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D.N. Aidit

THE
BIRTH AND GROWTH
OF THE
COMMUNIST PARTY
OF
INDONESIA



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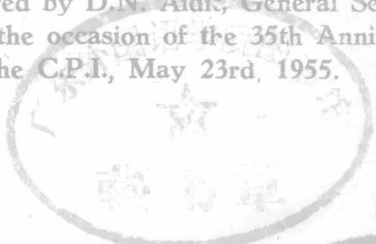
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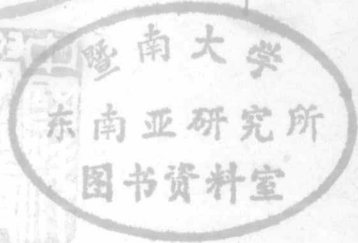
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The Birth and Growth of the Communist Party of Indonesia

Speech delivered by D.N. Aidit, General Secretary of
the C.P.I. on the occasion of the 35th Anniversary of
the C.P.I., May 23rd, 1955.



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The Communist Party of Indonesia was founded on May 23rd, 1920. Thus, this May 23rd, 1955, is the 35th anniversary of the C.P.I.

The birth of the C.P.I. 35 years ago was the birth of a Party of the Indonesian working class. The development of this Party is the development of the history of the Indonesian working class in leading the peasants and other masses of the people in the heroic struggle against imperialism and its hirelings, in the struggle to overthrow reactionary power and establish people's power based on the alliance of the majority of the people, that is, the alliance of the workers and peasants. Only such a people's power will make possible the attainment of a socialist Indonesia in the future.

The 35 years history of the C.P.I. is not a tranquil and peaceful one; it is a history which has gone through many turmoils and many dangers, many mistakes and many sacrifices. But it is also a heroic history, a joyful history, a history with many lessons, a successful history.

The growth of the C.P.I. during these past 35 years can be divided as follows:

- I. The Foundation of the Party and the Struggle against the First White Terror (1920—1926)
- II. Twenty Years Underground and the Anti-Fascist Front (1926—1945)
- III. The August Revolution and the Struggle Against the Second White Terror (1945—1951)
- IV. The Broadening of the United Front and the Building of the Party (1951—.....)

I.

The Foundation of the Party and the Struggle against the First White Terror (1920-1926)

The C.P.I. is the synthesis of the Indonesian workers' movement with Marxism-Leninism. It was not by chance that the C.P.I. was founded on May 23rd, 1920; it was an objective fact. The C.P.I. was born in the era of imperialism, after a working class had come into existence in Indonesia, after trade unions and the I.S.D.V. (Indonesische Sociaal Democratische Vereniging) had been established in Indonesia, after the 1917 October Socialist Revolution in Russia. The C.P.I. was a child of the period which was born on time.

That the C.P.I. was born because of the necessity of the period becomes clear from the following statement of Stalin in his work, "Foundations of Leninism":

"Imperialism is the most barefaced exploitation and the most inhuman oppression of hundreds of millions of people inhabiting vast colonies and dependent countries. The purpose of this exploitation and of this oppression is to squeeze out super-profits. But in exploiting these countries, imperialism is com-

pelled to build railroads, factories and mills there, to create industrial and commercial centres. The appearance of a class of proletarians, the emergence of a native intelligentsia, the awakening of national consciousness, the growth of the movement for emancipation — such are the inevitable results of this 'policy'. The growth of the revolutionary movement in all colonies and dependent countries without exception clearly testifies to this fact. This circumstance is of importance for the proletariat in that it radically undermines the position of capitalism by converting the colonies and dependent countries from reserves of imperialism into reserves of the proletarian revolution."

This statement of Stalin's is fully in keeping with what happened in Indonesia at the beginning of the twentieth century. In view of the fact that capital investment in Indonesia rapidly increased at the beginning of the twentieth century, colonial capital was compelled to introduce great changes in Indonesian economic life. It was forced to set up industries to process raw materials such as sugar and rubber, it was forced to build harbours, railways and repair shops. Thus, even though imperialism strove to preserve feudal relations, it could not prevent capitalist trends from penetrating into Indonesian society. Thus it was that new classes arose in Indonesian society, among others the proletarian class. This provided a new basis for the struggle for Indonesian independence and it was upon this new basis that the C.P.I. was founded. The irregular peasant revolts which had always met with failure were now replaced by the organised struggle of the proletariat which led the peasants and other revolutionary classes.

