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Mass mobilisation in Indonesian politics,  
1960-2001: towards a class analysis

Maxwell Ronald Lane  
University of Wollongong

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**Department of History and Politics**

**Mass mobilisation in Indonesian politics,  
1960-2001: towards a class analysis.**

**Maxwell Ronald Lane**

**This thesis is presented as part of the requirements for the  
award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
at  
University of Wollongong**

**May, 2009**

## **CERTIFICATION**

I, Maxwell Ronald Lane, declare that this thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other institution.

Max Lane

October, 2009

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	viii
Acknowledgements	ix
Preliminary Notes	x
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
Bringing class (struggle) back in: challenges for histories of contemporary Indonesia	2
Class and the forms of class struggle	5
Mass action, mass mobilization	19
Class and social movements	23
Mass action's clear presence in Indonesian history	36
Mass action and the course of Indonesian history	43
<b>Chapter 1:</b>	
<b>The absence of class analysis in studies of contemporary history</b>	<b>45</b>
Hegemonic negation: the masses are not there	48
Feith against the "solidarity makers".	53
Robison, 1965 and the "capitalist revolution"s negation of class struggle.	64
The fall of Suharto and the aftermath of counter-revolution: nuanced negations of class struggle	68
The popular classes and transition analysis: Aspinall and opposition	75
"Labour Politics"	83
Bringing back class (struggle)	92
<b>Chapter 2:</b>	
<b><i>Aksi massa</i> and the New Order: Counter-revolution against mass politics</b>	<b>94</b>
Radicalisation	94
The negation of <i>aksi massa</i> as the essential character of the New Order	104

The counter ideology to <i>aksi massa</i> : Floating mass	107
Consolidating the ideologicide: erasing memory	113
 <b>Chapter 3:</b>	
<b>Students and the last days of <i>aksi massa</i>, 1966-78</b>	116
The “anti-politics” student activists	120
1973-74: the beginnings of the new <i>aksi</i> movement	130
The 1973-4 movement and the previous activism	138
The bitter fruits of de-organisation	143
The counter-revolution’s last offensive	146
Conclusions	152
 <b>Chapter 4:</b>	
<b>Planning the revival of <i>aksi</i></b>	154
Beyond students	157
Active engagement	163
 <b>Chapter 5:</b>	
<b><i>Aksi</i> and the framework for the end of the New Order</b>	174
<i>Aksi massa</i> politics develops as a trend, 1989-1994	177
Student-worker <i>aksi massa</i> , 1995-1996	179
<i>Aksi Massa</i> through an international issue, 1995	180
<i>Aksi</i> : towards a first climax: 1996	181
Soekarnoputri conjuncture: terrain of first <i>aksi</i> climax	182
May, 1997: the second climax	188
The impact of <i>aksi massa</i>	198
Loss of control of political agenda	199
<i>Aksi</i> established as ongoing activity	200

Framing Suharto's fall: towards May, 1998	202
1989-1998: <i>Aksi</i> 's decade	208
<b>Chapter 6:</b>	
<b>The failure to win power: the limitations of actually existing <i>aksi massa</i></b>	210
Peoples Committees and Presidiums	212
Elite politics and the "peoples' committee"	226
<i>Aksi</i> , Consciousness and Organisation	232
Class and combativity	235
Limits of <i>aksi</i>	238
<b>Chapter 7:</b>	
<b><i>Aksi</i> and politics after Suharto</b>	242
Impact: <i>Aksi</i> and constraining the elite	249
Impact beyond constraint: <i>aksi</i> and political challenge	252
Towards <i>aksi</i> on a mass scale	257
The limitations and contradictions of the anti-dictatorship mass movement.	268
<i>Aksi</i> and class consciousness after the dictatorship	270
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	273
From mass action contestation to 'floating mass' dis-organisation.	273
From 'floating mass' dis-organisation to <i>aksi massa</i> re-organisation.	275
Dependent re-organisation: the consequence of ideological narrowness.	278
Frameworks for analyzing trends: future research	281
Relationship between mobilisation popular politics and ideological life	281
Relationship between mobilisational politics, ideological life and nation creation	284
On class	289
<b>Appendices</b>	290
APPENDIX 1: Manifesto of the Peoples' Democratic Party	296



APPENDIX 2: PRD field reports	296
APPENDIX 3: Response to the slander by ABRI Social and Political Affairs Chief Syarwan Hamid	303
APPENDIX 4: LIST OF SIGNATORIES claimed in KNPD statement, January, 1998.	311
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	314

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis presents an analysis of the course of political developments between 1960 and 2001 arguing that the determining factor at key conjunctures was class struggle, as manifested in the mass mobilisation of Indonesia's popular classes: the proletariat, semi-proletariat and pauperized petty bourgeoisie, (the latter including the peasants). The thesis deploys classical Marxist concepts, in their connections to some of Indonesia's political thinkers, especially Soekarno. It critiques some of the major in-depth (book length) struggles on political developments during this period as negating or downplaying the class factor, and in particular class struggle and mass mobilisation, in their studies.

The thesis argues that it has been the nature of two crisis caused by the escalation of mass mobilisation of the popular classes against a ruling class and its political elite, and the nature of the resolution of these two crisis, that best explains what happens at two key conjunctures in modern Indonesian history, 1965 and 1998. In 1965 the sharpening polarization between two visions of Indonesia was resolved with mass repression and the emergence of the New Order regime. The thesis examines how the political activity one side of this polarization was increasingly manifested in mass mobilisation and how the new regime was structured to permanently end all mass mobilisation activity. The thesis examines the nature of the crisis, namely an impending threat of the forces of the mass mobilisation winning power.

The thesis later examines the process whereby mass mobilisation politics in the period 1989-1998, re-asserted itself, through the agency of a small initiating political group, the Peoples' Democratic Party, and through the increasing involvement of more and more elements from the popular classes. A part of the examination presents the analysis that the content of class struggle for this period, in the aftermath of the radical suppression of mass mobilisation, was the struggle of the popular classes to reassert a right to mobilize. The thesis then examines the nature of crisis caused by the escalating mass mobilisation of this period, especially as it climaxes between 1996 and 1998.

Through an examination of the reasons for the inability of the political movement based on mass mobilisation to win power and its inability to sustain further escalation between 1998 and 2001, the thesis attempts to locate political weaknesses of the mass mobilisation politics that emerged in the 1990s, identifying in particular its weak ideological activity and dependence on alliance with dissident elements from within the ruling class and its elite.

The conclusion sums up these arguments as well as looks at possible future trends and the research agendas that would be needed to pursue this kind of approach in regard to future developments.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis most of all was made possible by the willingness of so many Indonesians to share their ideas with me. I thank especially all those I list in my prefatory note.

I must thank also Professor Adrian Vickers for his encouragement and support, the long conversations over coffee as well as the detailed comments on what I have written. I must also thank Professor Gary Rodan, who continued to offer many suggestions and comments on what I was writing after I left the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University and enrolled for this Ph.D.

Among my colleagues and associates, Dr Toby Carrol, now at the National University of Singapore, has been very supportive offering camaraderie as well as comments on some of what I have written.

I am also grateful for the comments and suggestions of Allen Myers, John Percy and Eva To.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife and partner, Faiza, whose companionship and solidarity has been essential.

## PRELIMINARY NOTES

### *Engagement with Indonesians.*

I have not used systematic interviewing as a part of the methodology of this thesis and have not sourced interviews conducted during the period of preparing the thesis. However, during that period I have had many discussions with Indonesians, whose own activities and ideas are relevant to thesis and indeed, in some cases, the subject of the thesis. These dialogues, however, are a continuation of a general dialogue I have had with political and culturally active Indonesians since 1971. There can be no doubt that that 48 years of dialogue has contributed – positively, I hope – to the course of trying to understand Indonesian politics, and therefore, also in writing this thesis. For the readers benefit, I list some of those Indonesians, but only those who are mentioned in the thesis. And with whom I have had such a dialogue. I have asterisked with a triple asterisk those with whom the dialogue has been intense, with two asterisk those with whom the dialogue has been regular but not intense and with one asterisk for those with whom the dialogue has been sporadic.

Abdurrahman Wahid 1991-1996 \*\* 1996 – 2004 \*

Budiman Sujatmiko 1991 – 2001 \*\*\*

Danial Indrakusuma 1990 -2009 \*\*\*

Dita Sari 1992-2007 \*\*\*

Hariman Siregar 1978 – 2009 \*\*

Joesoef Isak 1980-2009 \*\*\*

Pramoedya Ananta Toer 1980 – 2007 \*\*\*

Rendra, 1972-1981 \*\*\* 1981 – 2009 \*

Wilson 1992-2001 \*\*\* 2001-2009 \*

I am deeply grateful for the time and energy that these and many others have given to me over the years.

### **Published Material**

A considerable amount of the material in this thesis was included a book published during my doctoral candidacy, namely, *Unfinished Nation: Indonesia before and after Suharto*, Verso, 2008. Some material from Chapter 2 appears in Chapters 1 and 2 of that book. Much of the materials in Chapters 3, 4,5,6 and 7 appear in the same chapters in the book. Smaller sections of the thesis appear in other parts of *Unfinished Nation*.

# INTRODUCTION

This thesis will present an analysis that places class struggle at the centre of the analytical explanation of the course of Indonesian politics from 1949 until 2001, looking in some detail at the period 1965-2001, and in most detail at the period 1989-2001. It sees class struggle as the struggle for political power between classes, and focuses on the use of mass mobilisation as the political weapon of the popular classes in this struggle. The extent of the development of a mass action strategy at any one time — noting that mass action is not simply massive actions but is tied to a conscious purpose (i.e. has an ideology) — is the key to explaining the extent of success or failure of the popular classes in their use of this method of struggle.

The thesis has three parts. The first section will set out theoretical starting points and review key political histories and analysis of independent Indonesia. The second section will provide an analysis, reinterpreting available materials on the rise of Soekarnoism in the late 1950s and early 1960s and its suppression after 1965 as part of the coming to power of General Suharto. This section will argue that the political system established by General Suhartoism was a direct response to the advance of the mass action strategy of the popular classes before 1965 and, indeed, was a system built around institutionalisation of the suppression of any kind of mass action politics.

The third section, based on substantial original materials, will look at how the re-emergence of mass action politics 25 years after its suppression, as part of a conscious strategy, was at the centre of the processes that led to the end of the system established by Suharto. It will also examine how the lopsided development of mass action politics, i.e. its development with a weak ideological framework, is one of the major causes of the fragmentation which is a characteristic of Indonesian political life today and also is key to explaining the stagnation of the mass action movement between 1998 and 2008.

The methodology of the thesis has involved a number of approaches, which I have tried to synthesize. The thesis presents an historical outline of the periods under analysis, highlighting the elements relevant to an understanding of how mass mobilisation has played a determining role in change, i.e. in determining the key features of the following period of class struggle politics. The narrative analysis of the period 1949 until 1965 is necessary to explain what happens in the period 1989 until 2001, the primary case study.

In presenting an analysis of the lead-up period (1945-89) to the case study period (1989-2008), I have relied primarily on reinterpreting existing published materials rather than going to primary resource materials. However, the use of primary materials increases steadily when I deal with the 1970s and 1980s, although not to the same extent as in the study of the 1989-2008 period. For the basic analysis of the 1970s and 1980s, I am still tending to use the published work of other scholars, using new materials to illustrate new aspects flowing from a reinterpretation of existing works.

Throughout the thesis I attempt to provide evidence for my argument and my depiction of key developments or events through the use of available documentary materials or the use of published scholarly works that quote or reference such material. The thesis does not include any material from interviews. However, a part of the methodology of the work over the last three years has involved intensive dialogues with participants in the processes described in the thesis. While these dialogues have been valuable in developing an argument and analysis, the thesis does not rely on them to document the analysis. This thesis is also written after 40 years of direct engagement in Indonesia and with the processes described in it.

**Bringing class (struggle) back in: challenges for histories of contemporary Indonesia**

In the overwhelming majority of scholarly historical analysis of post-independence Indonesian politics, the role of class has been greatly downplayed or negated. Most of this history, usually written as contemporary history,<sup>1</sup> has been produced outside of Indonesia, and mainly by Australian and European scholars. American scholarship, while pioneering the in-depth study and analysis of specific periods of modern Indonesian history, has not produced works covering the period beyond of 1945-49.<sup>2</sup> American scholarship since the 1950s has either continued its emphasis on pre-1949 history or been more focused on political sociology, modernisation theory and development questions.<sup>3</sup> It has been a few Australian and European-based scholars who have pursued in-depth studies of post-1949 history in an attempt to identify the central, or primary, cause and effect processes creating major turning points in that period.<sup>4</sup> The key scholars producing major works have been Herbert Feith, Richard Robison and, more recently, Edward Aspinall. In the recent period, Robison has also worked jointly with Indonesian scholar Vedi Hadiz.<sup>5</sup>

Indonesian scholarship has not produced any similar works on the 1949-98 period, although this situation is currently changing dramatically.<sup>6</sup> Indonesian intellectual life in the

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term contemporary history because, even though all the scholars who will be analysed in Chapter 1 are political scientists, their works concentrate on analysing the course of developments over a particular historical time. While they may have collected the material in real time, the analysis and publication occur later, looking back at that specific period. The form of analysis is historical narrative analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Kahin, George McT, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Cornell, 1952; and Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944-1946*, Jakarta : Equinox Pub., 2006 are the classic examples of such works.

<sup>3</sup> For an early but still valid review of this scholarship, see Tan Chee Leng, Indonesian studies field: notes towards a critique of the field, B.A. Thesis, University of Queensland, 1987.

<sup>4</sup> See Simon Philpott, *Rethinking Indonesia: Postcolonial Theory, Authoritarianism and Identity*, London : Macmillan Press, 2000 for a critique of Indonesian political studies as a form of orientalist discourse. Philpott concentrates on the inner workings of various writings but does not present an his own analysis of Indonesian historical political developments.

<sup>5</sup> I have not included Rex Mortimer in this list even though he also wrote a major work, *Indonesian Communism Under Soekarno*. Mortimer was unable to develop any generalisation from his work on Indonesian political history because he died in mid-career as an Indonesianist.

<sup>6</sup> Adrian Vickers has accumulated a database of more than 2400 new works on Indonesian history published since the fall of Suharto. See *The State of Indonesian Historiography* at

period 1949-65 was such that the majority of intellectuals were active participants in political processes. Political movement life easily overwhelmed academic activity. After 1965, the involvement of intellectuals in political life continued — but with both political movement activity and academic activity, despite its significant expansion, under the control of a totalitarian regime with a very narrow, conservative political outlook.<sup>7</sup> The end of dictatorship in 1998 ended these constraints, and academic writing on history and politics has started to increase dramatically.

The central purpose of this thesis will be to present a critique of what I will argue is a major flaw in the works of the above authors and to illustrate an alternative analytical approach through an analysis of the 1965-2008 period. I will argue that the approaches used by all these scholars — although differing in other respects — share a common perspective that either downplays or negates the role of class in analysing the major turning points, or conjunctures, in Indonesian history. This is the case, I will argue, even with those writers — such as Robison and Hadiz, for example — who explicitly use class and state as categories in their analysis.

Chapter 1 will review the major works of these scholars, looking in particular at the way they treat the role of class in analysing the period of political history with which they deal.

In this Introduction I will set out some basic approaches to the issue of how to identify and assess the role of class in society, and in Indonesian history in particular. The Introduction will, of necessity, not only define some basic theoretical approaches, but also attempt to locate the role of class in the foundations of Indonesian national politics.

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[http://blogs.usyd.edu.au/vicindonblog/2007/02/the\\_state\\_of\\_indonesian\\_histor.html](http://blogs.usyd.edu.au/vicindonblog/2007/02/the_state_of_indonesian_histor.html), accessed March 26, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> See Vedi Hadiz and Danial Dhakidae (eds), *Social Sciences and Power in New Order Indonesia*, Jakarta : Equinox, 2006.



## **Class and the forms of class struggle**

What I will draw out in Chapter 1 in assessing the major scholarly works of the authors all (although some more or less do this.). I will be using an orthodox Marxist definition of class whereby classes are seen as being defined through the relations that exist between them, such relations flowing from relations with material elements in the process of production. In *Wage Labour and Capital*, Marx wrote:

In production, men not only act on nature, but also upon one another. They produce only by co-operating in a certain way and mutually exchanging their activities. In order to produce, they enter into definite connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations does their action on nature, does production, take place.

These social relations into which the producers enter with one another, the conditions under which they exchange their activities and participate in the whole act of production, will naturally vary according to the character of the means of production.<sup>8</sup>

In societies where capitalism is hegemonic, whether colonial, underdeveloped or advanced industrial capitalism, the private ownership of the major means of production determines the general nature of the formation of classes into a capitalist class, owning the means of production, and a labouring class, owning no means of production of significance (no capital) and surviving through the sale of its labour.

In colonial and underdeveloped societies, where no significant level of industrialisation takes place (i.e. in unindustrialised capitalist societies), this division into two classes may appear blurred due to the existence of a huge number of semi-proletarians alongside an equally huge number of pauperised petty-bourgeoisie.<sup>9</sup> In terms of the gap in access to

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<sup>8</sup> *Marx and Engels Selected Works (MESW)*, Moscow : Progress Publishers, 1983, Vol. 1, p. 159.

<sup>9</sup> Another potential blurring can result from the undeveloped state of the domestic bourgeoisie itself. Colonial domination meant that no class of national scale capitalists developed in Indonesia, those enterprises requiring massive investment remaining in foreign hands (except during periods of

resources, the existence of these huge numbers of semi-proletarians and impoverished petty-bourgeoisie does not in fact blur the reality of the class gap, nor the ultimate exploitative relationship. The most significant aspect of any “blurring” relates to an aspect of class and class analysis that is of special importance in this study. In fact, it is a crucial aspect in any application of class analysis to the understanding of political history: namely, that of the political life of the classes and the struggle for political power between those classes.

Class analysis that abstracts from or alienates an assessment of the role of class in political change, and which does not put the struggle between classes at the centre of its analysis will negate the whole concept of class itself — at least in its Marxist sense. It reduces it to a simple “interest group” defined by its perceived immediate interests, rather than its relationship with the other class or classes existing at the time. The formation of a class does not perfect itself simply in the economic sphere (the sphere of production). From the very start of any new social formation, political struggle (the struggle for power, especially state power) between the classes begins. It can occur as a kind of low intensity guerrilla struggle or take on more widespread and conscious forms. It is through the experience of these struggles that class consciousness is developed, reflected in the formation of a psychological outlook of the different classes, although contained for much of the time within the bounds of a national psychological outlook formed as a result of the dominance of the ideas of the ruling class, as they have formed historically, with their internal contradictions developed in response to the struggles between the classes. Within each class different currents and factions can develop. In capitalist society, the capitalist class’s factions and currents have their own political leaders and managers, usually ensconced in their political parties, upper levels of the bureaucracy, other state-funded institutions and the security apparatus. In this thesis, this layer as it exists in Indonesia will be referred to as the “political elite”, or “elite”.<sup>10</sup>

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nationalisation) This means that close, often dependent ties, can develop between domestic and foreign capital. However, this situation does not change the fundamental exploitative class structure that develops.

<sup>10</sup> So in this thesis, I am using “elite” in a different sense than in those analyses which use the term to describe a grouping defined in a way that alienates them from their class base.

In industrialised capitalist societies, trade unions, labour parties and communist parties are the easily recognisable forms of organisation. In revolutionary conditions, workers councils, such as the Paris Commune or the Russian soviets, are also easily recognised forms of organisation. Under colonial capitalism, such as in the Netherlands Indies, or under non-industrialised capitalism, such as in independent Indonesia, these forms of organisation have existed alongside other forms that have arisen due to the existence of a huge number of semi-proletarians and pauperised petty-bourgeoisie.<sup>11</sup>

The starting definition of the proletariat was succinctly formulated by Engels in *Principles of Communism*:

The proletariat is that class of society which procures its means of livelihood entirely and solely from the sale of its labour and not from the profit derived from some capital; whose weal and woe, whose life and death, whose whole existence depend on the demand for labour ...<sup>12</sup>

Engels explained the origins of the proletariat, at least in Britain:

The Proletariat arose as a result of the industrial revolution ... [which was] brought about by the invention of the steam engine, of various spinning machines, of the power-loom, and of a great number of other mechanical devices. These machines, which were very expensive and, consequently, could only be purchased by big capitalists, altered the entire hitherto existing mode of production and ousted the hitherto existing workers, because machines produced cheaper and better commodities than could the workers with their imperfect spinning-wheels and hand-looms. Thus, these machines handed over industry entirely to the big

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<sup>11</sup> In the Indies/Indonesia's case another factor, which I will discuss below, is the non-existence of a nation at the beginning of the formation of the classes of capitalist society.

<sup>12</sup> *MESW*, Vol 1, p81.

capitalists and rendered the workers' scanty property (tools, hand-loom, etc.) worthless, so that the capitalists soon owned everything and nothing was left to the workers.<sup>13</sup>

In the Netherlands Indies and in modern Indonesia, there has been no industrial revolution. Machine-based industry employed only a tiny portion of the population during Dutch colonialism — mainly in tobacco plants and sugar mills — and even today, only a tiny portion of the Indonesian workforce is employed in what might be termed industrial enterprises. A 2000 research report by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation identified that a massive two-thirds of the urban workforce — more than 60 million people — employed in medium (20-99 workers), small scale (5-19 workers) and household industries (1-4 workers) accounted for only 5-6% of total manufacturing value added.<sup>14</sup>

In the Netherlands Indies and in modern Indonesia there has been no industrial revolution. Machine-based industry, in particular heavy and medium level machine based industry, only employed a tiny portion of the population during Dutch colonialism — mainly in tobacco plants and sugar mills — and even today, only a tiny portion of the Indonesian workforce is employed in what might be termed industrial enterprise. This is not to deny that there has been a very substantial drift out of the agricultural sector into urban based manufacturing and services sector in contemporary Indonesia.

However, the predominant character of this activity is small scale with only a small percentage of the workforce employed in heavy and medium industry, with high levels of use of heavy machinery and consequent high levels of productivity, higher wages and stable employment. A 2000 research report by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation identified that a massive two thirds of the urban workforce — more than 60 million people — employed in medium (20-99 workers), small scale (5-19 workers) and

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), *Indonesia: Strategy for Manufacturing Competitiveness*, Jakarta, 2000.

household industries (1-4 workers) accounted for only 5-6% of total manufacturing value added.<sup>15</sup>

The UNIDO report went on to show that the medium and large-scale manufacturing establishments employed some 4 million workers or just 4% of the total work force of around [urban] 90 million. ...

In other words, the Indonesian urban workforce of about 90 million remained overwhelmingly comprised of a semi-proletariat with uncertain employment in a huge ocean of small enterprises, with miserably low productivity and with the concomitant low incomes to go with this.

This is reinforced by figures from the International Labour Organisation on status of occupation in Indonesian industrial sectors. . In 2008, "employees" (which includes bourgeois managerial personnel, highly paid middle-class professionals, as well as wage-workers, and also paid family employees) accounted for only 23% of Indonesia's economically active population in all the non agricultural sectors. The rest were made up of "employers and own-account workers" (i.e., capitalist employers and self-employed workers -- which can include not just petty proprietors but also much of the urban and rural semi-proletariat<sup>16</sup>), "members of producers cooperatives" and contributing family workers, and

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), *Indonesia: Strategy for Manufacturing Competitiveness*, Jakarta, 2000. (This material on the semi-proletariat has been published in my *Unfinished Nation*, Verso, 2008.)

<sup>16</sup> The use of the term "semi-proletariat" was widespread in Russian Marxism during the early 20<sup>th</sup>. It was used to describe two groups. The first was the poor peasant who owned land but not enough for him to produce adequate output the sale of which would cover his life needs. To do this, he needed, like any urban proletarian, to sell his labour to survive, as well as sell the little product of his labour on his land. The second group were those in the cities in a similar position: self-employed persons in manufacturing in very small activities, who also additionally needed to sell their labour. Lenin described the peasant group in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* as: "In the peasant mass of 97 millions, however, one must distinguish three main groups: the bottom group—the proletarian and semi-proletarian strata of the population; the middle group—the poor small peasant farmers; and the top group—the well-to-do small peasant farmers." Here he includes proletarian and semi-proletarian in the same grouping – they are indeed basically different components of the same class. In his assessment of the "commercial and industrial population" in Russian he again groups the "13.2 million belonging to the proletarian and semi-proletarian strata of the population" together. He also identifies a separate section the "needy small producers", which I have referred to in my text as the "pauperized petty bourgeoisie." Of course, the price forms of productive activity of semi-

"unpaid family workers". Noting that the "employees" category, includes high paid professional employees, and includes an unstated number of "paid family employees".<sup>17</sup> These figures reinforce the picture from the UNIDO statistics that the classical proletariat may only make up significantly less than 20% of those working outside agriculture. The semi-proletariat numerically dominates over the proletariat.

This is the underlying condition that militates against trade unions becoming the major vehicle of worker mobilisation. In these conditions *aksi* (and *rusuh*) become the two dominant forms of organization or action. The workplace can become a site of grievance and organization, but it is often temporary and ad hoc. The neighbourhood or *kampung* can be the more usual basis for mobilisation, or even the gang (the maze like laneways in the *kampung* along which people live in small crowded, small houses.) The semi-proletariat, or urban poor, as they are called in Indonesian political discourse, develop a specific form of political culture in these *kampung*. This is described well in an interview with a leader of the Peoples Democratic Party in 1998.<sup>18</sup>

What we call the urban poor are made up of the unemployed, the lumpen-proletariat (pickpockets, burglars, con men, sex workers, drug sellers, guys who jump up onto moving trucks and grab some of the load) as well as peddlers, government clerks and employees. In north Jakarta, they also include factory

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proletariat layers in Russia in the early 1900s and in Indonesia in colonial and post-colonial periods may differ. But the essential features stay the same. The semi-proletarian, like other proletarians, must sell his labour to survive, even if he is engaged in also selling goods he has produced himself (such as is the case with many of the millions of street-side food sellers in Indonesia). While it is beyond the scope of the thesis to investigate this, there is likely also a blurring in social life between such semi-proletarians and proletarians who were in tiny enterprises, shifting from location to location, or who work at home, but producing for somebody else. See <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1899/dcr8vii/index.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Table: 1C Economically active population, by industry and status in employment , INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION, Labour Statistics Database, via <http://laborsta.ilo.org/STP/guest>

<sup>18</sup> "Indonesia: Organising The Mass Struggle For Real Democracy: an Interview with Marlin" in *Links: International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, No 5, 1998, pp 8-9. Marlin is the pseudonym of a senior PRD leader who was involved in coordinating the intervention into the 1997 election campaign from underground.

workers, shop assistants, supermarket and department store employees (mostly women), coolies, public transport drivers, street stall owners and so on. Most of these people live in squalid *kampung* [geographically delimited “villages” inside the city zone]. Rubbish is piled up everywhere, there is no water, the drains are blocked, mosquitoes abound, the rooms are tiny so that people pile up next to each other like sardines to sleep, and they wash and defecate in public toilets where they have to pay. Electricity is around 100 watts total per household (if you’re a bit better off you can get up to 450 watts). It’s rare for anyone to get a senior high school or university education. Incomes are around 100–300 thousand rupiah (US\$20–US\$60) a month. Most families have two to five members. Children regularly suffer cholera, typhus, meningitis, dysentery, skin disorders, influenza, sinus and eye infections and malnutrition.

At demonstrations, protest most often takes place around the demolition of their homes, the increase in public transport vehicles which cuts into the incomes of existing public transport drivers [paid by commission and not wages], the banning of street stalls and peddlers by local government, the closure of small kiosks without the operators being given somewhere else to operate or being forced to wait too long for a new place. The urban poor usually read papers like *Sentana*, *Swadesi*, *Pos Kota*, *Suara Karya* and *Inti Jaya*.<sup>13</sup> In Surabaya [Indonesia’s biggest metropolitan and industrial centre after Jakarta] the public transport drivers read the middle class paper *Jawa Pos* and the sensationalist *Memorandum*, whose editorials are often very radical. (The military has instructed the paper that the editorial writer may be published only twice a week!) Reading these papers means the urban poor have been able to learn from the protest actions by students and peasant farmers when protest delegations to the parliament and the National Human Rights Commission are common. They imitate these actions, using leaflets, posters, placards, press releases and even giving interviews to the media.

The urban poor also read the penny novels of Fredy S and the Chinese sword fighting stories of Wiro Sableng and Kho Ping Ho which teach of the holiness of pure love and that those who struggle for justice and truth are always victorious, always survive. Many of them are members of the PDI and use the sense of *kampung* solidarity to involve their neighbours in PDI actions. Many were supporters of the PPP during the May elections. Gossip about government officials, their wealth,

scandals and corruption, is their daily staple. Many of these *kampung* have come to the same conclusion as the students as to the source of their problems. Many too, ever since they were teenagers in junior or perhaps senior high, have become accustomed to violence in the form of fights and mass brawls between students from different schools (often with knives and guns) or with the police trying to separate the warring students.

Asked about the combative mentality of this urban poor compared to the factory workforce, he continued:

The urban poor are more aware of the contradictions around them [than some factory workers] because in their daily lives the rich pass back and forth before their very eyes. They experience all kinds of criminality, including the criminal actions of the government and the violence and arrogance of the military in the form of extortion, bribes and beatings. They live among people from all walks of life and they have time to discuss and debate things with their *kampung* friends. They also have greater access to different kinds of reading materials, so their culture is more urban, more liberal-radical and they are open to new ideas.

However, while the situation of two thirds of the urban workforce being located in this “urban poor” sector pre-disposes them to aksi or *rusuh*, it has other consequences. First, it strengthens their sense of being *rakyat*, starkly differentiated from the wealth of the middle classes and the high-productivity sector of the economy that the prosperous layers relate to.

This huge proportion of people is characterised by low levels of productivity primarily because the country remains fundamentally unindustrialised and largely pre-capitalist. They work in areas where the technological revolution begun by the industrial revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has not penetrated. There has been very minimal centralisation of the forces of production. Many of these people go in and out of regular wage employment. Some run tiny micro-enterprises, peddling goods and services. Some are “owners of the means of production” — a plough, a tiny plot of land, a portable stove, an oxywelding apparatus; that is to say, many are pauperised bourgeoisie, including peasants.

In the Netherlands Indies and in modern Indonesia there has been no industrial revolution. Machine-based industry, in particular heavy and medium level machine based industry, only employed a tiny portion of the population during Dutch colonialism – mainly



in tobacco plants and sugar mills – and even today, only a tiny portion of the Indonesian workforce is employed in what might be termed industrial enterprise. This is not to deny that there has been a very substantial drift out of the agricultural sector into urban based manufacturing and services sector in contemporary Indonesia.

However, the predominant character of this activity is small scale with only a small percentage of the workforce employed in heavy and medium industry, with high levels of use of heavy machinery and consequent high levels of productivity, higher wages and stable employment. A 2000 research report by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation identified that a massive two thirds of the urban workforce – more than 60 million people – employed in medium (20-99 workers), small scale (5-19 workers) and household industries (1-4 workers) accounted for only 5-6% of total manufacturing value added.<sup>19</sup>

The UNIDO report went on to show that the medium and large-scale manufacturing establishments employed some 4 million workers or just 4% of the total work force of around [urban] 90 million. ...

In other words, the Indonesian urban workforce of about 90 million remained overwhelmingly comprised of a semi-proletariat with uncertain employment in a huge ocean of small enterprises, with miserably low productivity and with the concomitant low incomes to go with this.

This is reinforced by figures from the International Labour Organisation on status of occupation in Indonesian industrial sectors. . In 2008, "employees" (which includes bourgeois managerial personnel, highly paid middle-class professionals, as well as wage-workers, and also paid family employees) accounted for only 23% of Indonesia's economically active population in all the non agricultural sectors. The rest were made up of "employers and own-account workers" (i.e., capitalist employers and self-employed workers -- which can include not just petty proprietors but also much of the urban and rural semi-

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<sup>19</sup> United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), *Indonesia: Strategy for Manufacturing Competitiveness*, Jakarta, 2000. (This material on the semi-proletariat has been published in my *Unfinished Nation*, Verso, 2008.)

proletariat<sup>20</sup>), “members of producers cooperatives” and contributing family workers, and “unpaid family workers”. Noting that the “employees” category, includes high paid professional employees, and includes an unstated number of “paid family employees”.<sup>21</sup> These figures reinforce the picture from the UNIDO statistics that the classical proletarian may only make up significantly less than 20% of those working outside agriculture. The semi-proletariat numerically dominates over the proletariat.

This is the underlying condition that militates against trade unions becoming the major vehicle of worker mobilisation. In these conditions aksi (and rusuh) become the two dominant forms of organization or action. The workplace can become a site of grievance and organization, but it is often temporary and ad hoc. The neighbourhood or kampung can be the more usual basis for mobilisation, or even the gang (the maze like laneways in the kampung along which people live in small crowded, small houses.) The semi-proletariat, or

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<sup>20</sup> The use of the term “semi-proletariat” was widespread in Russian Marxism during the early 20<sup>th</sup>. It was used to describe two groups. The first was the poor peasant who owned land but not enough for him to produce adequate output the sale of which would cover his life needs. To do this, he needed, like any urban proletarian, to sell his labour to survive, as well as sell the little product of his labour on his land. The second group were those in the cities in a similar position: self-employed persons in manufacturing in very small activities, who also additionally needed to sell their labour. Lenin described the peasant group in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* as: “In the peasant mass of 97 millions, however, one must distinguish three main groups: the bottom group—the proletarian and semi-proletarian strata of the population; the middle group—the poor small peasant farmers; and the top group—the well-to-do small peasant farmers.” Here he includes proletarian and semi-proletarian in the same grouping – they are indeed basically different components of the same class. In his assessment of the “commercial and industrial population” in Russia he again groups the “13.2 million belonging to the proletarian and semi-proletarian strata of the population” together. He also identifies a separate section the “needy small producers”, which I have referred to in my text as the “pauperized petty bourgeoisie.” Of course, the price forms of productive activity of semi-proletariat layers in Russia in the early 1900s and in Indonesia in colonial and post-colonial periods may differ. But the essential features stay the same. The semi-proletarian, like other proletarians, must sell his labour to survive, even if he is engaged in also selling goods he has produced himself (such as is the case with many of the millions of street-side food sellers in Indonesia). While it is beyond the scope of the thesis to investigate this, there is likely also a blurring in social life between such semi-proletarians and proletarians who were in tiny enterprises, shifting from location to location, or who work at home, but producing for somebody else.

<sup>21</sup> Table: 1C Economically active population, by industry and status in employment , INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION, Labour Statistics Database, via <http://laborsta.ilo.org/STP/guest>

urban poor, as they are called in Indonesian political discourse, develop a specific form of political culture in these kampung. This is described well in an interview with a leader of the Peoples Democratic Party in 1998.

What we call the urban poor are made up of the unemployed, the lumpen proletariat (pickpockets, burglars, con men, sex workers, drug sellers, guys who jump up onto moving trucks and grab some of the load) as well as peddlers, government clerks and employees. In north Jakarta, they also include factory workers, shop assistants, supermarket and department store employees (mostly women), coolies, public transport drivers, street stall owners and so on. Most of these people live in squalid kampung [geographically delimited “villages” inside the city zone]. Rubbish is piled up everywhere, there is no water, the drains are blocked, mosquitoes abound, the rooms are tiny so that people pile up next to each other like sardines to sleep, and they wash and defecate in public toilets where they have to pay. Electricity is around 100 watts total per household (if you’re a bit better off you can get up to 450 watts). It’s rare for anyone to get a senior high school or university education. Incomes are around 100–300 thousand rupiah (US\$20–US\$60) a month. Most families have two to five members. Children regularly suffer cholera, typhus, meningitis, dysentery, skin disorders, influenza, sinus and eye infections and malnutrition.

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However, while the situation of two thirds of the urban workforce being located in this “urban poor” sector pre-disposes them to aksi or rusuh, it has other consequences. First, it strengthens their sense of being rakyat, starkly differentiated from the wealth of the middle classes and the high-productivity sector of the economy that the prosperous layers relate to.

This huge proportion of people is characterized by low levels of productivity primarily because the country remains fundamentally under-industrialized. They work in areas where the technological revolution began by the industrial revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has

penetrated in only a very undeveloped way. There has been very minimal centralization of the forces of production. Many of these people go in and out of regular wage employment. Some run tiny micro enterprises, peddling goods and services. Some are “owners of the means of production” – a plough, a tiny plot of land, a portable stove, an oxywelding apparatus; that is to say many are pauperized bourgeoisie, including peasants.<sup>22</sup>

Engels went on to write:

More and more did labour come to be divided among many workers, so that the worker who formerly had made the entire article, now merely produced a part of the article. This division of labour made it possible to supply products more speedily and therefore cheaper. It reduced the labour of each worker to a very simple, constantly repeating mechanical operation, which could be performed by the machine not only equally well, but even a good deal better.<sup>23</sup>

In both the Indies and modern Indonesia, this division of labour never developed on the same stable widespread scale as in Europe. While money relations (the payment of wages) steadily drove out pre-capitalist forms of the distribution of surplus, they did so in an under-industrialised capitalism. In the Netherlands Indies the vast majority of the population were pauperised, small landowning peasant farmers. Soekarno invented the term *marhaen* to refer to this mass of people, differentiating them, as an exploited mass, from the

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<sup>22</sup> Another manifestation of this low productivity sector is reflected in the phenomenon of underemployment. A World Bank sponsored study summarises the situation as follows: Underemployment is widespread in Indonesia. The 1993 National Labor Force Survey (SAKERNAS) provides ample evidence of the magnitude of the problem. Using the traditional standard (less than 35 hours per week), nearly two-fifths of the total Indonesian labor force (39.7 percent) are underemployed. Even a stricter standard defined as "severely underemployment" (less than 25 hours per week) identifies almost one-quarter (23.1 percent) as working too few hours. In the informal sector, the incidence of underemployment is far higher. Almost half of the workers in the informal sector (48.6 percent) work less than 35 hours, and 29.8 percent could be categorized as severely underemployed. Wiebe, Frank, *Income Insecurity and Underemployment in Indonesia's Informal Sector*, Policy Research Working Paper 1639, World Bank, 1996, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> MESW, Vol. 1, p. 82.

proletariat.<sup>24</sup> These masses did own some “means of production” — a tiny plot of land or a plough or buffalo — but they were no less pauperised and in misery than a wage-earning member of the proletariat. In independent Indonesia, skills remained very low but workers were often multi-skilled, shifting from one kind of low-skilled or semi-skilled labour to another.

This has had and continues to have a very radical impact on the forms of political organisation, and the overall nature of political life, of the working class (including the semi-proletariat) and the poor petty bourgeoisie (including peasants) in Indonesia. Understanding this situation is very important in guiding any attempt to document and analyse the political struggle between classes in Indonesia. In the circumstances where an overwhelming majority of the working population are not stably employed industrial workers, nor stably employed workers in an industrially organised service sector, but semi-proletarians or impoverished peasants working tiny plots of land, trade unions and trade-union-based-labour parties will not *necessarily* be the predominant form that the political struggle of the working masses takes. Neither will this be the primary generator of the political culture of the class, but it will of the various components, depending on other political conditions.

For example, in the immediate aftermath of the anti-colonial struggle and the national revolution where political organisation on ideological grounds flourished, political parties developed as the pre-eminent form of organisation, including for all segments of the working class, whether employed in the few larger enterprises or in the mass of small enterprises. The PKI grew rapidly, as did, later in the 1960s, the PNI. Trade unions, peasant organisations, and other mass organisations were arms of the political parties. After 1965, when the left parties were suppressed along with all open mass politics, political parties became much less important. In fact, as we will see in later chapters, most of the mass action political mobilisations of the 1990s were not organized through mobilizing the memberships of political parties.

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<sup>24</sup> See Soekarno, “Marhaen dan Proletar”, in *Dibawah Bendera Revolusi*, Jakarta : Publication Committee, 1966.

The general class composition of those mobilized in the mass action oriented parties in the 1950s and 60s, such as the PKI, was the same as those that mobilized in the 1990s. However, the forms of organisation and ideological resources were very different, resulting in different kinds of mass politics. This is what will be clear from the following chapters.

### **Mass action, mass mobilisation**

Organisations — unions, parties — are not ends in themselves. They are a means, a tool, to maximise the impact of activity. To be able to document and analyse class struggle history in an under-industrialised society, it is crucial not to be locked into a search for only the same forms of organisation that the class struggle may develop in an industrialised capitalist society. However, there can be identified a shared form of activity across industrialised and non-industrialised society, although here there are also differences, but within the same mode of activity.

Mass action and mobilisation entail the combining together, in large numbers, of workers, the underemployed and other marginalised groups to demand what they perceive as rights, or even necessities. Marx, writing in the birthplace of the industrial revolution (England) witnessed this mass combination and mobilisation springing from the immediate circumstances of wage labour under industrialised capitalism:

The increasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon, the workers begin to form combinations (trade unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there, the contest breaks out into riots.<sup>25</sup>

In both the Indies and Indonesia, where workers were drawn into industry, or industrially organised sectors of the economy, this phenomenon occurred exactly as Marx

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<sup>25</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The Communist Manifesto", in *MESW*, Vol. 1, p116.

saw in England.<sup>26</sup> However, as noted, only a small percentage of the workforce — between 10 and 20% — worked under these conditions. The other 80% were still the objects of exploitation through one mechanism or the other of the (underdeveloped) capitalist market: interest on loans, price mechanisms, monopolies, forced cultivation and super-low wages when they did get work.<sup>27</sup> There was still reason to come into collision with the capitalist class, whether colonial, neo-colonial or domestic. The form of organisation and the precise agenda of the struggle activity may not have been the “traditional” union or labour movement, or labour party, form or activity. This will even more be the case where independent unions are banned and only state-controlled unions allowed.

Here it is worth noting that as class struggle evolved in 19th and early 20th century capitalist society, Marx himself and other practising activist Marxists who followed, developed a greater understanding of the role of conscious intervention into the “collisions”, “revolts” and “riots” that Marx noted above. It was several decades of discussion over this aspect — how to develop a political leadership for these clashes — that eventually led to a clearer use of the concept of “mass action struggle”. Marx himself dealt with it at a both theoretical and historical level. At the highest theoretical level, Marx affirmed a stance against subordination to spontaneity and indicating the need for intervention into reality to change consciousness. He wrote, famously:

The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See Ingleson, John, *In Search of Justice: Workers and Unions in Colonial Java, 1908-1926*, Singapore : OUP, 1986.

<sup>27</sup> Boeke, J.H., *The Structure of the Netherlands Indian Economy*, New York : International Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1942.

<sup>28</sup> Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach”, (1845), in Eugene Kamenka, *The Portable Karl Marx*, New York : Viking, 1983.



He was an active member, indeed founder, of the International Workingmen's Association, which organised to intervene into the spontaneously developing actions and campaigns within the European working classes, to give these activities a specific purpose and to try to develop a particular consciousness. The most thorough exploration of the issue of how to make spontaneous "collisions", "revolts" and "riots", and the permanent forms of organization they give birth to (e.g. trade unions), the basis of a political strategy was developed by Lenin, in a series of writings, culminating in "What is to be done?" This text has become the handbook for what now would be called mass movement intervention by many socialist and communist groups.

Written in the midst of strikes, demonstrations, rallies and marches, Lenin's works are riddled with the word "struggle" and concentrate on the necessity to rise above the limited horizon that class struggle without theory (i.e. a scientific understanding of society) imposes. It is not the place here to investigate Lenin's theories in this respect; however, it is important to note that during the years of consolidation of the revolution in Russia after 1917, and while Lenin was still active, the idea of a strategy of mass action was codified. In the Theses on Communist Parties and Parliament adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, thesis 9 states:

The most important method of struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, i.e. against its state power, is above all mass action. Mass actions are organised and led by the revolutionary mass organisations (trades unions, parties, soviets) of the proletariat under the general leadership of a unified, disciplined, centralised Communist Party ...<sup>29</sup>

This resolution by the Comintern formalised the idea of a "mass action" strategy, which then entered into discussion of political strategy by revolutionary and radical movements around the world, even as it was given different emphasis and nuances in different circumstances and by different political forces. Achieving power (including an independent

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<sup>29</sup> *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestoes of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*. London : Ink Links, 1980, p. 100.

state) through unity of large numbers of people in more-or-less the same plight and mobilising them to action against the dominant class (its state), the colonial, neo-colonial or domestic capitalists, remained the fundamentally necessary dynamic.

Therefore, in analysing the paradigms used by the major works cited above and assessing the role of class in those works, this thesis will focus on understanding the way in which they deal with class struggle in the Indonesian context, paying particular attention to the role of mass mobilisation of the popular classes in struggle (understood here as "mass action politics")<sup>30</sup>. I will argue that in all cases the role of the mass mobilisation of the popular classes against the interests of the dominant classes is either downplayed or negated in the majority of analyses of the course of political history in Indonesia between 1949 and 2008, and, in more depth, between 1965 and 2008. I will submit an alternative analysis, which will argue *that it has been the crisis and resolution of mass action political mobilisation that has been the determining factor in the major turning points in the political history of the period.*

This thesis will therefore, in analyzing the paradigms used by the major works cited above and assessing the role of class in those works, focus on understanding the way they deal with class struggle in the Indonesian context, playing particular attention to the role of mass mobilization of the popular classes in struggle (understood here as 'mass action politics')<sup>31</sup>. I will argue that in all cases the role of the mass mobilisation of the popular

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<sup>30</sup> The word "mass" can have a double meaning in this kind of discussion. "The masses" can denote both a large number but also the mass of exploited labour. The capitalist class is, almost by definition, tiny in proportion to the population as a whole and compared to the working masses. Mass action politics, or mass mobilisation, can, depending on the conditions, have either or both of these characteristics. It is possible to have both a small mass action, i.e. a protest, strike, rally, march, boycott etc. by a section of the masses, as well as a massive action of the masses.

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### Class and Social Movements

One possible approach to examining the class mass movement connection would be to utilize some of the theoretical activity in political science, especially in comparative political studies, dealing with social movements. I have not done this for a number of reasons.

First, these various theories have had no impact to date on the study of Indonesian politics. There are no existing attempts to apply this theory in any in-depth or sustained manner.<sup>32</sup> Any attempt to apply them would be a pioneering work and one would need to be convinced that it was more worthwhile than critiquing the existing and influential modes of analysis. In addition, one would need some confidence that the theoretical models as they had already been applied to other societies showed some efficacy. Such an assessment would require a separate and substantial research and analysis project looking not only at the theory but its application in regard to other countries – something outside the scope of this thesis.

There is a certain issue of sequence here also. The major studies on Indonesia that do exist all ignore or belittle mass movement politics, and therefore, on the whole, have not

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<sup>32</sup> The most recent published review of the application of political science theory in relation to Southeast Asia is *Southeast Asia in Political Science: Theory, Region, and Qualitative Analysis*, edited by Erik Martinez Kuhonta, Dan Slater, Tuong Vu (Stanford University Press, 2008). In a chapter “Contentious Mass Politics in Southeast Asia: Knowledge Accumulation and Cycles of Growth and Exhaustion”, by Tuong Vu, the author notes “In Southeast Asian studies, the 1980s saw no major studies on the new urban uprisings in the region”. In relation to studies of mass movements in Indonesia in the 1990s, Vu identifies only Aspinall’s work on opposition to Suharto, which I have reviewed in Chapter 1. Basically, Vu’s work confirms that there has been no application of social movement theory or any variant of Tilly’s theories of contentious politics, for example, to mass action politics in Indonesia. In another chapter by “Civil Society and Close Approximations Thereof”, by Meredith L. Weiss, while there are reference to early studies of NGOs, again there are neither in-depth empirical or social movement theoretical oriented studies of Indonesia cited.

researched the mass action political activity that has taken place. There is very limited empirical data available in published books that would help the non-Indonesianist political theorist of social movements to begin to apply such theory to Indonesia. More works of the kind that I have written, theoretically driven explanations of historical developments giving a central place to mass action politics, will be necessary before Indonesia can be usefully included in attempts to generalize about mass movements across countries and time periods.

Separate from the issue of sequence, is the question of confidence in the efficacy of existing theories to the extent that one would wish to experiment with them in applying them to Indonesia. One work that does attempt to address the issue of mass movements is *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* by Francis Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, published by Vintage Books, in 1979. In the "Introduction to the Paperback Edition" they make the intent to focus on mass movements clear:

The left has understood that working class people are a historical force and could become a greater historical force. And the left has understood that the distinctive form in which that force expresses itself is the mass movement.<sup>33</sup>

In the comments below, I provide some initial reflections on Piven and Cloward's theoretical framework and definitions and then some reflections on the consequent problems that would arise in an attempt to apply that analysis to an objective reality that departs substantially from the reality in Indonesia.

It's theoretical analysis combines a series of assertions, mostly made possible by selective choice of subject matter. It proposed to make general conclusions about the effectiveness or otherwise of protest movements, however, it selects as its examples only movements from the United States – a very specific form of capitalist society, a settler, imperialist society – and even within that framework excludes the largest and most effective protest movement in 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. history, the movement against the Vietnam War. It also excludes the 20<sup>th</sup> century movement for women's liberation.

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<sup>33</sup> Francis Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*, Vintage, 1979, p. ix

Their focus as the agency of social movements is the “poor”. They use a very narrow and selective definition referring to “a stratum within the working class that is poor by standards prevailing in society at the time”. They claim that this definition is “consistent with classical Marxist definitions of the working class”. (p. xxiv) In fact, this definition of the “poor” or “the lower class” is irrelevant and unconnected to any kind of Marxist analysis. One can claim it is consistent with Marxist analysis by arguing that within the working class as defined by Marx, i.e. a class alienated from ownership and control of the means of production and dependent therefore on the sale of their labour for a livelihood, there is a layer that at any particular time is poor by prevailing standards. However, such a claim can be made in reference to any definition of the working class. The definition actually alienates that layer (if indeed such a description is accurate<sup>34</sup>) from its position in social and political relations flowing from the mode of production.

The fundamental problem arises from the fact that having made a very specific and narrow selection of the rebelling subject, they attempt to make general conclusions about the effectiveness of protest, political defiance and movement attempts to achieve change. The reality of this inconsistency can also be understood if we look at how they define the opponents of the movements they are attempting to assess. While the movements they assess, they themselves define as a section within the working class, these movements’ antagonists – the oppressing force – are defined as that force which combines monopoly of coercive power and of control over the productive forces. Given that they claim consistency with Marxist analysis, we can assume safely here that they mean the capitalist class. They present an analysis that makes general conclusions about how protest works against the capitalist class as a whole by assessing the record in relation to protest from what they themselves see as just one stratum within the working class.

An analysis that asked the question: what has been the experience of popular revolt against fundamental policies, decisions and ideological outlooks of the capitalist class in the United States would have included an assessment of the anti-Vietnam war movement and the women’s liberation movement. Both were challenges to high priority U.S. capitalist

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<sup>34</sup> I am not in a position to assess the empirical material and their analysis of it in their various case studies and therefore able to argue whether definition is valid at a basic empirical level.

interests. If they wanted to argue that these are different phenomena, they should have thus argued.

(This is perhaps a parallel blind spot to failing to see that the struggle for political liberty under the Suharto regime was also an integral part of any clash of interests between classes, however strongly or weakly a self-consciousness of class position existed – defined in the Marxist sense – may have been present.)

Their definitions also narrow their identification of what they call the “organizers” of the movements to those primarily concerned with domesticating the movements as permanent lobby organisations. They heavily emphasize this point seeing the trend by these “organizers” to build permanent lobbying structures, dependent on the elites that the movements had been challenging, as almost a universal trend. They assert:

In the main the left has held that formal mass-membership organisations are the correct vehicles with which the working class can drive toward power, at least in non-revolutionary situations.<sup>35</sup>

It is not surprising then that their *Introduction* (which is also their *Conclusions*) basically sets out a list of often flawed assertions. I will comment on some of those with most significance in any application to Indonesia, which I will discuss in the last part of this section. I am using those assertions of the authors that they put in italics in their Introduction/Conclusion.<sup>36</sup>

Only under exceptional conditions are the lower classes afforded the socially determined opportunity to press for their own class interests.

If by “press for their own class interests” is meant carry out a major protest campaign, then the statement that major protest campaigns are exceptional, i.e. not the norm, is perhaps true. However, the formulation contains other elements. It appears to assert that “the lower classes” (there appears to be more than one such ‘class’) only press for their own interests under exceptional conditions, in general. Thus the normal activity of unions in collective bargaining, welfare groups in lobbying, civil rights group in advocating is negated.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid p. xv

<sup>36</sup> The book has no conclusions chapter, so all the conclusions are contained in the Introduction.

This is, of course, consistent definitionally and in accord with the authors' stated conclusions that tend to preclude the activities of permanent organized mass membership organisations as being part of protest activity. However the assertion does not state that it is only under exceptional conditions that the lower classes launch major campaigns of protest action, but that this applies in general to all activities in defense of their interests.

Furthermore, their formulation asserts that the "lower classes" are "afforded the opportunity" to press their claims. Here the authors' analysis becomes very slippery: afforded by whom? Well, it is a "socially determined" 'affordation'. What does that mean? Does it mean that the ruling class conceded to them the opportunity to resist? The author's go on to argue that while the ruling class does not concede such opportunities, major social dislocation weakens the ruling classes capacity to regulate their oppression of the lower classes. Greater than usual rapid change, with consequent dislocation, apparently breaks down this capacity. Ironically, the authors' actual argument in this section of their exposition explains the opposite. "Sometimes, however, the poor do become defiant", they state early on in this part of their argument. The dislocation and the dissatisfaction attached to the dislocation creates the conditions conducive to the defiance, but the actual process, they assert, is the reduction in the capacity for regulation by the ruling class. What they describe is actually not any inherent decrease in the resources or strengths-in-itself of the ruling power but an increase in the defiance of the protesting layers, whatever the cost.

Later they make a number of assertions relating to how protest movements might be assessed:

The most useful way to think about the effectiveness of protest is to examine the disruptive effects on institutions of different forms of mass defiance, and then to examine the political reverberations of those disruptions.<sup>37</sup>

People cease to conform to accustomed institutional roles; they withhold their accustomed institutional cooperation, and by doing so, cause institutional disruptions.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24

<sup>38</sup> *ibid*

The political impact of institutional disruptions depends on electoral conditions.<sup>39</sup>

Over the pages where these assertions are made, the authors shift to another institutional focus, elections. In these pages, the authors' basic argument-cum-assertion is that it is only when protest movement disruption threatens electoral processes, that the governments or elites make concessions. This is argued also in the later chapters, but as with the summary in the introduction, the argument presented is basically epidemiological. When protest gains momentum and the scale becomes larger, concessions are made to divide the movement, excising radicals who are then subject to punitive action and channeling the rest into non-threatening electoral activity, while accepting lesser demands. But why do they do this and why is it that the majority of the ruling class supports the concessions, and not just any specific governing faction? What is actually being disrupted that brings about the concessions?

The author's under-riding sentiment is most aptly summed up in their final italicized assertion:

That protesters win, if they win at all, what historical circumstances has already been made ready to be conceded.<sup>40</sup>

Here we have the summation of the fatalistic structural analysis deployed by the authors'. One suspects that this was the sentiment that operated as the starting point of their analysis rather than the conclusion. It is upon this sentiment that their definitions are based: the contradiction of free control of the ruling class over both behavior and belief of everybody else and their choice of protest agency, the "poor" and "lower classes" defined as a sub-section of the working class, that will be easier to show is weak. It lies behind their conclusions that protest only occurs when the opportunity is "afforded" to the "poor" by society. As the ruling class is all powerful, any concessions gained buy other classes have not been won or wrenched away from the ruling class but are concessions that "historical circumstances", i.e. the ruling class, are ready to concede. This going-around-in-circles approach flows from the inability to locate contradiction in their analysis as a central

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<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p. 31

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 36



phenomenon, and thereby deprives them of the ability to assess what processes either quantitatively or qualitatively sharpen various contradictions.

*The absence of the anti-Vietnam War movement and the issue of class.*

In a study that proposes conclusions about the efficacy of protest movements based on examples from the United States, the absence of any in-depth focus on the anti-war movement in the U.S. is highly significant. There is no explanation of this absence and so we must infer that the authors probably exclude it because, in their eyes, it was not a movement of the “poor” or of the “lower classes”, as they define them. The anti-war movement was not only one of the largest mass movements in 20<sup>th</sup> U.S. history but one which both achieved its aims – withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam – and enormous ongoing effects in U.S. society. It produced the Vietnam Syndrome, which remained a block of major US overseas wars for 20 years until the 1990s and still has some impact. Moreover, the movement was the cauldron for the growth of other anti-status quo ideas and trends.<sup>41</sup>

The exclusion of the anti-war movement from the authors’ analysis, in the end, must be seen as flowing from the narrow and mechanistic definition of class that they use. Their starting point for defining class, or more “specifically” the “lower classes”, was nothing more than the criteria of a standard of living lower than that which generally prevails in society. This is less even than a Weberian definition of class, let alone a Marxist approach which defines class in terms of its relations with other classes (and with the social reality that underpins the formation of classes.) The anti-war movement in the U.S. was a *mass* movement and the overwhelming majority of those mobilized were from outside the capitalist class and outside the immediate layers in direct service of the capitalist class (senior managers, bureaucrats and so on). As the movement grew so did the breadth of its mass support, drawing in unionized labour and more and more of the black civil rights movement. However, even before this happened, the very mass character of the movement was only possible because of the support and/or participation of large sections of what Marx

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<sup>41</sup> My comments in the movement against the Vietnam war in this section are oprimarily based upon, Halstead,Fred, *Out Now: A Participant's Account of the Movement in the United States Against the Vietnam War*, Pathfinder, 2001

would have described as the proletariat, which are not defined in terms of levels of income or welfare but in terms of ownership and control of the means of production.

A Marxist analysis, flowing from analysis of class relations generally and most centrally class struggle for and over state power, would be looking for manifestations of class contradictions in the sphere of power. From this angle, the struggle against the Vietnam war was a major class struggle. The U.S. state's intervention in Vietnam was a conscious policy of the U.S. capitalist class, almost unanimously supported by that class, which it saw as in its interests, operating as an imperialist class. The war was aimed at crushing a worker-peasant based state and movement in Vietnam driven by anti-capitalist ideology. In the U.S. the capitalist class demanded that the U.S. proletariat both fight and pay for this war. The demands of the movement – U.S. Out Now! – do not immediately manifest class interests when the class is narrowly defined in welfare level terms and the class therefore is defined as being primarily concerned about socio-economic issues, or at best, the immediate formal political rights of those with a particular, low level of welfare. However, when the analysis shifts to a framework looking at the policy decisions of the class that owns and controls capital and the resistance to such decisions by those who don't own and control capital, the class nature of the struggle over Vietnam becomes immediately apparent. The mass nature of the movement, eventually gaining majority support in the USA with very high levels of activist participation, underlines this fact in a more concrete way.

If the antiwar movement had been included in Piven and Cloward's study, a number of challenges would have arisen to some of their assertions/conclusions.

There is a strong argument that the radicalization associated with the anti-Vietnam War movement challenged existing social limitations and effected an expansion in the ideological space outside the terrain defined by the ruling class and its structures. This is the opposite to the author's assertions that the social structure limits the extent and impact of protest movements. Of course, at the level of banality, we can assert that everything is contained – as Marx explained men make their own history but using the materials at hand. However, Piven and Cloward's assertion is not simply that the objective conditions impose a limit, but that *the controlling power of the ruling class* imposes the limits. In the 60s, on the contrary, existing limits were pushed back. This is difficult to register analytically where the analytical framework does not itself register the existence of contradictions, and this the possibilities and significance of the sharpening, blunting and also the resolution of contradictions.

The proposition that it is only under 'exceptional conditions', described as major dislocation, where the "lower classes" are afforded the opportunity to protest may come into contradiction with much analysis of the social conditions that precipitated the youth radicalization of the 60s, which was a major part of the development of the anti-war movement as a mass movement. There is a substantial analysis that shows that it was improvements in material conditions, including an expansion in the number of working class families who could afford to send children to university, rather than negative disruption of material conditions which fostered the possibility of rebellion. Of course, "dislocation" could be redefined to include this, but again this would make the formulation even more deeply banal: protest movements, which are abnormal events, occur when normal or pre-existing social conditions are changing. This is a banality which also, if we go beyond the time and place of the 60s or the USA, may also be questionable.

The confusing linking of "institutional life" as defined by day-to-day reality and membership of collectives on the one hand, and with elections on the other would, probably be able to be applied in some way or other to analysing the effectiveness of the anti-war movement in achieving its aims, and in leaving an impact which has lasted at least three decades – more if we were to include the legitimacy it (along with civil rights movement) gave to mass action politics generally. However, there would be many challenging questions that it would pose. When demonstrators invaded Chicago for the Democratic Party convention were they showing that they "cannot defy institutions to which they have no access, and to which they make no contribution."? Was the growth and radicalization of the movement dependent on electoral conditions or did it change electoral conditions?

Piven and Cloward perhaps also exclude the anti-war movement as it would raise very challenging questions about their final assertion: "That protesters win, if they win at all, what historical circumstances has already been made ready to be conceded." Would they then be arguing that the withdrawal of the U.S. from Vietnam was nothing more than a concession that historical circumstances had already made ready to concede. This would be an argument that the largest and most influential of mass movements in 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. history did not itself help make the "historical circumstances". The same question can be raised about other movements, including the civil rights movement: did they too not help make "historical circumstances"?

The anti-war movement, in so far as that it mobilized sections of the working class other than the segment identified in the book, also raises the issue of how movements expand within the working class, and the relations between youth and students and mass movement mobilisations. This is no doubt relevant to the civil rights movement as well, but would have been more foregrounded if the anti-war movement had been included.

It is not the place here, in any case, to delve into the weaknesses of this framework in relation to U.S. politics – that would require a fuller return to the empirical picture of the protest movements, both those selected by the authors as well as others. The point here is to underline some basic flaws at the theoretical level: a certain banality in some of the propositions, and confusions and contradictions in some of the analysis, reflected also in the narrowness of definitions and selectivity of the subjects for study.

#### *The Piven Cloward approach and Indonesia*

Use of the Piven Cloward approach would confront some anomalies, making it a problematic paradigm for the analysis of Indonesia.

#### Class

A good starting point in looking at such problems is their handling of the issue of “class”. In fact, if we contemplate their introductory comments on class again, they do not use class as an analytical category at all. They say they define the “lower classes” as “a stratum within the working class that is poor by standards prevailing in society at the time”. They offer no analysis of the working class itself, its relationship with capital or the state, but instead identify a “stratum” that they wish to concentrate on. Moreover, this stratum is defined purely in terms of level of welfare: it is “poor by standards prevailing in society at the time”. They propose no relational analysis of this “stratum” to the working class as a whole, only the quantitative definition that it is poorer than everybody else.

The classical Marxist treatment of class starts with a definition that identifies classes in relation to each other via their relationship to the means of production. Class is defined relationally, not as a “stratum” identified through poverty level. Piven and Cloward may argue that they are not defining class this way but just a section of the class – and identifying sections of classes is totally valid. However, they wrote in their preface:

the left has understood that working class people are a historical force and could become a greater historical force. And the left has understood that the distinctive form in which that force expresses itself is the mass movement.<sup>42</sup>

By talking in terms of “a historical force” that expresses it in the form of “the mass movement” and then providing a study of movements of a “stratum” from within the working class they are working a sleight of hand where the Weberian sounding “stratum” is actually replacing “class” as agency. (In fact, once the authors briefly finish discussing their definition of “the lower classes”, they resume writing as if they were talking about protest movements in general, instead of just the protest movements of the stratum they say they have identified).

To start with, of course, it is a totally arbitrary definition, or selection of agency, for which Piven and Cloward provide no justification. But apart from that, how would it be applied to Indonesia? In terms of “standards prevailing at the time” average per capita income is below \$2 per day. Does this mean we should assume that Piven’s and Cloward’s approach should only be applied to movements of people whose income is less than, say, \$1 or perhaps 75 cents per day? The arbitrariness of their approach in defining “the lower classes” and the “poor” has even greater consequences in distorting analysis than it does in the United States. In fact, their “stratum” approach becomes immediately useless conceptually.

I should emphasise here again that there should be no problem with identifying segments of a class as long as the activities of the segment can be located within a definition and analyse of the class as a whole. For example, in Marxist analysis the working class or proletariat is defined in terms of its alienation from ownership and control of the means of production and the consequent necessity to sell its labour time in order to survive, putting it into an antagonistic relationship with the capitalist class. This antagonism, which in turns produces an historical dynamic of class struggle for state power, frames all the activities of the proletariat (and the capitalist class.) The precise forms of this antagonism are not fixed, except for some general tendencies that will assert themselves, such as the tendency for labour to seek collective action. Where a specific manifestation of class struggle will start,

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<sup>42</sup> ix

with what section of the proletariat, or in what location, and in what form will vary according to conditions that exist in different times and places.

There is no reason to assume that the initiating agency will be the stratum that Piven and Cloward look at. In Indonesia in the 1990s, as we will see in later chapters, it was an alliance between student and factory workers that was able to initiate and sustain the momentum that re-legitimized mass action politics. Students and factory workers in general experienced a level of poverty *above* not below that prevailing in society. Additionally, the expansion of the mass anti-dictatorship movement after June 1996, and then again in very late 1997 early 1998, saw the initiative shift from factory workers to urban poor – who were poorer than factory workers – then to students and white collar workers, who not poorer. Piven and Cloward's non-class stratum approach becomes even more problematic.

A Marxist analysis will immediately focus attention on the history of the struggle between the classes. In the Indonesia case, attention is first drawn to the struggle for state power that developed between 1945 and 1965 between a worker-peasant (including semi-proletariat and pauperised petty bourgeoisie) based mass movement under the shared leadership of Soekarno and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and a capitalist class lead by a coalition between various pro-capitalist elites and the Army. How this antagonism was resolved, namely through a savage counter-revolutionary suppression of mass action politics set the framework for the next round of mass action class struggle activity. This developed in the late 1980s and 1990s as a struggle to re-win the right to engage in mass struggle. The Piven and Cloward stratum approach would be blind to such dynamics.

The proposition that the masses are "afforded" the opportunity to press for their interests only when periods of large scale social dislocation takes place is also revealed as an inadequate formulation when Indonesia's experience is considered. In most so-called developing countries, social dislocation is a permanent condition. This is even more the case in a period following violent counter-revolutionary suppression and the opening up of the economy to the large-scale entry of foreign capital, which in turn has a range of dislocatory effects. In the Indonesian experience, as I will outline in later chapters, the mass movement began in the late 1980s and grew during the 1990s as a result of conscious political activity to stir protest precisely in the absence of spontaneous activity that might have been generated by new dislocation.

In this arena too, the Indonesian experience contradicts Piven and Colvard's assertions on the role of agency, or leadership (although one suspects this is true of American experience too, if the analysis was not constrained by definitional issues). They write in the short final section entitled "A note on the role of protest leadership" to their chapter "The Structuring of Protest": "Protest wells up in response to momentous changes in the institutional order. It is not created by organizers and leaders".<sup>43</sup> However, in Indonesia between 1989 and 1996 there were no "momentous changes in the institutional order" nor was there any "welling up". Rather there were a series of large protest mobilisations, first of students and mainly peasants, then students and mainly factory workers, spread out during those years. These were initiated consciously defying the ban on mass action politics in order to re-win the legitimacy of that mode of activity. No significant spontaneous welling up took place as a precedent to leadership intervening – the opposite happened. This then prepared the way for larger mobilisations with a larger component of spontaneous participation, though not initiation. Truly spontaneous, welling-ups took the form of riots – but here too, even as far back as 1973, the ground was prepared by systematic political organisation beforehand.

(This was most probably also a feature of the building of the anti-war movement in the U.S. and Australia. First, there was no real "momentous dislocation" that preceded the start of antiwar protests. Secondly, there was several years of small-scale protests and political education campaigning – awareness-raising – that preceded the growth of the moment to mass size.)

The process was not intervention of leaderships is a situation of "momentous dislocation" but of *intervention in the workings of a contradiction*. Political "organizers and leaders" identified points of intervention in existing contradictions. There was a material contradiction between the interests of capital and factory workers. There was another contradiction between the need to be able to struggle and the banning and suppression of struggle. There was a contradiction between the populist sentiments inherited from earlier periods of struggle and the political culture being imposed from above, without legitimacy. It was possible to widen this contradiction and identify a possible resolution of some aspects:

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36

namely, ending dictatorship, as well as proposing more fundamental resolutions in the form of full democratic revolution. (The concept of 'democratic revolution' is discussed in Chapter 1 in the section on 'labour politics'.

Class can be defined in terms of relations to means of production and the relations between classes that stand upon those production relations. Once these classes have formed, however, the particular characteristics of the classes where these relations are manifested will depend on the conditions existing in each situation, including, but not confined, to the historical experience of collective struggle by the working class. In Indonesia's case both the historical experience of collective struggle of the working class (including its alliance with the peasantry), and suppression of that struggle, gives content to its definition as an alienated and exploited class. In addition, there is its economic history as a class in an underdeveloped economy, where preservation of extremely low levels of productivity, small (even micro) scales of activity, widespread casual employment combined with micro peddler activity, creates an additional cleavage between classes as well as within classes. A relational definition is crucial, as it sets off the search for contradictions and gives that search a compass, but it does not in and of itself provide the content or the material of those contradictions. The content will depend on local conditions and history where variation may be almost infinite.

It may be a futile search being conducted for a pattern that is shared by all social movements, mass movements or protest movements across locations and time periods. In any case, given that this approach, in any variant, has not been applied to Indonesia and that there is not yet a significant level of research already conducted on mass movements in Indonesia, especially the 1990s period being dealt with in-depth in this thesis, I have not attempted a study within the framework of comparative political analysis.

### **Mass action's clear presence in Indonesian history**

The motivation to adopt this approach has not stemmed simply or only from consideration of the Marxist analysis of class, class struggle and history and an initial application of that approach — along the lines summarised above — and comparing it to the analytical conclusions of the various cited authors. It also stems from the observation of the basic known facts of major developments in Indonesian political history that mass



mobilisation, in one form or another, was present on all occasions. Of course, being present does not necessarily mean it was a determining factor, let alone the primary determining factor. It may have been more an effect than a cause, or a subsidiary causal or determining factor.

However, before proceeding to review the cited literature (in the next chapter), it will be useful to make some initial points regarding the presence of mass action political mobilisations in Indonesian political history and the idea of mass action in Indonesian political thinking. The earlier introductory theoretical comments related to two matters. The first was the need to approach the question of class making sure there is no alienation of the concept of class from the relationship between classes, in particular as manifested by the political struggle between the classes. The second was the need, especially in a non-industrialised society, to focus on activity (mass action or mass mobilisation) rather than forms of organisation.

While during the colonial era there were many mass mobilisations that were protests against specific injustices — strikes for example — mass mobilisation also developed as a broader phenomenon, becoming the main method of struggle of the anti-colonial movement. In the Indonesian case (and probably in other cases also), the anti-colonial movement began before there came into being an Indonesian nation.<sup>44</sup> Of course, making this assertion assumes a specific definition or conceptualisation of a nation in order to claim that one did not exist.

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<sup>44</sup> The issue of defining the nation and determining a paradigm through which to study the history of nations is a separate concern whose scope is beyond the scope of this thesis. The literature on “the nation” is enormous. I am deploying the conventional Marxist materialist approach to the nation, which emphasises the historical character of the entity, i.e. that nations came into existence at a specific time in history, namely with the emergence of capitalism, and that nations can be defined with reference to specific essential material characteristics. The most succinct definition in this tradition comes from Stalin, J, *Marxism and the National Question*. See the next chapter for further elaboration.

As stated above, my main thesis is that *it has been the crisis and resolution of mass action political mobilisation that has been the determining factor in the major turning points in the political history of the period 1949-2008*. If it can be shown that the actual process of conception of a previously non-existent nation, its embryonic development and ultimate birth were intimately, even causally, tied to mass action politics, it may also become clear that many aspects of national political culture are also linked to mass action activity. This would predispose, at the very least, and in fact probably strengthen, the impact of the spread of or the deepening intensity of mass mobilisation politics on the course of politics, even apart from the argument that relates to the inevitable collision in struggle between classes under capitalism.

Certain very specific and very insufficient requirements for the creation of a nation were a result of the consolidation of the political and economic entity called the Netherlands East Indies. A specific and mapped territory was formed.<sup>45</sup> The very rudimentary requisites for the development of a common economic life were constructed, although nowhere near enough to allow the development of a real national economy. However, the creation of a territorially defined colonial economy, even if this was very much a “dual economy”<sup>46</sup> in which no national common economic life could develop, provided enough material reality to pose the creation of a national economy as a distinct possibility, under different political conditions, i.e., freedom from colonial rule. Nothing else was there: no education system for 95 percent of the population; no industry; no communication or transportation infrastructure beyond what was needed to ship out agricultural products and minerals to earn export income — for the benefit of the Netherlands rather than the Indonesian archipelago.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See Anderson, B.O., *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*, London : Verso, 2006.

<sup>46</sup> Boeke, *op. cit.*.

<sup>47</sup> For a summary of socio-economic data that provide a picture of underdevelopment during the colonial period, see Cribb, Robert, *Historical Atlas of Indonesia*, Richmond : Curzon, 2000.

The impetus for the development of a national consciousness came from growing connections among those “natives” who experienced their reality as one of being “governed”, oppressed, patronised or exploited and who lived within those borders. The realities of this existence as it was lived started to be described in novels, stories, drama, newspaper reports and political writings, giving more depth to the connections that were developing in a myriad of different ways.<sup>48</sup> This literature also developed the Malay language beyond a *lingua franca* of the ports and marketplaces into a language that discussed the future of an increasingly dynamic and complex society. As this process deepened, especially between 1900 and 1910, rebellion gave way to mass action: spontaneous uprisings and rebellions gave way to methods of struggle based on organising like-minded people with a conscious goal of protesting the injustices they suffered or winning changes they wanted.

The most widespread manifestation of this phenomenon was the birth and development of the Sarekat Islam, founded in 1909<sup>49</sup>. The Sarekat Islam was a mobilising organisation holding rallies, public meetings and strikes. By 1919, it claimed a membership of 2 million. During the period of its growth, industry employed a minuscule proportion of the workforce. The SI’s membership drew in every kind of person, including proletarians (railway employees, plantation workers) but even more semi-proletarians and immiserated petty traders, as well as some better off traders. Above all else, SI was an anti-colonial organisation.

It was partly out of the failure of the SI to develop a more advanced strategy of mass action that the split occurred in 1922 which gave birth to the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).<sup>50</sup> It too was an organisation that, while joining up proletarians (again often rail

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<sup>48</sup> See Maier, Hendrik, *Playing Relatives: a Survey of Malay Writing*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004.

<sup>49</sup> Cribb, Robert, *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia*, Richmond : Curzon, 2000.

<sup>50</sup> See McVey, Ruth, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1965.

workers), recruited more semi-proletarians and poor peasants. It too stressed mass action, carrying out strikes and a range of other protest mobilisations. These peaked in an attempted armed insurrection in late 1926 and early 1927, which was crushed by the colonial government. In 1926 just before the insurrection, the chairman of the PKI, Tan Malaka,<sup>51</sup> wrote the first book devoted to outlining the necessity of *aksi massa*, mass action. Tan Malaka saw Indonesia, as the nationalists had started to call it, as an industrialised country. He envisaged the mass action that would develop in the country as being similar to that already known in Europe:

Political demonstrations would take the form of the masses marching the length of the highways and in meeting buildings, with the purpose of putting their protests and strengthening the force of their political and economic demands and demonstrating to the enemy the size of our strength. If the slogan and demands are truly shouted by the masses, the political demonstration will become a great wave that grows in power every day so it finally washes away the political and economic fortresses of the ruling class.

In an industrialised country like Indonesia, "*aksi massa*", that is to say boycotts, strikes and demonstrations, can be used as an even sharper weapon.<sup>52</sup>

According to all studies of the PKI's insurrection in 1926 and 1927, many who joined the insurrection were not full proletarians, but included all kinds of semi-proletarian and petty bourgeois types, radicalised by their poverty and mistreatment under colonialism.<sup>53</sup> The PKI's theoretical defence of mass action was weakened by its insistence that Indonesia was an industrialised country. The insurrection was spearheaded by PKI regions where the

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<sup>51</sup> Tan Malaka actually opposed the 1926-27 insurrection.

<sup>52</sup> This is a translation of: "Demonstrasi politik ditunjukkan dengan massa yang berbaris di sepanjang jalan raya dan di gedung rapat, dengan maksud mengajukan protes dan memperkuat tuntutan politik dan ekonomi dan menunjukkan kepada musuh berapa besarnya kekuatan kita. "Bila semboyan dan tuntutan" sungguh diteriakkan oleh massa, demonstrasi politik dapat jadi gelombang hebat, yang makin lama semakin deras, kuat sehingga meruntuhkan benteng-benteng ekonomi dan politik dari kelas yang berkuasa.

Di negeri yang berindustri seperti Indonesia, "aksi-massa", yakni boikot, mogok dan demonstrasi, boleh dipergunakan lebih sempurna sebagai senjata yang lebih tajam" Tan Malaka, *Aksi Massa*, 1926, see full text at <http://www.marxistsfr.org/indonesia/archive/malaka/>

<sup>53</sup> See McVey, *op. cit.*

proletarian element was strongest. However, these represented truly tiny elements of their following. The concentration on this aspect may have led to an overestimation of their strength.

