founded and that, in December 1945, merged with Sjahir's socialist party to become the Partai Sosialis. To the surprise of the PKI membership, situating themselves in the tradition of Muso's revived PKI-Muda, the name PKI was now captured by the lawyer Jusuf. He launched his PKI on 21 October 1945. It aims reflected its national roots: land nationalisation, farmers' soviets and social revolution. For the time being the underground PKI tolerated the PKI-Jusuf, waiting for an opportunity to restore its authority. The PKI-Jusuf had a measure of success, with a growing number of members and branches, an armed organisation, and a widely distributed periodical. Its militancy, compared to the cautious Partai Sosialis, brought it close to followers of veteran communist leader Tan Malaka, who had broken with Moscow in the wake of the 1926–27 uprising.

Tan Malaka returned after 20 years of exile and, in January 1946, launched his federation, the Persatuan Perdjuangan (PP, Struggle Front). This was meant to unite all Republican organisations to support 100 per cent merdeka (independence) proclaimed on 17 August 1945, and to become the rallying point against the diplomacy (and hence tendency to offer concessions to the Dutch) of the government. PP's revolutionary fervour attracted a massive following. Tan Malaka played down his communist convictions, but in his writings he showed himself a true communist, who had an eye for the specific content Indonesian communism should be given. But he was also full of praise for the Soviet Union and probably willing to follow Moscow's guidance if it would ensure him the leadership of the PKI. Strangely enough, Tan Malaka let slip the chance to become the chairman of the Partai Sosialis, and failed to forge a bond with the PKI-Jusuf. He may have gambled that his own organisation might become the core of the revived PKI. He put all his energy into the PP, with seemingly astonishing success. The government seemed to be alone and ripe for replacement by a PP cabinet. A meeting of parliament in February–March 1946 was decisive. Clever manoeuvring by Sukarno, and awkward action by the PP supporters resulted in another Sjahrir cabinet, which continued its diplomatic efforts. The seemingly powerful PP turned out be a giant on clay feet. Tan Malaka and a few close to him were abducted, with the silent approval of the government, and when massive protest was not forthcoming, he was jailed, without trial, from March 1946 to September 1948.

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PKI-Jusuf opened its first conference in Cirebon on 8 March 1946. A militant mood prevailed; a Soviet Republik Indonesia was the aim. The government was severely criticised. PKI armed forces, *Lasjkar Merah* (Red Corps), took over power in the city, disarming army and police. However, within a few days the army returned and arrested the leadership of the PKI-Jusuf. They were, half a year later, tried by a military court.

A few weeks later, a *Panitia Pemberesan* (Purgation Committee) let itself be heard. It declared that Jusuf's PKI was not the rightful successor of the PKI-1926. It condemned the events in Cirebon. It is a rare occasion that the secret struggle for power within the PKI comes into the open. It seemed that the underground PKI was recovering its lost position. It looked as though it was closest to the international communist line. Moreover it was helped by the arrest of Tan Malaka on 17 March, which weakened his possible claims to PKI leadership.

At this point in time, the PKI was reinforced by the arrival from Australia, on 13 March 1946, of the former Digul exiles. These included communists of two tendencies. The majority had followed the People's Front and supported the Allied war effort. The *Panitia Pemberesan*, meanwhile, continued its work, and managed to dump the radical members. When it called a PKI conference in Solo on 29 March to elect a new leadership Sardjono, Digul exile and PKI chairman in 1926, was put forward. Tan Malaka's following and other radicals were not even admitted to the conference. A statement of aims was issued. The PKI, as a workers' party based on Marxism-Leninism, aimed at a socialist society. However, this should have majority support. This democratic principle required the PKI to win the support of farmers and the bourgeoisie. It characterised Indonesian events as the unfolding of a national revolution against international imperialism, as part of the world revolution. The struggle to uphold the Republik was therefore the first step towards a later socialist society. In that struggle the PKI was ready to cooperate with all democratic organisations inside and outside Indonesia.

This moderation found its reflection in the Manifesto issued a few days later. This noted that the world struggle between fascism and democracy had now taken a new form: progressive forces and the people in the colonies against the Reaction. The Republik's government constituted, 'a representation of a great number of groups and layers of the Indonesian people, a democratic structure, on which the democratic groups in the people base themselves'. In PKI there was no room for 'political adventurers and place-hunters' — clearly meaning Tan Malaka and his followers. Armed with its ideology the party is able 'to distinguish between matters which might and which might not be realised. Also, a situation will be evaluated in a realistic way, and responsibility will not be evaded.' To reach its objectives PKI firstly will support the government and it proposed to form a National Front to oppose fascist-reactionary oppression.

Amir and his internationally oriented comrades had at last disciplined the PKI to follow their course. The diplomatic efforts to gain the Republik's recognition were to be supported; socialist experiments in Indonesia were premature. The PKI kept its low profile. A legal and an underground board were still maintained, with the underground one being the body to ultimately make decisions. Most public effort was spent on the Partai Sosialis. The youth organisation Pesindo (Pemuda Sosialis

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Indonesia, Indonesian Socialist Youth), with strong armed bodies, was an important asset. In due course the labour union federation was added to the communist conglomerate, as well as the Partai Buruh Indonesia (PBI, Indonesian Labour Party). But it was still not labelled as communist.

A welcome addition to the PKI forces was Alimin, who had left Indonesia with Muso in 1926. He suddenly reported to the Republik in August 1946. He had been in China for a number of years, but did not carry any message as to communist tactics or policies. He wholeheartedly supported the Republik and its government and even outshone it in his moderation. His stature and international prestige were exploited to the full in the many speeches he delivered.

Alimin was also to prove useful when negotiations with the Dutch resulted in the Linggajati Agreement of November 1946. The opposition rallied against the agreement in Benteng Republik (Fortress of the Republik), including the more radical communist groups. The moderate PKI presence and its value became more obvious when President Sukarno increased membership of the parliament from 200 to 514 members, and nominated the new members in a successful attempt to ensure approval of the Agreement with the Dutch. PKI membership rose from two to 35. The pattern was continued in the PKI Congress of January 1947.

Sjahrir made concessions to the Dutch in the protracted negotiations in Jakarta that followed the Linggajati Agreement, but was disavowed by his ministers and the Sajap Kiri (a conglomeration of communist-minded groups formed in December 1946) in Yogyakarta. Abdulmadjid and Amir then used the opportunity to depose Sjahrir in June 1947. This opened the road to more communist influence within Sajap Kiri, and chances for Amir, who was not publicly known as a communist and never in word or deed acted as such, to succeed Sjahrir. After a short and complicated formation period, Amir was accepted as the new Prime Minister of the Republik's cabinet in July 1947.