The fact that the birth of the C.P.I. was preceded by the establishment of trade unions and the I.S.D.V. can

be explained from the following: in 1905, a trade union of railway workers called the SS-Bond was formed. In 1908, the V.S.T.P. (Verenigingen van Spoor -en Tram Personeel) a militant trade union of railway workers was set up. But the advanced consciousness of the Indonesian working class already required an organisation which was not only confined to a trade union struggle. In May 1914, the I.S.D.V., a political organisation which brought together Indonesian and Dutch revolutionary intellectuals and which aimed at spreading Marxism among the Indonesian workers and people, was established in Semarang. It was this I.S.D.V. which, on May 23rd, 1920, became the Communist Party of Indonesia (C.P.I.).

Concerning the October Socialist Revolution of 1917 which stimulated the foundation of the C.P.I., I should like only to borrow the following words of Comrade Mao Tse-tung:

"The salvoes of the October Revolution awoke us to Marxism-Leninism. The October Revolution helped the progressives of China and of the whole world to adopt the proletarian world outlook as an instrument for foreseeing a nation's future and considering anew one's own problems."

The foundation of the C.P.I. made it clear that the Indonesian progressives were not behind in welcoming the salvoes of that great October Revolution. In other words, Indonesian progressives and the revolutionary masses of the Indonesian people, precisely at the right time, joined in strengthening the new revolutionary front opposing world imperialism. With this, the struggle for Indonesian independence became an inseparable part of the struggle of the proletariat of the world to smash capitalism.

The tasks of the Indonesian Communists was already made clear by Lenin in his appeal in November, 1919,

to the Communist of the Eastern peoples:

"You are facing a task which has never before been faced by the Communists of the whole world: basing yourselves on the general Communist theory and practice and adapting yourselves to the peculiar conditions which do not exist in European countries, you must be able to apply this theory and practice to conditions in which the main mass will consist of the peasantry, in which you must solve the task of the struggle not against capital, but against Middle Age vestiges."

From this call of Lenin's, it became clear that the Communists in the East, and therefore the Indonesian Communists as well, not only had to base themselves on "the general theory and practice of Communism" but also had to *adapt themselves* to "the peculiar conditions which do not exist in European countries", and what Lenin meant by this was the peasantry.

The C.P.I. is the Party of a new class, that is the working class, which is required to bear the responsibilities of leadership. Why is it that the working class must bear the responsibilities as leader? The Indonesian working class, although not large in number (about six million wage-earners, among which about 500,000 are modern workers or proletariat), is, however, different from the peasants because the working class represents a new productive force; the working class is, also, not like the bourgeois class because the working class has the determination to struggle consistently, because this class suffers from three types of oppression, i.e. the oppressions of imperialism, feudalism and capitalism. Because of its sphere of work, the working class is the most disciplined class; since it does not own any means of production, the working class is the most consistent class and it is not individualistic. It is because of all this that

the working class, although not great in number, must bear the responsibilities of leadership.

The foundation of the C.P.I. which subsequently became renown as the champion of the struggle against Dutch imperialism was enthusiastically welcomed, not only by the Indonesian workers and peasants, but also by other sections of the people. It was welcomed, too, among the soldiers and sailors. The C.P.I. grew very rapidly.

Within a short period, the Communists had gained an influence in the P.P.K.B. (United Movement of Workers) whose congress in August, 1920, in Semarang was attended by 22 trade unions with a total membership of 72,000. The Communists exerted this influence mainly through the militant V.S.T.P. This was the beginning of the good tradition of the C.P.I. in the workers movement.

In 1920, strikes took place in Java and Sumatra which in general resulted in victories for the workers. These victories gave spirit and joy in the struggle to the workers, educated them as to the importance of organisation and discipline and opened the eyes of the workers and the people generally to the bankruptcy of the colonial labour regulations and of the colonial government.

The advances achieved by the workers movement struck fear into the government, and the most frightening thing was that the influence of the Communists was growing. The government tried to influence the Serikat Islam (Islamic Union, Tr.) and to sharpen the contradictions between the Communists (C.P.I.) and the S.I. Reformist elements in the P.P.K.B. were supported by the Dutch government, thus sharpening the contradictions between the revolutionary trend and the reformist trend.

In the C.P.I. Congress in Kota Gede, Jogjakarta, in

December, 1924, it was registered that the C.P.I. had 38 sections with 1,140 members while the Serikat Rakjat (People's Union, Tr.), a "substructure" of the C.P.I., had 46 sections with 31,000 members. The number of C.P.I. members in 1924, 1,140, was very large by comparison with the membership of the Communist Party of China which numbered only 900 before the "May 30th" movement of 1925. This is proof of the fact that the C.P.I. grew rapidly even though it faced great obstacles from the Dutch colonial government. The speedy growth of the Serikat Rakjat was an indication of the enthusiastic welcome of the peasants to the C.P.I. because the membership of the Serikat Rakjat was mainly composed of peasants.

