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Problems of the Indonesian Revolution

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I

Theory and Practice of the Indonesian Revolution

INDONESIAN SOCIETY and the INDONESIAN REVOLUTION

(Basic Problems of the Indonesian Revolution)

The Fifth National Congress of the Communist Party of Indonesia (CPI) held in March 1954 gave the answer to all the important and basic questions of the Indonesian revolution. But up to today, there are still many Party members who do not yet understand clearly what is meant by “the important and basic questions of the Indonesian revolution”.

It is important to know the basic problems of our revolution. Knowing the basic problems of the Indonesian revolution means knowing the targets and tasks of the Indonesian revolution, knowing the forces which push it forward, knowing its character and its perspectives. In order to know the basic problems of the Indonesian revolution, we must in the first place know Indonesian society.

PART ONE Indonesia and its Society

Chapter I

Indonesia's Geographical Position

Indonesia is an archipelago country consisting of thousands of small and large islands and covering a land area of almost two million square kilometres (the area of Indonesia is approximately 57 times

the area of Holland, 5 times the area of Japan, $3\frac{1}{2}$ times the area of France and twice the area of Pakistan). There are five main islands, Java, Sumatera, Kalimantan (Borneo), Sulawesi (Celebes) and West Irian (West New Guinea). The distance from the most easterly point to the most westerly point of Indonesia is approximately the same as the distance from the East Coast to the West Coast of the United States of America or roughly the same as the distance between the Caucasus and England.

Indonesia is surrounded by three oceans, the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. It stands as a bridge between the continent of Asia and the continent of Australia. These facts make it easy to understand why it is that for thousands of years right up to the present day, Indonesia has occupied an important position in world traffic, in economic affairs and in world politics.

Being an equatorial country, Indonesia's climate is tropical. The temperature is on an average of 26 degrees Celsius (Djakarta has an average of 26.4, Bandung, 22.6, Semarang, 26.9, Ambon, 27.2). As a tropical country, Indonesia has only two seasons a year, the dry season which runs from March to September, and the rainy season which runs from September to March. The rainfall is not the same throughout the country, some regions getting more than others.

The Indonesian islands are extremely fertile. The island of Java is one of the most fertile places in the world. This is why, from time immemorial, shifting cultivation and rice cultivation have been practised. In Indonesia, there are many mountains and hills, valleys and gorges, rivers and waterfalls. Many kinds of minerals are found in Indonesian soil. The Indonesian seas are full of riches. It was in this fertile and rich land, whose lines of communication were made easy by the presence of seas and rivers, that the ancestors of the Indonesian nation flourished and thrived.

Indonesia ranks among the large countries in the world, both from the point of view of the extent of its territory as well as

from the point of view of the size of its population. Being a rich country and an archipelago which links up two continents and is surrounded by three oceans has both its advantages and disadvantages to Indonesia today.

Indonesia has an advantageous geographical position because it cannot become isolated from the world at large. It has the necessary conditions for being, throughout time, a country which is frequently visited by others. It has unlimited conditions for establishing extensive sea communications both at home and with the outside world.

But on the other hand, if Indonesia itself is not a strong country, it will find it very difficult to withstand the pressure of invaders who are greatly interested in dominating the abundantly rich Indonesia. It is difficult to defend the country's extensive coast lines from foreign military attack and from the smugglers.

The experiences of the August 1945 Revolution teach us that guerilla warfare plays a very important role in the defence of Indonesia's sovereignty. Not all the most necessary requirements for guerilla warfare are present, for example there are not sufficient extensively populated tracts, there are not enough extensive mountain and forest regions that lie far from the towns and the lines of communication. This state of affairs is made all the more difficult because today, in the vicinity of Indonesia, lie fortresses of imperialism, colonial and semi-colonial countries. To the North lie Malaya, Singapore, Thailand, South Vietnam, Sarawak, North Borneo and the Philippines. To the South lie Australia as well as the Christmas Islands and the Cocos Islands which are under British domination. On the East is East Irian under Australian domination, while West Irian is still under the complete domination of the Dutch imperialists. Indonesia has no frontiers with a country which is already completely liberated from imperialist power. All these facts make it all the more necessary for the Indonesian revolutionaries to take their own course in bringing the Indonesian revolution to completion.

