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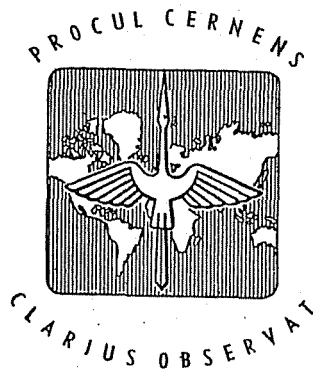
PEASANT MOBILISATION AND LAND REFORM IN INDONESIA

Gerrit Huizer

Working Paper.

Most of the material summarised in this paper was collected by the author while working with I.L.O. The opinions expressed are his own and do not imply the endorsement of the I.L.O. or I.S.S.

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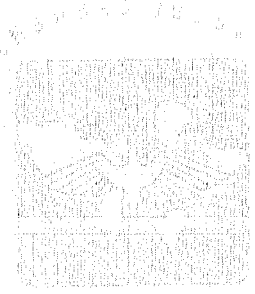
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Historical Developments

Peasant movements and revolts of a more or less spontaneous nature have occurred in the past in Indonesia as a reaction to changes in the living and working conditions of the peasants that resulted in acute frustration for them. One of the main reasons for such revolts was the rapidly penetrating colonial economy, particularly in Java during the 19th century, with heavy demands on the peasants for labour services and taxes. New land tenure arrangements introduced by the colonial government, such as the particuliere landerijen (privately-owned landed estates), upset the traditional system and created considerable discontent. Many revolts had strong messianic or millenarian overtones and some took the character of a kind of Holy War, such as the Tjiomas rebellion of 1886 and the revolt in Banten of 1888 described by Sartono Kartodirdjo.¹

In Central Java, in particular, the traditional and the modern colonial agricultural sector existed side by side: the sugar factories leased their land, often different plots for each harvest, from the villages surrounding the mills. Too many landless peasants were attracted by the plantations giving the plantation owners opportunity for abuse, resulting at times in severe social tension. Traditional peasant leadership, not able to cope with these new problems, lost part of its influence, giving a chance to radical political groups to mobilise the peasants. Thus the Sarekat Islam (SI), an urban-based nationalist movement, inspired by progressive Islamic but including non-Islamic people, could gain considerable influence after its foundation in 1911. The colonial government tolerated the SI since the "complaint bureaus" it established could serve as a safety valve for rural unrest. However, the rapid growth of the movement soon encountered official

1. Sartono Kartodirdjo, The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888: Its Conditions, Course and Sequel (The Hague, 1966); Id., "The Tjiomas Rebellion of 1886: A Case Study" (mimeogr., Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1969).

measures to check it.² Since local SI leaders basically could not do much more than the traditional leaders to get satisfaction of the peasants' demands, the SI lost many of its adherents as rapidly as it gained them. In cases where SI members came to some kind of organised radical action, this took the characteristics of the earlier millenarian movements, such as the Tuban Affair (1912), the Kudus riot (1918), the Madura disturbances (1919) and the Tjimareme Affair (1919).³

After a group of Communist and Communist-oriented leaders⁴ within the Sarekat Islam had in vain tried to gain control over the organisation, a split occurred. The so-called Red Sarekat Islam took most of the membership because of its radical approach in expressing discontent. The colonial government responded by imprisoning or exiling most of the top leaders, thus weakening the organisation. Since legal means of expressing demands were blocked, the remaining leadership divided among itself and influenced by the exiled, tried to organise a general strike and planned an uprising in 1926. Only the rebellions in Bantam and West Sumatra made some impact. Both were related to strong rural grievances and, in Bantam, also had religious (Holy War type) implications.⁵

The rebellions were rapidly suppressed by the colonial government; the PKI, the Indonesian Communist Party, which had played the major role in the uprising, was outlawed. About 13,000 persons were detained of whom most were soon released. Approximately 1,300 persons were interned and over 800 banished to the penal colony in the swamp lands of Boven Digul. Many remained there until they were freed in 1942 to help in the struggle against Japan. The "hard core" in Boven-Digul consisted largely of villagers who, as was noted,

2. Ruth T. McVey, The Rise of Indonesian Communism (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1965), pp. 7-12.
3. Sartono Kartodirdjo, "Social Movements in Java in the 19th and 20th Centuries: An Analytical Framework" (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, mimeo., 1969).
4. A Communist Party of Indonesia was created in 1920 by Sneevliet, a Communist leader from the Netherlands.
5. Ruth T. McVey, op.cit., p. 344.

could hardly be considered sophisticated Communists.⁶ The fact that a modern political movement could gain such an impact in a highly traditional society in a relatively short time, indicated that there were problems in the rural areas which caused the peasants considerable frustration.

The sociologist Schrieke,⁷ who in 1927/28 investigated for the Dutch government the uprising that had taken place in 1926 on the West Coast of Sumatra, indicated a number of general conditions that seemed favourable to the development of such movements.⁸ He emphasised the existence of serious grievances among the population and the hope of a solution expressed in the redemptive, magic word kemerdekaan, Freedom.

The opening-up through road construction and the introduction of cash crops to replace subsistence agriculture had upset the traditional way of life of the peasants in the Minangkabau area. Although their income increased, their needs had grown more rapidly, resulting in frustration. This frustration was also a result of feelings of inequality and acute resentment against those who had privilege and power and conspicuously showed it. The existence of a new group of people who had gained considerable wealth as a result of the boom, emphasised the social inferiority complex of the peasantry. The demands of the colonial authorities, and in some cases their arbitrary measures against any protest, stimulated the already existing resentment.⁹

Similar factors had operated or were operating in many other areas in Indonesia. Particularly in Java, several frustrating factors created a climate in which the growth of a militant peasant organisation was possible.

In Java as well as in other parts of Indonesia high social status was generally assigned to persons who were descendants of the early founders of a village. These were the families with traditional rights to the land. Over the years, however polarisation took place. Some of the elite became rich

6. Arnold C. Brackman, Indonesian Communism. A History (Praeger, New York, 1963), pp. 19 and 34.

7. Rapport van de Commissie van Onderzoek ingesteld bij het Governmentsbesluit van 13 Februari 1927 No. 1a, partly published in Selected Writings of B. Schrieke, Indonesian Sociological Studies, Vol. I (The Hague, W. van Hoeve, 1966), pp. 85-166.

8. Ibid., pp. 160-66.

9. Ibid., pp. 146-49.

while many descendents of these original inhabitants fell to the same status as the newcomers, mainly tenants and sharecroppers. This was a consequence of subdivision of lands for generations among sons and grandsons, so that only small plots were left. Many of these small plots then fell prey to land concentration in the hands of money-lenders, either absentee or from among the village elite, through indebtedness and mortgaging.¹⁰ Ina M. Slamet has quoted studies which indicate how, in the second half of the 19th century, new large landholdings were formed by means of usurious practices by better-off farmers, often religious leaders (hadjis), and other rich people. Land and houses of people who borrowed money at exorbitant interest were gradually taken over when indebtedness reached a critical point.¹¹

Partly as a reaction to deteriorating conditions, loosely organised mass movements had been created by several political groups, such as the Sarekat Islam and the Communist Party. In 1925 the traditionalist Moslim party Nahdatul Ulama was created. The 3 organisations mentioned were the first to rally some mass following. After the Communist Party was extinguished in 1926, "nationalist" parties of different kinds tried to organise mass followings.

These were a variety of youth, women's, community, religious, student and other type of organisations, either local or national but mainly urban based. During the Japanese occupation they were all brought under two central leaderships at the national level, one nationalist and the other religious (orthodox Islamic). The organisational hierarchy of these organisations covered most of urban and some of rural Java and obtained some effective power from the Japanese in the form of arms.¹² The new mass organisations, however, did not have much impact in the rural areas before the Second World War except in areas where contradictions between traditional Islamic and non-Islamic groups were strong.

Javanese peasants belonged generally to two main religious currents, the santri, orthodox Islamic, and the abangan, a mixture of animism, Hinduism and Islamic elements combined in various ways. Factional divisions in the villages

10. Ina E. Slamet, "De Indonesische Dorpssamenleving" (Anthropologisch-Sociologisch Centrum, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Voorpublicatie No. 3, 1968, mimeo.), pp. 39-41.

11. Ibid., p. 16; Soeboer Boedhisantoso, "Djakakarsa: A Fruit-producing Village near Djakarta", in Koentjaraningrat, ed., Villages in Indonesia (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1967), p. 344, observed that while most rich farmers to increase their prestige became hadjis, which implied that they made a pilgrimage to Mecca, not all hadjis were rich farmers. Some became poor because the pilgrimage costs exhausted their resources.

12. Robert R. Jay, "Religion and Politics in Rural Central Java" (Cultural Report Series No. 12, Southeast Asia Studies, Yale University, 1963), pp. 18-27.

generally followed the lines of santri or abangan. Such divisions became more acute with the appearance of political mass organisations which were formed along the same lines, rather than along lines determined by economic position and class.

It was particularly in the period before and after the Second World War that polarisation between santri and abangan began to appear. This expressed itself partly in the acceptance of new cultural items or the abandonment of others, such as a particular type of music, so that distinction between the two currents become more visible. Thus wajang, a traditional kind of puppet play, become more exclusively abangan, and "Arab style" band music typically santri.¹³ In the case studied by Jay the differentiation often divided the villages as a whole but brought greater cohesiveness to sub-units, neighbourhoods which became either santri or abangan. Personal loyalties played a role in the process of differentiation. In other villages there was no sharp break between different neighbourhoods.

After the Japanese occupation the struggle against the Dutch colonial regime was initiated and four nation-wide political organisations arose, the Nationalist Party (PNI) headed by Sukarno, the modernist Islamic Masjumi, the Nahdatul Ulama and the Communist Party. Indonesian society then became differentiated into four alirans, religio-ideological currents, since both abangan and santri divided themselves into a more traditional and a modernist wing.

The four "religio-ideological affiliations" are of great importance in understanding the background of peasant organisations. As Clifford Geertz noted about the area in Java he studied:

"The institutional agency of this new mode of integration was the aliran system. Aliran, an Indonesian word whose literal meaning is stream or current, has been extended in Republican Indonesia to signify what in English we call a social movement, an ideologically defined political faction animated by rather farreaching moral ambitions. In particular, an aliran consists of a political party surrounded by a set of sodalities - that is, voluntary organisations - formally or informally linked to it. In postwar Modjokuto the four parties were the Nationalist Party (Partai Nasionalis Indonesia, or PNI), the Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, or PKI), the Reform Moslem Party (Masjumi), and the Conservative Moslem Party (Nahdatul Ulama, or NU). With one or another

13. For an ample description of examples see Robert R. Jay, op.cit., pp. 79-89.

of these parties as nucleus, an aliran was a cluster of nationalist organisations - women's clubs, youth groups, boy scouts, charitable societies, cooperatives, lending societies, private schools, athletic clubs, religious organisations, labour and peasant unions, art groups, trade organisations - sharing a similar ideological direction or standpoint and loyalty to the same all-Indonesia leadership. There was a PNI peasant organisation, a PKI peasant organisation, a Masjumi peasant organisation, and an NU peasant organisation; there were PNI, PKI, Masjumi, and NU boy scouts, and so on: even the kindergartens divided up this way.

An Aliran was more than a mere political party and it was more than a mere ideology: it was a set of interconnected social forms which acted to group large masses of people into a generalized category."¹⁴

As Gunawan recently indicated, commenting on the aliran concept introduced by Geertz, the alirans were helpful in accelerating the breakdown of the hierarchical relations of a traditional society and initiating political mobilisation.¹⁵ The old relations were replaced, however, with new vertical ones, forms of patronage and not yet with a political mobilisation according to the horizontal lines of class position. The class structure in Indonesian rural areas was quite unclear and the growth of class-organisations therefore very difficult.

The Rural Social Structure and its Deterioration

That a mass-scale peasant organisation was not easy to create in spite of the severe frustrations which the peasantry suffered, was a consequence of the highly complicated and diversified land tenure situation in Indonesia. In the early 1950s Clifford Geertz observed for an area in Central Java:

"Under the pressure of increasing numbers and limited resources Javanese village society did not bifurcate, as did that of so many other 'underdeveloped' nations, into a group of large landlords and a group of oppressed near serfs. Rather it maintained a comparatively high degree of social and economic homogeneity by dividing the economic pie into a steadily increasing number of minute pieces, a process to which I have referred elsewhere as 'shared poverty'. Rather than haves and have-nots, there were, in the delicately mated vernacular

14. Clifford Geertz, The Social History of an Indonesian Town (M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp. 127-28; a recent study by B.Gunawan, Kudeta: Staatsgreep in Djakarta (Meppel, Netherlands, 1968, ch. 3), sees a relationship between the existence of alirans in Indonesia and a similar phenomenon called 'pillarization' (verzuiling) in the Netherlands where labour unions, political parties, youth and other types of associations are divided along the lines of protestant, catholic and neutral, humanist, or socialist ideological currents.
15. Basuki Gunawan, "Aliran en sociale structuur", in Buiten de Grenzen. Sociologische Opstellen aangeboden aan prof. dr. W.F.Wertheim (Boom, Meppel, 1971), pp. 69-85.

of peasant life, only tjukupans and kekurangans - 'just enoughs' and 'not-quite-enoughs'.¹⁶

Throughout Indonesia but also on Java the land tenure situation varied considerably from region to region. On the whole it seems that the situation for the small-owners deteriorated and the homogeneity, noted by Geertz, diminished in many areas, if it existed at all. According to official figures, by 1960 more than 60 percent of the peasants were landless.¹⁷

In several areas such as Bandung regence (kabupaten) a rapid concentration of land in the hands of absentee landowners and the village elite has been noted, in some communities covering up to half of the arable land. Small farmers lost their land through indebtedness and their inability to pay the moneylenders, who then took over their plots. As a next step indebtedness led to forms of feudal servitude.¹⁸ As Van der Kroef summarised in the early 1960s:

"... it is indisputable that a polarization of classes based on the widening distinctions between the landowning and the landless is ... a social dynamic of major importance in contemporary Indonesia."¹⁹

In one intensive field study made in the early 1950s in this area, in the village Tjibodas, the differentiation in the rural social structure was characterised as a split between the "serving" (mengabdikan) and the "commanding" (memperabdikan), those being served.²⁰ Among the first category are (1) the landless farm labourers or farm hands, in Tjibodas comprising 44 percent of the population; (2) the peasants who own no more than a small plot, a yard, on which the houses of their family and close relatives are built, altogether about 25 percent; (3) those who own a plot of 0.1 to 1 hectare of land, which is insufficient for the subsistence of the family so that they have to hire themselves to larger landholders or work on a sharecropping basis (this group is about 23 percent of the population in Tjibodas).