That same month the Republik faced a Dutch military action which ended in the loss of the greater part of its territory in Java. A new round of negotiations started as a result, now under international supervision. Under heavy pressure from the United States, and with the threat that military action might be renewed, the Republik acquiesced and signed in January 1948 the Renville Agreement (named after the US warship where talks were held). The terms of the Agreement caused a great stir; the coalition partners of the Sajap Kiri in the cabinet withdrew their ministers. Amir was left isolated, and offered the cabinet's resignation on 23 January.

He was succeeded by a 'Presidential' cabinet led by Vice-President Hatta. Not a single Sajap Kiri minister was included. Suddenly the comfortable position of Sajap Kiri, and the communists within it, at the centre of the Republik's power came to an end. Who was to blame? An obvious culprit was Amir, who had acted on his own initiative when tendering his resignation. He did not consult his fellow ministers, nor discuss the matter in Partai Sosialis, Sajap Kiri or PKI. Moreover, Amir's support of Renville was at odds with the new policies that Moscow prescribed from late 1947 onwards.[1]

1 This overview is based on Harry A. Poeze, *Tan Malaka, strijder voor Indonesië's vrijheid; Levensloop van 1897 tot 1945* ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1976); and Harry A. Poeze, *Verguisd en vergeten; Tan Malaka, de linkse beweging en de Indonesische Revolutie, 1945–1949* (Leiden: KITLV, 2007).

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Cominform

In 1947 the People's Front or 'united front' policy had reached a deadlock. The conflict between East and West sharpened. In September 1947 Cominform was constituted, as a union of communist parties against imperialism. Zhdanov's 'two camp theory', expounded at the founding meeting, posited the irreconcilable contradiction between the imperialist, anti-democratic camp and the anti-imperialist, democratic camp. The communist parties worldwide had to lead the resistance in all fields – government, politics, economics and ideology – against imperialist plans of oppression and aggression. This confrontation applied first and foremost to Europe. In the colonies the model was not instantly copied, and the national bourgeoisie was still viewed as of some utility. The Republik was presented as an example of an independence struggle which combined with radical reforms. This probably served to legitimise the Republik's government (with its strong leftist representation) in Soviet eyes. Indonesia was even described as under a government of an anti-imperialist front under the leadership of the Communist Party. The Renville Agreement was criticised, but the Republik was not taken to task for signing it. That, however, was before Amir's ousting from power. With Amir's January 1948 resignation, Moscow had to reevaluate.[2]

This is where Muso reemerged as an important figure for Moscow. He worked with a scholarly institute of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He supplied analyses and wrote press articles, notwithstanding that his work suffered from lack of information, and a lack of direct contact with PKI. Data from Indonesians, visiting international youth, students or trade union conferences was fragmentary. An important source was the stream of information flowing to and from Moscow to the Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN), but this also suffered from distortion and was not up to date.[3]

Despite growing doubts about Amir's course and the Renville Agreement, Muso initially remained loyal to his comrades and their approach. He explained away their ignoring of the line laid down by Cominform and Zhdanov as a tactic not to emphasise the leading communist role in the government, and to avoid an anti-communist reaction. The position of the government was strong, and its overthrow improbable. But on the same 23 January that he wrote this, Amir's cabinet fell.

Muso was rebuffed, already a day later, in strong terms by two Russian colleagues of the institute he worked for, in their report to the Department of Foreign Policy of the Russian CP as follows:

> Comrade Musso explains the reasons for not publishing the materials of the Conference of the nine parties [Kominform] and the absence of propaganda on the questions

2 Ruth T. McVey, *The Soviet view of the Indonesian revolution*, Southeast Asia Program (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1957), analyses the Soviet vision of the Indonesian revolution. Her sources and conclusions are followed here. On this period, see pp. 11–37. Hans Bräker, *Kommunismus und Islam; Zur-Religions- und Asienpolitiek der Sowjetunion; Band I, 2 Kommunismus und Islam; Islam und sowjetische Zentral- und Südostasien-Politik* (Tübingen: Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1971), pp. 342–54, generally confirms her findings, based on his own reading of Soviet sources. Zhdanov's speech was only published in Indonesia in May 1948 by the journal *Revolusioner* as Situasi politik internasional.

3 L.M. Efimova, 'Who gave instructions to the Indonesian communist leader Musso in 1948?', *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 31, 90 (2003): 173–4.

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> connected with the resolutions of the Conference of the nine parties on the part of the Indonesian Communist Party, by its special political line, which allegedly aimed at 'paralysing Truman's Doctrine as well as anti-Communist propaganda in Indonesia, carried on by the Dutch', with the help of conscientiously minimizing its actual strength and not exposing its leading role in the Republican government, as well as concealing its links with abroad and so on. In our opinion, if such a course is actually being taken it is a rotten course, and the consequences of this course have already been manifested in that Sjarifuddin was forced to sign an agreement with the Dutch, imposed on him by the American 'mediation', just because the Republik and particularly the Indonesian Communist Party up to this time absolutely insufficiently laid bare the aggressive policy of American imperialism and thus contributed to a certain trust among the unsophisticated part of the population in the policy and the 'mediation' of the American government. If the Party had published the resolutions of the Conference of the nine parties and Zhdanov's report in particular, the people would have understood the contemporary arrangement of forces on an international scale. One of two things must be true: either there is no such 'special course' of the policy of the Indonesian Communist Party in reality and Com. [Comrade] Musso is under a delusion, or if such a course actually exists, it is a disastrous course and Com. Musso justifies it.

They thus believed that the PKI held a misplaced belief in the role of the Unites States and had failed to unmask 'the expansionist nature of American imperialism'. This had landed it in a position in which it had no choice but to sign the Renville Agreement. A month later, on 18 February, the head of the foreign affairs section of the Central Committee, Plishevsky, sent a note to the Politburo in line with the critique above and with severe conclusions. According to him, the PKI had made mistakes in a wide range of matters, as follows:

> The rejection of the armed struggle with the Netherlands and the signing of the Renville agreement on the basis of concessions on the side of the Republican delegation;
> The surrender of state power and its transfer to the nationalist parties without a struggle and an appeal to the masses;
> The continuation of co-operation with the rightist parties instead of laying bare their reactionary activity before the masses;
> Keeping their distance from the USSR and the countries of the new democracy, the rejection of joining openly the Soviet camp in the Cold War in the international arena;
> Dispersing of the Communist forces among several parties and organisations, keeping the Communist Party proper in the background in the Socialist Bloc, denigrating the actual image of the CPI [Communist Party of Indonesia] in the eyes of the masses of the people;
> Insufficient unmasking of the aggressive nature of American imperialism before the Indonesian people.[4]

The Politburo in all probability confirmed the critique, but either way it implied that the PKI had to be disciplined. Answering the critical points would entail the

4 Ibid., pp. 175–8 (quotations on pp. 175–6 and 178).

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translation of them into directives for a new PKI course. Muso was the only person available and a suitable candidate to pass on the message.