The lesson we can draw from the August 1945 Revolution is that it is possible to wage guerilla war in Indonesia. But in view of the fact that our country does not meet all the necessary prerequisites for guerilla warfare, our revolution would have been more successful if at that time it had been able to make a correct combination between the three forms of struggle, the guerilla struggle in the villages (involving mainly the peasants), revolutionary actions of the workers in the towns and intensive work within the ranks of the armed forces of the enemy.

Chapter II

The Indonesian Nation

In 1955, the population of Indonesia was 84 million. Although the population of Indonesia is composed of many nationalities, they all make up one single unified whole, the Indonesian nation. The Indonesian nation is the sixth largest nation in the world (No. 1, China; No. 2, India; No. 3, the Soviet Union; No. 4, the United States of America; and No. 5, Japan).

The population is very unevenly spread out through the country. The island of *Java*, the smallest of the five major islands (Kalimantan, West Irian, Sumatera, Sulawesi and Java), has a population of about 54 million (including Madura), whereas *West Irian*, one of the biggest of the "Big Five", has an estimated population of less than two million. *Sumatera* which is almost three and a half times the size of Java has a population of about 12½ million. *Sulawesi*, one and a half times Java, has a population of about 6 million. *Kalimantan* (the Indonesian part) which is four times the size of Java, has a population of no more than about 3½ million. Apart from this, the population is spread throughout the islands of *Nusatenggara* (East Indonesia) with a population of 5½ million, and the islands of the Moluccas, with a population of 0.7 million.

Java has one of the densest populations in the world, about

393 persons per square kilometre (1952), and there are places where the density is as high as 460 persons per square kilometre (in Central Java).

There are more than a hundred nationalities in Indonesia, some of them consisting of tens of millions and some of them consisting of only a few thousands.

These nationalities include the Javanese, the Sundanese, the Maduranese, the Melayunese, the Atjehnese, the Minangkabaus, the Bataks, the Palembangs, the Lampungs, the Dayaks, the Bandjars, the Minahasas, the Bugis, the Toradjas, the Macassars, the Balinese, the Sasaks, the Ambonese, the Timorese, the Sabus, the nationalities in West Irian, and many more. Of all these nationalities, the Javanese nationality is the largest, then follow the Sundanese, the Maduranese, the Minangkabaus, the Bataks, and so on. The Melayunese nationality is the one that has for long been the most widely spread out, along the east coast of Sumatera, on the islands between Sumatera and Kalimantan and along all the coasts of Kalimantan. All these nationalities have their own languages besides using the Indonesian language, the basis of which is the Melayu language, as the language of unity. The cultural levels of all these nationalities are not the same, but all of them have an ancient history.

Thus, the Indonesian nation is a nation consisting of many nationalities, having many languages and many cultural levels, but they all originate from one stock, with one language and one culture. They became dispersed for a time but in the process of the struggle for national independence and for a New Indonesia they have been reunited. All these nationalities regard Indonesia as their homeland, they feel themselves as part of the Indonesian nationhood, consider the Indonesian language as the language of unity and regard themselves as having one single culture besides their own nationality cultures. A most interesting thing is that the Indonesian language does not originate from the language of the largest nationality. This language has never throughout history been the language of colonisers; on the contrary, it is a

language which unites more than one hundred nationalities. The Indonesian language is a language which has been forged in the struggle for national independence, it is the language of the liberator.

Besides citizens coming from the various nationalities, there are also in Indonesia some millions of citizens of foreign extraction, Chinese, European and Arab, each with their own language and culture side by side with recognising the Indonesian language and culture as their own.

The economic developments which have taken place in the various islands have not been the same. This is evident in industry, agriculture and especially in transport with Java having a broad network of highroads and railways whilst the other islands have very little or none at all. In fact, remnants of more backward economic systems still exist in some of the islands and regions. Based on this variety of economic conditions, society in our country has reached a variety of stages each with its own specific features.