16. Clifford Geertz, Agricultural Involvement (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963), p. 97.
17. Quoted in Justus M. van der Kroef, The Communist Party of Indonesia (University of British Columbia Publications Centre, Vancouver, 1965), p. 194.
18. Ibid., p. 193 from case studies by Raden A. Adiwalaga.
19. Ibid., p. 194.
20. H. ten Dam, "Coöpereren vanuit het gezichtspunt der desastructuur in desa Tjibodas", Indonesië, IX, no. 2, pp. 90-96. In an English version of this article which appeared in Indonesian Economics: The Concept of Dualism in Theory and Policy (The Hague, 1961), it was noted: "In this context the word 'serving' is used in the sense of 'submitting' or 'resigning oneself' to a person who gives orders or commands; provides employment, has others to serve him and in some cases extends protection" (p. 348).

The great majority of the population, about 90 percent, which has no land or very small plots, are considered those who serve and have to obey. The others are the better-off landowners, those who own enough land for their own subsistence or more and those who utilise the labour of farmhands or share-croppers. It was noted:

"Tjibodas is certainly an extreme case in certain respects. In most other villages in Java the percentage of landless people and of peasants with uneconomic holdings is decidedly lower, and the antithesis between the landed and the landless may be less sharp. But the general tendency pointed out by Ten Dam, is manifest in many parts of Java."²¹

It is extremely risky to generalise from the case study of Geertz in East Java or of Ten Dam's case in West Java as regards the harmony or conflict existing in the villages between the different social strata. Some areas were more tradition-bound than others. In certain regions modernizing forces had entered a long time ago, e.g. through the introduction of estate agriculture, while elsewhere the traditional more or less communal land tenure pattern prevailed. There is considerable evidence, however, even from areas where tradition and harmony appeared to be strong, that after the Independence of Indonesia and particularly in the early 1950s the status quo was disrupted in many ways. Even in "Modjokuto", the area studied by Geertz and his colleagues, these disruptive forces were visible, although the forces of rukun (traditional harmony) were still predominant, and contrasts between rich and poor in the villages not strongly felt or expressed.²²

The harmony in relations between villagers existed in spite of considerable exploitation of the poor by the better-off. Ten Dam explains this by looking into the mentality of the lowest strata, the farmhands and the peasants with uneconomic holdings who have to work for others to make ends meet. It is pointed out that the poor peasants on the whole are rather distrustful and passive. They live by the day, preoccupied only by the food for the next day. They have little interest in community problems and efforts in community development and similar government programmes do not find much response among

21. W.F. Wertheim, East-West Parallels (The Hague, 1964), p. 267.

22. See e.g. the study by Robert R. Jay, op.cit. "Modjokuto" is a fictitious name, not to be confused with the town of Modjokerto, and means something such as Middletown. It stands for the small town of Pare in the neighbourhood of Kediri, East Java. Geertz, Jay and other American scholars did fieldwork in this area in the 1950s.

them. Sometimes they may temporarily respond to messianic movements such as the Ratu Adil. On the whole, however, they are apathetic. Particularly the farmhands are highly dependent on their masters, whom they know and whose patronage at least gives a minimum of security. They follow their patrons rather than those who come to defend their interests. They have nothing to lose and they have a correspondingly low esteem for the legitimacy of the system under which they live.²³

The same was noted for the peasants with too small holdings. They may have more self-respect than the farm hands, but since the process of concentration of land in the hands of the better-off concerns them directly - having still something to lose - their feeling of frustration is probably stronger. Their social status is deteriorating gradually.²⁴

It was observed that both groups, landless and semi-landless peasants, accept their situation as unavoidable and follow the leadership of the better-off and wealthy farmers. The latter group is the one through which government programmes are channelled and whose position is strengthened through that. Poor peasants do not see any way to improve their situation by their own effort under those circumstances, and the facts seem to confirm their suspicion. Cooperative efforts in Tjibodas undertaken with support from the government gave only few benefits to the poor peasants and were on the whole controlled by and to the benefit of the better-off farmers and landholders. Considerable apathy and distrust of the majority of the peasants towards official programmes was noted.²⁵

Local government in Indonesia is organised in such a way that all officially sponsored programmes are channelled through it. Programmes generally operate at the kabupaten (regency) level through the bupati (chief administrator of kabupaten), then at the district level (ketjamatan) through its chief, the tjamat, and at the village (desa) level through the village head, lurah. The administrative village is the lowest unit of local administration in which a great deal of power is concentrated. Villages have several thousands of inhabitants and consist of a good number of hamlets. There are almost 60,000 villages in Indonesia.

23. H.Ten Dam, op.cit., pp. 90-94.

24. Ibid., pp. 94-96.

25. Ibid., pp. 105-16.

The key figures in the local hierarchy as the lurahs, generally belonging to the wealthiest families in the village. Formerly a lurah's position was hereditary but since Independence they are formally elected by all village inhabitants over 18 years of age. Candidates are usually members of the village elite. A recent field study noted that the election campaign for village head is so expensive that only the wealthy can afford it. The candidate is supported by the "influentials" of the village.²⁶ The "council of influentials" which plays an important but not official role in village government is a typically elite organisation which recruits its members through a cooptation system. The persons appointed by the lurah in the various committees and councils which make out the local government are practically all from this group of influentials, terkemukas.²⁷ Once he is elected a lurah can remain in office without re-election as long as he does not encounter the expressed dissatisfaction of the villagers. If the villagers are dissatisfied they have the right to petition the district head to dismiss the lurah. A meeting is called and a new lurah will be elected. A lurah can also retire voluntarily, in which case he can nominate one or two candidates to succeed him. Campaigns for election are not very open but are carried out informally through friendly gatherings in local centres where people habitually meet or in the people's homes.²⁸

Koentjaraningrat describes for the village he studied in Central Java how the lurah directed the village meetings in a rather authoritarian way, but he noted that before the meeting which was held to discuss a certain problem formally, a great deal of informal persuasion, talk and gossip had been going on in coffee shops and other popular gathering places, until a certain consensus had been reached. It was noted:

"This system of conducting meetings is probably derived from a corresponding element in Javanese social behavior, in which public controversy must be avoided at all costs. This attitude is further strengthened by the patriarchal figure of the village head; like a father, he should never be directly contradicted."²⁹

26. J. Helmer and E. Weiting, Kommunikatiepatronen in een West-Javaanse Dessa (Thesis, Tilburg, Netherlands, 1970), p. 17.

27. Ibid., pp. 27-30.

28. Koentjaraningrat, "Tjelapar: A Village in South Central Java", in Koentjaraningrat, op.cit., p. 272. For an interesting case study of a leader who was opposed by the villagers and had to make place for a newly elected lurah see Robert Jay, op.cit., p. 69 ff.

29. Ibid., pp. 274-75.

Changes were occurring, however, and Koentjaraningrat observed cases where the traditional system was abandoned after younger men became lurahs, who did not inspire fatherly respect and in political party work had learnt to direct meetings in different ways.

In most cases the traditional lurahs maintained their influence, while their status was enhanced by the fact that all government efforts (including community development and later even the land reform programme) were more or less directly administered by them. It was the outspoken purpose of community development and similar programmes not to disturb the village harmony existing under the traditional leadership.³⁰ This approach seemed to function in those cases where the traditional patronage system still prevailed unshaken and was not undermined by modernising influences.

In one case study of community development, it was observed that the communities in question in Banjamas, Central Java, seemed

"... to have retained more of their 'feudal' structure than have village communities in other areas of Java. The term 'feudal' here refers to the loyalties - initially stimulated by dependency - of the lower class people to members of the traditionally-determined higher classes in Javanese society. It is perhaps this loyal attitude towards recognised indigenous leaders which for the most part accounts for the success of community development in that area."³¹

In some cases special circumstances stimulated the peasants to greater collaboration and mutual effort for improvement. Thus another highly successful community development programme was evaluated in a village which was often

30. Selo Soemardjan, The Dynamics of Community Development in Rural Central and West Java (A Comparative Report, Monograph Series, Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., 1963), p. 8, analysed among others an official programme which has carried out considerable grass-roots work in the rural areas, the Lembaga Sosial Desa, LSD (literally translated: Village Social Institution), of the Ministry of Social Affairs, and pointed out as LSD's background philosophy: "... the Ministry decided that in no way should the harmonious life of the village community be disturbed, not even by the process of community development. The only way seen by that Ministry to accomplish development without social disorganization is to manipulate the stimulus to actual progress in such a way that it will be regarded as coming from within the community itself"; see also Department of Social Affairs, The L.S.D.: Indonesia's Voluntary Village Level Self-Help Program, Djakarta, 1969 (with a contribution by A.W. Buckland, I.L.O. Expert).

31. Selo Soemardjan, op.cit., p. 13.

harrassed by terror from the Darul Islam.³² The cohesiveness which resulted from the common danger and struggle that people had to face proved to be a good basis for successful community development.³³

In cases where the old harmony was disappearing, community development and similar efforts often met distrust and apathy among the poor peasants.³⁴ Where such efforts mainly benefitted the better-off, they helped to sharpen the growing contrasts. On the whole there seemed to be few areas left where traditional feudal-type leadership was not being undermined gradually by modernising influences, which could be merely economic, increase of indebtedness, absentee landownership or more blatant forms of exploitation of the poorer peasants by the groups of better-off. Particularly the idjon system was noted for bringing the peasants under more dependent conditions of work, as was extensively described in a 1959 article in PNI newspaper Suara Marhaen.³⁵ Idjon implied that a peasant contracted a loan with the harvest of his plot as repayment. Generally the price the moneylender gave for the produce under this system was lower than the normal market price and cheating was very easy.

Hardly any studies have been made in this field but the few that exist indicate a gradual deterioration of the traditional patronage system which had benevolent paternalistic elements toward a more exploitative type of relationship. The study by ten Dam in Tjibodas showed that, as a result of old relationships slowly being undermined, the emotional ties of the farmhands and tenants to their patrons loosened and first signs of a certain unrest among the peasants became visible.³⁶

This process of deterioration of the traditional status quo was accelerated partly a result of the entrance of political parties campaigning for adherence and the widening gap between abangan and santri, related to this process (see above).

New kinds of patronage and control from above were channelled through the new political and civic organisations along aliran lines during the early 1950s.

32. The Darul Islam movement was initiated in 1949 in West Java and supported by guerilla forces. It aimed at the establishment of an Islamic State by overthrowing the Indonesian government. By terrorising rural people and raiding villages it tried to force people to take its side. The movement harrassed several rural areas up to 1962 when its leader Kartosuwirjo was captured and sentenced to death.

33. Selo Soemardjan, op.cit., pp. 23-30.

34. See e.g. Ina E.Slamet, op.cit., pp. 49-50.

35. Ibid., p. 33.

36. H.ten Dam, op.cit., p. 104.

Utilising the possibilities existing in this climate, one of the most spectacular peasant organisations of the recent history was able to emerge, the Barisan Tani Indonesia (BTI, Indonesian Peasants' Front).

Origins of BTI in the Independence Struggle

During the struggle for Independence, formally initiated on 17 August 1945, the peasants were united in one mass organisation in which various religio-ideological currents worked together, the Barisan Tani Indonesia. The BTI was created at a Congress which took place on 25 November 1945, shortly after the Declaration of Independence. It spread rapidly in those areas where peasants were dissatisfied with the system imposed by the colonial government in which the use of their land alternated between estate crops and food crops. These lands were either lands of the principalities (Vorstenlanden), bound to tobacco estates, or lands tied by short-term low-rental leases to estate companies (mainly sugar). The peasants and/or their villages were obliged to lease their land to the estates but revenues were low, prices being fixed by the colonial government. Peasants also resented not being able to cultivate the rice which they needed.³⁷

The BTI took up this issue, about which peasants of all religio-ideological currents agreed and which was more appropriate for quickly rallying a mass movement than the complicated land tenure issue and the differentiation among large, middle, small and landless farmers and peasants. The issue was also a rallying point for the anti-colonialist struggle. The same problem, peasants' land being used by foreign estates, also existed in parts of Sumatra where the BTI spread its organisational activities in 1947. Because of the increasing radicalism of the movement and the growing influence of Marxist ideas within the organisation, Muslim leaders left it in 1947 and joined the new rival which had been created in 1946, sponsored by the Masjumi party, the STII (Sarekat Tani Islam Indonesia, Indonesian Islamic Peasant League), headed by Abu Umar. Moderate leaders of the socialist (PSI) and nationalist (PNI) parties remained in the BTI and strongly urged the government to buy private lands and unused portions of estates and sell them cheaply to the landless peasants.³⁸

37. John O. Sutter, Indonesianisasi, Politics in a Changing Economy, 1940-1955 (Data Paper No. 36-II, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., 1959, Vol. II), pp. 365-67.

