

Joop Morriën

The Communist Party of Indonesia and the Comintern

1. Archives

For the greater part of the period that the Communist Party of Indonesia (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*; PKI) was affiliated to the Comintern (1920-1943) in Indonesia it was an illegal party. In 1926 the party was banned by the Dutch authorities in Indonesia. It legally started life again after the proclamation of the Indonesian Republic in August 1945.

Until its banishment the PKI published several magazines and reports of congresses. Some of the magazines are preserved in Dutch archives, in the National Archive (*Arsip Nasional*) in Jakarta and local archives. In the Netherlands one can find PKI publications in the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology (*Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*; KITLV) in Leiden, in the Royal Netherlands Library (*Koninklijke Nederlandse Bibliotheek*) in The Hague (Den Haag) and the International Institute of Social History (*Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis*; IISH) in Amsterdam. The IISH specializes in archives concerning the labour movements, national and international. One can find there, too, publications by the Communist Party of the Netherlands (*Communistische Partij van Nederland*; CPN), which paid a lot of attention to the developments in Indonesia and the PKI. Moreover one can find publications by the Comintern itself.

Other sources of information are the official records of the former Netherlands Colonial Ministry, which for the years 1900-1942 are held in the archives of the Ministry of the Interior, and the records of the Netherlands Ministry of Justice. These records include the so-called mail reports, regular reports to the Dutch government, and special police reports. They are preserved in the Royal Netherlands Library.

Information is also available from the Comintern archives, which are stored in the Russian Centre for the Preservation and Study of Documents on Modern History (*Rossijskij Centr Chranenija i Izučeniija Dokumentov Novejšej Istorii*; RCCHIDNI) in Moscow. For several years now representatives of parties then affiliated to the Comintern have been able to have access to the archives concerning their own party. So in 1989 two representatives of the CPN, one of them me, had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with documents in the CPN archives. Part of them concerns Indonesia and the PKI. Thanks to the cooperation of Indonesian Communists, in February 1991 I had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with documents in the PKI archives, too.

2. Founding Congress

The Communist Party of Indonesia was founded on 23 May 1920, when at a congress in Semarang the Indian Social-Democratic Association (*Indische Sociaal Democratische Vereeniging*; ISDV) changed its name. The ISDV dated from May 1914, the first Marxist political organisation in Indonesia. It was established by Dutch Socialists, but soon developed into an association in which Dutch and Indonesian Marxists combined to struggle together. The Russian Revolutions - the February Revolution of 1917, but especially the October Revolution of that year - had a great influence on the still young Indonesian Marxist and anti-colonial movement. At the founding congress both Indonesian Communists and Dutch Communists were elected to the Central Committee (CC), with Semaun as Chairman and Pieter (Piet) Bergsma as Secretary.¹

At the May congress in 1920 the party was named the Association of Communists in the Indies (*Perserikatan Komunis di Hindia*), but at the fourth congress in 1924 it was decided to change the name to *Partai Komunis Indonesia*. In the historiography for the whole period the name generally used is "Communist Party" and the abbreviation PKI.

Indonesia had been a Dutch colony for centuries and during that period exploitation had had several

¹ F. Tichelman, *Socialisme in Indonesië. De Indische Sociaal Democratische Vereeniging 1897-1917* (Amsterdam, 1985); Ruth T. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism - up to 1927* (Ithaca, NY, 1965); Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1952); Joop Morriën, *Indonesië los van Holland. De CPN en de PKI in hun strijd tegen het Nederlands kolonialisme* (Amsterdam, 1982); Harry A. Poeze, *Tan Malaka. Levensloop van 1897 tot 1945* (The Hague, 1976); D. N. Aidit, *Problems of the Indonesian Revolution. Selection of Works* (Jakarta, 1963); G. Bauman, *De Tribunisten. De revolutionaire marxisten in Nederland* (Moscow, 1988).

faces.² In the years 1851-1860 the "Indian profits" amounted to almost one-third of the Dutch state budget. In the last decade of the 19th century the rubber-, coffee- and tea-plantations of big capital were developed on a great scale on the isle Java as well as on Sumatra. Workers, "contractkoelies", were conscripted and used as forced labour. Peasants were driven from their soil or remained subject to feudal exploitation by landlords. With new railways and improved harbours and roads there arose an infra-structure which required trained employees and workers. In the new development arose a new, for the future important phenomenon: national awakening. The first national associations were formed and in 1905 also the first trade union, the Union of Railway Workers.³

In that new economic and, to a certain extent, political climate the PKI started its activities. About half a year after its foundation the party decided at an extraordinary congress (at the end of December 1920) to join the Comintern. Before that decision, the Indonesian Marxist/Communist movement had already been represented at the Second Congress of the Comintern (July-August 1920) by Hendricus Josephus Franciscus Marie (Henk) Sneevliet, one of the Dutch leaders of the ISDV who was deported in 1918 from Indonesia because of his anti-colonial activities. Sneevliet was introduced by the Dutch Communist Sebald Justinus Rutgers, internationally well-known at the time, who had participated in the First, the Founding Congress of the Comintern. Rutgers wrote a letter to the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI), co-signed by Henriette Roland Holst and Sneevliet, explaining that Sneevliet was "a representative of the Indonesian Communist Party in the Netherlands Indies" and for six years had participated in the anti-colonial movement. "As the colonial question is on the agenda of the Second Congress we deem his presence at the Congress in Moscow very important. Although he has no written mandate for that Congress, as a result of a lack of time, we confirm that Sneevliet represents the ICP (Netherlands-Indies) in Europe and is fully justified to represent it also in Moscow."⁴

Sneevliet participated in the Congress under the name Maring, he was elected secretary of the "colonial commission". Two separate sets of theses were drafted for the Congress: one by Lenin and one by the Indian Communist Manabendra Nath Roy concerning the strategy and tactics of the anti-colonial revolution. The main items were: the attitude towards bourgeois-nationalism as a force opposing colonialism but also opposing social revolution; an estimation of the role of the peasantry and the agrarian revolution as essential in the revolution; the idea of unity of interests of the oppressed peoples of the East and the workers of the industrialized, imperialist countries. Finally both theses were presented to the Congress with minor changes, in a kind of compromise, and adopted. Generally speaking one can say that the necessity of cooperation with bourgeois-democratic nationalism was given more emphasis by Lenin.⁵

² On the socio-historical problems of Indonesian society in the colonial period: Fritjof Tichelman, *The Social Evolution of Indonesia. The Asiatic Mode of Production and its Legacy* (The Hague, 1980).

³ Jan Breman, *Koelies, planters en koloniale politiek* (Dordrecht, 1987).

⁴ S. J. Rutgers to the Executive of the Comintern, Amersfoort, 26 June 1920, Comintern Archives/CPN Archives (hereafter, Comintern/CPN), RCCHIDNI, 489/1/30. On the visit of CPN representatives to the archives: Joop Morriën, "Telegrammen uit de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Cominternarchieff", *Politiek en Cultuur*, October 1990. More about Sneevliet in: Max Perthus, *Henk Sneevliet. Revolutionair-socialist in Europa en Azië* (Nijmegen, 1976); Fritjof Tichelman, *Henk Sneevliet. Een politieke biografie* (Amsterdam, 1974). More about Rutgers in: G. C. Trincher Rutgers, K. Trincher, *Rutgers. Zijn leven en streven in Holland, Indonesië, Amerika en Rusland* (Moscow, 1974).