In March 1948 Muso was in Prague where he met Suripno, there under orders from Amir to contact the Soviet Union. Suripno, a PKI Politburo member, could feed him information — although outdated, as he had left the Republik in July 1947. In Prague, Muso also had extensive talks with Soviet diplomats and CPN leaders. Muso worked on a document to set out the new PKI course, regularly reporting to Moscow. In one report he showed great enthusiasm for an article of Chinese provenance 'The new stage of the Indonesian struggle for independence'. This applied Chinese experiences to Indonesia as follows:

> American and Dutch imperialism have to be exposed, the real fact is that America though appearing outwardly strong, is feeble. The people must struggle against vacillation and betrayal, firmly believing in the sure victory of the great cause of their liberation. They must not fear temporary difficulties and setbacks, but resolutely carry on the struggle into the camp of American and Dutch imperialism and the Hatta government, and lead themselves to victory … . They will discard their illusions and fears of America and cast away the cowardly, incompetent, vacillating and treacherous upper elements of Indonesia and march together, united in the struggle against imperialism. Although their struggle will be prolonged and arduous, the dawn of final victory will be nearer. … At the same time the national front of Indonesia will still be broadened to include workers, peasants, the middle and petty bourgeoisie, and other patriotic elements. Only the running dogs of America and the Dutch have to be excluded. The Indonesian people must learn that they should never trust in vacillating elements and compromising parties, but only in the people's revolutionary organizations and especially the INDONESIAN COMMUNIST PARTY. The victory of the Chinese people under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party over Japanese imperialism … in the past and their present victory over American imperialism and Chiang Kai-shek serve as an example to the Indonesian people.

Muso's report echoed this stress on a broad National Front under PKI leadership, putting him slightly ahead of Moscow's endorsement of the Chinese model.[5]

The close bonds between the communist parties in motherland and colony were also influential. Paul de Groot, the Dutch CPN chairman, came to Prague and entered into heated discussions, which resulted in a document entitled 'Outlines of the tasks of the communists in Indonesia'. De Groot at first insisted that a commonwealth relationship should emerge between the two countries. If not, he feared losing the support of Dutch workers, who would be afraid that independence would result in Dutch unemployment. Muso and Suripno retorted that this would seriously hamper mass mobilisation. De Groot became so angry that he called Muso an adventurer and Trotskyite, who did not know what was going on in Indonesia. When emotions subsided De Groot climbed down and agreed to a formula in which the Netherlands would merely gain preferential economic and cultural treatment. The document itself mentioned the merger of parties to become a United PKI and the formation of a National Front, in which the PKI wanted to unite parties, groups and people with

5 Ibid., pp. 180–1.

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the common goal of independence. The Hatta government should be met with opposition on a broad scale, with the objective of forming a government of national unity with appropriate PKI representation. Negotiations with the Netherlands, after the repudiation of Renville, were to be conducted on an equal basis and to result in the recognition of the sovereignty of the whole of Indonesia. Muso reported the agreement to Moscow in a letter of 17 May, adding: 'Undoubtedly it is a great turn. I hope the Indonesian comrades would understand it and would be willing to follow me.' De Groot lobbied with the Czech party leader, who expressed his approval. De Groot wrote a letter to Sardjono and Maruto Darusman, dated 10 May 1948, which Muso took with him. The party line had created bad results, and 'Now it is absolutely necessary that you make a sharp turn and step on a new way. Our old and trusted friend, who brings this letter, will help you much in working out a new line…'[6]

Muso's letter was commented upon by an official of the Foreign Affairs Section of the Central Committee, who gave the impression that Muso's programme was of his own, and not rooted in the Moscow line. His tone became rather false when ending:

> Judging by the tone of his declaration he intends to assume the leading role in the Communist Party and that may give rise to objections on the side of Indonesian comrades and have much more serious consequences. It would be desirable to point out to comrade Musso before his departure to the country that his task is assistance to the leadership of the Indonesian Communist Party and that Indonesian comrades themselves will define his role in the CPI.

Muso toned down his ambitions somewhat when he reported to Moscow in May and June that he hoped to be able to use his influence in Indonesia to realise 'a really national government responsible to the people's parliament … I hope to fulfil my crucial and interesting task.'[7]

In Moscow a Soviet official formulated it this way: Muso had been instructed to 'help' the PKI leadership.[8] How should we interpret this 'help'? Was it help that could be refused? On 21 June, Muso and Suripno set out from Prague for the arduous journey to Jogjakarta. It would take them seven weeks, until 11 August, to reach their destination.

In August De Groot was in Moscow and fully supported Muso's programme. He expected 'a certain resistance' of 'some persons' against the new course. He expected, on the basis of information from the Republik, that the Netherlands might use the opportunity to start a new wave of terror and armed aggression. In such a case everything had to be done to protect the party. He considered it improbable that the Hatta government would act against the PKI, considering the instability of this government

6 Ibid., pp. 181–4 (quotations on pp. 182 and 183). The agreement between Muso, Suripno and De Groot was presented on 8 Sept. 1948 to the Dutch ministers involved (National Archives, The Hague, Archive-Drees 164 en Archive-Beel 25).

7 Ibid., pp. 184–5 (quotation on p. 184).

8 Ragna Boden, *Die Grenzen der Weltmacht; Sowjetische Indonesienpolitik van Stalin bis Breznev* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006), p. 77, note 60. Boden quotes the Russian word *'ukazat'* which is here translated as 'instructed', but could well be read as 'ordered'. This letter is dated 4 July, when Muso had already commenced his journey.