38. Ibid., p. 474.

However, in the face of the issue of the conversion of peasant plots into estate lands the differences between the BPI and the smaller STII were not sharp. Under pressure of both organisations a Conversion Land Commission was created in 1948, and a campaign launched to abolish the conversion practices and to protect the peasants' interests versus the estates. The campaign was relatively moderate since it was seen that a compromise had to be found between the needs of the national economy for estate products and the peasants who had to lease their plots. It was clear, however, that the old colonial arrangement under which, for each guilder to the peasants two guilders went as profits to the companies, was felt as unjust.³⁹

The BPI was not completely dominated by the Communists, but it was practically eclipsed after the failure of the Communist Party to overthrow the Government in the Madiun rebellion in 1948. After that event, many members joined the MURBA (Indonesian Proletarian Party) of nationalist-communist orientation where the ideas of Tan Malakka had great influence. In Central Java the PNI organised its own first peasant organisations in 1948 under the name Petani (Persatuan Tani Nasional Indonesia, Union of Indonesian National Peasants), which held its first Congress in 1950.

After it became clear at the 1949 Round Table Conference in The Hague that complete independence would be given to Indonesia, the All Indonesian Peasants' Conference was organised jointly by the BPI, STII and Petani on 22-23 November 1949. It was demanded that, in order to solve the land conversion problem, cooperatives be established by foreign capital, the owners of plots and the workers, under government supervision. It was also demanded that estates which were confiscated during the scorched earth struggle against the colonial regime, be transferred to the peasants or their villages.⁴⁰

Although in some areas there were serious problems and frictions between the local occupants and returning estate-owners, at the end of 1952 in Java and Sumatra 70 percent of the estates had been restored. Particularly in North Sumatra a serious struggle developed between the squatters on estate land and the government trying to restore the estates. Bulldozing or tractoring of plots and houses occupied by squatters was used as a means to dislodge them. A programme to resettle the squatters on land available elsewhere was discussed. A Joint Secretariat of Peasant Organisations for Solving the Land Problem of

39. Ibid., pp. 536-47.

40. Ibid., p. 567 ff.

North Sumatra was formed to defend the peasants' interests. Mainly leftists participated, either Communist, Socialist (PSI) or left-wing PNI.

After one incident in which a few peasants were killed, a parliamentary commission came to the area, and finally special legislation was promulgated to solve the problem in a way favourable to the peasants who had occupied land, by giving them land elsewhere. In East Sumatra and also on about 200,000 hectares in Java, similar problems existed. Rights were given to those who occupied land before the actual promulgation of the new emergency law.⁴¹

While some kind of united action by peasant organisations of different political-religious orientation regarding such issues as the ex-colonial estates existed on the surface, the strife between the different currents persisted at the local level and was intensified in some areas, such as those where the influence of the violent clash between Communists and Moslems had been felt during the Madiun Affair in 1948.⁴² Another factor which caused an increase in local factional strife was the increasing competition between political parties in view of the future elections (to be held in 1955). While the BPI and the other organisations had rallied peasant support in areas where the estate problem existed, on the whole the mass of peasants had been neglected up to the electoral campaign. The disruption which was introduced into the villages was dramatically noticeable in some community development case studies in Central and West Java. While cohesion and harmony and a rather solid control of traditional local leaders prevailed until 1955, the campaigning of political parties for adherents brought conflicts, "mutual suspicions and unfriendly actions", because of the internal differentiation.⁴³

The overall impact of modern organisational efforts adapting to the traditional village patterns is probably best observed and summarised in an intensive case study in Situradja, West Java:

"Since the revolution a number of organisations and branches of national organisation have come into being in the subdistrict of Situradja. Considering the traditional weakness of corporate groups, it is not surprising that this is largely the result of pressure from above, either official or unofficial. People usually join organisations to maintain harmony in lineal or collateral relations, not because they see benefits to be derived for themselves or society from group activity. For example, government employees may join the party of their

41. Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 695-771.

42. Robert R. Jay, op.cit., p. 76, noted the increase in tension between traditional Moslim and abangan in the village he studied, not far from Madiun.

43. Selo Soemardjan, op.cit., p. 38.

superiors, sharecroppers that of their landlords. Some organisations have ended almost with the founding meeting; some have little more than a paper existence in subdistrict records, yet they may still be invited to send 'representatives' to be members of committees set up by the subdistrict office to work on the August 17 (Independence Day) program or other projects. The life span of an organisation and its activities depend on its leaders. The total membership seldom meets or otherwise participates in group activities."⁴⁴

The entrance of modern political organisations competing for followers and votes without giving much beyond propaganda in return has in many cases added to the apathy and frustration that apparently was growing regarding possibilities for progress and development. In areas in Central Java such as that studied by Koentjaraningrat, relations with superior local bureaucrats at the district level were considered more important than other alliances. People in those areas followed their established leaders in elections. The opponents and rivals of local heads voted for parties opposed to that to which the heads belonged.⁴⁵ Also in this case it was noted that the influence of bureaucrats and lurahs was strengthened by the fact that all government-sponsored community development and cooperative efforts were organised from above through them. This fact and the traditional patriarchal attitude of the civil servants had as a side-effect that very little initiative from the villagers themselves emerged. There was on the whole rather passive conformity.

Under the circumstances it seemed rather difficult for militant peasant organisations to gain a foothold in the rural areas where no rapid change such as that related to the estate economy had drastically upset the traditional system. The village elite generally adhered, if abangan to the PNI, and if santri to the Nahdatul Ulama or the Masjumi. However, their organisations on the whole were not very effective. For the Modjokuto case study area it was observed that the Communist-oriented BTI was the only organisation that had some serious appeal among the peasants.⁴⁶ Neither the peasant organisation of the Masjumi, the Sarekat Tani Islam Indonesia (STII), nor the Nahdatul Ulama peasant organisation had any activity at the village level. One of the NU leaders commented about the lack of activity: "All the argument about doctrine

44. Andrea Wilcox Palmer, "Situradja: A Village in Highland Priangan" in Koentjaraningrat, op.cit., pp. 322-23.

45. Koentjaraningrat, "Tjelapar, A Village in South Central Java" in Koentjaraningrat, op.cit., p. 279.

46. Robert R. Jay, op.cit., pp. 95-100.

does not mean a thing, the party that first sets up an organisation that really does something for the peasants will win any general election easily."⁴⁷ The STII had at one time started a rice storage place for the peasants and a rice mill to help the peasants and build up the capital of the organisation. This was later practically the only thing left of the STII activities and was not seen differently to any other private enterprise by the peasants.⁴⁸

It has been noted that the Islamic organisations appealed to religious sentiments in their campaign for adherents, an approach which, in some cases such as Modjokuto, had an adverse effect. In this as well as other areas even better-off peasants felt more inclined to join the PKI as a reaction to the orthodox soul-winning campaign.⁴⁹

Although in a number of cases such as in Modjokuto some members of the abangan rural elite were leaders of or sympathisers with the BTI or PKI,⁵⁰ on the whole these organisations could not rely on traditional authorities and patronage for organising their following. Wertheim observed that at times wealthy peasants had PKI insignia in their homes but that the great majority of rich peasants, dominant in the local patronage system, were of different political orientation.⁵¹ BTI and PKI had to appeal to the aspirations of the poor peasants by showing them that their basic interests were distinct from the traditional religious and secular authorities, expressed in Masjumi, NU and also PNI. This process of detraditionalisation was effectively promoted by the PKI and BTI.⁵² How this was done will be dealt with in the next section.

47. Clifford Geertz, The Religion of Java (The Free Press of Glencoe, Ill., 1960), p. 171.

48. Ibid., p. 172.

49. B. Gunawan, op.cit., pp. 37-38.

50. Observation by Robert R. Jay, op.cit., p. 99.

51. W.F. Wertheim, "From Aliran Towards Class Struggle in the Countryside of Java" (Paper for the International Conference on Asian History at Kuala Lumpur, August, 1968, mimeo), p. 5.

52. Donald Hindley, "Political Power and the October 1965 Coup in Indonesia", Journal of Asian Studies, XXVI, 2, February 1967, pp. 238-39.

The Creation of a Peasant Mass Organisation

After the failure of the Madiun uprising the Communist Party controlled peasant organisation BTI (Barisan Tani Indonesia) suffered a considerable decline and came under the control of moderate leaders. The Communists created the RPI, Rukun Tani Indonesia (Indonesian Peasants' Association), as a resistance movement in areas under Dutch occupation during the Independence struggle. In 1951 the PKI suffered another blow when many leaders were arrested after stirring up labour trouble. In 1953 after Aidit had become secretary-general of the PKI, efforts were initiated by the Communists to come to a united front policy and to build up a mass organisation, particularly among the peasants. In July 1953 Aidit published a statement regarding the "Future of the Indonesian Peasant Movement", which focused attention on rural problems and the potential for mass organisation in rural areas.

The BTI and RPI merged in September 1953 as a first step toward a United Peasants' Front. Through the use of militant slogans Communists assumed formal control of the 200,000 member BTI. The BTI voted to join the RPI but retained the name BTI. The Socialist Party members of the BTI then broke away, taking about one-quarter of the members, and created the Gerakan Tani Indonesia (Indonesian Peasant Movement, GTI).⁵³

The strategy to be followed by the Communist Party workers and the BTI activists was developed by Aidit in his above-mentioned statement in 1953. In the first place the "important and serious survivals of feudalism in Indonesia" were denounced. The survivals of feudalism were defined as follows:

"(1) monopoly ownership of the land by the big landlords, (2) land-rent paid in kind, (3) land rent paid in the form of labour and (4) the piling up of debts bearing down upon the peasants and placing them in a position of slavery."⁵⁴

Emphasis was given to the need to organise the peasants, taking as a point of departure their most strongly felt demands and grievances. It was suggested to create local organisations around such demands, which varied for each particular village or area. As examples were mentioned: low land rents, lower

53. Arnold C. Brackman, op.cit., p. 208; also John O.Sätter, op.cit., Vol. III, pp. 749 and 770.

54. Repeated in closing speech by D.N. Aidit in C.P.I. National Peasants Conference, Documents, Djakarta, April 1959, Supplement to Review of Indonesia, 6-7, June/July 1959, p. 11.

interest rates on loans, lower state taxes, abolition of unpaid labour, prevention of eviction of tenants, giving unworked lands to the peasants, giving arms to the peasants to defend themselves against the terror of fanatic religious groups such as the Darul Islam, assistance in seeds and tools, an agricultural school for each region, improvement of old irrigation systems, more representative village government and many other demands.⁵⁵

As final goal was indicated the distribution of land to peasants in private ownership, but it was seen that a strong base of peasant organisation should be first built up around the more immediate and urgent demands which could more easily be satisfied. Party cadres were instructed to identify in meetings with the peasants in each particular area or community what were their most acute problems. In order to achieve appropriate identification of the cadres and the village population, the policy of "Three Together" was followed: activists must "live together, eat together and work together" with the peasants. They must also help them in the solution of all kinds of practical day-to-day problems regarding rent payment, legalisation of titles etc. As Aidit indicated: "Only by practical work among the peasants, only by leading the peasants in the struggle for their everyday demands, demands that seem small, insignificant, unimportant, only in this way can party cadres and members have close relations with the peasants and receive their trust. Only by actions to demand things that seem small, insignificant, unimportant, can the peasants' organisations grow stronger, wider and more solid."⁵⁶

"Small but successful" actions were seen by the PKI and BPI cadres as the best way to mobilise the peasantry. As one PKI guide indicated:

"After the peasant organisation is formed, quickly undertake concrete activities in defense of the peasants' interests, such as the distribution of fertilizer, seedlings and tools at a cheap price, repairing the water channels, repairing the fish ponds and distributing fish eggs, establishing cooperatives, sinking wells together, repairing the village bridges and roads, organising a death association, general education and education of agrarian leaders, defense of people brought to court, eradication of illiteracy, organising sports and cultural bodies, etc."⁵⁷

55. Donald Hindley, The Communist Party of Indonesia, 1951-1963 (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964), p. 161.

56. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 174-75.

57. PKI, Tuntunan untuk Bekerdja dikalangan kaum Tani (Guide for Working among the Peasants), Djakarta, 1955, quoted in Donald Hindley, op.cit., p. 174.

It was emphasised, however, that the small but successful actions should be accompanied by stimulation among the peasants of the awareness that the basic solution to their problems only came with the end of landlord exploitation, and that this could be achieved through organised struggle. Actions that would directly affect the relationship with the landowners were not to be undertaken, however, until the organisation at the local level had gained enough strength. Then the demands for joint land rent agreements or for lowered interest rates on loans or lowered land rents could be brought up.