⁵ *Der Zweite Kongress der Kommunistischen Internationale* (Hamburg, 1921). In the preface to the minutes it says (Moscow, 1920), that because of a lack of stenographers some parts of the speeches could be missing or not quite correct. In Soviet historiography about the congress Lenin's view is emphasized. Towards the end of the seventies a series of three studies was published, *Komintern i Vostok*. English translations, some rather abridged: R. A. Ulyanovski (ed.), *The Comintern and the East. The Struggle for the Leninist Strategy and Tactics in National Liberation Movements* (Moscow, 1979) (A. B. Reznikov pays a lot of attention to Indonesia); R. A. Ulyanovski (ed.), *The Comintern and the East. A Critique of the Critique* (Moscow, 1981) (a chapter of A. Yu. Drugov: "Relations between the Comintern and the Communist Party of Indonesia"); A. B. Reznikov, *Comintern and the East. Strategy and Tactics in the National Liberation Movement* (Moscow, 1984).

3. Islam

One point in the theses, which did not draw much attention during the discussion, was to create problems for the Indonesian Communist Party in its relations with the Islamic organisations. The theses stated: "It is necessary to struggle against Pan-Islamism and the Pan-Asian movement and similar currents of opinion which attempt to combine the struggle for liberation from European and American imperialism with a strengthening of Turkish and Japanese imperialism and of the nobility, the large landowners, the clergy etc."⁶

One of the peculiarities of the Indonesian anti-colonial movement around 1920 was the cooperation of the Marxist/Communist movement with the Islamic organisation Union of Islam (*Sarekat Islam*; SI). Indonesian Communists like Musso, Alimin, Semaun and Darsono started their political life in the SI and were for a certain period active in both the SI and the PKI. In his contribution to the Second Comintern Congress Sneevliet pointed out that the SI-program appealed for struggle against "sinful capitalism". In a somewhat optimistic way he concluded, that in the SI stronger "socialist tendencies" always made the running. He advocated cooperation between PKI and SI and did not elaborate on the point about Pan Islamism.⁷

In Indonesia, however, the anti-Communist faction in the SI labelled the Comintern "anti-Islam". The PKI decided that it would do its best to explain just what was meant by Pan-Islamism in the Comintern theses: "however", it added, "we cannot do anything else to prevent the demagogic use of those theses". Obviously there was some discussion at the extraordinary PKI congress in December 1920, before the decision was made to join the Comintern.⁸

Joining the Comintern meant, for the PKI, that Indonesian Communists started to participate in Communist congresses abroad. Darsono travelled in 1921 to Moscow for the Third Congress of the Comintern. Also representing the PKI was the Dutch teacher Jan Cornelis (Jan) Stam, as has become clear from a just discovered letter.⁹ After the Comintern Congress Darsono participated in the congress of the CPN, which at his suggestion adopted a resolution against racism. The CPN, just like its precursor the Social Democratic Party (*Sociaal-Democratische Partij*; SDP), demanded immediate independence for Indonesia under the slogan: "Indonesia, free from Holland".¹⁰

In March 1922 Ibrahim Tan Malaka, then acting chairman of the PKI, was, just like Piet Bergsma, deported from Indonesia and spent several months in the Netherlands. Parliamentary elections were imminent and the CPN placed Tan Malaka third behind David Wijnkoop and Willem van Ravesteijn on the election list. Malaka campaigned in many cities all over the Netherlands, but the CPN gained just two seats.¹¹

The Fourth Congress of the Comintern in a somewhat extended way discussed the colonial question. Tan Malaka, present for the PKI, and Van Ravesteijn, who represented the CPN, raised the problem of Islam and Pan-Islamism. In his memoirs Malaka later noted that sometimes the discussion was fierce but that after all

⁶ McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, pp. 60s.; Morriën, *Indonesië los van Holland*, p. 39; Drugov, *Relations between the Comintern and CPI*, p. 387.

⁷ *Der Zweite Kongreß der Kommunistischen Internationale*, p. 345.

⁸ McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, pp. 73s.

⁹ Joop Morriën, "*Aroen*"-Jan Stam, *rebel in Indonesië en Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1984). In this book I wrote about Stam's visit to the Third Comintern Congress, not as delegate but as a friend of the CPN delegation (p. 100). In the Wijnkoop Archives in Moscow I found a letter from Stam (Leeuwarden, 4 May 1921) with the following phrase: "I received a letter from India, that they are going to delegate me to Moscow. However, don't ever let the editorial staff of *De Tribune* mention it, because otherwise it may happen that they will never allow me to go back to the East. At the moment - Thursday morning - I am still waiting for information from the Central Committee about my date of departure and so on. I have not heard anything from you. Please inform me soon."

¹⁰ Morriën, *Indonesië los van Holland*, pp. 30s. For the history of the CPN and its relations with the Comintern I refer to the contribution of Wim Pelt in this volume.

¹¹ Poeze, *Tan Malaka*, pp. 188-211.

he did not get an answer to all his questions.¹²

In Indonesia the discussion inside the SI between the left- and the right-wings concerning the PKI sharpened. In 1921 left-wing members established their own organisation, the Union of the Red Sarekat Islam (*Sarekat Islam Merah*; SIM). Relations between SI and PKI became delicate. Obviously the Comintern's leading body several times discussed the situation in Indonesia. The Soviet historian A. B. Reznikov mentioned a letter sent in January 1923 by the ECCI to the chairman of the *Sarekat Islam*, Omar Said Tjokroaminoto, setting out Communist policy with regard to the national liberation movements everywhere, including Islamic countries. The letter admitted awareness that Comintern policy did not fully coincide with the cause of the SI, but felt that should not hinder a joint anti-imperialist struggle. The unity of the capitalists of the world should be countered by the unity of the nationalists and revolutionary Muslims of the world.¹³ According to Reznikov, PKI leader Aliarcham "on behalf of the party" reacted negatively to the letter. Aliarcham was active in the SIM, which at his proposal in 1923 changed its name to Union of the People (*Sarekat Rakjat*, SR). He was elected chairman of the SR.¹⁴ According to Ruth McVey the reaffirmation by the Fourth Congress of the Comintern of its objection to the policy of Pan-Islamism did not mean that the International disapproved of the PKI-alliance with the SI. "Quite the contrary the Indonesian bloc within was pointed out at the congress as an example of the strategy that should be employed throughout the East."¹⁵ In 1923, however, the executive of the SI - partly following a suggestion by the Dutch government authorities - declared double membership of the PKI and the SI impermissible.

4. Arrests

The Dutch colonial power reacted more and more harshly against the growing anti-colonial movement, with arrests of progressive Indonesian journalists, political activists and trade-unionists, more especially the Communists among them, as for instance during the railway workers' strike in May 1923 on Java. During the Third Congress of the PKI in Bandung (3 and 4 March 1923), Semaun, the Chairman, pointed out that only three of the eight members of the central leading organ could be present: empty chairs were placed on the rostrum for those who were under arrest or exiled. Soon after the Congress Semaun also became a victim of the persecution. Being Chairman of the Association of Rail and Tram Employees (*Vereeniging van Spoor- en Trampersoneel*; VSTP), on 8 May he was arrested because of the growing unrest. After his arrest a general strike started, which brought no direct results. Semaun was deported and arrived in Amsterdam in September 1923.

Semaun became Chairman of the "Bureau Holland of the PKI" in which Bergsma and Brandsteder (also a Dutch Communist deported from Indonesia) were members. The Bureau maintained contacts with Indonesia and the Comintern, Semaun arranged for some Indonesians to follow a course of political study in Moscow. The Netherlands became "a major base" for PKI activities (Ruth McVey). The Bureau Holland of the PKI started a monthly magazine partly in Indonesian and partly in Dutch under the title *Pandu Merah/Roode Gids* (Red Pilot). The journal, first issued in Amsterdam in May 1924, was edited by Sneevliet, Bergsma and Semaun. A quotation from the journal dated 15 July 1924: "The oppressed peoples must maintain contact with the Communist International because they and the Comintern have one and the same enemy - international capitalism and international imperialism".¹⁶

In July 1924 the Chairman of the CPN, David Wijnkoop, and Semaun participated in the Fifth Comintern Congress and both were elected to the ECCI. When in Moscow they and the Comintern representative Raskolnikoff (Petroff) signed a common statement "About the work of the foreign bureau of the PKI". The

¹² Morriën, *Indonesië los van Holland*, pp. 42s. Tan Malaka, *Dari pendjara ke pendjara* (Djogjakarta, s.a.), p. 101.