After Tan Malaka, the idea of mass action was taken up by the leader who won a pre-eminent position in the anti-colonial revolution, Soekarno. Soekarno constantly argued for what he called “*massa-aksi*” and which he saw as having two components. Countering the arguments of moderates for whom “*massa-aksi*” would come later, Soekarno wrote:

What we are working at today, what we are doing today, whatever our activities are today in the way of building up organisations, writing articles for journals and newspapers, holding courses, holding public meetings, organising demonstrations ... all these things are included in mass action.<sup>54</sup>

Soekarno also differentiated between what he described as “massive actions” (*aksi massa*) and real *massa-aksi*. In the first part of his article above, published in *Fikiran Rakyat* in 1932, he described the form of activities that, if carried out by the *marhaen*, constituted mass action: “forming associations, writing articles, running courses, organising mass meetings, holding demonstrations”. However, these actions by themselves did not constitute *massa-aksi*. Crucial, in his eyes, were the purpose and consciousness associated with these activities. His argumentation set out *massa-aksi* not just as a method of struggle but as a strategy. First, he argued, it was connected with the struggle for power.

Power-forming, the building up of power — because the question of colonialism is a question of power, a question of might! Power-forming, because the whole history of the world shows that major changes are made by the victors only if the balance of gains and losses requires it, or if there is a power that demands it. It has never happened that a class voluntarily gives up its rights, said Marx ...<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Soekarno, “Non-cooperation cannot bring about mass action and power-forming?” in *Under The Banner of the Revolution*, Jakarta : Yayasan Bung Karno, 2005 , p 184.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.* p. 200.

For Soekarno a mass action strategy was the basis for breaking colonial power and winning independence. This was echoed in the words: “Organise mass action in order to reach Indonesia Merdeka!”<sup>56</sup> For Soekarno political activity had to be integrated into that purpose, with an ideology supporting this goal, for such activity to classify as *massa-aksi*. The point was to build political strength (*machtsvorming*) and this had to be done within a framework that understood the irreconcilable interests of the *marhaen* and colonial power. Soekarno in his presentation of the concept of non-cooperation with the colonial powers used the concepts of *sana* (over there — the colonial power) and *sini* (here — the oppressed Indonesian masses). Political mobilisation, in order to be *massa-aksi*, had to be located within this framework, as Soekarno noted.

Power-forming is therefore something based upon the antithesis between them and us, something that is full of the spirit of opposition and of conviction in resistance, something that is full of élan and the conviction that there can be no peace between them and us — something that is full of radical élan and conviction.<sup>57</sup>

After the suppression of the PKI, both the Indonesian National Party (Partai Nasional Indonesia — PNI) and later the Indonesian Party (Partai Indonesia — Partindo), in which Soekarno played leading roles, adopted this approach. As these parties implemented this *massa-aksi* approach they were quickly suppressed, first the PNI and then later Partindo. The development of the concept of the mass action strategy by the PKI (by Tan Malaka) and then by Soekarno and its implementation by the PKI, PNI and Partindo established it as the fundamental strategy of the Indonesian struggle for independence. The idea of the *sini*

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<sup>56</sup> Soekarno, 1934, “Marhaen and Proletariat”, in *Under the Banner of Revolution*, p.245. quoted in Max Lane, *An appraisal of Sukarno’s spiritual contribution to Indonesian independence*, University of Wollongong working paper.

<sup>57</sup> Soekarno, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

organising and mobilising to coerce a change in social and political reality through building political strength via organisation and mobilisation laid the foundations for the participation of masses of people in a wide range of organisations in the revolutionary war of 1945-49.

### **Mass action and the course of Indonesian history**

To reiterate the core argument within this dissertation: *it has been the crisis and resolution of mass action political mobilisation that has been the determining factor in the major turning points in the political history of independent Indonesia, , i.e. determining the key features of the next period of class struggle politics.* Mass action strategy — in the Marxist sense, and also as outlined by Soekarno — figured prominently in the political thinking of the leadership of the anti-colonial struggle. The idea of the mobilisation of the popular classes as a strategy for taking power was central — although by no means uncontested — in the thinking and practice of the anti-colonial political leadership from very early on.

A part of the purpose of this dissertation and the testing of the thesis that such mobilisation continued to play the determining role is to make this also a test of the relevance of the political ideas put forward by Tan Malaka, but more specifically by Soekarno. The testing of this thesis is not only, therefore, a testing of a theoretical perspective first developed by Karl Marx but also one expounded by Soekarno. At the same time, it is a testing of the analyses of the writers I will be looking at more closely in the next chapter. One of the peculiarities of the academic study of Indonesian political history is the theoretical domination of the field by American, Australian and European scholars. One reason (of a number of reasons) for this is that the ideas of Indonesian writers have been made the object of study but rarely have their ideas been deployed as theoretical or analytical tools to help understand that history. Partly this reflects a neo-colonial arrogance, but it may also represent an academic arrogance, dismissing the ideas of political leaders as having no explanatory power.

In this chapter, I formulated the primary general thesis of the dissertation regarding the determining role of mass mobilisation politics in a general way. The specifics of the application of this thesis to the case study period examined in the thesis — 1965-2008 — will be further elaborated in the next chapter as part of a review of the most important of the studies that attempt analysis of the course of developments in Indonesian history.



# Chapter 1

## The absence of class analysis in studies of contemporary history

While the mobilisation of the popular classes figured so much in the formation of Indonesian politics and in the political thinking of a large majority of the nationalist intelligentsia throughout the anti-colonial struggle, it has been absent or even negated in several in-depth scholarly studies of modern Indonesia. To illustrate this assertion, I will review several works on the history of post-independence Indonesia. I am defining “major works” as those in-depth studies of periods of post-independence Indonesian history that attempt to draw conclusions about the dynamics of Indonesian history. They have usually taken the form of book-length studies, with authors continuing their analyses through journal articles.

The authors falling into this category are Hebert Feith of *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*; Richard Robison, author of *Indonesia: the Rise of Capital*; Vedi Hadiz, author of a major study on labour<sup>1</sup> and co-author (with Richard Robison) of *Reorganising Political Power in Indonesia*; and Edward Aspinall, author of *Opposing Suharto: Compromise, Resistance and Regime Change in Indonesia*.<sup>2</sup>

All these studies are by Australian scholars, with the exception of Vedi Hadiz, an Indonesian scholar resident outside Indonesia and writing his major work as a co-author with an Australian scholar. The absence of Indonesian works reflects two phenomena. First, the leading intellectuals in Indonesia interested in politics during the 1950s and 1960s concentrated on participating in political struggle and organisation rather than concentrating

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<sup>1</sup> Hadiz, Vedi, *Workers and the State in New Order Indonesia*, London : Routledge, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> There is a spate of books now being published by the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies on the 1990s and 2000s. However, they have appeared too recently for me to include them in this review. I have excluded other longer books, such as *Indonesia, the Desperate Years*, by Dutch scholar Cijis Van Dijk, as this work does not attempt to draw theoretical or longer-term analytical conclusions. I do draw on it for empirical material in later chapters.

on academic research.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, post-independence Indonesian history was only just being created as contemporary history and the object of study for scholars.<sup>4</sup>

Second, during the New Order period, a similar integration into the political system (although less as intellectuals engaged in political struggle) meant that most of the leading academics were not engaged in major in-depth political history studies of either the '50s or '60s or their own period (the New Order). Furthermore, during the 30-year-long New Order period, serious contestation of official regime views of history was systematically suppressed, as were theoretical approaches inconsistent with the regime's political policies. This suppression, especially in a situation where the financial security of academics was precarious due to extremely low salaries, meant that the academe did not produce any major critical studies, especially ones based on the forbidden topic of class.<sup>5</sup>

Since the end of the authoritarian New Order government, government suppression of contesting analysis has lessened, although by no means disappeared. There is a burgeoning of new writing on Indonesian politics and history, and it is very likely that in the very near future Indonesian political scientists and historians will be producing the major works in this area. There may already be such major works in existence among the hundreds, perhaps, thousands, of new publications. However, academic debate and contestation have not progressed sufficiently to enable such works to be identified yet and have an impact.

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<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that there was no written political analysis by Indonesians. However, these writings were integrated into the political debates and discussions of the day. As a result, these writings rarely surveyed a historical period and attempted to draw out the dynamics behind different processes. The Indonesian Communist Party was the most productive in the analytical sphere. For an analysis of its general approach to political analysis, see Mortimer, *op. cit.* For a more recent analysis of the PKI's approach to analysing the politics of agrarian change, see White, Ben, "Between Apologia and Critical Discourse: Agrarian Transitions and Scholarly Engagement in Indonesia", in Dhakidae and Hadiz, *Social Science and Power in Indonesia*, Jakarta : Equinox, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, it can be noted that all of the major studies listed above were actually studies in contemporary history. They were researched as developments unfolded in real time and were finalised and published either still within the period they were studying, or very soon afterwards.

<sup>5</sup> See Hadiz, Vedi and Dhakidae, Daniel, *Social Sciences and Power in Indonesia*, Jakarta : Equinox, 2006; Dhakidae, Daniel, *Cendekiawan dan Kekuasaan di Negara Orde Baru*, Jakarta : Gramedia, 2002. Specifically on the issue of class, see Farid, Hilmar, "The class question in Indonesian social sciences", in Hadiz and Dhakidae, *op. cit.*, pp 167-196. For comments on Farid's critique, see the last section of this chapter.

There are no apparent major in-depth contemporary historical studies by American scholars, despite the fact that American scholarship led the way in establishing a tradition of in-depth political history. Professor George McT. Kahin from Cornell University, the author of *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, was the first to write a major study of the post-colonial period of Indonesia, covering the 1945-49 period. Herb Feith wrote his doctoral dissertation, the basis of *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy*, under the supervision of Kahin.<sup>6</sup>

Other American studies have been concentrated in areas such as anthropology, law, cultural studies, politics and development studies. However, none of these studies have involved the in-depth study of periods of political history in an attempt to draw conclusions about the dynamics of political change in post-1949 Indonesia. To be sure, there have been some speculative journal articles by such authors but no developed body of argumentation similar to that connected to the works I have selected.

I will, however, include some comments at the end of the argument in this chapter on two interesting works on labour politics. One of these is by one of the authors mentioned earlier, Vedi Hadiz, whose first major book was *Workers and the State in New Order Indonesia*.<sup>7</sup> The second is an unpublished doctoral dissertation by Michel3 Ford: *NGO as Outside Intellectual: A History of Non-Governmental Organisations' Role in the Labour Movement*.<sup>8</sup> Given the subject matter of this thesis — the mass mobilisation of the popular classes — and given that the 1989-98 period is given special attention, these two studies of organisations meant to enable mobilisations of the working class in this period deserve some commentary.

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<sup>6</sup> However, in the United States itself the tradition of in-depth national political history studies did not develop far and did not extend into the post-1949 period. Anderson, who was a student of Kahin, did not replicate his approach in his works after *Java in a Time of Revolution*, based on Anderson's doctoral dissertation. Kahin's own next major work on Indonesia, carried out in conjunction with Audrey Kahin, was more on United States foreign policy towards Indonesia rather than Indonesian political developments. See Kahin, Audrey R. and Kahin, George McTurnan, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia*, University of Washington Press, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Vedi Hadiz, *Workers and the State in New Order Indonesia*, London : Routledge, 1997

<sup>8</sup> Ford, Michele, *NGO as Outside Intellectual: A History of Non-Governmental Organisations' Role in the Labour Movement*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wollongong, 2003.

### **Hegemonic negation: the masses are not there**

In all five of the works cited, the political mobilisation of the popular classes has been seen as the least determinant factor in the course of Indonesian political development, not recognised at all or explicitly negated. This is most clearly reflected in the hegemonic periodisation used in almost all works on the history of independent Indonesia. This history is usually divided into the period of “constitutional democracy” (1949-59), the period of “Guided Democracy” (1959-65), the “New Order” (1965-98) and the “reformasi” period (1998-2008). The issue here is not the actual dating, which clearly corresponds with important turning points, but the way the periods have been classified. In the first three cases, their descriptions all relate to the governmental order. The question is whether classifying, that is summing up the course of Indonesian history during these periods, through reference to change in governmental form has been adequate to capture the dynamics of the changes that took place. Another possible focus for assessing turning points might include the change in the nature of political life in society at large.

The name accepted to describe the final period in most analysis — *reformasi*, following on from the fall of 1998 — is the call for reforms raised as a slogan by the mass movement in the last days of Suharto. It has been adopted into popular discourse by both scholarly writers and broader society. It is a term invented by the anti-dictatorship movement to describe its general agenda, and now refers to the period since the end of dictatorial or authoritarian rule.

I will argue that the classic, i.e. hegemonic, periodisation cited above does not, in fact, assist an adequate understanding of the course of political developments but hinders such an understanding. It stems from a narrow perspective, viewing political history as primarily the history of a specific set of institutions, most notably those associated with the state in the case of writers such as Robison, and negating other institutions as important, such as those connected to political mobilisation, unions, mass organisations and so on. Even more fundamentally, it negates an analysis of history which looks at *praxis*, at what people *do*, especially the majority of the people, as a fundamental component. In the case of Indonesia, political mass mobilisation, I will argue, has been the determining political praxis.

The periodisation used in most texts and studies is also conceptually inconsistent. The first periodisation is based on the idea of the adoption of a particular form of government:

constitutional democracy. The period from 1959 until 1965 — so-called Guided Democracy — simply adopts the term used by then President Soekarno to name the system he wanted to establish. This period is then usually viewed as a period of transition from constitutional democracy to authoritarian rule, (to be followed in turn by an anti-authoritarian government after 1965). Although it will be noted later, this latter formulation was not always easily or neatly able to be defended. As with the name “Guided Democracy”, “New Order” was also a term used by those within the New Order itself. However, the term has been more used to denote a “period” during which one regime held power, rather than referring to any specific form of government. Scholars have used the same name for this period — the New Order period — even though they may have different, even opposite, assessments of the nature of the form of government that existed throughout this period.<sup>9</sup>

Feith’s writing on the 1950s and 1960s hegemonised the analysis of Indonesian politics. However, his influence waned in the late 1970s and onwards. Feith himself briefly moved away from some of his own analysis in the 1970s, following collaboration with some of his doctoral students, such as Rex Mortimer, Alan Smith and Peter Britton.<sup>10</sup> Mortimer himself was influenced by the many sympathetic studies of the period of peasant mobilisation in China and other Third World countries, and the fact that he met leading members of the PKI in China in the 1960s. Monash University, where Feith was based, began hosting seminars and colloquiums on class in Indonesia, and particularly the peasantry. It was in this period that Feith formulated his idea of the “repressive developmentalist” state (discussed below).

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<sup>9</sup> The periodisation that I have described above is used in all the major textbooks on Indonesian history. One partial exception is Adrian Vickers, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. While Vickers follows the interpretation of the transition from the 1950s to the “guided democracy” period as a transition to authoritarianism under Soekarno, he introduces into his analysis a much broader range of criteria and observation than other texts. He continues this through to the two chapters on the New Order. Vicker’s history is a socio-political or cultural-political rather than simply a political history. This means that his periodisation, despite overlaps with those used in other texts, is more complex, identifying changes in society’s life and not simply political institutions.

<sup>10</sup> Rex Mortimer edited the book *Showcase State: Indonesia’s Accelerated Modernisation*, Sydney, 1973. Feith’s postgraduate students Peter Britton and Alan Smith both made contributions to this book within the framework of Feith’s final writings on Indonesian politics.

By the 1980s, English-language academic Indonesianists started to produce new attempts to theorise the New Order. Two rival currents developed: one emphasising what they saw as a virtual autonomy being exercised by the “state” — most clearly articulated by Ben Anderson — and another claiming a more holistic societal analysis and which attempted to define the New Order in terms of a “capitalist revolution”, articulated by Richard Robison. In fact, however, Robison’s analysis also collapsed back into a discussion of the state, separated from its role in relation to other classes. While Anderson talked about the “state-qua-state”, Robison talked about the military bureaucratic<sup>11</sup> and bureaucratic capitalist state.<sup>12</sup> The difference between them was only a matter of degree. Both negated popular mobilisation as any kind of determinant. The state was portrayed as either some kind of stand-alone reified “state essence” or as an instrument of a specific segment of the capitalist class — all powerful, standing above and separated from any other social dynamics.

Into the 1990s, debate over how to analyse Indonesian politics in Western scholarship receded dramatically. Scholars continued their work following their respective interests, but polemics between rival explanations, especially those advocating any kind of holistic analysis, diminished. Studies became case-study centred and empiricist. Robison, later collaborating with Vedi Hadiz, continued to analyse Indonesian politics primarily in the context of shifting relations between segments of Indonesian capital. In both Robison and Hadiz, the focus remains on the relationship between the state and the capitalist class, with little attention paid to relations between the capitalist class and other classes. As a result, the role of popular mobilisation does not figure as significant in the explanation of any aspect of Indonesian political developments.

Before proceeding to review these major works that have helped solidify this periodisation, it is useful also to return briefly to the discussion of one of the contending perspectives.

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<sup>11</sup> Robison, “Towards a Class Analysis of the Indonesian Military Bureaucratic State”, in *Indonesia*, 25 (April 1978), pp 17-40.

<sup>12</sup> Although published in 1982, the collection of essays *Interpreting Indonesian Politics: Thirteen Contributions to the Debate*, (edited by Benedict Anderson and Audrey Kahin, Cornell, 1982) remains the best compendium survey of the issues debated in the 1970s and early ‘80s and abandoned from the mid-1980s onwards. Anderson’s article on the “state-qua-state” is: “Old State, New Society: Indonesia’s New Order in Comparative Historical Perspective”, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 42, No. 3, May 1983, pp. 477-496.

Most of the political analysis of Indonesia takes as its reference point the stabilisation of an idealised political or economic system, i.e. either constitutional democracy or capitalist economy. This perspective was always challenged by at least one other perspective that saw neither establishing constitutional democracy nor a stable capitalist economy as the pressing political or economic task.

This was a perspective developed and articulated, most influentially, by Soekarno. It revolved around neither the system of government nor — as an end in itself — the economic system. Rather it revolved around the concept of “nation-building” and, as part of that process, “character building” (i.e. the completion of the consolidation of a national culture based on values of self-reliance). In most scholarly analysis, his emphasis on the nation and national unity was dismissed as a tactic or distraction. There seemed to be an assumption that with independence, the nation had been created.

As we will see below, this was also Feith’s starting assumption: because the nation had been established, now followed the pragmatic administrative, institutional and economic issues. There was no understanding of the material character of a nation and that it required a certain process to create and consolidate it. In Soekarno’s writing, it is also unclear if he had a fully conscious materialist theoretical understanding or analysis of the nation as an entity. However, he was acutely aware that independence by itself was not a guarantee of the completion of either the nation creation process or its consolidation. I will argue that the emphasis he, and others, placed on the importance of mass organisation and mobilisation flowed from either a fuller theoretical understanding or an instinctual, experience-based response to the issue of nation-building. During the period 1920-50, the most influential Marxist text on the national question, including in Asia, was *Marxism and the National Question*, published in the Soviet Union under Stalin’s name. In this work, a materialist analysis of nations is summarised as follows:

*A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.*

It goes without saying that a nation, like every other historical phenomenon, is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end.<sup>13</sup>

The focus on constitutional parliamentary democracy and/or a stable capitalist economy tended to assume the need for a relatively passive and peripherally organised population: they were either primarily individual voters or individual workers and consumers. As a mass force, either in a permanently mobilised party or union or in any series of ad hoc mobilising formations, the popular classes were viewed as a destabilising force, with those that tried to mobilise them perceived as enemies of stability and progress.

The idea of nation-building focused on a number of very specific processes — ones that might lead to the consolidation of the characteristics noted above — that had not been completed with either the proclamation of independence nor the Dutch acceptance of an independent Indonesia four years later, in 1949, does not figure as a part of the assessment of mass mobilisation activity. The borders of a common territory for the nation had not been finalised: there was a question mark over the western part of Papua. While an Indonesian culture, as distinct from regional or ethnic-based cultures, had developed rapidly since the 1900-10 period, embodied in the new fictional literature, poetry, drama, songs and also in the burgeoning political literature and political organisational activity of the masses, it was still a long way off consolidating itself permanently as the replacement for regional, pre-modern cultures. The economy too was still a backward dual economy with tens of millions of Indonesians living an economic existence relatively isolated from each other, operating in small local markets and economies as opposed to a national economy. This latter quality was

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<sup>13</sup> J. Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question", published as an Appendix in V.I. Lenin, *Marxism and Nationalism*, Chippendale: Resistance Books, 2002, p. 197. The literature on the nation is vast. For comprehensive collections of essays by the major writers on this topic see: Pecora, Vincent, *Nations and identities*, New York : Blackwell, 2001, and Spencer, Phillip and Wollman, Howard, *Nations and Nationalism: a reader*, New Brunswick : Rutgers University Press, 2005. Perhaps because of his deserved reputation as a totalitarian dictator Stalin's work is not quoted. For another important Marxist work on nations, see V.I. Lenin, "Theses on Nationalism and Colonialism", in SarDesai, D.R. (ed), *Southeast Asian History: Essential readings*, Boulder : Westview Press, 2006. The major works referred to today are: Smith, Anthony D., *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, London : Blackwell, 2007, Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1983, Hobsbawm, E.J., *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2007, Anderson, Benedict R. O'G., *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*, London : Verso, 2006.



indeed an issue of economic development; however, there were major questions as to whether a capitalist economy would integrate the mass of people into a single national economy or reinforce the "dual economy" that the country had inherited from the Dutch.<sup>14</sup>

In order to bring to a close any of these processes — the finalisation of borders, the creating and spreading through the whole country of an Indonesian national culture and the integration of a common economic life — those leaders and indeed masses that either analytically or instinctually recognised such processes as unfinished were drawn towards mass mobilisation. It was the organisation of people in mass numbers, on a national basis, to campaign for political goals and to spread specific ideas that had the main possibility for the creation of a new national consciousness and culture. It was these political leaderships, most clearly represented by Soekarno, that Herb Feith labelled "solidarity makers" in his *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy*.

#### **Feith against the 'solidarity makers'**

Feith divided the Indonesian political leadership of the 1950s — all those who had played some leadership role in the anti-colonial struggle and who remained in leadership positions after independence — into two camps: "administrators" and "solidarity-makers". The administrators provided the benchmark for defining both groups. Their vision for "post revolutionary Indonesia" was one of "planned economic development".<sup>15</sup> According to Feith, they did not see "economic progress as having primacy over social ideals".<sup>16</sup> Yet Feith used the alleged concern about the economy as the key demarcation between the administrators and solidarity-makers. He wrote: "On the other hand, there were Indonesian leaders — and here Soekarno may be taken as a representative — who did not place a high priority on the pursuit of economic progress".<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Boeke, J.H., *Economics and economic policy of dual societies, as exemplified by Indonesia*, New York : Institute of Pacific Relations, 1970.

<sup>15</sup> Feith, Herbert, *Decline of Constitutional Democracy*, Ithaca : Cornell, 1974, p. 36.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 37.

He continued in the same paragraph:

These men spoke frequently of *pembangunan*, literally “upbuilding” and the word was sometimes translated as “development” or “economic development”. But it actually had rather different connotations, ones which are social and political, rather than economic.<sup>18</sup>

Feith never explains anywhere in his work why he says “rather than economic” instead of “as well as economic”. The assumption in his argument is represented explicitly when he uses the word “post-revolutionary” to describe Indonesia after 1949. The revolutionary process is seen purely within the framework of the establishment of an independent state, not in relation the process of the creation of a nation, which he assumes as a completed given from 1949.

In a later section of this introductory chapter in his book, he reviews these two camps’ attitudes to “democracy”. Again in this comparison, the administrators and their attachment to “constitutional” democracy is taken as the benchmark. Feith asserted that “Indonesia” — whatever that meant to him: government, people, society? — had a “commitment to Western democratic institutions”.<sup>19</sup> Earlier he argued that while many key leaders — and he names figures from the right-wing parties and the military — had commitments to these institutions, he also acknowledged that “populist nationalism ... dominated the thinking of most members of the political public”.<sup>20</sup> So “Indonesia” had a commitment to “Western” institutions even though a majority of the “political public” had a viewpoint which Feith said could not be reconciled with this commitment. No wonder the last sentence in the chapter from which the previous quote was taken, in contradiction to how he opened that final

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<sup>18</sup> Ironically, as we will see later, the leaching from the word *pembangunan* of any social and political content was, in effect, later critiqued by Feith. Such a critique is also a clear theme in the book edited by Rex Mortimer, to which Feith also contributed: *Showcase State*.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

paragraph, reads “constitutional democracy was accepted only tentatively by the greater part of the political public”.<sup>21</sup>

Feith’s obsession with so-called “Western democratic institutions” as the measuring criterion for “democracy” was more explicitly contained in his extended comments later in the book on the nature of the so-called solidarity-makers. According to Feith, those who argued for mass mobilisation of the popular classes behind certain campaigns — the liberation of Papua, rejection of foreign debt to Holland and so on — did not represent any social or political interests nor did they have any real programme for the country. Their political outlook was a purely psychiatric phenomenon.

Looking at the political public in terms of the “administrator” – “solidarity-maker” contrast, one sees that each of these had a constituency. This was not principally because interests of one type were represented by “administrators” and interests of another type by “solidarity-makers”. What determined the division into skill group constituencies was a matter of values rather than interests. However, the division was not between men seeking contrasting value goals through political activity, but rather between those on the one hand who had firmly held values and sought to advance them through political activity and those on the other hand who were politically active for the sake of the activity itself and its meaning for personal integration.<sup>22</sup>

As shown earlier, Feith considered the majority of the political public to be “solidarity-makers”. This included Soekarno, the leadership of the PKI and a majority of the leadership of the PNI. All these people, according to Feith, adhered to values separate from any political, social or economic goals. They were all seeking “personal integration”. Their strategy of wanting to mobilise people in mass campaigns was to help them gain “personal integration”. Through this analysis, Feith in one phrase wipes out the necessity to look into their politics any further. He is able to do this through an unquestioning acceptance of the superiority of adopting “Western democratic institutions”, whose success is supposed to be a question of skills, rather than popular participation.

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 118-119.

The mass mobilisation developed by the "populist nationalists", apart from being a manifestation of a psychiatric issue of identity among its proponents, was also depicted by Feith as an essentially anarchic phenomenon. The first major mass mobilisations after independence were part of a campaign demanding that the government take action to liberate western Papua from Dutch control and integrate it into Indonesia. He refers to the mass mobilisation strategy as "organizing power", a translation of "*machtsvorming*", a term used by Soekarno during the anti-colonial struggle. Feith describes this strategy as follows: "It was the strategy of exciting mass feeling and threatening to let it get out of hand".<sup>23</sup> Feith refers to the fact that "more and more mass rallies" were being held and that they passed increasingly radical resolutions demanding the liberation of Papua.<sup>24</sup> However, he makes no assessment of the political consequences of more and more masses of people being mobilised in political action and assesses the mass campaign primarily in terms of the extent to which it de-stabilised the "administrator" government of the time (under Mohammed Natsir.) No other features, aspects or impacts of the mass campaign activity are discussed.

A similar negation takes place when Feith discusses the worker takeovers of Dutch companies in 1958-59. Following a one-day national strike called by the cabinet (over which Soekarno exercised major influence), workers in the Dutch-owned shipping company KPM and the trading company Geo Wehry read proclamations that they had taken over the companies. The movement snowballed throughout the country until almost all Dutch companies were unilaterally seized by their workers. After some confusion among the government, the companies were denationalised, but then handed to the army to manage, setting off a seven-year-long struggle with the trade unions over management control. That there was contestation from below over the installation of military officers as company managers is also not mentioned.

Here, Feith's main assessment is in relation to the economic disruption caused by the withdrawal of Dutch capital. Again there is no discussion, not even a reference, to the implications for levels of organisation, activity and consciousness among the members of

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 160.

trade unions and other worker organisations.<sup>25</sup> It is not that Feith cannot grasp a key feature of the period, the clash between those who were of the view that the revolution was not yet finished and those that considered that the revolution was finished. He concludes the final chapter in his work with quotes from Soekarno and Hatta summing up the contending positions.

Soekarno:

“The Peoples Awareness demands that every unjust situation or relationship be torn down and changed ... changed fast and in a revolutionary way.”

Hatta:

“A thorough-going social analysis would show that all our rebellions and our splits, our political anarchy and adventurism, and all the steps taken in the economic field which have created chaos, are a result of the fact that our national Revolution was not dammed up at the appropriate time.”<sup>26</sup>

Feith’s fundamental flaw was to negate the efforts to “tear down and change unjust relationships” simply as the manifestation of various individuals’ search for “personal integration”, an assertion based on no data and with no attempt to assess objectively the “organising of power”, i.e., mass mobilisation, in its own terms. The abandonment of constitutional democracy was a result, according to Feith, of the revolutionary perspective blocking the “administrators”. Feith concluded: “Neither a rules-based politics nor a largely coercion free government could be maintained for long in the face of persistent, and persistently re-stimulated, revolutionary ferment”.<sup>27</sup> For Feith, mass mobilisation was simply “persistently re-stimulated ferment” and not a movement towards particular values and associated goals. For him, the outcome of the victory of “revolutionary ferment” was the

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 586.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 607-608.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

“political domination of the economy and the rest of society”.<sup>28</sup> This would be purely for the benefit of “favourably placed politicians, officers and civil servants”.<sup>29</sup> The fact that millions of people had become involved in organised and ongoing political activity did not figure in the calculations in any way at all. (However, in an essay in the 1970s, which I discuss below, he would implicitly reject this position, although still with considerable ambiguity.) Feith notes the domination of the revolutionaries, the increased mass rallies, the worker takeovers of Dutch companies, but makes no effort to assess what these and similar developments meant for trends in the political life of the country.

The inability to identify the significance of the role of mass mobilisation, which flowed from his “administrators” versus “solidarity-makers” framework, resulted in a range of major weaknesses in his analysis when it came to dealing with the evolution of politics after 1960 and then the overthrow of Soekarno and the establishment of the New Order. While Feith did not write another book, he wrote essays and articles during the 1960s and ‘70s which allow us to see how his approach debilitated his analysis.

In 1968, three years into the Suharto era, Feith wrote an article for Cornell University’s *Indonesia* journal: “Suharto’s Search for a Political Format”. This is a remarkable article for the absence of the mobilised masses from its analysis and its making into a fetish of formal political structures. In particular, Feith focuses on what he argues was Suharto’s prioritisation of managing change through the Provisional People’s Consultative Assembly (M.P.R.S.), a body made up of members of the House of Representatives and a large number of appointed members. However, by 1968 leftist members of the House of Representatives had been arrested or killed. Feith writes:

Suharto was attracted to the M.P.R.S. as a vehicle because he wanted de-Soekarnoisation to proceed in an orderly fashion rather than taking place through the “parliament of the streets”.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 606.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Feith, “Suharto’s search for a political format”, *Indonesia*, 6 (October 1968) , p. 90.

The only reference to the phenomenon of mass mobilisation is this reference to “parliament of the streets”, which actually refers to the military-backed mobilisation of anti-communist students demanding the banning, indeed “crushing”, of a legal party, the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). This article, summing up Feith’s assessment of Suharto’s course of action between October 1965 and early 1968, makes not a single mention of the mass killings being used to crush the left and end the period of heightened mass mobilisations. I will present an analysis in the next chapter which shows that the politics of this period can be best understood as a counter-revolutionary pre-emptive strike against all mass mobilisation politics. Feith’s framework, with the violent suppression of the mass movement absent, leads him to some bizarre and surreal conclusions.

In his final section, he concludes by expressing agreement for the view that:

Indonesia’s political pluralism, rooted in the variety of her cultural history, impels the nation towards ... arrangements through which conflicts of interest and viewpoint are accommodated with a minimum of coercion.<sup>31</sup>

How is it possible to draw this conclusion after two years of mass killings, usually accompanied with physical or psychological torture, the banning of the biggest political organisations in the country, the closing of scores of newspapers and the presence of more than 30,000 political prisoners? It is possible only by negating the presence, as well as the rationality, of the so-called “solidarity-maker” sector. Feith attempts to make an assessment, in 1968, of the likelihood of Suharto resorting to a political format based on coercion. The main evidence for putting such a scenario on the agenda, in Feith’s article, is “the government’s steamroller style” in the 1968 M.P.R.S. session. Feith’s assessment is that “factors militating against an attempt to govern in a generally more coercive manner make one reluctant to suggest” that the government has decided to move in that direction.<sup>32</sup>

All of Feith’s specific analysis relates to Suharto’s attitudes towards a component of the alliance that supported the suppression of the left and the mass movement, in particular

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

relations between the army and “organic civilian political groupings”. Here Feith is referring to the army after the purge of pro-Soekarno officers and those civilian groups that had not been banned or which had been purged of pro-Soekarno elements. Feith’s concluding words represent a retreat from any serious conclusion on the developments of the previous years. Acknowledging that a review of the M.P.R.S. session, which he concentrated on, only revealed aspects of the formal political structure, he ends:

For the informal qualities of the new regime, and specifically for the fundamental question of how much the government will bargain and how much it will rely on coercion in dealing with civilian groups, we must wait for the future to reveal a settled pattern of practice.<sup>33</sup>

Feith is caught in a contradiction between his framework for understanding the polarised conflict of Indonesian society between 1950 and 1965 and reality after 1965. For Feith, there were only two sides — the rational, value-driven “administrators” and the irrational, no-values politicians seeking personal integration: “solidarity-makers”. It was the forces labelled as “solidarity-makers” who lost out after 1965, being violently suppressed. The rational, value-driven administrators variously led, supported or, at a minimum, acquiesced in mass violence and brutal suppression — but what values were driving them? Feith had argued they were driven by values that were associated with Western democratic institutions. Subsequently, it was difficult for Feith to come to grips with the fact that these forces were establishing a violent dictatorship.

One slight, and ineffective, variation to his analysis is the introduction of a military versus civilian axis, which could provide later the basis for an explanation as to why the defeat of the “solidarity-makers” did not lead to a pro-democratic, value-driven regime. However, in his writings covering the 1960-65 period (also written during that period), he had already associated the army with the rationalists of the “administrator” camp and the growing PKI with the irrationality of the “solidarity-makers”. In his analysis of the 1950s, Feith notes that at least on two occasions “there was an almost open clash between a group of Army leaders and the President [Soekarno]. In each case the army leadership was supporting positions

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 105.



adopted by Hatta, the Masjumi and the Socialists ...”<sup>34</sup> This alliance between the army leadership and Feith’s administrators remained in place until Suharto’s coming to power and during most of his period of rule. Suharto’s alliance with the Indonesian Socialist Party (Partai Sosialis Indonesia — PSI) -connected technocrats and economists after 1965 was a prominent and public feature of the coalition around the establishment of the New Order. In Feith’s analysis, the army was a part of the “administrators” and could not be depicted as a force opposed to the administrators’ support for democratic institutions, at least not outrightly opposed.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, Feith’s 1960s analysis of that period also firmly positioned the PKI as part of the anti-rational solidarity-maker camp. He clearly counter-posed the “American-backed program of economic stabilization”<sup>36</sup> — the programme supported by the “administrators” with a “Communist supported policy of opposing Malaysia” — a policy of the solidarity-makers.<sup>37</sup>

In 1968, reluctant to suggest that the regime might settle into a pattern of coercion, Feith was examining this issue in terms of relations between Suharto’s group and other elements of the “administrators” spectrum. Through the course of the 1970s, Feith’s articles gradually began to deal with the reality of the suppression of the vast bulk of the worker and peasant population.<sup>38</sup> This new approach manifested in just three published articles: “Growth and

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<sup>34</sup> “Feith, “Dynamics of Guided Democracy” in McVey, R., *Indonesia* New Haven : Human Relations Area File, p. 330.

<sup>35</sup> Feith was aware of the repressive acts of the army before 1965, noting them in his “Dynamics of Guided Democracy” and of the civilian components of the “administrator” political group’s support for this. However, this did not lead him to reconsider his basic bi-polar division of Indonesian politics.

<sup>36</sup> For a recent study of the cooperation between conservative elements of the Indonesian and United States establishments in the lead-up to and the formation of the new regime, see: Simpson, Bradley, *Economists with Guns, Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960-1968*, Stanford University Press, 2008. For a study of the direct role of U.S. corporate power in the same process, especially the very early New Order period, see Winters, Jeffrey, *Power in Motion: Capital Mobility and the Indonesian State*, Cornell University Press, 1996.

<sup>37</sup> “President Sukarno, The Army and the Communists: The Triangle Changes Shape”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 4, No. 8 (Aug., 1964), pp. 969-980.

<sup>38</sup> The late sixties and early seventies were, of course, the years of the anti-Vietnam War movement and widespread questioning of society in the West. It also coincided with the period of the “cultural revolution” in China and, among some scholars, [investigation of] the role and plight of the peasantry. At least four of Feith’s post-graduate students in the 1970s had an interest in these areas and

Development in Asia: Some Criticisms of Conventional Approaches”, “Political Control, Class Formation and Legitimacy in Suharto’s Indonesia” and “Repressive-Developmentalist Regimes in Asia: Old Strengths, New Vulnerabilities”.<sup>39</sup> The last article (written in 1980) was where Feith elaborated a new perspective, though marked with ambiguities originating from his old analysis.

Feith, in this article, postulates the emergence from the ‘60s of a specific regime type: the “repressive developmentalist” regime, of which the Suharto regime was one. He proposed that such a regime had five (or six) interrelated features. These were:

Economic growth, political repression, statist and developmentalist ideology, bureaucratic streamlining and its limits and distinctive forms of restratification. (And the generation and maintenance of a distinct cultural ethos.)<sup>40</sup>

This is a very descriptive approach to categorizing these regimes, separated from an analysis of their origins and *the consequences of their origins* for political processes. Feith does, however, use a new approach to assessing these origins: they are not the reflection of a victory of “administrators” over “solidarity-makers”. In reviewing various sets of regimes, Feith identifies three different processes that gave birth to the repressive-developmental type. In describing these three processes, we can identify the influence of his old framework. Chile and Argentina, he states, emerged as a “a result of victory over popular forces of workers, peasants and middle class elements”. This process is described with reference to class categories. However when it comes to Indonesia (and Brazil), class categorisation is dropped. These regimes “were born out of a major showdown with coalitions of left-wing and nationalist groupings (and a major crisis in capital accumulation)”. The third process is

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introduced Feith to a more class sensitive approach. One of these students, Rex Mortimer, wrote a significant work on the 1960s period and some articles on peasant issues. However, he died of illness before being able to develop any ongoing analytical framework. See Mortimer, Rex, *Indonesian Communism Under Sukarno*, Cornell, 1974.

<sup>39</sup> “Growth and Development in Asia: Some Criticisms of Conventional Approaches”, *Pacific Viewpoint*, 1974, 15(2): pp. 123-134.; “Political control, class formation and legitimacy in Suharto’s Indonesia”, *Kabar Seberang*, No.2, June 1977.; “Repressive-Developmentalist Regimes in Asia: Old Strengths, New Vulnerabilities”, *Prisma*, No.19, (December 1980), pp. 39-55; “Repressive-Development regimes in Asia”, *Alternatives*, Vol. VII, No.4 (Spring 1982): pp. 491-506.

<sup>40</sup> “Repressive-Developmentalist Regimes”, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

one in which regimes came to power as a result of “a series of minor contests with popular forces”: South Korea and Singapore.<sup>41</sup>

As Feith moves through his argument, he appears to give up the distinction between Chile and Argentina on the one hand and Indonesia and Brazil on the other:

*all of them*<sup>42</sup> [the regimes] were established as a defensive reaction against the political mobilization of lower class elements and all of them set out early to create an attractive atmosphere for foreign firms.<sup>43</sup>

Feith then comments (far too briefly) on a key ideological consequence of this fact, but in the process also reveals much about his own earlier 1950s analysis. He states that the way these regimes came into being meant they needed to wage an ideological fight against “populist anti-imperialism, socialism and the Left wing nationalism of figures such as Sukarno”. He then adds that this “anti-popular politics dispensation” was justified “in terms of the need to stop wasting time in fruitless wrangling, to break through the deadlock situations that ‘politics’ created and to get on with the job of development”.<sup>44</sup> This was exactly the same sentiment and argument that Feith attributed to his “administrators” — but as a positive attribute. Previously these arguments had been associated with democratic values and counter-posed to the irrationalism of the “solidarity-makers”. Now their real character is exposed: as a justification against “popular politics”; as a justification for repression against “the political mobilisation of the lower classes”

Despite this new recognition of the emergence of the New Order as a defensive reaction against popular mobilisation, and of at least one aspect of the necessary ideological response, Feith still does not give consideration to any other implications of this. His approach is to deal with the emergence of the new regime type as a more or less completed process with its specific strengths and vulnerabilities. He has recognised that the “popular mobilisation of the lower classes” represented a threat to those who took power after 1965,

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<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

but he has not yet been able to consider what that political mobilisation represented in terms of the development of Indonesian society and politics. He had always simply considered it as a quest on the part of some Indonesians for personal integration. As a result, while he poses questions about the strengths and vulnerabilities of his new regime type, he never poses any similar questions about the defeated mode of political activity — popular mobilisation — its strengths and vulnerabilities, i.e. its prospects for resurgence. As this was the last article Feith published on Indonesian politics, he did not develop this framework any further.

### **Robison, 1965 and the ‘capitalist revolution’s’ negation of class struggle**

Shortly after Feith stopped publishing on Indonesia, a new work by another Australian academic was published, Richard Robison’s *Indonesia: the Rise of Capital*.<sup>45</sup> While at one level Robison introduces theoretical categories — class and a class-based state — that were not present in Feith’s work, at another level he replicates fundamental aspects of the general character of Feith’s approach.<sup>46</sup> Feith’s negation of “solidarity-maker” politics led him to give almost no consideration to what that sector of society was actually doing. (Therefore he had no stimulation for considering a different approach to the one he had adopted. These things are mutually reinforcing.) Having negated the “popular mobilisation of the lower classes” as merely the reflection of the “solidarity-makers”’ search for personal psychological integration, his focus was diverted from mass politics in general to the political elite. His empirical descriptions of Indonesian politics concentrated upon the conflicts at the elite level, primarily between the different components of the “administrator” spectrum of political actors.

This is also the focus of Robison’s work, although these elite components are defined differently than in Feith. While Robison mentions the state’s role in suppressing the threat to an existing capitalist social order prior to 1965, his framework for explaining New Order politics in general is the state’s role in “intervening in disputes between the different and

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<sup>45</sup> Robison, R., *Indonesia: the Rise of Capital*, Sydney : Allen and Unwin, 1986.

<sup>46</sup> Robison’s first avowed attempt at class analysis is in Robison, Richard, "Toward a Class Analysis of the Indonesian Military," *Indonesia*, No. 25, April 1978, pp. 17-39.

competing elements of capital”.<sup>47</sup> While Feith concentrated on the politics of conflict between party elites, Robison concentrates on describing the politics of conflicts between capitalists, including those state officials in the process of turning themselves into capitalists (the owners of capital). The framework for this prioritisation is based upon his fundamental analytical thesis (and the first sentence in his book): “The most important revolutionary force at work in the Third World today is not communism or socialism but capitalism”.<sup>48</sup> He goes on to use the term “capitalist revolution” to identify the process which he is discussing.

Robison was not *as* dismissive, in 1986, of “the popular mobilisation of the lower classes” as was Feith with his psychiatric analysis of the “solidarity-makers”. However, he remained dismissive despite an analysis that concedes that what he calls the “capitalist revolution” could not have unfolded in Indonesia without the suppression of this mobilisation.

Robison’s use of the idea of a capitalist revolution is problematic. It is meant to echo the Marxist idea of capitalist revolution. However, the essence of that idea was the development of new productive forces whose development necessitated the “bursting asunder” of the old relations of production and the social order that had arisen out of it. Robison actually conceives the period of colonial penetration as the beginning of the capitalist revolution, when he writes that it has been ongoing for more than one hundred years (p. xii). If capitalist relations of production began to dominate economic life during the colonial period, then capitalism did not arise as a result of such a revolutionary bursting asunder but rather through a slow process of partial erosion of old modes of production as the result of the activities of an external agency. The revolutionary nature (and he made no clear definition of what he meant here) of the changes in the conditions of capitalist society in Indonesia, including through the New Order, is also undermined by his admission: “the New Order did not bring about a capitalist revolution; it reconstituted an existing capitalist social order and consolidated existing class structures as well as the political authority of its own officials”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Robison, *Indonesia, op.cit.*, p. x.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. vii.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p. 118.

The New Order was thus an essentially conservative order, conserving existing class structures, long in place.

However, he concludes his chapter discussing the fall of the Soekarno government with the summation:

The result may be seen as revolutionary rather than counter-revolutionary in that it broke out of the decaying colonial stage and lifted the capitalist revolution to a new state of development, providing the conditions for the entry of finance and industrial capital on a scale far beyond anything hitherto. For the victors of 1965 — politico-bureaucrat, middle class, capitalist and petty capitalist — the problem was to be one of accommodation and survival in the new capitalist era.<sup>50</sup>

For Robison, the change to the New Order is revolutionary neither because it has overthrown anything nor because it has created any new social formation, but because it has “lifted” capitalism to a “new state”.

Key in his summary above, Robison removes class struggle as a feature of the politics of the New Order: the primary problem for those among *the victors of 1965 was accommodation within the New Order*. There is no mention of any ongoing business with those defeated. In terms of the propositions of this dissertation, Robison also asserts that this change was revolutionary and not counter-revolutionary and in arguing this counter-position formulates his negation of the class struggle factor. Slightly earlier in his book as he argues his position, he briefly discusses the idea that the New Order was a counter-revolution — the position I will argue — and dismisses it. He wrote:

It is possible to view the New Order as a counter-revolution against “socialist” forces, and to the extent the PKI was seen as a threat to the propertied classes, it was. But upon close inspection there is little that was genuinely socialist about Guided Economy; rather it was a ramshackle, underpowered form of state capitalism operated by, and largely for, the benefit of the political-bureaucrats who dominated the state apparatus, notably the military themselves.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

There are strong echoes of Feith here. For Feith the outcome of the victory of his solidarity-makers was the “political domination of the economy and the rest of society”.<sup>52</sup> This would purely be for the benefit of those “favorably placed politicians, officers and civil servants”.<sup>53</sup> This conclusion is drawn as a result of Robison’s negation of class struggle mass mobilisation, although he does this with a different formulation than Feith.

Robison states that the PKI was “*seen*” as a threat to the propertied classes — then he follows with a “but”. He argues that there was little genuinely socialist about Guided Economy, giving a very negative, and more or less accurate, description of the economy at the time. However, the PKI was not in power and not even a significant component in the government. Neither were the other left-wing allies of Soekarno, the left of the PNI or key figures from Partindo. The PKI, and the pro-Soekarno movement as a whole, was seen as a threat by the propertied classes not because of what the centre-right dominated cabinet of the day was doing, but because of what it feared a Soekarno-PKI-PNI left-Partindo dominated government *might* do. Fear of such a government existed precisely because of the growth of the movement and the deepening radicalisation facilitated by wider and more active “political mobilisation of the lower classes”, to use Feith’s term from his last works.

By switching from a discussion of the threat of the “socialist forces” (as forces in motion) to a discussion of what the government of the day was doing — a government in which the socialist forces were an ineffective minority — Robison is able to negate the significance of the political mobilisations being carried out by the “socialist forces”.

Earlier Robison is quite specific about this: “The struggle between the PKI and the military can be seen as a struggle between contending politico-bureaucratic ‘elites’”.<sup>54</sup> This prejudice also leads to some inaccurate assertions about the politics of the Guided Democracy period. He states, for example, that it was a Guided Democracy “practice of establishing state-sponsored corporatist political organizations, within which the activities of social and

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<sup>52</sup> Feith, *op. cit.*, p. 606.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Robison, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

economic interest groups are contained”.<sup>55</sup> He mentions labour and youth as well as business and the civil service. While the army and other conservative forces tried to implement this practice, Soekarno supported the more widespread phenomenon, namely, the growth of labour, youth, women and peasant groups that were not initiated by the state and which were in fact the ideologically driven initiatives of those very same forces that Robison says were seen as a threat to the “propertied classes”. Soekarno encouraged the growth of the mass organisations of the PKI as opposition to the “state-sponsored corporatist political organisations”, such as GOLKAR and its affiliates. He thus argues that a *major feature* of the New Order was that it *continued* a practice which in fact the leadership of those trying to implement Guided Democracy was *opposing*. He turns reality on its head. Thus he cannot give due weight to the centrality of the institutionalisation of the suppression of the kind of mass political activity that actually was occurring during the previous period.

This also provides the basis for his delimiting “the problem” for the different components of the 1965 victors to simply accommodation and survival in the new capitalist era, which in turn he depicts as tied up primarily with conflicts among themselves. He thus provides no explanation of the enormous efforts of the whole of the capitalist class over the next four decades to repress and ideologically dominate the propertyless classes — an effort I will discuss in the next chapter.

### **The fall of Suharto and the aftermath of counter-revolution: nuanced negations of class struggle<sup>56</sup>**

The two major analytical political histories published since Robison’s *The Rise of Capital* that I will analyse present their analysis in the framework of the history of the fall of Suharto and its political aftermath. This is true for Aspinall’s study even though it started out as a study of the opposition to Suharto, mainly in the 1990s. Whether affirming or denying, both of these studies — by Hadiz and Robison and Aspinall — deal with the issue of “transition” out of authoritarianism to something else: some form of limited or “in process” democracy, usually, or, in Robison and Hadiz’s case, a predatory “illiberal democracy”.

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<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p. 107.



The undeniable fact that there is significantly less political repression now than under Suharto makes this focus more or less inevitable. The fact that political mobilisations were an integral part of the process of the downfall of Suharto also makes some discussion, and even recognition, of the role of popular mobilisation inevitable — though nothing is inevitable about any conclusions as to *the extent and significance* attributed to such mobilisations. However, the framework of “transition to democracy” analysis does turn on its head Feith’s initial discussion of mass mobilisation, which he saw as destabilising and destructive. Hadiz, Robison and Aspinall all identify these mobilisations as a positive phenomenon — although they all also engage in a negation, to one extent or another, of their role as a determinant in the political processes through negative, contradictory and alienating, or belittling assessments of their relevance or impact.

The work by Robison and Hadiz maintains a high level of continuity with Robison’s previous analysis, even though there is much more reflection of real political life in this work than any of Robison’s previous work. *The Rise of Capital* was a study of domestic corporate ownership in Indonesia and the policy struggles in the realm of economic policy that could be connected to the differing interests of different owners. In the post-Suharto era, *Reorganising Political Power* deals with a broader range of policy struggles, including the actual end of dictatorship, the form of government and decentralisation as well as economic policies. Despite this broader focus, Robison and Hadiz’s history of the rise and fall of Suharto and the reorganisation of power after Suharto remains hemmed in by its tautological analytical framework, where all politics are reflections of conflicts among the factions of a single class. The role of the relationships between classes and of other classes outside the capitalist class, are quickly negated, and affirmed as having been insignificant — though using a very weak analytical framework.

Hadiz and Robison assess that what they describe as “civil society” was so disorganised that it could not “provide the impulse” for any radical or social democratic project<sup>57</sup> and that a “radical agenda was to be absent in the struggles that would shape the contours of

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<sup>57</sup> Hadiz and Robison, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

Indonesia's new democracy".<sup>58</sup> This kind of assessment is repeated frequently in their work. As an assessment that there has not developed since the fall of Suharto a movement yet capable of challenging neo-liberal capitalism in the field of economic policy, or of challenging capitalism itself, the assessment is very accurate. However, such projects were never the immediate goal set out by the mobilised popular forces during the 1990s. The goal was to end the dictatorship, end the control over political parties and force a withdrawal of the armed forces from politics, specifically as a repressive force. The fall of Suharto was neither simply a process whereby one dictator was replaced by another, nor one where the political changes in the form of government were restricted to the reorganisation of the administration of power within the domestic capitalist class.

Robison and Hadiz provide little convincing analysis to explain the major shift in the balance of forces between the elite (the capitalist class in power and its politicians) and the popular classes that is manifest in the end of systematic military repression, the freedom of organisation now open to the working class and peasantry and the extended freedom of the press, among other newly won legalised freedoms. While it can be asserted that these freedoms benefit the so-called middle classes, it is actually workers, semi-proletarians, peasants, students and intellectuals who are utilising them most, as reflected in the expansion of the number of trade unions and peasant organisations. These are freedoms which specifically facilitate greater popular mobilisation in politics.

There was no foregone conclusion that the end of Suharto's rule would be associated with an extension of freedoms that his regime, and all the components which supported it, had always suppressed. The central place of the formalisation of political freedoms, including the freedom to mobilise, is explained by the central role played by the mobilisation of the popular classes in the actual process that led to the fall of Suharto and the need for the ruling class to make concessions to the popular classes in order to end the mobilisations.

Of course, the fact that concessions primarily limited to the formalisation of such freedoms, and not extending to economic rights and power, were sufficient to demobilise the mass movement does point to the fact that it was dominated by an anti-dictatorship consciousness and not a revolutionary consciousness, one that was demanding an end to the

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<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, p. 182.

rule of capital. Nor yet was there even that radical consciousness that falls just short of being revolutionary, i.e. one that could conceive of a major constraining of the economic power of capital in the interests of workers and peasants. This low ideological level is no doubt also connected to the “disorganisation” that does indeed exist among the popular classes. However Hadiz and Robison’s framework, which eliminates any study and analysis of the relationships between elite and popular classes (capital and labour) and the historical and contemporary factors affecting this relationship, results in a both a narrowing and a confusion in defining “the primary question for Indonesia” in terms of its political development. They focus narrowly on the conflict between those wanting to defend the dominant political powers’ right to defend their economic interests through the use of state power and those who argue for more free market approaches and assert this as the essence of the course of political development. Furthermore, they argue that a regime based upon this relationship, predatory capital’s domination of the market, is now “increasingly well entrenched”.<sup>59</sup>

They do not make this statement lightly but emphasise they are counter-posing it to any notion that there is any kind of transition taking place, whether to some kind of democracy or to something else. The process is over. They argue:

Unlike others, we have also not characterized Indonesia as being in the middle of a ‘transition’ period’. We reject the view, in fact, it is some intermediary point between predatory rule and the ultimate triumph of liberal forms and democracy. We have argued, on the contrary, that the *essential* [my italics] new patterns and dynamics of social, economic and political power have now been established.<sup>60</sup>

In an earlier chapter they assert that the “primary question for Indonesia” is “how reformist interests might organize and come to power”, reformist here meaning supporters of the free market and neo-liberalism. Later, as quoted above, they then assert that the question has been answered: the new regime where predatory capital reigns is entrenched: it is final. The only concession to the possibility of further developments is summed up at the end of the

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<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*

book. First they restate the nature of the entrenched new regime, capturing vividly the current system:

A frightening descent into the uncertainties of “wild” or “savage” capitalism and a re-organization of oligarchic institutions where political opportunism is the central currency.<sup>61</sup>

Describing this as an “initial stage”, they go on to point to a possible next stage:

But such a system produces its own limits and it is in the effort to contain ever-unravelling power and authority that a new regime will evolve. Thus we see the reassertion of those secular forces and interests forged around the old centralized state apparatus; not only the military and central bureaucracy, but also key political organizations such as Golkar and President Megawati’s PDI-P.<sup>62</sup>

In other words, in a further stage the old system will more or less simply reproduce itself. They have formulated their own version of a kind of an “end of history” paradigm for Indonesia: not the consumerist, liberal democracy that Fukiyama<sup>63</sup> wrote about but a predatory, “illiberal democracy”. As they conclude their summation, they drop altogether any consideration or study of the evolution of any factors that might affect the position of the popular classes. We must assume here also that their assertion of the weakness of the popular classes will also be permanent. This is why, presumably, any issue of the position those classes may or may not be developing is not part of the “primary question for Indonesia” nor is it significant in any of the “essential new patterns and dynamics of social, economic and political power” that have been allegedly “entrenched”.

It is worth considering for a moment the argumentation that underpins the Hadiz-Robison “end of history” perspective. One unstated idea that might be argued is embodied in their analysis that while capital rules, whatever reorganisation its rule may undergo does not

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<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Fukuyama, Francis, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York : Free Press, 1992.

amount to any significant qualitative change. Capital, which is more or less predatory in any circumstances, still rules. Nothing has changed in that regard. First, Suharto ruled, using political power to protect his clique's commercial interests from the "market". Now an oligarchy rules using political power to protect its commercial interests from the "market", though with less centralism and order, in this "initial stage". In a further stage, this will stabilise as the system somehow discovers its own limits.<sup>64</sup> This view amounts to saying that no significant change is possible except through a social revolution, i.e., only a removal of capitalism itself will see significant changes. Their analysis, however, also precludes this as a possibility, posing only that the "primary question" is whether the (neo-liberal) reformists will organise to get power.

They attempt to base their negation of the determining role of the mobilised popular classes empirically in the chapter "Disorganizing Civil Society." Its basic thesis is that civil society has been disorganised and is too weak to pose any alternative to the political projects supported by capital. This analysis, of course, avoids the fact that Suharto's authoritarianism was the preferred political form of almost all factions of capital (and still is today) but that they had to abandon it precisely under pressure from the mobilised popular classes, allowing the legal right to organise, mobilise and express opinions. The vast majority of the elite had resisted giving these rights for the previous 30 years.<sup>65</sup> So these popular forces did force the ruling class to adopt a new political project, even though not one that will finally solve their socio-economic justice problems. It is one that has massively reduced repression, however.

Very little space is accorded any assessment of the working class's and peasantry's — the vast majority of the population — political role in this discussion of civil society compared to that given to the "middle class reformers" and the "conservative bourgeoisie". In fact, even the discussion of "the working class and the peasantry" was a discussion of why these classes had not established a significant alliance with any middle class forces. Hadiz and Robison assert that where strong and radical working class movements found allies among

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<sup>64</sup> However, this idea stands in direct counter-position to a fundamental thesis of the early Robison work *The Rise of Capital*, where, it will be remembered, he argued that the change from the form of capitalism during the Soekarno period to the form of capitalism under Suharto was revolutionary.

<sup>65</sup> It should be noted here that these rights have not yet been extended to those Indonesians who adhere to Marxism-Leninism.

the middle class, they generally managed to overcome the resistance of the dominant classes to democratisation.<sup>66</sup>

Hadiz and Robison argue that no such alliance was established because the workers movement was not strong enough to attract interest from the middle class.<sup>67</sup> There is almost no assessment in the section of the sources, nature or contradictions and dynamics of the limitations in the working class's (and the peasantry's) ability to influence politics. Neither was there any consideration at all of the working class exercising any political influence on the course of development outside the framework of a traditional union movement. The limited empirical and analytical weight given to the largest social classes in the country reflects Hadiz and Robison's commitment to the Robisonian paradigm that the region is fully in the grip of a "capitalist revolution" and that only the internal politics of the capitalist class plays any determining role.

They also argue that this alliance did not exist, as was reflected in the absence of any middle class support for pro-labour or peasant reforms after the fall of Suharto.<sup>68</sup> This seems an odd statement when one of the first political changes to take place after the fall of Suharto was the ending of the suppression of independent labour and peasant organising. Workers and peasants did not come to state power, nor have they been able to develop quickly their strength using their new freedoms. However, the winning of such new freedoms is no small matter: death, torture and jail are no longer the systematic solution to worker activism and unionism. In fact, there are now openly socialist unions.<sup>69</sup>

Even if it were the case that after the fall of Suharto there was no operating worker-middle class alliance (assuming such an alliance is necessary or important), it does not at all follow that there was no such alliance before the fall of Suharto. In politics, alliances come and go depending on objective conditions and the needs of different parts of society. Later in this

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<sup>66</sup> Hadiz and Robison, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>69</sup> Many of the unions of the Aliansi Buruh Menggugat (Workers Challenge Alliance — ABM), including the Kongress Aliansi Serikat Buruh Indonesia (KASBI), have openly supported socialism and also advocate a workers government (i.e. the complete pushing aside of bourgeois dominance).

thesis, I will show that there was an active alliance between the popular classes (workers and peasants) and key middle class political elements. But it did not operate through unions or, indeed, any kind of permanent worker organisations, but involved the mobilisation of urban and rural workers through other mechanisms: mainly mass mobilisations connected to other aspects of political life, such as party life, though not necessarily through parties. When hundreds of thousands, or even more than a million, inhabitants of cities like Jakarta, Surabaya or Jogjakarta take part in mass mobilisations, it must be recognized that the majority of these masses are workers, either proletarians or semi-proletarians. Student mobilisations rarely went beyond 10 or 20 thousand students. In fact, I will argue later in this thesis that worker mobilisations led the way in the process of overthrowing Suharto.

Hadiz and Robison simply refocus elsewhere, internally within the capitalist class, to seek out what is the “primary question” and the “essential new pattern and dynamics of social, economic and political power”. But their analysis of this new pattern and dynamics leaves out the elite-mass relationship, both its confrontations with mass mobilisation and the dynamics that arise out of the competition to win public opinion, including in the context of elections. These have been and are the real arena of the political struggles that have ushered in change, as will be demonstrated later in the thesis. In Hadiz and Robison’s works, such processes have been, once again, negated.

### **The popular classes and transition analysis: Aspinall and opposition**

Hadiz and Robison explicitly counter-pose their approach to that of those who identify a transition taking place. Aspinall falls into this category. A perspective of transition immediately implies at least the prospect of change, unlike the Hadiz and Robison perspective. With transition and change as fundamental (at least on the surface) to his analysis, he has a greater tendency to give greater *consideration* to the role of the popular classes in processes of change. Ultimately, however, he also alienates these classes from the processes in which they did play a role. His analysis, while broader in the range of factors it considers than that of Hadiz and Robison, ends up almost equally negating the role that the mobilised classes played and play in Indonesian politics. Like Hadiz and Robison also, the way he analyses that role, including the way he analyses the definite limitations in the role of the popular classes, prevents him from being able to look at the processes which may, or may not, allow these limitations to be overcome.

Aspinall's main work in this regard is his *Opposing Suharto: Compromise, Resistance, and Regime Change in Indonesia*, published in 2005, but with much of the study being carried out during the 1990s, before the fall of Suharto. His work makes the clearest case for the role of popular mobilisation in the fall of Suharto and the end of authoritarian rule, while at the same time attempting to negate this reality in various ways. However, this negation has more obvious contradictions within it, as Aspinall is much more aware of the role of the mass movement. On occasion he also clearly formulates and identifies alternative processes, but does not pursue them.

Aspinall, referencing transition theorists such as O'Donnell and Schmitter, identifies two sides to the transition process, which he attempts to separate to some degree.<sup>70</sup> These are the processes of erosion of existing authoritarian power on the one hand and post-downfall "democratic construction" on the other hand. As his study focuses on the various forms of opposition that developed against Suharto during his rule, Aspinall has extensive evidence of the various processes of erosion of the New Order's exercise of repressive rule. Aspinall concludes in a number of places that it was indeed the opposition from below that resulted in the downfall of Suharto as a "society driven" (as distinct from an elite driven) process. Various forms of opposition had been able to inculcate a general "oppositional mood"<sup>71</sup> eroding legitimacy and, as it became more militant, raising the cost of governance. In assessing the impact of different forms of opposition, he firstly describes the mobilisational activities:

The first was the resurrection of mobilization as a normal feature of political life. Strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of public protest became far more frequent in the 1990s. In 1988, a single street march by a hundred university students was so unusual that it received extensive press coverage; by 1996, mobilization had become a commonplace mode of public expression. Even the major crackdown from the middle of that year only brought it to a temporary halt.

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<sup>70</sup> Aspinall cites O'Donnell, Guillermo, and Philippe C Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

<sup>71</sup> Aspinall tends to dissolve the concreteness of the mobilisations with the use of terms like "mood" or formulations such as "State versus society". Such terms lack precision; however, perhaps they do work as effective general descriptors or metaphors.



Protest was pioneered above all by students, peasants, and workers, although it was eventually practiced by a wide variety of groups.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to this first kind of opposition, Aspinall identifies two others. One was an extensive “associational life”, that is, an increase in the number of dissident, critical or advocacy organisations, some calling themselves non-government organisations (NGOs). Many of these organisations overlapped with (as well as sometimes constrained) mobilising politics. Aspinall sums up the nature of their activity with the formulation:

By the early 1990s, it was possible to discern the outlines of an increasingly vigorous associational life which was beginning to play important democratizing functions: contesting and containing state power, harboring critics of the regime, and enabling counter-hegemonic ideological production.<sup>73</sup>

The third area of “semi-opposition” identified by Aspinall was the opposition, usually framed within a general acquiescence to the regime, carried out within institutions that were part of the regime system, such as the officially permitted and highly controlled political parties.

Aspinall also recognised that the role of this opposition, especially the first and second kinds, was fundamental to the whole process of the fall of Suharto *and the transition* in the way he rejected the analysis that it was not opposition forces that overthrew Suharto but the economic crisis. He points out that a focus on the economic crisis does not explain “why Suharto’s resignation was followed by a democratic transition rather than by a reconstituted version of authoritarianism. Above all, an exclusive focus on the economic crisis fails to take into account the growth of opposition which preceded 1997.”<sup>74</sup> It was this opposition that “had been effective at inculcating an oppositional mood in society and in eroding the ideological bases of authoritarian rule.”<sup>75</sup> In what Aspinall called a “societal upsurge”, “social and political demands which had long been repressed were suddenly expressed. A spirit of

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<sup>72</sup> Aspinall, E, *Opposing Suharto: Compromise, Resistance, and Regime Change in Indonesia*, Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2005, pp. 254-5.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p 271.

protest spread across the country.” He adds that Vice-President Habibie, who succeeded Suharto, was able to stay in power with “3,200” demonstrations in “512” days only by “hastily embarking on democratic reform. He released political prisoners, loosened restrictions on labor unions and political parties, and dismantled press controls. His most far reaching step was to offer free and fair elections ...”<sup>76</sup>

Yet, in the same elaboration of this argument, Aspinall states: “... Indonesia’s dispersed and fragmented opposition had been unable to present a democratic alternative to authoritarian rule”. Did not shifting to a situation of free elections,<sup>77</sup> institution of freedom of the press and freedom to organise for trade unions, and release of political prisoners, represent a “democratic alternative to authoritarian rule”? Aspinall’s inability to conclude as a major thesis of his work that the mobilisation of the popular classes behind a set of demands for a political alternative was the major determining factor forces him to construct paradigms that reduce their role and in the process introduces confusion into his analysis. What he actually meant by “unable to present a democratic alternative” was that the forces of the opposition were not strong enough to take power themselves. As he published this book after both loyal opposition figures, Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Sukarnoputri, had indeed become president, it is clear also that his main assertion here is that the forces central to the mobilisational opposition were not able to take power.

In Aspinall’s analysis, the concessions forced from the elite — first, the abandonment of Suharto, and then Habibie’s concessions above — did not amount to “dramatic reform”, even though it represented what Aspinall in the same chapter called a *ruptura*, in which “democratization takes place via a rapid breakdown of the authoritarian regime, where the country experienced a societal upsurge”. Despite all the reforms that he mentions, this is soured by the fact that “the country remained afflicted by many problems which had characterized the Suharto period, including pervasive corruption and money politics and a politically assertive military”. Pervasive corruption and money politics (vote buying, buying political loyalty) are, however, common features of most parliamentary democratic systems

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<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> The formal rules for these elections were, in practice, very unrestrictive. The main restriction left over from the New Order was the ban on Marxist-Leninist parties. This ban, however, did not prevent a party like the People’s Democratic Party (PRD) participating in the elections.

in poor countries and common also in rich parliamentary democracies, though in different forms. An assertive military is also not uncommon in parliamentary democracies, whether in the form warned of by Eisenhower (military-industrial complex) in the United States or as an active power broker, such as in Turkey. The central problem of the Suharto period, dictatorship, had ended, and a very different set of processes were being put in place.

In any case, the fall of Suharto marked a sudden and very palpable retreat in political assertiveness of the military, which had hitherto forcefully opposed all the reforms embodied in Habibie's concessions. In fact, under Suharto it had been an active repressive power enabling a dictatorship. Within a few years after Habibie's concessions, the armed forces had lost all their allocated seats in parliament. In 2006, the process began of divesting them of all their businesses. By 2008, high profile ex-military leaders usually guaranteed financial backing and political support from powerful societal sections were heading political parties scoring less than 5% in the polls.<sup>78</sup>

Furthermore, corruption, money politics and "a politically assertive" military were not the primary characteristics of the New Order: these were systematic political repression and politically protected commercial monopolies by Suharto's inner circle. These fundamental characteristics were dissolved with the fall of Suharto. As Aspinall states in another place: Habibie could "preside over a reconstituted version of Suharto's government, but not a reconstituted version of Suharto's system".<sup>79</sup> The combination of regime personnel could be reconfigured, but the way they ruled, their system of rule, had to be ditched. However, even here Aspinall is wrong. Given Suharto's overwhelming central role in the government, a government where he is no longer present is surely something quite different from a "reconstituted version of Suharto's government".

Obscuring the fact that there was dramatic reform as part of the fall of Suharto, elevating negative features of the post-Suharto political and economic situation as proofs of no

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<sup>78</sup> For example, General Wiranto and General Prabowo, the two most powerful figures in the armed forces at the time of Suharto's fall, now head the Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat (Peoples Conscience Party – HANURA) and the Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Great Indonesia Party — GERINDRA). Neither has scored more than 5% in any poll by any survey group in Indonesia, or during the elections.

<sup>79</sup> Aspinall, *op. cit.*, 271.

fundamental change and confusing being able to present an alternative system with being able to seize power immediately are all consequences of the need to be able to state that popular mobilisation, while seeming to be central, was in fact not central — if it was, then the popular masses would be in government.

If the popular mobilisation was not the determining factor, what was a more determining factor? In the end, Aspinall argues that the most important factor which determined the way in which Suharto fell was Suharto himself. Aspinall argues that by adopting an increasingly personalistic sultanistic style of rule — i.e. less and less attempting to forge a coalition to rule — he forced the emergence of a more mobilisational opposition. According to Aspinall, he had lost the ability thereby to negotiate both any substantial reform and any process for his departure. In this analysis, the initiating factor shifts from any possible conscious agencies promoting mobilisational politics to the agency repressing such political practice. Mobilisational politics was generated by its suppression. In this argumentation, even the first initiation of mobilisational politics is located as a response to the sultanisation of Suharto's rule.<sup>80</sup> Aspinall writes:

*First* [my italics]... the most anti-establishment groups like students, intellectuals and already alienated dissidents began to mobilize. *Concurrently* [my italics] more unfocused and explosive discontent mounted among the lower classes.”<sup>81</sup>

Middle class layers, conservative establishment figures and ruling elite members followed in stages later. This whole process is described as a “splintering away” caused by a hardening of sultanistic rule. However, as Aspinall himself documents, the mobilising he describes as happening *first*, as well as the popular discontent surfacing at the same time, started *before* the sultanisation process he describes. He argues that this began after the period of “openness” in the early 1990s. He clearly identifies the first stage of mobilising beginning in

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<sup>80</sup> Here also Aspinall uses metaphor: the sultan. He is using the term to describe a situation in which Suharto increasingly rules, according to Aspinall, as a personal autocrat, not feeling the need to incorporate others into any decision-making or power-sharing processes. This is the image of the sultanic ruler in the Middle East or early Indonesia — although it is unlikely that any sultans ever ruled in such a manner, separate from organising coalitions of palace cliques and factions.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, p 270.

the late 1980s, before any sultanisation takes place. The so-called “sultanisation”, a narrowing of his elite support base and broader legitimacy, were, in fact, a product of the increasing mobilisation, which he felt the need to react to more harshly. This reality will become visible in the course of the analysis in later chapters of this thesis.

Aspinall is correct, like Hadiz and Robison, in describing the mass-based opposition as not strong enough to become the government or to end corruption, nor to completely eliminate any role in politics for the military, nor to end social injustice, poverty and other miseries. The problem arises when this reality is used to negate the role that popular mobilisation played in the major, qualitative changes that *did* take place, namely, the end of dictatorship and the considerable extension of formal political rights which formerly were not enjoyed at all. In the process of this negation, ironically, the initiative is shifted to precisely those forces that had to make concessions, instead of those mobilising to demand the concessions.

Aspinall does, however, provide one brief formulation of what might have been part of a different framework for his analysis:

There were [in 1998] few prospects of a serious overturning of the social order. The longer term implications of this situation were less propitious for democracy. The old New Order authoritarian coalition between state and the middle classes had broken down, but it had not yet been decisively replaced by a new democratic coalition uniting middle and lower-class groups. Tentative steps had been taken in this direction, but the lower classes remained largely unorganized ... lower class groups would have to engage in many future struggles to develop independent organizational capacities, win social and economic gains, and deepen the democratization process.<sup>82</sup>

Here, Aspinall presents a framework — though set out in an unelaborated bare minimum — for an analysis that could start to explain the dynamics of past developments and possible future trends. He states that “tentative steps” have been taken in the direction of replacing the “old New Order authoritarian coalition” but that the “lower class groups would have to engage in many future struggles”. In this paragraph, Aspinall provides the bare essentials of a class struggle analysis, although he keeps away from Marxist class analysis terminology,

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<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 264-65.

using vaguer terminology such as “lower class groups”. Much of his study is in fact about the struggles between the old New Order coalition and a new coalition still in formation. However, the study is not a study of that struggle, seeking to determine how it is proceeding, how is it affecting the course of political development in the country, what are the factors determining its twists and turns or where and how it might proceed further. Instead, this framework is mentioned only in passing, and a conclusion drawn, based on the fact that no social revolution has taken place, that this struggle was peripheral in the course of developments under study (the fall of Suharto and its aftermath). It led Aspinall to a conclusion with nothing to say about future political trends, with implications similar to the explicitly state conclusions of Hadiz and Robison. He ends his study, writing:

Indonesia’s democratic opposition had made a great achievement by forcing Suharto out of office. But by the time of Indonesia’s second *post-transition* [my italics] election in April 2004, there was widespread public belief that reform was exhausted and that Indonesia was mired in problems from which it might not escape for many years. Such was the legacy of thirty two years of coercion and semipluralism under Suharto’s New Order.<sup>83</sup>

In 2004, Indonesia was already “post-transition”. Possibility for further change was “exhausted” while the country was “mired” in problems. An approach that placed the ongoing struggle between classes — in Aspinall’s vaguer terminology, the old New Order authoritarian coalition and new coalition of middle and lower class groups — at the centre of the analysis would not only have analysed the 1990-2004 period more clearly but also provided a framework in which serious questions might have been posed about what might proceed next — unless history has indeed been exhausted.

### **‘Labour Politics’**

In a critique of Robison’s works, Indonesian historian and activist Hilmar Farid wrote: “The missing chapter” in Robison’s writings was then filled in by several other studies on the

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<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, p. 273.

Indonesian working class under the New Order”.<sup>84</sup> In his essay, Farid critiques Robison for failing to see capital as a relationship (i.e. with labour) and identifies this missing chapter as the study of the situation of labour. The major study Farid refers to is Hadiz’s *Workers and the State under the New Order*.<sup>85</sup> Farid himself does not comment on Hadiz’s work, continuing instead his critique of the gap in Robison’s work that the absence of any discussion of the situation of the working class represents. In some senses Farid’s critique tends to be a moral one, when he states: “What Robison called a ‘revolution’ was also a revolution in the way of life of a great many people who were forced to work under the commodity form”.<sup>86</sup> Farid’s moral critique also later introduces the issue of the violence the working class suffered. He positions this violence as a method of capital accumulation:

The wave of violence that wreaked Indonesia in 1965-6, apart from being a crime against humanity, is an example of the *ursprungliche Akkumulation* in action. It illustrated the other aspect of the “capitalist revolution” that Robison talks about. The mass killings were often accompanied by the theft of land and property and a condemning of the families that survived to a condition of “free labor”.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Farid, Hilmar, “The class question in Indonesian Social Sciences” in Hadiz and Dhakidae, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-184.

<sup>85</sup> Another major work in this areas is that on NGO-union relations in the dissertation of Michele Ford, *NGO as Outside Intellectual: A History of Non-Governmental Organizations’ Role in the Labour Movement*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wollongong, 2003. I am not commenting on this work as it does not attempt to draw any conclusions about the dynamics that determine the course of Indonesian politics in general. Ford confines her thesis conclusions to an assessment of possible changes in relations between what she calls “NGO intellectuals”, unions and workers. Ford also makes it explicit that she did not want to structure her analysis by contextualising labour in the New Order but rather in “the broader institution” of “organised labour”. Whether “organised labour” is a “broader institution” than Indonesian society is unclear, but in any case Ford’s approach also separates her analysis from any consideration of the participation of workers in political life outside of “organised labour”. This is also facilitated by concentrating her analysis on what she identifies as “non-revolutionary intellectuals”, i.e. those who have opted for separating trade unions from political struggle. As a consequence, the anti-dictatorship movement serves mainly as a backdrop to her analysis.

<sup>86</sup> Farid, *op. cit.*

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.* “*Ursprungliche Akkumulation*” means primitive accumulation.

While Farid later comments again on the violent repression of the working class, he is primarily concerned to see the capital-labour relationship as completely embodied in the commodity form itself. In this sense, he overlooks the struggle between the classes for state power as the ultimate location of the capital-labour contradiction and thereby fails to concretise his critique of Robison. Is it simply that Robison missed out on including a chapter (i.e. data) on the state of the working class and its level of exploitation? What exactly does Robison's analysis fail to explain? A key component of my argument is that *the fundamental content of actual existing class struggle between 1965 and 2001 was the struggle over the right to struggle, i.e. the right to mobilise*. Following chapters will document and analyse how this came to be the fundamental content of the struggle during this period and not the struggle to lessen direct economic exploitation — for example — through improving wages and conditions. As the following chapters will show, there were struggles over wages and conditions, but these were secondary in the course of political developments to the struggle between capital and labour, through different political agencies, over the right to mobilise, i.e. for political liberty.<sup>88</sup>

This framework is important because it also provides the context in which to ask questions about "labour politics". If struggles over wages and conditions are the starting point of an analysis, then there will be a tendency for questions about the state of trade unions and whether they have formed a labour party or initiated any other kind of social democratic project<sup>89</sup> to constitute the main investigation. This is the framework which, to one degree or other, dominates the approaches of Hadiz.<sup>90</sup> Both are concerned to analyse different phenomena in the context of assessing the development of a traditional labour movement. Finalising his writing in 1996, just before the anti-dictatorship movement starts to escalate, Hadiz attempts a concluding assessment of future possibilities:

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<sup>88</sup> The fundamental content of actually existing class struggle before 1965 was also not the immediate struggle for wages and conditions but for state power — see earlier comments on Robison's rejection of the New Order's coming to power as a counter-revolution.