Particularly since the drive to organise the peasants was also part of the struggle between the political parties for the first national elections to be held in 1955, the strife between different groups at the village level became more and more intense. The down-to-earth approach used by the PKI and BTI cadres was highly successful, and gave the Communist Party an unexpectedly strong position as one of the four largest parties in the country.

The National Political Effects

The election campaign⁵⁸ brought the divisions between ideological currents that had existed mainly at the level of political circles in the urban areas into the most isolated villages. Out of the elections did not come a clear majority of one group but a kind of balance between four parties belonging to the two main currents, abangan and santri (Islamic):

PNI (Nationalist Party)	8,434,653 votes	(22.3%)
Masjumi (Modern Islamic Party)	7,903,886	(20.9%)
Mahdatul Ulama (Traditional Islamic Party)	6,955,141	(18.4%)
PKI (Communist Party)	6,176,914	(16.4%)
Other small parties	8,404,705	(22.0%)
Among which PSI (Socialist Party)	753,191	(2.0%)

Although it is extremely difficult to generalise for the whole of Indonesia or even for Java, it could probably be said that many Islamic peasants who voted Masjumi or NU formed part of the traditional patronage of Islamic landlords,

58. For an interesting description and analysis of the first national elections in Indonesia and the solemn way in which they were carried out, see Herbert Feith, The Indonesian Elections of 1955 (Interim Report Series, Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Programme, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., 1957).

the hadjis, tied not only by economic bonds but also by loyalties which have religious implications. Of the abangan peasants, the small and middle farmers appeared frequently to belong to the Nationalist Party (PNI) while tenants and landless labourers appeared to be mostly inclined toward the Communist Party, although at the local level they were led in some cases by abangan landowners or other representatives of the rural elite.

There is however great variation from region to region, partly depending on the degree of impact of Islam. Other factors are the influence of the former Dutch colonial estate economy, which seems to coincide with strong BTI and Communist adherence.

The continuing rapid growth of the Communist Party and Communist-oriented peasant organisation after the 1955 elections is obvious from the results of elections for regional assemblies in 1957, which showed an increase of 34 percent in electoral strength over 1955. Comparing the 1955 and 1957 electoral figures it can be concluded that the gains of the Communist Party were losses for the PNI, rather than for the Islamic parties. This indicated that the division between santri and abangan was rather stable and deep-rooted, while within the abangan current the domination and patronage of traditional leadership, the village heads and particularly the higher level bureaucrats (priajis) was diminishing.

Over the next years the Communist Party and its mass organisations became the largest organised political force in the country and for that reason, at the elections in 1959, should have been entitled to form the Cabinet according to constitutional practice. For a variety of reasons, however, these elections were not held and the system of "guided democracy" was initiated by President Sukarno.⁵⁹ It had become very difficult to form effective coalition governments

59. Guy J. Pauker, "The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Indonesia" (Memorandum RM-5753-PR, prepared for United States Air Force Project Rand, The Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, Cal., Febr. 1969), pp. 5-6, noted: "The PKI leaders had reason to expect even more from the next general elections, which according to law were to be held in 1959. Many observers believed at the time that the PKI would emerge as the country's strongest political party, thus entitled by constitutional practice to form the new cabinet. If this had happened, the PKI would have been the first Communist Party anywhere in the world to gain control of a national government by legal peaceful means." As this report further indicated, the Army "...was not prepared to permit a Communist electoral victory and requested in May 1958 that elections be postponed for six years." This happened and "...in July 1959, Indonesia's parliamentary system was replaced by an authoritarian regime backed by the Army, Sukarno's so-called 'guided democracy'. Showing considerable political agility, the leaders of the PKI decided to make the most of a bad thing and began to cultivate President Sukarno in his new role as a dictator, while continuing to try to reopen the 'parliamentary road'."

among the three major parties (PNI, Masjumi and NU), while particularly the Army opposed the Communist Party becoming involved in the government. Since several regionalist groups had staged rebellions in the outer provinces, accusing the central government of being too much Java-centered, the President needed the support of the Army to check these forces.

In 1957 President Sukarno formed a government in which all parties were united under his leadership. In addition to the Parliament, a National Council was created (Dewan Nasional) in which political parties were counterbalanced by representatives of the so-called "functional groups", representatives of labourers, peasants, women, youth, veterans, the army, police, clergy, the outlying districts etc. The Army gained some influence in the political atmosphere through the National Council. This influence was much strengthened when in 1958 the army took over many of the nationalised Dutch enterprises, partly in order to prevent them falling into the hands of SOBSI, the Communist-oriented general labour union.⁶⁰

Through its role in the functional groups, the Army tried to gain control over the mass organisations (youth, workers, peasants etc.) of the different political parties by means of Cooperation Bodies, but the President prevented the Army from taking leadership over the functional groups. In order to check army influence, the President needed the support of the Communist Party, since it was the only group with a well-organised and disciplined mass basis among

60. Arnold C. Brackman, op.cit., p. 243; Everett D. Hawkins, "Labor in Transition", in Ruth T. McVey, ed., Indonesia (New Haven, Conn., 1963), p. 259, noted about the SOBSI: "The principal federation was - and still is - the Communist oriented SOBSI (Central Labor Organisation of All Indonesia) which had been founded in 1946 and was the sole effective labor federation in the Republic. SOBSI is composed primarily of industrial unions but also includes some craft groups; it is generally conceded to be the largest, strongest and most carefully organised federation with the largest number of full-time union leaders. Three other federations of importance in the 1950s were the KBSI (All Indonesian Congress of Workers) which claimed to be independent in spite of some PSI (Indonesian Socialist Party) officers; the SBII, which was started by the Masjumi Party; and KBKI, which was organised by the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI). The other federations were of less importance, some of them hardly being more than paper organisations."

the villagers and the urban lower classes. President Sukarno at times utilised mass rallies which the PKI could organise for him. The PKI, on the other hand, was quite dependent on the President's support to cope with too much Army restriction of its activities. In some of the outer provinces PKI activities were banned by the Army and PKI leaders were arrested. However, because of their strong base organisations and electoral power, the Communists in Java won influential positions in the administration of some areas and towns. The Army exercised increasingly strict control. Arrests of leaders and sympathisers occurred at times and mass meetings were rare and required Army permission.⁶¹

Further Growth of the BTI

The First PKI National Peasants Conference held in April 1959 was an important milestone in the campaign to organise the peasants. The efforts undertaken prior to 1959 were evaluated. Among the results discussed was the two-million increase of votes for the Communist Party. At the Conference was also noted:

"In regions where the Party has won an absolute majority, there have been not a few instances of legislation of peasant ownership over former estate lands that the peasants have long been cultivating."

It was recognised, however, that "many peasants still give their votes to parties of the landlords and the compradores."⁶²

The Peasants Conference then gave guidelines, based on former experiences, to the activists as to how to improve their approach:

(1) As one of the first and most important reasons for success was indicated the "going down" movement. Party leaders and activists of different levels went to the villages and tried, through the "Three Togethers" method to win the confidence of the peasants in order to find out exactly what were the agrarian relationships at the village level, and to investigate the social and economic conditions of the peasants or, in party terminology: "to assess the strength of the classes in the villages."⁶³ It was emphasised that special attention

61, See Herbert Feith, "Dynamics of Guided Democracy", in Ruth T. McVey, Indonesia, op.cit., pp. 335-41.

62. C.P.I. National Peasants' Conference, op.cit., p. 4 (Opening Speech of the National Peasants' Conference by Njoto).

63. Ibid., p. 6.

should be given to the number of persons and the size of landlords' holdings, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants, agricultural labourers and other "classes".⁶⁴

(2) After winning the confidence of the peasants and becoming profoundly acquainted with the specific problems of the various kinds of peasants and farmers in the villages, actions had to be undertaken which would lead to improvements in a gradual way. Such actions were "small but successful". As was noted: "The peasants and especially the peasants directly concerned, must be convinced of the justice and advantages of every demand raised and the demand must be in conformity with the strength of the peasants' organisation."⁶⁵

It was recommended that the activists must "strive to draw in and arouse 90 percent of the inhabitants of the village and must genuinely base themselves upon the poor peasants and the agricultural labourers and unite with the middle peasants."⁶⁶

This approach was particularly important since on the whole government programmes, including cooperatives, community development and agricultural extension tended to direct themselves to the better-off farmers and village elite rather than to landless and semi-landless peasants.⁶⁷

From 1959 onward the PKI and BTI tried to bring a certain diversification into the peasant organisations, which on the whole were large and heterogeneous. In order to be able to channel demands of specific categories of peasants in villages all over the country, three types of klompoks, groupings, were formed which were kept small and limited to peasants of a specific type, irrespective of their political affiliation or membership of BTI. Thus, special groupings were organised embracing agricultural labourers, including farm labourers without land and those who had a small plot but had to work for others to supplement their income. Another klompok consisted of tenant farmers, and a third kind of grouping of peasants who worked their own plots.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., p. 6.

66. Ibid., p. 7.

67. H. Ten Dam, "Coopereren vanuit het gezichtspunt der desastructuur in desa Tjibodas", op.cit., pp. 105-15, gives a striking example of this tendency.

An important task in this context was the establishment of cooperatives of "working people" as opposed to the cooperatives in which the better-off farmers or even the landlords had the leadership role and the main benefits. These cooperatives were to be for credit, production, and purchases and sales, and were to have an important function in the struggle against merchants and middle-men. Great emphasis was given to the need that democratic principles be applied to these cooperatives so as to avoid leadership functions falling into the hands of the traditional leaders, as usually occurred.⁶⁸ The cooperatives were promoted among the peasants in a gradual way, initiating through simple mutual aid teams in agricultural production, small savings and loan groups, groups for the joint purchase of inputs (such as improved rice seed). Once the peasants were sufficiently convinced and leaders properly trained, full-fledged cooperatives were created. Cadre reports indicated, however, that the formation of cooperatives encountered many obstacles.

Through the production cooperatives, in particular, simple efforts to improve agricultural techniques could be propagated, which would raise production without waiting for modern agricultural implements. Rice production could be improved through the "Five Principles" Campaign, encouraging peasants to "plough deeply, plant closely, give more fertilizer, improve seedlings and irrigation".⁶⁹

By 1959 270,000 cadres had graduated from party schools, but in order to improve the strategy and effectiveness, cadre and leadership training courses were more systematically organised from 1959 onward. Regional and local training centres were created. Great attention was given to the study of the social structure of the villages and hamlets, to experiences of peasant organisations elsewhere, and also to simple agricultural techniques.⁷⁰

Whenever a small but successful action of the community development type was undertaken, the cadres emphasised that this was only a preliminary solution as long as more important structural causes of poverty and lack of facilities remained, such as the exploitation by landowners and merchants.

In the activities of all kinds at the village level Communist-oriented mass organisations other than the BTI, such as the GERWANI (Women's Movement)

68. C.P.I., National Peasants' Conference, op.cit., pp. 7-9.

69. Ibid., p. 14.

70. Donald Hindley, The Communist Party, op.cit., p. 168.

and the Pemuda Rakjat (People's Youth) gave active support. This included activities for women that helped improve local conditions and strengthen morale, activities in the field of sports, recreation and folkloric performances etc. Traditional forms of mutual help were utilised and revived, such as the arisan groups, in which each member paid a weekly fee and each week one member was given the entire collected amount for some special purpose.

To the common peasants, membership of the PKI or BTI did not mean intellectual conviction but rather a desire for land or a better share of the crop, or it was even a gesture of solidarity with a brother who was already a member, or hostility toward a wealthy neighbour who was a member of the NU. However, in spite of the fact that the PKI and BTI respected religious traditions, even punishing cadres who openly made anti-religious propaganda, peasants in predominantly religious villages (Islamic) were more likely to follow their neighbours, including their landlords, belonging to the NU. On the other hand, in abangan villages even landlords were drawn sometimes by family and other ties into the BTI.

On the whole, it seemed that in mobilising the peasants the BTI had as an advantage over the peasant organisations related to other religio-ideological currents (alirans), that the cadres of the other organisations were less willing or interested to "go-down" into the villages. In several cases, however, the BTI also had its difficulties with its own cadres. As Hindley noted:

"First, the more literate and politically conscious peasants who tend to become cadres in both the Party and the mass organisations are often middle and rich peasants or even landlords, and retain the attitudes of their social position toward the poorer peasants. Second, in the relative social peace of the village, many cadres, themselves of peasant origin, are loath to create social disunity in the village or have failed to recognize the existence of landlord exploitation. Third, some PKI cadres have tended to become landlords once they become village officials, and to ignore the sufferings of the poorer peasants. Fourth, the educational level of peasant members is generally so low that they must be taught literacy and basic general knowledge before they can receive political training. And fifth, cadres from urban areas often do not know the regional language required, or are simply unwilling to engage in rural work."⁷¹

Competition of BTI cadres with traditional leadership was not easy and the influence of some of the other peasant organisations should not be underestimated. Their active membership appeared small, but the leaders of the Muslim organisation Nahdatul Uhlama and the Nationalist Party (PNI) peasant organisation Petani, were influential people with great authority in their villages. As such they automatically had a large following.

71. Ibid., p. 163.

The surprising thing about the spread and development of BTI and its activities in Java is that it came about in a society still dominated by tradition and respect for established leadership, although first signs of decline were there. The growth of BTI was not due simply to the fact that its cadres were more active than those of other organisations. To systematically undermine the hold of the traditional wealthy leaders over their villages and to bring the people so far as to oppose that leadership on crucial issues such as land tenure, is a big step in a tradition-bound society. Two important factors in this process were: (1) the creation of awareness and (2) charismatic leadership.