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as well as the strength of the leftist parties and the broad sympathy of the masses for communism.[9]

What are we to make of all this information? At play were Soviet critiques from different state and party bodies, with the Central Committee conclusions as the most authoritative. There were the talks with the Dutch comrades, the interaction with the Czech party, with a lot of prestige gained after the Gottwald takeover,[10] with Soviet Embassy officials, and Muso's own ideas. Muso was an experienced Stalinist, who had survived the years of terror, and knew how to adapt to the new line. He did so, and found it expedient to borrow from the Chinese experience. The kernel of all discussion was that the PKI course had been disastrous, and that a United PKI, a National Front and a National Front government, both under communist leadership, were the answers. It was Muso's own Gottwald Plan. There is no indication that armed revolt against the Sukarno-Hatta government was on the immediate agenda. The evidence also shows that Muso was not an uncontroversial person. He had a reputation for hotheadedness, and doubts about his organisational skills were reflected when it was emphasised that his task would only be to help the PKI. But an instruction to help, with a concrete programme brought from Moscow by a veteran leader of great prestige, to a party that clearly had made a lot of mistakes — could it be received in any other way than unconditional acceptance? There was not the slightest doubt among the PKI leadership that Muso was Moscow's emissary and that he should be obeyed. Efimova remarks that Muso 'apparently had come to the conclusion that it was he who was destined to play the leading role in the CPI revival in all its might and strength' in what she calls 'his personal sacred mission'.[11] These last few words seem to be too romantic. Muso did bring a message, but it was for the greater part not his own, but an adaptation of the new line for Indonesia.

Calcutta Conference

Calcutta was, in February 1948, the venue for a Conference of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), a nominally independent organisation actually under the control of Moscow. It was the first meeting where Southeast Asian organisations were represented after the 'two camp theory'. Whether a guideline was issued to the communist parties of the region to rise into armed revolts is a matter of controversy. Such actions in Indonesia, Burma, Malaya, Vietnam and the Philippines later in 1948 could have found their inspiration in the Calcutta Conference.[12] As for Indonesia there are no indications of such an instruction.

9 Ibid., pp. 77–9; Efimova,'Who gave instructions', pp. 185–6.

10 Klement Gottwald, the communist leader who took over power in Czechoslovakia in Feb.–Mar. 1948. He reorganised a coalition cabinet with communists to become a communist-dominated cabinet, with some non-communist ministers as window-dressing.

11 Efimova, 'Who gave instructions', p. 178.

12 Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *The left wing in Southeast Asia* (New York: Sloane, 1950), pp. 153–5, 226–7, quote a number of informants, but are cautious. Milton Sacks, 'The strategy of communism in Southeast Asia', *Pacific Affairs*, 23 (1950): 231, concludes Moscow's coordination is probable. McVey, in Ruth T. McVey, *The development of the Indonesian Communist Party and its relations with the Soviet Union and the Chinese Peoples Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Center for International Studies, 1954), pp. 52–6, and *The Calcutta Conference and the Southeast Asian uprisings* (Ithaca, NY: Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Department of Far Eastern

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The 'two camp theory' was given a lot of attention at the Conference, but Indonesia was still praised for its armed resistance to imperialist aggression.[13]

PKI reorientation

After Amir's resignation Sajap Kiri licked its wounds and formulated new policies and tactics. The cooperation in the Partai Sosialis between social democrats and communists, already strained after Sjahrir's forced retirement, became impossible. It was the reflection of the new world order, with two camps confronting each other, and the threat of a Third World War imminent. Sjahrir broke with the Partai Sosialis and founded his Partai Sosialis Indonesia (PSI) in February 1948. Two weeks later Sajap Kiri was succeeded by Front Demokrasi Rakjat (FDR, People's Democratic Front), in which Partai Sosialis, PKI, PBI, Pesindo and trade union federation SOBSI cooperated.

The name reflected the FDR's programmatic purposes. Amir seemed to enjoy great popularity. But, without institutional and governmental support and with an unpopular stance on Renville, the FDR was vulnerable, not the least for the radical Left who saw new chances for a comeback.[14] The FDR was very much aware of this. Already in March 1948 it made a grand change of course. Renville was now repudiated. Before negotiations the Dutch troops should leave Indonesia; Dutch property could be nationalised without compensation. Hatta could now be opposed, and the FDR acted also in conformity with Stalin's course. The main action was to campaign for the return of the FDR to the cabinet, with Amir in a key position.[15] However, this change of course was not widely publicised. In its two-pronged approach it issued also a moderate national programme, and it tried, along the parliamentary road, to gain readmission into the cabinet under

Studies, Cornell University, 1958), argues against a direct link between conference and revolt. Another view is found in Owen Lattimore, *The situation in Asia* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1949), pp. 198–9, followed by J.H. Brimmell, *Communism in South East Asia; A political analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 255–63. The latter concludes that 'the stage was prepared for the wave of violence which swept through India and South East Asia in the next few months'. *Marxism in Southeast Asia; A study of four countries*, ed. Frank N. Trager (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959), pp. 263–8, weighs all arguments and considers the Conference the place where Moscow instructed communists to start armed revolt, with the partial exception of Indonesia where Muso's return made an end to internal differences of opinion. Jacques Leclerc, 'Entretien avec Kath Olive', Parijs, 24.9.1985, in KITLV, Collectie-Leclerc H 1327-373, contains an extensive report of the Conference by Australian delegate Kath Olive, then Kath Bacon. She did not notice any instruction. Francisca Fanggidaej, of the Indonesian delegation, denies being given guidelines. She left the Republik on 20 July 1947, together with Suripno, to represent the Youth Federation at the WFDY Congress in Prague (August 1947). From there she went to London, where she lodged with the Information Office of the Republik. In Indonesia she worked with the Information Service of Pesindo. Her selection was because of language abilities, not rank. She was not a PKI member (Francisca Fanggidaej, interview Zeist, 17.3.2000). PKI leader Aidit denied that the Conference had exercised influence on Indonesia, when asked by the newspaper *Sin Po* ('D.N. Aidit: Omong kosong adanja "Komperensi Nanning" dan "Brigade Sukarela Internasional"', *Sin Po*, 14 Aug. 1953).

13 McVey, *The Soviet view*, pp. 38–46, and before in McVey, *The development*, pp. 52–6, and, *The Calcutta Conference*.

14 Poeze, *Verguisd en vergeten*, pp. 679–81.

15 Ibid., pp. 716–17.

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the banner of a National Front. In August, the FDR had to conclude that all its efforts had ended in a deadlock.[16]

The FDR tried to pressurise the government into making concessions to it by organising a strike in the strategic textile industry in Delanggu. A local strike was taken over by SOBSI, and thus became part of the test of strength between government and FDR. The conflict was seen as the precursor to a forthcoming showdown between Left and Right.[17]

Pressure on the Hatta cabinet was increased when suddenly, on 26 May, the Soviet Press agency Tass announced that an agreement to enter into diplomatic relations, and to exchange consuls, had been signed by the Soviet ambassador in Prague, and by Suripno as special envoy of the Republik. Suripno's mandate dated from before Renville and Amir's resignation. The Hatta government was embarrassed.