But the Party was not able to consolidate the broad sympathy of the masses and the many members of the Party. The Party did, indeed, carry out the important task of arousing a spirit of anti-Dutch imperialism in the ranks of the people, but it was not able to consolidate that which it had already achieved.

The basic mistake of the C.P.I. leaders at that time was that they had fallen prey to "leftist" slogans, that they did not seriously endeavour to explain the situation, that they wanted to solve all problems at one blow such as: liquidate feudalism, free the country of the Dutch, smash all imperialists, overthrow the reactionary government, liquidate the rich peasants, liquidate the national bourgeoisie. Of course, the result of all this was that unity grew between the real enemies and those who could become enemies and be aroused into opposing the Party. This resulted in the Party isolating itself which greatly weakened it. The Party did not sufficiently draw the attention of the members to small practical activities, to insignificant actions which were linked with the everyday needs of the workers, the peasants and the working

intelligentsia. And yet, it was only here, in such activities that the Party could unite with the broad working masses around the Party. It is of course true that such work is not pleasant nor is it without difficulties, but there is no other way to make the links of the Party with the working masses closer.

As was stated in the general report to the Vth C.P.I. National Congress in March, 1954, in this first stage:

"The Party was still completely unaware of the need for uniting with national bourgeoisie, in which the Party's slogan was "Socialism now", "Indonesian soviets" and "dictatorship of the proletariat". This 'left' deviation of the Party was criticised exactly and correctly by J.V. Stalin in his speech before the students of the University of the Peoples of the East on May 18th, 1925, in which he said that this left deviation contained within it the danger of isolating the Party from the masses and converting it into a sect."

The disease of "'Leftwing' Communism" with which the Party was afflicted did indeed convert it into a sect, it isolated the Party from the broad masses of the people and thus made it easier for the barbaric colonial power to smash the Party. What J.V. Stalin said was very correct indeed; that "a resolute struggle against this deviation is an important condition for the training of truly revolutionary cadres for colonial and dependent countries in the East". The truth of Stalin's words was keenly felt in the subsequent development of the C.P.I.

It was not possible for the up-building of the Party to receive proper attention from the Party leaders at that time. There was no Marxist-Leninist theoretical education in the Party; opportunist elements had infiltrated and gained control of the Party leadership; the Party did not yet know anything about criticism and self-

criticism and about the method of collective leadership. These facts made the Party very weak in the ideological, political and organisational spheres.

In a situation in which the Party was isolated from the masses and in which the organisation of the Party was extremely weak, the crisis in Indonesia deepened, the living conditions of the people grew worse and worse, and unorganised acts of resistance of the people against the government apparatus increased. It was in such a situation that Dutch colonial government provocations followed one another in quick succession, in the form of dismisses of strikers, arrests of peasants, the closing down of schools set up by the C.P.I. or the Serikat Rakjat, bans on workers' newspapers, arrests of workers' leaders, etc. Especially in order to deal with the peasants, the Dutch created terrorist gangs such as, for example, the "Sarikat Hedjo" in Priangan. All this led to the outbreak of a people's revolt on November 12th, 1926, in Java, and in the beginning of 1927 in Sumatra. Following the outbreak of this revolt, the C.P.I. came forward to give it leadership, as far as was possible. The C.P.I.'s attitude of speedily giving leadership to this people's revolt was a correct one.

During and after this revolt, the weaknesses of the Party became very apparent; for example, the lack of unanimity in the Party leadership concerning this revolt, the lack of preparations to safeguard the Party cadres and leaders, the lack of co-ordination between actions in one place and actions elsewhere, the lack of any link between the actions in the countryside and those in the towns, etc. Apart from this, there were also such people as Tan Malaka, at that time a leader of the C.P.I., who did not take resolute action prior to the revolt but blamed the revolt after it had broken out. More than that, he and his clique openly adopted trotskyite practices by



setting up a new party, the Pari (Indonesian Republican Party) in a situation when the C.P.I. was facing white terror from the colonial government and its lackeys. This split in the C.P.I., made the work of the C.P.I., already difficult as it was, even more difficult and helped the Dutch splitting policies in the C.P.I. and in the national independence movement in general.

Thousands of members and functionaries of the C.P.I. were hunted down and sentenced, some of them being hanged. Many were exiled to the swamps of Digul in Irian. Only a few C.P.I. leaders succeeded in escaping abroad, among them being C.P.I. Central Committee member, Musso.