<sup>89</sup> "Social democratic project" is the term used by Robison and Hadiz.

<sup>90</sup> For another assessment of Hadiz's analysis see Jeffrey Winters, "The Political Economy of Labour in Indonesia", *Indonesia*, No. 70, October 2000.



Continuing industrialisation<sup>91</sup> will ensure the presence of a growing and more aware constituency for the labour movement. There is no doubt that this constituency will continue to present pressures which may not be easily accommodated within the framework of exclusionary corporatism.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, though the employment of coercion and violence is still a strategy that the state can confidently use against organized labour, it will likely become a less viable one in the future. This in turn will affect business confidence in the coercive force of the state apparatus fixated on political stability, thus prompting more reformist inclinations in the business community in relation to labour unrest.<sup>93</sup>

Hadiz then offers two possible future scenarios. In one, the “working class in Indonesia can eventually usher in a form of accommodation that embodies some of the more inclusionary features of the populist model”, although he offers no examples of what these “inclusionary features” might be. In the other, there is a “more-or-less permanent tension” where labour is “unable to win any concessions from state and capital”.<sup>94</sup>

In the quote above, Hadiz formulates the possibility of continuing violence and coercion as being deployed against “organised labour”. He was right to assess that such a deployment of coercion may become less possible, but he was right for the wrong reason. It was not “organised labour” that subverted the possibility of continuing repression but the escalation of the mobilisation of unorganized labour, unorganised in the sense of not being organised through trade unions. The escalating mass actions between June 1996 and May 1998, described in later Chapters, indicate that it was *aksi massa*, organised through action committees or as the result of mass agitation, that created the crisis for the regime during those years.

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<sup>91</sup> Hadiz asserts throughout his book that Indonesia is industrialising despite the fact that less than 10% of the workforce is based in large or medium firms.

<sup>92</sup> This is Hadiz’s term for the New Order’s package of repressive policies, set out in Chapter 5 of his book.

<sup>93</sup> Hadiz, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

Hadiz's approach, in fact, assumes that somehow it is a natural tendency for labour, as a "constituency", primarily to seek representation in the form of the trade union. Trade unions, however, are essentially organisations for mobilisation, though usually in the very restricted arena of increasing the price paid for labour as a commodity. Even this form of mobilisation was suppressed under the New Order, as Hadiz also documents.<sup>95</sup> The level of repression, which this thesis also describes in Chapter 2, posits democracy and the freedom to struggle as the central question of the day. In his survey of the currents within the worker organising arena in the early 1990s, Hadiz locates those responding directly to this central question — the worker groups associated with the PRD — as the "radicals". Of course, in the original sense of the word — meaning going to the roots of the matter — this is a correct evaluation. However, Hadiz uses the term to denote a group whose radicalism "may isolate it from the wider labour movement".<sup>96</sup> As Chapters 4 and 5 will show, the *aksi massa* movement, which the "radicals" pioneered, grew to a much larger phenomenon, involving more people than the trade unions did during that period.

It is interesting that Hadiz clearly senses that the radicalism of the PRD-associated union, the Pusat Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia (PPBI)<sup>97</sup>, was more connected to their idea that unions should be involved in the struggle for democracy more than, for example, a struggle for a socialist or communist society. He does point out that the PPBI argued for a "socialist" society, noting that this was referred to as a society "without oppression". Later he quotes from a PPBI-connected writer arguing for politically conscious trade unions. Radicalism is defined as being concerned with the political struggle for democracy, while the non-radicals were the "wider" movement concerned with better wages and conditions,<sup>98</sup> or, at best,

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<sup>95</sup> *ibid.* pp. 104-109. For another documentation, see Lambert, Rob, *Authoritarian State Unionism in New Order Indonesia*, Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, Working Paper No. 25, 1993.

<sup>96</sup> Hadiz, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>97</sup> In the early 1990s, the main trade union connected with the PRD was called the Pusat Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia (PPBI). It later became the Front Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia (FNPBI).

<sup>98</sup> Non-radical consciousness is not simply the result of the influence of moderate union leaderships or "NGO intellectuals", as Ford documented. Studies of individual workplaces and individual strikes can indicate a considerable mix of consciousness as workers assess their plight at any one moment. See for example, Ratna Saptari, "Menulis tentang sebuah pemogokan buruh di Tangerang: kaitan antara

improved laws for representation in negotiations. It is not surprising that the trade unions Hadiz describes as conservative, moderate or reformist did not play a major role in the crisis of the regime nor were present in an organised form in the final days of the mobilisations that forced Suharto from power.<sup>99</sup>

Hadiz argues that the radicals were inspired by the history of political unionism in Indonesia. This is no doubt true.<sup>100</sup> However, it is also worth noting that during the early 1990s more activists, and especially those ending up in Hadiz's radical camp, were studying the classical works of Marxism.<sup>101</sup> During the 1990s, many works were translated into Indonesian, including works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Castro, Guevara and Australian Marxists as well as documents of the Communist International (COMINTERN). Because of the ban on Marxism and Leninism, very few direct quotes found their way into political writings; however it is clear that Lenin's writings on the need to achieve the maximum extent of political liberty so that there can be an open struggle for socialism played a particularly important role. Most influential was Lenin's *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, written in 1905. It was Lenin's writings during the period of the height of tsarist repression and the first revolutionary wave against that repression that were the most interesting for the activists.

In *Two Tactics* Lenin is on the warpath against those in Russia at the time who belittled the struggle for democracy. He commented on a resolution of the Bolshevik party which read:

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dimensi public dan privat", in Henk Schulte Nordholt, *Bambang Purwanto and Ratna Saptari, Perspektif Baru Penulisan Sejarah Indonesia*, Jakarta : Yayasan Obor Indonesia, KITLV, Pustaka Larasan, 2008. Such studies reveal how constraining the circumstances of proletarian life are on the development of consciousness when there is little political upheaval or motion confronting this situation.

<sup>99</sup> One moderate union, the Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (SBSI) led by Mokhtar Pakapahan, did have one experience with mass action in strikes that the SBSI was marginally involved in in Medan. See Chapter 7 and also Hadiz, p. 151.

<sup>100</sup> For analysis of the remembering of past radical history on developments in the 1980s and 1990s, see "Memory" in Max Lane, *Unfinished Nation: Indonesia before and after Suharto*, London : Verso, 2008.

<sup>101</sup> For a sampling of the Marxist writing that has become available in Indonesian, see the website **indomarxist**. This is an Indonesian-maintained site hosted by "Pemuda Sosialis". This appears to be a fictitious group — spreading Marxism-Leninism was banned in the 1990s and still is in 2009.

“both the direct interests of the proletariat and those of its struggle for the ultimate aims of socialism require the fullest possible measure of political freedom, and, consequently, the replacement of the autocratic form of government by the democratic republic”<sup>102</sup> arguing that it was also correct for the party congress not to discuss the ultimate “conquest of power” because “the political situation in Russia does not turn such questions as immediate issues”.<sup>103</sup>

It was this interest in moving from an autocratic form of government to a democratic republic that provided the framework for the analysis being developed by the radicals. However, it was not only the goal of a democratic government that was of interest but also the method. In the same work, Lenin emphasised:

On the other hand, it is more advantageous to the working class for the necessary changes in the direction of bourgeois democracy to take place by way of revolution and not by way of reform, because the way of reform is one of delay, procrastination, the painfully slow decomposition of the putrid parts of the national organism. It is the proletariat and the peasantry that suffer first of all and most of all from that putrefaction. The revolutionary path is one of rapid amputation, which is the least painful to the proletariat, the path of the immediate removal of what is putrescent, the path of least compliance with and consideration for the monarchy and the abominable, vile, rotten and noxious institutions which go with it.<sup>104</sup>

It was this idea of a “democratic revolution”, as in the title of the article, that is echoed in many of the writings and statements of the PRD and the adoption of the mass action strategy. It is also this article that sets the framework for the mobilising relationship between the proletariat and semi-proletarian masses, which mobilised together between 1996 and 1998 and again in 2001, as described in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Lenin not only argued against the prioritisation of economic demands (wages, conditions etc.) as well as against

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<sup>102</sup> V.I. Lenin, “Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution”, in *Selected Works* Vol 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p 431.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, p. 432.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, p. 453.

“the absurd, semi-anarchist ideas about giving immediate effect to the maximum program, and the conquest of power for a socialist revolution”<sup>105</sup> and for the prioritisation of the struggle for political liberty, but also against those who wanted to impose a narrow approach to class politics. All of the oppressed classes would be advantaged by the winning of political liberty; thus the democratic revolution was indeed a “*people’s* revolution” [his italics], echoing the resonance of the term “*rakyat*” in Indonesia. He wrote in *Two Tactics*:

Yes, the people’s revolution. Social-Democracy has fought, and is quite rightly fighting against the bourgeois-democratic abuse of the word “people.” It demands that this word shall not be used to cover up failure to understand class antagonisms within the people. It insists categorically on the need for complete class independence for the party of the proletariat. However, it does not divide the “people” into “classes” so that the advanced class will become locked up within itself, will confine itself within narrow limits, and emasculate its activity for fear that the economic rulers of the world will recoil; it does that so that the advanced class, which does not suffer from the halfheartedness, vacillation and indecision of the intermediate classes, should fight with all the greater energy and enthusiasm for the cause of the whole the people, at the head of the whole the people.<sup>106</sup>

So Hadiz’s radicals were radicals because of their commitment to the struggle for political liberty through the method of mass action, the basic strategy of revolution advocated by Lenin and the COMINTERN and by Soekarno in the anti-colonial revolution. As the following chapters will show, the Indonesian capitalist class and its political elite had strong instincts as to the danger of this approach, having only narrowly escaped demise in 1965. As Chapter 3 will show, they built a whole new political edifice whose central pillar was the suppression of mass action.

#### Levels of class consciousness and political conditions

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<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, p. 435.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*, p. 503. It is interesting that in Hilmar Farid’s essay quoted earlier, he critiques the PKI for being un-Marxist for also adopting the idea of “people” as distinct from class. Farid, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

An approach to the politics of the working class, while viewed *primarily* as political activity to achieve some specific social and economic advances of workers, will continue to prove inadequate. This will be especially the case in a political environment where the right to mobilise (i.e. the right to struggle) has been suppressed. The measurement of the gains made by the involvement of hundreds of thousands of workers in political action,<sup>107</sup> even without unions, cannot simply be made in terms of wages and conditions or negotiation rights, but rather in terms of the extent to which political liberty has replaced repression. When Hadiz attempts to sum up the advances of the labour movement by stating that “labour organizing has been much more successful” despite the economic crisis diminishing the “bargaining position of workers”, he locks in his analysis of “labour politics”, defining it as primarily basic trade union politics. This approach underestimates the advances made through the very replacement of repression by political liberty.<sup>108</sup> The focus away from the political organising (as distinct from “labour organising”) of the working class reduces to banality any conclusions that flow from the analysis. Thus in both his book and 2001 article, the conclusion is simply that “A poorly organized working class is repressed or, worse, ignored.”<sup>109</sup> Apart from the questionable empirical issue as to whether it is worse to be ignored than repressed, the analysis leaves out any discussion of large scale mobilisation involving working people, just because they were not a part of “labour organising” but

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<sup>107</sup> One writer who more explicitly negates the working class, although in shorter essay pieces, is Olle Tornquist. In his “Labour and democracy” in Stanley Adi Prasetyo *et al* (ed), *Indonesia’s Post-Soeharto Democracy Movement*, Jakarta : Demos, 2004, he writes: “under the New Order there were hardly any links at all , not even in terms of attempts at expanding general interest in resisting authoritarianism and the lack of freedom to organise into general demands for democracy. The specific point, then, is that there were special dynamics behind this which explain much of why labour failed to play a vital role in the rebirth of democracy in the country” (p. 137). He is able to ignore the mass participation of the proletariat and semi-proletariat in the mass actions between 1989 and 1998 and then again in 1998 because the links he states “hardly exist at all” are defined as links between “unionism and politics” (p. 136). Other forms of links between workers and politics, such as involvement in mass actions and protest committees and via mass agitation are ignored in this approach.

<sup>108</sup> Vedi Hadiz, “New Organising vehicles in Indonesia”, in Hutchinson, Jane and Andrew Brown, *Organising Labour in Global Asia*, London : Routledge, 2001, p. 123.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, p. 124.

rather part of temporary, but ongoing over time, mass mobilisations around issues of political democracy.<sup>110</sup>

These issues have an important significance regarding levels and forms of class consciousness. At the height of a full-scale social revolution, class conscious is raised to the level where a majority of the working class has a sharp understanding of the character of the capital – labour relationship and can envisage even a working class state power. In conditions of relatively little class conflict, working class consciousness can be reduced to understanding the necessity of unity for the conduct of ‘collisions’ with capital simply over the price that will be paid per hour for labour. In some other conditions, such as where political liberty has been suppressed, including the suppression of both the right to advocate collective struggle over wages and conditions as well the actual organisation of collective struggle, the dominant form of political consciousness likely to develop as the political content of working class consciousness is a democratic consciousness. This is the essence of the arguments by Lenin quoted earlier in this chapter. Within this form of consciousness, there are also different possible levels, reflected in to what extent the working class will mobilize to win full democracy by revolutionary means or not.

This thesis analyses the course of political developments in different periods in Indonesia to show that the mass mobilisations of the popular classes and the crisis they create has been the determining factor in those developments. In pursuing this course, I have not assumed that such mobilisations need somehow to take the form of “labour organising” nor that the extent to which labour organising or trade unions have developed are a key criterion for measuring the gains made through the political activity of the working class. Such advances can be better measured by identifying the actual content of class struggle at any particular period, such as in the period 1949-65, the immediate struggle for state power and the ability to shape Indonesia and between 1965 and 2001, the struggle to win the maximum extent of political liberty, i.e. the freedom to struggle through mobilisation. I will come back to the issue of what gains have been made in the Conclusion to this thesis.

### **Bringing back class (struggle)**

While by no means exhausting all the political history writing on Indonesia, it has been the works of Feith, Robison, Robison and Hadiz and Aspinall that have provided sufficient in-depth studies grappling with significant periods of Indonesian political history to enable them to present detailed arguments for what they think are the “primary questions” for political developments in Indonesia.<sup>111</sup> I have not identified anything among the less in-depth materials or from other disciplines that either directly challenges or provides a significant variation on the analytical frameworks that I have identified in Feith, Robison, Hadiz and Aspinall. In the course of this thesis, I will refer, however, to works that contribute to breaking new empirical ground outside the emphasis that flows from these frameworks. This includes several Indonesian writers as well as non-Indonesian researchers. These include Kees Van Dijk<sup>112</sup> and Munafrizal Manan<sup>113</sup>.

The coming chapters of this thesis will try to present an alternative analysis that places class struggle — i.e. the struggle for political power between classes — and the use of mass mobilisation as the political weapon of the popular classes at the centre of the analytical explanation. The extent of the development of a mass action strategy at any one time — noting Soekarno’s warning that mass action is not simply massive actions but is tied to a conscious purpose (i.e. has an ideology) — will also be key in explaining the extent of success or failure of the popular classes in their use of this method of struggle.

The argument will be presented in two parts. The first section will provide an analysis, reinterpreting available materials on the rise of Soekarnoism in the late 1950s and early 1960s and its suppression after 1965 as part of the coming to power of General Suharto. The thesis will argue that the political system established by General Suharto was a direct response to the advance of the mass action strategy of the popular classes before 1965 and, indeed, was a system built around institutionalisation of the suppression of any kind of mass action politics.

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<sup>112</sup> Van Dijk, Kees, *A Country in Despair: Indonesia between 1997 and 2001*, KITLV, 2002.

<sup>113</sup> Munafrizal Mana, *Gerakan Rakyat Melawan Elit*, Resist Book, 2005.



The second part, based on substantial original materials, will look at how the re-emergence of mass action politics 25 years after its suppression, as part of a conscious strategy, was at the centre of the processes that led to the end of the system established by Suharto. It will also examine how the lopsided development of mass action politics, i.e. its development with a weak ideological framework, is at the centre of the extreme fragmentation that is a characteristic of Indonesian political life today and also is key to explaining the stagnation of the mass action movement between 1998 and 2008.

## Chapter 2

### ***Aksi massa* and the New Order: Counter-revolution against mass politics**

In his final essays on Indonesian politics, Feith included Suharto's Indonesia as an example of a country where:

*"all of them*<sup>1</sup> [the regimes] were established as a defensive reaction against the political mobilization of lower class elements and all of them set out early to create an attractive atmosphere for foreign firms".<sup>2</sup>

Here he is referring to the process of radicalization — "the political mobilisation of lower class elements" — that developed during the fifteen years after the end of the guerrilla war against the Dutch and which sharpened dramatically between 1960 and 1965. As argued in the previous chapter, this kind of analysis negated the basic tenets of Feith's earlier works, ideas which he did not develop further or apply in any critique of his own earlier work.

This chapter will explore and develop a similar proposition as regards Indonesia: that what became known as the "New Order" was established and consolidated precisely as a "reaction against the political mobilisation of lower class elements" and that its character also flowed from this fundamental reality. This will mean presenting an overview of political developments in the 1960s, both before and after the events of 1965. This section will base itself on the major secondary works covering this period.

#### **Radicalisation**

The nationalist movement before 1945 was explicitly committed to the establishment of a new Indonesian nation and state: Indonesia Merdeka (Free Indonesia) was the hegemonic slogan in the movement. The political organisation and mobilisation of masses of people between 1909 and 1945 was increasingly explicitly oriented to this. After independence, the

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<sup>1</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>2</sup> See reference in Introduction.

struggle between political parties, and the class interests their leaderships represented, was essentially a struggle over what kind of country and society Indonesia would be.<sup>3</sup> Despite the deep antagonisms that were brought to the fore, this struggle also intensified the sense of Indonesian identity growing within society. What kind of society would Indonesia be?<sup>4</sup> This was how political debate posited the central issue before the whole people. Even movements that presented themselves as partially responding to regional grievances, such as the PERMESTA movement, presented their solutions to these grievances within the framework of Indonesia. Islamic fundamentalist currents, such as those based among such minority tendencies in Aceh, Sunda (West Java) and South Sulawesi, all also proposed an Islamic Indonesia.<sup>5</sup>

Whether Islamic, federalist, social democratic or socialist, all of the political streams were struggling for Indonesia to be created in their image. This crossed ethnic and traditional cultural boundaries and was a part of the foundation of the process of nation formation. There were no serious attempts to establish local parties: all major ideological streams attempted to build national parties.

At the same time, a different division was being sharpened. A difference quickly emerged that was reflected in the question of whether the national revolution had been completed in 1945-49 with the formal establishment of the independent Indonesian state. In the period after 1949, Soekarno and the organised Left, found mainly in the PKI and the left wing of the PNI,<sup>6</sup> took the view that the revolution had not been completed.<sup>7</sup> Their view was that the

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<sup>3</sup> Aspects of this struggle have been discussed in Chapter 1 in the discussion of the works of Herbert Feith. Little work on the 1950-65 period adopts the framework of there being a struggle for the nature of society and state, i.e. what kind of Indonesia.

<sup>4</sup> A more recent 2008 work that attempts a history of the idea of Indonesia from the early colonial time onwards and which attempts to document some of the contestations around this question is Elson, R.E., *The Idea of Indonesia: A History*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Cribb, Robert, *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia*, London : The Scarecrow Press, 1992, p. 114.

<sup>6</sup> There are, as yet, no works looking at the left movement as a whole for this period, and no studies of such left parties as Partai Indonesia (Partindo), nor Angkatan Komunis Muda (AKOMA). There are two major works on the PKI (Mortimer, Hindley) and one on the PNI (Rocamora). Herb Feith's articles on the period, cited in the previous chapter, have been particularly influential.

<sup>7</sup> See the very explicit quotes from Soekarno and Hatta respectively in the previous chapter.

economy was still in the grip of Dutch and general Western imperial interests and that a strong national (i.e. commonly shared) culture and character had not been fully developed.<sup>8</sup> This view was opposed by the army, the right wing of the PNI and the MASYUMI, who sought cooperation with the West and its corporations and who wanted an end to the political mobilisation of workers and peasants, especially as the latter were demanding nationalisation of more foreign enterprises, a role in the management of state-owned corporations and distribution of land from landowners to tenant farmers and the landless.<sup>9</sup>

There was also growing support for a more active alignment with the non-aligned and socialist bloc in world politics. The Soekarno-PKI alliance supported the Vietnamese revolution, developed a diplomatic alliance with the People's Republic of China and began a campaign against the formation of Malaysia while Britain and the Malayan elite did not allow a referendum in Sabah and Sarawak on their incorporation into Malaysia. A large campaign of mobilisations against Britain and Malaysia was supported by millions of people.<sup>10</sup>

The foundation of nation formation, especially at the cultural level, namely mobilisational political struggle, was a deeply contradictory process. It deepened commitment to the concept of an Indonesian nation but reflected deep divisions over what kind of country the still-to-be-established Indonesian nation and country should be. There was an ideological civil war over the fate of the nation, a civil war that was a basic element in the completion of the national revolution. Just as in other great civil wars involved in the creation of nations, the two sides in this war were anchored to basic class interests. Political mobilisation was more and more propelled by the energies of the proletariat and peasantry mobilising behind demands that they saw as reflecting their interests and behind a political leadership

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<sup>8</sup> The concept of *kepribadian nasional* ("national character") emerged and was energetically advocated by Soekarno. The need to develop a *kepribadian nasional* was accepted broadly on both left and right.

<sup>9</sup> While this was a constant theme in Soekarno's speeches, it was presented eclectically as part of his general campaign to introduce new political concepts. A more systematised analysis, though partially borrowed (from Mao Tsetung) analysis is in D.N. Aidit's, *Masyarakat Indonesia dan Revolusi Indonesia (Soal-soal pokok revolusi Indonesia)*, Jakarta, 1965. One summary of the ideological aspects of Indonesian communism under Soekarno can be found in Mortimer, 1974.

<sup>10</sup> Cribb, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

embodied in the alliance<sup>11</sup> between President Soekarno and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).<sup>12</sup> This was reflected in the incredible growth in the membership of the PKI and the other main Soekarnoist organisation, the Indonesian National Party (PNI), in the years before 1965. By 1965, the PKI and its mass organisations were claiming a total membership of 25 million.<sup>13</sup> The PNI also had several million members.<sup>14</sup> This 25 million plus represents a massive proportion of the adult population: it was more than half of the 37 million voting population of just ten years before and probably more than half of the 55 million voting population recorded in 1971.<sup>15</sup>

Ideologically, and reflecting upon the process of national identity, Soekarnoism itself had started to win a position alongside the concept of Indonesia as the most popular basis for conceiving of the completion of the revolution. During the 1950s, left and right, Islamic and secular, unitary and federalist all formulated their ideas as an answer as to what kind of Indonesia should come into being. Indonesia was the commonly shared central concept. The rebellions against the central government in the late 1950s, stemming partly from regional

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<sup>11</sup> The relationship between Sukarno and the PKI, between Sukarno and individual members of the PKI leadership, and the relationship between each of these two and the millions who joined mass organizations, and how they intermeshed has still not been adequately studied. The closed nature of the PKI's organization meant that there are few documentary materials available to expose differentiations inside the party. All the key figures were killed. Also, given the passage of time, it is the task of a kind of speculative analysis to assess who had the biggest influence, or what kind of influences were exerted, in convincing more than 20 million people to join left mass organizations in the early sixties: Sukarno or the PKI leadership or the specificity of the combination?

<sup>12</sup> The mobilisation of a movement behind this PKI-Soekarno alliance was also reflected in the development of the institutions of the PKI. See McVey, Ruth, "Teaching modernity: the PKI as an educational institution", in *Indonesia*, 50, October 1990, pp. 5-27. For conservative but well-documented writing on the growth of this alliance, see the various writings of Justus Van Der Kroef and Arnold Bracken, listed in the thesis bibliography.

<sup>13</sup> For statistics on the membership of the PKI and its mass organisations, see Hindley, Donald, *The Communist Party of Indonesia, 1951-1963*, Berkeley, 1964; also Mortimer, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

<sup>14</sup> On the Indonesian National Party in this period, see Rocamora, Joel, *Nationalism in Search of an Ideology: the Indonesian Nationalist Party, 1945-65*, Quezon City : Philippine Centre for Asian Studies, University of the Philippines, 1975.

<sup>15</sup> On the 1955 elections, see Feith, *op. cit.*, 1974; for the 1971 elections, see Ward, Ken, *The 1971 Elections in Indonesia: An East Java Case Study*, Clayton, 1974.

discontents, still finally took the form of establishing a Provisional Revolutionary Government of Indonesia. The trend was not towards secession.

During the 1960s, differing ideas about the future started to be formulated as either false or genuine Soekarnoism. Even those most opposed to the direction and character of mobilisational politics established themselves as, for example, a *Body in Support of Soekarnoism*.<sup>16</sup> All political forces adopted the vocabulary of “finishing the revolution”, of socialism, of being “progressive revolutionary” — at least in their open discourses.

This was not the result of totalitarian censorship or central state control. In the 1960s, the state apparatus itself was a central site of the sharpest possible conflict. The closest structure to a so-called “hard state apparatus” was the armed forces, whose leadership was in fact more and more opposed to mobilisational politics and to the left. The army leadership had even established its own organization, the Joint Secretariat for Functional Groups (Sekber GOLKAR) to propagate a form of socio-political organisation that eschewed both mobilisation and ideological conflict.<sup>17</sup> Even so, the armed forces officer corps was divided between left and right, as was shown in September-October, 1965 when it was revealed that there was extensive support for Soekarno among them.<sup>18</sup>

The force propelling all groups to adopt the left language of national revolution was the growing popularity of these ideas and the level of mobilisation of the mass of the people. The membership numbers of the PKI and PNI underline this reality. The PKI and its mass organisations claimed a membership of 27 million in August 1965. Moreover, there was a deep level of participation in this political life, which gave it extra strength, fusing together the development of a national cultural outlook with a specific political outlook. One manifestation of this participation was the explosion in availability of reading material,

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<sup>16</sup> Cribb, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>17</sup> See Reeve, David, *GOLKAR of Indonesia: an alternative to the party system*, Kuala Lumpur : Oxford University Press, 1985.

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed review of some of these politics, see Roosa, John, *Pretext for mass murder: the September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'etat in Indonesia*, Madison, Wis. : University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.

especially newspapers. In 1965, when Suharto came to power there were at least 160 newspapers.<sup>19</sup>

As tension increased, especially during 1964 and into 1965, the army arrested members of the PKI, especially farmers involved in leading occupations of land due for land reform.<sup>20</sup> After five assassination attempts on Soekarno in the late '50s and early '60s, and rumours of possible military coups and similar plots against Soekarno, Soekarno also agreed to the detention of opponents who were accused of cooperation with U.S. intelligence agencies. Although these mutual repressive actions even further heightened tensions, the acts of repression were not systematic, but ad hoc and chaotic. Soekarno, in fact, did not have control over the repressive apparatus, namely the army, police and courts, which were controlled by his enemies.

The real terror was that of being marginalised by opposing ideas growing in active support among the population. This did threaten, at some future point, possible loss of the dominant position in various associations and unions as well as in state institutions, including in educational institutions. Two leading figures from the intellectual right lost their positions in universities and the state radio organisation in this period.<sup>21</sup> A manifesto opposing the mobilisation of art and culture for political purposes, the *Manifes Kebudayaan*, (MANIKEBU - Cultural Manifesto), was issued by anti-left writers. This was banned on the initiative of Minister for Education and Culture Prijono, a member of the centrist and virulently anti-communist Murba Party.

Between 1962 and 1965, the Soekarno-PKI alliance gained more and more support, isolating its opposition, who increasingly turned to the army for protection. By 1965, the prospects of the Soekarno-PKI alliance coming to power were very great.<sup>22</sup> The pro-capitalist political parties had lost all momentum. Two — the MASYUMI and PSI — had been outlawed for

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<sup>19</sup> Cribb, *op. cit.*, p. 300.

<sup>20</sup> See Mortimer, *op. cit.*, Chapter 7.

<sup>21</sup> H.B. Jassin was dismissed from the University of Indonesia and Taufiq Ismail was dismissed from his position in the state radio.

<sup>22</sup> This is an assessment based on the rapid growth in size of these forces compared with the opposing forces. However, there was no clear mechanism for any transfer of governmental power, while no firm decision had been made to hold new elections.

participation in the unpopular and easily defeated 1956-57 armed rebellion, although their mass organisations and newspapers were not suppressed.<sup>23</sup> Figures from these parties also continued to hold positions at the local government level, especially in the governing committees established as part of the martial law structure. The PNI was undergoing a virtual split as left-wing forces gained greater support among the PNI's peasant and lower middle class base, leaving an isolated and weak right wing. The rural village-based Islamic organisation, with its strong ties to landowners, the Nahdatul Ulama, adapted to the national trend, accommodating to Soekarno's vocabulary (while inculcating its militia with an anti-left perspective).

At the level of national governmental power, both nationally and in the provinces, however, the growing Left alliance, comprising Soekarno, the PKI and the left wing of the PNI, was a minority. While Soekarno was president, he did not have the power to form a cabinet based on the alliance of pro-Soekarno and pro-left forces. He was constrained by the knowledge of the armed forces officer corps majority's hostility to such a development. The cabinet comprised a coalition of centrist and right-wing politicians from the PNI, the Murba Party, Nahdatul Ulama and from the armed forces. PKI leaders Aidit and M. Lukman were ex-officio members of the cabinet due to their position as deputy speakers of the Provisional Peoples Consultative Assembly, but they were not given ministries to head. Any attempt to shift the balance of power in the cabinet in a leftward direction held the potential to provoke a reaction from the armed forces, whose officer corps was dominated by anti-left officers. The other important arena was the parliament. Soekarno had dissolved the parliament elected in the 1955 general elections and appointed a new one. However, in this process, he had gone out of his way to be "representative", even reducing the representation of the PKI. The pro-Soekarno left forces in the parliament were in a minority. They were forced to accept watered down versions of some of the legislation they had championed, such as new agrarian laws, calling for the redistribution of land from large landowners to landless peasants.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Cribb, *op. cit.*, p. 362, p. 368 for basic information on the PRRI and Permesta rebellions.

<sup>24</sup> The Agrarian Law was first discussed in the Supreme Advisory Council which revealed a division between a radical bloc, based on the PKI and the PNI, and a conservative bloc, based on the Islamic parties. In the parliament, the law could get through only via the intervention of Soekarno proposing a compromise, in which the law would be implemented in stages. See Mortimer, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-285.



A political victory for the Soekarno-PKI alliance could come with nothing less than a deepening of the revolution, a complete displacement of current state power. The PKI leadership itself had developed the concept of “the state with two aspects” in which it posited that there were “pro-people” and “anti-people” elements in the state apparatus and that the “anti-people” elements had to be removed.<sup>25</sup> Soekarno also gave support to this perspective through his support for the “retooling” of corrupt and conservative bureaucrats out of the state apparatus. In the “retooling” context, the PKI identified as primary targets the “*kabir*” — capitalist bureaucrats — primarily army officers who had gained control of nationalised enterprises and associated government departments and institutions.

“Retooling” was not the only policy s aimed at the enemy within the state apparatus. Soekarno, the left PNI and the PKI also supported the program of “NASAKOMisation” of both the civil service and the armed forces. NASAKOMisation meant placing leading personnel from each of the nationalist (*nasionalis*), religious (*agama*) and communist (*komunis*) political streams into key positions in the civil service and the armed forces.

Support for a socialist direction — for nationalisation of foreign business, for land reform, workers participation in management and cooperation with the socialist states and the non-aligned bloc — was overwhelming at the mass level, but isolated within the state apparatus. The struggle over the nature of the new national entity became more and more a struggle between a mobilised movement of the popular classes led by the Soekarno-PKI alliance<sup>26</sup> and an increasingly politically isolated alliance of political parties, representing the interests of landowning and business groups, and under the leadership of elements that were strong within the state apparatus, particularly the army.

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<sup>25</sup> See Mortimer, *op. cit.*, *passim*. For a recent critique of the theory of the state with two aspects from an Indonesian leftist writer, see Imam Soedjono, *Yang Berlawan: Membongkar Tabir Pemalsuan Sejarah PKI*, Yogyakarta : Resist Books, 2006, pp. 272-275.

<sup>26</sup> For an early Marxist critique on the PKI alliance with Soekarno written from outside Indonesia, see *The Catastrophe in Indonesia: Three Articles on the Fatal Consequences of Communist Party Policy*, New York : Merit Publishers, 1966. The publication contains brief essays by Ernest Mandel and T. Soedarso and a statement by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. The thrust of its analysis was a critique of what it saw as an uncritical stance towards Soekarno and an illusion in an alliance with the bourgeoisie which Mandel (as well as the PKI) saw as represented by Soekarno.

Several things had become intertwined. The activity — mass mobilisation political struggle, the post-independence *pergerakan* — that had been spreading the vocabulary, ideas and methods of the new national culture was also the activity through which political (and social class) interests were struggling for sway over completing the formation of the new Indonesian nation and state.<sup>27</sup> It is crucial to keep reminding oneself here that Indonesia as a nation, a national social formation, had not yet been completely established in either 1945 or 1949. It was a nation in process of formation. The huge political mobilisations were not taking place in the aftermath of the completion of a national revolution, when the nation, in all its aspects, had been formed. These mobilisations were taking place as an integral part of the struggle for the nation.

Protection of the existing social order, including the new privileges of the military business managers caste, became intertwined with opposition to mobilisational politics in general. This was reflected in the struggle around another slogan of the period: “Politik adalah panglima” (politics is in command). The Soekarno-PKI alliance was proposing a reorganisation of politics and society requiring the removal from the state apparatus of conservative personnel and requiring a redistribution of power that would be constituted through a series of changes in the political format. This would involve NASAKOMisation, worker participation in state-owned enterprises, distribution of land from large landowners and the arming of the trade unions and peasant organisations. The political mobilisations in rallies, demonstrations, strikes, land occupations, formation of new branches of all organisations, cultural campaigns in the villages, educational courses, congresses and conferences were all aimed to achieve these goals. This was the concrete content of the various political declarations issued by Soekarno. Prioritising these campaigns was described as putting politics in command.<sup>28</sup>

Various political groups, in alliance with the army, started to actively oppose this idea. All politics, in particular mobilisational politics, was viewed as destructive. The “functional groups” concept, (*golongan karya* — GOLKAR), propagated by the army was meant as an alternative to mobilisation. An individual’s place in society was seen solely through their

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<sup>27</sup> For an interesting article looking at the PKI’s educational activity as a modernising activity, see McVey, “Teaching modernity”, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-27.

<sup>28</sup> On the contradictions of the polarisation of the period and some of the contradictions, see Vickers, Adrian, *A History of Indonesia*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp.152-155.

occupational role; their role in life and society, including their political role, was simply to carry out their (occupational) function: workers laboured, farmers farmed, fishermen fished, housewives served their husbands and children and so on. They were to belong to organisations under the effective control of the coordinating part of the organism, the state and the army. The Joint Secretariat of GOLKAR in the 1960s, and later in the '70s and '80s, was composed overwhelmingly of military officers.<sup>29</sup> It is worth noting that while GOLKAR dominated under the New Order, it had its origins as part of the resistance to the growth of the Soekarno-PKI alliance and the mass movement mobilising behind it.

The phenomenon of opposition to “politics” also began to surface within some intellectual circles and at the margins of student activity. By 1962 most intellectuals and artists had also joined one of the *aliran* [cultural streams]. The Peoples Cultural Institute (LEKRA)<sup>30</sup> and the National Cultural Institute (LKN), connected to the PKI and PNI respectively, were the biggest and most active cultural organisations. The Indonesian Scholars Association (HSI), also connected with the PKI, was growing rapidly. Among intellectuals and artists, these organisations were countered by new “anti-political” groupings, in particular, the Cultural Manifesto (MANIKEBU) group. The MANIKEBU group adopted the GOLKAR idea that different occupational groupings should stick to their roles: so artists, for example, should stick to art and stay out of politics, although they themselves worked politically with the army. Among students in Jakarta, a small new group arose, called Serikat Mahasiswa Lokal (SOMAL), whose basic outlook was to keep out of mobilisational politics.<sup>31</sup> The MANIKEBU group and the SOMAL students and a few of their academic mentors were to be the central political partners and to provide the democratic cover for General Suharto’s army leadership group when it seized power in October 1965.

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<sup>29</sup> For a history of GOLKAR, see Reeve, David, *Golkar of Indonesia: an alternative to the party system*, Kuala Lumpur : Oxford University Press, 1985.

<sup>30</sup> For background on LEKRA see Foulcher, Keith, *Social Commitment in Literature and the Arts: the Indonesian “Institute of Peoples Culture”, 1950-65*, Clayton, Vic. : Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1986. For a more recent and very comprehensive review and anthology see Rohoma Dwi Aria Yulianti and Muhidin M Dahlan, *Lekra Tak Membakar Buku: Suara Senyap Lembar Kebudayaan Harian Rakyat, 1950-65*, Yogyakarta : Merekeasumba, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> A detailed picture of student politics in this period can be garnered from Paget, Roget, *Youth and the wane of Soekarno's government*, [Ithaca, N.Y.]: Cornell University, 1970, Ph.D. thesis.

Thus the scene was set for a confrontation between the Soekarno-PKI led coalition, whose strength was based on the heightened mobilisation of the worker and peasant mass of the population and the army leadership, the right-wing parties dominant in the government alongside a small coterie of corrupt business managers and landowners, who were increasingly frightened of and opposed to any kind of mobilisational politics, a form of politics that they could not successfully pursue themselves. This second camp's strength was based on its overwhelming domination of the state apparatus, including the army. In the armed forces, while pro-Soekarno officers had increased in numbers, they were still a clear minority, especially in the army. The often held popular image of Soekarno as all-powerful leader is a false picture — he was often forced to compromise. His ideas were powerful among the people, and even his enemies had to accommodate to their popularity, but primarily at the level of choice of vocabulary. The conflict did generate repressive acts on both sides. MANIKEBU was banned and at least two of its signatories lost their jobs in universities and state radio. Several prominent figures associated with the anti-Soekarno camp were also detained.<sup>32</sup> The army continued its banning of PKI publications in the regions and, more ferociously, continued its attacks on peasant land actions in the countryside.

A cultural revolution had been under way since at least 1909 and had deepened and spread after independence as schools, parties and the new *pergerakan* spread their reach and deepened their contact with the people. This accelerated after 1962, when the Soekarno-PKI alliance surged in support before it was suppressed in 1965. A new discourse on the future of Indonesia was providing the basis for the emergence of a shared national cultural outlook among the majority of the popular classes. The outcome of the confrontation that developed between 1962 and 1965 was the mass suppression of the Soekarnoist/PKI *mass mobilisation*, and it was upon the institutionalisation of that specific suppression that the New Order was built.

### **The negation of *aksi massa* as the essential character of the New Order**

Neither the format nor the ideology of the New Order established by General Suharto can be understood without putting the mass mobilisation of the popular classes at the centre of the political conjuncture that produced the New Order. The New Order can be defined as a counter-revolution against mass politics.

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<sup>32</sup> These included former Prime Minister Syahrir and publisher and writer Mochtar Lubis.

Radicalisation deepened and the organisations of the social revolution — the PKI, the left wing of the PNI and affiliated mass organisations — grew rapidly after 1962. The struggle for power — even the preparation for social revolution itself — was more and more situated within the theoretical framework of the struggle between “the two aspects of the state”, i.e. pro- and anti-people aspects. Campaigns to “retool”, that is, dismiss conservative officials and *kabir* out of the state apparatus and state-owned companies and also out of some mass organisations, developed as the central struggle. There were many mass mobilisation campaigns demanding the dismissal of conservative governors and district heads. Students demonstrated for the dismissal of conservative university professors. Some mass organisations, such as the Indonesian Journalists Association, dismissed conservative leaders. It is not surprising that the retooling campaigns manifested also inside the armed forces.

On 30 September 1965, pro-Soekarno officers began to conduct a unilateral retooling of the armed forces high command. It is still unclear what, if any, were the overall plans of Colonel Untung and his fellow conspirators when they ordered the detention of seven of the top generals in the armed forces high command and moved to replace them with themselves and other pro-Soekarno officers. The most recent scholarship reveals that the initial aim was to remove the right wing of the high command and then to provoke a mass mobilisation across the country for the purge of the right wing from the officer corps as a whole.<sup>33</sup>

The mass murders were carried out by the Indonesian army as well as anti-communist Islamic and nationalist militia. These militia were led by the most right-wing elements attached to the Islamic party *aliran* as well as those attached to the Indonesian National Party (PNI). Which militia played a major role depended on local conditions and which of the anti-communist parties was dominant.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Roosa John, *Pretext for mass murder: the September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'état in Indonesia*, Wisconsin, 2006. In this new and convincing work, Roosa also argues that the chairperson of the Indonesian Communist Party, D.N. Aidit, was a leader of the group that planned the action but that he did not inform the rest of the party leadership. Later, argues Roosa, when the amateurish conspiracy went awry and Soekarno ordered it to stop, Aidit persisted in trying to bring it off and tried to replace Soekarno's cabinet.

<sup>34</sup> See Cribb, Robert, *The Indonesian killings of 1965-1966: studies from Java and Bali*, Monash University, 1990. For a regional study of the violence which also discusses the extent of the military's

Most estimates are that between 500,000 and 2 million were slaughtered.<sup>35</sup> Most of these people were leaders, activists or supporters of one component or other of the Indonesian left which had been looking to the PKI-Soekarno alliance for leadership. Many of those killed died horribly, as part of a terror campaign. They were decapitated, disembowelled, dragged behind a truck or otherwise cruelly killed. In addition to those killed, hundreds of thousands more were detained for between a few months and two years, often in unlisted safe houses. At least 14,000 were further detained for another 10 to 12 years.<sup>36</sup> Tens of thousands were dismissed from their jobs, especially in the teaching service, civil service and railways.

This terror, however, must be seen as aimed at more than the annihilation of the organised left, the PKI and all other groups following Soekarno's left direction. This terror was aimed at ending the processes of the national revolution and the mass mobilisation politics upon which it was based. It was meant to end the politics of *pergerakan*: all of the ideas and methods that had been an integral part of the Indonesian national revolution between 1909 and 1965.<sup>37</sup>

It is not difficult to understand why Suharto and the rest of the leadership of this counter-revolutionary offensive felt the need to annihilate these ideas and methods. In 1965 they faced an impending social revolution. More than half of the potential voting population were actively mobilised behind demands that, if fulfilled, would undermine the privileged position of aspiring military businessmen and rural landowners. This movement for worker control of state enterprises, land reform, further nationalisation of the economy and deeper cooperation among non-aligned countries had developed as an extension of the national revolution itself, as an extension of the struggle to consolidate Indonesia as a stable and sovereign nation. There was no way to separate the basic ideas of the national revolution — *aksi* (street protest), *mogok* (strike), *vergadering* (mass rally), *rapat massa* (mass meeting), *sarikat* (union), *berontak* (rebel), *semangat* (spirit), *pemuda* (youth), *massa* (the masses),

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role in organising the violence, see Robinson, Jeffrey, *The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence in Bali*, Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press, 1995.

<sup>35</sup> See Cribb, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>36</sup> Cribb's *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (pp. 423-424) gives a figure of 700,000 arrested in total, with 10,000 being shipped to Buru Island. Most of the 700,000 were released within two years.

<sup>37</sup> For an overview of these processes, see the chapter "Indonesia" in my *Unfinished Nation: Indonesia before and after Suharto*, London : Verso, 2008.

*rakyat* (the people), *revolusi* (revolution), *sama rata sama rasa* (equality), *berdaulat* (sovereign), *kepribadian nasional* (national character) — from the movement threatening social revolution.

The counter-revolution launched by Suharto in October 1965 was a counter-revolution not only in the sense of being an act of massive suppression of the organisations of the left and of the social revolution, but also of the national revolution itself. The first part of this counter-revolution was perceived clearly by its perpetrators. On this their cry was *ganyang PKI!* — crush the PKI! On the second aspect, they were probably blind to the destruction they were doing to the Indonesian national revolution. The terror, murder and massive arrests were the first step in ending mobilisational politics. The physical elimination and the psychological destruction of the movement itself, right down to the grass roots, was the first task. Suharto's purges were not purges aimed simply or only at decapitating the leadership of the movement. Nor were they aimed at simply combining decapitation of the leadership and some modest "shock therapy" to demoralise and unbalance the rest of the movement. It went further than that. The violence was aimed at the class base of the movement. Of course, this policy was implemented unevenly, depending on the intensity of the local social conflict. However, the fundamental policy behind all the killings was to decapitate the leadership, eliminate the activist base and terrorise the millions of sympathisers of the PKI, left wing of the PNI and all affiliated mass organizations — all of Soekarno's supporters, the basis of mass action politics.<sup>38</sup>

### **The counter-ideology to aksi massa: Floating mass**

The deeper purpose of the counter-revolution was then more clearly revealed in the policies that were pursued in the aftermath of this slaughter, terror and suppression of the left. Once the immediate threat of social revolution had been dealt with, the new counter-revolutionary government began a policy of political restructuring aimed at making

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<sup>38</sup> This slaughter and terror were accompanied by policies of immediate suppression of the organisation and press of the left. While the new Suharto regime felt compelled to continue to refer to socialism and revolution in its rhetoric for some time, Marxism and Leninism and, not long after, the writings of Soekarno were quickly banned. The PKI and Soekarnoist left press was closed down. Papers with obvious organisational affiliations with the PKI were immediately closed; others lasted a few months. The PKI itself and its mass organisations were banned. In the case of the PNI, both the party and its mass organisations were allowed to continue but were subject to purge. The secretary-general of the PNI, Surachman, was detained, tortured and killed.

permanent the end of any form of open mobilisational politics. There was to be no more *pergerakan*, ever. For them, as espoused by Hatta earlier, the revolution was finished.

The classic work setting out the “philosophy” of the counter-revolution is by the architect of the new political format, the late General Ali Moertopo. Moertopo was a special intelligence advisor to Suharto, headed a special operations unit for several years, held the position of personal assistant to the president for almost ten years and later became minister for information under Suharto. It was his book, *The Acceleration and Modernisation of 25 Years’ Development*, that set out the counter-revolution’s ideas.<sup>39</sup> At the core of his concept was the idea of the *floating mass*. It is worth quoting at length from his book on this idea:

The political parties were always trying to marshal mass support by forming various affiliated organisations based on the ideologies of their respective parties. The mass of the people, especially those in the villages, always fell prey to the political and ideological interests of those parties. Their involvement in the conflicts of political and ideological interests had as its result the fact that they ignored the necessities of daily life, the need for development and improvement of their own lives, materially as well as spiritually.

Such a situation should not repeat itself. Nevertheless, even now the parties continue to be narrowly ideology-oriented as before. Therefore it is only right to attract the attention of the mainly village people away from political problems and ideological exclusiveness to efforts of national development through the development of their own rural societies. For this reason it is justifiable that political parties are limited to the district level only [i.e. are banned from the villages]. Here lies the meaning and the goal of the depoliticisation (the process of freeing the people from political manipulation) and the deparpolisasi [the process of freeing the people from political party allegiances] in the villages.

Nevertheless, this does not imply the people in the villages are barred from maintaining political aspirations. Besides their opportunity to pour their aspirations into development of their own societies, in the general elections they can also vote for whichever political party or the Functional groups (Golkar) they regard as

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<sup>39</sup> Ali Moertopo, *The Acceleration and Modernization of 25 Years’ Development*, Jakarta : Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 1973. (Indonesian version published in 1972).



capable of channelling their aspirations and whichever has platforms in accordance with their own aspirations.

In this way people in the villages will not spend their valuable time and energy in the political struggles of parties and groups, but will be occupied wholly with development efforts. Through this process there emerges the so-called “floating mass”, i.e. people who are not permanently tied to membership of any political party.<sup>40</sup>

Moertopo grasped perfectly the link between mass mobilisation and the role of political parties and the groupings of mass organisations around them. The policies of slaughter, terror and suppression had been aimed at parties most effective in attracting people into activity. The ban on villagers participating in any party activity at all — except voting at election time — was a central follow-up to institutionalising political passivity. The concept that people would be “occupied wholly with development efforts” reminds one of the idea of a “tool with a voice” that was prevalent during slave society. The village people, who were the overwhelming majority in the 1965-75 period, were simply to work, to produce and to have no ongoing role in politics. In fact, however, the “floating mass” idea was more inspired by the perception of mass political passivity in the two-party system prevalent in Western parliamentary democracies in the 1950s and early ’60s. In the Indonesia coming out of 55 years of national revolutionary struggle, the only way to achieve this passivity where people “are not permanently tied to membership of any political party” was through the deployment of mass counter-revolutionary violence. No other way was possible. Parties and political mobilisation were too deeply embedded in the nation creating process itself.

The deep roots of the culture of political mobilisation meant that even after the slaughter, terror and suppression of 1965-68, the New Order needed an extensive and active system of repression to maintain “depoliticisation”. At the core of this system was the territorial command system of the armed forces.<sup>41</sup> From the very beginning of the establishment of the

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<sup>40</sup> Quoted in David Bouchier and Vedi R Hadiz, *Indonesian Politics and Society: a reader*, New York : Routledge, 2003, pp. 45-46.

<sup>41</sup> There is no single study or text documenting the system of political control established by the Suharto government. The brief overview here of such things as *dwifungsi* and the territorial command, *simplifikasi* of the political parties and other means of control have been reported in a

republic's armed forces, there had always been a section of the officer corps that had argued that the military should have a central role in politics. By the late 1950s, these officers had developed the concept of *dwifungsi* (dual function), which stated that the armed forces had a civic as well as military role. From the late 1950s through to 1965, the armed forces' role in political affairs was strengthened as a result of extended periods of martial law declared as a response either to mutiny within the army or as part of external military campaigns. The key structure for the armed forces' surveillance and intervention into politics throughout the country was a system of territorial commands that had developed during the period of guerrilla struggle against the Dutch. The guerrilla struggle had taken place in almost all areas of the country, and so the army had established regionally based units with local command headquarters and other outposts. The Indonesian army's structure therefore was never built around a system of forward bases to defend the country from attack externally, but rather was structured to manage military activity within the country. *Pro-dwifungsi* officers developed theories to justify the retention of this system, which then became a parallel domestic administrative structure to the civilian bureaucracy.

This structure was strengthened under the New Order and, for most of these 32 years, was invested with special authority to intervene in political affairs. Special national coordinating bodies, based in armed forces headquarters, were established to coordinate this system of political management. The first was called Command for the Restoration of Stability and Order (KOPKAMTIB), later slightly restructured and renamed the Body for Coordination of National Stability (BAKORSTANNAS). Military command posts existed at almost every level of society, with military personnel posted to all villages. This structure ensured that the ban on political party activity in the villages was strictly implemented.

Some parties were allowed to continue to open offices at the district town level and in larger towns. These were the parties that themselves had supported the surrender of political initiative to the army. However, the New Order decided that the counter-revolution even needed these parties — nine in all — to be further adapted to de-politicisation. First, they had to undergo *simplifikasi*. The Islamic parties were forced to fuse into one party to be called United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan — PPP). The non-Islamic parties, including the now thoroughly purged PNI, were forced to merge into the Indonesian

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large number of articles and newspaper reports. See a slightly extended account of this overview in Lane, *op. cit.*

Democratic Party (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia — PDI). Both the PPP and PDI were also subject to permanent intervention by the government in the selection of their leaderships. The regime's own party, GOLKAR, made up the third party that was allowed to participate in elections.

Of course, these parties were never to be allowed to become vehicles for a return of mobilisational politics. All party campaigning was banned except for a ten-day period before the four-yearly elections. This campaign period was also tightly controlled, with parties each able to organise rallies and marches on only three out of the ten days. Under floating mass, the masses' role was indeed truly to be limited to voting. Not surprisingly, under these conditions, when elections did occur, the PDI and PPP could never match GOLKAR. GOLKAR had massive funds but also a de facto presence in the villages. The regime had declared a policy of *monoloyalitas* for all civil servants, right down to the village head and his staff. They all had to be active members of GOLKAR.

The attack on the political parties was not only in terms of their role as electoral organisations. Their role in organising people in trade unions, peasant associations — the whole structure of *aliran* organisation — was also demolished. This demolition of the party-affiliated mass organisations was not, however, aimed just at breaking the hold of parties. In most respects, the terror of 1965-68 had already done that. Other policies were instituted to ensure that any such organisations that were allowed to exist played a role of ensuring that the popular classes, disorganised and demoralised by the terror, remained disorganised. The counter-revolution's policy was one of de-organisation of the popular classes as a whole.

Initially, during 1966-71, almost no attention was given to the question of long-term policy towards trade unions and similar organisations.<sup>42</sup> As the economy stabilised and both the peasantry and working class began to develop again as a stable social grouping playing a significant role in the New Order's economic programme, trade unions as well as farmers and fishermen's organisations were re-established but with a strict policy of ensuring that these sectors were not able to reorganise. All these organisations remained strictly in the

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<sup>42</sup> See Indonesian Documentation and Information Centre, *Indonesian Workers and their Right to Organise*, Leiden, 1981. Also Hadiz, Vedi, *Workers and the State in New Order Indonesia*, London : Routledge, 1997.

hands of officials selected by the New Order government, in many cases retired or serving army officers.

The establishment of these “unions” and other organisations on the basis of one organisation for each sector — workers, farmers, fishermen, youth etc. — was often justified with reference to so-called traditional corporatist ideas, often referring to the so-called “integralist state”.<sup>43</sup> There was, however, no interest in either incorporating or integrating these sectors of society into any of the fundamental political processes of the country, except as passive objects of policy, prevented from any possibility of organising to exercise any level of power. Rather than a manifestation of a so-called “corporatist” philosophy, these were policies of exclusion and suppression.

After 1972, organisations claiming to organise workers, peasant farmers, fisherpeople, youth, civil servants and civil servants’ wives were established. All were affiliated to GOLKAR and considered to represent key “functional groups”. They were consistently used throughout the New Order period to stifle genuine organisation. There were internal rumblings from within these organisations from time to time trying to transform their nature into genuine representative bodies. Such attempts were always suppressed. In 1985 a law was passed to deepen control over all social organisations, legally subjecting them to government control in almost all their activities and committing them to espousing the official state ideology, *Panca Sila*, the meaning of which only the government was allowed to interpret<sup>44</sup>. As a result, almost all worker, farmer, youth and student protest during the New Order developed outside these organisations.

All that was left for the majority of Indonesians was to “occupy themselves wholly with development efforts”, that is, to work and produce.

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<sup>43</sup> For a discussion of the “integralist state”, see Reeve, *op cit, passim*; also Bouchier, David, “Totalitarianism and the ‘national personality’: recent controversy about the philosophical basis of the Indonesian state”, in Schiller, Jim and Barbara Martin-Schiller, (eds) *Imagining Indonesia: Cultural Politics and Political Culture*, Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997.

<sup>44</sup> *Panca Sila* was originally formulated and explained by Soekarno in a speech in 1945. Later, in 1958, he gave a series of public lectures explaining it again. These lectures stand as virtually the total negation of the New Order’s interpretation of *Panca Sila*. While Soekarno connected democratic consultation, national unity, internationalism, social justice and monotheism to the major revolutionary upheavals in human history, the New Order ideologues distilled these principles to little more than the idea of obedience to authority.

### **Consolidating the ideologicide: erasing memory**

The 1965 terror combined with the floating mass policies attacked the organisation of the forces of *aksi massa*. The massive physical attack on the left ideological community was a virtual “ideologicide”. Of course, such levels of terror also surrounded the ideas of revolution, and of the left in particular, with a deep aura of fear. Anybody associated with the left or expressing left-wing ideas could be subject to such terror. The accusation of being a member of the PKI became one of the most threatening accusations that could be made. Anybody could be asked to obtain documents from local police and state authorities stating that they were “clean” of infection from the PKI. The presence of more than 12,000 left-wing activists on Buru Island prison camp right up until 1978 was a salutary reminder of what would happen if you espoused or were thought to be contaminated with such ideas.

Here too, in the world of ideas, the government realised that the initial terror and suppression would not be enough. The key institutions that could propagate left-wing ideas had been destroyed. They were no longer an immediate danger. The remaining threat came from the national revolution itself, that is, from its legacy, from any memory of what it was and had been trying to achieve. Memory of the national revolution had to be erased from the popular consciousness. Given that the very existence of Indonesia, even as a concept, was a direct product of the revolutionary process, this was a mammoth task. Here too, we see again the necessity, from the point of view of the counter-revolution, of the extent and depth of the slaughter and terror.

The media, the arts and culture and the universities fell quickly into the control of intellectuals who supported or were in sympathy with the counter-revolution. The country’s most prestigious university, the University of Indonesia, became the location of joint seminars with the armed forces to map out the country’s future. The two massive left cultural organisations had been banned, and their writers and artists were jailed and then exiled to Buru Island. The newspapers, previously attached to political parties and with specific ideological perspectives, either explicitly espoused the political outlook of the armed forces and the counter-revolution or acquiesced in all central matters, as they sought to establish themselves as successful business enterprises. The intellectuals of the MANIKEBU dominated everywhere, hardly raising a single note of concern regarding the hundreds of fellow intellectuals in prison.

In these institutions, a single history of the period of Guided Democracy was propagated. Debate about this period was impossible. All the writings of Soekarno, the PKI leaders and intellectuals and other leftists were banned, disappearing from all bookshops and libraries. For the intellectuals triumphant in the victory of the army, the period before 1965 had been one of terror. The popularity of their rivals in the arena of the arts and culture was terror for them. Both their positions in educational and artistic institutions and their markets were under threat. They had survived by cooperating with the army against Soekarno before 1965 and then again after 1965. It was this terror, articulated as the accusation of tyranny against Soekarno, that permeated their representation of the Guided Democracy period throughout the media, the arts and the universities. This MANIKEBU generation of intellectuals became known as the '66 generation and for the first few years the literary work which most displayed their sentiments was a collection of poems by Taufiq Ismail under the title *Tirani* (Tyranny), published in stencilled form in 1966. It was this perspective which permeated all ideological institutions. Ironically, this monopoly of perspective was not the result of the popular adoption of one view over another, but was based on a real physical tyranny.

However, the wiping of the memory of the previous sixty years of *pergerakan* history required also a more systematic approach.<sup>45</sup> The New Order began a total rewriting of Indonesian history to be propagated in schools, universities and through the mass media. This task was managed by the History Centre of the Armed Forces, headed by a historian who had been recruited into the armed forces and given the title brigadier-general: Nugroho Notosusanto.<sup>46</sup> An official history of Indonesia was commissioned. New textbooks were written for all levels of schooling and tried out in different forms during the course of 32 years. A prominent '66 generation intellectual was commissioned to produce a feature film depicting the New Order's version of politics under Soekarno and of what it claimed was the 1965 "abortive communist coup", complete with graphic depictions of blood-thirsty communist torturers. This film was compulsory viewing in schools throughout Indonesia for almost two decades. There were also other feature films commissioned on Indonesian

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<sup>45</sup> For an expansion of this aspect of the counter-ideology to *aksi massa* see the chapter "Memory" in Lane, *op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> For a new study of the militarisation of Indonesian history, which includes a chapter on Nugroho, see Katherine E. McGregor, *History in Uniform: Military Ideology and the Construction of Indonesia's Past*, Singapore : NUS Press, 2007.

history, especially depicting the alleged heroic activities of Soeharto after he had left Dutch service and joined the republican forces.

Even the period of direct armed revolt, between 1945-49, was renamed. This period had always specifically been referred to as the period of *revolusi*. In the course of the rewriting, it was altered to “war of independence”, eliminating the role of the mass of people in the overturning of colonial rule in so many areas of social life.

The new version of history eliminated *pergerakan* from the narrative. The period of open party politics was depicted as a period of instability and chaos with no redeeming features. The period of the early '60s was depicted as a period when the PKI and Soekarno wielded total power and the economy was completely neglected. The events of 1965 were depicted as a systematic and malevolent plot by the PKI to seize power. The propaganda lies about the sexual mutilation of assassinated generals' corpses continued for much of the period of the New Order. This was a depiction of history enforced throughout the education system. It was taught by rote with no debate or alternative versions tolerated. It was taught by a new generation of teachers educated under the New Order.

It is worth quoting from a school textbook, which again, underlines the government's focus on suppression of mass politics as its central concern. The 2001 *History for Senior High School* told how the PKI in preparing to seize power was doing the unthinkable: “Mobilizing workers, farmers, fisherman and lower civil servants in the interests of the Party” and “launching unilateral *aksi*”<sup>47</sup>

This chapter, drawing primarily on the available published scholarship, has described in an overview fashion the policies of the New Order after 1965, emphasising their primary character as a response to the level of mass mobilisation and the radicalisation that went with it, before 1965. The structuring of the new repressive order around the suppression of mass politics is also revealed starkly in the government's policies towards student politics between 1965 and 1978. The next chapter in this thesis will look at these policies.

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<sup>47</sup> From *Sejarah Untuk SMU Kelas 3*, Department of Education and Culture, Jakarta, 2001.

## Chapter 3

### Students and the last days of *aksi massa*, 1966-78

The previous chapter provided a general review of the position of mass action (*aksi massa*) in politics before 1965 and in the structures of repression that defined the New Order. This chapter will look in more depth at the student movement as it evolved between 1966 and 1978. The chapter will show that, for various reasons, some university students were allowed to continue with *aksi* style politics after 1965, but that this threatened the structures that had emerged in response to pre-'65 mass action politics. As a result, this last area of mobilisational politics was also shut down. I will show that the manner in which student politics was shut down further underlines the centrality of mass action politics as the central determinant in the course of political developments.

Since the beginning of the New Order, there has been a special aura around the word *mahasiswa* (university student). This was a creation of the circumstances of privilege one small sector of the student population enjoyed between 1965 and 1978. There are no in-depth studies of the student involvement in post-independence politics before 1965, although all the histories note that large student organisations attached to political parties did exist. It appears that the PKI had the biggest of these in 1965, but again there is little research available on its activities and the role of students in PKI politics. The same applies for other parties. Even after 1965, and despite the aura that has developed around *mahasiswa*, there are few in-depth studies, and none for the period after 1968.<sup>1</sup> The discussion of student politics that follows in this chapter, covering mainly the 1965-78 period helps explain the aura around "mahasiswa" as being connected to the privileges that some

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<sup>1</sup> The two early studies of the period after 1965 are Paget, Roger, *Youth and the Wane of Soekarno's Government*, Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, published as microform by University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1977 and Douglas, Stephen A., *Political Socialization and Student Activism in Indonesia*, University of Illinois Press, 1970. Since then there have been some articles on specific periods but no focused in-depth studies. Aspinall provides a chapter on students in his book *Opposition in Indonesia*, but situates student politics as a precursor to a general opposition. There is a huge, mostly unsurveyed body of material on students, in the Indonesian language, often written as reflections, but also academic studies.



students, and then for a few years, all students, enjoyed until 1978. This was the privilege of being able to engage in mobilisational politics.

Students were one sector of the population that escaped the ban on open mobilisational politics, at least for the early part of the New Order. On the campuses, all open mobilisational politics by the left parties and student groups was violently suppressed, with many students being arrested or killed. However, a small anti-left section who were supporting Suharto's counter-revolution were encouraged to carry out protests, demonstrations, marches and public meetings and to have their own newspapers.<sup>2</sup> Most of these students were organised into the Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia (Indonesian Students Action Front - KAMI). They absorbed among their membership the Masyumi-connected Islamic student organisations. They were used by Suharto to give a civilian face to the counter-revolution.<sup>3</sup> In order to maximise the sense of legitimacy the support of this relatively small sector of the student population gave Suharto, they were allowed to coopt for themselves the status of "representatives of the whole student sector" — they became "the students", "the *mahasiswa*".

While Suharto and his allies relied primarily on slaughter, terror and suppression, they knew that the military could not govern alone. It needed civilian allies to help it rule. Suharto and his supporters in the army did not declare a military junta even as they concentrated power in their own hands. They proclaimed that all their actions were also in defence of the revolution and democracy. They drew in their civilian allies and sought ways of organising public displays of civilian support for their actions.

Playing a central role in the display of support were high school and, particularly, university students. Demonstrations by university students against Soekarno occurred throughout the last months of 1965 and particularly in 1966. Most of these demonstrations were carried out under the banner of KAMI. KAMI was established on the suggestion of Major General Sjarif Thayeb, the minister for higher education and science, on October 25, 1965. While KAMI comprised student organisations with a conservative religious background, it appears to

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<sup>2</sup> See *ibid*. This work has the most detailed documentation of student politics immediately prior to and after the change from Soekarno to Suharto.

<sup>3</sup> The main MASYUMI student organisation was the Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (Islamic Student Association - HMI), although there were others.

have been initiated by a group holding quintessentially the counter-position to *aksi* politics. KAMI included the word “*aksi*” in its name and did indeed use street protest methods, but it was tied to the political aim of ending the domination of that method of political activity.

According to Paget, the process to initiate KAMI came from students with the outlook of and connected to the Sekretariat Bersama Organisasi Mahasiswa Lokal (SOMAL or Joint Secretariat of Local Student Organisations).<sup>4</sup> Paget, who carried out fieldwork in Indonesia during this period, describes SOMAL in the following way:

... the setting up of KAMI was essentially the initiative of a select group of elite Djakarta students who happened through socio-economic status to have intimate connections with powerful military officers most sympathetic to Suharto group ... their outlook on life generally conformed to that of the typical SOMAL member. In terms of public image, SOMAL itself was unheard of. It was no more than a loose confederation of tiny, highly elitist, local, urban university student organisations in several of the main cities of Java. SOMAL members would normally come from families fairly aloof from politics, except for occasional steps to ensure their continued privacy. The typical SOMAL type was well educated, spoke Dutch at home, and boasted a kind of premature urbanity. In regard to Indonesia’s political, social and economic problems he was quietly and coolly cynical about the prospects for change ... They organised picnics, dances, poetry readings and occasional chamber music. No segment of Indonesian society was farther from the mainstream of Indonesian life or freer of movement within it.<sup>5</sup>

Their opposites, the student organisations of *aksi massa* on the left, the Indonesian Students Movement Concentration (Consentrasi Gerakan Mahasiswa Indonesia - CGMI), affiliated to the PKI and the Indonesian National Students Movement (Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasional Indonesia - GMNI) had been banned and purged respectively, with many CGMI and GMNI activists killed or arrested. The CGMI and GMNI were absent from the streets while KAMI and some allies, with logistics supplied by the Army, dominated.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>6</sup> See Raillon, Francois, *Politik dan Ideologi Mahasiswa Indonesia*, Jakarta : LP3ES, 1985.

Over the course of about a year, the anti-Soekarno student movement assumed the representation of all students. The anti-Soekarno students were simply “the students” despite being a small minority compared to the huge memberships of CGMI and GMNI, before they had been suppressed by the army. KAMI was seen as the organisational expression of the ’66 generation. This movement’s expropriation of the monopoly on representing students was consolidated through the development of a new student press. Key newspapers included the daily *Harian KAMI* and, with perhaps greater prestige, the weekly *Mahasiswa Indonesia* (the Indonesian Student).

KAMI organised joint seminars and discussions with the army at the University of Indonesia. This “student movement” was then regularly described as the army’s partner in establishing the New Order.<sup>7</sup> In 2004, in his prize-winning documentary film *I don’t think I will ever forget*, Danial Indrakusuma interviewed people who were student leaders in 1965, such as *Mahasiswa Indonesia* editor Rahman Tolleng, as well as key generals who confirmed that they worked hand in hand against Soekarno and the left.<sup>8</sup> All of the demonstrations against Soekarno and the PKI during late 1965 and early 1966 were organised by these student leaders, including those demanding the arrest and resignation of cabinet ministers and others. Student leaders were used to launch all the frontal political attacks on Soekarno.

The students, the campuses and the ’66 generation intellectuals<sup>9</sup> were allowed the privilege of political mobilisation in their role as the main public, civilian allies of Suharto. They were the civilian and “democratic” face of the counter-revolution. They mobilised on the streets, while the army and militias arrested, tortured and killed. Here was the contradiction: the political method of KAMI had been the old method: mobilisation! Rallies and demonstrations, leaflets and placards, conferences, congresses and public forums and mass shows of force were the basic methods. During 1966, the student demonstrations even developed some momentum of their own, being launched not always in accordance with the

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, *The Leader, the Man and the Gun, Seminar Ekonomi K.A.M.I., Djakarta, 10 s/d 20 Djanuari, 1966*, Jakarta : Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia, Fakultas Ekonomi Universitas Indonesia, 1966.

<sup>8</sup> The film is available on DVD. It won a Special Jury Prize at the Jakarta International Film Festival in 2004, the jury citing the outstanding interview material it contained.

<sup>9</sup> Intellectuals and students who emerged as leaders at this time appropriated the title *angkatan ’66* (’66 generation).

schedule desired by the army. Confrontations even took place, and one student was shot dead.

Paradoxically, the students were depicted as a “moral force” uninterested in the question of power itself, just as they were legitimising a new ruling power. It was the depiction and thereby the restriction of their role to such a “moral force” that was the basis of Suharto tolerating their privilege of mobilisation, while everybody else was supposed to be a part of the “floating mass”. The campuses became a privileged arena where political mobilisation was possible for at least 13 years.

### **The ‘anti-politics’ student activists**

Between late 1965 and 1970 almost all of the KAMI mobilisations were aimed against Soekarno and what Suharto’s New Order labelled the “Old Order” — the government and politicians of the 1959-65 period. By 1970, many central leaders of KAMI had been absorbed into the regime’s political establishment. They became members of parliament or operatives in GOLKAR. Some used their contacts and soon emerged as substantial businessmen. A few went on to be academics. Some remained as “students” or held positions in one or other of the new institutions established as part of the official student movement or in the student press.

Only a few of the ‘66 generation of student leaders were not absorbed into the New Order institutions during this period. Between 1970 and 1972, these few student leaders emerged as critics of the Suharto government. However, their criticisms remained marked by the contradiction that had been part of the ‘66 generation’s rejection of mobilisational politics. They still used street protests but projected themselves as a purely “moral” and not a political force.

The anti-corruption campaign that began in January 1970 was the first manifestation of sustained criticism or opposition from amongst the “moral force” students.<sup>10</sup> In mid-January, a group of students at the University of Indonesia issued a statement expressing

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<sup>10</sup> Most of the incidents described in the following pages are drawn from daily newspaper reports translated into English and reproduced in the *Indonesian Current Affairs Translation Service (ICATS)*, published in Jakarta from 1967 until 1975.

disappointment in “their professors”.<sup>11</sup> The professors were Ali Wardhana and Sumantri Bojonegoro, who both held ministerial positions. The “disappointment” was expressed in relation to the Suharto government’s announcement of 100% price rises for petrol and kerosene. Within a few days, large student demonstrations began to take place with university students *turun ke jalan* (“going down into the streets”), sticking up placards on walls and on passing cars. Although the specific issue was the price rises, in these demonstrations constant and explicit reference was made to corruption. Pamphlets pictured generals and officials feasting on *anggur minyak* (“oil wine”) but insisting that the ordinary people pay the increases in prices. What was happening to Indonesia’s oil income so that a 100% price increase was necessary, asked the student protesters.<sup>12</sup>

The same posters also drew a parallel between the oil production and price increase contradiction and the promises of special attention to be given to education and the recent increase in university fees. Thus dissatisfaction with the conditions of students combined with disenchantment with the government’s policies and its attitude to corruption.

As students began to name offenders, including military officers close to Suharto, the official reaction to the student protest hardened. On 24 January, KOPKAMTIB JAYA (Jakarta Security Command) banned all demonstrations and on 27 January a protester was arrested.<sup>13</sup> Although the ad hoc groups formed during these few weeks remained in formal existence for another fortnight, public protest almost completely disappeared.

However, in early February, Suharto took action that gave the students cause to think that they had won some sort of victory. On 2 February 1970, Suharto established the Commission of Four to investigate corruption in Indonesia. It was given wide powers, and its members were political and social figures from outside the regime. On the next day, a student delegation visited the chairman of the commission, a 1950s prime minister, Wilopo, to offer

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<sup>11</sup> *Pedoman*, 16 January 1970; see also several newspaper reports of the actions by Mahasiswa Menggugat in *ICATS*, January 1970, pp. 27-31.

<sup>12</sup> *Pedoman* daily newspaper was sympathetic to the students and published reports on their actions and also reproduced some of their posters, such as in *Pedoman* on 16 January 1970. *Pedoman* was banned in January 1974.

<sup>13</sup> See *Angkatan Bersenjata* 31 January 1970 editorial on the bans, *ICATS*, January 1970, pp. 34-35.

any assistance that might be needed and to publicly claim some credit for the formation of the commission.<sup>14</sup>

With demonstrations banned but with the Commission of Four as an acknowledgement by the government of the validity of student claims, the ad hoc student group dissolved itself. The group of students behind the protests had called themselves *Mahasiswa Menggugat* ("Students Accuse"), a title very much reminiscent of Soekarno's defence speech at his trial in Bandung in the 1920s, entitled "*Indonesia Menggugat*". The leaders of *Mahasiswa Menggugat* were Arief Budiman, Ben Manoto, Harry Victor and Syahrir. Arief Budiman emerged as its most prominent spokesman.<sup>15</sup> Their announcement of disbanding declared that they were "a moral force and not a political force".<sup>16</sup> The Soekarno period, of which Arief Budiman and KAMI earlier had been major critics, was seen as one completely overcome by "political fever".

The disbanding of *Mahasiswa Menggugat* began a period of relative quiet. Between February and July, student protest was confined to some criticism by medical students of the facilities of the Faculty of Medicine. However, despite the relatively non-threatening nature of the issue, the protest was sufficiently large to cause the authorities to close the University of Indonesia campus after lecture hours. The intensity of the protest indicated that general tension within the student community had not receded.

On 2 July the Commission of Four presented its report to President Suharto. On 4 July, Marie Muhammad, an KAMI ex-leader and student journalist in the early days of the Bandung student weekly newspaper *Mahasiswa Indonesia*, demanded that the report be made public.<sup>17</sup> When the government was not able to assure the public that concrete action was

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<sup>14</sup> For an account of these developments see Boole, P.J., "Corruption and Corruption Consciousness in Indonesia", (BA Thesis), Melbourne University, 1973. See also Mackie, J.A.C., "The Commission of Four Report on Corruption", *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, Vol. VI, No. 3, November 1980.

<sup>15</sup> *Pedoman*, 11 February 1970.

<sup>16</sup> Arief Budiman, "Portrait of a Young Indonesian Looking at His Surroundings", *Internationales Asienforum*, Vol. 4, 1973, p. 79.

<sup>17</sup> See the extensive report on the meeting between student protesters and Suharto in which Muhammed is quoted as seeking more public information. The article is by a student activist

going to be taken, and especially as no commitment was made to publish the commission's report, Arief Budiman's student group re-emerged as another ad hoc organisation. This time it was called the Anti-Corruption Committee (Komite Anti Korupsi - KAK).

On 18 July Arief Budiman and other student leaders had the first of two consultations promised to them by President Suharto.<sup>18</sup> They presented Suharto with documents they alleged proved corruption by one of Suharto's personal assistants, a senior military officer. Arrangements were made for a further consultation with Suharto in a few weeks' time. Before the second consultation could take place, the government was annoyed even more by another development in the anti-corruption campaign. This time the initiative was not from the students but from the press: the prestigious daily newspaper *Sinar Harapan*, connected to the Protestant churches, leaked the official report of the Commission of Four. Two weeks after the publication of the report, the second consultation was held with Suharto. According to Arief Budiman, the first meeting with Suharto gave the students the impression that Suharto was seriously concerned about the level of corruption in the country. However, the second meeting altered that impression. Suharto used the meeting to accuse the students of being manipulated by politicians. It was clear that no action was going to be taken. Suharto finally did no more than read the report of the Commission of Four to parliament, and with this done, announced the next day, in his national Independence Day speech, that corruption was being tackled.<sup>19</sup>

Government repression of student activities began to harden. On 6 August, two KAK activists were arrested. On 12 August, six more were arrested at a demonstration outside the prosecutor-general's office. Included amongst these six was Syahrir, the co-founder with Arief Budiman of *Mahasiswa Menggugat*. A plan for a *malam tirakatan* (night of meditation) to be held by students in the main street of Jakarta, Thamrin Street, was condemned by the governor of Jakarta, Ali Sadikin. The KAK did not go ahead with the *malam tirakatan*, but

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who became a prominent journalist for *Sinar Harapan*, Jopie Lasut: *Sinar Harapan*, 20 July 1970, in *ICATS*, 1970, pp. 463-465.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Budiman describes the first meeting in the article cited above. He described the second meeting in *Kompas* newspaper on 8 August 1970. See also *Sinar Harapan*, 1 August 1970, in *ICATS*, pp. 530-531.

another group led by the poet Rendra did go ahead with this action. Rendra<sup>20</sup> and a number of others were detained briefly at the time.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile KAK announced that it would disband on the 16th.<sup>22</sup>

The next wave of protest was focused on the preparation for and the conduct of the 1971 general elections. Disenchanted with the way the government interfered in the internal affairs of the political parties, and opposed to the use of force in rural areas to obtain support for the government party, groups of students banded together to urge an informal vote. This group, of which once again Arief Budiman emerged as a leader, was called the *golongan putih* (the white group). The name, according to Arief Budiman, referred to the group's recommendation that voters mark the vacant, white part of the ballot paper.<sup>23</sup> It could not, however, but leave many people with the impression that moralistic overtones were also implied. *Putih* (white) is sometimes an opposite of *kotor* (dirty). *Golput* groups were active primarily in Jakarta, Bandung and Jogjakarta. However, the completion of the elections in July and the clear victory of the government party again quickly brought the activities of *golput* to an end.