(1) The BTI rallied its members on the whole, it seems, in a step-by-step way, elaborating on values that existed in Javanese culture but had not had a chance to develop under traditional rule and control, values of the need for struggle between good and bad, as reflected in the traditional wajang and the Ramayana story. There is considerable evidence that the PKI and BTI in the rural areas have utilised "progressive" elements in folklore and traditional culture, after a careful study of those elements, to make the poor peasants aware of their own interests and to show them ways to change the status quo.⁷² It was a question of placing the emphasis differently than was habitually done.

It would be an exaggeration to say that there was a clear-cut introduction of class struggle, but there were certain elements of this. Taking up the examples of existing but hidden grievances against those in power, people were made aware that the harmony in their villages was disappearing or did not exist. As abuses and usury became more obvious through the modernisation process, awareness of being exploited was due to increase, and the BTI took up this issue as a means with which to organise the peasants as an interest group.

(2) In addition to the existence of strongly felt grievances mainly related to a deteriorating land tenure situation, strong new leadership was needed to rally the people against the traditional elite. Identification with the fate of the poor peasants was the initial step to gain the adherence and admiration of the people. Some scholars emphasise the spiritual implications of charisma as a way to get a following.

72. D.N. Aidit, "Launch a New Culture Movement in our Villages", Review of Indonesia, Vol. VII, 5-6-7, May-June-July 1964, pp. 31-32.

In a study of religious attitudes in Central Java Mulder emphasised the importance of charismatic leaders, through whose intervention and guidance people experience a sharing of higher powers. Such a leader is a kind of guru (religious teacher) and bapak (father figure) on whom one feels able to depend. Loyalty to him becomes often more important than loyalties to parents and family, which as such are very strong in Java.⁷³ It is difficult to assess how and why one becomes such a leader. One has to prove oneself gifted with super-natural or other special qualities which are relevant within the traditional abangan religious context in Java. While the Javanese type of religiosity, kebatinan, can easily be a form of escapism of suffering, it seems that loyalty to charismatic and particularly gifted, able or courageous leaders can as such be a factor that rallies people in a struggle for improvement and change. Such leaders then can take over the "fatherly" role that landlords and wealthy farmers have traditionally played among the peasants in their village.

Once traditional patronage was undermined and new leaders enjoyed enough prestige, it was possible to compete successfully with old leaders in elections for lurahs (village heads) and even higher positions in local government. In several areas, particularly in Central Java, BTI or PKI leaders thus gradually took over official positions from the established elite.

In spite of many difficulties characteristic of organisational efforts in the highly traditional rural areas, the BTI was the most impressive of all the Communist-oriented mass organisations. While at the end of 1953 it started with a membership of several hundreds of thousands, at its Fifth National Congress in 1957 3,390,286 members were claimed; at the Sixth National Congress in 1962 5,654,974; in August 1963 7,099,103; and in September 1964 8.5 million.⁷⁴ Peasant membership of the Communist Party was only a small part of that of the BTI, and rose from 80,000 in March 1954 to over 750,000 in December 1958, reaching 1,200,000 in 1962.⁷⁵

73. J.A. Niels Mulder, "Aliran Kebatinan as an Expression of Javanese World View", Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, Vol. I, 2, September 1970.

74. Guy J. Pauker, "Communist Prospects in Indonesia" (Memorandum RM-4135-PR, prepared for the United States Air Force Project Rand, The Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, Cal., April 1964), p.19.

75. Figures derived from Donald Hindley, The Communist Party, op.cit., pp. 165-67; Hindley noted that the figures were not consistent, depending on the interpretation of "members" and "persons that can be mobilised."

The whole structure was organised in a centralised way. There were Regional Committees in the provinces, Section Committees in the kabupaten and committees in the villages and places with less than 100 members. The local cells existing in hamlets, plantations or other basic units were responsible to the RC's.⁷⁶

The Role of the Army

The growing strength of the Communist and Communist-oriented mass organisations provoked a strong response from the Armed Forces. A PKI Party Congress to be held in 1959 was first forbidden by the Army but was later allowed, thanks to the support of President Sukarno. The Congress was finally held 7-14 September 1959 under strict supervision of the Army and was closed to the public.⁷⁷ President Sukarno participated and expressed his agreement with its objectives.

In spite of harassment by the Army and strong opposition by local traditional or even nationalist (PNI) forces in the villages, the Communist organisations continued to grow steadily and in ways that were well within the limits of democratic procedure. The elections due in 1959 were postponed however, and the PKI had to identify even more with the President and his NASAKOM "populist" regime.⁷⁸ Although NASAKOM stands for the unity of Nationalists, Religious People and Communists, the PKI was not allowed more than symbolical participation in the guided democracy government, in the form of three ministerships without portfolio, which excluded them from any power or decision making within the government administration.

The strength of the Army was considerably increased in the early 1960s with help from the Soviet Union in the conflict with the Netherlands about West Irian, and particularly in a confrontation with Malaysia over Northern Borneo.

76. Guy J. Pauker, "Communist Prospects in Indonesia", op.cit., p. 37.

77. Justus M. van der Kroef, "Indonesian Communist Policy and the Sixth Party Congress", Pacific Affairs, XXXIII, 3, September 1960, p. 227.

78. For an interesting description of the way in which balance of power was maintained between President Sukarno, the Army and PKI see Donald Hindley, Political Power, op.cit., pp. 242-44; about "populism" in Indonesia see B. Gunawan, "Enkele Sociale Processen in Indonesië", Oost-West, 9, 2, February 1970, pp. 49-53.

The Army formerly consisted of local groups of resistance fighters against the colonial regime, generally headed by more or less charismatic leaders. Some of these groups had been demobilised but others were integrated into the TNI, the regular national army, many chieftains being given the rank of general. The manner of its creation meant that the Army had roots among the population, particularly in the rural regions where it originated. As former freedom-fighters, soldiers considered themselves to be the guardians of the people's interests.⁷⁹

Army leaders were sceptical about the development or lack of development of the democratic practices of party politics and general elections, in view of the strife to which this led. They particularly feared the Communists, knowing that if this group should come to power, the influence of the Army would be strongly curtailed. They also resented the Communist Madiun rebellion of 1948, at the time that the struggle against colonialism was going on.

The period of "guided democracy" and the many years of martial law gave the Army the opportunity to penetrate all sectors of life. As a response to several emergencies, mentioned above, the Army built up a strength of 350,000 well-armed and trained professional soldiers.⁸⁰ It is difficult to determine how much of the old spirit remained alive within the Army.

At the same time, the PKI and BTI survived only thanks to the President's support, and on the condition of accepting Surkarno's ideology into the Party programme, including the belief in God. Some authors speak of the weakness and "domestication" of the Communist Party as a result of this dependence. An advantage that the PKI had from not participating in any government was that it could not be blamed for the economic and social ills from which the country suffered, while all other large parties had to share responsibility for the increasing corruption and the deteriorating national situation.⁸¹

At the Sixth PKI Congress in 1959 it was affirmed that, although at the Fifth Congress in 1954 peasants represented less than half of the members, they now formed the majority in the party.⁸² Thus, by 1959, the bargaining position and mass organisation of PKI and BTI were strong enough to enable them to successfully take up the land reform issue at the national level.

79. B.Gunawan, Kudeta, op.cit., chapter 5.

80. Ewa T.Pauker, "Has the Sukarno Regime Weakened the PKI?", Asian Survey, IV, 9, September 1964, pp. 1061 and 1064.

81. Ibid., pp. 1060 and 1069.

82. Justus M. Van der Kroef, "Agrarian Reform and the Indonesian Communist Party", Far Eastern Survey, 29, 1, January 1960, p. 6.

Land Reform Legislation

On National Independence Day, 1959 (17 August), President Sukarno gave his Political Manifesto (Manipol) address in which he outlined the "guided democracy" principles under which Indonesia was to be governed. A new land tenure legislation was also announced, in partial response to the demands made by the April 1959 National Peasants' Conference of the rapidly growing PKI.⁸³

A principal demand had been a 6:4 division of the harvest between sharecroppers and landowners. On January 7, 1960, Act No. 2 was promulgated regarding Agreement on Division of Proceeds.⁸⁴ This was a compromise since the division was not clearly established but was to be decided upon for each kabupaten by its chief, the bupati. Later, an instruction issued by the Minister of Agriculture stipulated that no share for the sharecroppers could be fixed below the minimum of half the produce of irrigated land, and that agreements had to be made in writing before the village-heads, who were often themselves landlords. Discontinuation of the contract could be arranged through his intervention.⁸⁵ The agreements had to be made for at least three years for rice paddies, or five years for dry land.

Another more or less direct result of the strength and pressure of the Communist-oriented peasant mass organisation BTI was that early in 1960 the Supreme Advisory Council initiated a debate on land reform law. While those who represented the peasants, particularly the BTI and PKI, insisted on a "land-to-the-tiller" programme, practically abolishing sharecropping, the landlord interests in the Council were strong enough to bargain for a compromise and to maintain the sharecropping system, although under new regulations determining a maximum limit of land. Colonial types of land tenure were to be abolished altogether.

83. For an account of the special interest of the Indonesian Communist Party in the agrarian reform issue and the reasons for this see Justus M. van der Kroef, "Agrarian Reform", op.cit., pp. 5-13.

84. Act No. 2, Year 1960, Re Agreement on Division of Proceeds, 7 January 1960, Art. 7; the translation of the titles of this and other agrarian reform laws are mostly from the C.A.F.I., Commercial Advisory Foundation in Indonesia.

85. Ibid., Art. 6.

In 1960, the BTI leader Asmu (who in 1962 became BTI's chairman) declared that land reform was the ultimate goal of the peasant struggle, but that a gradual approach would be accepted. While it was demanded that lands of landlords belonging to the Darul Islam be confiscated because these people had been involved in efforts to overthrow the government, "patriotic" landlords would not be affected and it was only demanded that they share the yield with their tenants on a 60:40 basis. Asmu also demanded that the maximum amount of land that a landlord would be allowed to have should be 5 hectares of irrigated land or ten hectares of dry land.⁸⁶

On September 24, 1960, "Act No. 5 of the Year 1960 Concerning Basic Regulations on Agrarian Principles" was promulgated. Its principles are summarised below:

- "(1) agricultural land is for the tilling farmer;
- (2) primary rights to land, e.g., individual private ownership, are exclusively for Indonesia citizens, but foreign nationals can obtain secondary rights to rent or to use land under the time and size limitations set by law;
- (3) absentee ownership is not allowed except for those persons in active state service and for other exceptional cases;
- (4) the economically weak farmers should be protected against those occupying a stronger position."⁸⁷

On December 29, 1960, Act No. 5 was followed by the "Government Regulation in Lieu of Act No. 56 of the Year 1960 Concerning Fixation of the Size of Agricultural Land." It was in this Regulation that, in densely populated areas such as Java, five hectares of irrigated rice paddy and six hectares of non-irrigated land were fixed as the maximum holding of a landowner. All land beyond that limit would be bought by the government and resold to landless peasants.

86. Asmu, "The Question of Land Reform", Review of Indonesia, VII, 7, July 1960, pp. 30-32, republished from the organ of the BTI, Suara-Tani.

87. Selo Soemardjan, "Land Reform in Indonesia", Asian Survey, Vol. I, 12, February 1962, p. 25.

The following determinations were made:

Density of population per square kilometer	Maximum size of holding	
	Wet rice paddy (ha)	Dry land (ha)
Scarcely populated : up to 50	15	20
Less dense : 51 - 250	10	12
Sufficiently dense : 251- 400	7.5	9
Very dense : 401 and upward	5	6

The density of population was estimated for each kabupaten. Decisions as to the maximum size of land were based on:

- (1) the availability of land to be distributed
- (2) the density of population in each kabupaten
- (3) the type and fertility of land; wet and dry, irrigated and non-irrigated
- (4) the best farm size in accordance with the capability of a farming family plus a few farm labourers
- (5) the level of agricultural technology.

Since in Java there were relatively few landlords with more than five hectares,⁸⁸ the ceiling of five hectares did not leave much land to be distributed to those who were landless or had insufficient for subsistence (the official guideline for an appropriate landholding for a family was a minimum of 2 hectares). The ceiling was relatively high for Javanese conditions, where the average plot is about half a hectare. However, the law was seen as a good starting point and the BPI launched a campaign to acquaint the peasants with the new law and to make them demand its implementation.

Land Tenure Situation

That the land tenure pattern in Java is extremely complicated is shown clearly by the contradictory statistics available.

Hindley quoted figures given by the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs for 1957 indicating that there were in Java 3,227,694 hectares of sawah (owned by 5,788,247 persons; average 0.56 hectare per owner) and 4,369,099 hectares of unirrigated land (owned by 9,845,936 persons; average 0.5 hectare per owner).⁸⁹

88. See Table I for 1963 figures.

89. Donald Hindley, The Communist Party of Indonesia 1951-1963 (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964), p. 4.