¹³ Reznikov, *The Comintern and the East*, pp. 108s.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 110. Aliarcham - *sedikit tentang riwayat hidup dan perdjaoangannya* (Djakarta 1964). In this short autobiography the letter to the Comintern is not mentioned.

¹⁵ McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, p. 162.

¹⁶ *Pandu Merah*, Vol. 1, No. 3. In the article "Peristiwa 2 didalam dunia" (Events in the world) a comparison is made between the Socialist and Communist International.

statement said, that in order to broaden and deepen the work of the PKI and to establish the closest contact between it and the international Communist movement, the existence of the bureau "is considered both desirable and expedient". It stated, that the foreign bureau published a periodical organ, pamphlets and leaflets, to get the Javanese workers and sailors in Holland, as well as the Javanese comrades in Indonesia, acquainted with the International, and particularly with the European Communist movement. Members of the bureau were, for the PKI, Semaun and Bergsma (interesting to note that Bergsma was regarded as a representative of the PKI) and, for the CPN, Wijnkoop. Wijnkoop had the right of veto if he should find the decisions adopted by the bureau "at variance with the general political line of the CP of Holland"; in such cases the question was to be immediately submitted to the Eastern Department of the ECCI for decision. It was explicitly stated: "In decisions on questions of finance, technical arrangements and communications the representative of the Dutch CP does not possess the right of veto". In order to stimulate a close contact on the basis of reciprocity, a PKI representative was to become a member of the Central Committee of the CPN and a CPN representative, of the CC of the PKI.¹⁷ Semaun already belonged to the Central Committee of the CPN. Because of the developments in Indonesia a CPN member could not be a member of the CC of the PKI.

Sneevliet did not agree with the statement. In 1923 he had already had several quarrels with Semaun, whom he accused of being "left" and who had refused to give the Dutch trade-unionist Langkemper, specially in Indonesia on the initiative of Sneevliet, a function in the VSTP.¹⁸ In a rather long letter to the Eastern Department of the Comintern and to the Profintern,

signed as Maring, he protested that Brandsteder had been replaced and that Wijnkoop had a veto "in all political questions" (which, by the way, was not the case). Roy had told him that, although Roy thought that it should be, the work of the foreign bureau was not connected with the work of the Paris Colonial Bureau of the Comintern for the British and French Colonies. The connection with Indonesia was to be kept up through the Dutch Bureau and southern China, although, according to Sneevliet, the situation in the Dutch East Indies was fairly comparable with the situation in the French and British colonies and not at all with that in China or Japan. Moreover "comrade Semaun will now in practice more often make decisions independently, but he is not sufficiently educated for this, he has no straight line." Sneevliet wrote that he had resigned as editor of *Red Pilot*. He remained secretary of the Colonial Commission of the CPN.¹⁹

Semaun answered with an even longer letter to the Eastern Department. Roy had never told him of his view. The situation in Indonesia was not the same as in India nor, of course, the same as in China. "But in fact from a practical point of view it is necessary to keep our connection going via South China and via Holland. South China because more than half a million people from this country live in Indonesia, mainly as workers. Close connections between these Chinese workers and the Indonesian proletariat is of very great importance." The connection through Holland was very necessary. "The postal connection, the connection with our Javanese sailors, the political one and others are of great importance there for the revolutionary movement, so long as we do not export to Indonesia the sectarianism and the left-sickness of the Dutch so-called 'revolutionary' movement [...]." Wijnkoop's veto-right was a limited one and no danger. Semaun mentioned a mandate he had received from the PKI for the bureau.²⁰

Meanwhile the Dutch East Indies government, apparently as a result of a decision for sharper anti-Communist action, banned the import of the journal *Red Pilot* through the mail. It also took to arresting seamen found smuggling the organ into Indonesia, and the mortality rate of couriers was so high that after a few months the editors decided to give up.

At the fourth PKI congress in June 1924 it was decided to transfer the party headquarters from Semarang to the chief city of the colony, Batavia (now Jakarta). According to the leadership the party had 2,320 members and the SR, regarded as a mass-organisation of the party, some 100,000. Alibasah Winata was elected

¹⁷ Statement (without title), Comintern Archives/PKI Archives (hereafter Comintern/PKI), RCChIDNI, 495/154/701.

¹⁸ Joop Morriën, "CPN steunde reis Musso en Tamzil", *Politiek en Cultuur*, June 1991, pp. 164s.

¹⁹ H. Maring to the Eastern Department of the Comintern and the Profintern, Amsterdam, 29 October 1924, Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/154/735.

²⁰ Semaun to the Eastern Department of the Comintern and the Profintern, Moscow, 15 November 1924, Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/154/735.

as chairman, but five months later he was arrested. So the party decided on a new congress of the PKI and the SR in December and elected Sardjono as new Chairman of the party. The relationship between the PKI and the SR remained rather unclear. A lot of peasants were organised in the SR, but in 1924 Aliarcham declared that peasants were mainly a reactionary force and the party should concentrate on the proletariat, in his view the workers. So in December 1924 the party decided gradually to dissolve the SR.

5. Complicated Connections

Communication was a very complicated matter for the Indonesian Communists in exile, for the Comintern, the PKI and the CPN. Ships with mail were several weeks on their way, sailors with more confidential letters had to find time and opportunity for contacts. According to Reznikov in April 1925 the Fifth Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI adopted a resolution on the PKI-work in Java without knowing the latest PKI congress decisions concerning the SR. In its resolution the Fifth Plenum concluded that, "during the last two years" the PKI, while having had some good results, "has not sufficiently developed into a purely class proletarian party" and that, on the other hand, it did not provide the country's general national revolutionary movement with slogans which might have led that movement "along the broad path of anti-imperialist struggle". It called the SR an organisation which had grafted itself onto the Communist Party and "has retarded the latter's growth into a purely class proletarian party". The comrades on Java still regarded the national revolutionary movement from the standpoint of the 1919, 1920 and 1921 movement for liberation, when the anti-imperialist struggle in the East was directly stimulated by the October Revolution and the proletarian revolutionary movement in the West. Owing to the geographical isolation of Java and the lack of proper contact with the Comintern, the comrades continued "to utilise for Java the slogans of Soviet government, which were useless for the purpose of rallying the national revolutionary party, the Sarekat Rakjat, the masses of the peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie". The Fifth Plenum advised separating the SR and the PKI organisationally - "while retaining our leadership and while our members take part in Sarekat Rakjat organisations".²¹

The Eastern department of the ECCI sent the resolution to Tan Malaka, who was at the time Comintern plenipotentiary for the countries of East Asia. The department informed the CC of the PKI of its decision to organise a bureau for translating Lenin's works into Indonesian, which did not result in publishing Lenin's works in Indonesian.²²

The position of the SR became very difficult and decisions by the authorities meant in actual fact a prohibition. The Dutch Minister for the Colonies was looking for ways of also banning the PKI. The terror increased. Hadji Misbach, a devoted Muslim and Communist who led strikes and sugar-workers' resistance around Solo, was arrested and, with his family, exiled to the island of New Guinea. In Juli 1925 the PKI leadership had begun seriously to think of organising an insurrection in the near future with the aim of seizing power. The most important meetings were held in the town of Prambanan in the middle of Java, between Solo and Yogyakarta.