The next issue that appeared on the political horizon concerned the building of the Indonesia Indah Miniatur (Miniature Beautiful Indonesia) theme park. The project was sponsored by an organisation called Yayasan Harapan Kita (Our Hope Foundation). President Suharto's wife, Tien Suharto, was the president of this foundation. Estimated costs ranged from 10.5 billion to 20 billion rupiah. The perceived extravagance of this project and the ease

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<sup>20</sup> Rendra had been associated with the MANIKEBU before 1965 but had not become fully integrated into the '66 generation because he was out of Indonesia in the United States between 1964 and 1970.

<sup>21</sup> There are five different newspaper reports of this protest in Jakarta: *ICATS*, 1970, pp. 542-546.

<sup>22</sup> See report in *El Bahar*, 11 August 1970, in *ICATS*, p. 544, for KAK's statement as a prelude to its dissolution a week later.

<sup>23</sup> See newspaper reports (*Antara*, 15 June; *Sinar Harapan*, 16 June; *Api Pantjasila*, 28 June) in *ICATS*, 28 June 1970, pp. 417-419.



with which it received government support immediately provoked hostile responses from student and intellectual circles.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout December 1971 a controversy raged back and forth between student and intellectual groups on the one hand and Tien Suharto and her main government supporters, Ali Sadikin and All Moertopo, on the other.<sup>25</sup>

Arief Budiman, in an article written in 1973 looking back at these events, summed up the main issues in the following words:

The Indonesian intellectuals reacted. "Is a project such as this necessary? or at least has the appropriate moment arrived to build a project like this? Every year we have to beg for additional loans from other countries to finance our development. The First Lady answered that the money would not be taken from the state budget but would be collected from donations. However, would this not create the impression that domestic funds could be mobilised to finance development if ten and half milliard can be collected to finance such a project?" Why couldn't the donations be invested in a more productive venture such as the building of factories? Madam Tien answered that the project would attract tourists and thus be productive. The economists, of course, began to calculate and came to the conclusion that it would not be profitable. It would be more profitable, they contended, to build roads leading to places of tourist attractions or to repair existing roads. Roads, besides being useful for bringing tourist spots back to life, would also be useful for trade. Madam Tien again said that this was a cultural project and should not be viewed from the economic point of view only, for the profit from a cultural project was not materialistic. The artists responded this time and said that it would be better for the money to be used to repair museums and libraries, both of which were in a

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<sup>24</sup> See *Pedoman*, 2-12 February; *Sinar Harapan*, 2 December; *Indonesia Raya*, 10 December; *Api Pantjasila*, 18 December; *Sinar Harapan*, 18 December; *Kompas*, 20 December; *Angkatan Bersenjata*, 22 December; *Kompas*, 22 December; *Pedoman*, 24 December; *Proklamasi*, 24 December; in *ICATS*, 1971, pp. 840-848. These reports also show substantial initial opposition from members of the elite concerned about possible drainage away from different parts of the state budget. See especially the report on reaction from governors in *Sinar Harapan*, 2 December, *ICATS*, pp. 840-841.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 848

deplorable condition. In the end, Mrs Tien said that she would go on with the project for it was her own idea and she wanted to realise her ideas during her lifetime.<sup>26</sup>

Numerous ad hoc student and youth groups formed, amongst which the Gerakan Penghematan (Austerity Movement) was the most prominent. Arief Budiman was involved with this group, as were others from the earlier Mahasiswa Menggugat and KAK groups.<sup>27</sup> The students council at the University of Indonesia was particularly active, organising many public forums. On 12 January 1972, the All-Jakarta Body of Student Councils and Student Senate Cooperation issued a statement urging the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR – People’s Representative Council), to struggle for the “people’s aspirations” regarding the Mini project.<sup>28</sup>

The same combination of ad hoc student group street protests and office visitations, with university DEMAs holding panel discussions, occurred throughout most of Java and in Sulawesi and Sumatra.<sup>29</sup> One of the most interesting of the groups that appeared outside the major cities of Jakarta and Bandung was the group centred on *Sendi* newspaper.<sup>30</sup> It also published several important statements regarding the Mini controversy. While the Austerity Movement, as its name implied, concentrated on the economic wisdom of the Mini project and contained its criticism within the usual moralistic framework, *Sendi* viewed the Mini project and the accompanying events from a more political perspective. *Sendi* saw the ease with which Mrs Tien could carry out her wishes, the way in which the military authorities moved to forbid discussion of the issue and disband meetings and arrest protesters as simply another indication of the general nature of the government as such, namely, a dictatorship.

*Sendi*’s perspective was considerably different from that of the Arief Budiman-led Mahasiswa Menggugat, KAK, *golput* and Austerity Movement groups. These still presented themselves as being generally well disposed towards the Suharto government and acted

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<sup>26</sup> Arief Budiman, “Portrait”, *op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> *Nusantara*, 24 December, *Kompas*, 28 December, in *ICATS*, 1971, pp. 863-867.

<sup>28</sup> *Suara Karya*, 12 January, in *ICATS*, 1972, p. 54-55.

<sup>29</sup> Some of these discussions were banned or disbanded. See the report in *Indonesia Raya*, 4 January, in *ICATS*, 1972, p. 945.

<sup>30</sup> An almost complete set of *Sendi* is held in the Australian National Library.

within the context of a “moral force” to correct the excesses of the government should such arise as a result of the corrupting effect of power, or simply as a result of oversight due to government officials being too busy.

*Sendi* was formed by a group of students from Gajah Mada University and a lecturer in *publisistik* (journalism and communications) at the university. The majority of the students were from regions other than Java. The first issue of the newspaper was published in early November 1971. In the first six issues the paper published hard-hitting editorials on (a) lack of critical and serious research at universities; (b) the farcicality of the 1971 elections; (c) government neglect in financing of education; (d) *pembangunan* (development) as an empty slogan used by the authorities; and (e) the vulnerability of ordinary citizens to arbitrary arrest and other maltreatment by the authorities without any possibility of redress. By January 1972, *Sendi* had established its credentials as a critical journal — critical of both the student establishment and the authorities. Then, in the first issue of 1972, in January, it published its first full editorial on the Mini project, followed by a savage satirical comment underneath. The general approach of the paper in regard to political criticism can be observed in this latter piece. It was entitled *Mukaddimah* (Manifesto), which is also the title of the preamble of the 1945 Indonesian constitution, an almost holy document in the eyes of the government. The four paragraphs were printed in block letters and surrounded by a box. The statement, in fact, took the form of a mock constitutional preamble. It went as follows:

#### Mukaddimah

Whereas freedom is the inalienable right of just a tiny group in society, thereby repression and arbitrary rule naturally occur, because they are in accord with dictatorship and militarism;

And whereas the struggle of the ruler and his wife has reached a point of happiness being able to gouge out all the wealth they can:

By the grace of Satan and impelled by the desire to be obeyed, the rulers over the people of Indonesia declare their power;

Subsequent thereto, to form a strong ruling power which shall rule over all the people of Indonesia and all of Indonesia’s wealth; and in order to promote personal

status and prestige while impoverishing the nation, so shall be formulated the Indonesia Mini regulation establishing the Our Hope Foundation.<sup>31</sup>

The striking contrast between this outright and unrelenting condemnation of the government as a whole and the “moral force” concept of “moral pressure” and persuasion, with its assumption of the persuadability of the authorities, underlines the *Sendi* outlook as a new one within the context of student dissent in New Order Indonesia. Not that the *Sendi* group can be seen at this time as supporting an alternative leadership to Suharto and thus becoming fully involved in political struggle. Rather the difference lies in its open depiction of the government as a military dictatorship rather than a genuinely development-oriented government, with tendencies to corrupt and undemocratic excesses.

The Mini controversy had stirred up a wide range of opposition: amongst intellectuals, lawyers and artists as well as students. Suharto began the repression of the opposition with a threatening speech on the 6 January 1972. In this speech he accused the anti-Mini forces of really being out to topple the government and remove the armed forces from the administrative and legislative areas. He commented that these activities had been organised by the same old people (“*orang itu-itu juga*”) since 1968. He also made the most severe threat made against civil dissidents, including students, since 1966. He threatened to use the full power of the armed forces to “knock out” the protesters if they continued in their “misuse of democracy”.<sup>32</sup>

Although this speech presaged the quick demise of the anti-Mini movement, it also provoked several immediate critical responses from students and other groups. On the day after the Suharto speech, the papers published a statement by Arief Budiman and other Austerity Movement supporters entitled “We Will Be Powerless”.<sup>33</sup> Their statement revealed the difference in outlook between the student activists formed out of the opposition to Soekarno and the new generation, represented by *Sendi*. The statement confirmed the signatories’ opposition to the Mini project, but also announced that in the face of the threat of armed force made by President Suharto, the students — but “soft flesh, with eyes full of

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<sup>31</sup> *Sendi*, Minggu I, January 1972, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> See the extensive report of his statement in *Api Pancasila*, 6 January, in *ICATS*, 1972, pp. 51-52.

<sup>33</sup> *Pedoman*, 7 January, in *ICATS*, 1972, p. 53.

hope” — could do nothing else but now remain silent on the issue. The tone of the statement was one of disappointment but still remaining hope in the government. According to Arief Budiman, writing in 1973, the statement was considered “very touching” by many people and was a great blow to Suharto in the eyes of the Javanese.

To Pak Harto, in remembrance of our friendship formerly in 1966, we want to convey the message in order to distinguish who are friends and who are enemies; who truly loves Pak Harto and who wants him to trip and fall? We hope Pak Harto still remembers our old friendship and still wishes to hear what we are saying. With tears in our eyes we wave to you, Pak Harto: Good luck.<sup>34</sup>

A few days later, about seventy students and youth gathered at the graves of three students who had died in 1965-66 actions and swore to maintain the ideals of the early student actions. Among those attending were Arief Budiman, Julius Usman (a former activist in KAPPI, an anti-communist high school student group), Imam Walujo (a signatory of the “We Will Be Powerless” statement) and the Dutch-born civil rights activist Haji Princen.<sup>35</sup>

On 25 January, a statement was issued by a group of seven intellectuals from the University of Indonesia.<sup>36</sup> These intellectuals — Dr Alfian, Drs Dorodjatun Kuntjorojakti, Mrs T.O. Ichroni, Mardjono Reksodipuro and Drs Juwono Sudarsono — had also been active in criticisms of the Mini project. The intellectuals’ statement was primarily a statement of solidarity with the students and other youth. In Jogjakarta, *Sendi* also published an editorial on the subject of the overnight arrest of several students on the evening of 31 December at a protest against the Mini project – an obvious reflection of the hard line decided upon by Suharto. The *Sendi* writers took the first step towards shifting the attack from the role of individuals and even institutions to raising the issue of opposition to a “system”:

It seems that these enemies are not individual persons. We do not need to hate Mrs Tien Suharto and her seizing of the opportunity to push her project forward. Or to see the army that is arresting demonstrators as the enemy. That is all meaningless.

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<sup>34</sup> In *ICATS*, Jan. 1972 from *Pedoman*, 7 January 1972.

<sup>35</sup> *Indonesia Raja*, 11 January, in *ICATS*, 1972, p. 54.

<sup>36</sup> *Pedoman*, 25 January, in *ICATS*, 1972, p. 57.

Because while we are trapped in this chaotic system, anybody and everybody can act arbitrarily ... It seems that our enemy is not WHO but WHAT.<sup>37</sup>

The varying types of protest, however, were met by similar responses from the government. Arief Budiman and other student activists were arrested in late January.<sup>38</sup> *Sendi* finally had its permission to print revoked, and Ashadi Siregar, *Sendi*'s chief editor, was arrested and charged with insulting the head of state (in the *Mukaddimah*). He spent almost a year in gaol. Sporadic protesting continued up until early February, the last major protest being a poetry reading organised by the students of the Faculty of Letters at the University of Indonesia on 31 January 1972. Some '66 generation poets, now dissenting, read protest poems.<sup>39</sup> Although all the detainees were released during February, the protest movement was not able to revive. The threat to use the regime's security powers against the movement and the show of force in the arrests silenced most student protest for almost 18 months.

#### **1973-74: the beginnings of the new 'pergerakan'**

Between July and November 1973, a new wave of student protest hit Indonesia. The protest movement of 1973-74 developed in a quite different way from that of 1970-72, although many of the issues were the same. This change reflected the different range of social forces involved. The sudden influx of significant amounts of foreign capital had forced the closure of thousands of small Indonesian firms, especially textile businesses. The newspapers of Indonesia's indigenous business interests, such as *Nusantara*, *Indonesia Raya*, *Abadi*, *Pedoman* and others, began a sustained attack on government economic policy.

The student movement was operating in an environment where significant sections of the broad ruling layers — small business, the Islamic establishment, significant sections of the press — were potential allies. Moreover, all these groups had their own newspapers. '66 generation intellectuals, mostly people with PSI links or background, not only controlled some independent newspapers but also had influence in the GOLKAR newspaper *Suara Karya* through its editor, Rahman Tolleng, a former KAMI leader.

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<sup>37</sup> *Sendi*, Minggu II, January 1972.

<sup>38</sup> Budiman was arrested on 21 January, Jusuf A.R. on 23 January. *ICATS*, 1972, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> *ICATS*, 1972, p. 11.

The students went into action, therefore, in a climate where discontent with the Suharto government had spread to a number of sections of the original New Order alliance.

Another difference was that the leadership of the student body was now in the hands of a new generation of students. The outlook of these students was much more like that of the *Sendi* group than that of the “moral force” group and Arief Budiman. Indeed, in Jogjakarta, where *Sendi* was based, students associated with that newspaper played a major role in the 1973 protests. This new 1973 generation never went so far as to call openly for Suharto to be replaced, but its calls for a completely new economic strategy, its attacks on the so-called economic technocrats, its call for the disbanding of the president’s group of personal assistants and, most importantly, its alliance with a faction of the military opposed to Suharto, represented a real intervention into the struggle for power.

The University of Indonesia Discussion Group (Grup Diskusi Universitas Indonesia - GDUI) played an important role in developing the policies of the protest movement. This group had been formed much earlier and had been operating as a seminar for academics and advanced students. In late 1973, some of its main figures became very active in the criticism of the government’s economic policies. Especially active was the former Mahasiswa Mengugat-KAK activist Syahrir. Syahrir was now an assistant lecturer in development strategy at the Universitas Indonesia. He was assistant to Professor Sarbini Sumawinata, a PSI figure, who had been questioning the government’s policies since early 1971, mainly on the grounds of insufficient attention being paid to employment opportunities and income distribution.<sup>40</sup>

In Jakarta, one of the main themes that developed amongst the dissidents — dependency on foreign capital — got its first major public exposure through the weekly news magazine *TEMPO*, run by one of the most prominent, younger ’66 generation intellectuals, Goenawan

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<sup>40</sup> A comprehensive collection of newspaper reports on the events leading up to the major student protests and urban poor riots of January 1974 can be found in Marzuki Arifin S.E., *Fakta, Analisa lengkap dan latar belakang Persitiwa 15 Januari 1974*, Jakarta, 1974. Most of the incidents described here are reported in these clippings. Quotes, statements and so on have also been translated from the versions in this book. English language versions of newspaper reports, also composed as a chronology of events, can be found in the *ICATS* volumes for 1973-74.

Mohammed. On September 15 *TEMPO* published a report entitled: “Japan Arrives, Sees and Grabs”.<sup>41</sup>

In September 1973, Syahrir and another UI academic close to GDUI, Dr Juwono Sudarsono MA, both visited Jogjakarta. Sudarsono spoke at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at Gajah Mada University on the subject: “The international dimensions of Indonesian development”. During the event, Indonesia’s economic dependence on foreign countries was critically discussed. Then in November former *Sendi* activists Aini Chalid, Ashadi Siregar and another Jogjakarta activist, Fauzi Rizal, were invited to Jakarta. They all met with the GDUI group, and Aini Chalid gave a talk at the Faculty of Social Sciences, UI, entitled “The process of fermenting a new struggle”. In October in Bandung and Jakarta, student protests on the same theme, and critical of the development strategy as a whole, began to emerge. Already angered by police harassment of students with long hair, a group of students from the Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB) protested to the West Java Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (DPRD - Regional People’s Representatives Council). Posters were stuck up on the DPRD’s walls which read: “Foreign capital serves the people, or the people serve foreign capital?”; “The GNP goes up, the people’s trousers rot”; “A million barrels are pumped out, a million of the people’s pockets are emptied” and “A thousand yen are invested, a thousand small businesses fold”. In Jakarta, besides the GDUI, the University of Indonesia DEMA, referred to as DEMA UI, also became involved. Its chair, Hariman Siregar, also a member of GDUI and a medical student, soon emerged as the leading critic among students in Jakarta. The DEMA UI’s campaign soon led to the launching of the “24 October Petition”.<sup>42</sup>

#### 24 October Petition

To remind the military government, Intellectuals and technocrats of the following matters:

To review the development strategy and to formulate a new strategy with the proper balance between social, political and economic affairs which are anti-poverty, anti-ignorance and anti-injustice.

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<sup>41</sup> “Jepang datang, melihat dan menerkam”, *Tempo*, 15 September, 1973, pp. 44-50. The cover of this issue carries the slogan: *Invasi Saudara Tua* (Invasion of the elder brother.)

<sup>42</sup> These events are recorded in the news clippings reproduced in Arifin, op cit., pp 92-104.



Quickly free the people from the grip of uncertainty, the rape of the law, the reign of corruption, the misuse of power, increase in prices and unemployment.

Institutions for channelling society's opinions should be strong and function properly and must be given the maximum opportunity and place [in political life].

We are those with the greatest stake in the future and so the determining of the future, which cannot be separated from today's conditions, is both our right and duty. May God accompany the Indonesian nation on its journey.<sup>43</sup>

On and off campus, a variety of other groups began to form. They had names such as "National Pride Committee", "National Awareness Committee", "Anti-Luxury Committee", "Debt Paying Generation", "Black December Group".

Soon after the 24 October Petition was launched, creating a major stir in the press, J. Pronk, the Dutch minister for overseas development and the chair of the Intergovernmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI), visited Indonesia. Pronk was met by demonstrators in both Jakarta and Jogjakarta.<sup>44</sup>

In Jogjakarta, at a meeting between university students and Pronk on the campus of Gajah Mada, the criticism of foreign aid and investment came from a very active group called GEMIRI, the Indonesian Students' Movement for the People. In a pamphlet entitled "Overseas Aid and Our Development", GEMIRI addressed the problem of foreign aid and investment with the following words:

Overseas aid can give short term help but it can also become a long-term burden ...  
Or it can indeed become the weapon for large countries to gouge out raw materials  
and produce from developing countries.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 104. Also see *Pedoman*, 26 October, and *Sinar Harapan*, 31 October, in *ICATS*, 1973, p. 775. Also *TEMPO*, 3 November 1973, pp 13-14.

<sup>44</sup> For several newspaper reports of Pronk's visit, see *ICATS*, 1973, pp. 816-830.

<sup>45</sup> *Sinar Harapan*, 19 November, in *ICATS*, 1973, pp. 821-822. See *TEMPO*, 17 November, 1973, pp. 5-11.

Throughout November and December 1973 the number of protests increased.<sup>46</sup> Most DEMAs had issued statements critical of the development strategy or of the extensive political power of KOPKAMTIB or of the power of the president's personal assistants. Street demonstrations occurred every day in December carried out by various youth and student groups, sometimes aimed at government institutions, sometimes aimed at such symbols of luxury as nightclubs and beauty contests. Actions were also taken against the offices of various companies, and it soon became clear that Japanese capital was being singled out as a symbol of foreign capital in general.

In both Jakarta and Jogjakarta, the next important event in the development of the protest movement was the planned holding of midnight meditation meetings — *malam tirakatan* — on New Year's Eve. In Jakarta, before this event, Hariman Siregar, chair of the DEMA UI, had to confront a revolt within his ranks. Ten DEMA members issued a statement of no confidence in Hariman Siregar, on the grounds that many of the meetings held in the name of the DEMA UI had not been agreed to by the DEMA. However, the rector of the university continued to recognise Hariman as the legal chairman. This revolt came at the time of the planning for the night of meditation, and at the time of the DEMA UI statements opposing the coming visit of Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka and indicating the possibility of demonstrations.<sup>47</sup>

Given reports of a meeting by these 10 breakaway students at the house of an assistant to Ali Moertopo, *aspri* to Suharto for political affairs, it is clear that the attempt to discredit Hariman Siregar was also an attempt to stop the night of meditation and any possible anti-Japanese demonstrations at the time of Tanaka's visit. In Jogjakarta, the planned *malam keprihatinan* — "night of sadness/suffering" — was greeted with a statement on December 31 by the regional KOPKAMTIB commander that "Every act of violence will attract another act of violence".

The "night of prayer and meditation" in Jakarta was attended by approximately 300 students, and lasted from 11 pm until 2 am.<sup>48</sup> Attending were representatives from other

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<sup>46</sup> For 12 newspaper reports on such actions see *ICATS*, 1973, pp. 850-852; and "The Demonstrations", in *ICATS*, pp. 908-915.

<sup>47</sup> See Arifin's discussion of these developments, *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *ICATS*, 1973, p. 869.

University DEMA in Jakarta, as well as delegates from Bandung and Padang Panjang. There were several speakers, including Hariman Siregar and the UI rector, Nahar Mardjono. Hariman Siregar delivered a speech examining the role of Japan in South-East Asia's economy, with special reference to Indonesia, and offering biting criticism of the Indonesian government's own attitude towards development. After analysing the reasons for the increase of Japanese economic activity in Indonesia, Hariman came to the conclusion:

The relationship between Indonesia and Japan had put Indonesia in a position of dependency, and if we examine the country's position in the international system, we see that because of Indonesia's weakness, we are more a prisoner of the system than a participant.<sup>49</sup>

The economic characteristics of this dependence were pictured by Hariman in his general analysis of the role of foreign capital in Indonesia.

.... the economy is now based on five sectors. The first is overseas aid; the second, foreign capital; the third is exports of rubber; the fourth is oil; and the fifth, timber. And we know that the increase in rubber, oil and timber output would not be possible without those foreign inputs. So we can see that overseas aid and capital are the central factors in our economy.<sup>50</sup>

Early in January 1974 the government began to respond to the rising wave of student criticism.<sup>51</sup> Already in the previous few weeks, several of the members of the smaller ad hoc student and youth groups had been arrested or detained for interrogation. Now the government began to respond to the DEMA. First Suharto responded positively to a request by the DEMA for a meeting with him. This occurred on the 11 January, when 100 students from 34 student councils of major universities met with Suharto for an hour-long discussion.<sup>52</sup> Two declarations were handed to the president, one signed by the DEMAs from

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<sup>49</sup> The speech was later reprinted in Hariman Siregar, *Hati Nurani Seorang Demonstran*, Jakarta, 1994, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*, p. 4

<sup>51</sup> *TEMPO*, 12 January, 1974, p. 8.

<sup>52</sup> *ICATS*, 1974, p. 4.

Jakarta universities, and the other signed by universities from other parts of Java, and from Bali and Sumatra.<sup>53</sup>

Two days earlier, on 9 January, a student meeting at the ITB burnt effigies of presidential adviser Sudjono Humardhani and Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka. On the same day, UI students organised another panel discussion between Emil Salim, minister of communications, and Dorodjatun Kuntjorajakti, social scientist and GDUI figure, on the topic of foreign capital. On 10 January, another panel discussion was held on the role of Japanese foreign capital, this time with Nurcholis Madjid as moderator. On 12 January, the day after the DEMA-Suharto meeting, 12 DEMA from Jakarta held a rally in the grounds of the Universitas Kristen Indonesia, where effigies of “Tokyo dog” Sujono Huinardhani and “economic imperialist” Tanaka were burnt. At the same meeting, organised jointly by the DEMAs of Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Trisakti and IKIP Muhammadiyah, Hariman Siregar appealed for newspapers to boycott advertisements of Japanese companies. A project officer was also appointed for the student demonstrations planned to welcome Prime Minister Tanaka on his arrival.

The most important pressure on the students to stop the demonstrations was a joint statement on the same day by Generals Panggabean and Sumitro that “the most recent student actions tend towards the forming of forces, and can be interpreted as an act of *MAKAR* (rebellion, attempt to seize power)”. Despite the warning, the demonstrations continued.<sup>54</sup>

On 15 January about 500 student and youth protesters met Tanaka at the airport. At 8 am other students met at the Medical Faculty of Universitas Indonesia and from there marched to Trisakti University. They shouted slogans and carried banners criticising Japanese

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<sup>53</sup> There is a detailed report on this meeting in *Sinar Harapan*, 11 January, in *ICATS*, 1974, pp. 21-23. It lists the 34 DEMA that attended the meeting and contains the six-point declaration submitted to President Suharto.

<sup>54</sup> *Berita Buana*, 9 January, *ICATS*, 1974, pp. 29-30, for one example of security officials raising the charge of “*MAKAR*”.

investment. At Trisakti University, reportedly around 2,000 students rallied confirming the general theme of the protests and also rejecting the accusation of MAKAR.<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile in other parts of Jakarta riots and looting were breaking out. By the afternoon, areas of the city up to 10 kilometres apart were being ransacked or smashed up. In the evening a curfew was declared for after 6 pm. Whatever the effect of the demonstrations may otherwise have been, the occurrence of rioting immediately provided the government with grounds to act against the students and their supporters. The demonstrations of the students and the rioting were taken as parts of the same event. Responsibility for the rioting was laid squarely at the feet of the students.<sup>56</sup>

By 19 January, at least 18 intellectuals and students were arrested, including Hariman Siregar. On the 21st, Yap Thiam Hien, a Jakarta civil rights lawyer, who, along with H. Princen, had been extremely active in protesting illegal arrests and detentions throughout December and January, was also arrested. On 6 February, the attorney-general announced that 45 people suspected of political involvement in the *malapeketa 15 Januari* or MALARI, (“the January 15 disaster”) were under arrest. In the days to follow, several important Jakarta newspapers and magazines were closed down for having published so-called inflammatory reports of the riots and preceding events. Demonstrations occurred in other

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<sup>55</sup> *ICATS* carries 13 newspaper reports of demonstrations between 1 and 15 January, “The Demonstrations and Security”, *ICATS*, 1974, pp. 31-35.

<sup>56</sup> There was another “sub-plot” to the occurrences and demonstrations in that there is evidence of intervention into the student political arena by Ali Moertopo, who was trying to use the student protests to undermine General Sumitro, who was responsible for security. Moertopo tried to bring some students under his leadership by holding meetings with these students in his house. There is also evidence indicating that he may have played a role in organising incitements to rioting during the period. This accusation was made explicitly by student leader Aini Chalid in the dramatic one-minute final statement in his trial in 1975. (I attended this trial hearing, having been named by the prosecutor as a correspondent with Chalid and categorised as a “*penganut ajaran Marx*” [“Disciple of teachings of Marx”]. The tape recording of his one-minute attack on Moertopo was played over and over again outside the courtroom to a group of journalists who were stunned into disbelief — in Chalid’s courage. On Aini Chalid, see my “In Memoriam Aini Chalid”, [http://blogs.usyd.edu.au/maxlaneintlasi/2007/02/in\\_memoriam\\_aini\\_chalid.html](http://blogs.usyd.edu.au/maxlaneintlasi/2007/02/in_memoriam_aini_chalid.html).

cities until General Sumitro ordered the banning of all demonstrations in the regions on 20 January.<sup>57</sup>

### **The 1973-74 movement and previous activism**

After only one generational change in the student population and despite the repression of left-wing ideology, ideas very similar to those espoused by Soekarno and the PKI began to emerge. The 1973-74 student leaders were mostly anti-communist, with highly negative and critical perceptions of the Soekarno period and with conventional views of communism as simply a form of repressive totalitarianism. Yet their critiques of political and economic policies sounded very similar to phenomena that the PKI and Soekarno were also campaigning against.

The PKI and Soekarno campaigned for the “retooling” of corrupt *kabir* (capitalist bureaucrats). The 1973 student leaders campaigned for the dismissal of corrupt officials entwined in the struggle for business concessions from foreign interests. The PKI and Soekarno campaigned under the slogan: “Go to hell with your aid!” and talked about the need to build an independent economy free from neo-colonial domination. The new generation spoke of the foreign domination of the economy and the role of aid as a lever of power over the whole society. Some of the largest student demonstrations were in response to foreign officials — the Dutch development minister Pronk and the Japanese prime minister — who would have easily classified as representatives of NEKOLIM (neo-colonialism and imperialism), which Soekarno had also identified as a primary enemy.

The students’ criticisms, however, were not underpinned by the same Marxist political theory that had flourished in Indonesia since the first decades of the 20th century. In the 1970s, it was the ideas of the international new left that made their way, unevenly, into the student movement in Indonesia.<sup>58</sup> Writings about dependent development and neo-

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<sup>57</sup> *ICATS*, 1974, pp. 36-45. Arifin’s news clippings collection is also very comprehensive in covering the events.

<sup>58</sup> There is no study tracing how these influences made their way into Indonesia. There are two mechanisms that can be pointed to that are also mentioned in this thesis. First was the publication of the more radical later writings of Herb Feith and his students from the 1970s. His status as a leading Indonesianist meant that these articles received significant publicity. Second was the role of Rendra, who had spent the period 1962-70 in New York. He also brought back some of the ideas of the U.S. New Left. Of course, also the growth of the

colonialism developed in Latin America were also available. These did not contribute to any Marxist-style left-wing current developing. Rather, embryonic ideas of class exploitation, official corruption and foreign economic domination developed as part of a more general democratic agenda. Still, it was clear that the terror and repression after 1965 had been effective, within the student movement at least, only in suppressing the old vocabulary. It could not suppress the recognition by some people of real, existing phenomena.

These “new” ideas were, interestingly, complemented by another critique that in some respects was missing, or at least subdued, in the pre-’65 left’s campaigning. Even though just a few years before, KAMI leaders had recognised a student-army partnership, the new movement exhibited an open hostility to militarism. The *Sendi Muqaddimah* as well as the 24 October Petition both referred to militarism or a military government. Before 1965, the left had refrained from an open attack on the military as a left wing was developing within the military. After 1965, left-sympathising officers were executed, arrested or purged. This included some senior generals as well as the commander of the Air Force, Omar Dhani, who was brought before an army tribunal and gaoled. The PKI’s approach was to attack the “anti-people aspect of the state” while defending the “pro-people aspect”. By 1973, the perception of contradictions within the army had not completely disappeared. Suharto’s rival, General Sumitro, had begun a campaign for a “new pattern of leadership”<sup>59</sup> and had even made a trip to Buru Island to see the communist and other left prisoners and promise them an approaching release. Sumitro was dismissed by Suharto after the *MALARI* demonstrations and riots, ending for the next 15 years any serious attempts by senior army officers to portray themselves as more liberal than Suharto.<sup>60</sup> After 1973 anti-militarism, never such an explicit part of *pergerakan*, congealed as a part of the new agenda of the *gerakan mahasiswa* (student movement).

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international movement against the Vietnam War in the late ’60s and early ’70s pointed people in the direction of US radicalism.

<sup>59</sup> The idea of a “new pattern of leadership” started to be reported in November-December 1973. See the newspaper reports in *ICATS*, 1973, pp. 789-792. In these reports, Sumitro is quoted as saying that the “new pattern of leadership” would be instituted by 1 April or mid-1974 at the latest.

<sup>60</sup> For coverage of the role of General Sumitro, see May, Brian, *Indonesian Tragedy*, London : Routledge, 1978, chapter 10, and Jenkins, David, *Suharto and his Generals: Indonesian Military Politics 1975-1983*, Ithaca : Cornell, 1984.

These ideas, this embryonic left critique, developed precisely in the realm of mobilisational politics. Mobilising students looked for ideas from other arenas of mobilisation: the US new left, Latin America and the Thai student movement, which also launched big anti-Japanese and anti-military demonstrations in January 1974. In academia itself the echo was much more faint, still mediated by the anti-communist sentiments of the pro-Western PSI intellectuals. They were further removed from the arena of mobilisation, although several paid the price of a year in jail for having any connection with the student movement at all. The young economist Syahrir, who had been the closest to the students, was tried and sentenced to five years' imprisonment for subversion along with two student leaders, Hariman Siregar from Jakarta and Aini Chalid from Jogjakarta, who also received heavy sentences.<sup>61</sup>

The impact of this period of student political mobilisation, throughout 1973, was heightened by an additional separate but parallel campaign of dissidence. This was launched by the poet and dramatist, Rendra<sup>62</sup>. As a writer associated with the '66 generation and who had participated in student movement activities in 1972 and early 1973, Rendra also enjoyed the privilege of being able to engage in mobilisational politics. At the same time, being actually outside the legitimate haven of the campus, he was under constant pressure from the security authorities and needed to engage in a series of political manoeuvres to protect this privilege, including a high-profile meeting with General Sumitro.

The initial phase of Rendra's campaign, aimed particularly at the increased repressiveness and role of the military, was a media campaign publicising a play he was preparing for performance in January 1974. By the end of 1973, Rendra, who was already a celebrity because of his flamboyant lifestyle and love poetry as well as earlier protest actions, had become the most high-profile critic of the government. This campaign had some elements of mobilisation politics: media conferences, high-profile public appointments with officials, open participation in public street protests. It was the climax of Rendra's campaign, however, that was most reminiscent of pre-1965 *pergerakan* activity. Formally, this activity,

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<sup>61</sup> Van Dijk, Kees, "The Hariman Siregar Trial", *Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs*, Jan-June, (9)1, pp. 1-33.

<sup>62</sup> A full collection of newspaper reports on all of Rendra's theatre based protests can be found in Edi Haryono (ed), *Menonton Bengkel Teater Rendra*, Kepel Press, Jogja, 2005. The volume contains more than 1,600 pages of newspaper and magazine article reprints.



taking place in Jakarta in January 1974, was a drama performance. Politically, however, it can be marked as the first use of Jakarta's huge sports stadium for a mass political rally, with the *semangat* (spirit) of a genuine *pergerakan* mass rally, since the stadium was used by Soekarno and the PKI for the same purposes.

The Istora Stadium was packed out with thousands of people for a performance of the play *Mastadon dan Burung Kondor*. The play described a student-led mass revolt against a military dictatorship set in a fictional Latin American country. One character in the play is a poet who tells why he must speak out:

I hear the voice  
the scream of a wounded animal.

Someone has shot an arrow at the moon  
A bird falls from its nest.

People must be awakened  
Witness must be given  
So that life might be guarded.<sup>63</sup>

The semi-mystical cry of witness, however, is accompanied by a beautiful poem, "Mastadon and Condor", throbbing in its original Indonesian language rhythm with the power of a suffering voice, and easily mistaken as a poem from the pre-independence *pergerakan* or the pre-'65 radicalism.

The mountain wind moves softly through the forest,  
sweeps across the wide river,  
and finally comes to rest among the tobacco leaves.  
Sadly it watches  
the weary pace of the farm labourers  
as they march across the rich earth,  
which offers them only poverty.

The farm labourers work,  
planting seed in the fertile ground,  
bringing in the abundant harvest,  
and lead lives of misery.

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<sup>63</sup> Untitled poem, published in translation by Harry Aveling in W.S. Rendra, *State of Emergency*, Sydney : Wild and Woolley, 1980.

They live in shanties without windows  
and harvest for landlords  
who live in huge palaces.  
Their sweat falls like gold  
for the carpetbaggers who run cigar factories in Europe.  
When they demand their share of profits,  
the economists straighten their ties,  
and send them condoms.

My people's faces are lined with pain.  
They move like ghosts,  
all day,  
reaching out,  
turning this way and that,  
finding nothing.  
By sunset, their bodies are pulp.  
They lie down, exhausted,  
and their souls turn to condors.

Thousands of condors,  
millions of condors,  
moving to the high mountains,  
where they can rest in silence.  
Only in silence  
can they fully savour their pain and bitterness.

The condors scream.  
They scream with rage  
as they escape to the lonely mountains.  
The condors scream,  
and their screams echo among the rocks  
and the silent mountains.  
Millions of condors clawing at rocks,  
pecking at rocks, pecking at the air.  
In town, men prepare to shoot them.<sup>64</sup>

Ali Moertopo's fear of mobilisation, of involvement in "conflicts of political and ideological interests", proved to have a basis — at least, from the perspective of the counter-revolution.

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<sup>64</sup> Published in translation by Harry Aveling in *ibid.*

The students' privileged status allowing mobilisation had provided fertile ground for old ideas to begin to grow again, even if using different words. And this was not the only fear that the new *gerakan* heightened: there was also the new activity of the supposedly floating mass: the "*millions of condors clawing at rocks, pecking at rocks, pecking at the air*".

### **The bitter fruits of de-organisation**

The counter-revolution and its policy of enforcing the floating mass had the purpose of permanently suppressing mass mobilisation activity. In the past, it had been the party system and the affiliated mass organisations that had organised these mobilisations. The mass base of these parties, especially those most successful in organising, were located not only in the villages, but also in the cities. In the cities also, the mass of the population had become de-organised.

Between 1966 and 1973, there was no serious union organising of any kind. The government had made initial moves to form a new union federation, the All Indonesian Labour Federation (Federasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia) in 1972, which it kept under tight control, excluding workers from any real participation in decision-making. But in 1973, even as a "yellow" union, it had virtually no presence among the proletariat and semi-proletariat of either Jakarta or other major cities. The old unions, especially the big left-wing unions, had been smashed, their leaders and key support bases slaughtered and terrorised. *Aliran* political life had been ended. The millions of proletarians and semi-proletarians living in Jakarta *kampung* and surrounds had no organised political life at all.

While organisation had disappeared, politics itself cannot just be disappeared. The student mobilisations kept issues of discontent before the population. Dissident voices from the student movement were published in several major newspapers until several were closed down in January 1974. The campaign launched by General Sumitro around the theme of a "new pattern of national leadership" and the incredibly high-profile mobilisation campaign by Rendra separately made sure that the general atmosphere, especially in the cities where the media magnified the activities of students, artists and politicians, was increasingly politicised and tense.

The effect of de-organising the urban floating mass was to facilitate the emergence of a new form of political protest: *rusuh* (riot). Mass discontent with social and economic conditions and anger at corruption and the emergence of an elite living an ostentatious lifestyle were

no longer organised into a political movement. They simply burst forth onto the streets of Jakarta in mass riots not seen before in independent Indonesia. Riots, where spontaneous anger manifested in violent attacks on shops selling luxury goods, government offices and other symbols of the alien lifestyles of the enclave economy, became a regular phenomenon in New Order Indonesia. The floating mass did not always just float.

Between 30 December 1973 and 14 January 1974, student demonstrations in Jakarta escalated. These demonstrations, widely reported in the press and by word of mouth, heated up the political atmosphere. Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka was scheduled to arrive in Jakarta on 15 January directly from Bangkok. The large and militant student demonstrations against Tanaka and Japanese investment in Thailand were also widely publicised in Jakarta. Hariman Siregar had earlier travelled to Bangkok to meet Thai students, and this visit was also widely publicised. On 14 and 15 January, thousands of students assembled on the campus of the University of Indonesia and marched into the city centre. News of the demonstrations spread quickly over these two days, on radio and then through the press on 15 January. In tandem with the student demonstrations, riots broke out.

Rioting occurred in the main Chinatown retail centre, the main shopping mall complex, the nightclub centre and along the main thoroughfares where motor car and other luxury good showrooms were situated. It was later reported that at least 11 people died, 17 were seriously injured, 120 less seriously injured and 775 arrested. 807 cars, and 187 motor bikes were allegedly destroyed, mainly set on fire. The same report stated that 144 buildings were destroyed as well as the main Coca-Cola bottling factory, at the time a prime symbol of the new and much increased Western presence.<sup>65</sup>

Again and again during the '70s, '80s and '90s, the now de-organised urban floating mass were to vent their discontent in the form of *kerusuhan*. During the 1980s, student activity was suppressed and *kerusuhan* broke out as discontent sharpened with no political focus generated by a tandem political movement. As a result, the scapegoat factor became more prominent, with attacks on Chinese or Christian shops or houses, as well as symbols of luxury living and government authority. The biggest of these occurred between 20 and 25 November 1980, when the major Javanese towns of Solo and Semarang and scores of other

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<sup>65</sup> Arifin, *op. cit.*, p. 164. See also May, *op. cit.*, pp. 304-305.

smaller towns were hit by such rioting.<sup>66</sup> Many of these were smaller towns, indicating that even the small town floating mass would be activated in this way. In the 1990s, the *MALARI* pattern re-emerged as student and other organised mass protests began again. Twice major rioting occurred in tandem with major organised protests: in July 1996 and May 1998, the latter bring down the country's dictator.

### **The counter-revolution's last offensive**

The suppression in the wake of *MALARI* was not yet total, however, and the protest momentum revived quickly. Most importantly, the campus, as an arena of privileged mobilisation, retained its privileges in this respect. There was no ban on student political activity. Although it took three years for the DEMAs to recover from the arrest of so many student leaders, they continued to exist and were slowly able to reactivate.

Of course, the underlying issues of discontent, especially among the students and the urban and rural floating mass, had not disappeared. The years 1974 to 1977 were marked by incidents that only served to underline the issues that had been raised by the student movement. The state oil company, PERTAMINA, despite huge windfalls in profits as a result of the rise of world oil prices, almost went into bankruptcy as a result of suspect deals. President Suharto was forced to dismiss its director, an army general, Ibnu Sutowo, who went on to become a millionaire businessman. There was a general sense of the oil profit windfalls fuelling an extravagant lifestyle among the elite. During 1974-75, the trials of the detained *MALARI* activists received extensive newspaper coverage, ensuring that all the political issues raised by the student movement continued to be discussed.<sup>67</sup>

After a brief tactical retreat to the performance of Greek tragedies in the aftermath of the suppression of the student movement in January 1974 and the massive success of his mass *Mastodon and Condor* rally, Rendra managed to gain permission to perform a new play in Jakarta and then in Jogjakarta. Again, the performance of *The Struggle of the Naga Tribe* was more like a *pergerakan* mass rally than a typical stage drama. It was performed in the large open-air theatre in Jakarta's main arts complex to an audience of several thousand people ,

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<sup>66</sup> P. Bambang Siswoyo, *Huru Hara Solo Semarang Solo Semarang – suatu reportase*, no date or place of publication.

<sup>67</sup> All the trial sessions were reported in some detail in the daily media.

who reacted to much of the play as if they were listening to fiery popular orators. The performance was also a national event with extensive media coverage. The performance, the mobilisation of an audience through prior media coverage, the response of the audience, the reviews and controversy all told a fundamental story: this was again another real manifestation of the methods of mass political mobilisation, even if on a limited basis, in the absence of the broader organisation of the floating mass. With almost all of the 1973 student leaders and their intellectual allies in prison, Rendra emerged as the most prominent opposition spokesperson.<sup>68</sup>

*Naga Tribe* itself raised all the issues of the 1973 movement: arbitrary rule by a military government, corruption and an economic policy based on surrender of the development of the national economy to foreign interests. The play depicted a conflict between a village community as yet untouched by these phenomena and a government in an unnamed country with remarkable similarities to Indonesia at that time. This rather non-floating village community confronted, including in direct polemics and near physical confrontation, a coalition of a corrupt queen, Her Majesty; Colonel Srenggi; a chorus of drone parliamentarians; Mr Joe the US ambassador and Big Boss, the foreign mine company owner.<sup>69</sup>

There are a number of indications that these and other activities kept the issues raised in 1973 on the agenda and widespread in the society. In September 1976, the government announced that there had been a secret attempt to replace the government in what the head of KOPKAMTIB called a “palace revolution”. This “palace revolution” was apparently being carried out by a low-level Agricultural Ministry official, Sawito, who was also a mystic.<sup>70</sup> He had prepared documents calling for Suharto to surrender power to the elder statesman and conservative figure, former vice-president Mohammad Hatta. The whole case, and later Sawito’s trial, once again kept all these issues in the public mind. More than this, however, the depth and extent of feeling around corruption and arbitrary rule were

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<sup>68</sup> Rendra, *The Struggle of the Naga Tribe*, University of Queensland Press, 1978. I attended both performances in Jakarta in 1978.

<sup>69</sup> See Max Lane, “Introduction”, in *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> See David Bouchier, *Dynamics of Dissent in Indonesia: Sawito and the Phantom coup*, Cornell, New York, 1984.

reflected in the fact that one of the statements written by Sawito was signed by Cardinal Darmoyuwono, the head of the Catholic Church; Dr. T.B. Simatupang, probably the most senior intellectual from the Protestant churches; Prof. Dr. Hamka, one of the most respected Islamic teachers, and R. Said Sukanto Tjokrodiatmojo, a former police chief and head of the Secretariat for Cooperation among mystic groups and former vice-president, and the “founding father” of the republic, Mohammad Hatta himself. These very senior figures would not have signed Sawito’s statement if the sentiments it expressed were not widespread in society. The statement was presumably meant to be used to force Suharto to resign. A part of the statement read:

... if the current progress in national development is evaluated in the context of the way in which it has really benefited the Indonesian people as a whole it is clear that a part brought about an obvious deterioration in the standard of human dignity. This [deterioration], already in its critical stages, is leading is into the valley of gross indignity and has endangered both national life and the Indonesian national character to the extent that the very unity of the society and the process of national development are threatened. The danger of this threat is already quite apparent in the throttling of the sovereignty of the law.<sup>71</sup>

That discontent was also reflected, for the first time during the New Order, in a wave of worker and farmer protests. Between 1967 and 1977, there had been an increase in the size of the factory workforce, particularly textiles, and between 1977 and 1980 there was a wave of strikes as this new generation of factory workers attempted to win wage rises and better conditions, in particular the right to strike. International Labour Organisation figures show a jump from six strikes a year to several score each year by 1978-80. The pioneering documentation *Indonesian Workers and their Right to Organise* recorded details from, more than 60 of these strikes and protests, mainly among textile workers (INDOC, Leiden, 1981) . There was another wave of protests by plantation workers in Sumatra, where thousands of rural labourers came into conflict with the military. These developments, (which petered out after a series of repressive steps followed by a recession in 1982-83), also drew attention to all these issues during the last years of the 1970s. All these developments — the student leader trials, the *Naga Tribe* event, the Sawito affair, the strikes and plantation worker

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<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

protests — both reflected and deepened the impact of the '73 protests. By 1977, a new generation of students was leading the student councils and preparing another wave of protests following very tame May 1977 elections, where the “simplified” parties “competed” and delivered a massive 66% victory to GOLKAR.

Later that year student protests were occurring again: demonstrations, mass leafleting, sit-ins, public forums and conferences all featured. The student press also revived. The students pursued the same themes as in 1973: military power, arbitrary rule, unjust economic strategy and foreign dependence and debt.<sup>72</sup> The repression of the students in 1974, the heavy sentences handed out to Siregar, Syahrir and Chalid and the refusal of the regime to make any concessions to the students' demands had also hardened the movement's militancy. Demonstrations increased in size and number between October 1977 and January 1978. By January 1978, student councils from more than 60 universities around the country were coordinating their protest activities. Leafleting and postering spread throughout Jakarta and Bandung, with students at the Institute of Technology in Bandung taking the lead. Newspaper coverage of the student actions, occurring daily by January 1978, was also extensive, including in both the mass circulation and elite dailies.<sup>73</sup>

On 20 and 21 January, the regime launched the last battle of the counter-revolution's offensive, 13 years after it began. Six newspapers, including three prestige dailies and a main Jakarta tabloid, were banned. All student councils were frozen, i.e. they were banned from continuing activity. One hundred and forty-three student leaders were arrested along with 15 non-student activists. Widespread protest activity continued despite the arrests until the sitting of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) in March, which re-elected Suharto. However, after the MPR completed its session, the regime continued its repression. The privilege of mobilisation that it had granted to the campuses when the KAMI students were allies of the counter-revolution was now completely withdrawn.

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<sup>72</sup> For a good example of these criticisms, see Heri Akhmadi, *Breaking the Chains of Oppression of the Indonesian People*, Ithaca: Cornell, 1981.

<sup>73</sup> These events are closely documented in Stamp, Wendy, *Internal Opposition to the Suharto regime: the student movement 1977-1978 as a case study*, (B.A. Thesis ) Australian National University.



Student councils were banned on all campuses under a new policy called “Normalisation of Campus Life” (*Normalisasi Kehidupan Kampus* — NKK Moertopo’s concept of the floating mass was applied now in this arena as well. Students were to study and that’s all, just as the floating mass was to remain “wholly occupied with developmental efforts”. Key student leaders were put on trial and sentenced to between one and four years’ gaol.

Following the two waves of suppression, in January 1974 and then January 1978, NKK was to remain more or less effective in ending mobilisational politics on campus and off for the next 11 years, until 1989. After the banning or dissolution of the student councils and the announcement of NKK, there were some final protests. A protest statement was issued by 11 prominent academics, intellectuals and artists, including Rendra. The last real mobilisation action was a mass poetry reading by Rendra in the open air theatre in the Jakarta Arts Centre before thousands of Jakartans cheering every attack on the government in his poems. Provocateurs attacked the poetry reading, running up to the stage and throwing ammonia bombs, which forced Rendra and others off the stage as the fumes dispersed. But the reading resumed.<sup>74</sup> The next day, Rendra too was arrested for “reading poems that provoked violence”, i.e. of the provocateurs. Rendra spent almost a year in gaol. His arrest was a last repressive foray in the battle to end mobilisation.<sup>75</sup>

One poem that captured the essence of this fiery mass rally, and which Rendra declaimed with all the *semangat* of a *pergerakan* activist was “Poem of an Angry Person”:

Because we eat roots  
and flour piles up in your warehouses ...  
Because we lived all cramped up  
and your space is so abundant ...  
So we are not allies.

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<sup>74</sup> These events are captured on an exciting tape recording of the event made by Dr. Douglas Miles. I retain a copy of that tape recording.

<sup>75</sup> After his release from prison in late 1978, he was involved with political activists who produced the weekly newspaper *Santana*, published in Jakarta in 1979. Others involved included the journalist activist Yoppie Lasut, whose articles had covered the anti-corruption campaigns of 1970-72. See “Lencana Kekuasaan”, *Santana*, No. 195, January 1979, p. 1. He also wrote the editorial “Menyaksikan Zaman Edan”, *Santana*, No. 199, January 1979, p. 4, comparing the repression of freedom of speech and low level of “collective common sense” with Hitler’s Germany. *Santana* did not survive beyond 1979.

Because we are soiled  
and you are shiny bright ...  
Because we feel suffocated  
and you lock the door.  
So we distrust you.

Because we are abandoned on the streets  
and you own all the shade ...  
Because we endure floods\and you party on pleasure boats ...  
So we don't like you.

Because we are silenced  
and you never stop nagging ...  
Because we are threatened  
and you use violence against us ...  
So we say to you NO.

Because we may not choose  
and you are free to make your plans ...  
Because we have only sandals  
and you are free to use rifles ...

Because we must be polite  
and you have jails so NO and NO to you.  
Because we are the current of the river  
and you are the stones without heart ...  
So the water will erode away the stones.

Rendra's *Naga Tribe*, his other plays of 1975-77, and the poems he read and declaimed as part of the student protest — which he called “A Poet’s Pamphlets” — not only captured the spirit of the whole *gerakan*. It also attracted the ire of those intellectuals and artists who still had the KAMI spirit of 1965. They attacked these works as in the same spirit of the left-wing literature of the 1960s. For them, the kind of descriptions found in “Mastodon and Condor” and “Poem of an Angry Man” were “caricature” without nuance. Echoing the cries of these intellectuals in 1966, such “propaganda” constituted “tyranny”.<sup>76</sup> Rendra’s pamphlet poetry began to be accused of taking literature back to the PKI’s LEKRA writing.

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<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Ikranegara, “The Struggle of the Naga Tribe: The irony of a propaganda piece”, *Kompas*, August 1975, reprinted in English in Rendra, *The Struggle of the Naga Tribe*, Queensland University Press, 1979.

Work continued throughout the 1980s by students and-ex-students (as they left campus and found jobs) in developing the critiques that began during 1973-78, but no longer from within or connected to a mobilisational framework.<sup>77</sup> It was the period when the “NGO politics” of “civil society” began to develop, often, though not always, hostile to mass action and mobilisation. The student movement between 1973 and 1978 had continued the political methods of before 1965 — but with no organising together with workers or peasants — and had reintroduced some of the old critiques, set out in a different vocabulary. But the adoption of these methods had never been a conscious adoption of the pre-’65 political culture. Mass action or mobilisation politics did not develop again until the late 1980s, but this time as a conscious strategy of a section of a new generation of activists.

## Conclusions

This review of student politics during the 1968-78 period reveals the dynamic to return to open mass action politics, though constrained by the ideological heritage of the ’66 generation. Street protest developed again, climaxing in the large rallies and demonstrations in late 1973 and January 1974, resuming again in late 1997 and 1978. The constraints of the anti-mobilisation and anti-left 1966 legacy meant that among those carrying out these mobilisations there was no developed perspective for using mass action. Furthermore, the anti-left heritage meant that the student movement engaged in these activities separately from any class forces. All the same, not only some of the methods, but also many ideas reflected that of the pre-’65 left movement. A further constraint was the rejection of “politics” for being a “moral force”, which reflected the New Order’s fundamental hostility to mass politics, but also the consciousness of some of the groups that initiated KAMI as the anti-left student front. This orientation also tended to provide the basis for political leadership of the articulation of protest to be taken up by those least seen to be connected to the struggle for power, such as artists. Thus the most significant mass rallies took the form of plays and poetry readings by Rendra.

Despite these constraints, the New Order, with hostility to mass mobilisation politics as its central plank, could not tolerate such activity. As a result, it essentially moved to enforce

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<sup>77</sup> See Aspinall, Edward, *Student Dissent in the 1980s*, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1993. See also Aspinall, Edward, *Opposing Suharto Compromise, Resistance and Regime Change in Indonesia*, Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2005, especially Chapter 5.

floating mass on the student population as well, with *normalisasi kehidupan kampus*. The centrality of suppressing such activity to the fundamental structure and character of the New Order is revealed by its inability to tolerate such activity, even from a sector that was originally a key ally.

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## Chapter 4

### Planning the revival of *aksi*

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the thesis present an analysis of the process of the rewinning of *aksi massa* as the primary form of struggle against the authoritarian New Order government of President Suharto. Chapter 4, “Plans”, outlines the initial steps taken by a small organisation that consciously set out to revive the method of mass action. Chapter 5 describes the evolution of that initiative and the role it played in the overthrow of Suharto and the framework in which that overthrow took place. Chapter 6 begins to map out the limitations of what mass action was able to achieve during this period as the issue of who will wield power was posed more concretely in the last phase of Suharto’s demise.

Most analysis of the fall of Suharto concentrates on the analysis of the internal factionalism in the last days of Suharto.<sup>1</sup> However, the main contrast that I will attempt to draw in the conclusion of the thesis is with the more complex analysis of Edward Aspinall, whose major work I have already discussed in Chapter One. These chapters provide more information on the activities of the radical pro-mass-action forces, which makes it possible to develop a different perspective.

The emergence of the political current which placed *aksi massa* at the centre of its outlook is central to this analysis. The major point that the chapter wishes to underscore is that the process that the group initiated was consciously aimed at developing mass mobilisation as its strategy. This is an important point because the later extent of mass mobilisation, documented in chapters 5 and 6 (and even to some extent in Chapter 7), can be seen as a measure of the aptness of this group’s decisions. The ability of a very small group to pioneer the spread of a new (i.e. revived) method of political struggle reveals that method’s suitability to the purpose espoused, namely, the dislodging of the authoritarian regime.

Chapter 5 documents the extent of the success of their approach, even under conditions where state power was being used to prevent their success. As noted above, Chapter 6 begins to set out the limitations of this method. The discussion of its limitations will be continued in the final section of

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<sup>1</sup> For an extended list of texts discussing the fall of Suharto, see the Bibliography.

the thesis when the fate of mass mobilisation politics after the fall of Suharto is discussed. This discussion will be brought back to the notions of mass action discussed in the Introduction.

On May 2, 1994, about 40 activists from around Indonesia met at the offices of the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute (YLBHI) to announce that they had formed a new political organisation, the Persatuan Rakyat Demokratik (People's Democratic Union). The new organisation brought together local student, worker and farmer activists based in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Solo, Semarang and Surabaya in Java, Medan in Sumatra and Manado in Sulawesi. This was the first attempt to form these local activist groups into a national organisation, at least openly above ground.<sup>2</sup> Sugeng Bahagijo, who had been elected chairperson of the PRD after a three-day meeting of over 100 delegates from around the country, welcomed "everybody as members, farmers, workers, students, intellectuals and others, as long as they are concerned about the development of democracy in Indonesia".<sup>3</sup>

In its founding declaration, the PRD called for restoration of full democratic rights and freedoms, a return to civilian rule and redistribution of the wealth of society to the poor.<sup>4</sup> The PRD declaration also went much further than any previous pro-democracy group in Indonesia in the 1970s and 1980s by publicly calling for the restoration of full civil rights to the tens of thousands of former communist and Soekarnoist political prisoners and also calling for self-determination in East Timor.

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<sup>2</sup> Having cooperated with Indro Cahyono and Danial Indrakusuma on the publishing of *Progres* and then continuing communication with Indrakusuma, I was able to have a constant dialogue with some of the activists who were involved in this process between 1992-94. Some involved these general processes also visited Australia to participate in conferences although not all ended up in the PRD. These included Budiman Sujatmiko, later a chairperson of the PRD.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed description of this event see Max Lane, "Winning Democracy in Indonesia", in *Links, International Journal of Socialist Renewal*; also Miftahuddin, *Radikalais Pemuda PRD Melawan Tirani*, Desantara, Jakarta, 2004, pp. 81-84; for another description of the PRD see Dan la Botz, *Made in Indonesia: Indonesia Workers Since Suharto*, South End Press, Cambridge, 2001, Chapter 6. See also the detailed report *Tough international response needed to widening crackdown*, Human Rights Watch/Asia and the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights, August 1996 - Vol. 8, No. 8 (C), esp. Chapter 5, "The PRD and its affiliates".

<sup>4</sup> See PRD founding declaration in Appendix I.

Present at the launch of the PRD were a range of prominent figures in the democratic movement. These included Adnan Buyung Nasution, director of the Indonesian Legal Aid Institute. Other figures present included Mokhtar Pakpahan, head of the recently formed union SBSI (Indonesia Workers Welfare Union), Dede Triawan from the environmental organisation WALHI and Mulyana Kusuma, also from YLBHI.

After the launch of the PRD on May 2, 1994, the Indonesian regime threatened it with sanctions should it engage in any political activities. At the same time, numerous figures from the more liberal wings of a number of mainstream organisations, for example, Jakob Tobing from GOLKAR and Aberson Sihalohe from the Indonesian Democratic Party, defended the PRD's right to engage in political activity.

Soon after the launch of the PRD, Soesilo Soedarman, the minister for politics and security, stated:

The PRD is not legal. There are only three political vehicles recognised by the government, PPP [Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, United Development Party], GOLKAR [Functional Groups] and the PDI [Partai Demokrasi Indonesia, Indonesian Democratic Party]. The government will take firm action.<sup>5</sup>

The director-general of social political affairs of the Home Affairs Ministry, Sutoyo, also announced that if the PRD put up resistance, the police would "disband them forcibly".

This hard-line position was countered by Harsudiono Hartas, former armed forces general and then deputy chairperson of the Supreme Advisory Council, a state advisory body appointed by President Suharto. Hartas was reported as stating:

The PRD was formed because the political culture and mechanisms are blocked. The youth and students are looking for another way to struggle for their aspirations.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, Jakob Tobing, one of the chairpersons of the government party GOLKAR, told the press that the government shouldn't act too hastily in condemning the PRD as outside the law. On

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<sup>5</sup> *Media Indonesia*, July 31, 1994 <http://www.mediaindo.co.id/publik/9607/31/MI01-02.31.html>.

<sup>6</sup> *Media Indonesia*, May 5, 1994.



the other hand, Agung Laskono, chair of the National Council of Leaders of GOLKAR, stated sharply that the formation of the PRD was “unconstitutional”.<sup>7</sup>

Aberson Sihalohe, from the Indonesian Democratic Party, stated his strong approval of the founding of the PRD by calling it a manifestation of current frustrations with the political infrastructure.

### **Beyond students**

The formation process of the PRD was partly a reaction to the 1978 failure of the student movement and the dead-end of the NGO and student movements in the 1980s. However, in the 1990s there were still other opposition political groups that the PRD needed to assess. A report on the national situation delivered to the PRD founding conference provided a tentative analysis of these opposition forces:<sup>8</sup>

The first [group] that must be noted is the Petition of 50. This group has been the opposition since the New Order but has always been only half-hearted. It has no mass base or newspaper and has only weak international support. They have demanded that Suharto be brought before a special session of the People’s Consultative Assembly to give an accounting [of his crimes and abuses]. Their recent relations with Minister of Technology Habibie, reflecting Suharto’s attempt at reconciliation, has lost them credibility in the eyes of the people. Their main agenda is for a multi-party system, minus any left-wing parties.

As a political grouping, FODEM [Forum Demokrasi – Democratic Forum] has failed to develop into a strong and broad formation, because it has not wielded any effective political tools: it has no newspaper which openly and clearly advocates its political program, holds no real discussions, and no other publications let alone mobilises any masses under its banner. As Suharto has been expanding his own forces, FODEM should have been clearly telling the masses what FODEM wants to achieve. FODEM has the biggest potential to obtain international support.

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<sup>7</sup> Lane, *op cit.*

<sup>8</sup> *Laporan ke kongres Partai Rakyat Demokratik*, typescript, English translation from *ibid.*

Commenting on students who were not allying themselves in political activity with workers and peasants, the report states:

The increase in the scope and level of issues raised by the student movement leading up to the arrest of the 21 proves that the New Order regime has been unable to silence it. This proves the preparedness of the student movement to overcome the repressive measures taken against it, so that it can turn itself into an agent of democracy. It is true that so far there has not been the ability to maintain persistence in some campaigns, such as the campaign around the 21 students. But the mass student movement can become a force that can effectively demand democratic change if it can overcome some political and organisational problems. These include the problems of inter-regional and inter-campus rivalry.

The PRD's criticism of the 1980s opposition groupings of the Petition of 50, FODEM and others reflected its emphasis, indeed its central prioritisation, of the necessity to engage in mass mobilisation in direct defiance of the floating mass policy. The PRD emerged out of a process of debates and splits based on a rejection of any strategy that did not put mass mobilisation at its centre. Perhaps the first published outline of this rejection — an early manifesto for this new political current — was an article published in the English-language version of the social sciences journal *Prisma* under the pseudonym Fazlur Akhmad.<sup>9</sup> Fazlur Akhmad was, in fact, Daniel Indrakusuma, one of the founding members of the PRD in 1994 and a leading figure in all of the pre-party formation activity that led to the formation of the PRD. The article was entitled: "The Indonesian student movement – a force for radical social change?" Indrakusuma identified what he saw as the strategic weakness of the student movement up until the late 1980s:

Before 1970 the first activists to become aware of the shortcomings of this alternative [linking up with the military] were Soe Hok Gie of GEMSOS (Socialist Student Movement) and Ahmad Wahib of HMI (Muslim Students Association). However, like others in the generation of new activists in the 1970s who decided that this strategy was wrong, they

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<sup>9</sup> *Prisma*, No. 47, September 1989.

made another strategic mistake; *separated from popular power, they had no strong or broad mass base.*<sup>10</sup>

This weakness — separation from popular power — was also identified as the key weakness of the two major forms of student activity after 1978: study groups and NGO activity. Indrakusuma continued later in his article:

Until now, those students who have looked to this alternative in study groups have not been aware of their decay. A comparison with the Studieclub of the 1920s shows that they were in fact superior to the study groups of the 1980s. Historical analysis shows clearly how the Studieclub responded to and stimulated objective political-economic conditions .... In the political and economic conditions of the New Order, however, the study clubs are not transforming themselves: they more closely resemble apolitical debating clubs in their activities. They wallow in theoretical issues and cannot act dialectically, responding to and stimulating objective change ...<sup>11</sup>

He critiqued the earlier generations of student leaders for consistently avoiding mass mobilisation. Referring to the student leaders of the early 1970s he stated:

Their strategy is moral action — to change the system from within (mostly by using the ideology and institutions of NGOs). No political action can strengthen their bargaining position [because] they see mass organisation for political pressure as taboo. They often shelter behind the word (it is only a word) tactical, but in reality they never take political action on the ground to mobilise the masses.<sup>12</sup>

On the 1973-74 and 1978 leaders, he wrote:

Their political ideal was to take political power, but they lacked the political boldness to become involved in mobilising people from all sectors of society . . . In the case of Malari,

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in David Bouchier and Vedi R. Hadiz, *Indonesian Politics and Society: A reader*, 2003, p. 167.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 168

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

the masses were told to retreat. In the 1978 movement ... mass mobilisation was even less well prepared.<sup>13</sup>

Indrakusuma also critiqued the NGOs as having become bureaucratised and unable to transform their political agenda so as to be able to initiate political action.

In fact, by 1987, a small number of activists had already grouped together and decided to begin a campaign to revive mass mobilisation politics. In this, they remained a tiny minority among the whole student sector who had been either drawn into the scores of mushrooming discussion groups or the NGO community development and issue advocacy groups that had developed on the basis of foreign funding during the 1980s. Indrakusuma himself was not totally negative about the experience of the 1980s; his article also commented:

Many factors have ... provided the student movement of the 1980s with valuable experience in understanding and organising: discussions, the distribution of campus media, informal relations with youths in the cities and demonstrations, leading to continual reconsideration of tactics and strategies.<sup>14</sup>

Indrakusuma was right. Although the suppression of the student sector in 1978 ended mass mobilisation politics for a whole decade, the regime could not stop political discussion and other kinds of political experience. The whole of the 1980s was an intense period of political discussion and learning, beginning with the publication of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's books.<sup>15</sup> It is no accident that Indrakusuma's 1989 article itself included a historical review of the student movement during the colonial period and made historical comparisons of political struggle.

But it was not just more engagement with past historical experience that seeped into the world of political activism during this period. It was also the period of first re-engagement of political activists from the student sector with elements of society outside the student sector. As students graduated

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>15</sup> For a study that also connects Pramoedya's works with student politics in the period, see Ariel Heryanto, *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia: Fatally Belonging*, New York : Routledge, 2007, especially Chapter 3.

or dropped out of studies, many shifted into the NGO community development organisations. Indrakusuma noted how “social research, and social action for charity and ‘income generation’ [projects]” became major activities of the NGOs. All these activities brought them into direct contact with social sectors outside the student sector: labour, peasants, fisherpeople, *kampung* women and so on. A period began of documenting the social conditions of all these sectors. By the end of the 1980s, the libraries and publications of NGOs encompassed an enormous amount of data on the conditions of life of ordinary people.

The documentation of economic and social inequality through the NGO sector did have an impact on the kind of public discussion that seeped into the media, as well as the political discussion among student activists and graduated former student activists. This change happened very quickly. Even by the early 1980s, it had influenced discussion so much, that the most influential NGO — the YLBHI — began issuing annual human rights reports which went far beyond looking at the violations of civil liberties. The conditions of farmers, workers and women were surveyed in every report.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the director of the YLBHI in the early 1980s, Todung Mulya Lubis, developed the concept of “structural human rights”, theorising the need for structural change in society if these sectors’ basic rights were to be met.<sup>17</sup>

In the 1981 YLBHI *Human Rights Report*, its editors, Mulya Lubis, Fauzi Abdullah and Mulyana W. Kusumah, opened with the following analysis:

One thing is clear: the structures and the processes producing the violation of basic human rights are becoming increasingly integrated, strengthening each other, as time goes on . . .

The Indonesian economy appears every day to become more integrated with the world capitalist system, extends its reach through the giant multinational corporations and the international financial institutions. Our increasing dependency on them seemingly results in the implementation of policies that are not beneficial to the majority of people. And this dependence too appears to press the repressive and ideological apparatus to give further

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<sup>16</sup> For an early report, see *Langit masih mendung: laporan keadaan hak-hak asasi manusia di Indonesia*, 1980, Jakarta : Lembaga Bantuan Hukum and Sinar Harapan, 1981.

<sup>17</sup> See T. Mulya Lubis, *Bantuan hukum dan kemiskinan structural*, Jakarta : Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial, 1986.

protection to the dominant economic interests, so that the scooping out of profit on a national scale is made secure, while the majority of people feel it is harder and harder to live.

With the increasing large scale entry into Indonesia of large capital and of the international financial institutions, a dialogue has opened up between the international and national elites, who are able to determine policy. Alongside this, we see the majority of the *rakyat* left behind, struggling with increasing poverty.

This pattern of economic growth requires a pattern of political policies that does not tolerate participation. There has been a systematic centralisation of power and a systematic weakening of any alternative centres of power. The political parties, as legal channels for the aspirations of the *rakyat*, weaken every day with every new internal conflict and the emergence of figures whose personal and political integrity is highly dubious. Outside these formal channels, surveillance becomes heavier with every passing day. What is clear are the political mobilisations — especially in the case of the electoral democratic festivals — purely for the purposes of legitimising the rulers.<sup>18</sup>

The report — like those before and after it — provided a devastating picture of the inequalities that had developed in the education and health sectors, as well as of the conditions for workers and peasants. It included a 33-page appendix listing cases of labour protests over wages, conditions and violations of the right to organise. The YLBHI was viewed in this period as more or less a mainstream organisation.<sup>19</sup> Its access to the media was extensive. Its building was used by almost every other NGO and student group in Jakarta and surrounding areas for press conferences, seminars and other events. The spirit of its analysis, linking the violation of rights, defined to encompass social and economic rights, to structures of dependence and subordination to the world capitalist system, big

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<sup>18</sup> Translated from T. Mulya Lubis, Fauza Abdullah, Mulyana W. Kusumah, *Laporan Keadaan Hak Asaasi Manusia di Indonesia 1981*, 1983, pp. 13-14.

<sup>19</sup> See Michele Ford, *NGO as Outside Intellectual: A History of Non-Governmental Organizations' Role in the Labour Movement*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wollongong, 2003. See also Philip Eldridge, *NGOs in Indonesia : popular movement or arm of government?*, Centre of Southeastern Asian Studies, Monash University, 1989; also Eldridge, *Non-government organizations and democratic participation in Indonesia*, Oxford and New York : Oxford University Press, 1995.

foreign capital and international and national elites, permeated the whole of the dissident sector throughout the 1980s.<sup>20</sup>

This spirit, this general outlook prevailed in all NGOs and student groups by the end of the 1980s, when Indrakusuma wrote his essay for *Prisma*. The 1991 YLBHI report, under a new director, Hendardi, was even starker, illustrated with cartoon illustrations depicting the suppression and exploitation of an impoverished and malnourished *rakyat*.<sup>21</sup> The social and economic deprivation being suffered by every sector — labour, peasants, fisherpeople, teachers, the urban semi-proletarian informal sector, teachers and women — was documented. The report concluded with a document “Joint Declaration on Basic Human Rights in Indonesia” signed by nine of the major NGOs in Indonesia, including civil liberties, women’s rights, health rights and consumers’ rights organisations. It was a comprehensive critique of economic inequality, political repression and social oppression affecting all sectors of society. In terms of a critique of the nation’s socio-economic and political situation, these popular classes — proletarians, semi-proletarians and peasants — were well in the picture. Indrakusuma’s critique was that the NGOs and discussion groups did not see them as an active part of the solution.

### **Active engagement**

All the same, such ideas could not develop and spread without some elements among activists drawing conclusions that an engagement with these sectors was necessary that went beyond seeing these classes simply as victims. More and more groups were formed whose orientation included a “live-in” approach, where students would spend time with peasants and workers, in their homes and communities.<sup>22</sup> The “live-in” approach was pioneered by activists who had spent some time in the

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<sup>20</sup> This was, of course, also a carry over from the 1973-74 and 1978 critiques. See previous chapter.

<sup>21</sup> See *Demokrasi masih terbenam: catatan keadaan hak-hak asasi manusia di Indonesia, 1991*, Jakarta : Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia, 1991.

<sup>22</sup> One of the outputs from these close encounters with non-student sectors was the publication of the *Cerita Kami* series. This was a series of pamphlets with transcriptions or other kinds of detailed reports of the experiences of factory workers or of dialogues between students and the workers. They appeared irregularly between 1990 and 1995. *Cerita Kami*, Jakarta : Bidang Perburuhan, Yayasan Maju Bersama.

mid-1980s with the anti-Marcos movement in the Philippines.<sup>23</sup> These few students had left Indonesia and sought to be integrated into the mass organisations that were campaigning against Marcos. They had sought to learn from the Philippines experience, after concluding that students alone could not win change. In the Philippines, they had learned the techniques of community organising and mobilisation.<sup>24</sup>

By 1989, there were many such organisations active throughout the country, wherever there were university campuses. The engagement with non-student sectors went beyond either “social research” or “income generation” projects, such as cooperatives — although these aspects were also often preserved. There were two new types of engagement. The first was political education and the second was mobilisation. Students began taking radical political ideas, as well as information about existing legal rights, to the worker and peasant communities with whom they were engaging.<sup>25</sup> Discussion groups, although not called that, spread to workers and farmers, wherever students could reach them. But protest actions involving mobilisations of workers or peasants alongside students also began to take place. It was peasant protests that dominated in the first phase of this development, from about 1988 until 1992.<sup>26</sup>

The peasant farmer protests that achieved national prominence were those carried out by the Kedung Ombo peasants, backed by student activists. In 1985, the World Bank approved a US\$156 million loan to the Indonesian government for the construction of the Kedung Ombo Multipurpose Dam and Irrigation Project in Central Java. The purpose of the project was to flood 59,654 hectares

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<sup>23</sup> See Dan la Botz, *Made in Indonesia: Indonesia Workers Since Suharto*, Cambridge : South End Press, 2001, especially Chapter 9, pp. 266-269.

<sup>24</sup> During several visits to the Philippines between 1983 and 1987, I met cadres of the Philippines Communist Party who remembered the Indonesian activists who had trained with them. For a survey of the mass movement in the Philippines during this period, see Max Lane, *The Urban Mass Movement in the Philippines*, Singapore : Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 1990.

<sup>25</sup> See again *Cerita Kami*; also for examples see *Progres*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1991, pp. 20-21; Vol. 1, No. 5, pp 28-31. By 1993, these peasant actions had lessened compared to protest actions by urban workers.

<sup>26</sup> The organisation SKEPHI, which began as a “forest protection” network, developed during 1990-91 as a peasant mobilisation centre, connecting to such protests in Sumatra and Java. For various reports on peasant protests, see *Progres*.



of wet rice field to generate 225 MW of electricity. The project required the resettlement of 5,390 families (around 20,000 people) in 37 villages.<sup>27</sup>

According to INFID data, only a small percentage of families had freely accepted compensation for their lands and were actually willing to move. Up to 3,391 families had refused to accept compensation, primarily because rates were far below the market value of the land and they were not adequately consulted. Typical land prices in 1989 outside the project area were Rp.4,000 (around US\$2.60 at 1989 exchange rate) per square metre. Yet the compensation rate offered to the affected people by the local authorities was only Rp.250-750 (around US\$0.28) per square metre.

Farmers had protested the inadequate compensation since 1987, and by 1988 students began to join the protests and help organise visits by the farmers to nearby cities, and eventually to Jakarta. Some of these demonstrations were very large, and the campaign soon became a national cause. The case gained increasing legitimacy, and the mainstream NGOs, such as YLBHI, also became involved, helping about 50 farmers take the case to the Supreme Court. With several thousand farmers involved, there were many opportunities for activist groups to make links with different groups of farmers at different times. No permanent alliance between specific farmer groups and activist groups developed. The Kedung Ombo farmers lost their struggle; they were flooded out and never received adequate compensation. At the height of the campaign, Suharto himself charged them with being “stubborn”, later increasing the threat by stating that the region was known in the past as a PKI support base.

But the Kedung Ombo case, by becoming a nationally famous incident, stretching over the 1988-90 period, legitimised and help popularise *aksi* — street protest, actions, demonstrations, mobilisation.<sup>28</sup> By 1991, *aksi* involving peasants had becoming increasingly prolific. The spirit of *aksi* was exemplified in many of the songs and hymns adopted by the activist groups, such as the Yogyakarta Students Communication Forum (FKMY — Forum Komunikasi Mahasiswa Yogyakarta), the most active group in Jogjakarta:

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<sup>27</sup> INFID Fact Sheet on Kedung Ombo,  
<http://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1994/11/11/0015.html>

<sup>28</sup> For one account of the Kedung Ombo protests, see Arief Budiman and Olle Tornquist (Supervisors), *Aktor demokrasi: catatan tentang perlawanan di Indonesia*, Jakarta : Institut Arus Informasi Indonesia, 2001, pp. 1-48.

Rise up all you who struggle for democracy  
Spirit and blood aflame  
Unity solid like rock with worker and peasant  
And patriotic student

Wipe-out the robbers of the people's land  
Wipe out all the enemies of the people  
Advance with fists held high

Welcome a tomorrow of prosperity and dignity  
National democracy  
in Indonesia.<sup>29</sup>

At the national level, one group of activists in particular played a particularly central role in promoting this trend. This was SKEPHI (Sekretariat Kerjasama Pelestarian Hutan Indonesia — Indonesian NGOs for Forest Conservation). It was established at a meeting of NGO activists in Lembang, West Java, in August 1982. During the 1990-91 period, SKEPHI's activities went beyond the forest conservation issue. SKEPHI activists were involved in promoting and helping organise a series of large peasant *aksi* — sometimes involving over 10,000 farmers. Most of these actions were by farmers who had lost their land to major commercial development projects — golf courses, commercial market gardens, cattle ranches and so on. SKEPHI also hosted the mobilisation to Jakarta of such peasant protests from around the country. (Most SKEPHI activists were also connected to INFIGHT, which had also pioneered the 1990 protest actions against the execution of PKI prisoners.)<sup>30</sup>

The more these protests attracted increasing media coverage, the more similar protests occurred in other parts of the country. There is no study that gathers together all the data on these actions but a magazine appeared in 1990 which began to record many of these actions. This was *Progres*.<sup>31</sup> It was initially edited by two leading figures from SKEPHI, Indro Cahyono and Daniel Indrakusuma, the author of the 1989 *Prisma* article. Australian sympathisers helped the publication by providing an

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<sup>29</sup> Printed on a student leaflet circulated in Jogjakarta, n.d.