Soviet motives for making public the agreement seem to be related to the Cold War. The United States had answered Soviet actions by initiating the Marshall Plan and military cooperation with western Europe. The agreement showed the Soviet's anti-colonial attitude, as compared to the USA and the Netherlands. Moscow made clear its support for the Republik, in contrast to the American support of the Netherlands. Moreover, Hatta was forced to take sides. If he turned down the agreement, the FDR was supplied with an important means of propaganda. Already before this refusal, the FDR publicised the agreement as a 'diplomatic triumph'.

Polarisation between government and FDR grew because of the Suripno Affair. Along with the simultaneous Delanggu strike it made government and the parties represented in it less inclined to include FDR in any new coalition.[18] All this served to make the situation at the beginning of August tense. The talks between Hatta and FDR on admission to the government had reached a dead end — Hatta and his following did not want it, and by demanding at least half of the seats in a new cabinet the FDR hardly helped. Rumours of an immanent civil war and the forthcoming arrest of Amir and his colleagues began to circulate.

Such a coup against the PKI was, however, not a straightforward matter. The FDR controlled armed units and could mobilise workers in strikes. Indeed, starting in July it began to put into practice its own model of the National Front at the regional and local level. By the end of the month, five such administrations were installed, all with FDR preponderance. Amir commented, when asked, that these Fronts only consisted of an FDR initiative to put into effect the cooperation between parties on the basis of the National Programme. But it was an ominous sign to the government and the non-FDR parties that from the bottom up its authority was being seriously affected.[19]

These national fronts were also the PKI answer to a change in course in the Cominform, when in June Yugoslavia was evicted from the organisation for refusing to subordinate itself to Stalin's orders. The result was an all-out attack on nationalism. The FDR had to obey, and the consequence would be a total break with the

16 Ibid., pp. 747–59.
17 Ibid., pp. 763–70.
18 Ibid., pp. 770–5. A number of sources, as well as Hatta, connect the Suripno agreement with Soviet recognition of Israel. The Islamic world had to be 'compensated' and the agreement served the purpose.
19 Ibid., pp. 759–60.

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bourgeoisie. It is unclear whether all this was clear to the FDR leaders, but, conscious or not, their National Front met Moscow's terms, while also copying the successful Chinese communist model.[20]

This, then, was the tense situation which Muso found when he arrived back in the Republik on 12 August. He met with his comrades, who, for all practical purposes, considered him an envoy of Moscow, with a mandate to reorganise the FDR, along the guidelines of Stalin and the Cominform.[21] Sukarno and Muso, once co-lodgers in Surabaya, met on 13 August for a friendly chat. At the end of this reunion, however, Sukarno asked whether Muso would support the Republik and further the cause of the revolution. Muso answered, in Dutch: 'Of course that's my duty. I've come here to create order.'[22] Speculation started at once about Muso's purposes. 'Informed circles' suggested that he had brought from Moscow 'an important plan' to increase communist influence in the Republik.[23]

Muso did not waste time. The PKI Politburo met on 13 and 14 August. Muso's exposition on 'work and mistakes of the Party in the organizational and political fields' was approved after 'profound discussion' and resulted in a resolution that would become known as 'Djalan baru untuk Republik Indonesia' (A new road for Republik Indonesia).[24]

Muso added introductory remarks to explain the background of the organisational mistakes. The illegal PKI, as founded by Muso in 1935, was in the forefront of anti-Japanese resistance, but made the mistake of prolonging its illegality after the proclamation. Imperialistic agents used the opportunity to form a false PKI (PKI-Jusuf). The socialist party founded by the PKI also made a great mistake when it merged with the socialists of Sjahrir in the Partai Sosialis. PKI thus diverted its attention to work in government and parliament.[25]

In this way the PKI presence became less and less — its fame and popularity, built up before 1945, was lost. This process was reinforced by the underestimation of the strength of the workers and the people as a whole, and overestimation of the power of American imperialism and lack of trust in the anti-imperialist forces led by the Soviet Union. The existence of three workers' parties until the present day caused confusion, and provided the workers' enemies opportunities by way of

20 McVey, *The Soviet view*, pp. 52–7.

21 The mandate is mentioned in an interview with PKI leader Ngadiman ('P.K.I. tidak akan berontak', *Sin Po*, 14.12.1949). Also in my interview with Soemarsono, Jakarta, 23 Oct. 1980. On this subject, see also Ann Swift, *The road to Madiun; The Indonesian communist uprising of 1948* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1989), pp. 57–8.

22 *Revolusioner*, 19 Aug. 1948.

23 'Pengaroeh Communist direpoeblik aken bertambah hebat', *Sin Po*, 16 Aug. 1948.

24 'Djalan baru' was reprinted many times. I used the fifth impression of 1951. According to its foreword (p. 3), this was an unchanged reprint. There are no indications that reprints have been changed (McVey, *The Soviet view*, p. 58, n. 113). In my possession is a draft of this resolution ('Rantjangan resolusi'), probably originating from the Dutch Foreign Affairs Ministry. It looks to be the draft that Muso put before the PKI leadership. 'Djalan baru' then is the outcome of the discussions, or confrontation, between Muso and the politburo.

25 *Djalan baru untuk Republik Indonesia (Koreksi besar Musso); (Rentjana resolusi Polit-Biro untuk dimadjukan pada kongres ke-V dari Partai Komunis Indonesia; Disetudjui oleh konperensi CC PKI pada tanggal 26 dan 27 Augustus 1948)* (Djakarta: Bintang Merah: Tjetakan ke-V, 1951), pp. 5–6. This part was not included in the draft.

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establishing false leftist parties. The Politburo's conclusion was – also having in mind the developments in Yugoslavia – that radical change was necessary:

> 1. as soon as possible PKI must regain its position as vanguard of the workers' class; 2. as soon as possible PKI must regain its good reputation from before and during the Second World War; 3. PKI must acquire the hegemony [printed in capitals] in the leadership of the National Revolution.