There is undeniable evidence, that two representatives of the PKI, Musso and Alimin, were sent to Moscow to discuss the situation and ask for advice and support. According to Reznikov they arrived in July 1926 with CC mandates to have talks with the Comintern Executive. Semaun and Darsono in talks (in 1959) with Ruth McVey named mid-June 1926 as their date of arrival. This could be true, because there exists a letter "To the Eastern Department of the Comintern", dated 14 June 1926, signed "The Indonesian delegates of the PKI".²³ According to this letter, "In the month of November, 1925, an illegal conference was held at Solo attended by members of the Central Committee, representatives of the most important sections of the party, Sarekat Rakjat organisations and representatives of trade unions to consider the following: a) that government prohibition of the

²¹ Reznikov, *The Comintern and the East*, p. 112. Report to the Comintern: Conference of the PKI and the Sarekat Rakjat in Jogjakarta on 11/16 December 1924, Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/154/734.

²² "Resolution of the Colonial Commission of the Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI on the work of the Communist Party in Java", Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/163/184; Reznikov, *The Comintern and the East*, p. 113.

²³ McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, p. 485; Reznikov, *The Comintern and the East*, p. 485. Letter of the "Indonesian delegation of the PKI" to the Eastern Department of the Comintern, Moscow, 14 June 1926, Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/154/742.

Sarekat Rakjat has made its transformation into an independent national revolutionary party impossible; b) that the Sarekat Islam is totally ruined; c) that the parties and the red trade unions also have been forbidden." Apart from this people were irritated by the banishment of PKI-leaders and by tax increases and so the conference decided to prepare "illegally a general strike with the following demands: the release of all political prisoners; freedom of the press, speech and assembly; a real People's Assembly with universal suffrage; a general revision of taxes and lower taxes for the poor peasants; a general increase of wages." The conference decided to request support and advice for this plan from the Comintern and to send two delegates to Moscow "to explain the seriousness of the political situation in Indonesia". Objectively - according to the letter - "the party feels strong enough to meet reaction with strong resistance and rebellion. The party's power is demonstrated by the list herewith annexed." In that additional list the total number of PKI and Sarekat Rakjat members was specified in towns and regions, the membership of different trade unions "under direct control of the PKI" was given and a survey of fortifications and barracks with soldiers. The party believed that there was great discontent in the army. According to the list the party had 8,000 members, the SR 100,850 members and the PKI-controlled trade unions 23,195 members.

According to Ruth McVey on 22 December 1925, a conclave of PKI-leaders at the Semarang VSTP headquarters made the first move towards adopting an illegal position by outlining plans for an underground organisation. It seems that the conference consisted of about eleven top party leaders. Sardjono opened it and he and other speakers explained that matters had reached a point where it was necessary to make concrete plans for insurrection. Sardjono suggested that the action begin with strikes and culminate in armed violence, with attempts being made to draw both the peasants and soldiers into the revolt on the Communist side. No date for the insurrection was fixed. It had been decided that the first armed outbreak would take place in Padang, headquarters of the powerful West Sumatran Communist group, after which violence would be extended to Java, in accordance with the strategy of Tan Malaka. The purpose was to draw Dutch forces away from Java and give the revolt there a better chance.²⁴

Alimin and Musso were not present at that Semarang meeting, because they had left Indonesia earlier. First they went to Singapore in order to meet more Indonesian Communists and discuss the situation. They waited quite a long time for Tan Malaka, who, according to Musso, offered all kinds of pretexts for not coming to Singapore and in the end stayed away. In any case, Tan Malaka was aware of the plans and in letters to the Comintern and the CPN wrote that he did not agree with them. Musso always blamed Tan Malaka for not coming to Singapore and discussing the matter.²⁵

6. "People's Republic"

The Comintern had for some time been eager to become better acquainted with the situation in Indonesia and in April/May discussed sending a special representative. In the Indian sub-secretariat (6 May 1926), the candidature of "comrade Thomas" was rejected and the candidature of "comrade Miller" was provisionally accepted. Roy, Darsono and Semaun were to have conversations with Miller to ascertain his suitability for his mission. A letter of instructions was to be drawn up for the representative which, at the same time, could be sent to the PKI should it become impossible to send anyone. At the same meeting a speech of the Communist member of the Dutch parliament, Louis Leonardus Hendrikus (Louis) de Visser was discussed, and the Information Department was instructed to prepare an article for the *Inprecorr* on De Visser's speech and the attitude of the Dutch Social Democrats to the colonial situation. The Information Department had to prepare materials much more thoroughly than for the *Inprecorr*, "this material then to be sent to China, Japan etc."²⁶

On 13 May it was decided to send Miller as the representative of the Executive to Indonesia. He was to leave in two weeks. A program of action for the PKI and instructions for the representative were to be drawn up before his departure. Darsono, Semaun, Voitinsky and Roy were to draw up these documents before

²⁴ McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, pp. 311-313.

²⁵ Letters of P. Bergsma to the ECCI, dated 28 May 1926 and 6 June 1926, Comintern/CPN, RCChIDNI, 495/172/70.

²⁶ Minutes of the Indian sub-secretariat, 6 May 1926, Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/154/706.

the next meeting of the secretariat.²⁷ On 3 June it was decided that the "draft of comrade Roy" be accepted as a basis for the program, but that the draft program be brought before the Presidium "because the divergence of views is very fundamental". Semaun and Darsono were to write up their point of view in as clear and concise a manner as possible for presentation to the Presidium. From the minutes is not clear what kind of divergences existed. There is a call for a letter criticizing the past mistakes of the leading Indonesian comrades regarding the national liberation movement, the relationship of the PKI with the sympathetic mass organisations and the leftist deviation of the Central Committee. This letter of instruction is to be given to the representative of the ECCI, who is to make sure that a thorough discussion of these questions takes place inside the ranks of the party.²⁸

Ruth McVey mentioned a letter from Roy (10 June 1926) to Sneevliet informing him of the Comintern's concern about the situation in Indonesia. The Comintern thought it so alarming, that it would send one of its own observers to find out what was going on. Communications with the Indonesian party, Roy complained, were almost non-existent, and there was good reason to believe that the PKI was under an ultra-left leadership that was planning a putsch. This suspicion was supported by letters from Tan Malaka received a month before and by reports from some Javanese Communists that Bergsma had sent on to the Comintern.²⁹

Miller did not leave and instead Alimin and Musso arrived in Moscow. On 22 July 1926 the first exchange of opinions took place in the Eastern Commission. Alimin, Musso, Darsono and Semaun represented the PKI. Alimin said that the party conference at Solo had decided that the only effective way of countering imperialist repression was a violent offensive to organise an insurrection and that they had come to gain the Communist International's sanction for their plan. Roy and Murphy raised a lot of questions. Semaun at one moment declared: "If the Comintern disagrees, there will still be an uprising and a movement, independent of the Communist Party, and the Comintern will be weakened thereby." Roy concluded: "The position is this. The CC of the Indonesian party has decided in favour of insurrection, and sent two comrades to put this decision before the Comintern. The comrades maintain that there is a revolutionary situation. Taking this for granted, we must find out if sufficient preparation has been made so that the party is in a position to lead these forces of revolution."³⁰

On 29 July Roy started with the remark that, after careful examination of the reports and minutes of previous discussions, he had come to the conclusion that some more materials and some more information on the whole situation were needed. "We must consider the case more carefully. Our decision should be characterized not by acceptance or rejection of the plan, but by our giving exhaustive political direction to the party as how the revolutionary discontent can be mobilized and given organised form, preparatory to the eventual insurrection." The discussion did not come to any conclusion.³¹

Ruth McVey wrote, based on an interview with Semaun, that Zinoviev and the other representatives of the Trotskyist left encouraged Musso and Alimin in their project, for they were eager to strengthen their influence among the foreign parties and to disprove Stalin's contention that the time was not proper for proletarian revolution in the East. Musso and Alimin, who had as little idea of what was going on in Russia as the Comintern did of events in Indonesia, were at first attracted by this support; but after having absorbed some advice from their more knowledgeable compatriots and seen just what the Soviet situation was, they changed their minds about backing the Trotskyist horse.³² Reznikov mentioned several meetings between the Indonesian Communists and the ECCI. At the first one, on 9 August 1926, it was decided to prepare a resolution

²⁷ Minutes of the sub-secretariat for India and Indonesia, 13 May 1926, Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/154/706.