<sup>30</sup> On SKEPHI, see its regular journal *Setiakawan*, published between 1989 and 1993.

<sup>31</sup> Some issues of *Progres* are available in the library of the International Institute of Social History, the Netherlands, and the Menzies Library, Australian National University.

editorial address outside Indonesia and a former MALARI activist helped in raising funds for the magazine.<sup>32</sup> Later a split occurred within the INFIGHT/SKEPHI leadership grouping and Indro Cahyono ceased to be a part of the editorial group.<sup>33</sup>

*Progres* published views from the full spectrum of the political opposition, but specialised in material documenting the burgeoning protest actions taking place around the country. During its three years of publication, *Progres* documented protest actions by farmers and workers throughout Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Lombok and other of the eastern islands. A single issue, covering two months of activities, would on average document 40 to 50 cases of strikes, protests or workers' and peasants' mobilisations. *Progres* drew its documentation from a combination of newspaper reports and chronologies describing the actions written by those involved. The 40 to 50 actions reported in each issue were just the tip of the iceberg.<sup>34</sup>

By the end of the 1989-92 period, the techniques of street protest activity, include strike activity and land-related protests, had become very widely generalised. The widespread familiarity among workers, peasants and others with the techniques of protest activity was due to two key factors. It should be noted, of course, that one factor that was not operative was educational activity by large trade unions. The only large trade union was the government-controlled All Indonesia Workers Union (SPSI), which was an instrument deployed to ensure that the working class stayed a passive floating mass.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> I was the main person working on *Progres* in Australia with Cahyono and Indrakusuma. I received all the contents of the magazine on a floppy disk and laid it out before sending back master copies which were then printed in Indonesia (except for the first issue, which was printed in Australia and freighted to Indonesia).

<sup>33</sup> Cahyono at first indicated that he would send the material to Australia, but after almost three weeks, he told me over the phone at the time that Indrakusuma would send the material. From that point, Indrakusuma took over the editorship of *Progres*. Indrakusuma wrote an essay as a reflection on the split, without referring directly to the personalities or events. See Majid, "Sejarah Memberi Kesimpulan, Pergerakan Yang Merevolusionerkannya", in *Progres*, No. 3, 1992, pp. 59-60.

<sup>34</sup> These were reported in sections such as "Buruh Bergerak" in *Progres*.

<sup>35</sup> See Vedi Hadiz, *Workers and the State in the New Order*, Perth : Routledge, 1997; also La Botz, *op. cit*

One factor was that despite tight control over the media in reporting explicit political opposition to the Suharto dictatorship, there was little censorship of reporting of worker and peasant protest activity. This was true in the 1970s and 1980s as well as the 1990s. There are large collections of news clippings on worker protests in the 1970s and 1980s gathered by the Leiden-based INDOC project and also large collections of such clippings — involving thousands of cases — gathered by myself for the 1980s, now held by the library of the Australian National University.<sup>36</sup> The widespread press reporting helped legitimise these protests and integrate them into the urban popular culture. News reports of strikes, for example, were an important element in the tabloid press, such as *Pos Kota*, *Terbit* and other dailies aimed at the popular readership in Jakarta. In Java, newspapers like *Bernas* also gave considerable coverage to protest actions. Moreover, they were mostly not hostile reports, as is mainly the case in the mainstream Western media. The reports usually did cover in some detail the conditions of the workers, and often had short interviews with the workers.

However, the press reports operated at a very general level, giving a general legitimacy to labour and peasant protests. They only provided minimal information on the techniques of worker protests. In an environment of increasing spontaneous activity, buoyed by the public and press sympathy, the more organised sectors of the movement had from the beginning decided to produce what turned out to be a very popular and useful document. This was the *kronologi*.<sup>37</sup> A *kronologi* was a detailed account, often by the minute or every five minutes or ten minutes, of all the stages in the preparation and implementation of a protest action or strike. All aspects of the activity were covered: where workers gathered, how they were organised, the division of labour, how they approached the employers, how they dealt with the factory security, what they did when police or army arrived, who gave what speeches and when and so on and so on. These very detailed documents were widely circulated among activists. Between 1990 and 1992 *Progres* also used these *kronologi* as a source. The production of *kronologi* has remained an institution of the activist movement.

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<sup>36</sup> Since the INDOC project closed down, its archives have been housed at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam.

<sup>37</sup> Samples of *kronologi* can be found by searching the internet archives at <http://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/>. One example is reproduced later in this chapter. More than thirty *kronologi* are listed in the bibliography of this thesis.

Although it was banned by the Attorney-General's office on June 16, 1992, *Progres* continued to publish and circulate until 1993, when its funding ran out. The magazine was always distributed at minimal cost and never made a profit. The Attorney-General's banning order stated:

The aforementioned publication publishes things not in accordance with the facts, with the result that it gives rise to mistaken opinions within society about the nation's leadership.<sup>38</sup>

The emergence of new institutions arguing for a strategy of mass mobilisation was opening the way for a new political element being added to the previously spontaneous tendencies of worker and peasant protest. *Progres* and the *Progres* editorial group were the first such major visible institutions. But there were others being formed around the country in a quite complex process. *Progres* had been a tool for intervention among the layer of activists who had become more seriously engaged with non-student sectors, either in helping organise the protest actions or in carrying out political education among workers and peasants — although by 1993, the emphasis was on engaging with factory and transportation workers. In the central Javanese university city of Yogyakarta and the South Sumatran city of Lampung, where there was less industry, activists also maintained contacts with farmers.

In Jakarta, two groups played a central role in these developments. These were Yayasan Maju Bersama (YMB — Advance Together Foundation) and Forum Bebas Belajar (FBB — Free Study Forum). Both groups comprised student activists and some longer term activists who were organising “live-ins” with workers, educational programs and some strike actions. They were also centres of intense discussion over political theory, drawing on a wide range of sources, including all variants of radical political theory. The historical novels of Pramoedya Ananta Toer were also widely read. Each of the groups had also succeeded in recruiting a small number of factory workers as organisers. *Progres* was widely read among these groups, which also operated as a centre for distribution for *Progres*, after the split in SKEPHI/INFIGHT and Daniel Indrakusuma became active in YMB.

The split in SKEPHI and INFIGHT occurred in 1992. It resulted from a clash between two fundamentally different approaches to building a political movement to challenge the New Order.

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<sup>38</sup> Translated from a report in *Suara Pembaruan*, newspaper, June 17, 1992, entitled “Empat Barang Cetakan Dilarang Beredar”.

There was a very basic consequence of deciding on an *aksi*-oriented strategy of mass mobilisation: there needed to be a structured organisation to develop the skills, understanding and consistency to successfully pursue such a strategy. The strategic orientation to *aksi* was not simply about activism, about being more active, but also about building a whole movement based on this strategy. Those orienting to this approach, including Indrakusuma, started to build a core of people working in this direction. This core building, based on seeking a tight consensus on political approaches and a certain level of discipline, came into direct conflict with the traditional form of organisation among student activists, which was loose, informal and often relied on *pemimpin-anak buah* (leader-client follower) relationships.<sup>39</sup>

It was a bitter split, with the group led by Indro Cahyono levelling all kinds of charges against Indrakusuma, including the red-baiting charge that Indrakusuma had spent time with the left movement in the Philippines. In any case, after the split INFIGHT gradually receded into inactivity and SKEPHI gradually returned to being an established NGO working in traditional conservation spheres.<sup>40</sup> FBB and YMB were essentially post-SKEPHI organisations, in that they both had adopted theoretical approaches, incorporating as central elements of their strategy and pursuing mass action. The crystallisation of the organised *aksi* current as a party organisation, the PRD, was connected to another split, this time in the YMB.

YMB was only a small organisation, with between 10 and 30 activists, mainly students, but with one or two full-time workers as well. Most were students from the University of Indonesia. They had concentrated on political education and had published several issues of a magazine called: *Cerita Kami* (Our Stories). *Cerita Kami* comprised mainly transcriptions of extended dialogues between factory workers and activists concerning worker conditions and often attempting to incorporate Marxist concepts of surplus value, exploitation and class into the dialogue. FBB was also composed primarily of University of Indonesia students. In both cases they were mostly from history or

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<sup>39</sup> Indro Cahyono is now working with former General Wiranto in his party, Hati Nurani Rakyat (HANURA).

<sup>40</sup> See Sekretariat Kerjasama Pelestarian Hutan Indonesia, *SKEPHI, the NGO network for forest conservation in Indonesia*, Jakarta, 1998.

literature faculties. Among the YMB activists were Daniel Indrakusuma and Wilson,<sup>41</sup> who went on to become leaders of the PRD. YMB also included Hilmar Farid, who later emerged as a central figure in academic Marxism and the Jaringan Kerja Budaya (JKB) group.<sup>42</sup> FBB members included Dita Indah Sari,<sup>43</sup> “Wahyu” and several others, all of whom became founding leaders of the PRD and of the first trade union connected with the PRD.

In January 1993, activists from YMB and FBB joined with others from similar groups in Jogjakarta and Surabaya to participate in a joint action with farmers in East Java, in the village of Blangguan.<sup>44</sup> Farmers in the poor village of Blangguan were involved in a conflict with a local marine detachment, which had begun in December 1992. The marine base wanted the farmers’ land. It had even driven tanks into their village and flattened their houses and their crops, mostly corn. Individual farmers had been approached and told not to plant their corn; others who had planted had their crops torn out. The farmers had decided to resist and had made contact with activists in Surabaya, who had then communicated with Jakarta and Jogjakarta. More than 20 FBB and YMB students from Jakarta and Jogjakarta headed to Blangguan. As the village was under tight surveillance, the activists were to infiltrate into the village by different routes during the evening and were to participate in a mass planting of the fields the next day.

But the farmers’ huts were raided and most of the students captured. Others came out with the farmers and a head-on clash occurred. Around 50 villagers and students were arrested. Some students did escape through the fields and were able to make their way back to Jakarta. Those who were arrested were subject to electric shock torture, beatings, and having their heads submerged in

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<sup>41</sup> For Wilson’s prison memoirs, see Wilson, *Dunia di balik jeruji : kesaksian perlawanan*, Yogyakarta : Resist Books, 2005.

<sup>42</sup> See their journal *Media Kerja Budaya* for a detailed sense of their interests.

<sup>43</sup> For an early, brief biographical pamphlet in English on Dita Sari see, *Dita Sari: Jailed for daring to struggle*, Sydney : ASIET, 1997. See also <http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/publications/ditasari/contents.htm>. See also La Botz, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>44</sup> See report on Blangguan incident in *Progres*, No 1, 1993, pp. 18-19. There are also several email reports archived at [www.indopubs.com](http://www.indopubs.com). Many of these were issued by Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor (ASIET) from Australia. At that time I was national coordinator of ASIET and was receiving email and telephone reports directly from the organisers of the Blangguan incident.

a toilet bowl. This was the first time since 1965 that students had been subjected to torture. It was the Blangguan incident that provoked the split in YMB.

Blangguan was a traumatic event. Activists slowly made their way back to Jakarta after being released from detention. None was ever charged with any crime. But some returned in shock. Torture was a new experience, not just for the individuals but for the movement itself, and especially for students. Some argued that the direct confrontation with the military was unwise, but a general issue arose. Was it premature to embark on a strategy of open mobilisation in confrontation with the New Order? YMB split and its members dispersed into a range of different activities. However, within a few years the pattern and character of the split had become clear. The pro-*aksi* activists, a minority, started to merge and had in their ranks the majority of FBB activists and other pro-*aksi* elements that were coming out of their own splits in Yogyakarta. Most of the others gravitated to the JKB, the centre of the academic Marxist current.

One of the first organisational manifestations of this merging process was the formation of an underground group, called the Front Pemuda Nasional (National Youth Front). *Progres* published an interview by an Australian journalist, Mike Carey, of an FPN spokesperson in its March 1993 issue. This was the first publicly printed statement by the FPN. *Progres* also editorialised to welcome the formation of the FPN. The FPN spokesperson stated that its eventual goal was to win socialism in Indonesia. It stated its medium-term goal as achieving a “multi-party political system”. Answering a question about what had the student movement achieved, the FPN spokesperson answered:

There are six doors to democracy that have been opened. First, issues of relevance to the *rakyat* have begun to grow in society. The old culture of silence is being broken down by the people. Now many people speak about the problems of the people. Second, there is a militancy among the people now. There are many, many mass actions now, both organised and unorganised. Third, the propaganda and agitation work of the students has succeeded; this is reflected in the wide recognition by the people of the bankruptcy of the government and the desire for an alternative. Fourth, the struggle has borne fruit already in the form of new alternative institutions and organisations that the regime cannot fully control. Fifth, there is a much greater sense among the people, workers and farmers, of their rights. Sixth,



at the individual level there are more and more people, a majority now in the movement, who have come to more radical, alternative views.<sup>45</sup>

The FPN, in its 1993 or any later forms, did not emerge into the public again. However, other new *aksi*-oriented organisations did emerge. These were the Students in Solidarity with Democracy in Indonesia (SSDI) and the Indonesian Labour Struggle Centre (Pusat Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia — PPBI). It was the leaders and activists of the SSDI and PPBI who initiated the formation of the PRD in May 1994. SSDI and PPBI were joined by the National Peasants Union (STN — Serikat Tani Nasional) and the People's Art Workers Network (Jaringan Kerja Seni Rakyat). Even taken together, this PRD current was quite small, but its formation represented a new stage in the course of Indonesian political development. There was now an agent of conscious political intervention into the rising worker and peasant *aksi*, actually promoting *aksi* as a strategy. This agent had organisation and ideology. The impact of its interventions was to accelerate the popular acceptance of *aksi* as a form of political struggle laying the ground for a more general radicalisation of Indonesian politics.

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<sup>45</sup> *Progres*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1993, p. 21.

## Chapter 5

### ***Aksi* and the framework for the end of the New Order**

A central thesis of this dissertation is that mass action politics, i.e. mass political mobilisations of the popular classes, was the primary determining factor in the course of Indonesian politics during the period of the independent state, and especially in the period 1960-1998. The previous chapter documented the emergence of a small political current that adopted as its major political perspective the rewinning of mass action as the main method of struggle for the overthrow of the authoritarian regime under Suharto. This chapter aims to show how, once reintroduced, this method of struggle rapidly became the pre-eminent form of political activity, both at important conjunctures in the course of political developments and in terms of forming the general political atmosphere. The chapter will show the central role of mass mobilisation initiatives in the period leading up to June 1996, when protest against Suharto burst into mass protest and rioting, marking the beginning of Suharto's "long fall";<sup>1</sup> in the 1996 explosion itself; in the 1997 elections, which set the scene for the final period of Suharto's fall; and in his actual fall in May 1998. This analysis will lead into chapter 6, will examine the process during 1998, up until November 1998, assessing the limitations of the genre of *aksi massa* that had developed, assessing against some of the criteria identified by Soekarno and the COMINTERN, which I described in the Introduction to this dissertation.

The floating mass policy of the New Order gave a special character to the whole of the political life of Indonesian society: disorganisation, de-organisation.<sup>2</sup> As referred to in the previous chapter, the 1980s were the decade of student discussion groups, NGO critiques and, in the late 1980s, the beginning of more spontaneous protest actions as well as the beginning of the formation of a conscious political current promoting mass action as the primary form of struggle.<sup>3</sup> It was also the period during which Central Java was hit was scores of riots in which hundreds of buildings and

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<sup>1</sup> The scholar who has used the idea of a "long fall" by Suharto is Stefan Eklof, *Indonesian Politics in Crisis, The Long Fall of Suharto, 1996-98*, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> See Max Lane, *Re-organisation of Mass Politics and the Weakened National Revolution in the Era of Neo-Liberal Globalisation*, at <http://www.warc.murdoch.edu.au/wp/wp102.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> See previous chapter, also: Irene H. Gayatri, "Arah Baru Perlawanan: Gerakan Mahasiswa 1989-1993" in Muridan S. Widjojo *et al.* (eds), *Penakluk Regim Orde Baru Gerakan Mahasiswa '98*, Jakarta : Sinar Harapan, 1999.

shops were set alight or destroyed in scores of towns.<sup>4</sup> The floating mass never really did simply just float. A political life — although atomised and without any national format or vehicles — always continued.<sup>5</sup>

The period 1988-1994 was one in which the political atmosphere radicalised quickly. The de-organised character of the political life can disguise this fact. There was not the rise of a big, well-organised mass movement under a single or a few banners, nor the emergence of any powerful new political figures.<sup>6</sup> Instead there were hundreds, perhaps thousands, of small protest actions, scattered around the country.<sup>7</sup> There was much organisation and many organisations; it was just that they were almost all ad hoc. There was also by the early 1990s a new group, the PRD, small but with activists in several cities, agitating for the people to get rid of Suharto using mass protest.<sup>8</sup>

There was an incipient radicalisation of political discourse as the ideas of the NGOs, students and critical artists crept into the media, often indirectly. Critical and populist lyrics crept into pop culture. Two of the most popular musical groups, with millions of youthful fans, one around the singer Iwan Fals and another the group Slank, incorporated sentiments of dissent as early as the late eighties. Probably Iwan Fals' most famous stanza is that from the immensely popular song, "*Bongkar*" (Tear apart).

#### Oppression and arbitrary rule

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<sup>4</sup> P. Bambang Siswoyo, *Huru Hara Solo Semarang – suatu reportase*, n.d.

<sup>5</sup> This was fostered by the impact of the *rakyat* sentiment, especially in the media, which continued to report the real life of the ordinary people, including their restlessness, in the pages of the tabloid press. On *rakyat* see Lane, Chapter "Memory", in *Unfinished Nation*, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Aspinall has attempted an analysis of the role of labour in the political processes of the 1990s by seeking to identify activity of trade unions, but unions are not the only way workers can organise. See Aspinall, "Democratisation, the working class and the Indonesian crisis", *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (1999), pp. 1-32.

<sup>7</sup> *Kronologi Demonstrasi Mahasiswa 1989-1997*, Yayasan Insan Politika in cooperation with the Asia Foundation, 3 volumes, Jakarta, 1999. The academic team comprised Muridan S Widjojo, Arbi Sanit, Soewarsono, Abdul Mun'im DZ, Moch. Nurhasim, Irine H. Gayatri, Herman Sulistyo and Jamal Mashudi. This report is referred to in more detail later in this chapter.

<sup>8</sup> The pre-party formations that preceded the PRD were the Front Pemuda Nasional (FPN) and then Solidaritas Mahasiswa Indonesia Untuk Demokrasi (SMID). See previous chapter. Also Miftahuddin, *Radikalisasi Pemuda PRD Melawan Tirani*, Jakarta : Desantara, 2004, pp. 75-83.

Too much of it, too much to be able to describe it all  
Hoi! stop it, stop it now  
We are fed up with this uncertainty and greed  
We hoist our ideals on the streets  
because at home there is no one we can trust!<sup>9</sup>

The dis- and de-organised character of all this politicisation, the fact that it did not manifest itself in permanent organisational form — in big parties, trade unions or political movements — meant that the depth of radicalisation taking place was often underestimated.<sup>10</sup> In many ways, by 1994 there was already a broad incipient radicalisation. This was very vividly shown by the demonstrations and riots that took place in Sumatra's biggest city, Medan, in April 1994. On April 14, 20,000 workers from 24 factories went on strike and held a peaceful demonstration in the Deli Serdang industrial zone of the city.<sup>11</sup> The strikes were held in response to the discovery of the body of a leader of an earlier strike floating in the river. The striking workers organised a "long march" from the industrial zone into the city, where they rallied at the Labour Ministry and governor's office. Later in the day, after the rallies at these sites, when the marches were heading towards a major Medan thoroughfare, military anti-riot troops attacked the demonstrators. The workers fought back and the street fights broadened into general rioting. Further demonstrations of several thousand workers took place again on April 18, while smaller strikes, clashes with the security apparatus and rioting continued to flare up throughout the city and the industrial zone for more than week. One of the demands being raised by the demonstrators — apart from an investigation into the death of the strike leader, Rusli — was for the right of the workers to join a newly established independent trade

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<sup>9</sup> For some insights into Slank's music, see Emma Baulch's comments in *Making Scenes: Reggae, Punk and Death Metal in 1990s Bali*, Duke University Press, 2007, pp. 30-31. For lyrics (in English) of another Iwan Fals song, see Bouchier and Hadiz (eds), *Indonesian politics and society: a reader*, Routledge, 2003, p. 217. See also David Hill and Krisna Sen, "Rock n Roll Radicals", in *Inside Indonesia*, October-December, 1997. The article contains a useful brief summary of Slank's music.

<sup>10</sup> Here, I refer readers back to my critique of Aspinall's work in Chapter 1.

<sup>11</sup> English-language accounts of these events can be found in Jana D.K. "The 1994 Medan 'unrest'" in ASIET, *The fight for workers rights in Indonesia*, 1996. Web version at <http://www.asia-pacific-action.org/southeastasia/indonesia/publications/doss1/contents.htm>. Also Human Rights Watch, *The Medan Demonstrations and Beyond*, 1994, also online at <http://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1994/05/16/0000.html>. There is also a comprehensive report by Amnesty International, *Labour Activists Under Fire*, May, 24, 1994, <http://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1994/05/24/0007.html> See also Budiman and Tornquist, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-123.

union, the SBSI. As a result, both local and national leaders of the SBSI, including its national chairperson, Mochtar Pakpahan, were arrested, tried and gaoled.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Aksi massa* politics develops as a trend, 1989-94**

In 1999 a team of researchers from the Yayasan Insan Politika, some of whom were also academicians in the Lembaga Ilmu Pengeathuan Indonesia (Academy of Sciences — LIPI), gathered material from newspapers to try to get a picture of just how much *aksi* activity, in particular student demonstrations, had taken place between 1989 and 1998.<sup>13</sup> It was a limited survey using only a few, mainly Jakarta or Java-centric, newspapers. All the same, they were able to issue a three-volume listing, rich in data.

Their data list between 30 and 40 student protest actions, mainly in Jakarta and Java, each year between 1989 and 1992. Strikes and peasants actions are not covered, although the 1989 data do include several actions by students in solidarity with the farmers of Kedung Ombo. Issues ranged over campus democracy, solidarity with peasants and workers, protest over the arrest of activists for distributing the books of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, protest over demolition of heritage buildings, the first Iraq war, press freedom, school fees and many others. The 30 to 40 protests for each year that the listing gives was just a sampling of the protests occurring at the time.

After 1992, their sampling shows a sudden increase in the number of protests. In 1993, it gave 71; 1994 — 111; in 1995 it (probably inaccurately) shows a drop to 55;<sup>14</sup> then in 1996 up to 143; and in 1997 it listed 154 protests. Again these were very limited samplings from a few newspapers, and they still excluded worker and farmer protests, as well as many of the protests in 1996 by members of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) in revolt against Suharto's refusal to recognise Megawati Sukarnoputri as chairperson of the PDI.<sup>15</sup> For most of the period after 1992, protest actions of one kind or another were happening almost every day, somewhere or other in the country. Newspaper coverage, activist bulletins and word of mouth meant that the sense of protest was spreading

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<sup>12</sup> See ASIET, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> *Kronologi Demonstrasi Mahasiswa 1989-1997*, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> The YIP List appears to rely virtually completely on just one newspaper for its February-September 1995 period. This is the most likely explanation for its drop in number of actions listed.

<sup>15</sup> The main work specifically concentrating on the PDI during this period is Stefan Eklof's *Power and Political Culture in Suharto's Indonesia: The Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) and the Decline of the New Order (1986-98)*, NIAS Press, 2004. The sections in Aspinall on the PDI, which I quote later in this chapter, are also valuable.

everywhere. Still, these actions were mostly local, spontaneous initiatives. The Yayasan Insan Politika listing, wherever possible, gives the name of the organisations connected with the protest actions. All the data for the almost 800 protest actions listed show that the vast majority were organised by ad hoc, impermanent organisations reacting to local issues and conditions. There was only one organisation or network that appeared repeatedly, and in different cities, and that was the SSDI (later called SMID<sup>16</sup> when it took an Indonesian-language name) and the rest of the network associated with the PRD.

There was a stiffening of repression starting at the end of 1993. In December, 21 students from the Front Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia (Indonesian Students Action Front — FAMI) were arrested in Bandung during a demonstration demanding that Suharto be put on trial by a special session of the People's Consultative Assembly.<sup>17</sup> Then in June 1994, following a three-year period of relative tolerance of political criticism of the regime in the media, three major weekly news magazines, including the leading newsweekly *Tempo* as well as the hugely successful political weekly *Detik*, were closed down.<sup>18</sup> This represented a major clampdown and shocked many people, especially in the NGOs and the media. Students and journalists held several actions to protest the closures but were met with violent dispersals. There was a general hardening of regime statements against opposition. In March 1995, Tri Agus Susanto, a founding member of the activist group PIJAR, was arrested and imprisoned for publishing material campaigning against the clampdown.<sup>19</sup> There can be little doubt this hardening was itself a reaction to the increasing combativeness of the de-organised floating mass. The PRD decided to confront the repression with a radicalisation of its actions.

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<sup>16</sup> Solidaritas Mahasiswa untuk Demokrasi di Indonesia.

<sup>17</sup> *Tempo*, December 25, 1993, p. 24. The FAMI *aksi*, coming after so many others, was directly anti-Suharto and came at the end of at least two months of high profile publicity for Megawati Sukarnoputri's campaign to retain the chair of the PDI, despite Suharto's hostility. Every issue of *Tempo* during December had Megawati and/or her father on the front cover and her campaign as the lead story.

<sup>18</sup> Janet Steele, *Wars within: the story of Tempo, an independent magazine in Soeharto's Indonesia*, Jakarta : Equinox, 2005, pp. 234-237.

<sup>19</sup> *Gatra*, March 18, 1995, p. 35. The arrest of Tri Agus came after escalating finger-pointing by the government against non-government organisations accusing them of becoming oppositionists. See "Mereka ingin jadi agen perubahan", in *Gatra*, March 11, pp. 16-18, and associated reports in the same issue. (After June 1994, when *Tempo* was banned, *Gatra* became the main weekly news magazine in Indonesia, until *Tempo*'s revival after the fall of Suharto. I am using *Gatra* reports as confirmation of major events cited in this chapter.)

### **Student-worker *aksi massa*, 1995-96**

The first action was one of the biggest worker demonstrations organised since 1965, mobilising around 10,000 workers. The PPBI activists, including Dita Sari (ex-FBB) and Wilson (ex-YMB), had forged contacts with workers at the Great River garments factory as early as 1991, when there had already been some strike activity. In 1995 conditions had still not improved at the factory, which produced Triumph women's underwear as well as men's shirts with the brand names Arrow, Kenzo and others. The owners in 1995 were Abdul Latief, the minister of labour, and retired Admiral Sudomo, a previous minister of labour. This was the first large-scale, open mobilisation where banners appeared declaring a worker-student alliance. A *kronologi* that describes the action in detail is reproduced as an appendix to this thesis.<sup>20</sup>

The activists and workers were released the next day but later in August were formally charged.

The strike lasted three days, and the workers and students launched other protests outside the factory compound in addition to the march to the regional parliament. This included a picket and occupation of the lobby of the Ministry of labour by about 250 students. They were also dispersed with violence and more were arrested. The chronology travelled widely through email, and the strike was reported in the media.<sup>21</sup>

A monograph by PRD activist and secretary-general of the PPBI at the time, Wilson, entitled *Buruh dan Mahasiswa Bersatulah (Tentang Metode Aliansi Buruh-Mahasiswa)*, lists 29 joint student – worker actions that were organised between February 1990 and December 1995. All these actions included PRD activists, organised through SMID or PPBI. Each action is described briefly, citing either statements by the organisers or newspaper reports. The actions took place in Jakarta, Tangerang, Bandung, Solo, Makassar, Bogor, Jombang, Yogyakarta, Medan, Surabaya, Semarang and Palu. The publication also lists the names of over 50 students arrested at worker actions.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See also the report in *Gatra*, July 29, 1995, p. 37. The report carries a photo of the workers' mobilisation. The PPBI banner features at the front of the mass of workers.

<sup>21</sup> For a full colour, double-page photo of PPBI and SMID mobilisation at the national parliament in the Indonesian media, see *Gatra*, December 30, 1995, pp. vi-vii of colour supplement looking back at 1995. For another report of a PRD SMID worker mobilisation in the same time period, see "Tiga Jam di Sritex", in *Gatra*, December 23, 1995, p. 38.

<sup>22</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-24

The Great River strike, a milestone in the history of the movement, is not recorded in the Yayasan Insan Politika list. The YIP researchers seemed to rely on just one central Java newspaper for data on actions during June and September 1995, and only occasionally included worker actions. In November, the list records a 3,000-strong strike in the medium-sized East Javanese town of Jombang, involving factory workers, university students and students from religious schools. Three hundred university students occupied the Ministry of Labour office. Three students were arrested and charged with spreading lies. YIP also recorded a demonstration of 1,000 students on a Yogyakarta campus in which students and military clashed.

### ***Aksi Massa* through an international issue, 1995**

A second PRD initiative was astounding given the political conditions in Indonesia and was clearly meant to increase the level of defiance of the regime. Since 1975, one of the most sensitive and taboo issues in Indonesia was Suharto's decision in 1975 to invade East Timor and the occupation of East Timor. The East Timorese themselves had launched a revival of their own mass action campaign with demonstrations during the papal visit to East Timor in 1990 and then in Dili in December 1991.<sup>23</sup> The December 1991 demonstration was attacked by Indonesian military and hundreds killed. After this act of repression, the centre of the Timorese *aksi* campaign shifted to Jakarta in the form of occupations by Timorese youths of foreign embassies. The Timorese youths would normally seek asylum overseas. The campaign of embassy occupations served to help internationalise the issue of the occupation in Europe and North America. Up until 1995, very few Indonesians had spoken out against the invasion. The PRD's founding congress in 1994 had declared its support for an act of self-determination and another student organisation, PIJAR, had also expressed its solidarity with the East Timorese, their activists forming SOLIDAMOR (Solidaritas Timor Timur).<sup>24</sup>

Then on Human Rights Day, December 10, 1995, the PRD launched the first high profile protest action in support of East Timorese self-determination.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the action was carried out jointly with East Timorese activists. More than 100 members of the PRD, including SMID and PPBI,

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<sup>23</sup> The Santa Cruz *massacre* is described in all texts on recent Timorese history: see, for example, John Taylor, *East Timor: the price of history*, York : Zed Books, 1999.

<sup>24</sup> See SOLIDAMOR Solidaritas Tanpa Batas = SOLIDAMOR, Solidarity Without Borders, Solidaritas Indonesia Untuk Perdamaian Timor Timur, SOLIDAMOR., n.d.

<sup>25</sup> Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor, *Fighting Together: Indonesians and East Timorese join in struggle*, Sydney, 1997, is a dossier containing documents and details of this action. This can be located at <http://www.asia-pacific-action.org/southeastasia/indonesia/publications/>.



joined with a similar number of East Timorese activists to occupy the Dutch and Russian embassy compounds.<sup>26</sup> They scaled the fences carrying banners and placards. The media had been alerted. The action was a direct affront to the regime, and it retaliated by mobilising “pro-Jakarta supporters” who demonstrated outside the Dutch embassy. Then, in contempt of all diplomatic conventions, the thugs climbed over the fence into the compound and attacked the PRD and East Timorese activists, as well as the embassy staff. The Dutch ambassador himself suffered an injury to the head. After negotiations between the embassies and the Indonesian government, the activists were allowed to leave the embassy without being arrested. They immediately went into hiding, although one PRD leader, Petrus Haryanto, was later picked up at a medical clinic where he was being treated for wounds, detained and terrorised for several days.

### ***Aksi: towards a first climax, 1996***

*Aksi* involving various ad hoc groupings — though with at least one PRD member or PRD-influenced activist present<sup>27</sup> — and around a broad range of issues continued to be organised. The YIP List, using just five of the scores of Indonesian dailies, gives 3 for January 1996; 10 in February in six cities in Java, Sumatra and Bali; and 32 actions in March in 12 different cities in Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi. Then on April 23, 1996, *aksi* became the focus of the newspapers as the 1974 Malari pattern of student demonstrations and rioting urban floating mass resurfaced. A student demonstration in Ujung Padang, the provincial capital city of South Sulawesi, over increases in public transport costs imposed by the provincial government, turned into a riot.<sup>28</sup> The next day a follow-up demonstration by students from at least three campuses turned into a clash with the military and police and was also accompanied by widespread rioting throughout the city. Six university students were shot dead and more than 100 injured. Thirty-five were arrested and charged. On April 26, 10,000 students held a demonstration demanding the lowering of public transport prices, the dissolution of extra-legal

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<sup>26</sup> See also *Gatra*, December 16, 1995, p. 72.

<sup>27</sup> The presence of such activists is difficult to document given the fluid and temporary nature of these groups. However, throughout 1994, 1995 and 1996, I was in constant contact with the PRD leadership by telephone. They were able to pass on information on scores of actions, on almost the same day, sometimes even the day before, indicating their close proximity to all these activities.

<sup>28</sup> These demonstrations and riots are also recorded in the YIP report.

repressive institutions and the end of military violence. The governor eventually revoked the price rise.<sup>29</sup>

The YIP list then notes 48 actions during May, more than half of which were protests over the violence in Ujung Padang. During May these listed actions, based on just six newspapers, took place in Bandung, Jember, Jakarta, Semarang, Solo, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Salatiga, Purwokerto, all on the island of Java and Medan, Padang, Pekanbaru, Lampung and Palembang in Sumatra as well as in Ujung Padang itself. The Human Rights Watch/Asia, Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights later produced a report detailing 25 actions between April 1995 and July 1996 — more than one per month — organized by the PRD and its affiliated organizations. Almost all had the character of high-profile actions acting as examples of the mass action method. The list, with descriptions of the actions, is reproduced as an appendix to the thesis.<sup>30</sup>

### **Sukarnoputri conjuncture: terrain of first *aksi* climax**

Even the modest data from the YIP List show the dramatic increase in protest actions from 1989 onwards. By 1996 this was met with more arrests, the banning of major newsweeklies and the ending of all media liberalisation and the steady increase in the use of violence in dealing with the protests, including torture, kidnappings (such as that of Petrus Haryanto) and firing with live bullets on demonstrators. The regime's political crisis was already well and truly developing. The crisis was developing separate from another front of trouble for the Suharto regime, namely, its inability to continue to keep one of its previously tame parties under its control, the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI).<sup>31</sup>

After June 1996, there was a fusion for almost a year, of the protest movement that had developed since 1989 and political protest around Suharto's moves to regain control over the PDI. But it should be noted that before June 1996, the issue of the PDI had not featured in any protest actions anywhere. The conflict between the PDI leadership and the Suharto regime had not been a factor driving the protest movement — it had, until June 1996, just been background noise.

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29 *Gatra*, May 4, 1996, p. 40. See the follow-up two-page report in *Gatra*, May 11, 1995, pp. 71-72. The latter carries a photo of one of the student mobilisations. There is a further report of student solidarity demonstrations, including by SMID, in *Gatra*, May 25, 1995, p. 37.

30 From: "Indonesia: Tough international response needed to widening crackdown", Human Rights Watch/Asia, Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights, August 1996, Vol. 8, No. 8.

31 See Eklof, *Power and Political Culture*, *op. cit.*

The conflict between the PDI leadership and Suharto had been brewing for some time. The PDI, a fusion of the old (but purged) PNI and various Christian and other small parties, was one of the three parties permitted under Suharto's electoral and political party laws, the other two being GOLKAR, Suharto's own party, and the United Development Party, a fusion of some Islamic parties. It is not clear exactly when or how, but at some point in the mid- to late 1980s, processes began within the PDI oriented towards asserting some independence from the regime. In 1987 Megawati Sukarnoputri was approached to become an election candidate, presumably by the new PDI leadership under Soerjadi. Soerjadi, apparently encouraged by rivals of Suharto from among his former officials, also sought to recruit other relatively high-profile personalities, such as the film star Sopha Sopha, the economist Kwik Kian Gie and the banker Laksamana Sukardi. All of these figures represented a layer of businessmen and celebrities who were already wealthy and relatively independent of the Suharto franchise machine. However, the PDI had long lost most of its old PNI membership base. They had been purged or frightened away after the massacres of the majority left leadership and activists in 1965. The PNI's pathetic state was shown when it scored only 6.9% in the 1971 elections.<sup>32</sup>

Megawati's recruitment as a candidate for the 1987 election campaign and her repeat participation in 1992 served to revive a mass base for the PDI — at least on a temporary basis. She attracted hundreds of thousands of people to her rallies outside Jakarta and up to 3 million people at rallies in Jakarta in 1992. As she travelled through the country, although espousing only the most abstract of policy visions, the PDI started to recruit again, especially at the local level. Soerjadi had started appointing local party commissioners — and not party branches — to get around the floating mass legislation. It appears that this period helped revive very old PNI networks among the country's poorer layers of the middle class and bourgeoisie. Ed Aspinall describes this aspect:

To account for the strength of Megawati's challenge, therefore, it is necessary to look beyond formal politics, toward an array of more humble informal networks and patterns of organization which assisted to maintain the tenacity of the old Soekarnoist mass base. For example, many members of the old PNI and its affiliates, right through to the 1990s, remained organized in arisan groups (a kind of communal money-saving). Former PNI members used arisan meetings to maintain group cohesion and facilitate political discussion and communication. In former PNI base areas, like Central and East Java, supporters of the

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32. See Ken Ward, *The 1971 election in Indonesia : an East Java case study*, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1974.

old party similarly regularly gathered for slametan (thanksgiving feasts) on auspicious dates, such as the anniversaries of the birth and death of Sukarno. Such practices remained widespread: according to one participant in 1993, there were as many as fifty PNI-oriented arisan groups operating in the Jakarta area alone. Networks mediated by informal community leaders — small businesspeople, Javanese mystics, martial arts teachers, artists and the like — similarly assisted in maintaining the party's coherence at the local level. Nationalist or PDI-aligned *preman*, semi-criminal elements, played a role in mobilizing young people for PDI rallies in the cities. Many former civil servants retained emotional attachments to old PNI symbols and networks. From the late 1980s there were numerous reports of retired village heads, ABRI officers and other officials returning to the PDI fold.<sup>33</sup>

Aspinall also gives a good sense of the kind of less organised support Megawati's PDI attracted at election time:

The mass support base of the party, who supplied the crowds at the party's 1987 and 1992 elections rallies, were from even more humble origins. These were the petty traders, owners of small 'kiosks,' un- or under-employed youth and the myriad others who constituted the urban informal sector. Many were not particularly attached to the PDI but were simply looking for an avenue to protest.<sup>34</sup>

The conflict between Suharto and Megawati developed into confrontation in June 1996, when the government decided to recognise a PDI congress organised by an anti-Megawati, pro-regime faction. It thus moved to withdraw legal recognition of the Megawati PDI, outlawing her from the formal political system. She and her supporters refused to accept this and maintained their stand that her leadership and her PDI were the legitimate parties. This was a level of defiance from within the formal system which had never happened before.

This happened in the direct aftermath of the Ujung Padang demonstrations and the escalation in protest actions throughout the country. The momentum of the protest movement that had been underway since 1989 and a new momentum brought into play by this confrontation merged. Beginning on June 14 in Semarang, protest actions began against Suharto's refusal to recognise Megawati's leadership. There followed actions in Surabaya and Yogyakarta on June 17, Salatiga on June 18, in Jakarta on June 19 of about 4,000 people and then the largest action of 15,000 people in

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<sup>33</sup> Aspinall, *op. cit.*, p. 172-173.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 175

Jakarta on June 20. All of these actions up until June 19 were joint actions of the PDI and PRD, where the banners of both parties were prominent. The June 20 action was organised by a broader coalition of organisations. The demonstration made its way towards Monas from the PDI headquarters, but was intercepted near Gambir station by the military, which beat the crowds with rattan batons, kicked them and pelted them with stones. An army tank also drove into the crowd. Five people were killed and around 70 seriously injured. About 50 people were arrested and taken to the nearest offices of the army's Strategic Command Headquarters.<sup>35</sup>

There were more protest actions the next day in Jakarta as well as other cities around the country, including a large demonstration by the group ALDERA in Bandung, which was also attacked by troops. In Jogjakarta on June 25, a demonstration of 7,000 people broke through a military blockade outside the Gajah Mada University campus and made its way to the local parliament.

In Jakarta again, on June 28, 3,000 rallied at the national parliament in support of Megawati.<sup>36</sup> In Jakarta again on July 12, 5,000 rallied at the Proclamation Memorial.<sup>37</sup>

The merging of the two momentums, however, did not mean that the mobilisation of workers and others sectors around separate issues stopped. Demonstrations still protesting over the violence in Ujung Padang continued through June. The YIP list also notes demonstrations against university fees, corruption in the Indonesian Development Bank and the mysterious escape from prison of a corrupt state oil company official.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> For a media version of this event see "Mereka berupaya menyangga Mega" in *Gatra*, June 29, 1996, p. 27-28. This report lists the PRD, the Partai Uni Demokrasi Indonesia (PUDI), a group founded by dissident Sri Bintang Pamungkas and Pijar as among the several groups involved, alongside the pro-Megawati PDI forces. The report also lists demonstrations as taking place in other cities such as in Bali, Ujung Padang, Surabaya and Mataram.

<sup>36</sup> For more reporting on the mobilisations and activism of the pro-Megawati, see the section "Arus Bawah Bergerak" in Faisal, Helmi A, *Gerakan Pro-Mega Menelusuri Jejak Pendukung Megawati*, Jakarta : Angkatan Muda Nahdatul Ulama, 1998, pp. 77-168. The sources of the reports are Indonesian newspapers. They are listed separately at the back of the book.

<sup>37</sup> *Gatra* reported the demonstrations in Jakarta and Solo, July 6, 1996, pp. 27-28. It was a sign of the development of an *aksi suasana* that in the same issue of *Gatra*, and in the same "Nasional" section there were two other reports of *aksi*, neither to do with the PDI. One was a protest by trishaw drivers against harassment, another a student demonstration against police who had been harassing lecturers. See *ibid.*, p. 27 and p. 28.

<sup>38</sup> Most of the above demonstrations are sighted from the tables in the YIP report.

In addition, on June 18 — one day before the protests against Suharto's moves against Megawati began in Jakarta — the PRD organised a demonstration of 2,000 workers from Indoshoes Pty Ltd, a company based just outside Jakarta. The 2,000 workers went on strike and came to Jakarta to rally outside the national parliament building, where they were joined by about 3,000 other workers and students. Three thousand workers returned to the national parliament the next day but this time they were blocked from entering the parliamentary complex by a military blockade. They then marched to the Ministry of Labour.

Just three weeks later, on July 10, between 10,000 and 20,000 workers from 10 factories in one of the industrial areas of Surabaya went on strike and demonstrated, engaging in running street fights with the military. The strike was organised under the banner of the PRD and PPBI, who distributed thousands of leaflets among the workers which included the following demands: end the interference of the military in workers' affairs and in the PDI; end the armed forces dual functions; for the nomination of Megawati Sukarnoputri as a presidential candidate.<sup>39</sup>

Scores were injured and more than 20 detained, including three PRD leaders: Dita Sari, Coen Hussein Pontoh and Mohammed Soleh. Dita Sari was sentenced to six years after the prosecution asked for eight years; Coen Pontoh received four, after the prosecution asked for six, and Sholeh also received four years.<sup>40</sup> They were not released until after Suharto fell.<sup>41</sup>

July 27, 1996 — when another round of demonstrations combined with riots of the urban floating mass exploded with a huge fury in Jakarta — is most frequently given as the starting point for the beginning of the end of Suharto's rule, as the start of the beginning of his "long fall". But the momentum of escalating and spreading protest actions was already well under way. July 27, 1996 just spurred things on.<sup>42</sup> Megawati, the PDI membership and those forces mobilising in solidarity

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<sup>39</sup> *Gatra* reported this mobilisation in detail, headlining the report "Brosur politik di Tengah Buruh", with the tag line: "Unjuk rasa buruh di Surabaya menuntut kenaikan upah dan perubahan politik", July 20, 1996, pp. 32-33. It carries a photo of part of the rally outside government offices. The report mentions the involvement of PRD, PPBI and SMID.

<sup>40</sup> *Kompas*, June 17, 1997, from a table *Vonis Aktivis PRD*, sourced from the Pusat Informasi Kompas, reprinted in a booklet *Berita PRD Juni – Agustus, 1997*, Amsterdam : Pusat Dokumentasi Indonesia.

<sup>41</sup> *Gatra*, July 27, 1996, pp. 40-41, reports on the charges and detentions.

<sup>42</sup> Descriptions of the events are carried in Aspinall and especially comprehensively in van Dijk. For the 10-page *Gatra* report see *Gatra*, August 3, 1996, pp. 21-32. The front cover carried a picture of rioting and the headlines "Hura-hara Markas PDI".

with Megawati's PDI were refusing to be outlawed by the regime. Several score of members were occupying the official PDI national headquarters in a building supplied by the government. The government ordered them to leave the building. They refused. The headquarters became the meeting place for a broad coalition of anti-government forces known as the Majelis Rakyat Indonesia (MARI — Indonesian People's Assembly). While the rallying point for the MARI coalition was defence of the Megawati PDI, it issued a broad range of general demands. These included wage rises for workers, civil servants and soldiers; better prices for farmers' produce; defend the exchange rate at a fixed amount; provision of free education and an end to corruption; and repeal of all repressive laws.

In fact, the PDI headquarters was becoming a possible launch pad from which the momentum of the previous 23 years since MALARI, and the immediate past seven years since the *aksi* process began, might be propelled to a higher phase. Not surprisingly, the regime moved to end the PDI headquarters status as this rallying point. Military and police arrived and cordoned off the general area. After stoning the building for a few hours, forces declaring themselves members of the officially recognised PDI, but made up primarily of hired thugs and perhaps soldiers, attacked the offices and took them over. Many claim that more than 20 people were killed. More than 20 of the PDI people in the headquarters were arrested and later tried and imprisoned and released only after Suharto fell. Aspinall gives a good summary of the immediate aftermath:

Meanwhile, a large crowd had gathered beyond the military cordon. As rumors spread that many in the office had been killed, stone throwing began. Although PDI leaders appealed for calm, sporadic clashes continued, with sections of the crowd at one point chanting 'ABRI are killers' and burning a nearby police post. The crowd grew for some hours, swelled by residents of nearby slum areas, high school students and other passers-by. Around 2 p.m. troops made a concerted attack, using tear gas, water cannons and batons, but not firing. The crowds scattered, and from this point running battles and widespread rioting took place through a large part of Eastern Jakarta. Many thousands of poor *kampung* residents joined in. The activists from opposition groups among them were able to exercise little control. Eventually, some 56 buildings were destroyed, more than 200 people were arrested, and four (according to official figures) were killed.

In fact, July 27 was another example of the MALARI syndrome: mobilisations in which organised protests by a specific political sector were accompanied by widespread rioting among a de-organised section of the population.

## May 1997: the second climax

The July 1996 demonstrations and riots marked another point in the escalating political crisis for the counter-revolution: floating mass politics was unravelling. Not surprisingly, the regime launched a direct attack against the main agent promoting *aksi*: the PRD.<sup>43</sup> The PRD was accused of organising the rioting.<sup>44</sup> A propaganda campaign began labelling the PRD as communist and a new version of the PKI.<sup>45</sup> Orders were issued for the arrest of all leaders and members. Thirty PRD leaders and members were arrested and detained, 14 tried and sentenced. The PRD was forced underground — except that during 1997 several PRD leaders appeared “above ground” in their trials. None were released until after the fall of Suharto.

While the organisation systematically promoting *aksi* was hounded, protest actions themselves continued to increase, mutating into a wider range of activities. Actions initiated by PRD groups receded for a few months until the organisation regrouped underground and relaunched its own campaign of actions at the beginning of 1997, under different banners in different towns.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Probably the most detailed report on the July events and the crackdown that followed can be found in *Jakarta Crackdown*, a 316-page report published by the Alliance of Independent Journalists, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development and Institute for the Studies of Free Flow of Information, May, 1997, no location. Apart from a detailed chronology of the attack on the PDI offices in Diponegoro, it also contains an extensive chapter, “Snaring the PRD”, giving the details of the accusations, charges, captures and so on. It also details the repression against non-PRD activists in later chapters.

<sup>44</sup> *Gatra*, August 17, 1996, pp. 26-27. This was the front cover story with photos of PRD chairperson Budiman Sujatmiko and labour activist Mochtar Pakpahan. The cover reads: “Dijerat Subversi”. See also Aspinall; ASIET.

<sup>45</sup> The arrest of the PRD leaders remained the front cover story on *Gatra* throughout August. See *Gatra* August 24 and 31 issues. The *Gatra* August 31 issue carried an interview with Dita Sari. The interview attempted to connect Dita Sai to the PKI. See pp. 34-35. For a report on the processes leading towards trials see the report: “Tak hanya dijeret subversi”, pp. 32-33.

<sup>46</sup> In an article written in March 1997, the PRD claimed it had been able to establish new branches in seven towns. See Hasyim, “27 Juli : Pengaruhnya — Gerakan Sekarang,” in *Pembebasan*, No. IV, Februari 1997, <http://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1997/03/07/0102.html>. The PRD’s underground existence was manifested through the publication *Tuntutan Rakyat*, published by the “Komite Perlawanan Baru”. It circulated its photocopied bulletin of 8-10 pages until around the end of 1997. It carried statements by the PRD plus news reports on various protest actions around the country.



Spontaneous, locally organised actions by students, workers and farmers continued,<sup>47</sup> although for a while the media were slightly more cautious in reporting them. The YIP list recorded about 40 student actions between September and December 1996, using six newspapers.

But a new form of *aksi* started to occur: actions by the newly recruited membership of Megawati's PDI. Megawati continued to refuse to accept the legitimacy of the government's recognition of the rival PDI under Soerjadi. Megawati opted to challenge in the courts the legal status of every PDI local branch set up by the Soerjadi party. While litigation appeared as the announced tactic adopted by the Megawati PDI against the regime, almost every single one of scores of court sessions was accompanied by a local PDI mass rally, march or demonstration.<sup>48</sup> Sometimes PDI members would demonstrate at the electoral commission or other related government bodies. These were relatively non-militant — except when occasionally dispersed violently and PDI members fought back — but effectively spread the mobilisation method of politics throughout the country. Occurring in parallel with the spontaneous actions, it meant that the country began to enter into a permanent state of *aksi*.

Floating mass political culture was truly dead and buried. But de-organisation still dominated. While probably tens of thousands of people did join the Megawati PDI between 1993 and 1996, there were millions more who had no organisation — at least no *permanent* organisation. Before 1996, riots usually occurred in conjunction with a specific large *aksi*, usually initiated by students, but which escalated political sentiments to a higher level. After July in 1996, PDI and spontaneous actions occurring during the same period kept so many issues on the public agenda at once, that the political mood was approaching a state of permanent anger and dissent, even rebellion.

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<sup>47</sup> For an outline of the priorities of the PRD underground at this point, see Maulana, "Menilai Peristiwa 27 Juli 1996" in *Tuntutan Rakyat*, No. 5. n.d. (photocopied leaflet).

<sup>48</sup> Aspinall rather stresses Megawati's passivity during this period, comparing her unfavourably with Amien Rais, who associated himself more with student protest. See Aspinall, *Opposing Suharto*, p. 216. I think this analysis doesn't give the PDIP's mobilisational activity around the court proceedings enough weight. It may be one factor that helps explain Megawati's longevity after the fall of Suharto, and Rais's very brief political life. Reports of the actions were mainly through telephone and emails. They may have been reported in the local press at that time. According to an article, "Pdi-Perjuangan Masih Terus Melawan", published in *Pembebasan On-Line*, in November 1996, PDI members, numbering in the thousands, were turning out at these court cases. See <http://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1996/12/12/0013.html>

By November 1996, the PRD had also regrouped and formed new action committees in several cities which began to organise actions. In the four months leading up to the May 1997 elections, the number of protest actions continued to escalate, raising a broad range of issues. However what was to hit Indonesia in May 1997 was hinted at by new levels of defiance and new kinds of alliances that took place in the south Sumatran city of Lampung in December 1996. Over December 10 and 11, the city was paralysed by a combination of a strike by *mikrolet*<sup>49</sup> and bus drivers and demonstrations by university and high school students. The merging of university, high school student and transportation worker protests into a single action took place more or less spontaneously.<sup>50</sup>

In this new climate, riots began to occur separate from any specific organised protest. Riots occurred in the East Javanese town of Situbondo in November, in Tasikmalaya in December and then, on January 30, in Rengasdengklok, in the ethnically Sundanese part of West Java. There were also more riots in Ujung Padang, West Kalimantan and West Papua. In all cases, it was reported that a conflict incident between Chinese and non-Chinese, or Christian and non-Christian, individuals sparked the riots. But inevitably the rioters — this time drawn from a more rural sector of the de-organised — attacked government buildings and symbols of consumer prosperity, as well as churches or Chinese-owned buildings.<sup>51</sup>

By the time of the May 1997 elections there was an atmosphere of heightened political tension. There were demonstrations somewhere in the country almost every day opposing the government on some issue or another. PDI mobilisations also continued. On one occasion before the elections, 20,000 people rallied outside a courthouse in central Jakarta, completely blocking the major thoroughfare of Gajah Mada Street. The country had been rocked by riots in Jakarta just nine months earlier, followed by destructive rioting in other parts of the country.

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<sup>49</sup> *Mikrolet* are small station wagon-type vehicles than carry 10-15 passengers. They travel back and forth along specific routes picking up and dropping off people where they wish on that route.

<sup>50</sup> PERINGATAN HARI HAM 10 DESEMBER 1996 MAHASISWA,PELAJAR,SOPIR MIKROLET LAMPUNG BERSATU DALAM MENUNTUT HAM dan DEMOKRASI, "LAMPUNG BERGOLAK", 11 December 1996, statement and chronology issued by Komite Mahasiswa untuk Perjuangan Demokrasi (TesaPD) UBL, Perjuangan Mahasiswa untuk Keadilan (PERMAK) Unila, and Dewan Perjuangan Mahasiswa Pro Demokrasi (DPMPD) AAL/STIE Lampung (typescript).

<sup>51</sup> For a summary overview of these disturbances see the chapter, "Riots and Conspiracies" in Stefan Eklof, *Indonesian Politics in Crisis*, *op. cit.*

The legitimacy of the elections was also being challenged in a way that they had never been before. Megawati and her followers, who were clearly the largest party group with an active membership base, were excluded from the elections. Megawati effectively indicated that she wanted her followers to boycott the elections. Several national religious and community figures also indicated that they favoured a boycott. This included a pre-Easter apostolic letter by the Indonesian Bishops' Conference, which told Catholic believers that it was not a sin to refuse to vote in the May 29 general election. Almost all of the various pro-democratic NGOs and activist groups, such as the PRD, PIJAR and others, advocated a boycott. An election monitoring group, itself comprising a coalition of activist groups, including PRD members, also used protest actions to draw attention to the anomalies in the election procedures, most of all the absence of Megawati's PDI, now called the PDI Struggle (PDI-P).

The call to boycott the elections, coming from so many directions, had mixed results. Many boycotted voting, especially in the areas where Megawati's PDI was strong, but almost nobody boycotted the key mobilisations, that is to say, the anti-regime election *aksi*. The grip of mobilisational politics had become too strong. The escalating protest momentum was not conducive to people staying at home and doing nothing active about a state of affairs in the country that they were increasingly agitated about. Instead the tendency was to mobilise. As I will describe below, the May 1997 elections saw the largest mobilisations in the history of the New Order. They were also, perhaps, the most militant in the history of post-independent Indonesia. These mobilisations also took a form which nobody predicted at the time: the *aksi* had become truly politically independent.

Predictions that the GOLKAR campaign would be large and well-financed but lacklustre and that the Soerjadi PDI campaign would be a flop did come true. Predictions that the PPP would run its usual more-or-less pro-New Order lacklustre campaign also came true. With the New Order seeking the biggest ever majority for GOLKAR, the PPP pulled back on its campaign efforts, cancelling, for example, plans for campaign activities at the village level in many areas on the three days set aside for its campaigns. The regime itself was, however, very sensitive to the possibility of mobilisations. The election laws banned rallies and marches altogether. Strict regulations were put in place to ensure that the police could maintain control over all campaign activities. The parties had to notify the police and other election-related authorities of their full integrated campaign plans and of every individual activity. Activities were classified as "monologic" and "dialogic" depending on whether the

public attending the activities would also be allowed to speak.<sup>52</sup> The campaign period was to last 27 days, with each party having turns to campaign — nine days each.

What nobody predicted were the huge, militant mobilisations that occurred spontaneously on all the days set aside for PPP campaigning in Jakarta, as well as in several other cities. In Jakarta on the days set aside for PPP campaigning, the PPP had several activities planned for different parts of the city. Tens of thousands of people streamed out of the densely populated *kampung* areas to make their way to the sites of PPP activities.<sup>53</sup> These were, however, not simply PPP mobilisations but spontaneous mobilisations by the Jakarta poor giving vent to their anger. They did not carry placards and banners provided by the PPP or calling for support for the PPP, as would be usually the case. Instead, surprising everybody, they carried their own banners proclaiming their support for “Mega Bintang”, literally “Mega Star”.<sup>54</sup> The “Mega” referred to Megawati and the “Star” was the star and crescent of Islam. Jakarta’s urban poor, whether practising Muslims or more secular Muslims, united in an angry rejection of GOLKAR and the New Order. Banners read “A Coalition of Mega-Bintang-People for Democracy”, “A Coalition of Mega-Bintang-People to Refuse Absolute Majority for GOLKAR” and “A Coalition of Mega-Bintang-People for Change” as well as “GOLKAR is corrupt”, “GOLKAR cheats” and other anti-government slogans.

Neither the PPP national leadership nor Megawati had promoted the idea of such a coalition or battle cry. The idea appeared to be first raised in the Central Javanese city of Solo, where the chairperson of the local PPP branch, a maverick by the name of Mudrick Setiawan Sangidoe, announced that Megawati’s PDI was giving its votes to PPP.<sup>55</sup> In early May, Mudrick also met with Megawati, who did not state any support for such a coalition either. The PPP national leadership also made it clear that it was opposed to such an idea — which would have been tantamount to supporting an alliance with an outlaw, outside the electoral system. The issue was not raised again by any of the leadership.

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<sup>52</sup> H.A.Adiasyah, Boykee Soekapjo, Dana k. Anwari SB, Riyanto DW, *Pemilu 1997 Antara Fenomena kampanye Dialogis dan Mega-Bintang*, Jakarta, 1997, p. 49.

<sup>53</sup> PRD activists participating in these mobilisations were asked to send in field reports. See Appendix 2, for English translations of some of these reports circulated at the time.

<sup>54</sup> For an interesting analysis of the impact of the Mega Bintang phenomenon from a non-PRD source after the elections, see “Mega-Bintang-Golput dan Nasib Soerjadi”, *Suara Independen*, 7/III/MEI-JUNI 1997. They identified another phenomenon apart from Mega-Bintang, namely Mega-Golput, referring to the Megawati supporters who boycotted the elections.

<sup>55</sup> Budiman and Tornquist, *op cit.*, pp. 229-268.

The masses had adopted their own political line, calling on the two major camps in the mainstream opposition to unite against the government. The election campaign was organised so that each party had a day where it alone could hold activities — although not rallies and marches. There were four rounds of a day each for the three parties. By the fourth round, the scale of mobilisations on the street — defying the government ban on outdoor rallies and defying the urgings and cancellations of events by the PPP itself — had grown enormously and had become increasingly angry and militant. It is difficult to make an exact estimation of the number of people on the streets on May 14, one of the later days set aside for campaigning for the PPP. Calculations by PRD leaders put the figure at over one million mobilised throughout the city in different locations.<sup>56</sup> There is no consolidated listing of the mobilisations that took place throughout the city as people poured out of the *kampung* heading for different meeting points. However, all descriptions of the campaign point in the direction of massive and extensive mobilisations. Academician Syamsudin Harris referred to the “teeming campaigns of the PPP, which had ‘greened’ the whole city of Jakarta”.<sup>57</sup> Eyewitness accounts and newspaper reports all underline the massive scale of the PPP day turnout in Jakarta, of people *berjubel* or *menyemut*<sup>58</sup> — massing out in crowds like ants — onto the main roads..

The dynamic of this mass-initiated new political line — calling for a united opposition to oust GOLKAR — not only startled but also frightened the regime and the elite generally. Immediately after the first round of PPP day demonstrations, when the Mega-Bintang phenomenon appeared, the government banned the use of any placards which used the “Mega-Bintang” term, and any other paraphernalia related to Megawati, including any pictures of her or her father, former president Soekarno. These bans, which came on top of the most heavy-handed pre-election pro-GOLKAR manoeuvring ever implemented by the government, only further infuriated an already mobilised and angry population. The bans tested the militancy of the popular mood. Amien Rais, in an interview with *Tempo Interaktif*, assessed the mobilisations as a general protest:

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<sup>56</sup> “Commentary by Peoples Democratic Party. Mega-Bintang-the People: A broad mass coalition against the Soeharto dictatorship”, typescript statement.

<sup>57</sup> Hans Antlov and Sven Cederroth, *Elections in Indonesia: The New Order and Beyond*, Routledge, 2004, p. 29.

<sup>58</sup> Info Harian, May 27, 1997, distributed via Apakabar mailing list; interview with Amien Rais, ““Rakyat Ingin Mengucapkan Selamat Tinggal Kepada Status Quo” by *Tempo Interaktif*.

Berjubelnya anak-anak muda yang turun ke jalan saat kampanye PPP itu bukanlah menandakan kebangkitan PPP, tetapi karena tuntutan rakyat yang semakin kuat terhadap perubahan. Semuanya ini adalah protes terhadap kemapanan, begitu penafsiran saya.<sup>59</sup>

The results of this challenge to the Mega-Bintang masses was an escalation of mobilisation and defiance of all attempts to prevent the carrying of Mega-Bintang paraphernalia.<sup>60</sup> This was despite the chairperson of the Jakarta branch of the PPP issuing instructions for PPP members not to take part in any marches or rallies.<sup>61</sup> His instructions held no sway over any significant section of the previously floating masses. The acts of defiance by marching crowds of *kampung* dwellers included attacking and burning down police stations when the police tried to order the handing over of placards or posters, and chasing away the police or military. Other government offices were attacked and ransacked. Military and police barricades attempting to stop illegal open rallies and marches were stoned and attempts were made to break through. In many cases, the police and military personnel used force to disperse these marches. Street skirmishes were common throughout Jakarta. The report by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Jakarta described it well:

As an example of the disaffection of the masses, which directly or indirectly reflected the “rejection” by the masses of the “leadership” of the parties, of the “legal competency” of the election authorities and the “authority” of the security apparatus was the case of the explosion onto the streets of the greater Jakarta area on the PPP campaign days during the last three rounds of campaigning. Even though the Jakarta regional council of the PPP stated that they would not carry out any campaigning on those days and the election authority had banned rallies and motorcades and the security apparatus declared that it would take harsh action against anybody violating the campaign rules, the masses and sympathisers still came

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<sup>59</sup> “The massing of young people onto the streets on the day of the PPP campaign is not a sign of the rising up of the PPP. It is all a protest against the establishment (status quo). That is my interpretation.” *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, the report “Aparat Berpihak, Massa Mega-Bintang Melawan, Istana Nyaris Diserbu” *SiaR*, report circulated via Apakabar mailing list, May 19, 1997.

<sup>61</sup> Amien Rais saw the “Mega Bintang” as : “Para pendukung koalisi Mega Bintang sama seperti *massa* PPP yang lain menggunakan kesempatan kampanye PPP untuk menyampaikan protes terhadap pemerintah”. (“The supporters of the Mega Bintang coalition were the same as the other PPP masses using the opportunity of the PPP campaign to protest against the government”) *Info Harian*, *op. cit.*

out onto the streets to rally, and in motorcades [with motorbikes], shouting banned slogans and ignoring all calls from the security apparatus and the PPP officials for them to stop their activities, and indeed resisting these authorities in increasingly “violent” ways.<sup>62</sup>

This report also gave some statistics pointing to the level of physical clashes:

Up until and including the final round of campaigning, there were more than 200 people who died (mostly in crashes or burned alive in buildings during riots as in Banjarmasin), more than 100 seriously injured and 400 with lesser injuries. There were 4 policemen seriously injured and 15 with lesser injuries; and 3 members of the other branches of the armed forces who lost their lives; as well as 3 seriously injured and 6 with lesser injuries. There were 5 police stations, 1 district military headquarters, 26 civil district government offices, 110 houses, 6 political party offices, 4 mosques and 3 churches damaged as a result of actions by the masses. There were 208 vehicles, including 18 government service vehicles, damaged.<sup>63</sup>

Another writer, Kees van Dijk, in his book *Country in Despair, Indonesia between 1997 and 2000*, using newspaper reports to put together a picture, described the atmosphere in his chapter “Violent Campaigns”:

Not a day passed without crowds somewhere running amuck and taking possession of the streets, fights erupting between groups of supporters of the different parties, and individuals being beaten up. All over Indonesia mobs turned violent. Barricades appeared in the streets where people were urged to resist the security troops or to prevent gangs supporting another party entering their neighbourhoods, and shops remained closed. Stalls selling food or drinks were plundered, and free petrol was demanded at petrol stations. Drivers and passengers of passing cars were forced to hand over money and cigarettes, or had stones and bottles hurtled at them if they did not make the appropriate sign: one, two or three fingers in the air, to indicate their support of, respectively, PPP, Golkar or PDI.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> J. Kristiadi, T.a. Legowo, Nt Budi Harjanto, *Pemilihan umum 1997 : perkiraan, harapan, dan evaluasi*, Jakarta, 1997, p. 98.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p. 99-100.

<sup>64</sup> Kees van Dijk, *Country in Despair, Indonesia between 1997 and 2001*, 2002, pp. 32-33. Kees van Dijk's book provides the most detailed digest of political developments during the 1997-200 period available in English.

Van Dijk's vivid description presents a picture of a society descending into anarchy, which certainly seemed to be the case for a while. But his description also reveals the political nature of the unrest and the role that the PPP campaign days played:

... most clashes broke out around the PPP campaign, which appeared to have turned into rallying points to unleash slumbering hostility against the government and all that it represented. For ordinary citizens, PPP campaign days became days to dread.<sup>65</sup>

Of course, it was mostly "ordinary citizens" who were in fact mobilising, and they had been awakening from the "slumber", or their "floating" for some time before.

Similar mobilisations — almost always outside the control of the PPP — took place in many other cities, especially on Java, in both the Sundanese and Javanese ethnic areas. By the last day of campaigning, the 1974 MALARI syndrome took over. Mega-Bintang mobilisations voicing their clear political line, demanding a democratic coalition against GOLKAR, were accompanied by outbreaks of rioting. As one group of Indonesian researchers described in their report: "There is no other word to describe the PPP campaign at the end of the campaign period (Friday May 23 1977): RIOTS. The rioting spread from the tip of west Java [Sunda] to East Java."<sup>66</sup> This one report, for example, describes how "hundreds" of people were beaten by rifle butts until tear gas was used on the Javanese town of Tegal, how police stations were burned down in the large city of Cirebon, of mass street fighting with GOLKAR members in Semarang, of attacks on the police and government offices in Tangerang, and several other examples. In some cities, even military posts were attacked. In the CSIS report, the writers included figures showing that just six of the Jakarta dailies carried reports of at least 250 incidents of so-called violent clashes during the 27-day campaign period.<sup>67</sup> Their report emphasised that even these figures are an underestimation, as many incidents went unreported.

The ban on Mega-Bintang placards and paraphernalia, justified on the basis that there was no registered Mega-Bintang party, was maintained throughout the campaign but could not be effectively enforced. The regime had suffered its first major defeat at the hands of popular defiance. The fear generated by this was felt throughout the elite. While the regime banned it, the PPP disassociated itself from it completely. An additional worry to the regime and the elite generally was that, despite the PRD being forced underground, PRD activists had been able to intervene to

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<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>66</sup> H.A.Adiasyah, Boykee Soekapjo, Dana k. Anwari SB, Riyanto DW, p77.

<sup>67</sup> J. Kristiadi, T.a. Legowo, Nt Budi Harjanto , p. 93.



heighten the profile of the political demands present among the masses. Under the name of a Mega-Bintang-Rakyat coalition, they started distributing leaflets among the marches and rallies with several specific political demands, under the general demand of: get rid of Suharto! These included: repeal of the five political laws; repeal of the dual function of the armed forces; a cabinet comprising political parties; eliminate corruption and conglomerates; investigate the wealth of the children of the president, ministers and other officials; and lower prices.<sup>68</sup> The PRD activists estimated that they distributed around 600,000 of these leaflets with the help of volunteers from the people joining the mobilisations.<sup>69</sup> These were small leaflets, typed on cheap newsprint paper and stencilled or printed.<sup>70</sup> As one PRD leader explained:

We in the PRD had a fantastic experience. We distributed 600,000 leaflets with our demands and our ideas for resistance in the midst of the strict control by the military (remember what they were capable of in 1965 and in East Timor!) And the leaflets were taken up by the people enthusiastically. There was not one leaflet to be seen on the ground anywhere. Many housewives took them away and made more copies. When we started chanting: "Mega, Star, the people!" the mass chant in reply was "The people are on the rampage!" The people really fought back with all their might, trying to break through the barricades the military had set up between different suburbs. They knew, and this is what we were saying in our leaflets also, that if they could break through the barricades so that all the masses from the whole Jakarta-Bogor-Tangerang region could link up, then who knows what could have been achieved. Most of the mass media published the demands in our leaflets. It surprised us at first that reports of our leaflets got through the regime's control over the media. But later we realised that it was the regime itself that engineered the media space because they felt it was necessary to launch counter-propaganda against us.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> H.A.Adiasyah, Boykee Soekapjo, Dana k. Anwari SB, Riyanto DW, p. 209.

<sup>69</sup> Discussions with PRD activists in 1997.

<sup>70</sup> There are samples of these little leaflets in the *Reformasi* collection at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and in the "Indonesian zamizdat material — documents" collection in the Menzies Library, Australian National University.

<sup>71</sup> "Indonesia: Organising The Mass Struggle For Real Democracy: an Interview with Marlin" in *Links: International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, No 5, 1998, pp. 8-9. Marlin is the pseudonym of a senior PRD leader who was involved in coordinating the intervention into the 1997 election campaign from underground.

The PPP leadership itself announced that it was reporting the Mega-Bintang-Rakyat leaflets to the police, although there were no names or addresses on the leaflets. Suharto's minister for home affairs, General Syarwan Hamid, and also Harmoko, the chairperson of GOLKAR, meanwhile openly accused the banned PRD of distributing the leaflets,<sup>72</sup> a claim which the PRD responded to sharply.<sup>73</sup>

The combative mood of the Mega-Bintang masses continued for several weeks after the elections and was provoked further by the announcement that GOLKAR had won more than 70% of the vote. Given the astounding mobilisations of anger against GOLKAR during the campaign, and combined with all the documented reports of cheating and manipulation by journalists and the various election monitoring coalitions, the election results were widely seen as fraudulent. There were immediate further angry and large mobilisations against the results. These took place in several towns throughout the country. In some cases, again, police stations or government offices were burned down, occupied or ransacked.<sup>74</sup>

### **The impact of *aksi massa***

The 1997 election campaign was a major victory for *aksi massa* politics and a defeat for the New Order.<sup>75</sup> This was because the rewinning of *aksi massa* had undermined the central tactic of the New Order — the imposition of floating mass politics. The 1997 elections represented a collapse of that tactic. As the CSIS report on the elections noted, huge numbers of people, in a highly combative manner, had completely defied the security apparatus, the civilian government and the party leaderships. Throughout the country, there were militant and large-scale mobilisations. The New Order had been brought to a political crisis by the rise of mass mobilisation politics — long before the country was hit by the Asian economic crisis. The full-blooded emergence of mobilisational politics

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<sup>72</sup> J. Kristiadi, T.a. Legowo, Nt Budi Harjanto, op cit. p. 99.

<sup>73</sup> For a detailed response by the PRD see *Response to the slander by ABRI Social and Political Affairs Chief Syarwan Hamid, that the People's Democratic Party (PRD) has masterminded the riots and unrest during the election campaign*, reprinted in Appendix 3.

<sup>74</sup> This kind of revolt in the large towns of Pekalongan (Java), Sampang (Madura), Yogyakarta (Java) and Banjarmasin (Kalimatan) are well documented in Syamsuddin Haris, *Kecurangan dan Perlawanan Rakyat dalam Pemilu 1997*, Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1999. This book also contains an analysis of the relationship with the separatist movement in Aceh in the context of the 1997 elections.

<sup>75</sup> See also Aspinall's assessment in *Opposing Suharto*, section entitled "The 1997 Elections: Defeat in Victory", pp. 199-201.

was at the heart of the crisis; however, the processes of the previous 10 years had delivered defeats in other arenas.

The rise of mobilisational politics of the popular classes undermined the repressive capacity of the regime, which rested upon mass acquiescence to the floating mass, brought about by terror and policies of ideological control. This had at least two specific flow-on impacts.

### **Loss of control of political agenda**

The regime lost control of the management of the public political agenda. When Ali Murtopo first set out his concept of floating mass, he emphasised that the purpose was to “allow” the majority of the population — at that time based in the villages — to be “wholly occupied with development efforts”. Issues of political conflict were to be removed from the arena of concern of the population at large. During election campaigns, this was ensured by the regime’s control of the party leaderships, combined with regulations prohibiting criticism of government policy as well as of other parties. As a result of the accumulation of defiance and seepage into the public arena of issues of social justice and political repression over the previous decade, the regime had started to lose control in this arena as well. In a survey of the press coverage of the 1997 campaign, the CSIS report already cited listed the following frequent issues raised during electioneering:

- poverty and the prosperity of the “little people”
- access to education
- corruption, manipulation
- political renewal, democratisation, the political laws
- equity in distribution of development
- human rights and rights of the *rakyat*
- labour and employment
- social justice and inequality
- national leadership and the role of the military
- clean government<sup>76</sup>

The election results delivered a 70% result for GOLKAR, but politically the New Order had suffered a major defeat and was in crisis. The regime continued its campaign against radicalism conducted in

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<sup>76</sup> J. Kristiadi, T.a. Legowo, Nt Budi Harjanto, *op cit*, p. 29.

the form of a general propaganda attack against the PRD, but it was failing. Ed Aspinall sums up this failure well:

In a post-Cold War world, and with Indonesia's own conflicts of 1965 a distant memory, warnings of communist infiltration had lost their power to convince. They even seemed anachronistic to the more sophisticated urban population. Even immediately after the riots, newspapers printed readers' letters that openly questioned the official account. PRD leaders who remained at large gave press interviews, contemptuously dismissing government accusations. The National Human Rights Commission released findings on the affair, which contradicted the official version, stating that 23 persons remained missing, and that security forces were involved in the takeover of the PDI building. In one opinion poll of 500 urban dwellers, only 13 per cent of respondents agreed that the PRD was behind the riots, a large majority blaming the security forces, Soerjadi or the government ... The government's campaign was also hampered by considerable incompetence of execution, as when the family of PRD leader Budiman Sudjatmiko was accused of PKI links, it subsequently emerging that they were pious Muslims affiliated to Muhammadiyah.

Despite the repressive atmosphere, various opposition elements continued to seek ways to challenge the regime. Megawati's PDI focused on its series of legal challenges. The groups that had borne the brunt of the post-July repression, meanwhile, began to reorganise. Even the PRD, which had decisively made the transition to illegal opposition, began to rebuild underground. Before the end of the year it was organising demonstrations on several campuses using various "front" organisations. During a visit to Indonesia in late 1996, I was struck by the new optimism of many in NGO, student and other activist circles, even those in hiding. There was a growing feeling that the regime was turning in on itself and approaching terminal crisis: *pembusukan* (decay) was a term widely used to describe this process.<sup>77</sup>

### ***Aksi* established as ongoing activity**

Most significantly, protest action increased dramatically in the coming months, even apart from the unrest that developed after the economic crisis started to impact on Indonesian society after November 1997. The YIP list showed 110 protest actions between the May elections and the end of

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<sup>77</sup> Aspinall, *op cit.*, pp. 192-193

1997. More actions were listed for these seven months than for any previous full year.<sup>78</sup> The list, this time using seven papers only, gave demonstrations — again concentrating only on student demonstrations — in Jakarta as well as in Yogyakarta, Semarang, Solo, Wonosobo, Kendari, Purwokerto and Malang in Java; Bandung, Tasikmalaya and Bogor in Sunda; Ujung Padang in Sulawesi; Palembang, Pekanbaru, Medan and Bandarlampung in Sumatra ; and Mataram and Selong in the Nusantara islands province. The single largest number was from the student city of Yogyakarta. The YIP list described actions with numbers of participants ranging between 10 or a few hundred to thousands. Protests were against military violence, violence by GOLKAR gangs or other pro-regime gangs, the political laws, the dual function of the armed forces, corruption, the ineffectiveness of the legislatures, the existence of extra-constitutional security bodies, the refusal of officials to meet demonstrators, authoritarian behaviour by university vice-chancellors, statements by regime officials that “spilling the blood of rioters is permissible”, the 1997 election results, the new repressive labour laws, corruption in the cooperatives bureaucracy, the undertaking of mega-commercial projects, school and library fee increases, sexual harassment on campus, violation of farmer rights to subsidies, the corporatisation of campuses, official involvement in illegal gambling, hunger in West Papua, price rises of basic commodities, demolition of homes for road widening, corruption of forestry licensing, official involvement and cover-up of the assassination of a journalist as well as the US blockade on Iraq and Israeli policy against Palestine.