The PKI had already taken some steps to climb out of the 'ravine of reformism', but a 'correct understanding of its strategic, organisational and political mistakes was still lacking'. 'During the exchange of views with Comrade Muso in the politburo, critique and self-critique took place frankly. All politburo members admitted openly and unanimously their mistakes and were prepared to make these good. The radical solution for the main mistake is the establishment of a legal workers' party, to replace the underground PKI.'[26] The parties' merger was to result in one workers' party with the historical name of PKI. This was an urgent matter, but would take some time to implement. The Indonesian Revolution was labelled a national or bourgeois-democratic revolution that should be led by the working class. In the PKI, workers should be dominant, in rank and file as well as leadership, in contrast to the previous preponderance of intellectuals.[27]

The second part of *Djalan baru* dealt with the political mistakes, with their roots in the Japanese occupation and wrong views of west European sister parties. In this respect Muso had an axe to grind. Former CPN members returning to Indonesia, without appraising the objective situation, had applied European reformist policies to Indonesian circumstances. They did not understand that after the Allied victory cooperation with the imperialist powers should be terminated. This had led the CPN to be content with a commonwealth link between Indonesia and the Netherlands, rather than independence.[28] In this way communists had taken part in talks with imperialist powers, and political struggle had overshadowed the armed struggle. They forgot that the national revolution had to be part of the proletarian world revolution. In this respect, 'the Soviet Union was the basis, the strongest bulwark, as the leader and champion of all anti-imperialist struggles in the world. This is caused by the fact that there are only two camps in the world, opposite to each other and fighting each other. For the Indonesian national revolution there is no other place than in the anti-imperialist camp.' The communists had not made use of the opportunities the international balance of power offered. To the contrary, they had signed the Linggajati Agreement, and responsibility for accepting the Renville Agreement rested with them. 'After that, the major mistake committed was the resignation of the Amir Sjarifuddin cabinet, voluntarily and without resistance.' They completely forgot Lenin's teachings about state power. The way was

26 Ibid., pp. 6–10. The draft does not differ significantly. The draft already contained the lines on the self-critique — the PKI leaders knew at once what was expected.

27 Ibid., pp. 10–11. The draft does not contain the strong wording on the parties' merger. The emphasis in the draft on the role of peasants was changed for a more orthodox accent on the workers' role.

28 Ibid., p. 11. In the draft CPN, in particular Paul de Groot, influenced by French communist leader Jacques Duclos, is mentioned as the sole culprit. This was mitigated to a general reference to west European sister parties.

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opened to bourgeois elements to take over government and leadership of the national revolution. The communists isolated themselves in opposition.[29] Since then the communists had made laudable efforts to increase their influence, but in organisational respect there was much to be desired. This was also partly to be explained by the growing repression of the Hatta cabinet.[30]

The PKI should now repudiate Linggajati and Renville, as having reduced Indonesia to the status of a colony. Instead, the PKI should maintain direct relations with the Soviet Union. It had to look for allies within the anti-imperialist camp. CPN received special mention, but had to reverse its policy from endorsing commonwealth to support for complete independence.[31]

All these principles were translated into a concrete programme. The working class, led by its vanguard, the PKI, was to lead the revolution. The PKI had to be strong, with roots in all villages, factories, businesses and estates. Its leadership was to be based on a national programme, to be executed together with other progressive parties and individuals. A purge of reactionary and counterrevolutionary elements was an absolute necessity. The PKI was to be devoted to the completion of the national revolution, as the predecessor of the socialist revolution. Unity was needed, by a 'National Front, realized from the bottom up and supported by all progressive parties, groups and individuals'.[32] The PKI had allegedly only played lip service to the concept of such a united front up to this point. Now it had to be implemented correctly, and to lead to a national front government.[33]

Djalan baru is an almost sensational, frank document, with which Muso created order at once, at least in the FDR. Critique of FDR leaders was devastating; only a few lines may be interpreted as not negative. In organisational and political respects almost everything had gone wrong. Muso did not spare anyone and the PKI leadership was rudely disciplined and drawn back into Moscow's harness. The PKI leaders swallowed it all. Was their agreement with the new course the price they paid to save their skins in the purge that was announced? Amir, leader of FDR, had little to retort. He had committed a deadly sin – relinquishing power after Renville – and felt guilty. Muso dominated the scene, he did not tolerate contradictory opinions and with un-Indonesian coarseness made clear what Moscow, and Muso as its mouthpiece, wanted.

Djalan baru was a public document, and the opponents of PKI thus knew what PKI held in store for them — no more than crumbs. Muso even called *Djalan baru* his Gottwald Plan. Still, Muso's new course fitted in with the FDR development since Renville. It had turned against Renville, and to opposition against Hatta's cabinet. But it had also worked to regain its place in the cabinet, and in this respect it failed. With its new local national front organisations, FDR had already came close to what Muso proposed. Amir was thus able to say that 'the arrival of the *oude heer* [old man] Muso accelerates a process that is already

29 Ibid., pp. 12–16. In the draft there was no reference to Amir.
30 Ibid., pp. 16–18. The Hatta repression was not in the draft.
31 Ibid., pp. 18–20.
32 Ibid., pp. 21–6. The draft is, understandably, shorter.
33 Ibid., pp. 27–8.

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under way'.[34] This process now involved demonstrations, strikes and possibly threats of armed action. But this was heavily mortgaged by the burden of two years of government participation and support of a diplomatic course. Could the FDR leadership break so radically with their past, and still retain credibility? The radical Left, with Tan Malaka's supporters gaining strength again, was ready to exploit these paradoxes.

Muso in particular, followed by Suripno and the FDR leadership, were vocal in meetings and interviews, and *Djalan baru* was repeated, explained and given an even more radical, implacable content.[35] *Djalan baru* as a resolution had to be discussed and approved by all FDR organisations. PKI approval went along with the election of Muso as General Secretary. The other Politburo positions were filled with former FDR prominent members — with no purge victims, except perhaps Alimin and Sardjono who were relegated to minor portfolios. Meanwhile, the formation of local national front organisation went on, a shadow administration unfolding.[36]

On 29 August Amir Sjarifuddin publicly disclosed that he had been a PKI member since 1935. It caused a shock, and many of his fellow politicians chose not to believe this. He was considered a nationalist, a socialist, prominent in FDR, but not communist. He had been a member of the underground PKI leadership. This had remained a secret, as otherwise he would not have been able to become Prime Minister. His 'coming out' was ascribed to his ambition to remain on top in Republik political life, to match Muso in a forthcoming struggle for power in PKI.[37]

Tension mounted, and Hatta found it appropriate to speak out at a meeting of the Parliament's Working Committee, saying that the government would act to correct political excesses, when necessary with an iron fist. The army also heightened its vigilance. But government was unsure as to the level of its popular support, while the army did not know how widespread sympathy for the FDR was within its own ranks. Moreover, there was the threat of a new Dutch attack on the Republik.[38]

On the other hand, the PKI and Muso did not seem to be impressed. Muso made his speeches, and started a propaganda tour on 6 September, accompanied by a good number of politburo members, with almost all the bigger cities on his schedule. Muso was the most prominent speaker. Other supporting speakers even gave accounts of their previous mistakes before crowds of thousands. They probably did not feel much at ease, and their 'performance' served to enhance Muso's prestige, as Stalin's envoy. Moreover, they became an easy prey for Left radicals, who were eager to square accounts.