²⁸ Minutes of the national secretariat for India and Indonesia, 3 June 1926, Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/154/706.

²⁹ McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, p. 335.

³⁰ Report of the discussion, entitled "Indonesian Conference, July 22, 1926", Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/154/742.

³¹ The discussion at the meeting of the Indonesian sub-secretariat, 29 July 1926, Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/154/706.

³² McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, p. 337.

on the Indonesian question. The draft was adopted by the ECCI Presidium on 17 September. It formulated the task as: to overthrow imperialist and feudalist tyranny; to set up a government consisting of exploited people in the shape of a "people's republic"; to form a national-revolutionary bloc and ensure the proletariat's political leadership of it. The Presidium session was attended by Palmiro Togliatti, Dmitri Manuilski, Otto Kuusinen, Sen Katayama and Vittorio Codovilla as well as by all the members of the Indonesian party delegation.³³

Musso and Alimin departed for home. According to Reznikov on leaving Moscow they did not inform the Comintern that they had no intention of heeding its advice; however, "their position was precisely that. Soon after the talk in the Executive Committee, the two men, without coordinating their action with the Comintern, sent their party Central Committee permission to proceed with the uprising that was being prepared."³⁴ Musso and Alimin, however, declared that they arrived in Singapore in December 1926 after the uprising in Indonesia had started and were arrested. After their release they returned to Moscow.

7. The uprising

The uprising broke out on Java in November 1926. On the 12th of that month in Batavia Communists tried to occupy strategic positions, but after two days the colonial authorities were fully in control of the capital. In other parts of Java fights continued for several weeks. The ECCI proclaimed a manifesto on 20 November saying: "The Communist International welcomes the revolutionary struggle of the peoples of Indonesia and pledges its complete support. Workers of the world! Do not permit the Dutch imperialists to drown the struggle for freedom of Indonesia in blood! Hasten to the aid of the Indonesian fighters! Organize mass-meetings, express your sympathy for the insurrection in Java, and protest against imperialist terror. Organize demonstrations in front of the Dutch Embassies and Consulates and demand freedom for the Indonesian people and the military evacuation of the colony. Surpressed peoples of the world! The insurrectionary Indonesians are your advance guard, they express the will to freedom which is your common property. Do everything in your power to support them in your struggle."³⁵

In the Netherlands on 16 November, only one day after the first news-items about an insurrection had reached the Netherlands, *De Tribune* (the CPN daily) printed already an appeal co-signed by the CPN and the trade-union Netherlands Labour Syndicate (*Nederlands Arbeids Syndicaat*, NAS) of which Sneevliet was chairman. The appeal was entitled "The Warning Shot". Here is an excerpt: "It is deliberate deceit to speak, as does the bourgeois press, of a Communist plot. It is not a question of a small number of persons, but of a rising resistance from the people. Deceit, which has to create an atmosphere to justify new violent counter-measures; deceit, which will prevent a correct judgement of the nature of this first big resistance on Java."³⁶ The CPN and NAS sent a telegram to the governor-general (the highest Dutch government-official in Indonesia) declaring that they considered the insurrection on Java "a result of the mismanagement of the former governor-general Fock, who had resigned. The provocative attitude of the authorities had caused these expressions of desperate resistance. Those really guilty are the former governor-general and his advisers."³⁷

On 22 November started the Seventh Enlarged ECCI Plenum started. It was attended by Semaun and De Visser. The Czech delegate, Šmeral, speaking for the ECCI, criticized the CPN for its supposedly inadequate reaction to the insurrection and for suggesting that the revolt was provoked by the government of the Dutch East Indies: "We are informed that the Party even tolerates in its midst a trend of thought implying that the great mass uprising in Java was the work of provocateurs." Moreover he suggested that the party had remained passive and only proposed a mixed investigation committee (including Social Democrats) be sent to Java. De Visser rejected

³³ Reznikov, *The Comintern and the East*, pp. 120s.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Morriën, *Indonesië los van Holland*, p. 57. On page 53 I posed the question of whether a part of the confusion was not a result of the Comintern program itself. The constitution said that the goal of the Comintern was by all means, including arms, to fight for the downfall of the international bourgeoisie and the founding of an International Soviet Republic.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

the accusation of passivity, but also said: "How did it happen that the Dutch party did not immediately take up a sharp and correct standpoint? When the first reports concerning the uprising were received, the Party was of the opinion that this was another provoked struggle. But once the Party realized that the Javanese workers had actually started an armed uprising, it did everything in its power to support them." De Visser moreover reminded the ECCI that the Organisation Bureau of the Comintern itself had helped draw up the minimum program of demands for Indonesia, which the CPN had presented when the revolt broke out.³⁸

Obviously there had been some discussion among the CPN leaders. Sneevliet, who was secretary of the Colonial Commission of the CPN, wrote a letter to the Comintern without consulting Bergsma. He summed up several demands and strongly recommended sending De Visser, who had been a member of parliament since May 1925, to Java to take part in a committee of investigation.³⁹ It seems that, in the Comintern, especially the words "desperate resistance" in the telegram CPN and NAS sent to the governor-general were criticized. Bergsma blamed Sneevliet, who had drafted the telegram, for those words. He had telephoned the draft text to Bergsma, who did not agree - as he wrote to the Comintern - with these words.⁴⁰ Personal relations in the Central Committee were strained for some time for several reasons. At the end of November 1926 Sneevliet left the Central Committee and, in 1927, the party. He was replaced as secretary of the Colonial Commission he was replaced by Gijs van Munster, who had worked as a teacher in Indonesia, was expelled in 1923 and knew leading Indonesian Communists personally.⁴¹

The 1926 uprising was dramatic, tragic and heroic and is looked upon as a milestone in the history of the PKI and Indonesia. D. N. Aidit (from 1950 to 1965 leader of the PKI) in speeches concerning the party's history dealt several times with the uprising. He said: "The disease of 'Left-wing 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 [...]. The 1926 revolt ended in defeat for the PKI 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."⁴²

8. PKI Banned

After the 1926 insurrection the PKI was banned, several Communists were hanged and 13,000 arrested; thousands of them deported to the far away island of New Guinea, where they were imprisoned in the camp Boven-Digoel, still a notorious name from those days. Since the PKI could no longer work legally, its relations with the Comintern became even more problematic. Leaders such as Musso, Alimin, Semaun and Darsono were in exile in Moscow and Tan Malaka was somewhere in Asia. All were active, although at that time Tan Malaka had most probably already broken with the Comintern. In 1927, may be even in 1926, Tan Malaka had established his own party, the People's Party of Indonesia (*Partai Rakjat Indonesia*; PARI), which attacked the Comintern. Musso, Semaun and Darsono visited the Netherlands rather frequently. Semaun had actually already travelled to the Netherlands in the middle of November 1926 for consultations with the Central Committee of the CPN and with the Indonesian student organisation Association Indonesia (*Perhimpunan Indonesia*; PI).

At the beginning of the twenties the Indonesian student organisation, founded in 1908 mainly as an organisation for social contacts, chose to support national independence and resistance against Dutch colonialism. It changed its original name, Indian Association (*Indische Vereeniging*), into *Perhimpunan Indonesia* and called

³⁸ McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, p. 348.

³⁹ H. Sneevliet to N. Bucharin, M. Roy and A. Losovski, Amsterdam, 17 November 1926, Comintern/CPN, PCChIDNI, 495/172/70.

⁴⁰ P. Bergsma to the ECCI, 1 December 1926, Comintern/CPN, RCChIDNI, 495/172/70.

⁴¹ About the life of Gijs van Munster: Joop Morriën, "Gijs van Munster (1883-1945). Strijder tegen kolonialisme en fascisme", *Cahiers over de geschiedenis van de CPN*, no. 10 (1985), p. 115.