Most of the C.P.I. members and functionaries, even though they had not long been Party members, were imbued with a strong Party spirit. Without any regrets and with smiles on their lips, they went to the execution block, accepted prison sentences of deportation to places of exile. The C.P.I.'s consistent anti-Dutch imperialist policy and the heroic stand taken by the C.P.I. members and functionaries in face of colonial power at that time, raised the prestige of the C.P.I.'s policy in the eyes of the genuine fighters for independence, and in the eyes of the Indonesian people. This increased the confidence and love of the oppressed people for the C.P.I.

The 1926 revolt ended in defeat for the G.F.I. and the revolutionary Indonesian people. But there is one thing which cannot be forgotten and that is that this revolt showed the Indonesian people that the Dutch could be thrown into confusion, that colonial power could be shaken, that this power was not eternal. This is why the 1926 revolt was of exceptionally great significance in raising the political consciousness of the Indonesian people.

The conclusion from all this is that the C.P.I. leader-

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ship was not yet able to combine the general truth of Marxism-Leninism with the practice of the Indonesian revolution because they did not yet possess Marxist-Leninist theory and they did not yet have an understanding of the historical conditions and of Indonesian society, of the peculiarities of the Indonesian revolution and of the laws of the Indonesian revolution. The result was that the Party did not know the basic objective demand of the Indonesian people, the demand for the elimination of imperialism and feudalism and the attainment of national independence, democracy and freedom. Further, the Party leadership was not aware that in order to attain this basic demand, a broad united front had to be built between the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie, based upon the alliance of the workers and peasants under the leadership of the working class. As a result of the lack of understanding of all this, there arose within the Party leadership of the time erroneous views to the effect that "the peasants cannot be relied upon in every action", that "the middle classes and the educated people have already become tools of the capitalists", that the C.P.I. must be "anti-all capitalisms", that the C.P.I. slogans should be "socialism now", "a soviet Indonesia", "dictatorship of the proletariat" and the like.

Although at this stage, the Party organisation grew, the Party did not become consolidated. Party members and cadres were not ideologically and politically strong and they did not get the required Marxist-Leninist education. The active elements in the Party could not be made into the backbone of the Party. In a critical situation of coping with provocation and the first terror, the elements in control of the Party leadership were not able to lead the entire Party in such a way as to save it.

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Basically, in this first stage, the C.P.I. had no experience in two fundamental question, namely: (1) the question of the united front, and (2) the question of building the Party.

II.

Twenty Years Underground and the Anti-Fascist Front (1926-1945)

After the 1926 revolt, the C.P.I. was banned by the Dutch colonial government. Since the C.P.I. could no longer work legally and since it had been attracted by left slogans, the revolutionary masses which had previously been led by the C.P.I., welcomed the left-wing nationalist party, the P.N.I. (Indonesian Nationalist Party) which was established in 1927. Many C.P.I. cadres and members entered this left-wing party and also entered mass organisations. But the activities of the C.P.I. cadres and members were not well led at that time because the C.P.I. did not yet have a new central leadership.

After the defeat of the 1926 revolt, a period of decline set in in the Indonesian national independence movement. It became clear that the Dutch colonial government not only suppressed the C.P.I. and the revolutionary mass organisations under its leadership, but also the P.N.I. which it suppressed by various provocations, by obstructing all its activities and by exiling its leaders.

This situation in which the C.P.I. and the left-wing nationalist party were being beaten by the colonial government was utilised by the right-wing nationalists whose

main strength was in the Party of the Indonesian Nation (PBI), to strengthen co-operation with the Dutch government. They concentrated their activities in what they called 'positive' work, aimed at setting up co-operatives, schools, trade associations and so on. Within certain limits, the right-wing nationalists did succeed in expanding their activities out to some of the regions right up to the villages. The Dutch were fond of calling them 'healthy nationalists' because their activities were not in conflict with the interests of the Dutch government and, as a result of this, too, they obtained the necessary facilities from the Dutch government.

But the period of decline in the independence movement did not last long. World crisis followed by the impoverishment of the masses of the people, by economies, higher taxes, mass dismissals and the like hindered the peaceful collaboration between the right-wing nationalists and the Dutch government. Radical voices from among the workers, the peasants and the intelligentsia were becoming increasingly distinct. This crisis period is best known as the 'depression' or, as the Indonesian peasants call it, the 'period of misfortune'.

Then, like a sudden flash of lightning on a hot summer's day, in Februari, 1933, the "Zeven Provinciën" (Dutch warship, Tr.) mutiny occurred, an event which was warmly welcomed by the workers of many countries. This event was important in reviving the spirit of resistance of the Indonesian people against Dutch colonial power. Later, in July, 1933, there was a railway strike threat in Java which the Dutch government managed to prevent only with great difficulty and with the help of Indonesian reformists.

In the regions, resistance grew, mostly in the form of individual measures and actions, evidence that the spirit of resistance was increasing. Dutch suppression of workers'