What was later to be called the *reformasi* agenda was already present in political life and discourse in 1997 before the Asian economic crisis. The economic crisis hit Thailand in July 1997, but it was not until October and November that Indonesia began to feel the socio-economic impact, in terms of price rises and spreading fears of food shortages and loss of bank savings. By early October, it was also clear that the regime had no answer to the crisis when it sought assistance from the International Monetary Fund.<sup>79</sup> By the end of October, student demonstrations began to demand that the government halt the rises in prices of basic commodities. At the end of December, students

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<sup>78</sup> For an interesting description of the increasing involvement of professionals in protest activity, especially in 1998, see A. Prasetyantoko, *Kaum Profesional Menentang Rezim Otoriter*, Jakarta : Grasindo, 1999, esp. pp. 150-172.

<sup>79</sup> For a chronology of events connected to the crisis in Indonesia, see Hal Hill, *The Indonesian Economy in Crisis*, 1999, pp. 11-14. As is to be expected from one of the economists from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs-funded pro-New Order Indonesia Project at the Australian National University, the chronology does not mention any events relating to the impact on the mass of the population, such as prices rises.

organised big end of year demonstrations at the two prestige campuses of the University of Indonesia in Jakarta and the Gajah Mada University in Jogjakarta.

### **Framing Suharto's fall: towards May 1998**

Over the next four month, protest actions exploded but this time there was a clear political focus for all protests: the ousting of Suharto.<sup>80</sup> For the period beginning January 1998 up until the fall of Suharto at the end of May, the YIP list reported 850 actions, about eight times more than had occurred in any full year during the previous decade. The list covered 20 cities only: Ujung Padang (Sulawesi) 173 demonstrations, Bandung (Sunda) 130, Jakarta 127, Yogyakarta (Java) 108, Surabaya (Java) 69, Semarang (Java) 52, Medan (Sumatra) 36, Banjarmasin (Kalimantan) 44, Purwokerto (Java) 27, Jember (Java) 19, Denpasar (Bali) 18, Kupang (West Timor) 14, Bogor (Sunda) 14, Salatiga (Java) 13, Mataram (Lombok) 13, Depok (Jakarta outskirts) 11 and Bandarlampung (Sumatra) 10. But these demonstrations were taking place in almost every other major town and many smaller towns. In the descriptions of the demonstrations on the YIP list the word *ribuan* (thousands) appears more and more frequently, as does *bentrok* (street fighting). The first demonstration listed as involving "thousands" was on the island of Bima in eastern Indonesia on February 7 and then in Solo on February 11 and in Majelengka, West Java on 12 February and at the University of Indonesia on February 25.

Denny J.A.'s 2006 study, using newspaper reports, calculated 1,702 protest actions involving 10.7 million people over the 12 months from September 1997 to August 1998.<sup>81</sup> A publication by the Lembaga Kliping and Dokumentasi Indonesia contains photocopied newspaper reports of 80 student demonstrations between January and April 7.<sup>82</sup> It also includes a selection of photographs from

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<sup>80</sup> For one summary of protests in 1997-98, with an attempt to categorise the social sectors involved, see Denny J.A., *Democratisation from Below Protest Events and Regime Change in Indonesia 1997-1998*, Jakarta : Sinar Harapan, 2006. For another extensive collection of newspaper reports on protest mobilisations and commentary on them, see Kunarto (ret) Police General, *Merenungi Kiprah Polri dan Gerakan Mahasiswa*, Jakarta: Cipta Manunggal, 2000. Kunarto's selection of newspaper reports covers both demonstrations and *bentrokan*, i.e. physical confrontations with the police. He includes 37 reports of *bentrokan* between January and March 1998. Most of the news reports he reproduces are from January-April 1998.

<sup>81</sup> Denny J.A., *op cit.*, p. 27; p. 31.

<sup>82</sup> Lembaga Kliping and Dokumentasi Indonesia, *Kliping Media: Demo dan Aksi Mahasiswa*, Jakarta, n.d.

newspapers from 66 protest actions, some showing huge crowds, from the February-May period.<sup>83</sup> This volume identifies from media reports ninety nine university campuses from Sumatra, Java, Bali and Sulawesi as having been involved in “aksi”<sup>84</sup>.

Mobilisations escalated after March, when a stage-managed People’s Consultative Assembly re-elected Suharto as president and then he proceeded to install a cabinet which included his closest cronies and his daughter. Based just on the listings by YIP, it can be calculated that there were at least 30 to 40 demonstrations across the country every day during the March-May period. Tens of thousands of people were involved every week and from all sectors of society: the semi-proletariat, referred to as the urban poor, including the tens of thousands of recently dismissed factory workers, as well as white collar workers, bank tellers, doctors, teachers and farmers. One manifestation of the spread of *aksi* to all sectors of society was the mushrooming of women’s groups involved in actions. These ranged from specific mobilisations of women university students through to *kampung* housewives and more middle and upper class women, who also initiated their own groups and activities.

Students were at the forefront of the mobilisations. Key student demonstrations were those that took place in Solo, Central Java, on March 17, when fighting broke out between students and the military as students forced their way out of the campus. On April 2 and 3, the same happened when thousands of students forced their way through army lines to march out of the Gajah Mada University campus. This was repeated on April 13, when the military occupied the campus for about eight hours. On April 24, similar clashes occurred at the University of North Sumatra in Medan, where students also used Molotov cocktails against soldiers. The campus had to be closed for several days.<sup>85</sup>

As *aksi* gripped the country, demanding that Suharto go, the regime itself seemed determined to cling to the counter-revolution’s long-term central tactic: the masses must return to their previous passive state. The regime did not immediately recognise, or was not willing to admit to itself, that it had already lost this battle. Instead, it launched a campaign that was more suitable as pre-emptive

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<sup>83</sup> Lembaga Kliping and Dokumentasi Indonesia, *Kliping Media: Demo dan Aksi Mahasiswa dalam Gambar*, Jakarta, n.d, pp. 4-49. (In the copy I saw, this document was bound in the same volume as that noted in footnote 82.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>85</sup> Budiman Sujatmiko, “Gerakan Mahasiswa Kini Bersama Rakyat Tuntaskan Reformasi Total”, in *Kompas*, December 20, 2000.

action, namely, a campaign to capture and crush the force that it saw as the conscious agent promoting *aksi*, the PRD. PRD members were kidnapped, along with other activists whom the authorities thought were PRD members. Most PRD members were underground, but at least 30 were hunted down and captured. Most of those caught were tortured; at least 14 were murdered, including the PRD's prominent poet, Wiji Thukul. Among those caught and tortured was the chairperson of the PRD Central Leadership Council, Andi Arief, as well as one of the PRD's international spokespersons, Mugianto.

The effort by the regime was doomed to failure on two levels. First, the underground organisation of the PRD was effective, and key central personalities whom the regime was after were well protected. Second, and more fundamentally, the whole movement had grown beyond the PRD, as had indeed the momentum for mobilisation. On Saturday, May 2, demonstrations each involving thousands of students took place in almost every city in the country. The YIP report listed Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Bandung, where several separate demonstrations took place, as well as Denpasar, Malang, Medan, Solo, Surabaya, Ujung Padang, Purwokerto, Semarang, Kupang, Palembang and Banjarmasin. Actions also took place as far away as in Banda Aceh in Aceh and Jayapura in West Papua.<sup>86</sup>

When the regime announced increases in the price of electricity and fuel on May 4, some of the biggest demonstrations took place, overflowing into clashes with the military, and often drawing in people living in the *kampung* around the locations of the clashes. Finally, the regime resorted to direct terrorisation of the mobilised students themselves as distinct from seeking out the underground proponents of *aksi*. On May 12, students returning to the University of Trisakti campus were fired upon by soldiers. Four were shot dead. Over May 13 and 14, rioting broke out in Jakarta again, resulting in the greatest loss of life and damage to property that Jakarta had suffered from such rioting.

Demonstrations, drawing in every sector of society, multiplied even more dramatically. Between May 7 and May 20, the day before Suharto resigned, there were 310 demonstrations listed. Violent clashes with the police or military were almost inevitable, with the police or soldiers often firing rubber bullets. There were marches. Students and *kampung* dwellers (that is, workers and semi-proletarians) took over streets and held open forums. Local parliamentary buildings, governors' offices and other official buildings were occupied. In some cities, students took over the state radio

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<sup>86</sup> *Aksi Mahasiswa Reformasi Total*, 1998, pp. 84, 117, 211 and 227. This book contains extensive data taken from newspapers on the day-to-day unfolding of *aksi* in scores of towns across Indonesia.



station and made their own broadcasts. They even attacked military outposts. In a column in *Kompas* newspaper on May 14, Professor Sarlito Wirawan Sarwono, the dean of the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Indonesia, expressed his fears of the student movement and mass anger uniting because of the regime's slowness to reform. He opened his column with words which summed up the whole of the elite's fears:

Lately the student *aksi* in several cities and towns in Indonesia have changed to become mass actions. in Yogya, Solo, Surabaya and then also in Jakarta, pushing and shoving between students and officials have turned into fighting, throwing things (from stones to tear gas) and finally to shooting (although still using rubber bullets).<sup>87</sup>

On May 19, tens of thousands of students occupied the parliamentary grounds, stating they would stay there until there was a sitting of the MPR which would dismiss Suharto. On May 20 demonstrations with the same demands followed in every other major city. Using newspaper reports, YIP listed: Bandung — hundreds of thousands; Ujung Padang — hundreds of thousands; Yogyakarta — more than 500,000; and others all in the tens of thousands or thousands. Many people in Yogyakarta claim that one million students and *rakyat* gathered in the main square on May 20 in a rally that was also supported by the sultan of Yogyakarta.<sup>88</sup> Interestingly, where the rallies were largest and involved non-students, there was no significant rioting.

As from May 20, for the first time since the May 1997 elections, the numbers involved were in the hundreds of thousands, which meant it was clearly primarily not simply students. In fact, the mobilisations had often involved non-students, including the worker-student and peasant-student actions of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the PDI solidarity actions and the May 1997 Mega-Bintang-Rakyat mobilisations. The May 1998 mobilisations consecrated *aksi* as *aksi massa*.<sup>89</sup> The trends had been very visible since at least the beginning of May, and little by little, elements of the New Order elite — starting from the outer fringes but moving ever closer to Suharto — started to abandon him. By May 20, almost everybody had openly abandoned him, including his cabinet ministers and

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<sup>87</sup> Translated from Sarlito W. Sarwono, "Aksi Mahasiswa bukan Aksi Massa" ", in Dedy Djameludding Malik (ed), *Gejolak Reformasi Menolak Anarki*, 1998, p. 285.

<sup>88</sup> See the booklet *Lengser Keprabon*, n.d. for coverage, including photos, of the actions in Yogyakarta. This publication also claims that one million people attended the Yogyakarta rally.

<sup>89</sup> In Denny J.A.'s attempt at a quantitative study, what he describes as non-student actors were a majority in the September 1997-February 1998 period and in June-July 1998. Denny J.A., *op cit.*, p. 84.

GOLKAR chiefs. Less openly, his military chiefs were also suggesting resignation. On May 21, he resigned and Vice-President Habibie was sworn in as President.<sup>90</sup>

The political elite, including those close to the centre of power, had dropped Suharto as part of their strategy to prevent the further escalation of mass mobilisation and any political radicalisation accompanying it. Already, the propaganda by the PRD and other radical student groups calling for the formation of “people’s committees” as an alternative source of power to the formal structures was spreading and generating other more moderate but equally threatening scenarios. However, the momentum of mass action did not stop after the resignation of Suharto. The mobilisations were being driven by more than just a desire to get rid of Suharto. A new agenda had been accumulating in the public mind, especially among students, workers — including the white collar and professional workforce — as well as farmers and villagers since the time of the student movements of the 1970s and Rendra. This process had intensified during the 1990s, the decade of *aksi*. The fall of Suharto would not satisfy the expectations around the new agenda — *reformasi*.

In June, General Wiranto, as commander in chief of the armed forces, complained that *reformasi aksi* were “everywhere” (*marak*). He declared they “were tending to challenge anything and everything”.<sup>91</sup> He was not exaggerating. The fall of Suharto was like the collapse of a dam. Mobilisations spread everywhere. The list of actions that the Yayasan Insan Politik documented also changed after the fall of Suharto. Although still entitled a chronology of student actions, it included more protests by workers and villagers.

The “challenge to anything and everything” had merged with a more formally defined broader agenda. During the January-March period and afterwards, this agenda was given the name *reformasi* — reformation. The *reformasi* agenda encapsulated all of the ideas and demands that had accumulated during the previous decade or more and was concentrated around the two central political demands that had been popularised by the PRD in its propaganda — repeal the political laws and end the dual function of the military — and the broader, more collectively formulated demand to end nepotism, corruption and collusion, known as KKN.

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<sup>90</sup> For an Indonesian journalist’s chronology of these last three days of Suharto’s rule and his fall, see Ecip, S. Sinansari, *Kronologi Situasi Penggulingan Soeharto*, Bandung : Mizan Pustaka, 1998.

<sup>91</sup> *Suara Pembaruan*, June 3, 1998; accessible at [http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and20\\_v2.htm#Wiranto](http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and20_v2.htm#Wiranto): Stop all this hounding and defamation.

Demonstrations after the fall of Suharto articulated demands ranging from rejecting the new president, Habibie, through to calling for the dismissal of village heads. It is impossible to know the exact number, but mini-rebellions occurred in hundreds of villages throughout the country.<sup>92</sup> Villagers mobilised in their own *aksi* and demanded the resignation of village heads they accused of corruption. In some cases, the village heads were chased out of the village after having their offices or homes attacked. At least one village head died when he had a heart attack when confronted with the *aksi*. This kind of action later spread to campaigns demanding the resignation of district and regional heads. In 1998, demonstrations also took up issues of economic and social welfare, especially relating to price rises in the aftermath of the economic crisis. It was during this period that demonstrations also further popularised the use of the term “KKN” — *Kolusi, Korupsi, Nepotisme* — as one of the main enemies of *reformasi*.

The kidnappings of students,<sup>93</sup> the shootings at Trisakti University<sup>94</sup> and the reports that mass rapes of Chinese Indonesian women during the rioting in May were organised by military agents also fuelled a rise in demonstrations against the army. In the weeks immediately after the fall of Suharto, there were demonstrations outside local army commands in scores of towns throughout Indonesia. Student groups, directly or indirectly connected to the PRD, also played a spearhead role in these, but they spread beyond the PRD core.

Wiranto was absolutely correct — everything was being questioned. The YIP list gave more than 900 cases of *aksi* in the seven months after Suharto fell. But by this time the possibility of adequately documenting the protests through news clippings and other documents had completely disappeared. Everything was *aksi*. There were demonstrations demanding the repeal of every repressive law on the books, whether they were legacies of the colonial period, the pre-1965 period or the New Order. There were also demonstrations trying to march into the street where Suharto lived, and there were several clashes with the military guarding the street. Moreover, mass actions also began to multiply in areas where repression had been the most intense: in East Timor, Papua and Aceh. In these three regions, where there had been an armed resistance of one kind or another

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<sup>92</sup> There are several such incidents recorded in the YIP list. An article in *Pembebasan* magazine mentions heads from 41 villages being chased out. This kind of incident continued to be reported for several months after the fall of Suharto.

<sup>93</sup> See Hendaridi, *Penghilangan Paksa mengungkap kebusukan politik Orde Baru*, Jakarta : Grasindo, 1998.

<sup>94</sup> Hadikoemoro (ed), *Tragedi Trisakti 12 Mei 1998*, Jakarta : Universitas Trisakti, 1999.

to the New Order, Suharto had militarised all governmental operations. Control had been tight, with military counter-insurgency operations deploying the usual methods of murder, torture, arbitrary detention and terror. With Suharto fallen, his elite and his military in disarray, the space opened for mass *aksi* in these areas also. Student groups in the three regions pioneered the *aksi*, and they soon became frequent.<sup>95</sup>

### **1989-1998: Aksi's decade**

The analysis in this chapter shows the pre-eminent role that mass mobilisation of the popular classes had in the various stages of political developments during the decade that led to the fall of Suharto. The methodological application of a tactic aimed at rewinning this particular form of struggle in the period up until 1996 laid the basis for it to spread more spontaneously once the political terrain, which it had itself helped create, demanded even higher levels of mobilisation. Between June 1996, when the regime's attack on Megawati Sukarnoputri sharpened, through to the May 1997 elections and then to the May 1998 unseating of Suharto, the mobilisation of people on the streets in organised acts of defiance was integral to all political developments. In fact, all political developments were enabled by the increasing extent and combativeness of the mobilisations. The PDIP's protest defiance between June 1996 and May 1997 would not have happened had not mass action already been re-legitimised in the eyes of significant sections of the masses. Neither would the level of defiance on the PPP election campaign days in May 1997 have been so great: those mobilisations underlined the bankruptcy of the regime's manipulated elections. Without this mood of general defiance and combativeness, embodied in *aksi massa*, it is improbable that the student protests would have occurred in such a widespread and militant form.

Other factors, such as the 1997 economic crisis, can explain governmental instability but cannot explain the dramatic loss by the regime of the political agenda nor the complete subversion of the underpinning format of the New Order, namely, the floating mass (neither which were processes fostered by any faction of the elite).

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95 The YIP Lisiting also started to include actions in various East Timorese and Papuan towns throughout the June-December 1998 period.

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## Chapter 6

### The failure to win power: the limitations of actually existing *aksi massa*

A political situation of impending ungovernability was being created by the persistent deployment as well as provocation of mass protest activity, escalating from 1989 onwards. This came to a head in May 1998 and created the circumstances — summarised below — in which Suharto was forced to resign as president. This chapter will review the role of mass protest in the final lead-up to May 1998 but also review the period until November 1998, when the last large-scale, nation-wide *aksi massa* took place.<sup>1</sup> The fall of Suharto confronted the mass movement with a new immediate issue: power. This chapter will analyse how pro-mass action groups began to formulate their ideas about a transition to a new power and also begin an analysis of why they were not able to implement these ideas. This will begin a discussion of the limitations in the development of *aksi massa* politics in the 1990s, a discussion which will be continued in the following chapter with an assessment of the role of *aksi massa* as the post-Suharto order stabilises. The discussion of the limitations of mass action politics as it actually developed will bring us back, in the concluding chapter, to the ideas of Soekarno on the issue and the Marxist perspective contained in the COMINTERN's formulation on mass action.

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The “challenge to everything and anything”,<sup>2</sup> as Wiranto described the spreading protests, acquired the name *reformasi* — reformation — or *reformasi total*. The *reformasi* agenda encapsulated all of

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<sup>1</sup> A mobilisation of approximately one million people did take place in 2001 in defence of the Abdurrahman Wahid government and demanding the dissolution of GOLKAR. However, this mobilisation was not nation-wide, being localised in Surabaya. It also did not presage any new wave of large-scale demonstrations. See the next chapter for an analysis of the Surabaya 2001 mobilisation.

<sup>2</sup> *Suara Pembaruan*, June 3, 1998; accessible at [http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and20\\_v2.htm#Wiranto](http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and20_v2.htm#Wiranto): Stop all this hounding and defamation.

the ideas and demands that had accumulated during the previous decade or more. This agenda was concentrated around the two central political demands that had been popularised by the PRD in its propaganda — repeal the political laws and end the dual function of the military — alongside the broader, more collectively formulated demand to end nepotism, corruption and collusion, *nepotisme, korupsi dan kollusi*, NKK. *Reformasi aksi* continued to confront the government, the military, local authorities, companies and enterprises at all levels while a new momentum started to develop focussing on the plans for an extraordinary session of the People's Consultative Assembly (SI-MPR) announced for November 1998.

Once the ouster of Suharto had been achieved, the concept of *reformasi* and the broader agenda for political change took on greater importance as the next goal. President Habibie, supported by a circle of intellectuals and former activists, embarked on a rapid series of policy reforms meant to meet *reformasi* expectations. He affirmed that there would be elections as soon as possible and that there would be an extraordinary session of the People's Consultative Assembly to formally confirm these plans. He also ratified international agreements on labour rights which had the effect of immediately relaxing, though by no means ending, state repression in this sector.<sup>3</sup> New legislation was foreshadowed in a range of areas clearly meant to respond to the *reformasi* agenda, including legislation that would effectively repeal the repressive political laws that had been used to restrict most political parties and NGOs in their activities.

However, these moves clearly did not go far enough to meet *reformasi* expectations. First, there were ongoing cases of violent repression of protest actions taking place around the country, including in Jakarta.<sup>4</sup> Second, there were no signs that any concrete action would be taken against members of the New Order inner elite accused of corruption or violation of human rights. Habibie, although advised by political actors relatively distant from the core New Order rulers, was still a part

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<sup>3</sup> A comprehensive review of legal and policy changes in this area can be found in Michelle Ford, *NGO as Outside Intellectual: A History of Non-Governmental Organizations' Role in the Labour Movement*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wollongong, 2003, pp. 293-299 (online version).

<sup>4</sup> See "Police beat up labour protesters", Agence France Presse, August 25, 1998; [http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and32\\_v2.htm#Police beat up labour protesters](http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and32_v2.htm#Police%20beat%20up%20labour%20protesters); also "Riot police scuffle with 4,000 in Surabaya", Dow Jones Newswires, September 9, 1998: [http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and34\\_v2.htm#Riot police scuffle with 4,000 in Surabaya](http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and34_v2.htm#Riot%20police%20scuffle%20with%204,000%20in%20Surabaya). There are many examples of such incidents during 1998, reducing to a lesser frequency after 1998.

of the New Order coalition and could not act decisively against it, and probably did not want to do so. Habibie's *reformasi* moves during the May-November period therefore fell short of a fundamental expectation among wide sections of the public: the removal of the New Order political elite.

### **People's committees and presidiums**

Within the broad *reformasi* upsurge, people were confronted with the issue of a replacement for the New Order political elite. Two general strands of thinking developed and were manifest in political discourse during the period between January and November 1998.

The first of these was generated at the radical end of the spectrum by the PRD. They started to add to their printed propaganda and to include in their speeches at public forums and *aksi* the call for the establishment of people's committees (*komite rakyat*) or people's councils (*dewan rakyat*). The call was issued through a new organisation formed to try to gather together radical forces that would support this approach. This was the National Committee for Democratic Struggle (Komite Nasional untuk Perjuangan Demokrasi — KNPD). Its secretary-general was the PRD activist Nur Hikmah. In January 1998 it issued a statement calling for the formation of a "council for the salvation of people's sovereignty". The statement, in part, read:

#### **II. Council for the for Salvation of the People's Sovereignty**

Represents leaders from a number of political forces within society, which can be represented by political figures with influence or are leaders of organisations. All of the members of this council [have a responsibility] to uphold the agenda of struggle of all of the network of organisations which join it.

##### **A. Task and functions**

- Work out an economic and political program which is oriented to improving the quality of life of the country and nation and is forward looking;
- Calls for action to be taken by the people to struggle for change through all channels of communication and means of information distribution possessed by the people's political leaders on a national level;



- Take the program of struggle and the practical steps to all networks of institutions and organisations which have the same commitment;
- Organise platforms in the framework of opening the space for political education which is effective and injects political consciousness and raises the political participation of the people. This can be done through the mass media, through a curriculum of training which is in accordance with the need to respond to the development of the objective conditions of social life;
- Direct the political actions of the people toward an effort to carry out change, beginning with the smallest steps, by the formation of places for the people's aspirations as a creation of the people's sovereignty to control the implementation of government life.

#### B. Program of struggle

- A succession and democratic mechanisms to elect a new president and vice president;
- An investigation into the wealth of government officials and their families;
- The withdrawal of the five repressive political laws;
- A change in the system of government to make it possible for the political parties to enter the cabinet;
- Wipe out corruption, collusion and the conglomerates, toward an economic system which is clean and for the people;
- Reduce the social and political role of the armed forces and abolish the dual function of the armed forces. The military's social and political role to be carried out through a military representative in the MPR in a composition that is just and proportional;
- A reduction in prices of essential items;
- Upholding the basic principles of human rights in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

#### C. Basic program

- Broaden the participation (support) of [social] figures and demand moral responsibility of leaders/figures to actively join in thinking about and playing an active role in carrying out improvements in all aspects of social life;
- Campaign openly and broadly for the formation of a national political leadership which can lead the political and economic reform;
- Launch a petition or support action for the national political leadership and give a full mandate to take actions which are considered to be needed;
- Put pressure on the government to make policies as worked out by the council which are supported by the broad united strength of the people and direct it to political levels which are effective to raise the bargaining position of the people;
- Encourage the people to form coalitions or bodies to independently monitor policies with the task of controlling and organising a social life which is democratic and clean.<sup>5</sup>

This was a call aimed at making permanent what had so far been temporary. The concept of the people's committee or people's councils was based on the idea that the various temporary, ad hoc committees and groups established to organise various *aksi* should coalesce to form more permanent formations, whether based in neighbourhoods, villages or workplaces.<sup>6</sup> In January, the mood was radical and the KNPDP claimed wide support for the call, issuing a list of 77 supporters,

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<sup>5</sup> "Form a council of political leaders to safeguard the sovereignty of the people!", National Committee for Democratic struggle (KNPDP), January 6, 1998: [http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and01\\_v2.htm#Form a council of political leaders](http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and01_v2.htm#Form a council of political leaders)

<sup>6</sup> This idea emerged from a reading by Left activists in Indonesia of Lenin's *Two Tactics of Social Democracy*, written in 1905. In this pamphlet, Lenin argued that the primary task of the socialist movement was to agitate and struggle for the fullest possible political liberty, which would require the fullest possible democracy. He further argued that it would be only the working class and socialists who would be willing to implement democracy to its fullest extent, analysing how the bourgeoisie would want to hesitate and keep aspects of the old undemocratic order. He thus argued for a revolutionary democratic government that would be based on the organisations of the mass mobilisation, i.e. the revolutionary insurrection itself. See Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1970

including oppositionists from the elite, NGOs, mass organisations, student groups, artists and others.<sup>7</sup>

Several key names were later to move to disassociate themselves from the people's council approach, especially Abdurrahman Wahid, Amien Rais and Megawati Sukarnoputri. With such widespread support, the PRD assessment at the time was, however, that there was likely to be a further escalation of mass mobilisation across the country in the lead-up to the November 1998 MPR sitting, which would provide the mobilising process with possibilities for more immediate and combative organisation. This was reflected in the call to PRD cadres that it issued in February:

*What must be done - the pressing tasks of the people*

1. Establish an Independent People's Council (*Dewan Rakyat Merdeka* — DRM) in all regions, places of work and study.

All of those people struggling for democracy must build the DRM. Those who will sit on the council should be all of the local representatives and representatives of the functional groups, representatives of all of the [economic] sectors and professions, [political] parties and independent mass organisations which wish to struggle with the people for democracy. This council will be the highest instrument of the people's struggle, because it will be established on the people's initiative. The first task of the council is to select the leaders of the people which are virtuous, courageous and ready [to struggle for the people].

...

Instructions to all PRD cadre

To all PRD cadre throughout the country. Our task at the moment is to:

- Help the people to build a genuine people's council at all regional levels and places of work and study;

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 1.

- Help the people in demanding their rights to fulfil their economic needs (stomachs), that is in retaking the productive sectors with the benefits of production to be used by the people in a just manner;
- Help the people to launch a mass struggle through strikes, protest actions and so on as the tool of the people's struggle.
- Continue to be firm and ready to join with the people's struggle until the people win and are fully in power.<sup>8</sup>

In August 1998 activists from the Sumatran city of Lampung announced the formation of the first people's committee. Lampung is the closest Sumatran city to Jakarta, on the island of Java. It is possible to travel from Jakarta to Lampung by car in half a day, crossing the narrow strait between Java and Sumatra by ferry. Activist politics in Lampung was in constant contact with Jakarta. There had been large and militant mobilisations in Lampung since 1996. Most famous was the transport workers strike and student mobilisations that had paralysed the city for three days in December 1996, which had played a major role in restarting the momentum leading to the May 1997 election mobilisations. There had been very combative demonstrations on Lampung campuses, including the smaller private campuses, where students had even taken security personnel hostage.<sup>9</sup> A statement issued by the Lampung People's Committee listed 56 member organisations, of which 28 were various kinds of often village-based *posko* or local popular coordination centres.<sup>10</sup> The list also included political parties, trade unions, the main environmental and legal aid NGOs, student groups and some broad activist coalitions.

The statement also set out a comprehensive platform of goals and demands in the political, economic and cultural sphere. The political platform included "the setting up of *reformasi posko*",

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<sup>8</sup> "Continue to raise the banner of the peoples struggle," Central Leadership of the PRD (KPP- PRD), Mirah Mahardhika, February 20, 1998; [http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and10\\_v2.htm#Continue to raise the banner](http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and10_v2.htm#Continue%20to%20raise%20the%20banner).

<sup>9</sup> "Bloody Lampung", [http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and10\\_v2.htm#Bloody Lampung: scores arrested & hurt](http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and10_v2.htm#Bloody%20Lampung%3A%20scores%20arrested%20&%20hurt). Posko were pioneered by the PDI in the 1996 struggle to maintain Megawati as chairperson of the PDI. See Chapter 5 and later in this chapter.

<sup>10</sup> *Deklarasi Dewan Rakyat Lampung*, August 14, 1998. This can be accessed at <http://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1998/08/16/0006.html>.

the formation of people's councils at all levels, the repeal of the dual function of the armed forces, new democratic political laws, the bringing to justice of violators of human rights and mass killings such as had occurred in Aceh, East Timor, Lampung and Jakarta, the freeing of all political prisoners and the holding of the earliest possible elections. The political platform also demanded that Suharto and his agents be put on trial and Habibie be rejected as a product of the New Order.

The statement emphasised in several places the importance of *aksi massa*, which had been the main purpose for which the village *posko* had been established. On September 2, a delegation of about 2,000 to 3,000 people representing 60 village *posko* demonstrated outside the governor's office. According to a statement issued by the Lampung Legal Aid Office, people arrived using 40 trucks, four buses and scores of smaller vehicles. The People's Council forced the local government to sign an agreement to establish a joint commission to deal with numerous land disputes between villagers in 63 villages and nearby plantations.

Activists, in particular from the PRD, have told me of other such initiatives in Java. The people's committee movement did not, in the end, take off during this period, affected by the fate of the huge mobilisations that took place in November 1998. However, agitation around this call was taking place all through the period June-October 1998. During this period, it was not yet clear whether the momentum would be there to propel the formation of such committees or other forms of organisation forward.

The PRD was proposing an essentially revolutionary solution to the issue of a replacement power to the New Order elite: that power should be built up from below out of the mobilisation process. Within the rest of the student movement, a more mixed concept developed. Among a broad range of students there was also a call for a people's committee or similar bodies, such as a presidium of elite figures or community leaders. The interpretation of the concept outside of the PRD varied along a spectrum of different assessments or visions of who might make up an alternative governing coalition to the New Order. Some included student and activist groups, others tended more and more to concentrate on political figures from the broad political elite who had been able to escape being labelled New Order: in particular Rais, Wahid and Megawati. All of these perspectives, which were continually in flux within a very fluid network of rising and falling student and activist coalitions, were bound by a basic proposition. This was that the Habibie government, as a product of the New Order, was illegitimate and that therefore it was legitimate for it be replaced outside of constitutional processes.

Even in November this perspective was held widely outside the student sector also, despite some elite figures having become hostile to the idea. On November 12, one day after the demonstrations started, a group of prominent dissident politicians, former officials and a former general, known as the National Front (Barisan Nasional), called for the formation of a “presidium” as a provisional government, to comprise “national and community figures, from the campuses and among students, from mass organisations and new parties”. This presidium would replace the Habibie government and would, among other things, organise elections.<sup>11</sup> The signatories were detained and questioned, accused of *makar*, or attempt to seize power.<sup>12</sup> It was this perspective, this expectation of immediate regime change, that provided the basis for the next wave of mass mobilisation escalation that occurred at the time of the special 1998 sitting of the MPR.

Almost all the student groups that had been active before May announced that they would mobilise for the MPR session to reject the legitimacy of the Habibie government and the MPR itself.<sup>13</sup> The most prominent was FORKOT (Forum Kota — City Forum), which brought together activist groups from several campuses across Jakarta. FORKOT made different claims at different times, but at least 14 campuses were involved. The PRD was part of FORKOT before May 1998 but organised through other committees, such as KOMRAD, during 1998. On October 28 and then again on November 9, student activists and other political groups combined to organise large protest actions as a kind of warm-up events. The demonstration on October 28 was organised by a coalition that brought together almost every student group in Jakarta behind the demand of ending the dual function of the military. They mobilised between 20 and 30 thousand mainly students near the parliament building.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> “Komunike Bersama”, printed in full in *Suara Pembaruan* daily, November 16, 1998, reproduced in *Peta Politik di Indonesia*, CSIS, No 22, November 1998, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Gatra*, November 28, 1998, pp. 24-29.

<sup>13</sup> “Mahasiswa Susun Strategi Demo besar-besaran Tolak SI MPR”, *Sinar Pagi* November 4, 1998, reproduced in photocopy form in *Kliping Media — Topik Sidang Istimewa MPR*, Lembaga Kliping and Dokumentasi Indonesia, Jakarta, n.d., p. 45. Also in the same volume see “Demo it bisa jadi People Power”, p. 71; “Marak, Demo mahasiswa anti SI MPR”, p. 67.

<sup>14</sup> *Tempo*, November 9, 1998, pp 18-19, 22-23. *Tempo* gives a figure of 14,000 for the demonstration in Jakarta and indicated the presence of FORKOT as well as another group, Forum Nasional, led by the playwright Ratna Sarumpaet, who was also calling for a people’s committee-style transitional government. *Tempo* lists demonstrations on October 28 in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Semarang,

Then, as the November MPR session approached, the armed forces mobilised large numbers of troops in Jakarta. They also mobilised the Pam Swarkasa (Volunteer Security) militia, who were armed with sharpened bamboo spears and knives. The military took the position that the MPR session itself was under threat and that students were intending to mobilise huge numbers to occupy the MPR and demand the resignation of Habibie. The events of November 11-14 indicated that the military's assessment was correct.

The mobilisations of November 12-14 in Jakarta, which were reflected in mobilisations around the country, brought hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of people onto the street and manifested a level of combativeness greater even than that of May 1998.<sup>15</sup> In May, no non-student masses were mobilised in Jakarta until at the very end, after Suharto had resigned. In fact, the majority faction in the student leadership kept the non-student masses out of the parliamentary compound in May. This time, from around November 9, the *kampung* population of Jakarta became increasingly engaged in a confrontation with the military and the Pam Swakarsa militia it had formed. Van Dijk describes the combative attitude of the Jakarta proletariat and semi-proletariat, including school pupils and other young people, "chasing and beating up Pam Swarkasa".<sup>16</sup>

The mood among the masses had been generated out of frustrated expectations. This included an expectation flowing from the call for the end of the dual function of the military: that military methods in dealing with social unrest would decrease. The *kampung* population was agitated by the brazen presence of the Pam Swakarsa and the military, mobilised clearly in defence of the regime and the MPR, still made up mostly of Suharto appointees.

In addition, there had been systematic mass leafleting by the PRD in key urban poor areas — using leaflets similar to that of May 1997. The leafleting had been targeted at urban poor *kampung* along some of the routes that students planned to use when they marched to the parliament buildings on November 12. This tactic worked extremely effectively with almost all the non-student mass

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Surabaya, Bandar Lampung, Palembang and Manado. The *Tempo* report also says that the Barnas group was present. My figures are based on estimates by a range of activists who were present.

<sup>15</sup> "Indonesia in revolt", statement issued by Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor, November 13, 1998, (prepared by Max Lane), [http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and43\\_v2.htm#Indonesia in revolt](http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and43_v2.htm#Indonesia%20in%20revolt).

<sup>16</sup> Van Dijk, *op cit* p. 345. Van Dijk presents the most detailed description of these events, using mostly Indonesian sources.

mobilisations, where *kampung* people joined the marches occurring along these routes.<sup>17</sup> This tactic was also a direct response to the reality of the de-organised state of the people. One analysis by a PRD leader after the event emphasised:

The choice of the best routes for the march in order to draw in the masses was crucial. Why is this so important? because even up until now the people are not organised and the organised forces of resistance are very weak. The correct choices of routes on November 12 and 13 meant that a million people or more could be drawn into the actions.<sup>18</sup>

From the evening of November 12 until the evening of November 13, Jakarta was in a general state of *aksi*. There was a planned build-up to the MPR sitting, which started on November 12. On November 9, thousands of students from a broad coalition of student groups marched from the Legal Aid Foundation offices in central Jakarta towards the University of Indonesia campus in Salemba Street also in central Jakarta. The groups involved ranged from the PRD-linked group KOMRAD (which also included workers and urban poor) to the University of Indonesia Clan (KBUI), a broad gathering of academics and students from that university. Student groups connected to liberal Islamic groups also participated. This action began the stream of actions that followed. Later in the day thousands of students from the FORKOT coalition tried to march to the parliament building.<sup>19</sup> They carried banners demanding the formation of a people's committee and rejecting the special

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<sup>17</sup> The major routes included: Senen — Kramat — Palembang — Matraman — Proklamasi — Pramuka — Jatinegara — Kampung Melayu — Casablanca — Otista — Dewi Sartika — Cawang — Cilitan — Gatot Subroto — Kuningan — Warung Buncit — Mampang Prapatan — Sudirman — S. Parman — Bunderan Slipi — Pal Merah — Petambur — Tanah Abang — Kampung Bali — Grogol — Daan Mogot — Roxy. It was in the Cawang-Cilitan-Gatot Subroto neighbourhoods where *kampung* populations turned against and killed members of the Pam Swakarasa.

<sup>18</sup> *Belajar Dari Peristiwa Perlawanan November*, typescript document, circulated in the PRD.

<sup>19</sup> By this time FORKOT was no longer the major cross-campus coalition in Jakarta. The debate inside FORKOT before May on the question of calling on non-students to join the May demonstrations had been just the first sign of political differences among the student leaders active at that time. Many students shifted into other groupings such as the PRD-linked KOMRAD and KOBAR, or groups linked to Nahdatal Ulama students, such as FAMRED, or groups linked to PIJAR, such as FORBES or to groups not attached to any organised ideological pole. FORKOT tended more and more to eschew alliances with other groups, adopting a more radical language.



sitting of the MPR has illegitimate.<sup>20</sup> Police and soldiers blocked the march. On November 10, a new coalition called AKRAB, involving the groups that had mobilised on November 9, organised a rally of thousands of students and ordinary people at the Proclamation Monument in central Jakarta. They also rejected the legitimacy of the MPR sitting and called for preparations to establish a People's Assembly. FORKOT, also mobilising thousands of students, again tried to march to the MPR but was again blocked. On November 11, the AKRAB coalition organised another rally billed as a People's Assembly. Tens of thousands of people mobilised. They tried to March from the Proclamation Monument to the roundabout in Jakarta's main street, but were blocked by police and military. One University of Indonesia student used a car to smash through the army barricades, injuring a soldier from the Army Strategic Command, before he was beaten.<sup>21</sup>

On November 12, thousands of students attempted to march from the Catholic University of Atmajaya, also in central Jakarta, to the parliament buildings. They were stopped again, and street clashes with soldiers broke out twice. Thousands of students and *kampung* dwellers were on the streets conducting street rallies, giving speeches and singing political songs all around the area of Semanggi. Semanggi was one of the areas where the PRD had also concentrated its mass leafleting and agitation during previous days. In the evening, there were more clashes of students and *kampung* people with the army when news spread that a high school student had been killed. More than 100 people were killed. Clashes and street rallies continued all night.

On November 13 and 14, the mobilisations continued, fuelled by popular anger over the killings at Semanggi. The AKRAB coalition organised a march on the MPR, still raising the demand that it disband and a new coalition government be formed by a presidium of non-New Order figures, who were to organise a speedy election. The mobilisations in Jakarta, and those occurring simultaneously around the country, were to provide the mandate for establishment of such a presidium. The Barnas group of dissident former officials, generals and students leaders had issued its call for a presidium on November 11.

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<sup>20</sup> The November issues of both *Gatra* and *Tempo* carry photos of some of the large mobilisations in Jakarta. KOMRAD and PRD banners are clearly visible.

<sup>21</sup> For newspaper reports on the demonstrations, see "Simultaneous student action in 16 cities", *Kompas*, November 15, 1998: [http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and43\\_v2.htm#Simultaneous student action in 16 cities](http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and43_v2.htm#Simultaneous student action in 16 cities).

By the afternoon of November 14, clashes with military units broke out in at least three areas in Jakarta and continued late into the evening. Hundreds of students and others were shot at Atmajaya University, where student protesters from the previous days had tried to march again. Nine were shot dead. Hundreds of thousands proceeding from other directions were still able to break through barricades to make it to the MPR by the evening.

Some of the student marches were organised to proceed along the major thoroughfares that cut their way through the densely populated *kampung*, where mass leafleting had been occurring during previous days. Along these routes, hundreds of thousands of people flowed out of the *kampung* lanes to swell the student marches to the MPR. Reinhardt Sirait, a student involved in this part of the mobilisation, described the experience.

The important experience of the November 1998 upsurge was that it succeeded in “awakening” and “drawing in” the urban masses. The anger stimulated by the students’ resistance in May ’98 found its moment in the extraordinary session of the MPR. This is how it began:

Tuesday, November 10, thousands of students were concentrated in Diponegoro Street, and were blocked by marines in front of Megaria [cinema]. Some committees moved in the direction of the Proclamation Monument, the place of the People’s Assembly and the starting point for the next day’s activities. The area was under the control of the Pam Swakarsa, but the people chased them out.

Wednesday, November 11, in the early afternoon, the People’s Assembly was held by a number of *aksi* committees: FAMRED, KOMRAD, Front Jakarta, Megawati Support Committee, Workers Committee, and so on. In the late afternoon, tens of thousands of people moved off towards the parliament via Diponegoro Street and Imam Bonjol. In the evening, there were blockades everywhere. A small clash occurred between a student driving his car and the military, injuring some militaries. Two people were arrested.

Thursday, November 12, early in the day, KOMRAD and KBUI distributed tens of thousands of leaflets calling on the people to join the action to reject the MPR extraordinary session. They were distributed all along the Salemba-Matraman-Kampung Melayu-Cawang route. These routes were chosen based on the experience of July 96 and the 97 Mega-Star elections. In the early afternoon, thousands of students moved along Salemba towards Kampung Melayu. Thousands of urban poor who were waiting along Salemba-Matraman-

Kampung Melayu and Cawang joined. Hundreds had become thousands, which had become tens of thousands: children, mothers, the supporting masses, all shouting slogans and clapping their hands. The students were stressed, always worried about provocateurs and that they would not be able to control the masses. Then they started to be confident that they could lead such an open resistance. Twice, military blockades were able to be ignored.

Towards evening, the long columns of student-people masses were blockaded in Gatot Subroto Street, directly in front of the Jakarta metropolitan police headquarters. The columns were forced back. This was possible because the movement wasn't prepared and the military used guns. But now with experience in attack and defence, the student-people returned to the starting point in Salemba to consolidate and to prepare for the next day's actions. This was a valuable experience.

Friday, November 13, in the morning, the *kampung* were bombed with more "People Unite" leaflets. The route changed: Salemba-Matraman-Kampung Melayu-Casablanca-Semanggi. As predicted, tens of thousands of people later were waiting to join the action. The day before, the Casablanca area had been "enlightened" by a long march by FAMRED. The students were now confident that they could lead. In Jatinegara the infrastructure [marshals, megaphones] for leading the masses was not adequate, so there was some rioting. Thousands of urban poor waiting in Cawang were moved off towards Kampung Melayu. Because there was not enough infrastructure, the masses became split into two groups. One went via Rasuna Said (Kuningan) and another through Karet heading for Semanggi. There were reports that some students and people had died, been injured. The sound of exploding tear gas and rifle fire had resulted in people coming out of their homes, out of the laneways and the street stalls to make barricades to slow down the military's movements. They attacked them with rocks, Molotov bombs, defending the students.

November, 14: Salemba, Senen, Matraman were in revolt. Without any instructions or plans, the people had gathered and were waiting. There were clashes. The central Jakarta police station was encircled by the people. A KODAM military vehicle was burned. Angry over the Semanggi incident ... they attacked any symbol of tyranny. Around Semanggi, the people

stopped all passing cars looking for military. In Slip there were clashes between residents and the military. Hundreds of thousands of people surrounded the parliament building.<sup>22</sup>

Kees van Dijk, drawing on Indonesian press reports, also captures the situation:

On November 13: During the afternoon and in the evening, parts of Jakarta were to turn into what the Jakarta Post described as a 'virtual battlefield ...', pitting students, supported by the masses, against heavily armed police and soldiers. (The Jakarta Post, 14-11-1998) Another journalist wrote that watching TV was like watching a war movie. Security units employed light tanks, armoured cars, and water cannons. Soldiers could be seen taking up firing positions. Protesters fought back with stones, Molotov cocktails, and any other missiles which came to hand.<sup>23</sup>

On November 14: On the day following Semanggi, people held in Jakarta what was described as *razzia militer*, checking cars and public transport in search of soldiers and policemen, beating such persons when they could lay their hands on them ... Sporadic looting took place in various parts of the city, carried out by people shouting that they were hungry and yelling "Long live the students". No traffic was possible between the airport and the town. ... On 14 November, marines had to warn members of the army that it was dangerous to drive alone in the streets and that their military vehicles might be set on fire by enraged citizens.<sup>24</sup>

The MPR compound was more or less occupied by the student-mass assembly by the evening of November 14. The occupation came at the end of three days of *aksi* takeover of the Jakarta political arena. Furthermore, this had been part of a national scale mobilisation. Between November 9 and November 14, demonstrations took place in almost every major city in the country as well as in many small towns and even villages. In Jakarta and throughout the country, the same demands were being raised and the same form of struggle was being used. On November 14, Jakarta, especially the central Jakarta *kampung* areas, had been in a state of uprising, with the *kampung* population defying

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<sup>22</sup> Translated from Reinhradt Sirait, "Pengalaman Pergolakan November 1998," in *Pembebasan*, August 1999, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> Kees van Dijk, *op cit*, p. 347.

<sup>24</sup> Kees van Dijk, *op cit*, p 348. Some elements of the marines had received good media publicity by refraining from the use of force in confrontations with the masses. Marines accompanied crowds marching along some of the routes taken to the MPR.

the security apparatus at virtually every point. The students had mobilised huge numbers to the MPR, had broken through the military barricades and assembled at the MPR. However, despite the size and militancy of the Jakarta mobilisations and the national spread of the supporting mobilisations, the occupation of the parliamentary compound was not able to be sustained for more than a few hours. It was not disbanded by force, however; there were too many people and the army was already overstretched by the city-wide mobilisations and the collapse of the Pam Swakarsa in the face of mass hostility. The students dispersed the occupation themselves. In a self-critical report on the student consciousness, one analysis argued:

On November 14 (on day after the killings of *mahasiswa* and *rakyat* at Semanggi and Gatot Subroto) the regime was indeed in a squeeze. The *rakyat* were angry. The *mahasiswa* and *rakyat* had gone into action and had reached the parliament building which had been the goal also the day before [but which they had not reached]. The regime had to let the *mahasiswa* and *rakyat* reach the parliament to avoid even bigger clashes.

But then what did the vanguard [i.e. the students] do?

The vanguard did not have the consciousness that this was the moment to begin a new phase to launch a higher offensive at a moment when the regime was in a tight fix and was not capable of acting. The hundreds of thousands of *rakyat* and *mahasiswa* who had reached the parliament did not now want to defend the area that they controlled! Even though all the things needed to do this had come into being spontaneously: support from the mass media, especially electronic media; logistics and support from other political groups. Their lack of consciousness that it was time shift the focus of the struggle to defending their positions in the parliament compound meant that they reverted to past tactics, namely to return to their respective bases and to let the people to go home.<sup>25</sup>

At the time, the student leaders who led the dispersal were also being affected by many rumours: that the army would launch an all-out attack, that thousands of Pam Swakarsa were massing. Neither was true. There was a more fundamental problem of consciousness. *Aksi*, in the form it had assumed up until that time, was not able to take the movement further. It confronted the question of power.

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<sup>25</sup> *Belajar Dari Peristiwa Perlawanan November*, typescript document, circulated within the PRD.

## Elite politics and the people's committee

The development of the mass action form of politics was a challenge not just to the dictatorship but to all the edifices of the counter-revolution itself. Gradually the whole of the political elite, backed by its underpinning class base, the domestic bourgeoisie, mobilised to try to save the system. The crisis of the regime that had become so exposed in 1997 was not a crisis of the regime alone or of Suharto's personal rule but of the political system as a whole. Among the first to realise this were those politicians at arm's length from the centre of power, not immersed in the machinations of suppressing the mobilisations, and who had some analytical capacity. The two most important of these were Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais.

Abdurrahman Wahid, also known as Gus Dur, was (and is) a highly contradictory politician. Intellectually he stands above almost all other politicians in the political elite that emerged under the New Order in the 1970s and 1980s. Ideologically, he stands closest to the social democratic tradition of the Indonesian Socialist Party (PSI), although he has never exhibited the same open hostility to the Communist Party as did the PSI leaders of the 50s and 60s — but then there has been no Communist Party as a rival after 1965. He is probably the only national politician who, before 1998, advocated reconciliation with the ex-members of the PKI and acknowledged the wrong of the massacres of 1965. His main political vehicle for direct response to the democratisation issue was his chairpersonship of FODEM, a small, moderate pro-democracy grouping, with ex-student leaders who were closely aligned with PSI elders. At the same time, he had assumed the chairpersonship of the Nahdatul Ulama in the 1980s, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, an organisation based on a huge, but loose network of traditional village Islamic leaders and the villagers under their influence. This network potentially reached millions of villagers, especially in East Java.<sup>26</sup>

Wahid saw the danger to the system as early as July 1996. He was highly critical of the decision by the Megawati PDI, PRD and others to confront the regime by refusing to vacate the PDI headquarters in July. He opposed the escalation of mobilisational politics, often articulating this

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<sup>26</sup> On Wahid, see Greg Barton, *Abdurrahman Wahid : Muslim democrat, Indonesian president : a view from the inside*, Sydney : UNSW Press, 2002. There are a large number of books published about Wahid in Indonesia. None capture the contradiction between his perspective as a social democrat and his lack of confidence in his own traditional mass base, which forces him into innumerable manoeuvres.

opposition as a fear of the masses running amok.<sup>27</sup> After the round of larger mobilisations and riots in June-July 1996, he suddenly reconciled with Suharto and appeared to embark on an attempt to convince Suharto to leave the presidency so as to allow a reorganisation of Indonesian politics that could better head off an impending clash with the *aksi* process. He attempted to reassure Suharto of his family's future by offering his support for a major role in the future for Suharto's daughter Tutut in a post-Suharto scenario. He campaigned for GOLKAR in the 1997 elections, travelling around the country with Tutut. Abdurrahman Wahid always stood between the elite and the mobilised masses trying to achieve peace between the two; trying to manoeuvre a way to change that would not need the masses to mobilise. This stance also undermined him when he later became president. (See Chapter 7 for a discussion of the mass mobilisation in defence of Wahid's presidency and his attitude towards it.)

Amien Rais was also following a change-from-within tactic. He had joined and was active in an organisation called the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association (ICMI), whose titular head was Suharto and whose active head was B.J. Habibie, a minister in the Suharto cabinet for several years. A large number of intellectuals had identified Habibie as a figure who was prepared in the longer term to consider reorganising the political format away from dictatorship. Rais was also a leading figure, and soon chairperson of another large Islamic organisation, more based in the cities and towns, called Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah had not mobilised its members in politics for more than three decades and had become passive and fractured, with some of its membership aligning with the officially blessed PPP party of Islam and others seeking independent political channels. His position in Muhammadiyah gave him a high national profile. As criticism of the government strengthened even in the early 1990s, Rais joined in on some issues such as corruption. He also spoke out on the issue of succession, but did not campaign on it. When leaders of the churches advocated a boycott of the 1997 elections, he was also pressured to do so but declined.<sup>28</sup> He, like Wahid, stood outside the massive May 1997 mobilisations. But involving as they did the urban constituency that the Muhammadiyah had appealed to in the past and so connected with the PPP, he could not ignore the militant opposition of the May 1997 mobilisations. He began a campaign of increasingly sharp criticism of Suharto and started also to demand that Suharto resign. When the

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<sup>27</sup> Personal discussion with Wahid, Nahdatul Ulama headquarters, Jakarta, 1997.

<sup>28</sup> I heard him explain the reason for his refusal to support the boycott of the May, 1997 elections in a seminar at the University of Sydney just before the elections. He explained that he did not want to put Muhammadiyah's hospitals and orphanages at risk of losing government funding.

student movement surged forward after December 1997, he tried to position himself as a spokesperson for its sentiments. Between January and March 1998, no other figure from the political elite aligned him or herself to the mass opposition as did Rais — neither Wahid nor Megawati — although he later retreated from this alignment (see below). After March, as the students radicalised, this changed.

Crucial to all the actions of all members of the political elite between February and May 1998 — and indeed in the following several months — was pre-empting any further escalation of the mass mobilisations and of any qualitative leaps forward in terms of the emergence of radical forms of organisation. By March 1998, the central demand of the whole movement was for the resignation of Suharto, so Wahid tried to engineer agreement for Suharto to resign without any confrontation, helping convince Suharto to announce that he would reshuffle his cabinet and announce new elections where he would resign. However, this manoeuvre had no impact, and the mobilisations continued to grow.

Having aligned himself with the mobilisations, Rais' pre-emptive role was targeted at preventing an escalation of mass mobilisation in Jakarta and in particular in preventing the mobilisations expanding to draw in the Jakarta proletarian and semi-proletarian masses. At the beginning of May, Rais had threatened to call a demonstration of millions in Jakarta. But it soon became clear as demonstrations became more combative, large and frequent around the country that such a mobilisation might only further deepen the politicisation. Further, Rais had no real control over the process. Precisely because there was no permanent organisation and the dynamic was fundamentally of an unfolding process rather than the manoeuvring of stable, organised forces, the risks were too great. He soon backed off and even requested television time to tell people that there would be no such popular mobilisation.

Rais gave an explanation for his retreat stating that he had been told that the army was prepared to carry out a Tiananmen Square style massacre. There has been no documentation of what decisions or deliberations were taking place in army headquarters and there may well have been officers expressing that kind of sentiment. However, the army had long lost the initiative in dealing with the protest movement. A Tiananmen Square-style massacre would have been required not just in Jakarta but throughout the country.<sup>29</sup> Even in Jakarta, May 1997 had shown that the virtually the

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<sup>29</sup> Another factor impacting on the armed forces would have been the internal factionalism that was opening up. It is possible that some officers had decided they no longer had a stake in the regime,



whole city could mobilise, in either organised defiance of barricades and authority or riots. It would have provoked more demonstrations and massive rioting, even possibly some kind of urban rebellion. Such an upheaval would have further rocked the collapsing economy. The military, throughout these events, was an ineffective player in the political struggles underway.

A struggle also broke out within the Jakarta student movement leadership on the question of whether to call the masses onto the streets. Such a call, in order to have real authority, needed to be made by one or more of the broader student coalitions that had emerged out of the sudden explosion in campus activity and which had won popular recognition. The most important of these was Forum Kota, which brought together student activists from at least 14 campuses. On May 14, the students debated the call, with PRD-affiliated students and other radicals arguing for such mass participation, and those who were increasingly looking to figures like Amien opposing it. After hours of debate, the radicals lost the vote by a narrow margin.

This meant that Jakarta's demonstrations on May 19 and 20 did not achieve the scale and popular character of those in Bandung, Yogyakarta or Ujung Padang, or of the mass and militant character of many of the demonstrations of other cities. However, the manoeuvres by Rais and the caution of the more moderate students still did not prevent the Jakarta proletarian and semi-proletarian masses coming out to demonstrate. They did — except they did not join the student demonstration. They rioted. Their anger and rejection of the elite were still manifest and were to show themselves again in the spread of actions throughout the country, with *aksi* even spreading to the villages and corrupt village heads being chased out of office.<sup>30</sup> The threat to the elite was not yet over, especially as ideas of people's committees, people's assemblies and mass movement-mandated presidiums started to

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while others were still out to defend it. The balance between the two was constantly changing. For studies of the military in the latter part of the New Order and after, see especially Damien Kingsbury, *Power Politics and the Indonesian Military*, Routledge, 2003; Rinakit, Sukardi, *The Indonesian Military after the New Order*, Copenhagen : NIAS Press, 2005; Mietzner, Marcus, *Military reform in post-Suharto Indonesia: elite conflict, nationalism, and institutional resistance*, Washington : East West Centre, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> *Gatra* magazine covered these reports when they seemed to peek in July 1998. See for example "Reformasi ala Sijunjung", *Gatra*, June 6, 1998, p. 46; "Aksi Gugat Kepala Daerah", *Gatra*, June 13, 1998, p. 38; "Menggoyang Sulta Bolkiah", *Gatra*, June 20, 1998 p. 39; "Mereka Pun Jadi Reformis," *Gatra*, June 20, 1998, p. 9; "Pembusukan dari Atas", *Gatra*, June 27, 1998, pp. 38-39; "Got Mampat Pub Jadi Isu," *Gatra*, July 11, 1998, p. 41; "Duri KKN Menusuk Bupati," *Gatra*, July 18, 1998, p. 39; "Tak tahan di demo warga", *Gatra*, July 25, 1998, p. 39.

be propagated by the same forces and using the same methods which had successfully propagated the call for the repeal of political laws, of the military's role in politics and for the ousting of Suharto.<sup>31</sup>

It was Amien Rais who took the lead in campaigning against the call to establish people's committees. By mid-September, he was warning that the idea of people's committees was "leftish", warning people that there were efforts afoot to revive ideas from the era of NASAKOM. He also stated publicly that idea of people's committees was being borrowed from the Russian Bolsheviks' idea of soviets. Although those calling for people's committees were also calling for urgent elections, Rais directly counter-posed the idea of people's committees with the holding of elections, stating:

This is very dangerous, because people are being told not to believe in the process of democracy, elections are belittled, and then parties will not be needed and people will just rely on mass strength, on muscle.<sup>32</sup>

Ironically, other forces had also tried organising "mass strength" against the *komite rakyat* idea. In October, the Islamic Umat Forum Upholding Justice and the State Constitution (Forum Umat Islam Penegak Keadilan dan Konstitusi Negara — FURKON) mobilised 25,000 people at the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta in direct opposition to *komite rakyat*, claiming it to be a communist idea.<sup>33</sup>

Rais, Wahid and Megawati were finally confronted directly with this issue during the November uprising. Expectations among the majority of student leaders were that these three figures needed to take the initiative in demanding that Habibie step aside and make away for a presidium-style government. Some student leaders, mostly those associated with the less ideological groupings around faculty student councils, began pressuring for Wahid, Rais and Megawati to meet. Initially

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<sup>31</sup> See the interview with two FORKOT leaders, Ely Salomo and Irwan, in *Panji Masyarakat*, November 4, 1998, pp. 26-27. According to Salomo: "Kami terus melakukan gerakan. Kalau nanti gerakan kami menggagalkan SI, ya gagal ... Target kami Komite Rakyat terbentuk." Ely Salomo is now a central leader in the Pusat Perjuangan Indonesia, one of the four nationally organised leftist formations active in Indonesia in 2009.

<sup>32</sup> "Sejumlah Kalangan Sesalkan Pernyataan Amien Rais Soal Nasakom", *Siar* magazine, September 19, 1998, accessible at <http://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1998/09/15/0007.html>

<sup>33</sup> *Gatra*, October 10, 1998, p. 59. According to *Gatra*, FURKON saw the *komite rakyat* idea as coming from FORKOT, a coalition of campus activists who represented the largest organised student group in the 1998-1999 period.

there was no enthusiasm for such a meeting; each of these three figures had their own ambitions. In one attempt to arrange such a meeting, students picked up Rais at Jakarta airport and forcibly took him to the house of Wahid. The meeting still did not come off and had to await another day. Finally the three of them, together with the sultan of Yogyakarta, met at Wahid's house on November 10. The sultan was actually a member of GOLKAR and had been governor of Yogyakarta for much of the New Order. He had won some acceptance among some students when he supported the pre-May mobilisations and actually supported a call for non-students to join the 500,000 or more strong May 20 rally in Yogyakarta.<sup>34</sup> Many other dissident elite figures, including those from Barnas, also assembled at Wahid's house in the Jakarta suburb of Ciganjur, but were kept outside.

Rais, Megawati and Wahid remained consistent to their long-term trajectory. They did not wish to legitimise or strengthen *aksi* politics. While making the necessary statements in support of reform, action against corruption and the demobilisation of the Pam Swakarsa, they refused the students' demands and issued a statement affirming that they trusted Habibie to organise the elections which would remain the major mechanism for all aspects of the political transition. They also were unwilling to take a clear-cut stand on the mass movement's demand to immediately end all military role in politics. The key elements of the Ciganjur Declaration, as it became known, responding to the demands of the mass movement read:

That general elections would be a democratic way to terminate the transitional government of President B.J. Habibie; it also would be the best way of establishing a new legitimate government.

...

That ABRI's dual functions should be abolished gradually and the last phase of it should take place no later than six years from the date on which this statement is revealed to the public, paving the way for the growth of a civil society.

... Everyone should return home and stop complicating the situation.

The failure of these figures to fully align with mobilised popular sentiment was already known to both students and masses as they rallied and marched on November 13. Amien Rais had appeared on TV in an interview and angrily charged that the mobilisations were being managed by radical

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<sup>34</sup> For a report on the sultan's participation in the Jogjakarta May demonstration, see "Tita Reformasi Sang Raja", *Gatra*, June 13, 1998, pp. 86-87. The report carries a photo of the sultan standing before the mass rally.

groups with their own agendas.<sup>35</sup> The mass anger at the violence used against the people as early as November 9 and then again on November 12 and during the day on November 13 helped keep the mobilisation momentum going. There were also hopes that a large and militant demonstration and actual occupation of the MPR might change Rais, Wahid and Megawati's attitude. However, on the evening of November 13, there were no signs of such a change.

### ***Aksi*, consciousness and organisation**

The Suharto dictatorship was defeated by *aksi*. This was also the essence of the New Order's political crisis: its inability to govern on the basis of the floating mass policy of enforced passivity. The story of the victory of mass mobilisation is on one level the story of the conscious decision and persistent commitment of a small group of people to revive mass action as a form of political struggle during the 1990s. In this sense, Suharto did not just fall from power, but was pushed. The extent and depth of the spirit of *aksi* and its political power have been powerfully captured in a brief aside by Daniel Dhakidae in his mammoth scholarly work, *Cendikiawan dan kekuasaan dalam negara Orde Baru* (Intellectuals and power under the New Order state).<sup>36</sup> Dhakidae himself had been a student activist in the 1970s and one of the editors of *Sendi* magazine. He later studied at Cornell University in the United States and went on to head the research department at Jakarta's largest newspaper organisation, *Kompas*, in Jakarta. In his opening chapter in this work he refers to something which "frightened the New Order with all its armed forces".

He was referring to just some words about one word: in fact, a line from a poem by the poet Wiji Thukul. Thukul was the poet of *aksi*. He had been a trishaw driver and carpenter as well as a poet. He was a leader of the PRD and helped established its cultural organisation. He disappeared in 1998, probably kidnapped and murdered by agents of the military.<sup>37</sup> Dhakidae quotes one of his poems, written in 1986, that became extraordinarily popular. Its last line, says Dhakidae, became so popular

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<sup>35</sup> For a critique of this interview see Lani Cahyani, "Mengapa Gus Dur, Amien Rais, Megawati, Dan Lain-Lain Lebih Takut Terhadap Radikalisme Dibanding Dengan Militerisme?", *Info Pembebasan*, December 17, 1998, accessible at [www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1998/12/17/0006.html](http://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1998/12/17/0006.html).

<sup>36</sup> Daniel Dhakidae, *Cendikiawan dan kekuasaan dalam negara Orde Baru*, Gramedia, Jakarta, 2003.

<sup>37</sup> On Wiji Thukul see: Wilson (ed), *Kebenaran akan terus hidup : catatan-catatan tentang Wiji Thukul*, Jakarta : Yappika and Ikohi, 2007. For a relatively comprehensive selection of his poetry see: Wiji Thukul, *Aku ingin jadi peluru : sajak-sajak*, Magelang : Indonesia Tera, 2000.

during the New Order than an equivalent can only be found in “Karl Marx’s super-slogan *Workers of the World Unite* or the super slogan of the Indonesian revolution *Freedom or Death!*”<sup>38</sup>

### Warning

if the people leave  
while the rulers deliver their speeches  
we must be vigilant  
perhaps they have lost hope

if the people hide away  
and whisper  
when discussing their problems  
then rulers should beware and learn to listen

if the people don't dare complain  
then things are dangerous  
and if what the rulers say  
may not be rejected  
truth must surely be under threat

and if suggestions are refused without consideration  
voices silenced, criticisms banned without reason  
accused of subversion and of disturbing security  
then there is only one word: fight!

This last line — *There is only one word: fight!* — was indeed “a force uniting the activists who wanted to overthrow the New Order.”<sup>39</sup> The Indonesian word *lawan*, “fight” or perhaps also translatable as “resist”, is a powerful word in the language, reverberating with a total rejection of compromise. In terms of political consciousness, that other key word of the national revolution, *rakyat*, gained a new and again combative content as *aksi* and *lawan* became its partners, in opposing “floating mass”, *massa mengambang*.

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<sup>38</sup> Daniel Dhakidae, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>39</sup> Daniel Dhakidae, *op. cit.*, p. 56,

The spread and grip of this particular form of struggle — *aksi* — in Indonesian society, especially as it became a mass phenomenon, eventually, as Aspinall put it, “presaged a head-on confrontation between state and society”.<sup>40</sup> But *aksi*, of course, did not develop this power simply as some kind of metaphysical manifestation of the will of the radicals who began the movement back in the 1980s. At one level, *aksi* was a form of political action: protest mobilisation in the form of strikes, land occupations, hunger strikes, rallies, marches, sit-ins. But as an intervention into other already existing social, cultural, political and economic processes, it became more than just a form of action.

A decade is long enough to delete the memory of specific historical facts: the memory of who did what and why. A decade is not long enough, however, to delete a social class’s memory of the quality of an experience. Mass mobilisation had been at the essence of the *pergerakan* of the 1920s and 1930s, the period of the political and guerrilla struggle against the return of the Dutch colonial forces between 1945 and 1949 and the period of nation building which transformed into the movement for “socialism a la Indonesia” in the 1950s and 1960s. The horrific terror and slaughter of 1965 did drive those who were most part of that experience — the millions of workers, peasants and students on the left — into a kind of dark silence, where the survivors of the mass murder could only whisper their memory of past organisational activity, if they were not themselves traumatised by torture or witnessing murder. But there was a more general experience of the mobilised *rakyat* that was entrenched in symbols less easy to eliminate completely. The most potent of these symbols was Soekarno, *Bung Karno*, himself. Even 25 years later simply bearing his name could provide the capital to propel an otherwise nondescript personality — Megawati — into a position of national stature.

The regime’s campaign of terror in 1965 and 1966 was implemented on a scale and using such unrelenting horror — decapitation, disembowelling, mass execution, rape — that it did intimidate into quiescence the memory of the past empowerment of mobilisation. The murder and imprisonment of the most articulate and courageous of the leadership of the socialist movement also strengthened this effect. But the tactical requirement to allow post-1965 students to use political mobilisation, even if without the participation of non-student *rakyat*, meant that echoes of

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<sup>40</sup> Aspinall, *op. cit.*, p. 237. Framing the conflict between “state and society” as Aspinall does is not theoretically precise. The real confrontation was between the capitalist class’s state, led and managed by its political elite, and a growing mass mobilisation of students, proletarians, semi-proletarians and pauperised petty bourgeoisie. His formulation has no doubt been generated by the fact that the mass mobilisation created a hegemonic atmosphere of movement and protest. In this sense his formulation is more a metaphor.

*gerakan* remained, and, in the big student protests of 1973, 1974 and 1978, these echoes were strengthened. *Mahasiswa* (student) became a word that belonged to the people, and later *aksi*, *lawan* and *rakyat* went naturally side by side with *mahasiswa*.

The *mahasiswa* chink in the counter-revolution's floating mass strategy meant that there was really only the period between 1978 and 1988 when floating mass was being enforced consistently upon all sectors of society. This was not long enough to wipe out completely the form of political consciousness that had developed during the 60 years of the national revolution and in which an active role for the *rakyat* was a central part. Within just a few years of actions reintroducing the *aksi* method, a new momentum was restarted. Furthermore, the new political consciousness as it developed during that decade of momentum also took on an especially combative quality.

### **Class and combativity**

An important factor that facilitated the development of combativeness was the deepening and widening involvement of the proletariat and semi-proletariat as the primary component of the mobilisations. As documented in earlier chapters, the very early attempts at campaign mobilisations — such as the Kedung Ombo dam case — were based on student-peasant actions, with the peasants comprising the bulk of the participants. During the 1992-1996 period, factory workers provided the overwhelming bulk and were the backbone of the mobilisations that were at the forefront of rewinning mass protest as a method of struggle. The Great River and Gajah Tunggal strikes were highlights, as were the large and militant worker mobilisations in Surabaya in June 1996, where Dita Sari and Muhammed Coen Pontoh were arrested and scores of factory workers beaten. These actions, involving tens of thousands of factory workers, were the highlights among scores of other smaller factory worker actions. They combined actions demanding improvements in wages and conditions with the demand for the freedom to organise and to mobilise. Facing regular harassment and repression, they developed a habit of combativeness. They organised in specifically worker-defined organisations, either new unions or worker action committees.

This new combative method then spread to semi-proletarian sections of the population, who tended to mobilise on a territorial rather than a workplace basis. The first major example of this was the June 1996 demonstrations initiated by the MARI coalition campaigning in solidarity with Megawati Sukarnoputri, who was refusing to accede to the government's demand that she give up her position as chairperson of the PDI. As explained in the previous chapter, this mobilisation was the first example of a mass action whose primary focus shifted to a specific democratic demand. When the PDI headquarters were attacked in July 1996, semi-proletarian unrest burst forth in both

demonstrations and in rioting. These were violent confrontations with the police, and the attacks on buildings were certainly not the work of mobilising middle-class white collar professionals.

Between July 1996 and May 1997, there were fewer strikes while the PRD activists, key agents sustaining this process, were forced underground. The Megawati PDI sponsored many protest mobilisations outside the courts, where she was legally contesting the legitimacy of the PDI leadership recognised by the government. These again were urban poor, i.e. proletarian, semi-proletarian and poor small bourgeoisie mobilisations. The combative character of the class mobilisations was not fully revealed, however, until the massive actions on PPP election campaign days during the May 1997 elections.

The descriptions provided in the previous chapter of the high levels of combativeness — also reflected in the figures for attacks on police stations, barricades, government buildings — emphasise the extent to which the mobilisations were based upon the anger of the exploited classes. As the provided quotations showed, this was also the view of elite political figures associated with the bourgeoisie, such as Amien Rais. Furthermore, the vigorous attempts of the PPP leadership to stop the mobilisations and their condemnations of the Mega-Bintang-Rakyat leaflets, which raised demands for political liberty (ouster of Suharto and withdrawal of the army from politics) with economic demands (100% increase in wages), were another reflection of the bourgeoisie and its politicians' recognition that the mobilisations were against their interests, even though aimed at the regime and not their particular groups. Indeed, the Mega-Bintang placards, spontaneously initiated in the Jakarta alleyways (albeit responding to a call made by a Solo politician), actually utilised symbols which were associated with the PPP (the *bintang*) and the PDI (Mega). The PPP leadership tried to stop the mobilisations. The PDI, with an insipid campaign to boycott the election, mobilised absolutely nobody.

Another manifestation of the class character of the mobilisations was the effectiveness of the PRD's mass leaflet distribution through the *gang* (alleyways) of the working class urban poor areas of Jakarta, in both May 1997 and November 1998. In both cases huge numbers, in the hundreds of thousands, were mobilised in response to leaflets that advocated both socio-economic improvements (100% wage increases) and political liberty (democratic rights). By November 1998, Suharto had been ousted but the appeal of the demand for withdrawal of the army from politics was still strong. The November mobilisations also called for the formation of a presidium government, hinting at the prospects of a possible further radicalisation — except for the collapse of the student leadership after the elite opposition opted for change through elections.



There is a distinct continuity between the *aksi massa* mobilisations by the factory workers during the 1992-1996 period and the extension of mobilisations to the urban poor *kampung* mobilisation via the *gang* leafleting (proletariat and semi-proletariat) that were so explosive in May 1997 and November 1998. The role of middle class mobilisations was minimal, as was the general role of the elite's political parties (except for the bridging role that the PDI and its *poskos* played between July and December 1996, declining rapidly in 1997 as Megawati hesitated to take a strong stand regarding an attitude to the May 1997 elections).

The exception to the overwhelming domination of the mobilisations by the urban poor proletarians and semi-proletarians was in Jakarta in May 1998. Here, as this chapter described, a division in the student leadership of the mobilisations decided against calling for mass involvement. This was further reinforced by key elite figures, most particularly Amien Rais, publicly appealing, including in a special TV broadcast, that there be no mass protests. This is why the May 1998 occupation of the parliament buildings in Jakarta has given the impression of being a middle class mobilisation, comprising mainly students from those campuses opposed to calling for mass involvement. It was at this mobilisation that figures like Amien Rais obtained a platform from which to speak. However, it would be wrong to conclude therefore that the protest movement as a whole, including in Jakarta, had become dominated by middle class students. First, precisely because there was no call for mass involvement in the protests, urban poor unrest exploded in the form of mass rioting. The phenomenon of organised student protests combined with unorganised mass urban poor rioting — it was certainly not the middle class rioting — that reappeared (similar in character to the phenomenon that took place in January 1974). The steadily escalating participation and combativeness of these class forces between 1992 and 1998 had no politically directed channel as a result of the decision not to call on them to participate in May 1998 at the parliament, so it exploded in another form. Second, we could see from the successful *gang* mobilisations of November, later in the same year, that the combativeness and willingness of the popular classes to mobilise en masse behind demands for political democracy and wage increases remained strong.

The consciousness of mobilisation that developed during the 1990s was a consciousness that reflected a process of defiance, of wresting back something that had been taken away. It was more angry, combative and militant and was consistent with the necessity of confrontation in the streets. Before 1965, it was only among peasants that confrontation with the police and landowners occurred. While Soekarno remained relatively isolated within the state apparatus and the political elite, as head of state he lent an aspect of state authority to the mass mobilisations of the 1962-65 era. Even the chairperson of the PKI would appear at mass rallies wearing a ministerial uniform

(even though as a minister he wielded no authority over any ministry). Many mass mobilisations were not experienced as acts of defiance of the state because of President Soekarno's support. After Soekarno was sidelined within the state structures after September 30, 1965, the full force of the state was brought down on all those who had mobilised.

This ambiguity has been absent from *aksi* activities since 1989: all have been openly in defiance of the state and faced state violence, mainly exercised through the military, throughout the period of the New Order. This declined in the period immediately after the fall of Suharto, but did not disappear completely. The state apparatus, in particular police and military, are still used against workers, students and farmers. In 2004 in Ujung Padang police raided and shot dead students on a major campus; demonstrators outside a mining company in Kalimantan were shot and killed; peasant activists have been arrested and beaten. In Aceh, *aksi* reached its peak after the fall of Suharto in a 2 million-strong demonstration (in a population of 5 million) demanding a referendum, in November 1999. In 2003, the military was deployed in full-scale repression under military emergency rule.

As *aksi* mobilisations spread, zigzagging their way through a decade of political developments, this process also facilitated the beginnings of a reorganisation of the de-organised popular classes. The escalating and very combative opposition that the New Order faced during the 1990s was increasingly organising more and more segments of society. Action committees, discussion groups, campaign coalitions, new advocacy groups mushroomed. Furthermore, this was a national scale phenomenon, occurring from Aceh to Java to Papua. However, the most important phenomenon to grasp is that the *aksi* form itself became a form of organisation. The structure of organisation was always present in *aksi* and in many cases documented in the *aksi* chronology. There was a division of labour, precise roles for the "membership" during an action, a conscious collective stand towards the state apparatus as well as other groups. Both as an activity that directly involved people and as something which people observed as an example or model, the *aksi* was a reorganising mechanism.

### **Limits of *aksi***

There can be a tendency to underestimate the level of organisation that was developing and therefore the political challenge that it threatened because of one fundamental characteristic of this organisation that is peculiar to Indonesia's historical development after 1965. With *aksi* itself as the essential mechanism of organisation, it was in a constant state of flux. Everything, or almost everything, was *temporary*. The proportion of politically mobilising people involved in a permanent or stable political or mobilising organisation was small, even while almost the whole society was

organising through a myriad of temporary forms. Action committees rose and fell as the situation changed. Coalitions between NGOs, political groups, student groups and others rose and fell. Even where some remained stable, the membership came and went rapidly, often giving an organisation dramatically different characteristics at different times. In 1997, the election monitoring organisation KIPP — established on the initiative of the most radical activists, including the PRD — was an organisation that initiated *aksi* of all kind. KIPP became permanent, existing even in 2003, but its composition changed and its activities changed radically as well, dropping *aksi*. In other words, the regime was not being challenged by the so-called archetypical “well-organised mass opposition movement” but rather by a *process*, by something coming into being.