⁴² D. N. Aidit, *Problems of the Indonesian Revolution* (Djakarta, 1963), pp. 69, 71.

its organ *Indonesia Merdeka (Free Indonesia)*.⁴³ The PI became more radicalised and in 1925 sent "a resolution of support" to the Comintern Executive, which said the organisation supported the Comintern tactics concerning the national liberation movement. Indonesian students, such as Iwa Kusumasumantri, travelled to Moscow to study politics. However, the relationship between the PI and the Comintern, the PKI and the CPN developed some twists and turns at the end of the twenties.

In November 1926, obviously without consulting the Comintern, the PKI or the CPN, Semaun submitted to Mohammad Hatta, then chairman of the PI, an "organizational plan for our national movement" involving the formation of a new nationalist party in Indonesia after the annihilation of the PKI. Hatta rejected this plan and submitted his own ideas, which resulted in a convention signed by Hatta and Semaun on 5 December 1926.⁴⁴ The Comintern and both parties were astonished. The ECCI condemned Semaun's action as capitulationist. On the other hand the Dutch government accused the PI leaders of connections with the Comintern and on 27 September 1927 arrested Hatta, Pamontjak, Ali Sastroamidjojo and Abdul Madjid. After half a year of custody all four were acquitted.⁴⁵

The Dutch government was obviously very worried by the developments in Indonesia and instructed the "General Criminal (Detective) Force" under the Attorney General of the High Court of Justice in the Netherlands East Indies to investigate thoroughly all extremist, Communist and nationalist activities. In 1927 there appeared - top secret and for restricted distribution - the first of a series of "political police reports" compiled by the General Criminal Force. The reports were based on articles in the press and decisions by the Comintern, the PKI-leaders, the CPN, the Profintern and Indonesian nationalist parties, but also on reports from spies in various organisations.⁴⁶

9. The Sixth Comintern Congress

A delegation of the PKI participated in the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in August 1928. This Congress predicted - in retrospective wrongly - the growth of proletarian revolutions and in so doing created a gap between the Communists and the national democrats and the bourgeois-nationalists.

The PKI delegation was composed of six Communists, some using pseudonyms. In historiography there exists a difference of opinion as to the composition of the delegation. Kahin maintained, that Tan Malaka participated under the pseudonym "Alphonso" and sharply criticized Bukharin. Poeze, however, stated that Tan Malaka was not present, but that some historians mistakenly decided that "Alphonso" was he.⁴⁷

At the Congress Musso was elected to the ECCI, while Semaun was not re-elected. Darsono was elected as a candidate-member. According to Poeze Tan Malaka, although not present, was also elected as a candidate-member. But according to another publication the person in question was not Tan Malaka but a South African delegate called Malakka. It is hardly likely indeed that the PKI was allowed two candidates.⁴⁸

In the aftermath of the Sixth Congress a discussion was started in the Dutch Communist press (as this

⁴³ John Ingleton, *Perhimpunan Indonesia and the Indonesian Nationalist Movement 1923-1928* (Monash papers on south-east Asia, no. 4, 1975). Ingleton refers to official records in the archives of the former Netherlands Colonial Ministry.

⁴⁴ For the full text of both statements, see *ibid.*, pp. 80-85.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61. Ali Sastroamidjojo in his memoirs *Milestones on my journey* (Queensland, 1979) described his time in jail. He suggests (p. 35) that Dutch police in Indonesia recovered the secret statements.

⁴⁶ Harry Poeze (ed.), *Politiek-politioneële overzichten van Nederlandsch-Indië, Deel I (1927-1928)* (The Hague, 1982), *Deel II (1929-1930)* (Dordrecht, 1983), *Deel III (1931-1934)* (Dordrecht, 1988). The reports were made up to 1938. Part IV is in preparation.

⁴⁷ Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, p. 85; Poeze, *Tan Malaka*, p. 357. I saw in the PKI archives the credentials for the delegation. "Alphonso" did not give his real name, but gave his age as 22, PKI member since 1925 and student.

⁴⁸ Horst Schumacher, *Die Kommunistische Internationale 1919-1943* (Berlin, 1989) contains a list with members and candidate-members elected. For 1928 it mentions Malakka (two k's) for South Africa.

was a legal possibility) about the course of the Indonesian revolution. Both Indonesian and Dutch Communists participated in this discussion. Points of difference were, whether an Indonesian national bourgeoisie existed and what should be the attitude towards the nationalist organisations. The Comintern published a resolution as did the CPN congress in 1929. The resolutions sharply criticized the Social Democrats for not demanding immediate freedom for Indonesia and the colonial peoples in general. A criticism that, by the way, was also made by Hatta.⁴⁹ In the parliamentary elections of 1929 Darsono had the second place behind De Visser on the CPN list, Musso the fourth and Alimin the sixth. The CPN asked the Comintern for a gramophone record with the voices of Alimin and Musso to use in the election campaign.⁵⁰

In 1927 the Indonesian Nationalist Party (*Partai Nasional Indonesia*; PNI) was established in Indonesia soon with Sukarno as its most outstanding leader. Aidit pointed out that, as their party was forbidden, PKI cadres and members joined the PNI and other mass organisations. At the time there was not yet a new central PKI leadership. In his activities Sukarno sometimes referred to Marxism and developed the idea of cooperation between nationalism, Islam and Marxism. Relations between the Comintern and the nationalist movements, not only the Indonesian ones, became strained after the Sixth Comintern Congress.

For some time the League against Colonialism and Imperialism had been in contact with some counterparts in Indonesia. The PI, except for a short interval, participated in the League.⁵¹

10. The Musso-Darsono Conflict

A conflict arose among the Indonesian Communist leaders, which ended with the expulsion of Darsono from the Comintern in December 1930. In 1929 Darsono had travelled to Berlin, where he stayed and established contact with nationalists in Indonesia. He complained about not receiving any expenses from the Comintern. In March 1930 Musso sent to the Eastern Department a "short summary of articles" written by Darsono for four Indonesian papers: "the *Darmonkondo*, the organ of the loyal nationalist organisation *Budi-Untomo*, in the *Bintang Timur*, the organ of the petty bourgeois *Parada-Harahap*, in the *Percha Serlatan* (Southern Sumatra), edited by the former SI leader Bratanata; and the *Persatuan Indonesia*, the periodical of the *Partai Nasional Indonesia*." In those articles Darsono was, for instance, indulging in polemics against the opinion that the native bourgeoisie was growing. Musso wrote that "the best way to cure him of his wrong conception, which can lead to serious opportunism, is to make his relations with the Comintern closer, to force him to write articles not only in the Indonesian papers, but also in the Dutch and German Communist papers, so that we can control him more closely. I am sure that he will refuse to come to Moscow, therefore he must be obliged to become a member of the CP of Germany."⁵²

At the request of Musso the political secretary of the CPN, Cees Schalker, visited Darsono in Berlin. He talked to him for a long time - as he wrote to Musso - but Darsono "became very angry and stated that Father [i.e. Moscow] has entirely neglected not only him but also T.M. [Tan Malaka]. Besides he is not in agreement with the policy of Father at home." Schalker concluded, that "business is not so good as we have expected and we shall have to take tactful steps to prevent our brother from taking wrong steps."⁵³

In a letter to Alimin (11 May 1930) Darsono mentioned that he wrote a lot of articles for Indonesia, he could not write quite openly, but readers would understand him. "Comrade Manovar [Musso] may write for

⁴⁹ Joop Morriën, "Kanttekeningen bij twee documenten over Indonesië", *Cahiers over de geschiedenis van de CPN*, no. 2 (1979), p. 7; Mohammad Hatta, *Verspreide Geschriften* (Jakarta and Amsterdam, 1952), pp. 445-449.

⁵⁰ Morriën, "Telegrammen uit de Tweede Wereldoorlog", p. 253.