A transcription and translation of the Muso speech in Madiun, an FDR stronghold, taken from the radio, on 8 September, is preserved. A few quotations will serve to document Muso's oratory. Behind the speakers hung three banners: 'Form a Front Nasional, on the basis of a Program Nasional with a Kabinet

34 FDR journalist Soerjono heard Amir say this at a FDR meeting (Soerjono, 'On Musso's return', *Indonesia*, 29 (1980): 61).
35 For a survey: Poeze, *Verguisd en vergeten*, pp. 1101–11.
36 Ibid., pp. 1113–7.
37 Ibid., pp. 1117–27, sorting out the reactions to Amir's long communist past.
38 Ibid., pp. 1136–42.

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Nasional (anti-imperialist)', 'The National Revolution must be lead by the working class' and 'The workers are communists'. In the pamphlet announcing the meeting Muso's Soviet credentials were expounded.

He is

a. A PKI leader in 1924–26
b. A world-renowned communist
c. A communist who wandered all over the world
d. A communist who lived for 23 years in Moscow
e. And will relate his impressions of the *Soviet Union*, the fatherland of the proletariat.

Next to Muso on the rostrum stood an empty chair. Muso pointed to it at the beginning of his speech, exclaiming: 'The highly revered Comrade Stalin'. He continued:

> Our revolution has now been going on for three years and yet the workmen, peasants, pemudas and women have not benefited by these results. On the contrary, they have suffered badly. The fault lies in the beginning of the revolution, but we have to admit that this has been the fault of the PKI itself. Do you realize how, brothers, that the PKI has the courage to admit its mistakes? The proclamation of freedom has taken the wrong turning, and now the leadership of the revolution is in the hands of the bourgeoisie and the landed gentry, the proletariat being excluded altogether. …
>
> I am Muso, who was exiled in 1926, who has come to re-establish the PKI, continued by Sjarifuddin and his friends. During the Japanese occupation they were imprisoned by the Japanese, but the PKI will live on forever. And the fact that the PKI is highly favoured by the people is proved by the presence of the thousands of people at this meeting. …
>
> The Soviet Union is a proletarian country; since we too have become a proletarian country it is only natural that we accept the guidance of the Soviet.
>
> There are people who put the question, what will be the direct advantage of cooperation with the Soviets? Before consuls had been exchanged we had already been aided by the Soviet Union. Has on the other hand any support been received by licking the boots of the Americans? (Cheers). For three years our government has licked the Americans; the result is that the Americans support the Netherlanders (Cheers). Up to this moment this policy goes on. …
>
> The PKI is not sufficiently resolute, that is why it has not been able to influence the workmen and the peasants, that is why it is not backed by the people. The first step now to be taken is to reinforce the PKI. When once strong again we will mobilise the people to march against the Netherlanders.
>
> Are we able to oppose the Netherlanders? Just look at the Greek guerrillas, who have held out for years against their government, which uses American armament, even American officers are on the side of the government. They have even started to attack and 70 per cent of the country is in their hands. If this small country is able to fight America, why should we, a people of 70 million heads, be unable to march against the Netherlanders? (Cheers). We have no proper arms, neither have the Greeks. They have captured their weapons – even their cigarettes – from the Americans. If we

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want, we too can apply these tactics. The people of Indo-China have held out against France which is three times as strong as the Netherlands.

The armies of France, consisting of former SS-Germans, are stronger than the Netherlands ones. Why then are we not able to do the same? This is all our own fault and it is caused by our lack of organisation. Our strategy has in the first place to be to kill as many Netherlanders as possible and to seize their weapons (Cheers).…

It is said that I am an agent from Moscow and that I have received instructions. These are lies. Our policy is not an instruction from Moscow, but it is a natural consequence of the nature of our revolution. Experiences in Burma, China, etc. have convinced me that our revolution must be in the hands of the proletariat. This is the age of the working classes. Why has the system of capitalism come to an end? By the Russian revolution, which has been going on for 30 years, by the existence of the new East-European democracies, by the labour-movements in Europe and America and by the nationalist movements in Asia. In the Soviet there is already socialism. And what does that mean? It means that all means of production are in the hands of the workers, and all trade as well. Collective agriculture made the use of aeroplanes for sowing possible, a thing which could never be done by a private person. In the Soviet Union atom-energy is used for agriculture, in America for making bombs.

The Soviet Union is the leader of the world revolution, of which our revolution forms a part, consequently we are led by the Soviet Union. If we choose the side of the Soviet Union we are right.

Comrades, I am tired. Other speakers are waiting.

Merdeka![39]

It was in no small measure a show in which Muso played the main part, and the other PKI leaders, branded and humiliated as responsible for the complete failure of communist policies since the proclamation, were relegated to playing 'the bad guys'. Muso's credentials as a Moscow veteran were employed to the utmost, and supported by a bright picture of the Soviet Union, as a workers' paradise. It all tasted very much of millenarianism, that always had found fruitful ground in Java, especially in times of crisis and war. But Muso did not fail to explain the 'two camp theory', and that there was no room for neutrality in the worldwide struggle between imperialism and socialism, which was inevitably to result in a communist victory.

While *Djalan baru* was outspoken, but still somewhat inhibited as a written document, in words there were only vehemence and implacability. There was no room, in Muso's political order, for bourgeois leaders, for the traditional nobility, for hereditary leadership in the villages. The state owned the enterprises; workers could rise to become its directors. Land was distributed to its tillers. It was all-out war against the Netherlands — guerrillas and scorched earth were the tactics to be

39 The complete version, translated into English, is in John Hamlin, American Consul to Secretary of State, 'English translation of speech made by Muso at mass meeting', Singapore, 30 Sept. 1948, in National Archives, Washington, 856D.00B09.3048. The anecdote about the empty chair in Jusuf Wibisono, *Bertamasnja dibelakang tabir besi* (Bandung: 's-Gravenhage: Van Hoeve, 1953), pp. 103–4 and Frances Gouda, *American visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia: US Foreign policy and Indonesian nationalism, 1920–1949* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002), p. 276.

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employed, and the aim was to kill as many Dutch soldiers as possible. Muso called on the Muslims to join him in this 'holy war'.

It was all written and said in the open. All non-communists could read the signs on the wall, but they choose to ignore its message, until it was too late?