Between 1996 and 1998, the broad political elite had divided into two camps. One camp, around Suharto, the armed forces and GOLKAR, comprised those who remained committed to continuing to enforce a floating mass regime, with murder and torture if necessary. On April 18, 1998 — just one month before he was forced to resign — Suharto was still espousing a floating mass view on politics on campus. Echoing Ali Murtopo’s old insistence that everybody remain “wholly occupied” in their respective development functions, Suharto declared that the campus’s true function must be protected. Through the military commander over the armed forces in Central Java, Major-General Tyasno Sudarto, Suharto declared:

President Suharto said that the campuses were built and functioned to educate and prepare the nation’s future leaders. The occurrence of protests on the campuses of course was disturbing the implementation of the educational process. The president has requested that the function of the campus to educate future leaders not falls into error and that therefore they cannot carry out their function properly because of these disturbances.<sup>41</sup>

A second camp comprised those desperate to prevent the reorganization and repoliticisation process that *aksi* had restarted from developing to a level that might threaten the system as a whole. The “transition to democracy” in Indonesia that was formalised in 1998 was, in fact, a transition from one tactic to preserve the political and business elite — enforced floating mass — to a new tactic: co-option of social and popular unrest through new electoral and parliamentary processes. *Aksi* did not stop after November 13. Indeed, for several weeks afterwards, there were waves of demonstrations calling for the dismissal of the armed forces chief of staff, Wiranto, and

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<sup>41</sup> Translated from Suharto, “Unjuk Rasa Ganggu Fungsi Kampus”, in Dedy Djamiluddin Malik (ed), *Gejolak Reformasi Menolak Anarki*, 1998, p. 214.

sharper demands for the ending of the military's role in politics. There were more demonstrations outside military posts and offices in many cities throughout the country — in most cases organised by groups connected with the PRD. Many of these mobilised thousands of students. But the overall political momentum, a momentum focussing the myriad *aksi* on a specific political goal, diminished.

*Aksi* had defeated Suharto and won a major victory, the first victory, against the counter-revolution. Neither armed force nor civilian state apparatus had been able to save Suharto or the policy of floating mass. The elite's new tactic was forced to concede to political parties the right to organise at all levels and for trade unions to be free to establish themselves, at least as free as in most liberal parliamentary systems. The PRD, for example, was able to operate openly again. State censorship over the press ended. And street protest and mass mobilisation — *aksi* — were acknowledged as an integral and legitimate part of the political culture. The law was changed to end a ban on street demonstrations, requiring only that the police be informed before actions. The military increasingly withdrew from intervention to suppress *aksi*. "Dual function" lost its ideological authority and the military had to seek other justifications for a role in politics.

But in the form it had taken during the 1990s, *aksi* had not been able to replace the New Order state, the political elite as a whole, with a popular power. *Aksi* succeeded, but *komite rakyat* did not. A new mode of politics had been conceded: electoral politics, reflecting a new balance of power between elite and masses. However, it was the same elite. The change was that power and position had been rearranged among them. Suharto and his cronies were marginalised; the military elite had been pushed back; the GOLKAR bosses were now players on the same level as Megawati and her PDIP. Retired generals, former GOLKAR bosses and businessmen also flocked to join the PDIP. The elite was reconfiguring itself. At the same time there were many other more junior players. Power and position had also been redistributed downwards to the provincial, regency and district levels of the party machines of these elite figures. In the Ciganjur statement, Rais, Wahid, Megawati and the sultan had included a commitment to decentralisation. This demand had not been important in the movement prior to this. It was a concession to their party machines and a signal of how their new tactics of co-option rather than repression would develop.

The failure of *aksi* in 1998 to bring about a people's committee-style government was, in effect, a failure of the social and political reorganisation process to go beyond *temporary* forms to achieve more extensive *permanent* forms of organisation. The movement had won authority for and developed skills in a powerful new form of political action. It had developed a body of policy critiques and ideas stretching across the liberal democratic to socialist spectrum that provided the

basis for the emergence of the *reformasi* agenda, which the reconfigured post-New Order elite could not ignore. But it had not produced any mass-scale permanent organisation held together by shared ideological orientation.

The campaign to build a political movement against the New Order based on mass action really began only in the early 1990s. *Aksi* had about seven years, compared to the New Order's 25 years, to develop before the two moments of confrontation in 1998: with Suharto in May 1998 and with the broader elite in November 1998. It is not surprising that the transition from temporary to permanent forms of organisation was not achieved in such a short period. The *aksi* movement for political change had completely rolled back and destroyed the whole edifice of floating mass, which had been enforced through the most violent and horrendous terror. This was its amazing achievement. However, it was also most likely that this first experiment with mass action would be only an opening phase in the process of the reorganisation of Indonesian society and its de-organised popular classes. The movement had had a lot to overcome. The de-organisation of Indonesian society by Suharto's counter-revolution had been severe and deep. It had terroristically suppressed independent genuine self-organisation among the popular classes. It had deprived the whole of society of a shared historical memory of the struggle of its own creation.

The stage of development of mass mobilisation politics had not developed to that espoused by either Sukarno or the COMINTERN (as outlined in the Introduction). Before we return to the theoretical discussion of mass mobilisation politics outlined in the Introduction, it will be useful to look at the successes and limitations of the actually existing mass mobilisation politics in challenging the new forms of electoral politics that were established in 1999.

## Chapter 7

### ***Aksi* and politics after Suharto**

The *aksi massa*-based anti-dictatorship movement succeeded in pushing Suharto out of power and ending the dictatorship, achieving the political gain of a shift from dictatorship to electoral rule. However, the movement that developed between 1989 and 1998 was not able to replace the ruling oligarchies with a new power based on its mobilisations. In the form it had taken during the 1990s, *aksi* had not been able to replace the New Order state, the political elite as a whole, with a popular power. *Aksi* succeeded, but *komite rakyat* did not. A new mode of politics had been conceded: electoral politics, reflecting a new balance of power between the ruling class and its political elite and popular classes. However, it was the forces with power and position starting a process of rearrangement among them. Suharto and his cronies were marginalised; the military as an institution of repression had been pushed back; the GOLKAR bosses were now players on the same level as Megawati and her PDIP. Retired generals, former GOLKAR bosses and businessmen also moved to join the PDIP.<sup>1</sup> The elite was reconfiguring itself. At the same time there were many other more junior players. Power and position had also been redistributed downwards to the provincial, regency and district levels of the party machines of these elite figures. In the Ciganjur statement, Rais, Wahid, Megawati and the sultan had included a commitment to decentralisation. This demand had not been important in the movement prior to this. It was a concession to their party machines and a signal of how their new tactics of co-option rather than repression would develop.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2004 a new party of the elite was formed to back Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as a presidential candidate, the Partai Demokrat (PD). It has been gradually eating away at GOLKAR's pre-eminent position as the party of the political, social and economic elite.

not ignore. But it had not produced any mass scale permanent organisation held together by shared ideological orientation.

The movement not only won the shift from dictatorial to electoral politics, with its increased democratic space, and the legitimisation of a broader agenda of political issues open for public discussion. It had also brought about a significant change in the political culture, which shifted from the fear-based culture of the floating mass to the more combative culture of *aksi*. The forced resignation of Suharto in May 1998 opened the way for a rapid and massive spread of *aksi* among the general population. The mobilisations leading up to the march on the MPR in November 1998 was the most dramatic example of this, containing as it did the potential for a qualitative deepening of the radicalisation. As a national phenomenon, this mobilisational process collapsed when Megawati Sukarnoputri, Amien Rais and Abdurrahman Wahid (also known as Gus Dur) declared that they would support a process of political transition through elections to be organised under the Habibie government. However, *aksi* continued to occur frequently at the sites of grievance among many sections of the population. The political conditions that enabled such an escalation of street mobilisation were primarily created by the success of the movement in forcing Suharto to resign and forcing a break in the cohesion of the political elite formed during the Suharto period. There was a massive boost in confidence at the mass level, and *aksi* of various kinds around a variety of issues took place around the country.

In a book published in 2005, the Indonesian analyst Munafrizal Manan described the situation like this:

The era of transition, followed by political liberalisation, changed Indonesian society very drastically. This society, where for three decades freedom and political participation had been blocked, changed to a society free and with the courage to articulate its political participation. The great fear of articulating the demands that existed under Suharto disappeared completely as soon as the transition began.

Since the beginning of mid-1998, the daring of society increased in a very impressive manner. Voices of protest and demands that would have seemed absurd to imagine occurring openly before became a part of the reality of contemporary Indonesian political life. Protests, demonstrations, rallies and mass actions of different kinds became normal

political activities. Even before the year [1998] had ended there had been almost 3,000 demonstrations carried out by almost every social layer.<sup>2</sup>

Most of these *aksi*, of one kind or another, have not been documented systematically, but it is still possible to identify the main trends and limitations. Probably the most immediate and dramatic wave of *aksi* after the resignation of Suharto were *aksi* at the village and *kabupaten* level to force the resignation of village heads or bupati and even governors, who were considered by large sections of the local population to be either corrupt or oppressive.<sup>3</sup> Manan in his book notes the forced resignation of the bupati of Langkat in North Sumatra; the Lampung regional secretary in South Sumatra; the Banten bupati, the bupati of Maros in South Sulawesi and the bupati of Banyuwangi as examples.<sup>4</sup> There were many more such cases, including at the village level. There are estimates that more than 300 government officials, mostly village heads, were forced to leave their posts during the May-July period in 1998.<sup>5</sup> In some villages, they were physically chased out of the village or their offices attacked, stoned or burned. The magazine *Pembebasan*, for example, reported that the inhabitants of 41 villages in the Central Javanese kabupaten of Klaten mobilised in a coordinated fashion to remove all 41 of their village heads. In Tuban, East Java, hundreds of villagers forced the local district head (*camat*) to resign and smashed up his office. In a village near Palembang in South Sumatra, a village head considered corrupt was attacked and an acid used in rubber production was doused over him.<sup>6 7</sup>

These village *aksi* were not confined to protests demanding the resignation of officials. There were also many occupations of production sites, such as coffee, cacao, palm oil and sugar plantations as well as prawn farms. Such actions occurred, for example, in Jember, Tuban and Gresik in East Java as well as in Tangerang, Tapos and Indramayu in West Java. In fact, there were examples of this all throughout the country. Land also became a major issue, with increasing examples of land

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<sup>2</sup> Translated from Munafrizal Manan, *Gerakan Rakyat Melawan Elit*, Yogyakarta : Resist Books, 2005 pp. 151-152.

<sup>3</sup> See references to contemporary media reports of such actions in Chapter 6.

<sup>4</sup> *op cit.*, p. 152.

<sup>5</sup> See earlier references to news magazine reports of such incidents in Chapter 6.

<sup>6</sup> These actions are reminiscent of the actions described in Anton Lucas, *One Soul, One Struggle: region and revolution in Indonesia*, Allen and Unwin, 1991.

<sup>7</sup> *Pembebasan*, September 1-15, 1998, p. 6.



occupations by farmers reclaiming their land from private developers or local government projects.

As one study put it:

... with the fall of Soeharto, occupations of land controlled by the state — and to a lesser extent corporations — exploded all over Indonesia. The Director General of the Department of Forestry and Plantations estimated that as of September 2000, some 118,830 hectares of national estate land had been seized, along with 48,051 hectares of private estate lands.<sup>8</sup> These occupations are enormously significant in light of the combined dispossession and repression of the Soeharto era. According to preliminary estimates made in early 2003 in Garut, Tasikmalaya and Ciamis districts some 14,000 families have occupied nearly 9,000 hectares of land in 41 locations that all have units of SPP [See Tables 1, 2 and 3 in Appendix 1]. Even though this is not a large percentage of the extensive territory of the districts, the occupation and cultivation of this land has been significant for the plantation and forest managers.<sup>9</sup>

Manan also cites several cases taken from reports in the daily newspaper *Kompas* between May 1998 and November 2001. It is worth summarising some of these:

- 120 hectares of national housing company land occupied by 500 people who suspect (incorrectly) that the land is owned by the Suharto family
- People occupy 2,165 ha of land in Bogor, West Java, owned by Suharto's son Bambang Trihatmojo. The people fence off this rubber plantation land, which Bambang was planning to turn into a self-contained town development.
- Hundreds of garden vegetable farmers occupy and plant crops on the Cimaacan golf course, which they claim had been vegetable growing land previously. Near Surabaya, in the district of Lakσανtri, villagers also occupied golf course land which they said was village land sold without consultation with the inhabitants.

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<sup>8</sup> As quoted in Fauzi, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> in "Redefining Agrarian Power: Resurgent Agrarian Movements in West Java, Indonesia", by Suraya Afif, Noer Fauzi, Gillian Hart, Lungisile Ntsebeza and Mancy Perluso, p. 4.. The paper can be found at [repositories.edlib.org/cseas](http://repositories.edlib.org/cseas) maintained by the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, University of California Berkeley.

- Hundreds of villagers from the village of Cibedug, in the district of Ciawi, West Java, occupied land on the Tapos cattle ranch, owned by the Suharto family. They divided up the land, which they had previously claimed as land they had been farming.
- People from Muara Pahu and Jempang in Kutai, East Kalimantan, occupied the base camp of the Lonsum Sumatra Company, which had 16,500 ha of land that the villagers claimed the company had not obtained permission to log.
- Villagers from Suci and Pati in Jember, East Java, occupied coffee plantation land managed by a local provincial government company. The police attempt to disperse them and 10 people were injured.
- Thousands of people from North Barito district in Central Kalimantan stormed and occupied a gold mining area, angered by the gold mining company's arbitrary attitude to traditional land ownership.
- Between 200 and 300 farmers occupied 100 ha of clove plantation in Blitar, East Java, and cut down all the trees planted by the plantation company, stating the land was theirs. The police forcibly removed the farmers, with two killed and 16 injured.

Manan also documented four blockades organised by people in 2000, as further examples of this trend. In April, 2000, in Kutai Barat, East Kalimantan, people blocked the road into the Kelian Equatorial Mining Company because of a land compensation dispute. On May 15, villagers from Kayu Batu village near Jayapura, Papua, blockaded the Telkom offices in Jayapura, also over land compensation issues. Also in May 2000, villagers from four villages in Muara Batang Gadis in North Sumatra blockaded the offices of the Kerang Neam forest company, protesting its 25 years of forest clearing of people's lands. In June 2000, local people blockaded the Newmont Minahasa Raya mining company in North Sulawesi, also over land compensation issues.<sup>10</sup>

These kinds of protest actions, and many others, continued at a sustained pace in the period after 1998.<sup>11</sup> There has been no let-up. *Pembebasan* monthly magazine, published by the People's

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<sup>10</sup> Manan, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-155.

<sup>11</sup> In fact, the *aksi* phenomenon has sustained itself until 2009, the time of finalisation of this thesis. One small but symbolic manifestation of this is the policy of the Jakarta traffic police to announce on their website every day the location of *aksi* that they are aware of as a traffic management policy.

Democratic Party (PRD) during the 1998-2006 period,<sup>12</sup> regularly reports a smattering of these protests in each issue. Each issue has reported at least 20 and up to 200 cases of various forms of protest over the seven years from 1998 involving almost every social sector: students, workers, farmers, neighbourhood residents, teachers, doctors, nurses, electricity company employees, bank employees, state airplane factory employees, victims of Suharto period injustice, squatters, public transport drivers, taxi drivers, journalists, street traders, fishermen, women demonstrating against sexism of various kinds: and so the list could go on.<sup>13</sup>

Even the lower ranks of the police and army have mobilised. The August-September 2002 issue of *Pembebasan* reported that on May 20 more than 300 policemen demonstrated to protest what they said was the unilateral stopping of promotions by the West Java police chief. These 300 corporals were representing 2,000 of their colleagues. Then on June 26, 325 soldiers demonstrated to press for information as to what was happening regarding non-appearing housing credit from an army-owned bank after they had already paid the bank their deposits.<sup>14</sup>

The resilience of this phenomenon is reflected, for example, in the reportage of the July 2005 issue of *Pembebasan*. In its regular section entitled “The People Fight Back”, covering the previous four weeks, it includes anti-corruption protests in North Sumatra; in Semarang, Central Java; in Sleman, Central Java; in Makassar, South Sulawesi; in Boyolali, East Java; in Bulukumba; protests against the budget in Jakarta; by teachers’ assistants and casual teachers in Cianjur, West Java; students and street traders demonstrating against the arrest of students after a joint demonstration; university students in Aceh protesting fees; students and townspeople protesting unfair actions by a local election commission in Makassar; thousands of civil servants protesting on the streets in Temanggung against alleged arbitrary transfer of 78 civil servants by the bupati; students protesting the development of a new mall in the education quarter in Malang, East Java; in Yogyakarta hundreds of farmers protesting the new water privatisation bill; in Jakarta hundreds of people demonstrating against the privatisation of the Pasar Rebo hospital; over 1,000 farmers and others demonstrating in central Jakarta against a new regulation giving the government the right to seize

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<sup>12</sup> The PRD split in 2007 when the majority leadership expelled opponents of a decision to make a strategic shift away from a mass action strategy. Since 2008, *Pembebasan* has been published by the Komite Politik Rakyat Miskin–Partai Rakyat Demokratik (Committee for the Politics of the Poor — PRD), a new party formation formed by those expelled for defending the mass action strategy against a new parliamentarist line.

<sup>13</sup> For sample reporting on these *aksi*, see *Pembebasan* throughout the 2001-2003 period.

<sup>14</sup> *Pembebasan*, June 2002, p. 6

land without compensation; a week later another demonstration against this; thousands of farmers demonstrating again in Semarang against the same regulation; more than 200 street peddlers demonstrating outside the Jakarta provincial parliament against being forcibly moved along; students at the premier Gajah Mada state university in Yogyakarta demonstrating against the doubling of some fees; farmers demonstrating in Lampung, South Sumatra, on the issue of forcible removal from their lands; fishermen and workers in West Nusatenggara demanding the sacking of a Labour Department official they accuse of corruption.

*Pembebasan* is a lively monthly tabloid which also publishes a range of analytical articles on domestic and international affairs. Being published by the PRD, which is a small party with minimal resources, it can report only a small selection of the *aksi* taking place. The fact is that since 1998, almost no section of the popular classes of society has not been involved or touched by this spread of *aksi*.

As mentioned above, a fundamental characteristic of these *aksi* is that they have not transformed into any kind of national political movement or movements with a permanent character. They have remained a form of protest usually located at the site of grievance, only rarely reaching beyond that location.<sup>15</sup>

It is the fragmented and site-located nature of this endemic protest that forces the commentator to rely on gathering anecdotes and using the selected reports from *Kompas* (as did Manan) or the reportage in a magazine like *Pembebasan*. Uncongealed into any political movements (and in the absence of any well-resourced systematic research or even a systematic scouring of all the national and local media), this socially endemic protest can easily be underestimated both in its extent and its significance. Such an underestimation provides the basis of conclusions that the popular classes are relatively absent from the political processes as significant political actors. The fact that the anti-dictatorship movement did not establish a popular power and that the ruling class, its political elite reconfigured, remains in power may also lead to an underestimation following the argument that if the popular classes were powerful enough to dislodge a dictatorship, they should have been

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<sup>15</sup> Student protest has, of course, been not so restricted to site of grievance. While there have been regular protests and occupations of officials' offices on campuses over campus issues, some student demonstrations have been carried out by politically affiliated student groups taking their protests off campus: to parliament, Suharto's house or a government office. However, these too have not transformed into a larger cross-sectoral political movement.

powerful enough to replace it. However, this line of argument does not recognise any possibility of degrees of power; it asserts an all or nothing logic, denying partiality in political processes.

The inability of the *aksi massa*-based movement to go from temporary forms of organisation to permanent forms of organisation during the 1989-1998 period is not surprising. This is a very short period of time, coming after 30 years of near totalitarian suppression of grass-roots organisation and national ideological life. Furthermore, in the 1990s, the dynamics of the situation focussed all efforts on the dislodging of Suharto, which in and of itself did not require a deeper consolidation of political organization, as distinct from the idea of replacing Suharto with popular power. The latter idea, embodied in the concept of the *komite rakyat*, arose only in the last months of the anti-dictatorship movement.

The limitations of the *aksi massa* movement are best further analysed by assessing its development not only during the period of the 1990s but since 1998 as well. Such an examination of the limitations of the *aksi massa*-based movement requires a review of both its capacity to impact on politics and its record in attempts to achieve a more permanent form. This review will cover the 1998-2007 period; however, it must be noted that some of the processes discussed in this chapter are still ongoing and final conclusions therefore difficult.

### **Impact: *aksi* and constraining the elite**

At the end of 2000, a major controversy developed in the sphere of labour over a new regulation making it more difficult for employers to dismiss workers. This was Labour Ministerial Regulation 150/2000, Resolution on Dismissal and Redundancy Payments, Payments for Longevity of Service, and Compensation issued on June 20, 2000.<sup>16</sup> This regulation imposed a number of obligations on employers, not only conditions making it more difficult to dismiss workers, including striking workers, but also a range of financial obligations towards workers that had not previously existed. On December 15, the Indonesian Textile Industry Association, Indonesian Footwear Industry Association, Indonesian Garment Manufacturers' Association and the Indonesian Toy Manufacturers Association issued a joint letter explaining their objections to the regulation. The Ministry of Labour issued a revision of the regulation, No. 78/2001, removing or watering down all the sections that

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<sup>16</sup> Keputusan Menteri Tenaga Kerja (Kepmennaker) Nomor 150/2000 tentang Penyelesaian Pemutusan Hubungan Kerja dan Penetapan Uang Pesangon, Uang Penghargaan Masa Kerja, dan Ganti Kerugian di Perusahaan.

were objectionable to the employers.<sup>17</sup> The employers' position was also strongly supported by the minister of finance. The employers also directly lobbied Vice-President Megawati Sukarnoputri, who was in the middle of a manoeuvre to try to oust President Abdurrahman Wahid.

This action was rejected strongly by almost all the trade union and worker organisations. The government moved again and moderated one provision in favour of workers' rights. However, this was a relatively minor amendment and the resistance from trade unions and groups advocating for workers' rights continued. Manan gives one description of the reaction:

In several places in Indonesia demonstrations and strikes took place demanding the repeal of these two regulations. In Jakarta, thousands of workers organised by the All Indonesia Federation of Worker Unions (FPSI) demonstrated before the front of the Presidential Palace. At the same time hundreds from the Indonesian Prosperous Worker Union (SBSI), demonstrated in front of the Vice-President's Palace. In Medan, 5,000 workers from a range of organisations demonstrated to demand the same thing. Demonstrations also took place in Bandung (West Java), Sidoarjo (East Java), Makassar (South Sulawesi) and several other areas.<sup>18</sup>

The largest demonstration was that which occurred in Bandung on June 13-15, 2001.

In this area, clashes took place between workers and security apparatus which then evolved into amok. The West Java parliament was virtually destroyed as a result of being attacked by a hail of stones and other destructive acts by the masses. Several pieces of equipment were also destroyed or burned. Eighteen cars and 10 motorbikes were destroyed, 20 cars and 12 other motorbikes damaged. Bandung was paralysed during the workers' demonstrations. The security apparatus had acted repressively toward the demonstration and then went amok. Eighty people were arrested, almost all of them in a state of having been severely beaten.

The governor of West Java decided to postpone the implementation of the new law and ordered the implementation of the original law, which contained fewer provisions detrimental to workers. The governors of Jakarta, East Java, Central Java, Lampung, Kota Batam and several other areas did likewise, and, in the end, the government reinstituted

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<sup>17</sup> See Manan, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-199.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 199-200.

Labour Regulation No. 150/2000 and formed a new tripartite forum. This was done after holding a meeting with representatives of the government, employers and 30 leaders of trade union organisations.<sup>19</sup>

This was a major defeat for the government and employers, although they were able to retake what they had lost later in the year when a new, very restrictive law on labour disputes was introduced. The employers' defeat in June, however, was a reflection of the power of mass mobilisation. The potential for mobilisations, both demonstrations and strikes, was underscored by the extent of the strikes. Over a two-week period strikes and protests had taken place in every industrial zone in the country. Labour activists counted 99 towns where there were actions. In many cases, community or human rights organisations as well as students supported workers organised in local enterprise unions. This had been facilitated by the formation of broad committees in many cities earlier in the year to organise May Day actions.

The combativity of the workers who had mobilised in the thousands in several cities also showed that workers were able to take on a directly political focus. In Bandung, workers marched on both the Bandung kabupaten and Bandung town parliaments and occupied and trashed them. In other towns also workers protested outside regional parliaments. Furthermore, the strikes and protests then merged into a supplementary wave of strikes and protests around the country aimed at another more general government policy: the decision to reduce the price subsidies of various fuel products. Protests and demonstrations began against these policies around June 15 and also spread throughout the country. President Wahid had tried to delay the increases until October; however, pressure from his economics ministers, in turn no doubt pressured by the International Monetary Fund office in Jakarta, meant that they happened in June. This second wave was also characterised in many cities and towns by public transport strikes as drivers of buses and smaller commuter vehicles protested against both the fuel increases and the consequent increases in fares, which threatened to reduce patronage.<sup>20</sup>

For the repressive wing of the state apparatus, this pattern was recognisable: the combination of organised, militant and politically focussed *aksi* developing alongside explosions of *rusuh*, rioting. This had been exactly the pattern that developed during the 1990s. The police revived the 1996 ploy

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> "PRD Tolak Kenaikan Harga BBM di Depan Istana Negara", *Tempo Interactive*, December 20, 2004 | 13:51 WIB.

of accusing the PRD of being behind the protests and riots. The PRD, and the union closely associated with it, the FNPBI, was involved in protests in Bandung, Jakarta, Surabaya and other cities. They were, however, a part of wider coalitions. In Jakarta, the Jakarta police accused the PRD and the student activist grouping FORKOT as well as eight other unnamed non-government organisations.<sup>21</sup> In Bandung, the police raided the PRD office, seizing computers, books and documents and arresting the younger sister of a local PRD leader. According to police Brig-General Sudirman Ail, the West Java police commander: “Several of them [PRD] were arrested handing out leaflets inciting workers to strike”.<sup>22</sup>

Persistent mobilisations by students and transport workers has constrained price rises for fuel (petrol and kerosene) by respective governments since June 2001. The threat of protests and demonstrations has not stopped the steady reduction in fuel price subsidies and the consequent price increases but has slowed it. Furthermore, the government had to restrict the extent of these price rises by retaining higher subsidies for kerosene. Kerosene is used directly by the urban and rural poor for cooking and boiling water on small stoves. Kerosene was not originally excluded from this policy, required by the IMF, but was after the second wave of demonstrations against price rises in January-February 2002. The rise in August 2005 was also introduced very hesitatingly and only with great propaganda support.<sup>23</sup>

### **Impact beyond constraint: *aksi* and political challenge**

The protests over labour law and fuel price rises have shown the power of *aksi* mobilisation to constrain the government in its policy making. This is the case despite the fact that the discontent organized through *aksi* has not transformed into a political movement or sustained social protest movement. There are no large political parties based upon mobilised discontented elements from the popular classes. While trade unions have increased in number, they still cover only a tiny fraction of the population and are not politically influential organisations in and of themselves. One crucial

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<sup>21</sup> “Aliansi Buruh Demo ke Istana Tuntut Upah Wajar dan Tolak BBM Naik”, *Tempo Interactive*, December 21, 2004 | 14:49 WIB

<sup>22</sup> see “Massa Bergerak, PRD Dituding”, June 2004, Detik.com. See also “Police arrested five PRD members”, *Detik*, June 17, 2004 (APSN data base collection).

<sup>23</sup> Major protests against fuel price rises occurred in May 2008, organised by a new coalition, the Front Pembebasan Nasional (National Liberation Front — FPN). It did not succeed in forcing the government to retreat on these price rises. However, the fear of rising mobilisations led all the parties in the national parliament to try to seize direction of the issue by calling for a parliamentary interrogation of the government.



question to be answered is why this is so. Why has such discontent, despite being militant and active (not passive) not produced any large-scale permanent political organisation?

One way to gain insight into the issues involved here is through an examination of the single major case after May 1998 of mobilised discontent intervening on the question of who should rule, who should govern. Large-scale mobilisations took place through the first six months of 2001 — the same time as the BBM and labour protests — demanding the dissolution of GOLKAR as a step to prevent the reconsolidation of political power of a reconstituted New Order elite. These mobilisations peaked with mass rallies and marches in Surabaya in February 2001 of almost a million people.

### Background

The massive November 1998 mobilisations collapsed when Abdurrahman Wahid, Megawati Sukarnoputri and Amien Rais refused to go down the extra-parliamentary path in confronting the Habibie government. The demobilisation of the mass protests denied a national platform from which to speak to all of the political groups and individuals at the core of these mobilisations. Student groups and leaders, human rights groups, dissident politicians and radical parties, such as the PRD, were all suddenly deprived of the vehicle through which they acted and the platform from which they spoke. These groups were deprived of the main energy and infrastructure that allowed them to act on a national scale: national waves of focussed mass actions. This was a major obstacle for them in participating in the first post-Suharto general elections in 1999. Most of the forces at the core of the mobilisations either did not participate in the elections or found themselves participating as a small organisation no longer connected to the national scale energies and infrastructure of the *reformasi* mass movement.<sup>24</sup>

This meant that the electoral process was dominated by the political organisations associated with the three “opposition” figures who had opted for the electoral method of transition and the two Suharto era parties they had effectively compromised with, GOLKAR and the United Development Party (PPP). Megawati's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), Abdurrahman Wahid's National Awakening Party (PKB) and Amien Rais' National Mandate Party (PAN) dominated the election campaign alongside GOLKAR and PPP. The *reformasi* parties, such as the PRD and other new

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<sup>24</sup> I will be using the term *reformasi* mass movement and *reformasi* constituency to refer to the broad spectrum of radical political groups, as well as student, NGO, human rights, agrarian reform, women's rights, pro-reform intellectuals and journalists who adopted the term *reformasi* as the name for the democratic and social changes they were demanding.

smaller parties, were marginalised in this process as a result of the November 1998 demobilisation. An alliance of GOLKAR, PKB, PAN, PPP and several other smaller parties in the new People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) elected Abdurrahman Wahid as president, against Megawati, even though his party, the PKB, was one of the smallest in the parliament. Megawati Sukarnoputri, whose PDIP was the largest party with 35% of the seats, was elected vice-president.

This was an anomalous result reflecting an opportunist alliance between conservative Muslim parties and GOLKAR. The first group was opposed to a woman president, while GOLKAR saw the PDIP as its main rival in the new era. The anomaly was that the new president, Abdurrahman Wahid, did not ideologically represent the majority coalition in the MPR that elected him. Wahid himself was somewhat of an anomaly in Indonesian politics and a figure of extremely contradictory political orientations and background. On the one hand he was chairperson of the Nahdatul Ulama (NU), a Muslim religious organisation claiming millions of members. Formally the NU is an association of religious clerics and scholars, called *ulama* or *kyai*. Wahid is also an *ulama*, able to use the full title Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid. He is the grandson of the founding *kyai* of NU. The NU is based in the more rural areas of Indonesia, especially east and some parts of central Java. It has traditionally been a very conservative organisation on religious and social doctrine as well as politically. Its youth militia, the Banser, played a significant role in the massacres of leftist farmers and workers in 1965. At the core of its structure are religious schools, *pesantren*, which are often major landowners in their regions, making many *ulama* the backbone of the rural landed elite. Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid had a massive and very loyal following among the NU constituency after he took over the chairmanship in the 1980s.

Ideologically, however, Wahid was closer to the secular intellectuals of the social democratic Socialist Party of Indonesia (PSI). He had been educated in Egypt and Jordan and adopted a modernist and secular-oriented interpretation of Islamic teachings. Parallel with this he articulated political views that could be described as social democratic or liberal democratic. As well as being chairperson of the NU, in the 1980s he became chairperson of a small but high-profile group called the Forum Demokrasi. His main collaborators in this organisation were intellectuals usually considered close to the PSI current. As head of NU, he advocated a separation of religion and state, winning "Islamic values" through cultural change rather than through enforcement by the state and even adopting secular forms of greeting between Indonesian citizens rather than religious ones. As chairperson of Forum Demokrasi during the Suharto period, he argued for political liberalisation, although in an extremely cautious and non-confrontational way. He was the first national political

figure to criticise the massacres of leftists in 1965 and to apologise for the role of NU organisations in those events.

He survived under the New Order by accommodating to the mode of politics imposed by Suharto. He often stated his support for Suharto's candidacy for president at election times and in 1997 even helped campaign for GOLKAR, while still advocating political liberalisation. He was opposed to confrontation with Suharto and to mass mobilisation politics, often equating calls for mass mobilisation with provocations to mass violence.

He shared the political elite's aversion to mass participation in politics, but he did not share their other fundamental ideological outlooks. When he assumed the presidency, he advocated lifting the ban on communism and reconciliation with the pre-1965 left. This alone provoked opposition from Muslim and military elements who had been part of the coalition in the MPR that elected him.<sup>25</sup>

While Wahid's first cabinet included figures from all the parties that had supported him, at the core of his government was an alliance of figures drawn from a liberal democrat and Christian network of intellectuals and political figures. The shadowy Indonesian Anti-Communist Society (MAKI), though often making some bizarre accusations, did accurately list these individuals in one of its publications to include people such as Rizal Ramli (minister for economics and finance), Wimar Witoelar (presidential spokesperson), Marsilam Simanjuntak, Bondan Gunawan and Lt Gen Agus Wirahadikusuma. Simanjuntak had been Wahid's main collaborator in Forum Demokrasi. General Wirahadikusuma had emerged as a savage critic of corruption and abuse of power within the armed forces, making many enemies of fellow officers. MAKI accused Wahid and his allies of conspiring to attack the interests of GOLKAR, the army and Islam. They depicted this as a communist conspiracy and so classified all these people as pro-communist and therefore also supporters of the PRD, which was depicted as a reborn PKI.<sup>26</sup>

Wahid's election as president immediately put at centre stage contradictions that were to introduce deep volatility into the political situation. First, there was a quickly deepening contradiction that developed between Wahid and the majority in the parliament that had supported him and, of course, he had already earned the hostility of his vice-president, Megawati, and her party, the PDIP,

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<sup>25</sup> See the collection of interviews and essays by politicians and Islamic intellectuals, including Amien Rais, protesting Wahid's approach in Rais, Amien *et al.*, *Menolak Bangkitnya Kembali Komunisme*, Jakarta : DPP KNPI and FORSIWI, 2000.

<sup>26</sup> *Awas PKI Bangkit Lagi!!! Dibalik gerakan radikalisme, anarkhisme dan barbarianisme PRD*, Jakarta : Masyarakat Anti Komunis Indonesia, Maret 2001, pp. 7-8.

when he took the presidency from her. His ideological perspective was too much for them, especially his support for legalising communism and his promotion of General Wirahadikusuma to commander of the crucial Strategic Army Command (KOSTRAD).<sup>27</sup> This was accentuated by the emergence of his governing network, which was tending to sideline the established political forces from the Suharto period. Key figures from GOLKAR, PPP, PDIP and the TNI were dismissed by Wahid or forced from the cabinet between late November 1999 and April 2000.

The forces opposed to Wahid comprised an alliance between GOLKAR, the armed forces (TNI), some of the old Suharto era smaller parties (such as the PPP), PAN, led by Amien Rais, and the PDIP, who were manoeuvring for closer ties with the TNI. This was driven by essentially a GOLKAR-PPP-PAN-TNI alliance — that is, an alliance dominated by the parties of Suharto's New Order.<sup>28</sup> They were the parties that had put Wahid into the presidency. The PDIP was also part of this alliance, but Megawati's tactic was to let GOLKAR drive on the issue in the parliament. She remained relatively silent on the issues that GOLKAR, TNI and others dug up to use against Wahid. The anti-WAHID alliance was very powerful. Wahid was not only isolated in the parliament but also inside the state apparatus, both at national and provincial level. More than 60% of provincial governors were members of GOLKAR, a legacy of the Suharto period. Most high state officials had similar links. Wahid, as president, was increasingly forced to rely on extra-bureaucratic techniques to try to get things done. Wahid's officials then approached the National Logistics Body (BULOG), an institution that organised the distribution of rice and other goods throughout the country, to obtain "tactical funds", which would enable him to circumvent some of this bureaucratic hostility. This attempt to get around the normal way funds are allocated became the main issue which the GOLKAR-TNI-PPP-

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<sup>27</sup> Wirahadikusuma had become an outspoken critic of corruption in the armed forces and also a critic of the presence of military posts at the village and subdistrict level. He spoke outright in favour of ending the dual function of the military and the end of military activity in business. See Bouchier and Hadiz, *op cit.*, pp. 306-309. Wirahadikusuma was appointed to senior positions under Wahid, but this encountered resistance from other army officers and he was eventually sidelined. He died unexpectedly in August 2001. According to Damien Kingsbury, Australian intelligence analysts suspected he was murdered. Kingsbury, *Power Politics and the Indonesian Military*, Routledge, 2003, pp. 178-180.

<sup>28</sup> The National Mandate Party (PAN) was headed by Amien Rais, who was a part of the group of national elite figures considered to be opponents of Suharto, at least as of 1998. PAN had started off as a party led by intellectuals who had prospered under the New Order but who had grown alienated from it in the later years for a range of reasons. However, during this period PAN became more and more dominated by figures from a conservative, right-wing Islamic background. PAN joined PPP and other right-wing Muslim parties in a parliamentary caucus called the "Central Axis". The Central Axis joined GOLKAR as the core of the opposition to Wahid, with the PDIP and Megawati acting initially as a quiet partner.

PDIP majority in the parliament used against him — although the use of “tactical funds” from BULOG and other state enterprises had been common practice for the previous three decades. The majority in parliament set in motion impeachment processes that were to succeed in ousting Wahid from the presidency in July 2001.

This conflict set in motion a second but no less important contradiction that centred on the question of the revival of politically focussed mass *aksi*. The issue was where Wahid could draw support. He had the support of a majority of the base of the NU, although only a part of the rest of the leadership of the NU and the PKB, the electoral wing of the NU. He did have the support of the majority of the *reformasi* constituency, although this was usually qualified and critical support. The same groups which supported Wahid in the conflict with the GOLKAR-TNI-PDIP parliamentary majority and supported his perspectives on political liberalisation and reform of the army were often on the streets opposed to the economic policies he was implementing which flowed from the Indonesian government’s agreements with the IMF. The protests against the labour laws and protests against the fuel price rises discussed earlier occurred during Wahid’s presidency. Moreover, the primary organisational form of this constituency, the *aksi massa*, had been demobilised and the constituency had fragmented into its myriad of component parts and constituent spontaneous processes. It was made up of smaller parties — the PRD, PUDI, PBSO and others — as well as human rights and community organisations, individual political figures, artists and intellectuals and ad hoc spontaneous action groups and committees. This constituency had no significant representation in parliament. When the conflict operated as one between a Wahid-NU/PKB-*reformasi* constituency alliance and a GOLKAR-TNI-PDIP alliance, the issue was immediately posed of the necessity and the possibility of reviving *aksi* on a mass scale. From where else could come a serious political force to counter-pose to the majority in the parliament? The contradiction here was that Wahid as well as the PKB and NU leadership were not supporters of mass *aksi* as a form of struggle. And among the *reformasi* groups, not all were in favour of being drawn into the conflict.

### **Towards *aksi* on a mass scale**

The conflict between Wahid and the GOLKAR-TNI-PDIP alliance began very quickly and was clearly visible by the beginning of 2000. The initial battles were manifest in the struggle over cabinet and other positions. In November 1999, the main leader of the PPP, Hamzah Haz, resigned from the cabinet. In February, after a series of tense face-to-face meetings, Wahid also dismissed the former armed forces chief, General Wiranto, as minister in charge of politics and security, who was also seen as the main representative of the TNI’s interests inside the government. In April Wahid

dismissed the prominent PDIP figure, Laksamana Sukardi, as minister in charge of state enterprises. This was followed with the dismissal of GOLKAR businessman Yusuf Kalla (who became vice-president in 2005 under President Yudhoyono and is now chairperson of GOLKAR). More PDIP and GOLKAR ministers were dismissed in August 2000, and some of Wahid's liberal democrat associates moved into cabinet positions. Then in August the GOLKAR-PPP-TNI-PDIP majority in parliament formally moved towards impeachment by starting a parliamentary investigation into the approaches to BULOG and also the way in which Wahid tried to circumvent the bureaucracy with monies donated by the sultan of Brunei.<sup>29</sup>

At stake in this conflict was the status of the old forces of the New Order in the post-New Order political format. For those in the *reformasi* constituency, the opposition to Wahid from these forces, led by GOLKAR, was seen as resistance by the New Order to Wahid's support for political liberalisation and his bringing into government of political liberals. The opposition was seen as an attempt at a New Order comeback. Throughout 2000, student groups and radical political groups, in particular the PRD, began organising protest actions raising the demand "Disband GOLKAR!" as part of a campaign to fight off the attempt by GOLKAR and the TNI to reassert their former power. However, this began to escalate after the GOLKAR-TNI-PDIP majority in parliament began the impeachment processes in August. Alliances of student, worker activists and human rights activists began forming in many cities throughout the country. These alliances grouped the most radical activists behind the general slogans of "destroy the remnants of the New Order", "put GOLKAR on trial" or "disband GOLKAR". The campaign materials of these organisations reiterated the crimes of the New Order and pointed out the signs that the New Order political forces were still strong. In an article in *Pembebasan*, March 2001 issue, some of these arguments were summarised. Evidence of the rising up of remnants of the New Order included, stated the article:

1. the fact that none of them have been taken to court for their crimes against humanity or corruption, such as Suharto and his cronies;
2. the laws being passed all legitimise their continuing existence in the political system, such as the laws guaranteeing representation of the TNI and police in parliament;
3. the success of Golkar in remarketing itself to the public while neither having really changed nor having been brought to account for its past deeds;

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<sup>29</sup> See chronology in *Indonesia Media Online Berita Tanah Air*, August 2001, [indonesia.com/2001/august/berta-0801-kronologus.htm](http://indonesia.com/2001/august/berta-0801-kronologus.htm).

4. GOLKAR being able to maintain control of key state institutions, putting its people in government departments, including having a GOLKAR candidate as front-runner for heading the Supreme Court;
5. GOLKAR's ability to use the parliament as its platform, such as in the impeachment processes against Wahid;
6. GOLKAR still having 60% of governor and bupati positions outside Java and 40% in Java.

Demonstrations were fairly steady and of a moderate size during October-December 2000, although usually very militant. There were frequent clashes with the military and police. However, even during this period there were signs of the possibility of the demonstrations escalating to a mass scale. These signs were connected to the possibility of cooperation in organising mobilisations between this militant student sector, organised in a variety of ad hoc alliances in different cities, and Wahid's organisations, the National Awakening Party (PKB), Nahdatul Ulama and other organisations connected to the NU, such as the Indonesian Islamic University Students Association (PMII). Wahid's weak position in the parliament, with support from only the PKB, which had only a small contingent, and another small, Christian-oriented party, meant that he needed support from outside parliament.

The PRD took the initiative to begin communications with PKB and NU leaders about joint demonstrations in support of the demand to put GOLKAR on trial for crimes committed during the New Order period or to disband GOLKAR. This was a complicated process because the PRD was also involved in other alliances with student and worker groups organising protests against the Wahid's government's policies to reduce the subsidies on fuel prices, a policy being pushed by the IMF and some cabinet ministers close to the IMF and World Bank. There were debates inside the PRD and among student activists about cooperation with Wahid, who was categorised in both PRD and other activist analysis as a part of the grouping of "fake democrats", which also included Megawati Sukarnoputri and Amien Rais. However, the talks with the NU leaders revealed that they were willing to support demonstrations with the demands put forward by the PRD, including demands for a 100% rise in wages, as well as the demands against GOLKAR. The PKB and NU leaders made no attempt to steer things into a more moderate direction, for example, concentrating purely on a "defend Wahid" direction.

The PRD faced minimal problems with the PKB and NU leaders on the issue of demands and slogans for the demonstrations. But they soon found that there were big problems in the PKB and NU leaders actually delivering on promises of joint actions or even of delivering on promises to let PRD

leaders speak at actions organised by the Wahid forces. The nervousness of the Wahid forces was not on the issue of the campaign against “the remnants of the New Order “ but on the question of the method of struggle, the form of action, mass *aksi*. On numerous occasions, promised contingents from the Wahid forces simply did not arrive as promised. However, the Wahid forces were caught in a bind. They had to show they had significant support outside parliament, given that it was becoming clearer and clearer that they were isolated inside parliament. Wahid himself began to threaten openly that he would call on his traditional base to mobilise. From among this base, groups emerged calling themselves the “Prepared to Die Squads”. Wahid indicated he might ask his supporters from East Java to mobilise to Jakarta. In January 2001, PKB officials warned ominously that they could not stop their mass base from NU coming to Jakarta: “All that we can do is to persuade them not to be easily provoked by anti-Gus Dur groups. We have no power to ban them”, PKB Secretary-General Muhaimin Iskandar told the press in Jakarta on January 7.<sup>30</sup> It was also announced that 200,000 NU members were to arrive in Jakarta by January 15. But this 200,000 mobilisation never eventuated.

By January 2001, the anti-Wahid forces had begun their own *aksi* mobilisations. There were two prongs to this attack. Student groups associated with the Islamic parties in the parliament that were opposing Wahid organised regular demonstrations calling for his ousting. These were mostly peaceful and often quite large mobilisations. In Jakarta, they were often organised through the student executive boards (BEM). These were a kind of student representative council operating at faculty level in some universities. Islamic student groups associated with the Justice Party (PK) had been concentrating a lot of effort on winning control of these BEM and were now using them to mobilise their constituency on campuses against Wahid. They were very effective in indicating that a significant and active section of the student body was opposed to Wahid. They concentrated on raising the issues of Wahid’s attempt to raise “tactical funds” through BULOG and donations from the sultan of Brunei.

A second prong of the attack was to mobilise other groups, sometimes students, sometimes paramilitary groups, against the PRD or other symbols of leftism. There were attacks on PRD offices in several places in late 2000 and early 2001. Later, in May 2001, an international seminar organised by a research institution associated with the PRD was attacked by a paramilitary group associated

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<sup>30</sup> *Indonesian Observer*, January 7, 2001.



with the PPP, after police detained the international participants.<sup>31</sup> Anti-communist groups also declared that they would raid bookshops and confiscate and burn left-wing books.<sup>32</sup> These were attacks on the PRD and the more militant student groups, who were emerging as the key allies of Wahid against the GOLKAR-led alliance, as well as a confrontation with Wahid's stated position of wanting to lift the ban on communism.

Even in this climate, talks continued between the PKB and PRD about collaborating in organising mass mobilisations. On January 24, 2001, the press reported an agreement between the PRD and the NU. One of the English-language newspapers published the following news item:

PRD, NU to hold joint rally

Jakarta — The left-wing Peoples Democratic Party (PRD) and the nations biggest Muslim organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) are to hold a joint rally against forces opposed to democracy.

PRD leader Budiman Sudjatmiko yesterday met with NU Chairman Hasyim Muzadi to discuss the agenda of the rally.

Budiman said there are clear indications that the old power and its anti-democracy groups may attempt to oust the democratically elected government. He said Muzadi is keen for NU and the PRD to join forces for the sake of upholding democracy.

The PRD and NU are to hold a joint massive rally. It will accommodate the non-governmental organizations, students and pro-democracy activists. It will aim to consolidate pro-democracy powers.

No date was given for the event. Budiman said he invited NU to join the rally, because Muzadi had recently declared 2001 to be the year of strictness. That means the pro-democracy groups have to take a strong stance against the old forces, which want to regain power.

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<sup>31</sup> I was present and among those detained for three days. For a commentary on this event, see "Forget Tommy, get the foreigners and PRD", *Laksamana Net*, June 11, 2001. See also "Catch them, kill them", *Green Left Weekly*, June 20, 2001; Press release *Kronologi pengepungan aparat kepolisian dalam acara konferensi Asia-Pasifik*, <http://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/2001/06/08/0006.html>.

<sup>32</sup> The issue of raids on left books was prominent throughout May and only ended later in the month when the militia groups involved failed to carry through their threats. See "'Leftist' books safe as planned raids canceled", *Jakarta Post*, May 21, 2001.

Muzadi said that in some ways the PRD's ideas are similar to those of NU. We also want to find a way to thwart the attempts by the old power groups that want to eliminate the democracy process in Indonesia, he said.

Muzadi denied that he and Budiman had discussed the national leadership issue, saying the PRD and NU were more focused on the national interest, rather than the president.<sup>33</sup>

This was a clear statement of defiance of the military elements inside the government. On January 10, General Yudhoyono,<sup>34</sup> then minister for politics and security (now president) had told a delegation of student leaders: "Political disputes cannot be solved by mobilizing the masses. Let the political elite sit down together and find the best solution for our country."<sup>35</sup>

By the end of January, tensions had deepened. On January 24 Wahid had been summoned before a parliamentary committee to answer questions on the BULOG and Brunei funds. He had walked out of the session before the questioning had finished.

The first real exhibition of the potential of an alliance between the Wahid forces and the more militant wing of the *reformasi* constituency occurred not in a joint PRD-NU mobilisation in Jakarta but in Surabaya on February 5, 2001. An alliance had been established late in 2000 called the Front Reformasi Total (FRT). This alliance comprised youth organisations associated with the NU alongside the PRD and associated groups as well as a range of other student organisations and the local chapter of the high-profile environmental organisation WAHLI. The NU-associated groups included IPPNU (urban youth and students), East Java PMII (university students) and GP ANSOR (rural youth).<sup>36</sup> The FRT called for NU members to march on the East Javanese capital, Surabaya, from the surrounding areas. The official call of the FRT was for GOLKAR to be put on trial for its crimes during the New Order and, if found guilty, disbanded, and/or the government to be purged of figures who held positions in the New Order regime.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Indonesian Observer*, January 24, 2001.

<sup>34</sup> Yudhoyono had been appointed by Wahid to replace General Wiranto. Yudhoyono had been depicted in the media as a more reforming general. Wahid dismissed him later, on June 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Jakarta Post*, January 10, 2001.

<sup>36</sup> *Pembebasan*, March 2001 p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> "Non-NU elements involved in attacks on Golkar office", *Jakarta Post*, February 8, 2001. Here a NU leader calls for the arrest of PRD and FRT activists.

According to the central Javanese daily *Berita Nasional*, hundreds of thousands of people massed into Surabaya on February 5 to demonstrate at the provincial parliament building.<sup>38</sup> The paper reported thousands of trucks and cars filling the streets bringing people in from surrounding areas. Sit-downs of thousands of demonstrators blocked different parts of the city. Smaller towns on the outskirts of Surabaya also witnessed large demonstrations. Workers also staged strikes in some of the industrial satellite towns. Student activists assessed the total mobilisation as around one million, occurring in Indonesia's second biggest city, a major port and industrial centre. *Pembebasan* also reported the total as one million. It was a huge and militant mobilisation and showed the potential of the mass action form of struggle.<sup>39</sup>

The mobilisation also flowed over from a march or motorcade from surrounding towns and a peaceful demonstration outside the parliament to a march on the East Java GOLKAR offices. Here a section of the rally occupied the GOLKAR offices, trashed the office and then set it on fire.<sup>40</sup> The anger of the masses on the street and the attack on the GOLKAR offices quickly frightened the NU leadership. They all moved immediately to distance themselves not only from the arson at the GOLKAR offices but from the mobilisation as a whole, while still trying to squeeze some political mileage out of the event. One of the leaders of the East Java NU branch, Mas Subadar, told *Bernas* that the NU was the not "motor force" behind the February 5 mobilisations. But, he added, "This was a result of the behaviour of the political elite in Jakarta, like Amien Rais (chairperson of the MPR) and Akbar (chairperson of the House of Representatives) ... The people of East Java cannot be held back any more."<sup>41</sup>

Later the chairperson of the NU, Muzadi, made a clear statement that NU did not support the action. This was followed by a similar statement by Mahfud, the secretary-general of the PKB.<sup>42</sup> This, in turn,

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<sup>38</sup> *Berita Nasional*, February 6, 2001; see the article: "Ratusan Ribu Massa Jatim Beraksi Lagi", <http://www.indomedia.com/bernas/022001/06/UTAMA/06uta6.htm>.

<sup>39</sup> There had been another example that mass-scale *aksi* could quickly occur in late 1999, but in an arena that did not act directly on the processes being described here. In November 1999, an estimated two million people mobilised in the city of Banda Aceh demanding a referendum on self-determination for Aceh. In Aceh, the social and political discontent and the yearning for political liberalisation and socio-economic improvement found their expression in the demand for separation from Indonesia.

<sup>40</sup> There were also accusations later that GOLKAR members set fire to the buildings.

<sup>41</sup> *Bernas*, February 6, 2001 (IP).

<sup>42</sup> "PRD behind East Java destruction: Mahfud", *Detik*, February 9, 2001.

was followed by a statement by Wahid himself that the violence at the GOLKAR office was instituted by an outside party. Akbar Tanjung, chairperson of GOLKAR, immediately blamed the PRD and the student groups FORKOT and FAMRED for the violence and called for the banning of the PRD, echoing the policy of the Suharto government in 1996.<sup>43</sup> The PRD and other elements in FRT denied that they were responsible for the arson at the GOLKAR office.<sup>44</sup> There was an increase in violent attacks — stone throwing and fire bombings — on PRD offices during the rest of February through until at least June.<sup>45</sup> Other student and radical groups were also attacked, such as an attack on the activist artists group Taring Padi in Yogyakarta on February 20.<sup>46</sup>

Television and newspaper reports on the massive mobilisations in Surabaya and the controversy generated by the arson at the GOLKAR office focussed national attention on the protests. As a result, more such demonstrations occurred, first around East Java, the NU heartland, and then all around the country. There were demonstrations reported in Medan, Yogyakarta, Kudus and Makassar as well as Gresik, Mojokerto, Sidoarjo Malang, Probolinggo, Demak, Situbondo and Pasuruan.<sup>47</sup> These were mainly student and worker demonstrations, targeting GOLKAR offices. In Makassar there were physical clashes with the police.

While the moves against Wahid in the parliament continued throughout February, March, April and May, so did the demonstrations. Even in smaller towns in NU areas, militant actions occurred.<sup>48</sup> In the town of Purwokerto, Central Java, for example, pro-Wahid demonstrators occupied the local

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<sup>43</sup> *Kompas*, February 9, 2001 (IP). Also see *Pembebasan*, March 2001, p.3. The police also accused the PRD of being behind the demonstration: "Police say PRD involved in East Java riot", *Detik*, February 12, 2001. For threats to the PRD also see "Communist bogeyman thrown into equation", *South China Morning Post*, April 25, 2001.

<sup>44</sup> "East Java reps maintain PRD not behind attack on GOLKAR HQ", *Detik*, February 13, 2001. Later, perhaps reflecting differences in the NU camp, a PKB official also blamed GOLKAR members for the arson: "GOLKAR burned its own offices in East Java", *Detik*, February 16, 2001.

<sup>45</sup> "Indonesian labor fears worst is yet to come", *Inter Press News*, June 26, 2001; "Activists demand stern action against Muslim hard-liners", *Jakarta Post*, June 14, 2001.

<sup>46</sup> *Pembebasan*, *op. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> *Kompas*, February 9, 2001; "Demonstrations by Gus Dur supporters turn violent", *Jakarta Post*, February 6, 2001.

<sup>48</sup> "Wahid supporters protest in Indonesia's East Java", Reuters, February 25, 2001.

state radio station and issued their own pro-Wahid broadcasts.<sup>49</sup> However, the attempt to build the mass mobilisations foundered. Wahid raised the prospect of more mobilisations a few times but then would dampen expectations.<sup>50</sup> The focus was on whether a major mobilisation could be organised in Jakarta behind specific demands that would push back the manoeuvres in parliament by GOLKAR. Finally, in May, a series of demonstrations took place outside the Presidential Palace which combined the forces of the student radicals, including the PRD, and Wahid supporters. There were also demonstrations of primarily NU Wahid supporters.<sup>51</sup> However, these demonstrations did not grow beyond a few thousands.<sup>52</sup>

By May, the stakes had been raised as the impeachment process was leading to a session of the People's Consultative Assembly where, it became clear, the majority would vote Wahid out of the presidency and make Vice-President Megawati the president. In this context, what anti-GOLKAR mobilisations were taking place were now not only demanding that GOLKAR be held accountable for crimes under the New Order period but were also urging Wahid to issue a decree to dissolve parliament and call new elections.<sup>53</sup> There was no constitutional provision for Wahid to do this. Any attempt to dissolve parliament would also receive no support from the armed forces, which were backing the GOLKAR-PDIP-PPP majority in the parliament. The only force that could possibly legitimise a direct move by Wahid to dissolve parliament and call new elections would be a massive show of mobilised public support.

On May 31, the chairperson of the MPR, Amien Rais, a leading figure in the anti-Wahid coalition, announced that it would hold a special session on August 1 where there would be, one way or

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<sup>49</sup> "Gus Dur supporters hit the streets", *Jakarta Post*, March 7, 2001.

<sup>50</sup> Some NU and PKB politicians were also regularly hosing down expectations of mobilisations: "'The pressure thousands of Gus Dur's supporters cause by their street action is comparable to primitive democracy, which is what the Student Executive Boards (BEMs) conducted several days ago. 'Why don't we allow the political crises to be resolved by the legislature without mass public pressure,' Chotibul added.'" From: "Gus Dur supporters block Ketapang Port", *Jakarta Post*, 16 March,, 2001.) Chotibul Umam Wiranu was deputy secretary general of the National Awakening Party (PKB).

<sup>51</sup> "The President's supporters warn of rebellion in East Java", *Jakarta Post*, May 1, 2001.

<sup>52</sup> "Huge rallies fail to materialize in the capital", *Jakarta Post*, March 29, 2001.

<sup>53</sup> The anti-GOLKAR momentum created through the mobilisations was also producing initiatives not connected to the PRD and PRD-NU *aksi*. For example, anti-New Order Islamic and Soekarnoist groups also took the case for the disbanding of GOLKAR to parliamentary commissions. See "Organisations demand that Golkar be disbanded", *Tempo*, May 23, 2001.

another, a vote on Wahid's presidency. As it became clearer that Wahid was indeed about to be removed as president and replaced by Megawati by the GOLKAR-led coalition, almost all of the *reformasi* constituency united to call on Wahid to dissolve the parliament, dissolve GOLKAR and hold new elections. Activists from almost every human rights, environmental, democratic community, student, women's rights and trade union organisation were in and out of the Presidential Palace throughout June and July. There were more demonstrations in many cities but the NU forces were never mobilised in a sustained manner.<sup>54</sup>

On July 22, one week before the MPR was scheduled to meet, Wahid finally issued a decree which (1) suspended parliament, both the MPR and the DPR; (2) stated there would be an early election to be held no later than within one year and (3) dissolved GOLKAR.<sup>55</sup> But with parliament and the armed forces defiant and having built no sustained show of mobilised public support, the decree was ignored by the MPR and DPR. The MPR instead moved forward its special session and on July 23 installed Megawati as president.

From January through to June the extent of popular mobilisation was the greatest since 1998. The huge February mobilisation in Surabaya and the wave of other actions provoked throughout the country were reminiscent of 1996, 1997 and 1998. Moreover, these mobilisations aimed against GOLKAR and all the other surviving forces from the New Order were taking place among a non-stop stream of protests, occupations and strikes around other issues. Apart from the strikes and demonstrations over the new labour laws and several waves of protests against fuel price rises, the myriad of other protests and strikes did not let up throughout this period. Nowhere throughout this period did Wahid provide a clear platform which might have organised or galvanised this discontent. He had the worst of both worlds. His perspective on political liberalisation, including the legalisation of communism; his attempt to bring other liberals into the government from outside the established political parties; and his support for the most outspoken reformer inside the armed forces set him against all parties that had supported his election as president. But neither did he put forward a platform that could galvanise popular support. His economic policies, involving imposition of IMF-

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<sup>54</sup> "Situbondo paralyzed as 10,000 occupy government building", *Jakarta Post*, May 31, 2001, reported a pro-Wahid occupation of the local government buildings. See also "Mass protests break out in East Java's cities", *Jakarta Post*, May 30, 2001. This report mentioned Surabaya, Pasuruan and Sidoarjo and described the demonstrations as involving "thousands".

<sup>55</sup> Wahid was reported in the media as threatening this course of action in the middle of July. "State of emergency looms despite compromise efforts", Agence France Presse, July 19, 2001. See also "A new president, as well as an old one, for Indonesians", *New York Times*, July 23, 2001.

prescribed austerity policies, was a barrier to winning popular support. Most crucially, he consistently pulled back from using mass mobilisation as a means of organising and demonstrating public support for his presidency.

There is considerable commentary, both within Indonesia and from international commentators, that Wahid's major failing was erratic behaviour and bad management. Wahid is certainly a very complex personality, embodying very sharp and deep contradictions. He is head of one of the most tradition-oriented Islamic organisations in the country, whose base is thousands of Islamic clerics educated primarily in Islamic jurisprudence as well as mysticism. At the same time, he has been the most consistent advocate of modernising and secularising Islamic political and social outlooks, advocating a significant separation between religion and state. He has been chairperson of Forum Demokrasi, while supporting Suharto at election time. He has supported Suharto, who organised the counter-revolutionary massacres of communists in 1965, while calling for the legalisation of communism. It is not surprising that such a contradictory personality might also make contradictory remarks.

However, the crucial factor in Wahid's "erratic behaviour" has never been his personality, but rather the fundamental contradiction of his situation. He was a political liberal whose only possible power base was the mobilisation of a very angry and discontented urban and rural poor mass base.

However, Wahid always eschewed such mobilisation. This meant that his only recourse in any struggle with those opposed to democratic liberalisation was political manoeuvre. He has been in a constant state of political manoeuvre against and among other political forces since the 1980s. This was intensified during the struggles during his presidency. Switching alliances with individuals, sacking and appointing people, switching public stances, throwing out unsubstantiated criticisms were the only weapons open to him while he rejected building alliances aimed at mobilising public support in the extra-parliamentary arena.

The failure of the Wahid presidency was directly related to the foundering of another wave of politicised mass mobilisation. In many respects this foundering was caused by very similar factors to those that caused the demobilisations in November 1998. In November 1998 the student and popular mobilisations were relying on Amien Rais, Wahid and Megawati to agree to the idea of forcing Habibie to resign and hand over power to a presidium. When they opted for transition by elections under Habibie, the movement had nowhere to go — or, at least, that's what the majority of the student leadership thought. Insofar as the mobilisations were oriented towards the question of governmental power, they were relying on the willingness of figures from within the political elite

to support a “people’s power” uprising as a means of forcing an incumbent out and then legitimising coming to power by extra-constitutional means. This was again the situation in 2001. Neither the student movement nor organisations like the PRD had the size or authority to mobilise hundreds of thousands of people by themselves. They were dependent on Wahid and the NU leadership agreeing to and fully supporting a mass mobilisation strategy — at least for a long enough period for a self-sustaining momentum to get under way, as had occurred in 1997-98. For brief periods when they had supported such a method of struggle, in February 2001, for example, it was possible to glimpse the potential scale and militancy of any future mobilisations based on a similar alliance — *had such an alliance been possible*.

### **The limitations and contradictions of the anti-dictatorship mass movement, ideology and class consciousness.**

The speed and ease with which the November 1998 mass mobilisations dissolved and the inability of the 2001 anti-GOLKAR mobilisations to develop beyond a single national events point to the movement’s dependence on alliances with anti-dictatorship elements of the bourgeoisie to maximise its outreach during the 1996-2001 period. This was a function, I would argue, of its character as a specifically anti-dictatorship movement, that is, with an ideological perspective that had narrowed to a reform agenda centred on the ending of the pillars of the dictatorship — although this was a much broader agenda, open to public debate, than had been possible during the first 30 years of the dictatorship.

This dependence was a function of the speed with which the movement developed in late 1997 and early 1998. Within just a few months a movement that had been essentially confined to radical formations and the mass constituencies they could mobilise (as manifested in the 1989-1996 student-peasant and student-worker land occupations and strikes) grew to involve hundreds of thousands more students and urban poor in semi-spontaneous actions around the slogan to end the dictatorship. The speed with which this happened precluded processes that could consolidate the *aksi* method of activity and organisation into permanent organisations. While the main initiating force in the *aksi massa* political current, the PRD, had formulated more far-reaching political changes in its various programmes, the movement as it developed during late May 1997 to May 1998 narrowed in its ideological outlook.



In fact, this narrow ideological view entered into the PRD as its membership grew in this period. Some of its key figures in the 1997-98 period, such as Andi Arif, its national spokesperson during this period, later became political advisers to the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono 2004 election campaign.<sup>56</sup> At a panel discussion in 2003, where he and I were both speakers, he argued that the movement's aim was democracy and that it had been achieved with the overthrow of Suharto. After two failed attempts to garner the membership and financial resources to achieve electoral registration for an electoral party basing itself purely on uniting grass-roots forces, a majority of the PRD voted in 2007 to end these attempts and to stand candidates as members of one of the smaller elite-based parties and devote the majority of their energy and resources to electoral politics, rather than continuing to pursue a mass mobilisation strategy. They chose the Star Reformasi Party (Partai Bintang Reformasi). A minority who opposed this decision were eventually expelled and have since formed their own organisation, the Komite Politik Rakyat Miskin - PRD (Committee for the Politics of the Poor – KPRM-PRD). Since then the KPRM-PRD, along with other relatively new ideologically left forces have been organising to rebuild the *aksi massa* movement, but with an openly and specifically socialist ideological basis — although still formulated to avoid any call for a full social revolution.<sup>57</sup>

The demobilisation of the pro-Gus Dur demonstrations in 2001 marked the end of a specific phase in the development of *aksi massa* politics. It is not surprising that it was by marked by the removal of a government by what amounted to a constitutional coup. This “coup” was a reassertion of hegemony over political life by the political elite belonging to the domestic capitalist class, and represented through the parliamentary parties. The demobilisation resulted in a relative reduction in levels of mobilisation and reduced the constraints imposed on the elite from below. Fuel price rises and tightening of labour laws, including the legalisation of outsourcing, were implemented with minimal fears by the elite between 2002 And 2008. The Megawati and Yudhoyono presidencies proceeded with no examples of mobilisations of the 1996-98 or 2001 levels. Only in late 2008 and entering into

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<sup>56</sup> Arif is now the national coordinator of Jaringan Nusantara, which mobilises student and activist support for President Yudhoyono.

<sup>57</sup> The retreat of a majority of the PRD from *aksi massa* politics and the formation of the KPRM-PRD were a tense and complex process involving both substantial polemics and organisational and political activity. The occurrence of this process and the emergence in the same time frame of new organisations, also oriented to an *aksi massa* project of one kind of another, and with an openly socialist outlook, together possibly represent the beginning of a qualitatively new phase in the development of *aksi massa* politics. While I have gathered considerable materials on this process during the 2007- 08 period, I have decided that this new phase is better dealt with in a separate study following on from this thesis.

the election year of 2009 — and with slightly improved levels of coordination between new pro-*aksi massa* organisations — did mass protests exercise a constraining pressure on the government.<sup>58</sup>

However, the long struggle between 1989 and 1998 had won a qualitative expansion of political liberty. The right to mobilise had been won and *aksi* had become a part of the political culture. Organisations whose primary purpose was to organise mobilisations were now more easily established. There was thus a mushrooming of trade union and peasant union formation. The formation of trade unions (organisations primarily concerned with wages and working conditions) was a secondary phenomenon during the 1989-98 period, when the struggle for the right to mobilise and political liberty provided the basic framework for activity.

### ***Aksi* and class consciousness after the dictatorship**

The militant mass action demanding political liberty — a demand also embedded in the form of action which was then banned — manifested the political content of class consciousness among the mobilised popular classes. It was a primarily democratic content, responding to the capitalist class's project of floating mass politics. In the aftermath of the fall of the dictatorship, the content has shifted significantly to that of socio-economic demands. In this sense there has been a twin narrowing of the mass movement's agenda. First, there has been a moderating of the democratic agenda, accepting the shift to electoral politics and the improved balance of forces between elite and mass (capitalist and popular classes) that electoral politics represents. Second, more particularly at the mass level, protest mobilisations have shifted more to the socio-economic arena, abandoning — at least for the time being — seeking a deepening of democratic change. It should be noted here that an analytical framework that sees socio-economic demands as inherently more worker issues,

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<sup>58</sup> In May 2008 two coalitions of *aksi massa*-oriented groups, the Front Pembebasan Nasional (FPN — National Liberation Front) and the Front Perjuangan Rakyat (People's Struggle Front — FPR) organised a series of protests against fuel price rises. These did not succeed in stopping the fuel price rises. However, there was a clear fear among the elite-based parties that the mobilisations might escalate. The parties in the parliament moved to institute a process to interrogate the government about its policies and what ameliorative policies might be necessary. When international fuel prices fell, however, the Yudhoyono government immediately moved to lower prices. It did this twice and then in 2009 it became a major boast in Yudhoyono's election campaign. In November 2008, the Aliansi Buruh Menggugat (Workers Challenge Alliance — ABM), a national alliance of trade unions, launched mobilisations of several thousands of workers in at least five cities against a ministerial decision urging employers to restrict wage rises to the national economic growth rate. Again the parties responded quickly, also demanding that the government amend the decision. The mobilisations were partially successful in that the government did amend the decision, urging employers to take into account the inflation rate and not the economic growth rate, which was considerably lower than the inflation rate.

as the primary proof that workers are mobilising as workers, than the struggle for political liberty (necessary for workers to be able to organise) may see these shifts as not a narrowing of consciousness but as some kind of return to “real” working class consciousness.

This would be an incorrect posing of the problem. It is probably true that the most common self-conception of both mobilising proletariat (including semi-proletariat) and pauperised petty bourgeois (including peasants) was as the *rakyat*, “the people”. *Rakyat* literally means people. But the word cannot be used for “people” in every context. You could not use *rakyat*, for example, “There are many rakyat at the opera today”. You could not even use *rakyat* in the sentence: “There are 500 people as members of parliament”. Everybody knows that the members of parliament are not *rakyat*. The very word for “people” has been given class content. It refers only to that mass of *Marhaen*, workers and peasants, the impoverished, the “little people”. If we were to ask the question: what developments or changes in condition would be necessary to facilitate a change, or deepening of this consciousness, whereby the working class can see themselves fully as a proletarian class, as understood in a Marxist sense? — then one very helpful change would be the ability for those political forces who wish to advance that consciousness to be able to explain openly and advocate a Marxist analysis. However, the advance in the extent of political liberty won in 1998 has not extended to lifting the legal ban on the “spreading of Marxism-Leninism”. Indeed, as explained earlier, resistance to the lifting of this ban was one of the factors behind a majority of the capitalist class and its elite turning against President Abdurrahman Wahid in 2001.

In this situation, a revival of campaigning for full political liberty by the working class and other poor, i.e. mobilising to demand the right to openly espouse all ideologies, would be rather an advance in levels of class consciousness compared to being restricted to socio-economic agendas. A measure of the advance in achieving a fuller class consciousness may be a greater understanding — whether analytical or instinctual — of the needs of the class if it wishes to be able to advance its material and social conditions. Where revolutionary socialist ideology is banned, full political liberty is in the interests of the working class.

Here it can be emphasised that rewinning the method of struggle of mass action by itself does not inevitably mean an ongoing deepening of class consciousness or escalation of mass movement activity. Advances in the ideological sphere are also necessary. The rewinning of mass action also delivers this technique of political activity to other class forces as well. Different factions of the elite have used street mobilisations in conflicts in the electoral arena, in disputes over results. The conservative Islamic party, the PKS, has mobilised tens of thousands of people at least twice in

support of Palestine and against Israel. Smaller mobilisations by the PKS, and by the Hizbut Tahir, have also been organised in support of legislation that would give the state the power to enforce conservative dress codes for women, in accord with some interpretations of Islamic law. However, despite an extended testing period of ten years since Suharto's fall, no reactionary political forces have embarked on any sustained attempt to build a mass action-based political movement, such as was attempted by the PRD in the 1990s. Street mobilisations organised by these forces have been rare and not part of any sustained pattern. The PKS does remain a highly visible political party but is focusing its activities in the electoral sphere and not the extra-parliamentary sphere. It is not possible, therefore, to assess these movements' capacity to mobilise on an ongoing basis among the proletariat (and semi-proletariat) or the pauperised petty bourgeoisie.<sup>59</sup>

While this has been the case for conservative or reactionary forces, it also remains true that mass mobilisations of working class and peasant protests have remained fragmented and been unable to escalate, despite the gains made in political liberty.

At the same time, it must be noted that the movement made a major gain in extending political liberty — in the sense that it was discussed by Lenin in *Two Tactics*. However, it was not achieved through revolution, but rather through reform: “the way of delay, of procrastination, of the painfully slow decomposition of the putrid parts of the national organism”. This is reflected in the continuing control of the old elite — reconfigured — over the state. The movement did win the right to mobilise but not fully: it is still illegal to mobilise in support of revolutionary socialism and communism. Political demands and analysis tending in this direction must still use code words and disguised vocabulary and avoid any explicit call for revolution. How, in what context and when this limitation will be opposed will represent a significant issue in the future development of class struggle politics.

The following, concluding, chapter will sum up analysis of the extent of the determining role of mass mobilisation of the popular classes in the period discussed in this thesis. It will also assess the relationship between the specific character of the mass mobilisational politics which developed during the period and the strengths and limitations of its role at various times.

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<sup>59</sup> The PKS did have considerable sway over a student organisation, Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslimin Indonesia (KAMMI — Indonesian Students' Action Front) during the 1998-2004 period. KAMMI did carry out street protest mobilisations of students around socio-economic issues in this period. It appears that this kind of action has reduced considerably since 2004, possibly under pressure from the PKS leadership, afraid that such actions would encourage a general increase in militancy. KAMMI, however, did not attempt to involve large mobilisation of non-student sectors of society.

## Conclusions

This thesis analyses the role played by the mass mobilisation of the popular classes in two processes of major change in the political life of Indonesia. One was the change from the period of deep contestation over the future of Indonesia (1950-65) to the period of counter-revolutionary consolidation of institutions of suppression of mass mobilisation (1965-89). The other was the change from this counter-revolutionary totalitarianism to resumed but moderated contestation (1998-2001). In both these processes of change — these major conjunctures — I show *that it has been the crisis and resolution of mass action political mobilisation that has been the determining factor in the major turning points in the political history of the period, i.e. determining the key features of the next period of class struggle politics*. Utilisation of this approach also produces a different way of categorising the turning points in modern Indonesian history.

### **From mass action contestation to ‘floating mass’ disorganisation**

Chapter 2 showed how the deepening of the mass mobilisation of the popular classes during the 1950-65 period eventually produced a crisis in the form of an irreconcilable conflict between the popular classes and an elite hitherto dominating the political system and political life. The deepening of the mass mobilisation was reflected in both the growing size of the organisations basing themselves on mass action politics (PKI and PNI), the spread of the ideology of the mobilisations (socialism), the direct threat to the privileges of property (land actions, struggles for worker control of state corporations) and the use of the mobilisations to remove hostile personnel from the state apparatus. Contrary to Robison’s argument, what followed was indeed a counter-revolution, but a counter-revolution not aimed at overthrowing a revolutionary government but aimed at suppressing a mass mobilisation that was threatening to bring to power a revolutionary government. Chapter 2 also sets out how this crisis was resolved in the form of the establishment of a regime whose structure and policies were built around the necessity for the suppression of the mass movement of the day *as well as* the suppression of mass action politics *in general and permanently*. The chapter sets out the set of policies aimed at destroying the Soekarnoist-PKI movement, institutionalising the suppression of mass actions politic as a foundation policy of the regime and removing any memory of past experience of mass mobilisation.

Chapter 3 illustrates the centrality of these policies to the political foundations of the New Order by showing how that even 10 years after the end of the mass action politics period, the regime found it necessary to extinguish the one remaining arena of permitted mass mobilisation: the student sector. The chapter not only describes the student mobilisations and then the policies implemented in 1978

to end student mobilisations but shows how the privilege of mobilisations in this sector rapidly reproduced the ideological concerns of the pre-1965 left, although using a different vocabulary and without a final or comprehensive ideological perspective (e.g. socialism): hostility to foreign capital and dependency, anti-militarism and anti-corruption. For the regime, this emphasised again for them the inevitable radicalisation that followed any permissiveness towards mass action politics.

Taking the crisis created by the deepening and radicalising of mass action politics before 1965 as the key determining process provides an analysis with considerable explanatory power, which neither results in the confusions of Feith, who was unable at first even to pose appropriate questions regarding the structure and nature of the Suharto regime. His initial analysis, still caught up in his identification of the victorious “administrator” forces as supporting “western democratic institutions”, was unable even to recognise the massive suppression of the mass action sector. In 1968, he was still asking whether the Suharto regime would resort to coercion. He did not rectify this position until 1978, but then did not develop his new analysis beyond an initial exploratory article. Following the course of political developments from this perspective also avoids making the basic empirical error that Robison does, namely asserting that during the Sukarno period the regime was imposing a corporatist straitjacket on mass organising — which would not have posed a threat, and would have not, therefore, required suppression. Robison is “able” to reject any concept that the New Order was counter-revolutionary by asserting an empirically wrong description of the pre-1965 period.

His analysis also sets up a framework which allows him to concentrate purely on the internal politics of the Indonesian capitalist class as the coming to power of the New Order is severed from any relationship between elite and mass. This means that he (with Hadiz) in their work on the post-Suharto period fails to provide any analysis of the qualitative changes that occurred in political life after 1998.

The analytical framework that I have argued in chapters 2 and 3, by capturing the most dynamic aspect of politics — the elite-mass relationship, i.e. a class-struggle matrix — also enables an immediate identification of key questions that can be asked about future developments. Will the suppression of mass mobilisation last? Under what conditions might it revive? How will the regime react to a revival? It is through asking these questions and seeking answers that we are able to find an explanation for the fall of Suharto that answers key questions about the broader political changes that accompanied his fall.

### **From 'floating mass' disorganisation to *aksi massa* reorganisation.**

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 describe and analyse the processes whereby mass action politics reasserted itself, through the agencies of new political groups, in the period 1989-98 and the role of mass action in the fall of Suharto. These chapters detail the conscious actions of an organised group to try to relaunch mass action politics — a conscious agency being necessary given the systematic suppression of this method of political action. The demise of mass mobilisation of the popular classes after 1965 was not the result of a withering away of such activity; it was not a sociological phenomenon. It was the result of organised suppression, which would most likely be overcome by organised resistance. Mass action did not retreat because of some fundamental socio-economic or sociological change in society which underpinned it. In fact, the socio-economic class gap grew wider. The socio-economic class gap fundamentals were the same before and after 1965, and even into the 1970s when the economy began to grow. This was why the student mobilisations, occurring mostly in the 1970s, quickly produced similar concerns about foreign debt and dependence and corruption as linked to the issue of poverty and the rich-poor gap. The revival of mass action politics was not awaiting some change in objective conditions, but rather the emergence of some agency which would initiate steps to revive mass mobilisation. This emergence of a new agency is outlined in Chapter 4.