Indicating certain discrepancies in the data, Hindley then quoted a Ministry of Agrarian Affairs table on the landholdings of non-irrigated land, amounting to 9,155,369 holdings, and another table on the landholdings of irrigated land, totalling 5,527,691. He noted that the discrepancies in the figures were not explained by the Ministry's reports.⁹⁰

A new attempt to evaluate the land tenure situation was made with the Agricultural Census of 1963, based on sampling. In the introduction to the Preliminary Figures published by the Bureau of Statistics in 1964, it was noted that certain errors and discrepancies might occur because of utilisation of the sampling technique.⁹¹

A recent World Bank Report quoted figures of the 1963 Agricultural Census indicating that the cultivated area of Java consisted of 2,652,000 hectares of irrigated rice land and 2,006,000 hectare of dry land. The total was divided into about 7,950,000 farms, giving an average of 0.7 hectares per farm. The Report also emphasised that many smallholders were only nominal owners since, as a result of indebtedness, their land was controlled by wealthier farmers and/or money lenders. It was noted that there were so many sharecroppers and tenants that one hectare of land was often worked by as many as four or more tenants.⁹²

The World Bank Report compiled the following table based on the 1963 Agricultural Census.

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90. Ibid., p. 5; making the issue even more complicated, Karl J. Pelzer, "The Agricultural Foundation", in Ruth T. McVey, ed., Indonesia (New Haven, Conn., 1963), p. 127, quotes a document of the US Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS 5249) utilising the table used by Hindley regarding dry lands, as referring to the number of sawahs (irrigated rice fields).
 91. Census Pertanian 1963 (Agricultural Census 1963), Report No. 1, (Preliminary Figures, Biro Pusat Statistik, Djakarta 1964), p. IX.
 92. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Development Association, Economic Development of Indonesia, Vol. III, Annex 1, Agriculture, Report No. AS-132a, February 12, 1968, pp. 29-32.

Table I. Size of Farms

<u>Area of Farm by Size</u> Hectare	<u>Farms in Java-Madura</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0.10 - 0.49	4,152,434	52.2
0.50 - 0.99	2,147,708	27.1
1.00 - 1.49	858,477	10.8
1.50 - 1.99	350,889	4.4
2.00 - 2.99	273,914	3.4
3.00 - 3.99	88,636	1.2
4.00 - 4.99	35,983	0.5
5.00 -	33,867	0.4
Total	<u>7,941,906</u>	<u>100.0</u>
	=====	=====

Definitive figures of the 1963 Agricultural Census published in 1968 gave the total number of farms (units cultivated by one farm household, by its owner of the land or not) for Java-Madura as 7,935,109, covering a total of 6,171,405 hectares.⁹³

While the overall Agricultural Census data do not deal with land ownership but with farms, more elaborate census data per province give figures on the percentage of farms worked by owners and those worked by non-owners, tenants, sharecroppers etc., divided as in Table II.⁹⁴ In West Java the non-owned farms are mainly sharecropped, in Central and East Java either sharecropped or rented for a fixed amount. In East Java a large proportion of the non-owned farms are rent-free from state or village.

Table II.

Farm holdings	Fully owned	Tenure arrangement
West Java	2,155,437	1,307,008
Central Java	2,638,216	848,429
East Java	2,789,727	994,828
Jogjakarta	2,789,727	1,517,700
Jakarta	328,589	1,271,837
	<u>23,140</u>	135,231
Total	20,559	2,581
	7,935,109	

93. "Census Partanian 1963" (Census of Agriculture 1963), II A. (Biro Pusat Statistik Djakarta, 1968, mimeo.), table 1.

94. Derived from preliminary tables of 1963 Agricultural Census shown to the author by Bureau of Statistics but as yet not officially published.

Indonesian experts of the Agricultural Institute in Bogor pointed out that discrepancies in the figures are partly due to the fact that in 1963, when the census through sampling was taken, many owners reported less land than they actually had, fearing the effects of the new land reform legislation (limiting holdings to five hectares, the rest to be expropriated). Another thing which does not come out in the 1963 figures is the fact that better-off farmers usually own the best lands since they are descendents of the founders of their villages, and that, in view of the "threatening" land reform, they nominally divided large plots among close relatives. Additional complications are that in the 1963 Agricultural Census, house compounds and gardens of less than 0.1 hectare were not counted, while in other statistics regarding land tenure they were. Specialists and field observations indicate that a considerable number of peasants own plots just covering their home plot and a small yard around it.⁹⁵

Other factors which complicate any assessment of the land tenure situation are the traditional systems that exist in Java. One such system, widespread according to some informants, is the gade system in which small owners place their land at the disposition of a creditor in exchange for a loan. It is not a pawn because according to tradition the creditor is entitled to use the land until the debt has been repaid. Many relatively large farm units are composed of plots controlled under this system by the farm operator, who does not nominally own the plots.⁹⁶ In the statistics regarding farm-holdings they figure as one farm, classified as partly-owned if the farmer owns one of the plots he operates directly or with farmhands. On the other hand, the land of the owner of a number of plots which are worked by sharecroppers does not figure as one farm-holding in the statistics, except for the plot or part of his property that the owner works himself directly or with farmhands. The number of farmhands is not mentioned in the Agricultural Census. According to a 1968 report of the Ministry of Manpower there are 3.1 million landless agricultural workers (buruh-tani).⁹⁷

95. According to one source, this constitutes about 18 percent of the total farmland of Java. John E. Metcalf, The Agricultural Economy of Indonesia, p. 39, U.S. Department of Agriculture, quoted by International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, op.cit., p. 29.

96. Information supplied by specialists in the Directorate-General of Agrarian Affairs of the Department of Home Affairs (in charge of land reform) and the Agricultural Institute of Bogor.

97. Arrie Benggolo, "Report on the Manpower Situation in Indonesia" (Delivered to the Tenth International Manpower Seminar, May 27-August 17, 1968, Washington D.C., Ministry of Manpower No. 922/Ppt/1968, Mimeo.), p. 3.

The 1963 land tenure statistics for Java (including Madura) indicate that of the total of 7,950,000 farms over 4,000,000 are between 0.1 and 0.5 hectares. This means that a large part of their operators will have to work for others or find non-agricultural employment to supplement their income. The fact that there is a large group, a little over 2,000,000 peasants, who work between 0.5 and 1 hectare of land indicates that there is no clear break between those who have to work for others and those who do not. There is a considerable sector which, during part of the year, employs helpers, while at other seasons members of this sector supplement their income by working for others.

Another complication is that a considerable number of peasants who officially own a small plot of land, in reality work for others on their own plot in cases where their plot is pawned in some way and controlled by a money-lender or wealthier neighbour. The poorest group which, according to specialists, is constantly increasing in Java is the group of farm hands, landless labourers, who only work for others. The 16,000,000 people working in agriculture, forestry and fishing in Java (and Madura) are distributed as follows:

Table III.

	Total	Males
Independent workers	7,479,000	6,451,000
Employers	204,000	167,000
Employees	4,522,000	2,420,000
Unpaid family workers	3,802,000	1,991,000
Others	33,000	20,000
	<u>16,040,000</u>	<u>11,049,000</u>

Source: Survey Sosial Ekonomi Nasional (November 1964-February 1965), Central Bureau of Statistics.

While current statistics are not very reliable, comparative data to show how the land tenure situation has changed over the years are not available at all. However, probably even more significant than the rather precarious agricultural conditions of Java has been their constant and gradual deterioration noted by some experts.⁹⁸ The frustration resulting from this process may explain the willingness of the peasants to join radical pressure groups such as the BPI. The demand for land redistribution and a more equitable sharecropping

98. About this process, called "agricultural involution", see Clifford Geertz, Agricultural Involution, op.cit.

arrangement apparently had a strong appeal, which explains why the BTI grew between 1953 and 1964 from 800,000 to over 8,000,000 members.

One observer noted:

"Land reform is a complex question on which little data is available. Large landholdings are rare in Indonesia, especially in Java, where the PKI concentrated its attention. But holdings of more than two hectares have apparently been on the increase in recent years; severe inflation may well have strengthened this trend. Moreover the ownership of larger holdings is often associated with money lending, which can involve a separation between ownership and control, with the concentration of control over land probably being more extreme than the concentration of actual ownership."⁹⁹

Regulations regarding Implementation of the Reform Law

Not only the statistics regarding land tenure formed a shaky basis for an agrarian reform programme. Land reform legislation as it came into being over the years was also rather complicated, making effective implementation difficult. This legislation was laid down in a considerable number of laws, decrees and regulations, promulgated over the years 1960-64 and each dealing with specific issues. The first (No. 2 of 1960) dealt only with the sharecropping problem. During 1960, as noted above, laws regarding basic regulations on agrarian principles and fixation of the maximum holding of agricultural land were promulgated.

Another serious problem to be tackled by legislation was that of land owned by very small holders but controlled through indebtedness by money-lenders or wealthier farmers: the harvest was used to pay the interest (at excessively high rates) or to repay the loan. Law No. 1 of 1961 stipulated that after paying interest for seven years the official owner of the land could automatically get back his land.¹⁰⁰

Regulations regarding the actual implementation of the reform programme came out in the course of 1961. The main executive bodies were officially created in April 1961 and consisted of hierarchy of Land Reform Committees: a Central Committee headed by the President, provincial committees under the respective governors, kabupaten (regency) committees under the bupati, district committees under the tjamat, and village land reform committees under chairmanship of the lurah. The kabupaten committees were the most important in the execution of the actual programme.

99. K.D. Thomas, "Political and Economic Instability: the Gestapu and its Aftermath", in T.K. Tan, editor, Sukarno's Guided Indonesia (The Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, Australia, 1967), p. 118.

100. B.Gunawan, Kudeta, op.cit., p. 95.

The kabupaten, or Second Grade Regional Land Reform Committees, were headed by the bupati and the Chief of the Agrarian Office as chairman and executive secretary respectively, and further contained 16 heads of government services related to agriculture. The latter category included an officer appointed by the Military Administration, the chief of police and the public prosecutor of the kabupaten. Also, representatives of the four largest peasant organisations formed part of the kabupaten Land Reform Committee. The organisations mentioned in the annexes and regulations following the decree were PETANI (of the Nationalist Party), PERTANU (of the Orthodox Islamic Party Nahdatul Ulama) and the BTI.

The tasks of the Second Grade committees included: to execute instructions of the Central Land Reform Committee; to regulate the registration of land; to regulate the taking-over of surplus land by the government; to determine form, amount and manner of reimbursement; to fix the priorities of persons to get land; to guide and supervise the ketjaman (district) and village land reform committees.¹⁰¹

The bupati was made responsible for the selection of committee members at the ketjaman and village levels. Also at those levels a few representatives of large peasant organisations were on the committees. For the village level it was stipulated: "The membership of the Village Land Reform Committee is left to the discretion of the Second Grade Regional Land Reform Committee with the understanding that progressive figures and representatives of peasant organisations participate and should comprise at the most five members."¹⁰²

The fact that the existing civil administration played an important role at all levels was no guarantee for the effectiveness of the reform. Most villageheads were themselves large landholders and although a few representatives of peasant organisations participated in the committees, the PETANI and PERTANU representatives were often also landowners. The World Bank noted that, on the whole, representatives of potential beneficiaries did not play a significant role on the committees, contrary to what happened elsewhere, as in Japan or Taiwan.¹⁰³ The only way that the peasants could exercise pressure was generally

101. Presidential Decree No. 131 of 1961 re Organisation for the Implementation of Land Reform, April 15, 1961, Art. 6.

102. Ibid., Art. 8.

103. I.B.R.D., op.cit., p. 35.

through the BTI member on the Land Reform Committee, backed by the organised strength and potential bargaining power of his group. In some areas in Central and East Java where the BTI and Communist Party had won elections for local officials such as lurahs, the situation was more favourable to the peasants.

For the actual implementation of the reform programme in September 1961, Regulation No. 224 was promulgated. As lands to be distributed were indicated: (1) lands in excess of the maximum limit; (2) lands of absentee owners; (3) lands of principalities and ex-principalities; (4) other lands directly administered by the government. It was stipulated that absentee owners, those who resided outside the ketjamatan where their lands were located, had to transfer their land to inhabitants of that ketjamatan or it would be taken over by the government.¹⁰⁴ As indemnification for lands taken over by the government (excess land or absentee owners land) would be given: for the first five hectares ten times the annual net proceeds, for the second, third and fourth five hectares nine times the annual net proceeds and for the rest seven times the annual net proceeds.¹⁰⁵ This indemnification would be given 10 percent in savings at the Bank Koperasi Tani dan Nelayan (Cooperative Bank for Peasants and Fishermen) and the remainder in land reform promissory notes. The savings could be taken out one year after the land had actually been distributed.¹⁰⁶

In the distribution of land to peasants, priority would be given to the tillers cultivating the land in question and the regular peasant workers of the ex-owners. Special priority would be given to veterans and widows of fallen independence fighters.¹⁰⁷ Beneficiaries would have 16 years in which to pay the government the price to be reimbursed to the former owner for the distributed land. The beneficiaries were obliged to join cooperatives through which they would receive credit from the Bank Koperasi Tani dan Nelayan.¹⁰⁸ Landowners who rejected or boycotted the taking-over by the government of their excess land for distribution to peasants, would be punished by three months' detention and no indemnification for the land.¹⁰⁹

104. Government Regulation No. 224 Year 1961 re Implementation of Land Distribution and Payment of Indemnification, September 19, 1961, Art. 3.