The road to armed revolt

In these first weeks of September Surakarta, the second city of the Republik, became the scene of a complex conflict. Surakarta had become the centre of oppositional forces. FDR and left radicals had their headquarters there. The army division had strong FDR sympathies, and was able to thwart government efforts to 'rationalise' it, thanks also to backing of army commander Sudirman. When, according to the stipulations of the Renville Agreement, thousands of military of the West Javanese Siliwangi Division were evacuated to the Republik, many of them were quartered in or near Surakarta. Siliwangi was loyal to the government and anti-leftist. Their quartering in overcrowded Surakarta, the lack of housing and food, the inhospitable population, all served to make Siliwangi unhappy. After armed incidents and kidnappings the situation got out of hand. Lower ranking officers of Siliwangi played an important role in the early stages. A train of events was set in motion, and the top officers of Siliwangi decided to fight it out. Sudirman did his best to halt the fighting, and even sided with the local division. But he had to give in, and Siliwangi, by threat and deceit, was able to expel its fellow military from Surakarta. Intra-army contradictions were reinforced by political conflict. Pesindo headquarters were raided, and in reprisal the prominent leftist leader Muwardi, chairman of an anti-PKI federation, was kidnapped, never to be found again.

Developments in Solo were in retrospect of even greater importance in the trial of strength between government and PKI/FDR. Both parties later accused the other of having consciously sought confrontation. This does not seem to have been the case. Local developments followed their own course and the government and FDR only reacted.

The FDR wanted to 'localise' the conflict. The new communist party was under construction, and needed time to reorganise. Surakarta was a stronghold to be maintained. Its position on the road from central to east Java also protected the FDR dominance in Madiun, the third city of the Republik. The government only in a late stage could extend its grip on Surakarta, and record an important political and military victory. In an irreversible process of action and reaction, of expectation and suspicion, of uncertainty about the opponents' plans, the road to confrontation was taken.[40]

The next stage was set in Madiun. Here Soemarsono, appointed head of the local 'Action Committee', was charged by FDR to execute the national programme, in particular the land reforms that were part of it. It was an operation on a grand scale. On 8 September, Amir told a mass meeting in Madiun that in 260 villages land was reallocated. Force was used. Next, armed incidents were reported in Madiun. Alarming reports from Surakarta made the FDR nervous and fearsome of a recurrence. Soemarsono had talks with the politburo, which had arrived in Kediri on its tour, on 10 or 11 September. Here it was decided to launch a preemptive strike in

40 For a survey and analysis of developments in Surakarta, see Poeze, *Verguisd en vergeten*, pp. 1149–89.

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Madiun against Siliwangi and likeminded units. Execution and timing was to be decided in consultation with the politburo. In this connection on the day before the action, which was launched on 18 September, two politburo members, Wikana and Setiadjit, arrived in Madiun, and took a leading part in the preparations. Their presence has not been acknowledged in the literature on the Madiun revolt. Scholarly accounts are in agreement with later PKI historiography and call the events in Madiun a local affair that got out of hand, or – a view predominant in the PKI accounts – a pretext used by Hatta (Sukarno's role being ignored) to provoke a showdown with PKI/FDR. There is thus need to revise the story.[41]

The revolt was an initial success and power in Madiun and other north Java towns fell into FDR hands. The politburo assembled in Madiun and in a radio speech Muso launched his claim for power against Sukarno. However, Siliwangi marched successfully against FDR troops and after 10 days Madiun was recaptured. It was not the end of the revolt. It took till the end of November before the FDR guerrilla forces were defeated. In the process, Muso was killed on 31 October.

Conclusion

The arrival of Muso was a catalyst. Before, FDR was still looking for a return to power by parliamentary means, with extraparliamentary pressure, like the Delanggu strike, applied in support of this aim. There was also reflection on possible use of armed force should a national front government fail to materialise, amongst other possible scenarios.

This was the context into which Muso arrived 'to create order', first of all in his own party. His new programme, *Djalan baru*, was swallowed by the FDR leadership. More than his reputation as a PKI veteran this will have been brought about by him being considered the the envoy of Stalinist Moscow, to whom they understood only unconditional obedience was appropriate. His arrival ended caution, diplomacy and the secrecy about illegal actions. *Djalan baru* was clear and Muso in speech and writing even more so. His objective was a communist Republik, cosmetically made up as a national front government. The Republik's government knew what was in store — there would be no place for Sukarno and Hatta, the Sultan of Jogjakarta was to disappear and the army was regarded as 'fascist'. His utterances blocked any chance of compromise. He also blocked a potential ally: the Tan Malaka supporters. The result was bitter denunciation by the radical left of the FDR leaders who had admitted political mistakes. This was effective, and the FDR had no answer. PKI could not possibly punish its leaders, as they were all guilty. Thus, it did not go beyond painful self critique.

Government reaction on all this was reserved. No plans were made to withstand the PKI threat. The army restricted itself to warning words and vigilance. It looks that

41 Sources are Soemarsono, 'De Madioen-affair', 11 Nov. 1949, pp. 4–5, in National Archives, The Hague, PG 979; interview Soemarsono, Jakarta, 23.10.1980; Hariandja, 'Pokok2 Peristiwa Madiun', p. 7, in KITLV, Collectie-Leclerc H 1327-286, also Nita, 'Tentang provokasi Madiun: Sebuah pengantar studi', in Hersri Setiawan, *Negara Madiun? Kesaksian Soemarsono pelaku perjuangan*, pp. 181–211. Forum Studi Perubahan dan Peradaban, Jakarta, 2002: 190–1. And from an unsuspected source, the Antara photographer reporting Muso's tour mentions the departure of Wikana and Setiadjit to Madiun (*Antara*, 8 Oct. 1948). There is more detail in Poeze, *Verguisd en vergeten*, pp. 1201–4.

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in this way PKI was granted time to consolidate and – when a peaceful take-over of power would not succeed – launch military action at a time of its own choosing.

The events in Solo disturbed this scenario. The PKI chose to reply in kind; the choice was between Sukarno and Muso. It ended in failure, and PKI/FDR made crucial mistakes in military and organisational respects during the revolt.

It was Muso who set the course towards confrontation. It was his fault that due to his tactless behaviour armed conflict started at an inopportune moment. With more caution he would have been able to postpone the confrontation until a time when his party was better prepared. The government in Jogjakarta might not have reacted with the choice: Sukarno or Muso.

The new Moscow policy would probably anyway have resulted in a rupture and confrontation, but with Amir, Suripno, Setiadjit and Alimin, instead of Muso, it would have happened later. The chances of success would have been greater: the PKI would be stronger, the economic crisis in the Republik deeper, and the deadlock in the negotiations with the Netherlands more unsolvable.[42]

42 Based on the conclusion in the chapter on the Madiun Revolt in Poeze, *Verguisd en vergeten*, pp. 1387–91.

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