My argument, however, is not simply that mass action was re-initiated but that it revived in a substantial manner and eventually created a crisis whose resolution determined the precise nature of an important conjuncture. Chapter 5 describes and analyses the spread of mass action during the 1990-98 period. It analyses the crisis of governability and legitimacy that the spread of mass action, especially after June 1996, created for the Suharto regime. The chapters show how the mass actions initiated by the PRD in the early 1990s were later complemented by and even overtaken by mass actions that went beyond being propaganda for mass action, but started to intervene in the issue of state power itself. From June 1996 onwards, when the first mass action involving the PDI took place, mass mobilisation of the popular classes was more and more around the issue of who should rule, and no longer around immediate demands, such as wages or conditions, or even the right to organise.

Chapter 5 also brings out the speed with which mass action grew and spread. The first mass action broader than the PRD worker-student mobilisations of 1993-96 was the June 1996 mobilisation in support of the PDI, and including PDI forces. Within just 10 months, by May 1997, during the parliamentary elections, the police, army, civil apparatus and regime-approved party leaderships were unable to prevent massive and militant street mobilisations against the government in direct

defiance of government prohibitions. Moreover, the May mobilisations, apart from being massive and militant, also showed signs of a deepening politicisation from below, as large numbers of people brought their own posters and placards supporting the Mega-Bintang slogan for opposition unity. The militancy was reflected in the willingness to confront physically the police and army as well as the more spontaneous combativeness of local poor populations who acted against the militia brought in by the government to intimidate the mobilisations.

It was the rapid spread, deepening politicisation, combativeness and threatening radicalisation that were working to produce a crisis for the regime. The further spread of the movement to campuses throughout the country from around September-October 1997 until May 1998 helped further exacerbate the crisis of legitimacy and governability.

The occurrence of a major economic crisis in late 1997 was also a major political problem for the regime. The specific way that crisis unfolded and was resolved was, however, determined by the threat being posed by the mass movement. The argument in favour of this proposition is revolves around the fact that it was the idea and agenda connected to *reformasi* that framed the politics of Suharto's fall. In this regard, Chapter 5 and some of Chapter 6 also set out the components of this *reformasi* agenda, and they related to the demands of the mass action movement that had evolved during the previous 10 years. In the wake of the economic crisis, the demand was not for a new economic management team or a different packet of economic policies, but for *reformasi*: the ousting of Suharto and the end of authoritarian rule, withdrawal of the army from politics (especially as a repressive instrument) and an end to abuse of power over money (nepotism, corruption, collusion).

The crisis was brought about by the spread of the mass protests which threatened ungovernability, but also by the threat of deeper radicalisation, reflected in the calls for a government of a "people's committee". The resolution of the crisis could be achieved only by concessions to the mass movement by the elite in the form of the abandonment of authoritarian rule (i.e. the abandonment of Suharto) and the promise of instituting some rapid political reforms, as implemented by Habibie: free elections, release of political prisoners, lifting of restrictions on labour organising and the press and on mass protest activity itself. Another part of the resolution, equally a direct response to the mobilisations, was a refusal to make a concession: namely, the refusal by Amien Rais, Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Sukarnoputri to support a people's committee government, i.e. a revolutionary transition, opting instead for an electoral transition to be organised by the incumbent government under Habibie.



This combination of concessions in important areas of political reform but moving to undermine the momentum of the mobilisations by switching to electoral struggle framed the process of political transition from authoritarianism to the current system of parliamentary rule and political life dominated by electoral struggle. This particular combination can be best explained as a packet of responses demanded by the crisis created for the elite by the deepening mass action process for their crisis to be resolved.

As Aspinall stated: “why Suharto’s resignation was followed by a democratic transition rather than by a reconstituted version of authoritarianism” cannot be explained by a simple reference to an economy-based crisis. He added, “Above all, an exclusive focus on the economic crisis fails to take into account the growth of opposition which preceded 1997”.<sup>1</sup> In Robison and Hadiz’s case, they avoid discussion of the changed nature of the system of rule — i.e. the elite-mass relationship — altogether. Where Aspinall, Robison and Hadiz converge, however, is their assertion, in one form or other, that the current system is now entrenched. The important processes that sum up “the question for Indonesia” are now related to one aspect or another of the internal politics of the ruling class. The possibility of new clashes between class forces is ruled out in the coming period, just as previous commentators ruled out any serious change in the previous system of rule under Suharto. Here their assessment is based on a snapshot of the state of the mass movement and mass action activity, devoid of any framework for analysing its own processes or its relationship with the elite — as they have created none.<sup>2</sup>

Their approach perhaps can be convincing for some, given the fact that the mass action activity, the mass movement, not only did not come to power but was demobilised after 1998 and had not yet revived when they were writing in the early part of the first decade of the millennium. In fact, it still has not revived. My argument has been *that it has been the crisis and resolution of mass action political mobilisation that has been the determining factor in the major turning points in the political history of the period, determining the key features of the next period*. This is not in the sense that the mass movement determines events simply through the assertion of its own influence or power over any course of developments in order to get what it wants. Whether, in any particular case, mass action by the popular classes in support of their demands is defeated or not, is not the question. The

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<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> This is true, I think, of the dominant discourse in Aspinall. However, as I pointed out in the Introduction, Aspinall’s work sometimes contains contradictory asides, such as his remark, which he does not at all elaborate upon, that “tentative steps” have been taken in the direction of replacing the “old New Order authoritarian coalition” but that the “lower class groups would have to engage in many future struggles”.

issue is rather what kind of threat (crisis) it created and what kind of resolution did it force on the ruling classes, given the conditions at the time, and therefore what new terrain was created which would set the key features for the next period of class struggle politics. However, this analytical approach cannot be the basis for avoiding addressing the question, in any given context, of why the resolution takes the form of a demobilisation rather than an escalation of mobilisation (which in its final form is an insurrection and seizure of power). Robison and Hadiz as well as Aspinall deal with this aspect in a rather cavalier way. Aspinall makes his rather banal general comment “lower class groups would have to engage in many future struggles”. Indeed. Robison and Hadiz similarly assert that ““civil society” was so disorganised that it could not “provide the impulse” for any radical or social democratic project<sup>3</sup> and that a “radical agenda was to be absent in the struggles that would shape the contours of Indonesia’s new democracy.”<sup>4</sup> Neither summing up helps us understand the dynamics of the demobilisation and therefore does not help understand the nature of any new elite-mass matrix, of any new balance of forces between Indonesia’s capitalist class and the country’s popular classes.

#### **Dependent reorganisation: the consequence of ideological narrowness**

It should be emphasised here that while the resolution of this crisis did not take the form of an insurrection and seizure of power by the mobilised class forces, it did result in the introduction of a substantial range of reforms that have expanded democratic space. Furthermore, the 10 years of mass action politics prior to 1998, and this mode of struggle’s legitimisation through its role in the removal of authoritarianism, has brought about a change in political culture, manifested in the continuation of widespread street protest and other forms of popular protest actions. This is documented and analysed in Chapter 7.

The “defeat” experienced by the movement was manifested in a *relative* demobilisation, in turn manifested in the inability of widespread small-scale protest to find the mechanisms for escalation on a national scale. This is a qualitatively different phenomenon than the real defeat suffered by the mass action movement in 1965.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I analyse how at the peak of a mobilisation, in 1998 and 2001, demobilisation occurred as the result of the abandonment by elements from the elite of an alliance that was mobilising huge numbers from the popular classes. This happened when Amien Rais, Abdurrahman

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<sup>3</sup> Hadiz and Robison, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 182.

Wahid and Megawati Sukarnoputri rejected the idea of a people's committee government in November 1998. It happened again in June 2001 with the inconsistent attitude of Abdurrahman Wahid towards the anti-GOLKAR mobilisations. This raises the question of why the abandonment of these alliances by the elite politicians resulted in such rapid de-escalation of the mass movement. The answer to the question is quickly found as soon as we reflect upon the context: the demand for the seizure of power through the vehicle of the mobilised masses. At these two points — 1998 and 2001 — the movement, both at leadership<sup>5</sup> and mass level, was demanding something — i.e. a revolutionary (extra-constitutional) seizure of power when it could not yet envisage itself seizing that power. The PRD, and perhaps some other radical elements, envisaged a people's committee as coming out of the mass movement itself. However, the majority of the movement, which had exploded onto the scene during the very brief period of January-May, saw such a committee or presidium as comprising other forces, i.e. those in alliance with it at the time but *outside* the movement.

An ironic contradiction of the movement was that it achieved its pressing, immediate aim of ending dictatorship so rapidly. During the period when it was at its highest and involving the largest number of people, it narrowed politically to a mass protest movement against Suharto. During this period, the possibilities diminished to create in a mature and developed manner the range of activities that Soekarno set out that distinguished *aksa massal* (massive actions) from *aksi massa* (mass actions): “forming associations, writing articles, running courses, organising mass meetings, holding demonstrations”. Nor were the mass actions being “organised and led by the revolutionary mass organisations” as the COMINTERN prescribed (as quoted in the Introduction). The mass action movement, in its rapid growth, had taken on the overall characteristic of a spontaneous mass push for the end of dictatorship. While this included “holding demonstrations” — indeed this was the main form of activity — there were fewer and fewer organised mass meetings, courses and writing of articles coming from within the movement. This was especially true of the kind of activity that retained the more radical ideological perspective, reflected in the call for people's committees based on the forces directly involved in the mass mobilisation against the dictatorship, as distinct from the presidium of elite opposition figures. This shrunk to a small minority, with the shallower or narrower ideological perspective focussed on the simple removal of the dictatorship also exerting influence within radical circles as well.

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<sup>5</sup> Here I am referring to the majority of the leadership. By November 1998, groups like the PRD were a minority.

The dominance of the presidium perspective over the people's committee perspective, which flowed from the speed of growth of the movement and the massive influx of newly active people, explains the speed too of the de-escalation after each betrayal of mobilisational politics by elite figures, in 1998 and 2001. This de-escalation, however, was not followed by or accompanied by suppression, as in 1965. The collapse of the mobilisation escalation in November 1998 did not end mass action politics or return Indonesia to a floating mass situation. As the material in Chapter 7 showed, mass protest activity continued, and was even able to reach a massive and combative state again, in February 2001.

2001 marked the end of a phase where a platform for reaching out to a nation-wide audience to advocate mass mobilisation behind popular demands could be created through an alliance with elite figures.<sup>6</sup> This reinforced the pattern of site-of-grievance social protests characterised by an absence of any large-scale political mobilisations, which has continued until 2009. There was no political leadership with the profile and authority to call such mobilisations, as there had been during the de facto alliances between the PRD and Megawati in 1996, the student movement-Megawati-Amien Rais-Wahid combination in 1998 and the PRD-*reformasi* NGOs-Wahid alliance in 2001.

The reorganisation of the popular classes through *aksi* following the floating mass period continues in fragmented and dispersed form despite the de-escalation of national mobilisations, as the data in Chapter 7 illustrate. The lack of an ideological perspective going beyond removal of dictatorship creates a *tendency* for the *aksi massa* to become, in Soekarno's formulation, simply an *aksi massa*. However, even in the latter period of rapid growth (November 1997–May 1998), the mass action activity still did retain an ideological perspective, even if very narrow. The narrowness created a *tendency* towards moving away from having a fully fledged *aksi massa* character. In fact, the history outlined in this thesis, from Chapter 2 through to Chapter 7, records the struggle of the movement towards a fully fledged *aksi massa* movement. Such movements cannot drop fully developed from the sky.<sup>7</sup> The inability to view the emergence of mass action politics in the late 1980s and through the 1990s as a process which must necessarily be passed through (whatever the specific features of

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<sup>6</sup> The PRD tried one more attempt at a *strategi atas* based on an alliance with dissident elements of the elite, when they participated in the Koalisi Nasional (KN), whose other prominent components were Eros Jarot and Rachmawati Sukarnoputri. However, this initiative also failed. Neither Jarot nor Rachmawati had been able to establish a level of authority to mobilise large numbers of masses around their program.

<sup>7</sup> This is why Aspinall's comment: "lower class groups would have to engage in many future struggles" is both true and banal. The development of any *aksi massa* movement is a process involving many struggles. The question is to identify the analytical framework that allows us to see these struggles, locate them in broader processes and assess what trends are unfolding.

the process) also leads Robison and Hadiz to categorical assertions which are in fact empirically incorrect. They write, as I quoted in Chapter 1: a “radical agenda was to be absent in the struggles that would shape the contours of Indonesia’s new democracy”.<sup>8</sup> The fact that in the course of the emergence and development of the mass movement a “radical agenda” — i.e. an agenda going beyond ending authoritarianism or dictatorship — was not *hegemonic* is not at all the same as saying it was “absent in the struggles” that forced out the dictatorship. The various programs and propaganda by the PRD as described in this thesis, for example, indicate that such radical agendas were present. To mix up being “absent” with not being hegemonic not only is a major empirical error but also results in the closing off of investigation of possible future trends, insisting that the new pattern of politics has become entrenched and finished.

### **Frameworks for analysing trends: future research**

Analysing the demobilisation in this way draws our attention to some specific questions. If the de-escalation (manifested in the fragmented state of the activity) is due to loss of a national platform connected to the end of potential alliances with elite figures, then the question arises: are there any processes underway that might either (a) create a new kind of platform, i.e. one not dependent on dissidents from within the elite or (b) create a situation where cleavages re-emerge within the elite where some elements would be compelled again to acquiesce in mass mobilisation being used to attack another section of the elite?

### **Relationship between mobilisation popular politics and ideological life**

In Chapter 2, I outlined the policies of the counter-revolution that suppressed mass action activity as well as the ideological life of the popular classes. This thesis has concentrated on documenting and analysing the rise of mass action politics and not on developments in the arena of political thinking and ideological life. Partially this is because a vigorous ideological life was not a key feature of the movement during the 1990s, at least not across the movement as a whole. *Aksi* — mobilisation — was the centre and the framework for the movement. The movement sustained no substantial progressive press. The closest to this was *Pembebasan*, which was never able to sustain regularity and never got beyond a monthly when it was regular. The magazine *Progres*, published in the early 1990s, carried more information and debate but was also unable to sustain itself. While *aksi* became fragmented as a manifestation of de-escalation after 1998, ideological life remained fragmented and sporadic throughout the whole 1989-98 period. As I outlined in Chapter 4, this was primarily a result of the PRD — as the primary new initiating agency — prioritising overcoming the floating mass

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<sup>8</sup> Robison and Hadiz, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

passivity through advocating *aksi*. This has coloured the whole process, at least up until 2008. The movement also produced no books or booklets which became handbooks or major discussion texts.<sup>9</sup>

There is a connection between the weakness of ideological life and the strength of any trend for the movement to develop a platform independent of alliances with dissident elements in the elite. The issue here is not whether or not an alliance with dissident elements of the elite should be pursued; nor is it the argument that such an alliance creates dependence. The dependence flows from the ideological weakness in the consciousness that dominates in the movement, which can only be overcome through systematic political education, propaganda and agitation. There is a relationship between how any movement based on mobilisational politics will develop and the depth and maturity of ideological life. Mass action — *aksi massa* — cannot achieve a final escape from tending back to *aksi massal* without an ideological perspective. A movement cannot go beyond achieving a change — no matter how dramatic — in the sphere of political infrastructure, such as a change of rule (by the same class) from dictatorship to electoral parliamentary rule, to a change in social structure without being guided by a suitable ideological perspective. There can be no revolutionary movement without revolutionary theory.

Having noted that a radical agenda was present, but not hegemonic, a key question for investigation, especially for the period after 2001, is whether or not there have been developments in the sphere of the mass action groups' ideological life whereby this aspect is being strengthened. Initial research undertaken during the course of research for this thesis has already identified a number of new initiatives. Further research and analysis of these developments need to be the topic of a supplementary study continuing the work of this thesis. Suffice it to say in the context of these conclusions that there has been a significant growth in the number of institutions active in the area of radical ideological work, either integrating this work with mass action activity or parallel with it. This ideological activity still represents a minority within the movement as a whole, but is many times larger now than that which was happening in the 1990s. A reflection of its early stage of development is that the movement is still not sustaining any kind of regular newspaper, even of a simple kind.

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<sup>9</sup> The major "texts" of this whole period, from the mass movement's perspective, are without doubt the novels and writings of Pramoedya Ananta Toer. See my chapter "Memory" in *Unfinished Nation*. However, despite the impact of these works on reorienting some student activists towards the mass action politics through the novels' depiction of the rise of Sarekat Dagang Islam, even after 20 years the movement itself has produced no work analysing, critiquing or explaining Pramoedya's ideas. Interestingly, the central role of the newspaper in Pramoedya's story the inspiring campaigning journalist, Tirto Adhisuryo, did not in turn inspire thinking that a newspaper should play a central role in the new movement.

In order to illustrate this activity, simply pointing to it as a significant phenomenon, I list below a few of the new institutions now operating. Developing a better understanding of the activities of these groups should be a major research task. I am including mostly those with easily accessible websites:

- Perhimpunan Rakyat Pekerja
- Komite Politik Rakyat Miskin – Partai Rakyat Demokratik
- Pusat Perjuangan Indonesia
- Front Perjuangan Rakyat
- Resist Books
- Kommunitas Bambu
- Praxis
- Jurnal Bersatu
- Aliansi Buruh Menggugat
- Rumah Kiri.<sup>10</sup>

A crucial question that would also need to be investigated is whether there are any processes underway towards full or partial unification of these initiatives, as this will be significant in any process of building a sufficiently strong centre to achieve ideological independence. Again early research indicates that there have been new experiences in this arena, such as the development of a socialist-oriented union alliance, Aliansi Buruh Menggugat, the publication of the journal *Jurnal Bersatu*<sup>11</sup> and the organisation of protest actions in May 2008 under the banner of the Front Pembebasan Nasional (National Liberation Front - FPN).<sup>12</sup> It would be very important also to investigate whether other processes are developing in a less visible way, either at a national or the

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<sup>10</sup> For websites, see Bibliography.

<sup>11</sup> As of April 2009, *Jurnal Bersatu*, which publishes analytical material, has come out three times. See: <http://jurnalbersatu.wordpress.com/>

<sup>12</sup> For some notes on the May 2008 FPN actions see Max Lane, [http://blogs.usyd.edu.au/maxlaneintlasi/2008/06/june\\_1\\_fpn\\_protest\\_at\\_presiden.html](http://blogs.usyd.edu.au/maxlaneintlasi/2008/06/june_1_fpn_protest_at_presiden.html)

provincial level.<sup>13</sup> These may be in the form of new parties,<sup>14</sup> more unified mass action activity, even if still temporary, or growth in mobilisational organisations relating to more immediate economic demands (labour unions, farmer unions).

The new development represented by these processes is the emergence of initiatives based on an ideological approach going beyond opposition to authoritarianism. The mapping of the ideological content of these new initiatives is the work of a separate study. However, it can already be easily identified that all the new initiatives adopt one kind or other of a Marxist socialist perspective.<sup>15</sup>

### **Relationship between mobilisational politics, ideological life and nation creation**

It has not been a central thrust of this thesis to discuss the relationship between the development of mass action politics and the nation creation process. However, this issue was raised as part of the critique of the works of Herb Feith. It is worth making a few further comments in this conclusion in the light of some of the material discussed in the course of the thesis. A deeper analysis will require another in-depth study.

One aspect that can be identified for discussion flows from a comparison of the crisis (and its resolution) created by the escalation and radicalisation of mass action politics in the 1960s with the crisis (and its resolution) in 1998. As pointed out in Chapter 2, the conflict that emerged during the 1950s and 1960s was not simply over what form of government should prevail in Indonesia but what kind of *nation* — *and therefore what kind of economy and culture* <sup>16</sup> — Indonesia should become. In the 1990s, even though groups like the PRD had a more radical agenda, the hegemonic

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<sup>13</sup> The emergence of a front called the Front Perjuangan Rakyat (People's Struggle Front - FPR) seems to be a separate process to that of Aliansi Buruh Menggugat, FPN or *Jurnal Bersatu*, which all overlap. Sources indicate that the FPR is the initiative of a semi-secret organisation, the Liga Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist League - LKI), which has links with or is inspired by the example of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Initial research does also point to separate (though sometimes overlapping) alliance and coalition processes at the provincial level.

<sup>14</sup> The first talks recently started between PRP, KPRM-PRD and other groups around the issue of uniting in a new party. (Personal communication from activist in attendance, May 9, 2009.)

<sup>15</sup> See for examples the interviews with representatives of 14 organisations published in the first issue of *Jurnal Bersatu*. These interviews are also available translated into English at: [http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/focus/jurnalbersatu\\_10yearsafterthefallofsuharto\\_may2008.htm](http://www.asia-pacific-solidarity.net/focus/jurnalbersatu_10yearsafterthefallofsuharto_may2008.htm) The PRP, PPI and KPRM-PRD all explicitly advocate a socialist perspective.

<sup>16</sup> The definition I have used for nation, i.e. a stable community with a common language, economy and culture, subsumes the idea of the social structure.



consciousness, especially during its last months of rapid expansion, was focussed on changing the form of government, away from a dictatorship and towards something “democratic”.<sup>17</sup> The growth of support for the Soekarno-PKI alliance primarily reflected a support for their ideas, which were summed up in the formulation “socialism a la Indonesia”. This difference also explains the different kinds of resolution to the crisis created by the mass action escalations. The 1960s crisis, posing as it did the *potential* for social revolution, required mass suppression and ideoligicide: a clear victory for one *class* or another. The 1998 crisis was a threat to the political infrastructure of the day, and the crisis was resolved with concessions by one class to the others. (For more concluding remarks on the class question, see below.) The Indonesian proletariat, semi-proletariat, pauperised petty bourgeoisie (including poor small peasants) are now relatively free to organise independently (of the bourgeoisie) — something that was impossible during the floating mass period.

This difference — a crisis threatening change to the social structure as compared to a crisis threatening the form of rule — not only called forth different resolutions, but also has consequences for the national question. In the 1950s and 1960s, the driving force behind the conflict that developed was the necessity for an answer to the question: what kind of Indonesia? The answer to this question was necessary for all classes for any kind of economic and social development strategy to be implemented. The question existed and demanded an immediate answer as a result of the fact that the Indonesian nation was still in the process of formation — using the definition of nation that I quoted in the Introduction and Chapter 1. The resolution of the crisis through *suppression* of mass action, the memory of the historical experience of mass action and of free ideological life brought to an end any and all substantial struggle over the answer to the question: what kind of Indonesia? However, this answer (an authoritarian, capitalist Indonesia) was not imposed through adoption by the bulk of the population. This kind of resolution had the effect of removing from political life, *especially at the mass level*, any conception of solutions to social, economic or cultural problems being nationwide mobilisation of resources and energies. The demise of a “solidarity-maker” force — which was always more than just “making solidarity” — at the hands of “administrators”, whose administrative outlook required the suppression of mass action as a hindrance, helped put the whole nation creation process at stake.

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<sup>17</sup> I use the formulation “something ‘democratic’” as most of the ideas about where a change away from dictatorship should go was posed in the negatives: “end *dwi fungsi*” for the armed forces; “repeal the repressive political laws”. Even though this was the case, the shift under Habibie to deciding on a parliamentary electoral democracy, with all the basic formal freedoms (except the freedom to advocate communism or separatism), was very rapid, in fact almost immediate.

As I noted above, the exploration of this assertion requires a separate study to elaborate it. However, I think it can be argued that another aspect of the de-escalation and fragmentation, and the process (struggle)<sup>18</sup> to reverse and overcome this, relates to the rewinning of a stronger sense of nation, especially at the mass level. The escalation of mass action from May 1997 until May 1998 definitely took on a national scale, with actions around the same demands occurring from Aceh to Papua. During this period, the demands related to issues at the heart of national politics: who would rule over Indonesia and how would they rule (i.e. form of government). The May and November 1998 mobilisations in Jakarta were national in character, in that they focussed national political struggle. The outcomes of those Jakarta mobilisations had consequences for national politics. The demobilisation that took place in November 1998 was not simply a shift from large to small but a shift from national to site of grievance (whether defined geographically, in relation to social sector or to a specific issue). Even the 2001 mobilisations in Surabaya represented a national political phenomenon — its national effectiveness, although struggled over in the form of to what extent the East Java mobilisations would be extended to Jakarta and other areas of the country.

This aspect of the national question — i.e. how organisation for mobilisation plays a role in the formation of a nation — is also reflected in the struggle for national organisation of new mass action-oriented organisations based among the popular classes. This too will necessarily be the object of further study. Unification, partial or total, of the new initiatives in building such organisations or in developing theoretical and ideological approaches not only have the aspect of unity overcoming political and ideological differences but also of extending organisation in different social sectors or around different issues to combining these activities within the framework of struggles for different national policy solutions. It also ready possible to identify new multi-sectoral formations that have come into being since around 2000.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, whether within or across sectors, organising for mobilisation since 1998 has also been characterised by a struggle to unite local organisations into regional and then national organisations. This process is very connected to initiatives in the ideological field. As in the 1950s, national organisation may develop as ideologies develop representing class interests across the nation.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Conceptually, choosing the word “process” over “struggle” relates to the emphasis one wishes to give to “agency”. All struggles are a process; but not all processes unfold as a result of the initiatives and activities of a conscious agency.

<sup>19</sup> The PRD pioneered multi-sectoral organising in the 1990s. Now the Pusat Perjuangan Indonesia and the Front Perjuangan Rakyat are also experimenting in this.

<sup>20</sup> In the sphere of those oriented to mass action politics among the popular classes, different socialist perspectives appear to be the ideological perspectives that are framing this process. Among

## On class

In the Introduction, I quoted Marx about the collisions between classes (bourgeoisie and proletariat) and how these collisions can also turn into “occasional revolts” or “riots”. Marx was, on that particular occasion, talking about clashes that might be organised through trade unions. The organising of these “collisions” between different class interests has, however, taken on many different forms in different places and different times. In Indonesia, since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the forms have been many and varied. The questions being struggled over — while always ultimately reflecting a clash of class interests — have also been varied. In this thesis, the two crisis and resolution processes I have looked at (1965 and 1998) have involved different forms of organisation but the same basic political activity: mass action. In both cases, the mass action has involved the mobilisation of the popular classes (proletarians, semi-proletarians and pauperised petty bourgeoisie), enabling thereby at certain points the *aksi massa* not only to be of the masses but also massive.

This thesis has not been the appropriate place to go into the specific political economy of all the processes involved, with the specific feature of the semi-proletariat and pauperised petty bourgeoisie being permanently much larger than the proletariat.<sup>21</sup> There is still much work that can be done to deepen an understanding of the relationships between these three sectors, both in terms of economic and political interactions. The way in which politically directed *aksi* have occurred concurrently with riots (*kerusuhan*) and the role of the huge spontaneous mobilisations of May 1997 and November 1998 that enveloped the more organised student contingents that I have described in the thesis are pointers to the importance of these relationships.

In the course of the last 60 years, not only the forms of organisation of mobilisation, but also the nature of the ideological perspectives driving the mobilisations has been different, as discussed above, and as described through the thesis. The fact that both of the crises I have analysed come out

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those opposed to or eschewing mass mobilisation politics, such as those operating in the sphere of electoral politics, there are also attempts to organise nationally along ideological lines. The clearest systematic attempt to do this in the period before 2009 has been by the Welfare and Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera) basing its appeal on a kind of modernist Islamic fundamentalism. However, the cultural narrowness of its appeal has meant that its efforts have not paid off. Since 2009, there are signs that there may be another ideology — authoritarian nationalist chauvinism — that could be deployed. The most active attempt at this in 2009 is by the Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Great Indonesia Movement - Gerindra), led by ex-General Prabowo Subianto.

<sup>21</sup> For an initial discussion of such political economy issues, see my “The Political Economy of *Aksi*” in *Unfinished Nation*.

of the mobilisation of the popular classes against a ruling class and its political elite and that the resolutions — either suppression or concessions — have been initiated by a dominant class aiming to end threats from below reinforce my argument that class struggle has been at the centre of the turning points in Indonesian history: 1965 and 1998. The course of developments between 1965 and 2001 was driven by the struggle to win the right to mobilise, the struggle to overthrow the floating mass method of rule. 1998 represented a major win for that struggle — though not complete, as the open struggle for socialism and revolution is still banned. However, the boundaries of political liberty have been extended enormously. Apart from the specific research agendas identified above, we may also ask the general question: under post-2001 conditions, what is or will be the content of the struggle between capital and exploited labour in Indonesia? In general terms, I think the answer will still be within the framework of the democratic revolution, i.e. the struggle to win full political liberty, with no limitations on what ideologies might be expounded. This will include a struggle over whether political forces, organised for mass action mobilisation and with radical ideologies, will be allowed to participate in electoral politics. Socio-economic grievances will fuel the discontent that will provide the energy for this clash, but the primary content will be the struggle for political liberty. The search for a clear ideological perspective within the mass action sphere of political activity will become a focus of increased struggle within that sphere.

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX 1

### Manifesto of the People's Democratic Party

[This manifesto was issued on July 22, 1996 at a ceremony to announce the formation of the Peoples Democratic Party. There is also a longer 36 page Manifesto.]

There is no democracy in Indonesia. Democracy, meaning people's sovereignty, should be the basic principle and foundation for the formation of any state. As long as this sovereignty has not been given its rightful place in the political, economic and cultural life of a nation and people, history will continue to throw up resistance.

The state authority during the 30 years of Suharto, has become an institution which shackles and obstructs the opportunity for the development of popular participation in the process of determining social and political life. Executive power has become enlarged, is oppressive, uncontrollable and overrides the authority of the legislature and the judiciary.

#### Oppression under the New Order

The history of the Indonesian nation is actually the history of a people's struggle, a struggle famous for its tenacity in resisting all forms of exploitation and oppression with the aim of achieving humanism and peace. However, the coming to power of the New Order regime in 1965 has meant backward steps for Indonesian society, when compared to Indonesian political life in the period of 1950-1959. Basic rights of popular participation have been shackled, limited and cut off by the implementation of the 5 political laws and the dual function of the military (ABRI). The aim of independence, that is freedom to choose, to supervise and to determine the course of the political life of a country, has moved further and further away from everyday political life. Systematically, the authorities of the New Order regime, dominate the political arena through brutal, cruel and unconstitutional methods. They do not value differences of opinion, criticism and do not want to hear the people's aspirations.

The rise of the people's resistance - that is of civilians, is greeted with intimidation, terror, arrests, jailing, bullets and even with slaughter. Newspapers, magazines, books and other tools of education which are critical and dare to differ from the point of view of the authorities are banned and closed down. Journalists who do not favour one-sided reporting of the government's point of view are sent to jail. The working class who are economically oppressed, are intimidated, terrorised and even killed. Peasants find it increasingly difficult to keep their land and defend their rights, as they are confronted by the military when they resist capitalist encroachment into their

land. All these authoritarian strategies are logically employed, implemented, enacted and maintained with one aim in mind, to ensure the stability of capital accumulation.

### Economic injustice

Till now, we have witnessed the widening of the gulf between the rich few and the poor majority. Workers are promoted by the Suharto dictatorship and sold cheaply to invite investment and capital accumulation for the rich. Indonesia's economic growth of more than 6% per annum is only enjoyed by a small minority group. Economic assets which are vital for the quality of life of the people are privatised with concessions traded amongst Suharto's cronies and their families. Monopolies and oligopolies that exploit the people are protected and facilitated by the powers that be. Economic hardship increases when the government is filled with corrupt people who are in collusion with bureaucrats working for private interests and their respective business groups. Imperialist organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund continue to prop up its growth by pouring in millions in the form of foreign loans. As a result, Indonesia's foreign debt has now reached US\$10 billion. This means that we occupy the third highest rung on the foreign debt ladder, beneath Brazil and Mexico.

Indonesian economic development, which benefits the few owners of capital and exploitation by foreign investors in Indonesia, have resulted in a society which has become more brutal and further away from the aim of the people of reaching prosperity and justice.

### The people resist

After thirty years, eight months and 22 days of the New Order government, the Indonesian people can no longer accept and tolerate this government, economically, politically or socially. There are many examples that prove this: workers are striking in many industrial estates, peasants are actively resisting eviction, students are demonstrating against militarism, intellectuals resist attempts to stifle academic freedom, indigenous people in Kalimantan and West Papua are fighting back against Jakarta's exploitation. In East Timor, the Maubere people have never stopped fighting against the military invasion and occupation by the New Order. Forms of resistance taken up by the people continue to increase - from mass actions, where many sectors of the population work together, occupying Parliament, invading police and military headquarters, confronting the military to mass production of leaflets. The essence is this: popular dissatisfaction is everywhere, the people are no longer content to live under the New Order regime. The socio-economic and political system now that is safeguarded by the regime has proven to be unable to articulate, let alone resolve the concrete problem faced by the people.

The current system is bankrupt. This is the time for the 5 political laws to be repealed and the time for the military, currently sheltering under the dual function of ABRI doctrine, to return to the barracks.

### Political reforms

The package of 5 political laws is the government's justification for limiting the people's rights to political participation. The role of political parties as a channel for the people to become involved in politics, as the birthplace of popular sovereignty, needs to be established immediately. Fair and democratic elections, those which do not limit the participation and the political aspirations of people as given rights in a modern civil society, have never existed. The structure of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament reflect the tactics used by the regime to maintain power. Those belonging to cliques and the military have the special privileges of being appointed by Suharto and have never had to subject themselves to elections. Laws governing mass organisations do not allow them to have political affiliations and their formation is often obstructed. Lastly, laws governing referenda are such that they have never been enacted to decide important questions, for example, the appropriateness of the 1945 Constitution given the changing socio-economic and political world context. Instead the constitution has become something sacred. People who are sovereign are people who can learn about and have the opportunity and the ability to understand their sovereignty and can understand their ability to engage in politics. If we are to achieve these aims, there is no alternative but to repeal the 5 political laws of 1985.

The military encroaches on civil life. In a modern society civilians who don't carry weapons should have absolute control over the military, turning the military into the 'giant mute'. (to borrow the French term *La Grande Muette*). Not one word on power or politics should be communicated through the barrel of a gun. Therefore, the people have to demand the repeal of the Dual Function of the ABRI doctrine.

The subordination of the New Order regime to the world capitalist system means that the Suharto government has been unable to escape from international scrutiny over the oppression which exists in this country. The fall of authoritarian regimes in Latin America, Africa and Asia has taught the regime and the democratic movement that no authoritarian power can last forever. Everything has its end, just as it has its beginning.

### Oppose neo-colonialism: self-determination for East Timor

Foreign economic policies should have an anti-neocolonial character, as opposed to the policies of agreements, such as those embodied in NAFTA, APEC and AFTA. International must abide by the principles of peace and humanism. For that reason, the end of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor has to be part of our political program, not merely of us extending solidarity, but of fighting alongside them for their right to determine their own destiny and to be independent. The Indonesian people's democratic struggle will not be complete and genuine unless it joins with the Maubere people's demand for independence. PRD opposes national chauvinism and considers internationalist links as the mainstay of the people's struggle. The integrated nature of global capitalist power, with the support of governments who have no respect for democracy necessitates an international resistance against it. For that reason, PRD will actively support all international forums and actions which are of a grassroots character and are opposed to oppression.



### The way forward

Efforts to resist the New Order's authoritarian nature cannot be separated from the program of the PRD. As a political party, we feel we have the right and the obligation to participate in the political process to determine social and political life. The opposition to popular participation cannot be allowed to continue. In the present conditions, people's sovereignty in this system does not need legal and formal recognition from the authorities, when they don't even value the active participation of people in scrutinising and criticising it. The problems in Indonesia that are brought on by capitalism need to be resolved. This has to come about through wider involvement of the people, through democratic participation. The many forces that are capable of bringing about political improvement need to unite their programs and activities immediately to form a popular democratic government based on the grassroots.

A government that is democratic and people-oriented needs to have a clear vision for the future for the Indonesian people. It needs to have a clear vision of the way out of the economic, social and political problems we have, problems which have existed for 30 years, eight months and twenty days. To achieve clarity in direction towards a democratic society, we need to seek the forces from the people, who have the strength to push towards this goal. Because of this, questions of strategy and tactics need to be formulated based on the potential existing inside the people themselves. Of all the potential present, we see the resistance put up by workers as the most significant potential force that will be harnessed and organised into the democratic struggle. Their increasing numbers, their continuing fightback and their strategic position in the capitalist system of the New Order will make the working class a stronghold for democracy now and in the future. The second strength we see is that of students and intellectuals. This social layer have become the pioneers in the political resistance against the New Order. Their ideological, organisational and political ability are important contributions to the democratic struggle. The adventurism of the students' movement and the resulting loss of power of organised students, can only be avoided if it is linked in with the people's democratic struggle as a whole. The third proven force that is still continuing to develop is the urban poor. Their increasing numbers and marginalised state as a result of the attractiveness of the city and the uneven development between city and countryside form the basis of the urban masses.

In actions supporting Megawati, we can see how this sector militantly and tenaciously defended their rights. The last sector that is also important is the peasant sector. Brutal capitalism has impoverished them and robbed them of their land which is their means of subsistence. It is not surprising that it is this sector, who are spread throughout Indonesia in large numbers, which will be an important supporting force in the democratic movement.

To unify and mobilise the existing democratic forces, a common platform is necessary, one from which we can act in unity. It is not enough for unity in action to be

represented by a common program and method, it needs to also have the ability to decipher the political situation in order to force the widening of popular participation. For the sake of that momentum, we need to respond to and anticipate (the effects of) the general elections in 1997. The elections will be a time when mass consciousness will be focused on politics, a time featuring mass mobilisations by the contestants. The democratic movement must monitor this mass consciousness, so that it can intervene and contribute towards the raising of people's awareness about the political motives of the New Order. We should not isolate ourselves from the consciousness of the masses, much less to look down upon it. We have an opportunity to take advantage of the coming elections. A tool for organising and broadening the opposition networks and taking advantage of the elections, is through the formation of KIPP (independent election monitoring committee).

KIPP is intended not only for monitoring the elections but to assist in raising the consciousness of the people around their daily problems. KIPP has already become popular. Because of that, we expect that KIPP can break in breaking the illusions of the masses and can be used to campaign to educate and mobilise the people to say that the issue of elections is related to the issue of people's sovereignty. This sovereignty will always be related to the five political laws of 1985 and dual function of ABRI. That is where KIPP should be anchored. KIPP should not just be a concept merely for the monitoring of the election process from voter registration to vote counting. Instead, it should monitor how far is popular sovereignty being taken into account in the election in order to assess the legitimacy of the election.

#### United front

The most important and urgent step that must be taken is to create a united front based on a common platform to reach strategic aims ultimately designed to achieve popular sovereignty. These strategic aims would include the repeal of the 5 political laws and the dual function of ABRI. This front must have its roots deeply in the masses or it cannot exist and will never grow strong. Because of this, the type of organisations inside a front must be at the level of political parties or mass organisations. A front for struggle that is serious and genuine must have programs, tactics and strategies and slogans that are based in the masses. A front is a body to mobilise the masses, not a vehicle for campaigning on political issues. Previously we had not realised the meaning of 'political front' and could not differentiate between an 'action committee' and a 'political front'. In future, we need to build a democratic political front and this needs to be done as soon as possible.

There is no point maintaining the existence of an organisation if it cannot understand and resolve the strategic issues under the New Order. PRD considers that a front that is structurally supported by the masses needs to be built. As long as these mass 'pockets' have not been mobilised into the democratic struggle, this front will be incapable of confronting the militaristic and domineering power of the New Order. With all the problems of Indonesian society we have looked at above, we should also be able to envisage and articulate what a future democratic society might look like. PRD considers that it is more important to come up with political solutions to ease the

way towards economic solutions for the problems of an Indonesia that has been exploited in a wholesale manner under capitalism. PRD sees that it is important in the future to build a modern civil society that respects popular sovereignty and institutionalises democratic practices with their own legislative, executive and judicial structures.). The structures of true democracy must be subservient to the sovereignty of the people. For that reason, a popular democratic coalition government must be created for the future, in order to channel the aspirations of the people. This channelling of aspirations needs to be able to respect various ideologies and their respective methods without military intervention.

The development of a modern civil society in Indonesia that is based on popular sovereignty will depend on how we build a democratic movement now. Strategy and tactics need to be formulated now with the concrete state of the people in mind. Because of that, PRD believes and is confident that the organising of the masses is the only way to bring about popular sovereignty. The founding of the PRD is one manifestation of and an answer to the dysfunction of extra parliamentary institutions. Its formation also aims to provide a clear goal for the people's struggle, towards a multiparty and peace-loving popular democratic society.

Jakarta, 22 July 1996

## APPENDIX 2:

### PRD Field Reports

(These translations were circulated by email in 1997. Electronic versions in my possession.)

*[In order to provide an idea of the PPP day street mobilisations and leafleting interventions, the following accounts provided by activists at a major mobilisations are useful. The sites of the activity are in proletarian residential parts of Jakarta.]*

#### Field report 1: The Mega-Star-the People campaign of May 14, 1997

02.00 Fifty military come to activist house in Tangerang to intimidate activists planning a mobilisation later that day in their area. The Tangerang mobilisation is aborted.

10.55 Leaflets calling for a mass mobilisation are distributed in Mampang area of Jakarta. At 11.00 nine more activists start distribution in South Jakarta starting from Pasar Minggu area. No signs at this stage that large mass gatherings would eventuate.

The general content of the leaflets were:

1. A call to unite against Suharto.
2. Rejection of the dual role of the military.
3. Rejection of the five repressive political laws.
4. Opposition to corruption, monopoly and collusion.
5. A demand to investigate the wealth of officials and their families.

11.35 Three activists arrive at Jambul intersection (Dewi Sartika, Kalibata and Cililitan) and begin to distribute leaflets. While not yet very large, people begin to gather in the gangways.

12.00 Four activists from Bogor arrive in the Otista Cawang district. Others from Bogor still not arrived yet.

12.10 A report from an activist at Dewi Sartika street, outside Suara Pembaruan offices, that the masses have already began to gather and that leaflet distribution is becoming more intensive.

It is reported that all leaflets have been distributed in the Cawang, Dewi Sartika and Casablanca area.

12.16 One group arrives from South Jakarta in Kampung Melayu area, and others head for Klender by truck. About 500 people line the streets from Otista to Mataram (Jatinegara

roundabout). Nearby at Nusantara Cinema about 300 gather while beating the beduk drum. Soldiers from Jakarta Metropolitan Military Command stand guard every 4-5 metres.

Anti-riot platoons also stationed in Kampung Melayu area. Some with video cameras.

12.35 No masses between Jatinegara and Gramedia. Two hundred people gather in a small group at the Medical Faculty, University of Indonesia.

More activists join in distributing leaflets at Kampung Melayu.

13.07 Masses fill these streets like ants in Dewi Sartika street. There is a total traffic jam. A motorbike convoy and march and rally of masses fill the streets stretching from Gang Budi to Cawang. Leaflets run out between Budi Asih and Suara Pembaruan offices.

13.10 Masses fill the streets like ants between Otista, Kampung Melayu right through to Jatinegara roundabout. Activists are deployed to Cawang to begin the rally.

13.54 Reports that masses overflowing in the streets along Warung Buncit, Pasar Minggu and Kalibata.

15.30 Thirty PPP activists begin the march by marching in the direction of Cawang. Other activists gather. The banner reads: The Mega-Star-the People Coalition for Democracy. The masses come together. The march heads off for Otista. At the Otista traffic lights (the intersection where Colts from Bekasi pass), PPP security and police attempt to stop the march. The masses demand to continue the rally. The masses expand rapidly along the march. On both sides of the streets local people greet the marchers enthusiastically. The march is followed by motor bikes, cars and trucks carrying supporters as well.

15.44 The marchers reach the BRI/Yusenter. Apparatus try to force the march to disband. The masses refuse and continue the journey.

Otista Street under mass control. Masses coming from Pasar Minggu and Kalibata stopped from entering Dewi Sartika. The same for those coming from Pancoran. They are forced to turn back and are directed towards the Indonesian Christian University.

The masses continue on filling the streets between Kampung Melayu and Jatinegara Intersection. The chant of "Mega-Star-the People" fills the air. Local people respond: the People are running amok! Watchers join in the march. The flooding in of people means that things are no longer under direction or being coordinated with any tightness. The flooding of the masses starts to block out the banners that have been unfolded.

16.30 The masses arrive at the roundabout where you head for Jatinegara Railway Station. The masses continue towards the railway line. Outside Army Headquarters they are blocked by military who force them to veer to the left. The masses try to break through the blockade. This lasts about five minutes. The masses start to throw whatever they get their hands on at the

military. Several people are beaten by the military. More and more military keep arriving. Masses on the bridge overhead also start throwing things at the military. More and more masses keep arriving. Some groups from the march turn around and are followed by the masses. But large numbers remain still trying to break through. The banners are shifted to the right lane of the road. The military follow masses who shift to the other side of the road.

The military keep pushing forward into the masses. The offensive tactics of the military succeed in forcing the masses to bring down the banners.

18.00 (Approx.) The masses disperse.

Notes:

1. The total numbers for those filling between Cawang-Dewi Sartika-Oto Iskandar (Otista)-Jatinegara-Matramana was approx. 500,000.
2. The total masses on the streets throughout Jakarta is estimated at 1.5 million.
3. Masses on the streets in earlier campaign activities were about 1 million (see *Terbit*, May 12, 1997)
4. 60,000 leaflets distributed.
5. Government radio (RRI) on 19.00 reports threats from election authority head, Singgih, and Armed Forces representative General Syarwal Hamid that they will take action against those infiltrating the campaign to cause the elections to fail and to lead it into another direction. This statement was made vis-a-vis the Mega-Star banners (which read the Mega-Star-the People Coalition for Democracy).

General Syarwal Hamid also commented on efforts via the internet to cause the elections to fail.

## **Field report 2: A chronology of riots in Otista and Kampung Melayu (May 20)**

12.30 Rain poured on the Cawang area and its surrounds. At this time, PPP masses were not yet visible in the areas of Otista, Dewi Sartika or Kalibata. The armed forces [ABRI] themselves had prepared three anti-personnel vehicles and wore stripped clothing and were fully armed, dispersed around the area of the Cawang toll road.

12.36 The rain continued to pour and the PPP masses in Kalibata, Dewi Sartika, Cawang and Otista were still not seen. There were no formations in the street.

13.00 The PPP masses were still not to be seen. The number of security personnel continued to increase and deployed on Jalan Otista and Dewi Sartika.

13.24 The PPP masses began gathering in the lanes (gang) along Kalibata and the Kampung Melayu bus terminal and in each lane there were around 10-30 people totaling around 600 people. Most of them wore clothing with PPP symbols such as T-shirts, hats and head bands. They also carried PPP flags.

The number of ABRI personnel trying to guard the lanes continued to increase. A striped truck with an orange roof at the Kalibata intersection, a black truck with an orange roof in front of the Suara Pembaruan office and in Cawang one more striped truck, military police and an anti-riot (Brimob) unit totaling 10. In Tebet [South Jakarta] in front of the Bank Republik Indonesia (BRI), there were already scores of Brimob on guard. In Gelanggang Remaja were two crowd control trucks. So far, no street mobilisations to be seen.

13.33 At this time, the gathering of the masses was becoming obvious. In each lane and for the length of Jl Otista thousands of PPP members gathered similar to Jl Ambon (near to the Kampung Melayu bus terminal).

Every 15 metres along the length of Jl Otista and Dewi Sartika was guarded by around 4-7 anti-riot soldiers. The tight security could also be found at the mouth of the lanes, banks and petrol stations. The masses became more enthusiastic especially when ranks of soldiers went past. They shouted at them and abused them. So far, the mass ranks were still unable to be seen.

13.46 The masses at Jl Dewi Sartika gathering in the lanes began to come together. As those in the different lanes each began to meet; they discussed among themselves what might occur. What was most obvious, the gathering occurred 150 metres from the Cawang bridge.

Meanwhile, around 300 metres before the Kampung Melayu bus terminal, a very large mass gathering reaching 2000 people started. They unfurled PPP flags, added to by banging on empty pans and chants of "One Star, Two Animal" ["One" referring to PPP being first on the ballot paper, "two" referring to Golkar - *ed.*].

The procession was still not visible, but all along Jl Otista flags and symbols were displayed by the masses in each lane. In a vehicle with a loud speaker, the police announced to the masses that this was not a campaign and parade day and because of this the masses were asked to return to their homes.

A gathering of masses which reached hundreds in front of the BRI. They also wore campaign clothing but did not shout or yell. A leaflet containing a photocopy from a report from the newspaper *Harian Terbit* was distributed from hand to hand. At that moment, a number of soldiers approached the PPP masses and asked them to remove their T-shirts. But the masses distanced themselves from them and went into the grounds of a cinema.

At Kalibata a similar incident occurred with PPP masses being asked to remove their T-shirts by ABRI soldiers. This incident occurred right at the Kalibata traffic lights. Because there were not many of them [PPP], they succeeded in stripping them. By this time around 1000 personnel from Brimob, military and military police had been deployed.

13.52 The masses in Cawang grew larger. They stood in lines for the length of the street. The masses which had earlier gathered in the entrances to the lanes joined the rows of people in each of the streets.

The total number of soldiers in the Cawang area reached 200 surrounding Cawang and blocking traffic going towards Otista or from Otista via Dewi Sartika. At Jl Otista, the largest gathering of masses was at Jl Mesjid Bendungan and reach 1500 people.

14.07 Three cars with PPP flags moved off to hold a parade. The Masses greeted them with shouts of "Viva Bintang". However they did not join in the parade because the soldier's security was extremely tight.

14.44 A section of the masses with the courage to join the parade were intercepted by soldiers in the Cawang area and blockaded towards the direction of the toll road and a section was escorted. Thousands of the masses were in ranks along the side of the road near the Cawang pedestrian overpass. Police and soldiers continued to surround them and the number of personnel continued to increase reaching a total of 300.

14.53 The masses gathered along the edge of Jl Dewi Sartika were forced back into the lanes and at the entrance to the lanes with scores of soldiers guarded them. Many of the lanes were barricaded with iron.

Lined up between Cawang and Tebet there were seven trucks full of soldiers and scores of military jeeps – some striped, others black – and fully armed.

Despite this, a section of the masses continued to gather on the edge of the streets while calling on their comrades by waving their hands to continue forward.

15.04 At Jalan H. Yahya and Jalan Otista (300 metres before the Kampung Malayu bus terminal) the masses totaling hundreds of people began shouting and yelling abusing at each group of soldiers which passed. Security was extremely tight up to the Kampung Malayu bus terminal.

15.12 A pickup full of PPP members with PPP campaign symbols began a parade. They shouted "One Star, Two Animal". They moved off in the direction of Cawang.

This march got an extraordinary reception from the masses, who since earlier in the afternoon had been standing and waiting. "Viva Bintang" reverberated again. Not caring about the soldiers gathered near them. The parade was not blocked by security personnel.

15.31 A stone fight occurred in the area of Jl Ambon. The masses, totaling tens of thousands, moved off by foot on the East side of Jl Otista. They pushed and surrounded the troops back who in turn pushed and surrounded them. A marine truck full of soldiers was trapped in the midst of the masses. The masses asked the troops in the truck to get down. Shouts of "Viva Bintang!" and "One Star, Two Animal!" reverberated everywhere. The ranks were actually only spearheaded by around 15 people. But because of their courage in front of the masses they followed. Unfortunately the masses had no leadership. They brutally attacked the troops with stones.



15.43 The troops began to lose patience. Viciously they attacked and beat those who were moving forward. They also fired tear gas twice. The masses appeared confused and ran into the lanes. According to an eye-witness around ten people were arrested and five PPP members wounded. At this time it is not known how many soldiers were victims of the masses' attack.

15.52 The masses were seen moving off toward the Kampung Melayu bus terminal. Indian file they walked on the edge of the road and a group went through the small lanes (behind the roads) and began to gather again.

The PPP masses on the move got an extraordinary reception from the people at the Kampung Melayu bus terminal. From the pedestrian overpass the people continued to cheer for the victory of PPP. "Viva PPP" reverberated and they got the "thumbs up" from the thousands of people who had witnessed the riot.

16.01 As time went by the gathering became larger and larger and began to wave flags and unfurl banners. Dan "Viva Bintang" continued to reverberate. At that time the masses in the area had already reached around 5000.

16.05 Another stone battle occurred with the military. Facing this, troops from a number of units (the largest were the marines and the army) fired their weapons. The masses were scattered again after hearing the gun shots as many as five times. Many of them immediately lay face down in the street.

16.30 Thousands again gathered on the West side of the Kampung Melayu bus terminal waving PPP flags, after being called by a number of their comrades they maintained themselves in front of the troops. In front of the troops they waved flags and shouted anti-Golkar slogans.

16.43 The stone war occurred again and a number of the soldiers were wounded. The soldiers with blooded faces were taunted and laughed at by the masses, most of all by those on the pedestrian overpass, who witnessed it clearly. Seeing this, the masses became even braver in confronting the soldiers and it became brutal as a number of soldiers at the front were punched.

The thousands of troops were in the area again dispersed the ranks of the masses by firing tear gas twice and ten times fired their weapons. The masses became disorientated and tried to save themselves.

16.48 By their comrades who were still maintaining themselves in front, the PPP masses and their sympathisers were asked not to be afraid and hold their ground – don't be frightened – to confront the security forces. "Don't be afraid" and "Come on, keep going forward" were shouted in the mist of the battle with the soldiers who were trying to quieten the masses. In the end, thousands of the masses returned to the streets and immediately confronted the

security forces. Flags continued to be waved, banners were unfurled and head bands continued to be worn.

At that time, eight marine trucks entered the area of the Kampung Melayu bus terminal and an army helicopter sounded a siren from the air.

16.50 The fight started again and gun shots were heard seven times. This time the masses were not scattered but again reentered the lanes. In the streets were scattered left behind sandals and shoes, and stones which had been thrown at the troops by the masses.

From the helicopter the soldiers warned the people to return to their homes and not disturb the flow of traffic.

17.04 The masses who had entered the lanes again emerged from the lane openings and continued to try and throw stones at the troops. They also set fire to Golkar flags and vehicles.

After that, the troops renewed their attack and ran over those people who did not want to step aside to the side of the road.

17.15 The masses continued to resist in the streets. Jalan Otista which had been closed a number of times was reopened by the soldiers and cars were allowed to pass. The intention of opening the road was to destroy the gathered masses who were still on the edge of the street.

*[At the time of writing this chronology the masses were still gathered at the edges of the roads not wanting to go, as a result the troops continued to guard the area.]*

### **APPENDIX 3:**

#### **Response to the slander by ABRI Social and Political Affairs Chief Syarwan Hamid**

*[After the military accused the PRD of organising the scores of demonstrations and riots that took place during the election period, the PRD issued the following statement. Response circulated in translation in 1997 by email.]*

**Response to the slander by ABRI Social and Political Affairs Chief Syarwan Hamid, that the People's Democratic Party (PRD) has masterminded the riots and unrest during the election campaign.**

- 7000 rupiah per day, lower prices!
- New party, new president!
- Boycott the elections!
- End the dual role of the Armed Forces!
- Repeal the five political laws!
- Referendum for the Maubere people!

We, the People's Democratic Party (PRD), are once again accused by the New Order regime of masterminding rioting and also of infiltrating the election campaign by pushing for the formation of a Mega-Star-the People Coalition. According to the New Order regime, the PRD has been systematically planning the replacement of the Suharto regime through the formation of a People's Democratic Coalition using the momentum of the elections. The New Order regime says that this is proved by the fact that leaflets have been distributed in Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang, Bandung, Medan, Lampung, Yogyakarta, Solo, Semarang, Purwokerto, Surabaya, Palu, Manado, and Ujung Pandang.

The PRD, whose leaders have been imprisoned by the New Order regime, wishes to respond to the statements by the regime that have been published in the mass media.

Firstly, we reject all accusations that we have masterminded the rioting that has occurred during the campaign. But we will show why the rioting has occurred. Secondly, we do not deny that we circulated leaflets calling for a boycott of the election and the formation of a Peoples Democratic Coalition and that we sent them to other opposition groups. Thirdly, we do not deny that we are planning the constitutional replacement of Suharto. Fourthly, we reject being identified as the organisational producers of the leaflet Mega-Star-the People Coalition that has been widely distributed in the election campaign. But we support the contents of that leaflet. Indeed we will show that the people do not reject the program presented in that leaflet.

As stated above, we do not deny that the PRD had circulated a letter calling for the 1997 Election Boycott and a call for opposition groups to form a People's Democratic Coalition and

for the replacement of Suharto as president through the momentum of the elections and the 1998 Plenary Session of the People's Consultative Assembly. This letter (No. 15/STA/KPP/A/III/1997 25 March, 1997) was sent to 15 pro-democracy figures in Indonesia. This was an open letter and so it was printed in large numbers in several major cities.

Why did we do this? As we all know, the elections are manipulated so that they are not an instrument for channelling the aspirations of the people. This is even more the case with the pushing aside of Megawati Sukarnoputri of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). There is no way that the elections will be a real "festival of democracy" as in the New Order's slogan.

For us the basic problem is the five Political Laws of 1985 and the dual role of the Armed Forces. This is what makes the elections such a cause for concern. These laws and regulations have opened wide the doors for criminal acts by those in power, while shutting tight the doors to democracy. The 1997 election offers no hope for improving the lives or of progressing democratisation. The 1997 elections are just a means for those in power to consolidate their position. It is as if they do not hear, do not see, do not know that society has changed and that the demands for democratisation grow louder and louder. The statement by the dictator Suharto before the Indonesian Council of Islamic Preachers (MUI) that the elections are not an instrument for maintaining the status quo was just old and stale political chit chat.

We, the cadres of the People's Democratic Party, say that it is time for all the democratic forces to unite in action to strengthen the struggle to establish full and genuine democracy. The demands of the democrats are more widespread, more tumultuous, growing in size, heightening, and growing sharper and sharper just as the credibility of the New Order dictatorship crumbles in the eyes of the people and the world. Yet we still face the problem of lack of unity among the pro-democracy forces. We worry that without unity in action the democratic forces will have difficulties in responding to the changing situation of the country and the people and will hesitate in responding to new and unpredictable developments. It will be a political sin that history will never forget, if we are not able to quickly respond to and understand the billowing desire of the people for change – even more so, if the tide of change that comes forth for the people ends up in creating waves of rioting and destruction.

In that leaflet, the PRD called on the opposition groups and the people to unit in boycotting the elections. An election boycott, besides delegitimising undemocratic elections, could also be a platform for uniting the democratic movement. We all know that the United Democracy Party (PUD) headed by Sri Bintang Pamungkas has a program of boycotting the election. The Marhaen Peoples Movement, headed by Sukmawati Sukarnoputri, has also taken the same attitude. So has the PRD.

The boycott of the election was one of the steps that was necessary to oppose the New Order regime. The demands that we put forward were for the repeal of the five 1985 political laws and the dual role of the Armed Forces. Because there will never be a democratic election that will be useful for the people while the five political laws and the dual role of the Armed Forces continues.

The New Order regime will not fulfill these demands. Because these two things are the most valuable of the New Order's political assets. If these two things are repealed then the military-capitalist New Order dictatorship will be easily overthrown by the democratic movement. But this is not important. What is most important is that we convince the people that the two greatest obstacles to democratisation are the 5 political laws and the dual role of the Armed Forces.

So that it will be the people themselves who pull down these two pillars of the New Order dictatorship. Apart from this, from this moment, the pro-democracy movement must be preparing a democratic political order. There needs to be a platform that can be the basis for all popular forces to unite for democratic political change. Such a democratic political order will require the repeal of the five political laws and the dual role of the Armed Forces. The political order that we desire is a Popular Multi-Party Democracy, while the government that we want to replace the New Order is a Popular Democratic Coalition government.

Popular multi-party democracy will return freedom to the people to participate in politics, especially the freedom to form parties. Nobody's rights to political participation should be stolen, no matter what the ideology, no matter what the political line, no matter what the political ideals, no matter what the political program. This, in principle, is full liberal democracy but with a strong popular nuance. In this case, liberal democracy is not meant simply to glorify individual freedoms, but more to take things in the direction of freeing political instruments from the grip of a dictatorship so that they become the property of the people. While a Democratic Coalition government would be a coalition of different social classes, sectors and political forces that each represented some part of the people from the village to the national level. This is the character of a democratic government.

We all see that dictator Retired-General Suharto must be replaced. He has been in power too long and stole too many of the peoples' rights. During the last 31 years there has been fatal steps backward, especially in the area of democracy. General Suharto's commitment to the people has not been proven. Rather we all know that during his reign he has expanded his family and his cronies' business dynasties while tens of millions of people live under the poverty line in misery.

The 1997 election has also closed the door to the emergence of a new president, especially a president from the pro-democracy movement. There is no way we can win a presidency from the democratic movement under a system like this. Only a democratic system, a multi-party system, that provides an opportunity for a president from the democratic movement. The dictator Suharto always uses constitutional rhetoric to save himself from the political demands of the people. And using the same excuses, he has always smashed any open democratic opposition that has emerged outside his grip. Threat of prison, terror, kidnapping, torture or even murder are often used techniques of the dictatorship's agents to secure the status quo. Should the democratic opposition retreat because of this? No! The democratic opposition need not fear the threats of the dictator Suharto and his followers.

The objective political situation demands change. Because all the demands for change have never been responded to by the state, so they have accumulated and now emerge in the form of riots and social unrest. So both the frequency of the recent riots and social unrest has not been an immediately spontaneous phenomenon but the result of a structural process. A great social gap within society, impotent representative institutions and a repressive stance by the Armed Forces are the source of the problem.

The collapse of the reputation of the New Order, the Armed Forces and the presidential family also need to be considered. Given these things, the opposition movement will easily win the support of the people. The repressive acts of the authorities simply exposes them before the people. The people become surer and surer in their knowledge of the regime as a cruel, dictatorial and anti-democratic regime.

### **Why do we support a People-Star-Mega Coalition?**

From the beginning we have always supported a political coalition to pressure the New Order Regime. This is the case too with the Mega-Star-the People Coalition. But the Mega-Star-the People Coalition is also a specific thing. The Mega-Star-the People coalition represents the spontaneous demand of the masses for unity, a demand flowing from their discontent. These demands emerged from a situation where there is a gap between the progressive consciousness of the masses and their political actions. A political leadership is needed which is capable of taking advantage of the openings that emerge. In the preceding months, these openings could only have been seized by the PDI-Megawati. But the absence of any clear statement by Megawati, as a person in a position to lead politically, has meant that the potential of the PDI-Megawati to respond to the objective conditions created over the preceding several months has not been realised (if we don't actually want to say failed.) In this uncertain situation, the majority of Megawati's supporters as well as many other critical minded masses have sought their own way forward. They found their way to the PPP. In these times of rapidly changing conditions, the PPP filled this golden opportunity, separate from the question of whether the PPP leadership is doing this consciously or not.

It is true that this "coalition" is not based on a formal agreement between the national elite of the PPP or of PDI, Megawati. The offer by Mudrick Sangidu of PPP Solo, followed up by the Banjarmasin PPP, to nominate Megawati as President never received any clear response. Megawati answered them with just a smile, so there has been no de jure bonds, but just a de facto "smile coalition" between Megawati and Mudrick. In other words, the party leaderships have not discussed a formal coalition that would accelerate and expand the national mass mobilisations.

Indeed such a coalition has the potential to absorb the critical energy of the masses and unite it in an effort to get rid of the Suharto dictatorial regime if the leadership of the two parties wanted it. But there is a real issue related to the question of whether they want to do this or not, as political will is a general question for the opposition as a whole in Indonesia.

Each day the Mega-Star-the People Coalition expands and shows its potential for radicalisation. It is the specific radicalism of the urban poor. We see this coalition emerging in the towns, whether provincial or district towns. For the New Order these are very unsettling developments. At first the government did not ban the coalition, seeing it as a better option than people boycotting the election. But finally they did ban it. There were three reasons for the ban. Firstly, the potential for the coalition in further radicalising and expanding the mass mobilisation of the urban poor in the cities. Secondly, the unification and coming together of the peoples discontent (from all sectors and streams) in one vehicle. Thirdly, an explosion of votes for PPP in the cities which threatened and endangered the Golkar majority that the government has targetted.

PPP president, Buya Ismail Hasan Metareum and the PPP leadership seem to relish primarily the prospect of an increase in their votes. Buya and the other PPP leadership are only interested in gaining an increase in seats. To put it crudely, the PPP wants to use the split in the PDI to increase the votes for the PPP. When the Mega-Star-the People leaflets started to circulate with their seven demands, Buya appeared frightened, pale and reactionary. Buya should not feel slandered. The leaflet was not issued in the name of the PPP, but in the name of a coalition. Buya was also too extreme – perhaps because he was frightened – in interpreting the demand "Unite to replace Suharto" as a call for a coup. In all countries, and especially at election time, a call to change a president and nominate another candidate is a normal thing. A struggle to replace a president should not be interpreted to mean a coup. On the contrary, such a struggle is a constitutional and democratic struggle because it has been proposed in the context of an election.

Buya and the PPP leadership should rather look upon the leaflet as an aspiration of the people that has been passed on to or left with his party. If Buya does not struggle for these aspirations, then as a people's leader, he must be said to have failed. And he would have failed too as a democrat. There are criteria for assessing whether somebody passes or fails as a democrat. The program put forward by the coalition is a democratic program. There is not one element of this program that stands outside the conventional democratic framework that operates in democratic countries. Buya and the PPP leadership have no grounds to reject this program. These are the changes that the people want.

In reality, the Indonesian opposition has often disappointed the people. Don't be surprised if the majority of the people and the Indonesian youth view Buya and the majority of other opposition figures – including Megawati and Gus Dur – as hesitating and failing to see the desire of the majority of the masses who want change. The lateness in response of these politicians has resulted in them adopting a confusing stance. They carry out more and more unpopular acts. It is not impossible, for example, that the people turn their backs and shift their support somewhere else.

### **The PRD and the people support the program in the Mega-Star-the People Coalition**

The PRD has been accused of producing the Mega-Star-the People Coalition leaflets that contain the seven political demands. Organisationally, we reject this accusation. But the PRD is

not going to waste time on the question of whether it was the intelligence services who made the leaflet or a group outside the PPP. The question for the PRD is whether the demands are correct and represent the interests of the majority of the people. The PRD supports 100% the Mega-Star-the People demands. It is up to the government if it wants to point out that these demands are the same as those always put forward by the PRD. According to the mass media more than 200,000 of these leaflets were distributed and were handed out by the people themselves. All reports indicate that the people photocopied and distributed the leaflets themselves. The PPP elite and the government can reject the leaflets. But on the ground, the people could not get enough of them.

The May 14, 17 and 20 mass actions showed that the mass participation was no longer 100% spontaneous and confined to enjoying the 1997 "festival of democracy". The people understood the risks involved in joining the rally. This is especially the case after the Armed Forces had carried out exercises right in front of the nose of the people in the middle of Jakarta just a few weeks before. The demands that the masses chanted and the posters they carried were themselves reminders of the risks involved in participating in the actions. Look at the demands in the leaflets and the demands chanted by the people:

- The need for a coalition to oppose the Suharto regime.
- Repeal of the five political laws.
- End corruption, monopolies and collusion.
- Raise wages and lower the prices of basic necessities.
- Investigate the wealth of the presidential family and other high officials.

None of this stopped the people of Jakarta from joining the campaign rallies. The increasing size of the march with every step forward of the ranks shows how a genuine consciousness among the masses to reject the continuation of the Suharto regime has developed. This is an aspect of the objective situation that cannot be denied any more.

### **On the riots and unrest during the campaign**

The PRD has been accused of masterminding the rioting during the campaign. We reject this accusation. But the PRD has a responsibility to explain why this unrest has occurred. Many of the political developments, both organised and spontaneous, are a part of an ongoing tension that is developing into a confrontation between the dictatorship and the people. July 27 has been the maximum point in this confrontation to date. That incident not only led to changes in the configuration within the broad political elite, but also contributed to the development of conditions that the dictatorship fears most: the outbreak of political confrontation by the masses and the rise of extra-parliamentary political forces as a source of new political radicalisation.

The 1997 elections are of great significance in the history of the New Order dictatorship. The continuance of the oligarchy as the basis of a crony business empire is at stake now. Even so, as a political force, the Suharto dictatorship will work hard to maintain these favorable conditions. During the last 30 years, the dictatorship has piled up untold wealth, distributed



economic and political power nepotistically, controlled parliament and stunted the political parties and developed a loyal military to defend its political and economic interests.

As we know the overthrow of Megawati was a means to smooth the way for the dictatorship to steal popular legitimacy through manipulation of the ballot box. The PDI under the leadership of Megawati was always an irritant factor for the success of the elections, elections that the dictatorship always needs to win with an absolute majority for its party: Golkar. The dictatorship responded in a bloody and brutal way because Megawati has slowly but steadily attracted great sympathy of the masses and had absorbed the aspirations of the masses for change.

The unrest after unrest since July 27, in Tasikmalaya, Situbondo, Sanggau Ledo, Rengasdengklok, and even Tanah Abang in Jakarta is evidence of how the people have manifested their energy of resistance. In the midst of heightening repression, the radicalism of the masses has also increased. The Suharto dictatorship appears increasingly unsure as how to anticipate the widening social unrest. It has no effective political strategy to halt the trend towards confrontation by the angry and fed up masses.

The Suharto dictatorship appears unsure in facing this situation. The populist sentiment is clearly very dangerous for the crony business cliques and their families. The success of the election is one way that the business cronies of the Suharto dictatorship can safeguard their situation in a "legal" and "constitutional" way. As election day approaches, the dictatorship faces the choice of more violence or letting the Mega-Star-the People alliance flowering through the vehicle of the PPP. Both approaches impose costs for the regime. A violent response will provoke more widespread and even more extreme social unrest as well as attract international condemnation.

Yet to allow the rise of the Mega-Star-the People alliance at this moment is the same as the dictatorship piercing its own heart. Because such a coalition would draw together all the suppressed aspirations of the oppressed sectors of the people and would become a fertile vehicle for opposition to the dictatorship. The experience of oppression is bound to develop a new political character, bringing a new radical populism onto the Indonesian political stage.

The intensifying anger of the people must be channelled through organised political forces. The dictatorship must also consider this. If not, then the people will answer in their own way. The unrest that has ripped through Jakarta and other cities during the campaign must be understood in this context. The naive seeking of a scapegoat in order to hide the impotence of Suharto's dictatorial regime is no answer. Indeed the PDI predicts that if the peoples' political discontent continues to rise and become more exacerbated, while the Suharto regime stubbornly resists change, even greater social unrest will take place. If the five political laws and the policy of the dual role of the Armed Forces that suppress all organised democratic political forces are maintained, then it will be the Suharto dictatorship that will be the "mastermind" of the explosions of unrest that are bound to happen in the coming period.

**One struggle, one change: Democracy or Death!**

In the name of the Central Leadership Committee,  
People's Democratic Party,  
s/Mirah Mahardika

#### **APPENDIX 4:**

##### **Call for the formation of council of political leaders.**

LIST OF SIGNATORIES claimed in KNPD statement, January, 1998.

“Form a council of political leaders to safeguard the sovereignty of the people!”,

National Committee for Democratic struggle (KNPD) - January 6, 1998:

<http://www.asia-pacific->

[solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and01\\_v2.htm#Form a council of political leaders](http://solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/netnews/1998/and01_v2.htm#Form%20a%20council%20of%20political%20leaders)

1. Abdurrahman Wahid;
2. Amien Rais;
3. Alawi Muhammad;
4. Abdul Madjid;
4. Ali Sadikin;
5. Aberson Marle Sihalohe;
5. Arbi Sanit;
6. Asmara Nababan;
7. Arief Budiman;
8. Baharudin Loppa;
9. Bambang Wijoyanto;
10. Bambang Triantoro;
11. Budiman Sudjatmiko;
12. Cholil Bisri;
13. Deliar Noer;
14. Dede Oetomo;
15. Ditasari;
16. Eros Djarot;
17. Emha Ainun Nadjib
18. Goenawan Mohamad;
19. Harun Al Rasyid;
20. Hari Rusli;
21. Hasnan Habib;
22. Hendar di
23. Hamengku Buwono X
24. Iwan Fals
25. Issac Hindom
26. Julius Kardinal Darmoatmodjo;
27. Karmani;
28. Kusnadi Hardjosumantri

29. Kwiek Kian Gie
30. Kuntowijoyo;
31. M. Yusuf
32. Marzuki darusman
33. Mathorri Abdul Djalil;
34. Muchtar Pakpahan;
35. Megawati Soekarnoputri;
36. Marsilam Simandjuntak;
37. Mulyana W. Kusuma;
38. Muslim Abdurrahman;
39. Mustofa Bisri;
40. Mudrick Sangidu;
41. Mudji Sutrisno;
42. Nurcholis Madjid
43. Nursyahbani Katjasungkana;
44. Permadi;
45. Princen, HJC;
46. Ratna Sarumpaet;
47. Ramlan Surbakti;
48. Rizal Ramli;
49. Rusydi Hamka;
50. RO. Tambunan;
51. Sabam Sirait;
52. Sandyawan Sumardi;
53. Subadio Sastrosatomo;
54. Sucipto;
55. Sukmawati Soekarnoputri;
56. Supeni;
57. Soemitro;
58. Soetandyo;
59. Sri Bintang Pamungkas;
60. Syamsuddin Haris;
61. Slank;
62. Trimoeja D. Soerjadi;
63. Y. B. Mangunwijaya;
64. Wiji Thukul
65. Pijar;
66. Aliansi Jurnalis Independen;
67. Forum Komunikasi Generasi Muda Nahdhatul Ulama;
68. Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasional Indonesia;

- 69. Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia
- 70. Gerakan Mahasiswa Kristen Indonesia
- 71. Persatuan Mahasiswa Katolik Republik Indonesia
- 72. Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam
- 73. Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah;
- 74. Ikatan Pemuda Muhammadiyah;
- 75. Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Nusantara;
- 76. Pemuda Demokrat;
- 77. Solidaritas Perempuan

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## Archives

### A. Hard copy collections

#### **Partai Rakyat Demokratik (Indonesia) Archives International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam, The Netherlands**

"Collection of leaflets, reports, statements on the PRD 1990s; some periodicals among others Suara Buruh 1993; documents concerning student actions 1991-1998; PRD documents on the elections 1997; documents concerning the students organisation Solidaritas Mahasiswa Indonesia untuk Demokrasi (SMID); propaganda material." (IISH description – see <http://www.iisg.nl/archives/en/files/p/10863977full.php> for detailed description.)

#### **Indonesian zamizdat material – documents Menzies Library, Australian National University**

"Box 1. Lembaga Bantuan Hukum -- Box 2. Women's issues -- Box 3. Newspaper clippings -- Box 4. NGOs -- Boxes 5-7. Student publications -- Boxes 8-9. Internet sources -- Box 10. Publications: Partai Rakyat Demokratik (PRD), Komite Nasional Perjuangan Demokrasi Yogyakarta (KNDP-DIY), Komite Perjuangan Rakyat untuk Perubahan Yogyakarta (KPRP), Gerakan Rakyat Pro Reformasi (GRPR), Komite Rakyat Independen (KRI) -- Boxes 11-12 Worker/peasant publications -- Box 13. Political manifestos, pamphlets, reports, miscellaneous items -- Box 14. Political

analyses, articles -- Box 15. East Timor -- Box 16. Alternative/banned journals -- Box 17. Miscellaneous journals" (Menzies Library description)

**Perhimpunan Dokumentasi Indonesia** – Amsterdam, Netherlands

Private collection of mostly photocopied political materials relating to the activities of the PRD and the anti-dictatorship movement and the activities of the PKI exile community in Europe.

**Indonesia based collections**

Before 2007, I had access to archival collections of documents held by the PRD in Indonesia as well as the personal archives of some individual members.

## B. Web archives

**Apakabar database, 1990-2002**

"[C]omprised of approximately 175,000 Indonesian and English-language postings from various moderated lists covering the period October 1990 to February 2002...It contains the complete sets of the postings previously found on the Indonesia-related lists run by John MacDougall on the [www.indopubs.com](http://www.indopubs.com) website, which is designed to advance Indonesian studies throughout the world" (University of Ohio description).

This email list was used by activist groups and activists during the 1990s. Many statements and chronologies, as well as posted media reports can be found in this database.

**Indonesian News Digest, 1997-2009**

This database comprises English language media reports and other documents, including translations, selected to be of interest to people following Indonesian politics.

**The Indonesian Peoples Resistance** (includes large archives of PRD statements and other materials)

**PRD archival site**

Contains some digital copies of *Pembebasan*; *Tugas Kita* and *Mimbar Opposisi*, as well as miscellaneous statements

### **Indonesian Roundup Archive (2006 only)**

<http://www.asia-pacific->

[solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/roundup/roundup2006.htm](http://solidarity.net/southeastasia/indonesia/roundup/roundup2006.htm)

## **Websites**

### **Politik Rakyat Miskin**

<http://www.kprm-prd.org>

### **ARAH GERAK**

<http://arahgerak.blogspot.com/>

### **Alliansi Buruh Menggugat**

<http://buruhmenggugat.or.id/>

### **Front Nasional Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia - Politik Rakyat Miskin**

<http://fnpbi-prm.blogspot.com/>

### **Jaringan Nasional Perempuan Mahardhika**

<http://perempuanmahardhika.blogspot.com/>

### **Liga Mahasiswa Nasional Demokratik – Politik Rakyat Miskin**

<http://lmnd-prm.blogspot.com/>

### **Rumah Kiri**

<http://rumahkiri.net/>

### **BERDIRIKARI Online, published by PAPERNAS**

<http://papernas.org/berdikari/>

### **INDOMARXIST**

<http://www.indomarxist.co.nr/>

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### **Pembebasan**

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