From the historical point of view, the Indonesian nation of today did not inhabit Indonesia thousands of years ago. About 1,500 years before Christ or roughly 3,500 years ago, the present-day Indonesian nation was not in Indonesia but was living in Further India (now Indo-China, Thailand and Burma) and at that time they were called the "Mon Khmer people", a people which still inhabits Tonkin, Thailand and Cambodia. The "Mon Khmer people" is a branch of the "Austro-Asian" (South Asian) people, the other branches being the "Kasi people" (Asam), the "Munda people" (India), and the "Santali people" (India). The Indonesian nation is one of four branches of the "Mon Khmer people" (the other branches are: Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia). These four branches of the "Mon Khmer people" were called the "Austronesian people" (the people of the southern islands). The "Mon Khmer people" were not originally inhabitants of Further India, they came from Yunan (South China) and when they were still in Yunan they were part of the "Austral people" (the southern people).

Thus, although the Indonesian nation is divided into many nationalities (including the nationalities in West Irian and Halmahera which ethnologically belong to the Melanesian people but politically belong to Indonesia), it is a nation that stems from one single stock (the stock of the Austral people and later the stock of the Austro-Asian people, and then later on again, the stock of the Mon Khmer people); it is a nation with a very long history which has waged bitter struggles in wars and in the fights against natural calamities.

About 3,500 years ago, our ancestors were still wandering in Further India, they were tilling the valleys of the Mekong River, and the Irawadi and Salwin Rivers. Under strong pressure from the peoples which came from the North and the West who occupied their lands and who plundered them and disturbed the peaceful lives they were living, they were forced to chose between two alternatives: to be treated like slaves or to find a new abode. They felt that it would be better to leave and live in freedom rather than be enslaved.

As a result of wars and other factors such as shortage of food, natural disasters, widespread floods and epidemics, the ancestors of the Indonesian nation left the Asian mainland on simple sailing vessels and drifted farther and farther away. They understood navigation, were of sturdy physique and full of courage. They crossed oceans, some of them reaching Madagascar, the Philippines, Kalimantan, Sumatera and others of the islands of Indonesia. By stages and in large groups they migrated to the islands of the South and eventually settled down along the entire coastline of Indonesia from the most westerly point to the most easterly. They were like victorious reinforcements occupying new territories. In these new lands, they were free to pick lands to till, to hunt and to continue with their shipping habits. They built their houses along the coasts they occupied.

But the islands of Indonesia were not uninhabited when our ancestors arrived. They met the 'native' inhabitants. These 'native'

inhabitants were of the Negrito and Wedda races and had lived in the Indonesian archipelago for thousands of years. These 'native' inhabitants did not like being pushed out by these newcomers from the North and at first offered resistance. Besides having to reach some sort of settlement with these 'native' inhabitants so as to get a place to live and a livelihood, our ancestors had to fight against wild animals, floods and other difficulties. By comparison with the 'native' inhabitants, the weapons our ancestors bore were better, they were able to make use of sharp weapons made of iron (daggers, lances and bows and arrows). The 'native' inhabitants were only armed with blow-pipes equipped with small poison arrows. Our ancestors were skilled at tilling whereas the 'native' inhabitants depended for their livelihood on jungle products. After many centuries had elapsed, the 'native' inhabitants and the newcomers were able to live together, while those who refused to mix ran off to foreign lands. In brief, it was not easy for our ancestors to get hold of the homeland Indonesia, they had to wage a life-and-death struggle, they had courageously to traverse wide oceans, to fight against wild beasts, floods and the like.

The Indonesian nation who, while on the Asian mainland, came from one national stock, with one language and culture, became split up after arriving in Indonesia, they were spread out over the islands, separated by mountain ranges, rivers and huge lakes, and the result was that they became isolated from each other. Centuries of natural isolation resulted in their developing along their own lines, they grew into nationalities each with their own language and culture.