105. Ibid., Art. 6.

106. Ibid., Art. 7.

107. Ibid., Art. 8.

108. Ibid., Art. 17.

109. Ibid., Art. 19.

The activities of the land reform committees did not start until 24 September 1962, the second anniversary of the basic agrarian law's promulgation.¹¹⁰ Compared with similar efforts in other countries, the publicity given to land reform legislation by the authorities and even the Communist Party demonstrated little aggressiveness.¹¹¹

The first stage of the land reform programme was to be implemented in Java and the Lesser Sunda Islands. In the course of 1963 the kabupaten land reform committees in this area calculated that 337,445 hectares of land (including national domain) were available for distribution. It was noted that this small amount of land was due to the high ceiling (of 5 HA) and particularly the leniency toward absentee landowners in this programme area. Much sawah land belonged to absentee landowners who lived in towns in Central Java.¹¹²

Chances for conflict between owners and potential beneficiaries were enhanced by the former's reaction to the first steps of land reform law implementation: determination of the available quantity of surplus land. As the World Bank Report noted:

"Observations in the Javanese countryside in 1964 pointed to many evasions of the permissible retention. There was no clearly stated provision that to escape redistribution, ownership of a parcel of land had to antedate the reform by a specified date. Lacking this, normal subdivision of a holding became as standard in Indonesia as it is elsewhere whenever ceilings or ownership are introduced."¹¹³

In addition to the fact that the land reform committees were often dominated by representatives of the local elite and were biased in favour of

110. E. Utrecht, "Land Reform in Indonesia", Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies, V, 3, Canberra, November 1969, p. 77; a highly interesting account of the various laws and the reform procedure can be found in the Indonesian language in Boedi Harsono SH, Undang-Undang Pokok Agraria (Djambatan, Djakarta, third printing, 1970).
111. I.B.R.D., op.cit., p. 35.
112. E. Utrecht, op.cit., p. 78; Selo Soemardjan, op.cit., p. 28 noted: "There are as yet no exact figures available on the number of absentee owners of agricultural land, but it may safely be assumed there is a positive relationship between that number and the proximity of large cities."
113. I.B.R.D., op.cit., p. 37, concludes: "However, the real issue is not this type of evasion but that under the Javanese conditions the ceiling was too high. Fixing the permissible retention at 5 hectares for Java was flying in the face of reality."

the larger landowners, they were also liable to certain forms of corruption.¹¹⁴
Both factors interfered with effective implementation of the reform programme.

Radical Peasant Pressure and Its Effects

In reaction to the slow and defective implementation of the land reform and the determination of which surplus lands were to be expropriated, the BTI and PKI (Communist Party) stepped-up their activities and became more militant, risking the more or less harmonious collaboration that existed at the national level between them and the various other political currents.

At a December 1963 meeting of the Central Committee of the PKI, the slowness of land reform implementation was vigorously denounced. Figures were presented indicating that of over 200,000 hectares of surplus land registered, less than 20,000 hectares had been actually distributed in the country as a whole. Aidit stated that completion of the programme, continuing in this rhythm, would last until the year 2000.¹¹⁵

In order to pressure the speeding-up of the reform programme Aidit endorsed and encouraged in his report the so-called "unilateral action movement" (Gerakan Aksi Sefihak) of the peasants.¹¹⁶ It is difficult to assess whether this movement was instigated by BTI or PKI leadership, or was a spontaneous reaction by the peasants to doubtful practices and unilateral actions by landowners, such as eviction.¹¹⁷ The "unilateral actions" were initiated somewhere in 1963 by peasants as well as landlords and generally implied not awaiting the decision of the Land Reform Committee but taking the law into one's own hand.

114. For a recent case study see: J. Helmer and E. Weitering, Kommunikatiepatronen in een West-Javaanse Desa (thesis, University of Tilburg, Netherlands, 1970, mimeo.), p. 43.

115. Guy J. Pauker, "Political Consequences of Rural Development Programmes in Indonesia", Pacific Affairs, XLI, 3, Fall 1968, pp. 388-90. B. Gunawan, Kudeta, op.cit., pointed out that Aidit's statement was exaggerated and apparently used as political propaganda; the figure 200,000 probably only refers to land expropriable from landlords and does not include the 130,000 hectares of national domain and principalities land given in official figures regarding distributable land.

116. The report was later published as: Aidit, Set Afire the Banteng Spirit (Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1964).

117. Wertheim suggested that in relation to the crucial land tenure issue the BTI may have followed a somewhat more radical line than the PKI; see B. Gunawan, Kudeta, op.cit., p. 207, note 4.

Utrecht gave the following examples:

"(a) A landowner learns that one of his labourers has on his own initiative or at the instigation of the BTI, requested the local land reform committee to assign to him the property rights over the stretch of land that he tills. Without waiting for the decision of the committee, the landowner tries to oust his dangerous labourer. The latter seeks help from the BTI if it was not behind him already. Then the landowner reports what is going on to the Petani. The Petani advises him to issue an ultimatum as to the date on which the labourer has to leave his field. But one morning, some days before the ultimatum is due, the landlord discovers on his field a crowd of 100 or more BTI members armed with sticks, hoes and sickles and working together. Off he hurries to the local board of Petani and after some time he returns accompanied by a band of Petani members as big as or bigger than the BTI crowd on his field and provided with all sorts of weapons as well. A battle is fought and victims fall under the knives and the hoes or by the bullets of army or police units who have meanwhile intervened.

(b) A labourer, thinking that as a sharecropper he has a right to the field that he has already applied for to the local land reform committee, without awaiting the decision of the committee, refuses to hand in a part of the harvest to the landowner. (Not infrequently this happened on the advice of the BTI). The landowner, supported by Petani, then tries to get rid of his labourer by intimidating him. A mass of BTI members comes to the labourer's assistance and a fight develops.

(c) A landowner does await the decision of the land reform committee concerning a dispute on a stretch of his land, either because he is convinced that he will win the affair on objective, factual and legal grounds or because he feels assured of the support of some influential committee members who may have a party or a family relationship with him. Here again, the labourers, encouraged and supported by the BTI, frequently take matters into their own hands by mass occupation of the disputed field."¹¹⁸

Utrecht then drew the conclusion:

"If one takes failure to await the decision of the committee as the criterion, direct action was liable to be resorted to by either side, and not, as was often said, only by the landless peasant. The organisation that sided with the party who had taken the initiative without awaiting the decision of the committee accused the opponent of having acted provocatively. This was often true, which clouded the issue still more."¹¹⁹

While unilateral actions of the landowners tried to avoid land distribution or the peasants claiming their new rights, unilateral actions of the peasants were directed toward the initiation and acceleration of the land distribution process. The tactic mostly used by peasants was occupation of the lands to which landless peasants were entitled according to the law. By occupying certain plots of land the peasants involved tried to indicate which lands were to be distributed and to whom, thus forcing the land reform committee in charge

118. E. Utrecht, *op.cit.*, pp. 81-82.

119. *Ibid.* (my italics).

to speed up its decision. A complication was that BTI members who occupied a certain plot to be distributed, were not always those peasants who had a right to the land according to the legally established list of priorities (first tenants tilling the land in question; second, workers cultivating the land, etc.). In several cases the BTI favoured its members over members of a smaller peasant organisation even if the latter had priority according to the regulations. This caused conflict in some cases. ¹²⁰

Another issue to which unilateral actions of peasants were directed was related to the sharecropping regulations. When the first three years after the promulgation of the sharecropping law had passed and the three-year contracts between sharecroppers and owners terminated, sharecroppers did not want to return back the land they had been cultivating when the owner desired it and simply refused en bloc to leave. According to informants, this happened in 1964 and 1965 on a rather large scale. The owners had the legal right to take back their lands for cultivation but in many cases BTI action prevented them from doing so.

One immediate effect of unilateral actions demanding fulfilment of sharecroppers agreements was probably that, on 2nd March 1964, Regulation No. 4 of the Minister of Agrarian Affairs was promulgated, laying down measures against landowners who did not follow up the stipulations of the bupati regarding sharecropping. Landowners could be denounced to the village land reform committee. To punish those found guilty of violating the legal arrangements for division of the proceeds (mostly on a 50:50 basis), the Regulation stipulated that 60 percent of the harvest would be for the tiller, 20 percent for the landowner and 20 percent for the Ketjamatan Land Reform Committee. This was made retroactive to 1st January 1964.

At times the question arose against whom peasant action should be directed, as the complicated land tenure situation made it often difficult to distinguish between landlord and peasant. At the 1959 PKI Peasants' Conference, the main target of reform efforts was seen as those "landlords" who were foreign or who actively supported or sympathised with the Darul Islam, the bands which, up to 1962, terrorised some rural areas to fight for the establishment of an Islamic state. Peasants were divided into:

120. For one case see J. Helmer and E. Weitering, op.cit., p. 43.

"(1) 'Rich peasants' who are by nature 'semi-feudal', lease out excess land that they have and lend out money, although they may also work some of their own land; (2) 'middle peasants', who usually, but not always have enough for their own needs and are as a rule 'independent economically', although they too may be exploited by moneylenders or landlords; and (3) 'poor peasants and agricultural labourers', with little or no land, and who, as tenants or sharecroppers, are wholly at the mercy of their landlords."¹²¹

In 1959 'rich peasants' were seen as neutral in the peasant struggle against 'landlords'. After the introduction of agrarian legislation, however, all owners of more than 5 hectares of irrigated land in densely populated areas or the equivalent in other kinds of land were officially considered as landlords.

During implementation of the reform more precise knowledge of the land tenure situation was needed, and in early 1964, PKI leader Aidit launched and personally headed a campaign to investigate the rural situation in Central and East Java. About 200 research workers and 2,500 assistants collaborated in this effort.¹²²

It was noted:

"As part of its intensive campaign to win adherents among the peasantry the PKI under Aidit has carried on extensive research in land-tenure patterns in Indonesia; this was revealed very high concentrations of landownership in the hands of a few peasants and landlords in many areas. These data confirm the analyses made by non-Communist investigators at least in Java."¹²³

The 1964 research also tried to identify the "7 village devils": "wicked landlords, the blood-sucking money lenders, the idjon dealers, wicked middlemen, the bureaucrat capitalists, wicked authorities and the village bandits".¹²⁴ The research stimulated the awareness of new rights and willingness to overcome traditional domination among the peasants, expressed in the unilateral actions that took place particularly in Central and East Java.

Peasants were classified more or less according to the criteria worked out in 1959, and the strategy of local peasant organisations of the BPI was designed in accordance with the findings. Landless agricultural labourers and tenants were the favourite subjects of BPI action, but small owner-farmers with insufficient land for their subsistence were also included in the base of the organisation. Family farmowners who had enough land for their subsistence were

121. Justus M. van der Kroef, "Agrarian Reform and the Communist Party", Far Eastern Survey, 29, 1, January 1960, p. 6.

122. "Aidit completes research into conditions of peasants and peasants' movement", Review of Indonesia, VII, 5-6-7, Djakarta, May/June/July, 1964.

123. Justus M. van der Kroef, The Communist Party of Indonesia, Its History, Programme and Tactics (University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1965), p. 147.

124. "Aidit completes research etc.", op.cit., p. 28; Idjon is a type of usurious pawning of land and harvest.

also included in the base of the organisation. Family landowners who had enough land for their subsistence were seen as a group to collaborate with. Rich farmers who worked at least part of their land were not considered enemies. The struggle was directed mainly against the landlords, those who lived off the land and off the tenants or sharecroppers who tilled it. It was this group which had surplus land as defined by the land reform law. Because of their wealth they were often also moneylenders and controlled many small farmers through indebtedness.

It was difficult to persuade peasants in a society strongly dominated by a tradition of rukun (harmony) to take action against the landlords, generally the influential people of their village; however, the land tenure situation apparently contained so many - often deeply hidden - grievances and resentment that united action among peasants could be stimulated. Formerly, such resentment had been expressed only mildly in traditional wajang (shadow puppet theatre) themes, including that of "village devils".

In particular to be able to counteract the hold that traditional leaders (often landlords) had over the peasants, Aidit and his collaborators made a special study of folkloric elements in each region, looking especially for "progressive and patriotic tales and stories". One way in which landless peasants were mobilised to stand up for their new rights under the land reform law was to let them remember which lands, presently in the hands of some of the so-called "village devils", had belonged in the past to their own forefathers.

Wherever cases of strife occurred, they were often related to the factional splits and political divisions already existing in the villages. In some areas this was between PKI and the Nationalist Party, PNI (which often meant between poor peasants and better-off farmers or even landlords) and elsewhere between PKI and the Orthodox Islamic Party, the NU (between poor peasants and hadji landlords). The religious issue may have provoked difficulties since land belonging to religious institutions (wakap) was not considered available for distribution. It seems that hadji landlords often donated their land nominally as wakap land.¹²⁵ Whenever accusations were made that peasants acted "unilaterally" by taking religious lands, it may well have been in such cases. At times serious clashes occurred between Islamic groups and BTI peasants. Thus, at the village level, things often happened which upset village solidarity beyond the point of what was bearable.