⁵¹ R. T. J. van Vugt, "Het belang van de liga tegen imperialisme, tegen koloniale overheersing en voor nationale onafhankelijkheid in de strijd voor de onafhankelijkheid van Indonesië. 1927-1930" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Amsterdam, 1987).

⁵² Musso, Information to the Eastern Department of the ECCI, 22 March 1930, Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/154/752.

⁵³ Cees Schalker to Musso in Moscow, Amsterdam, 4 April 1930, Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/154/752.

10 years in the papers published in Holland, which are not read by our peoples, and I will write articles which look opportunistic for the Indonesian papers. You will see who will work better and more fruitfully, although comrade Manovar is writing 100 percent Marxist articles." Darsono tried to publish his own daily, which certainly would not have been 100 percent Marxist. "One has to be flexible."⁵⁴

On 26 December 1930 the Presidium of the Comintern (Losovski, Kolarov, Weinstone, Manuilski, Katayama, Tschau-Piao, Ferrat, Béla Kun, Musso, Piatnitski, Chitarov, Stalin and Kuusinen) decided to expel Darsono from the ranks of the Comintern. It said that over the years Darsono had adopted an outspokenly opportunistic view, maintaining that it was necessary to cooperate with the Indonesian national reformists and that, since a national bourgeoisie did not exist in Indonesia, there was no base for reformism. During the conference of the anti-imperialist League (in Frankfurt) Darsono had refused to criticise national-reformist leaders. He had concentrated on working among students and neglected workers and sailors. Darsono had kept saying that he agreed with the Comintern, but he had looked for a way of living as a petit bourgeois.⁵⁵

In 1932 the ECCI again analysed the events in 1926/27 in Indonesia and, according to Reznikov, made important recommendations. According to him it had come to the conclusion that the uprisings of 1926/27 had not been defeated only by Dutch terror, but also by the treachery of the national-reformist bourgeoisie. Neither the SI nor any other nationalist organisations, the ECCI stressed, had done anything to defend popular interests from the onslaught of imperialism. It put forward the aim of overthrowing the rule of Dutch imperialism and attaining full independence. It recommended demanding the organisation of a worker-peasant government of Indonesia on the basis of councils (soviets), as well as the confiscation of all land belonging to imperialists, land-owners and usurers for the benefit of the peasants and the workers.⁵⁶

The CPN, at its December congress in 1932, adopted a resolution on Indonesia. In the police reports special attention is devoted to that resolution, because it called upon Dutch Communists to strengthen their solidarity with the PKI and the Indonesian independence movement and emphasize the slogan "Indonesia, free from Holland now".⁵⁷ The Soviet historian E. P. Zakaznikova even called the resolution a "turning point" in the activity of the CPN concerning the Indonesian problem and pointed out that the resolution was drafted in consultation with the Comintern. In his memoirs Paul de Groot also stressed in his memoirs the significance of that resolution, neglecting, however, what had been done in the twenties.⁵⁸ The Comintern instructed the French

⁵⁴ Samin [i.e. Darsono] to Dirja [i.e. Alimin] in Moscow, Frankfurt, 11 May 1930, Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/154/752.

⁵⁵ Resolution of the ECCI Presidium about the exclusion of Darsono, 26 December 1930, Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 495/2/137. The CPN complained that it had not been informed beforehand. The party did not object to the expulsion, but complained that it could complicate its recently established contacts with the nationalists. Cees Schalker to the Comintern, Amsterdam, 28 March 1931, Comintern/CPN, RCChIDNI, 495/172/78. He wrote among other things: "The necessity for his exclusion has for a long time been becoming clearer and clearer. But his exclusion NOW, now the CPN has succeeded in establishing a serious contact with a number of Indonesian nationalists from the PNI, may perhaps result in these contacts, which were established with very great difficulty, being seriously weakened again."

⁵⁶ Reznikov, *The Comintern and the East*, p. 127.

⁵⁷ *Politiek-politioneel Overzichten*, III, p. 261. The police wrote: "The CPN will have to propagate the slogan 'Indonesia, free now' constantly and systematically and support the revolutionary action among the 'Indonesian' workers in Holland and the work of the 'Indonesian' Communists in the Netherlands and 'Indonesia', and with all its strength further the recovery and the maximum reinforcement of the PKI." The word Indonesia was written in quotation marks, because the colonial authorities did not use it and always referred to the "Netherlands Indies" or just the "Indies". *Politiek-politioneële Overzichten* at several places also noted that through Dutch, and especially Indonesian sailors, there was a connection with Indonesia.

⁵⁸ Paul de Groot, *De dertiger jaren 1930-1935* (Amsterdam, 1965). He did not explicitly mention the congress, but wrote about a change in the attention being paid to Indonesia. E. P. Zakaznikowa, *Rabočij klass i nacionalno-osvoboditel'noje dviženie v Indonezii* (Moscow, 1971). In Russian there are other studies, as e.g. A. B. Belenkij, *Ideologija nacionalno-osvoboditel'no go dviženia v Indonezii 1917-1942* (Moscow, 1978).

daily *l'Humanité*, the American and the British *Daily Worker* and the Berlin *Rote Fahne* to publish the full text of the resolution, apparently as a kind of international guideline. The CPN decided to put several Indonesian Communists on the election list for the parliamentary election in April 1933, among others chairman Sardjono, who was imprisoned in Boven-Digul, Alimin and Rustam Effendi, the chairman of the *Perhimpunan Indonesia*.⁵⁹

Shortly before the elections, on 5 February 1933, Indonesian sailors, supported by a number of Dutch ones, mutinied on the naval cruiser "De Zeven Provinciën", an event that for one or two days was world news of greater impact than the rise to power of Hitler. The background of the mutiny was a wage-conflict, but nationalist sentiments played a part. The mutiny ended in a massacre, when "De Zeven Provinciën" was bombed by a Dutch warplane. In some historical publications the mutiny is, without any basis, described as a sinister Comintern conspiracy.⁶⁰

In the election the CPN increased its seats from two to four and Rustam Effendi was the first - and, before the second world-war, remained the only - Indonesian to be sworn in as member of parliament. From that time onwards an Indonesian Communist was in the Dutch parliament to defend the Indonesian people's right to self-determination.⁶¹

11. Musso's Illegal Trip

The main concern, however, was to establish a Communist Party organisation in Indonesia. In 1932 a foreign department of the PKI (*Buro luar negeri PKI*) was formed in the Netherlands. The members' names were not published, but from the Comintern archives I learned that they were Rustam Effendi, the student Abdul Madjid, an un-named Indonesian in Berlin (perhaps the student Setyadjit) and the Dutch Communists Gijs van Munster and Alex de Leeuw. The department produced press-releases and also sent Marxist literature to Indonesia.⁶²

In March 1934 the foreign department published a long statement, calling itself "foreign department PKI, section of the Comintern". The department was given a constitution in the course of 1933. According to this constitution it was to be "composed of Indonesian Communists outside Indonesia". Further, the constitution said that building up the PKI and a central leading organ in Indonesia were "more than ever an imperative necessity."⁶³

In 1934 in the youth organisation Indonesian Youth (*Indonesia Muda*) in Indonesia there was great interest in Marxism. J. H. Philippo, a Dutch illegal Communist working as an employee in the harbour of Tandjong Priok, was one of the people through whom pamphlets were sent to Indonesia.⁶⁴ Referring to building up the PKI can be seen as a hint about the coming illegal trip Musso was to make to Indonesia. The preparations for that trip had to be very thorough and had already been started in 1933 by the Dutch section of the Comintern department of international relations. Apart from Musso, Tamzil, a law student in the Netherlands and member of the PI, also travelled to Indonesia to assist him. Musso, most probably travelling with an Australian passport, arrived on 16 June 1935 in Indonesia and chose as a base for his operation the big seaport

⁵⁹ Morriën, "Telegrammen uit de Tweede Wereldoorlog", p. 253.