After arriving in the Indonesian archipelago, our ancestors continued with the way of life they had lived on the Asian mainland, they lived in communities, built their houses on poles facing each other, tilled the land, sailed and hunted. Their implements of production were extremely primitive forcing them to work collectively. Their many means of production were jointly owned, there was no exploitation of man by man and all inhabitants had equal rights

to the natural resources. At that time, there were no classes in society. They elected the leaders of their villages, there was no such thing as kings appointed from above and there was no such thing as state power. The state was not necessary at that time. Social law and order at that time was laid down on the basis of habits and customs, and the authority, respect and power of the leaders or the elders. Our ancestors then lived in a primitive communal society. We still come across remnants of primitive communal society in our country, for example in the form of joint village ownership of land, the habit of working together (gotong-royong), the remnants of matriarchal lineage (such as in Minangkabau and the island of Enggano), the left-overs of patriarchal lineage (as in Batak, the Moluccas), and so on.

As the implements of production improved and the productive forces increased, the old relations of production began to obstruct the further development of the forces of production. Primitive communal co-operative methods of work were no longer in keeping with the advance made in the implements of production, social division of labour developed and grew. All this meant that, like it or not, joint ownership of the means of production had to be replaced by individual ownership. But the ricefields and meadows, forests and pasture-lands as well as the irrigation installations remained common property.

Private property rights on certain of the implements of production and of personal wealth gave rise to a desire to accumulate the implements of production and to accumulate riches on the part of those who had the chance to do so, namely those in positions of power (the elders assisted by the war-chiefs and religious functionaries). Those in power turned common property into private property. There also emerged a thirst for expansion, for territorial expansion, to capture other villages, with the result that villages united together under one of the elders. Wars took place one after the other because each village elder (of a small district) wanted to expand his territory so as to be able to get hold of more implements of production and

wealth. Those taken prisoner in the wars were no longer killed off but were turned into slaves and forced to work so that the results of their labour could become the property of those in power, adding to their wealth. The people who fell into serious debt and were unable to repay their debts were also turned into slaves. The slave-owners were quite free to do what they liked with their slaves, including trading them and killing them. Thus it was that our ancestors entered into slave society.

A gulf grew up in this slave society between the two basic classes, the slave-owners and the slaves, those ruling and those being ruled, and gradually became deeper and deeper. Thus it was that class struggle first took place in the society of our ancestors. The power of the village-elder became greater and greater until eventually he was entitled to appoint his own successor (formerly the elder had been elected). The area under the power of these elders expanded, the villages under their control and the families dominated by them increased in number. These elders, who had now become rich and had alienated themselves from the people, together with their families and servants, lived on their own in luxury in the "keraton" (king's palace) and the "kedaton" (prince's palace). Besides being leaders, they were also regarded as the representatives of our forefathers who had to be respected and obeyed. In view of the resistance put up by the slaves, the slave-owners were in need of the wherewithal with which to suppress this resistance and subjugate the slaves. It was in this way that the state came into being for the first time, an apparatus which gave power to the slave-owners and made it possible for them to rule over the slaves. Remnants of this slave society were still to be found in some islands in the early part of the twentieth century, for example, the slave-owners could order their slaves to be put to death without being liable to any punishment, the "mramba" (slave-owners in Sumba) were entitled to the entire products of the land cultivated by the slaves ("atta"), and the children born out of slave marriages were the property of the slave-owners.

But the fact that the slave-owners had the weapon of the state in their hands did not put a stop to the resistance of the slaves, both open and secret resistance. Slave labour which at first was a force encouraging the advance of the productive forces by comparison with primitive communal labour gradually proved not to be productive any more because the enslaved people could not possibly have any interest in their work and therefore became less and less creative.

A section of the freemen in this slave society, the peasants and the craftsmen, could no longer stand the burdens of paying for wars, and they became bankrupt and fell into the position of slaves. Some of them fled to the coastal areas or to other places beyond the reach of the slave-owners and joined in the resistance against the slave state. Continuous warfare waged to preserve the power of the slave-owners, to which was added the ever falling level of production and the deterioration of trade resulted in the slave power becoming weaker and weaker and its culture becoming more and more degenerate.

The progress achieved by the productive forces was no longer in accord with the relations of production which were based on slavery, slave society had already become a shackle and that is why it was eventually replaced by feudal society. In Indonesia, and especially in Java, our forefathers entered feudal society roughly at the beginning of the Christian era. In feudal society, the remaining slaves were able to till the land "for themselves" on condition that they deposited a major part of their crop with the feudal landlord. Here, then, the division between produce of the necessary labour for the peasants and the produce of the surplus labour which was seized by the feudal landlord became clear. The basic contradiction in feudal society was the contradiction between the feudal landlords (the kings, the nobles, the priests and the chieftains) and the peasants. State power was in the hands of the feudal landlords who ruled over the peasants. The status of the peasants was somewhat more "free" by comparison with the slaves with the

result that the peasants were by comparison more productive. In general, it was no longer possible to have the peasants wantonly put to death. They were not slaves but servants and worked for the landlords in the form of unpaid labour (rodi, corvee), handing over a major part of their produce.

Besides the peasants, the craftsmen and the traders were among those classes ruled and whose further growth was hampered by feudalism.

The history of the civilisation of the Indonesian nation reveals that agriculture and handicrafts are very old indeed, that Indonesia had its own philosophers, scientists, first-rate artists, statesmen and military strategists. Long before Christ, that is, long before the coming of the Hindu people, Indonesia was producing work tools on a large scale and weapons made of stone and iron; the calendar, so very necessary to regulate work on the rice-fields, was already known, and a system of irrigation had been established. In the year 150 after Christ, the second-century Greek geographer and astronomer, Ptolomeus, wrote that the island of Java was extremely fertile and produced much gold (what he meant was articles made of gold). From the same period, we can read in the Hindu epos (Ramayana): "Make a careful study of Djawadwipa (Java) which has seven kingdoms, the island of gold and silver, abounding with articles of gold." In the year 132, envoys were sent from Java to China taking with them kingly seals of gold. Indonesia's position, lying as it does between India and China, made it, right from the beginning of the Christian era, a centre of world trade. It is stated that in 414 A.D., a Chinese merchant left West Java for Canton together with 200 other persons, the majority of whom were Hindu merchants.

The above facts show that long before the foreigners came, the Indonesian nation was a civilised nation and the opinion that the Indonesian nation only became civilised after the advent of the foreigners who taught the Indonesians is not correct. Later, after the arrival of the Hindus, stupendous and beautiful temples were

constructed, and the famous art of dancing and the puppet play took root. All these are the creation of the Indonesian nation itself, the individuality of the Indonesian nation itself. The Hindus only played the role of assistants and advisers. The achievements of this culture show that ever since ancient times, the Indonesian nation has been willing to accept anything good from abroad, anything in the form of ideas or assistance from experts but without in any way giving up their own individuality.

In foreign trade and foreign policy, the Indonesian nation played an active part and was skillful at utilising the extremely advantageous geographical location of the country. This policy made Indonesia in past times one of the centres of world trade.

But the Indonesian nation was not only renowned for being hard-working and persevering, for having its own culture and civilisation but also as a nation of fighters and revolutionaries. Ever since the time they had lived on the Asian mainland, the Indonesian nation had been accustomed to fighting. In the course of obtaining Indonesia as a homeland, they had also to struggle, as they did too to defend their homeland from foreign attack. The Indonesian nation is a freedom-loving nation with a revolutionary tradition. This has been proved right up to recent centuries, to the 20th century, right up to today. Indonesia's history from early times has been a history of peasant revolts, a history of heroes, a history of revolutions, a history of the working people. The 20th century is the century in which the struggle of the Indonesian nation took on modern forms which were in essence but a continuation of the centuries-long revolutionary traditions.

Chapter III

Feudal Society

Although Indonesia is a large country with a favourable geographical position, very fertile, with a large population and an ancient cultural history rich in revolutionary tradition, it is still