⁶⁰ On the mutiny, see J. C. H. Blom, *De muiten op de Zeven Provinciën* (Bussum, 1975). Some time ago L. de Jong described - basing this on a book published in 1957 by Richard Krebs - the mutiny as a Comintern conspiracy, but he changed his opinion in 1984. L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog, Deel 1: Voorspel*, pp. 160-161; *Deel 11a: Nederlands-Indië I*, p. 363.

⁶¹ Sardjono and Alimin were higher on the election list, but were not allowed to come to the Netherlands, so Rustam Effendi took the seat.

⁶² Morriën, "CPN steunde reis Musso en Tamzil", p. 166.

⁶³ "Position of the foreign department of the PKI with reference to the decisions of the XIII plenum of the ECCI", Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI, 49: 758.

⁶⁴ J. H. Philippo was arrested in September 1936 and after one year in prison deported in September 1937. With his Indonesian wife, Raden Soekaesih, who had been detained in Boven-Digul for three years (1927-1931), he settled in the Netherlands.

city of Surabaya. He started to form a circle of friends from the magazine *Indonesia Berdjoang* (Fighting Indonesia). Under a pseudonym he even published some articles. The chief-editor, Pamudji, a member of the nationalist Indonesian Party (*Partindo*), joined the illegal PKI after having been for nine months in jail for a press misdemeanour. *Indonesia Berdjoang* was kept alive with money from the Comintern. It also managed to start its own printing-office, which, for instance, illegally printed a translation of the 1932 CPN resolution about Indonesia.

Tamzil contacted a number of people from nationalist parties and spoke to them about his Marxist views. He also had meetings with representatives of the PARI. Active in the youth organisation *Indonesia Muda* there were members not only of the PARI but also members/sympathizers of the PKI, many of whom hardly knew the difference between the two organisations or considered it as irrelevant. Musso was very critical of the PARI, which he labelled "Trotskyist" and attacked sharply in letters and articles, but he had no objection to Tamzil's talks. Both Musso and Tamzil contacted the Association of the People's Youth (*Persatuan Pemuda Rakjat Indonesia*; Perpri), more radical than *Indonesia Muda*, and won over the chairman Sunarman for the ideas of the PKI.

Musso and Tamzil remained in touch with the CPN in the Netherlands through letters to covering addresses and through couriers. The information was sent to the CPN representative in Moscow, Anton Struik, who, if necessary, informed the Presidium or the Eastern Department of the Comintern. Musso had left before the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (July 1935) which brought about a big turnabout in Communist policy and in the Comintern's attitude towards the national organisations. Musso wrote (obviously in answer to a question) that he understood the "Popular Front Policy" and was already applying it. Tamzil also wrote that Musso was applying the new policy correctly. Musso explained the Communist attitude to small circles and his most important partners became Pamudji, Achmad Sumadi, Djokosudjono, Ruskak, Dularnowo and Sri Sitilarang.⁶⁵

In one way or another the Political Information Department (*Politieke Inlichtingen Dienst*; PID) came to know about Musso's presence. He left Surabaya for a nearby village, but after some time it was thought better for him to leave Indonesia altogether. He departed from Indonesia on 11 May 1936 and via Bali, Hongkong and Shanghai arrived in Moscow. In a report to the Comintern he mentioned that only three of the illegal leading body of seven persons he had formed were still really active. He did not give names, but described the social backgrounds of the seven. In several parts of Java illegal PKI groups were active. As for communication with the outside world, the channel through Holland was still the most important one, but a second should be established through Shanghai and Vladivostok. The Indonesian comrades in Moscow and the Netherlands should be examined as to their suitability in order to send them as soon as possible to Indonesia for the strengthening of the cadres. "We need them as a counterweight to the nationalist elements."⁶⁶

In October 1936 Achmad Sumadi and Djokosudjono made a trip to PKI groups in the middle of Java. Achmad Sumadi went to Batavia to consolidate a youth group, but in December 1936 he was arrested. That meant a new blow to the illegal central leadership, even though Pamudji was not arrested.⁶⁷

The Communists in nationalist organisations agitated for a United Popular Front against the Japanese danger and the slogan "Indonesia, free from Holland now" was no longer in the foreground. They supported a petition by the member of the People's Council (*Volksraad*), Sutardjo, for a conference about the future political (state) relations between the Netherlands and Indonesia.⁶⁸

The CPN decided on the same policy. On 15 May 1937 Musso reported on discussions he had had with the Dutch political bureau. The foreign department of the PKI was to be set up in Paris, meetings were to take

⁶⁵ Letters of Musso and Tamzil in Comintern/PKI. As to names and places written in a code of figures, see Morriën, "CPN steunde reis Musso en Tamzil", pp. 167s.

⁶⁶ "Bericht über meine Arbeit in Indonesien", Comintern/PKI, RCChIDNI.

⁶⁷ Morriën, "CPN steunde reis Musso en Tamzil", p. 168. On the new PKI, see Harry Poeze, "The PKI-MUDA 1936-1942", *Kabar Seberang*, No. 13-14 (Townsville, 1984), pp. 157-176.

⁶⁸ *De petitie Soetardjo* (Leiden, 1937); *Congres 1938. Communistische Partij van Nederland. Redevoeringen en besluiten* (Amsterdam, s.a.). L. de Visser spoke about Indonesia and the petition. *Perhimpunan Indonesia* devoted a special anniversary issue to the danger of Japan: "Indonesia", *Jubileumnummer uitgegeven ter gelegenheid van het 30-jarig bestaan van Perhimpunan Indonesia 1908-1939* (Leiden, 1938).

place in Brussels. Musso was responsible for activities both in- and outside Indonesia; supported by the political bureau of the CPN, he was responsible to this bureau.⁶⁹

Concerning the Popular Front Aidit wrote: "On the initiative of a few left-wing nationalists and a few Communists a legal people's organisation called the Movement of the Indonesian People (*Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia*; Gerindo) was formed. The formation of Gerindo gave new strength to the national independence movement and the anti-Fascist movement. On the initiative of the Gerindo and some other democratic parties, the Indonesian Political Union (*Gabungan Politik Indonesia*; GAPI) was set up; this was a united front of parties which aimed at the creation of a parliament for Indonesia and which offered co-operation to the Dutch government to resist Fascism, in particular Japanese Fascism, which was threatening the Asian peoples."⁷⁰ At the CPN congress in 1938 the slogan "Indonesia, free from Holland now" was no longer in the center of Indonesian policy; the main idea was to protect Indonesia from Japanese Fascism by giving certain democratic rights. For the PI this also became the main political course. In the Netherlands this policy was interrupted for a period after the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact in August 1939.⁷¹ Some time after the German occupation of the Netherlands the Popular Front against Fascism was the main goal again and the PI participated in the Dutch resistance movement.

In Indonesia the (illegal) Communist *Amir Sjarifudin* played an important role in the Gerindo and the GAPI. The Communist group led by Pamudji and some others was arrested in March 1943. Widarta then took the place of Pamudji.⁷² During the Japanese occupation there was no contact between the Indonesian Communists and the Comintern. The Indonesian Communists played an active part in the movement for the proclamation of the Indonesian Republic on 17 August 1945.

⁶⁹ Morriën, "CPN steunde reis Musso en Tamzil", p. 169.

⁷⁰ Aidit, *Problems of the Indonesian Revolution*, p. 76

⁷¹ Morriën, *Indonesië los van Holland*, p. 103; W. F. S. Pelt, *Vrede door revolutie. De CPN tijdens het Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939-1941)* (The Hague, 1990) pp. 162s.

⁷² In May 1965 the Institute for the history of the PKI in a limited way distributed for discussion the draft of a cyclostyled manuscript "Sedjarah 45 tahun PKI" (The history of 45 years PKI). It was - and is - still confidential. It could never be published, because in October 1965, when Suharto started his bid for power, many PKI-leaders were murdered and the party banned.