125. E. Utrecht, op.cit., p. 84.

Political factional strife also implied that some unilateral actions by the peasants were not directed exclusively against large landowners; they were also taken against small farmers who did not have excess land but who happened to belong to peasant organisations opposing the BTI. This complaint was made by leaders of Petani in June 1964.¹²⁶ On the other hand, it seems that in some areas landlords who supported the PKI were not victim to unilateral actions, while their neighbours belonging to other parties were so troubled. Wertheim noted:

"It is certain that there were instructions of the PKI not to discriminate between PKI and non-PKI and strictly to keep to the text of the Agrarian Law. But in view of the non-class composition of the party there is a good chance that in several areas the accusations were not completely unfounded."¹²⁷

The fact that in addition to the purely economic and legal aspects of the struggle for implementation of the land reform such religio-ideological (aliran) factors and local political factional strife entered, probably enhanced the bitterness of the struggle.¹²⁸

For the PNI and its peasant organisation Petani the struggle was particularly painful, since Petani had in its ranks many better-off farmers who had to lose from the land reform. PNI peasant organisation members were instructed not to choose the side of the landowners but of the poor peasants, but peasants' unilateral actions were condemned. There was a danger of more and more Petani members leaving their organisations and joining BTI ranks. Considerable polemics resulted between PNI and PKI forces, expressed through their respective daily newspapers Merdeka and Harian Rakjat, and PNI became increasingly divided over the issue.¹²⁹

In mid-1964, probably under pressure of PNI and in the absence of President Sukarno, the government ordered a start to settling agrarian disputes through mutual consultation. The PKI at a National Conference in July 1964 requested the establishment of land reform courts which would include representatives of

126. B. Gunawan, op.cit., p. 51.

127. W.F.Wertheim, "From Aliran Towards Class Struggle", op.cit., p. 17.

128. Ibid.; see also E. Utrecht, op.cit., p. 83.

129. For a summary of the polemics see B. Gunawan, Kudeta, op.cit., pp. 98-110; in mid-1965 a split occurred in the PNI partly as a result of the increasing inner tension over the land reform issue.

the peasant organisations. President Sukarno in the August 17, 1964 (Independence Day) speech expressed understanding for the unilateral action movement, and the establishment of reform courts was announced. The actions continued, at times leading to violent clashes such as in October 1964 in Indramaju involving 2,000 peasants, where several policemen were injured.¹³⁰ It was probably this kind of "impulsive" action by BPI which made Aidit remark in a party report in May 1965 that "the peasant movement must proceed in a framework of strict discipline."¹³¹ Some authors suggest that the movement was getting "out of hand".¹³²

Land Reform Courts were created by the Minister of Justice after Law No. 21 of 1964 had been promulgated to that effect on 31st October 1964. As a result, almost all available land, about 300,000 hectares, was distributed in Java, Madura, Bali, Lombok and Sumbawa by the end of the year, according to a report by the Agrarian Minister.¹³³ Figures regarding the results of land reform at the end of 1969, supplied by the General Directorate of Agrarian Affairs of the Department of Home Affairs, give an impression of the source of the land distributed.

For the First Phase covering Java and the Lesser Sunda Islands, the total number of hectares distributed had not changed since the end of 1964, covering about 300,000 hectares. Half of this land was national domain and only 65,132 hectares came from surplus land of landowners who had more than the maximum amount of 5 hectares. This indicates that landlords on the whole were only partly affected, in view of the fact that the official objective of the distribution of surplus land was 112,500 hectares.

Absentee landlords were treated even more leniently, according to the official objective. While 22,000 hectares were supposedly available, only 8,600 hectares (of 18,000 absentee owners) were distributed.¹³⁴ This poor

130. Guy J. Pauker, "The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Indonesia", p. 43.

131. Ibid.

132. E. Utrecht, op.cit., p. 83.

133. Ibid., p. 85.

134. This figure, presented in 1970, should be compared with that for Java, Madura etc. of 55,910 absentee landowners, given in January 1965 by the Agrarian Minister; quoted in E. Utrecht, op.cit., p. 78, note 14.

Table IV. List of Distributed Lands under Land Reform until December 1969*

Stage I				
(Java and Lesser Sunda Islands)	Available land (hectares)	Number of Owners Affected	Hectares Distributed	Number of Beneficiaries
Surplus lands	112,524	8,967	65,132	100,477
Absentee owners' lands	22,084	18,421	8,610	29,324
Principality lands	73,566		73,566	79,856
State lands	147,344		147,192	383,301
Total Stage I	355,518	27,388	294,500	592,958

Stage II				
(Rest of Indonesia) (mainly after 1965 in Sumatra)	Available land (hectares)	Number of Owners Affected	Hectares Distributed	Number of Beneficiaries
Surplus lands	49,001	77	34,548	25,981
Absentee owners' lands	8,132		8,026	9,239
Principality lands	52,712		37,850	53,244
State lands	473,538		307,774	185,561
Total Stage II	583,383	77	388,198	274,025

* Data supplied in 1970 by Director-General of Agrarian Affairs of the Department of Home Affairs.

performance should be seen in the light of the fact that the land reform law could be interpreted as abolishing absentee ownership altogether. Article 10 stated:

- (1) Every person and every corporate body having a certain right on agricultural land, is in principle obliged to cultivate or to exploit it actively by himself while avoiding extortionate methods.
- (2) The implementation of the provision in paragraph (1) of this Article shall be further regulated by legislative regulation.
- (3) Exceptions to the principle mentioned in paragraph (1) of this Article shall be regulated by legislative regulation."¹³⁵

The lack of clarity of the legal stipulations was apparently a source of conflict in the rural areas and was partly responsible for the utilisation by

135. Act No. 5 of the Year 1960 Concerning Basic Regulations on Agrarian Principles, Special Issue, 020/1967, Department of Information, Republic of Indonesia, Article 10; I.B.R.D., op.cit., p. 33 observed: "If we interpret Article 10 correctly, absentee ownership was not permitted."

peasants of civil disobedience and other non-violent tactics, such as unilateral actions, occupation and cooperative cultivation of plots which were considered to illegitimately remain in the hands of landlords.

The frequency and size of the unilateral actions was difficult to estimate. The fact that in August 1964 President Sukarno more or less endorsed the movement and that, during the second half of 1964, measures were taken to drastically accelerate the stagnant land reform programme, may indicate that the unilateral action movement took on considerable proportions. This would indicate how effectively the peasants were organised by BTI and PKI. Militancy is generally not considered a characteristic of Javanese peasants, and the traditional approach at the village level has always been the search for compromise and harmony. The fact that in a good many instances this pattern was abolished seems to show how far the process of de-traditionalisation had gone in Java. On the whole it seems that local people took the new course of events for granted and about half a million peasants were able to benefit from land reform in a relatively short time (the second half of 1964). After this, the unilateral action movement apparently lost some of its impulse. It seems that during the rapid land distribution in the second half of 1964 little violence occurred.

The 1965 Massacre

Some kind of reaction by rural elites, particularly the Islamic local leaders who had lost influence or were threatened by the new developments, could be expected. This happened after the failure of the coup d'etat by dissident Army officers, allegedly related to elements of the PKI, on 30 September 1965 (the Gestapu).¹³⁶ During the Gestapu five notoriously anti-communist generals were assassinated by a group of high-ranking officers and their sympathisers, headed by Col. Untung.

A wave of terror swept the rural areas, particularly of Central and East Java and Bali at the end of 1965, which practically eliminated the BTI and PKI. This massacre was mainly organised by the para-commando troops of the Army in October 1965, in reaction to the assassination of the generals.

136. See W.F.Wertheim, "Indonesia Before and After the Untung Coup", Pacific Affairs, XXXIX, 1 & 2, Spring and Summer 1966.

As one recent report noted:

"In the aftermath of those assassinations, numerous PKI cadres all over Indonesia were liquidated by the Indonesian Army's security operations, guided and supported in many instances in East Java by members of the Nahdatul Ulama (Moslem) Party and in Central Java and Bali by members of the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI). These killings released pent-up social tensions generated by the PKI's aggressive agrarian policies of 1963-1965 and touched off a rural massacre in which several hundred thousand PKI followers lost their lives."¹³⁷

A Pulitzer Prize winning report described as follows what has been called "one of history's worst orgies of slashing, shooting, chopping violence":

"Thousands of Indonesians who were members of the Communist Party, or who supported it, or who were suspected of supporting it, or who were said by somebody to have supported it, were put ruthlessly to death. In the mayhem, people innocent of Communist affiliations were killed too, sometimes by mistake, sometimes because their old enemies were paying off grudges in the guise of an anti-Communist campaign."¹³⁸

Some authors seem to suggest that the massacre was carried out by the villagers against elements which they considered as the cause of "disruption of village solidarity" and its replacement by "class conflict".¹³⁹ In some areas, such as Bali, where BPI and PKI activists seem to have neglected to integrate their action into local cultural and religious traditions,¹⁴⁰ this may have been the case. On the whole, however, and particularly in East and Central Java, many sources indicate that the campaign was initiated outside the village and carried out mostly by non-villagers or young members of the village elite. Para-commandos of the Army played the initiating role and members of the orthodox Islamic youth organisation ANSOR were trained by the Army to carry through the campaign. Many of these youngsters were sons or relatives of the traditional local leaders and landowners (hadjis).¹⁴¹ Village solidarity was then disappearing anyway due to the increasing indebtedness and loss of land by smallholders and the competition between political parties from the early 1950s onward.

137. Guy J. Pauker, "The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Indonesia", pp. v-vi.

138. John Hughes, Indonesian Upheaval (David McKay Company, Inc., New York, 1967), p. 153.

139. Guy J. Pauker, "Political Consequences of Rural Development Programmes in Indonesia", Pacific Affairs, XLI, 3, Fall 1968, pp. 389-90.

140. John Hughes, op.cit., pp. 175-83; Philippe Gavi, Konterrevolution in Indonesien (Europaische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt, 1968), p. 40, indicated that only in Bali and Madura did more civilians than military men participate in the assassinations.

141. Data from a study by Lance Castles quoted in W.F. Wertheim, "Indonesia Before and After the Untung Goup", op.cit., p. 6.

The massacre started about 20th October 1965 in the Klaten area in Central Java, an area where serious agrarian tension had prevailed and where groups of Communists tried to organise armed resistance. The killing was soon extended to areas where no resistance existed but where land reform had interfered with the interests of wealthy, mainly Moslim, landowners, such as Kediri or Banjumas in Central Java. Particularly for these areas newspaper reporters indicated the role of the Islamic youth groups, stimulated by the Army in the killings mainly of poorer peasants.¹⁴²

Nowadays it is often said that the PKI cadres had lists of local landlords and religious leaders (often landowning hadjis) who were to be eliminated as soon as the opportunity was ripe. It is not possible to check the truth of this accusation, but it was apparently strongly believed among better-off circles. This fear may partly explain the ferocity with which PKI cadres and members were persecuted and killed. Initially in Central Java some civil war type of struggle was waged between PKI and BPI on the one side and the Army on the other side, but on the whole Communists and their followers seem to have given little resistance.

BPI and PKI members were not assassinated in all areas; imprisonment was more common in regions outside Central and East Java and Bali.

In West Java cases were observed where a kind of razzia on communists was organised by village councils of terkemuka's (influentials generally belonging to the elite) at the request of higher local authorities. There was no Army intervention in these cases and no violence. Members of Communist organisations were later screened by the military and jailed for longer or shorter periods. After returning to the village their movements were controlled.¹⁴³ A campaign to spread Islamic religion was carried out as a counterweight to former Communist influence, and supported by the military and the kabupaten government.¹⁴⁴

Since the basic problems behind peasant unrest have not been solved and are not being attended to, the potential for peasant protest, probably more radical than what developed between 1953 and 1965, remains. Thus, a recent Ford Foundation report noted the lack of enduring political stability in the country, resulting from not solving basic issues such as the contrasts in rural areas, as follows:

142. Seymour Topping of New York Times and Frank Palmos of The Sun (Australia), quoted by W.F. Wertheim, ibid., p. 8; also John Hughes, op.cit., pp. 152-61.

143. J. Helmer and E. Weitering, op.cit., p. 20.

144. Ibid., pp. 4-5 and 22-24.

"The main problem here is that political stability has so far been achieved through the suppression of PKI, the Communist Party, for long the largest and best organised party in Indonesia. The PKI claimed to have 300,000 cadres when it celebrated its 45th anniversary in May 1965. According to recent estimates of the Government, some 200,000 cadres have escaped location and elimination in spite of the mass-lynchings going on in 1965 and the fact that over 100,000 suspected communists are currently detained in makeshift prison camps throughout Java.

In other words, two-thirds of the hard-core members of the PKI are suspected to be still at large and can be expected to seize every opportunity to undermine the authority of the Government. In a country where student groups, political parties, religious groupings, functional organisations and even sections of the armed forces are constantly engaged in a tug of war, there is of course ample opportunity to play off one section of the community against the other.

The issue of land reform in Java has proved to be particularly attractive for exploitation by the PKI. Nearly 90 percent of the villagers in Central and Southern Java do not own the land they cultivate. Peasants work on leased land, retaining only 40 per cent of the harvest, the rest constituting rent payment. Although a reform of this situation has been proposed for many years, it has never been carried out. Neither has the Suharto Government taken up the issue in earnest."¹⁴⁵

Effects on Land Reform

Except for effects in the Outer Island, where national domain land was available, the land redistribution programme was virtually stopped. In several cases lands that had been distributed in Java or the Lesser Sunda Islands were taken back by the former owners, the beneficiaries being arrested or assassinated as part of the massacre. These activities took on such proportions that the government had to do something:

"In an effort to save what positive results land reform had achieved, the then Agrarian Minister issued an instruction on 10 December 1965 (No. 42-PLP-1965) which contained orders 'to take measures against former landowners and other people who abuse the actions against the G-30-S (the abortive coup of 1 October 1965) by taking back illegally redistributed land or by obstructing re-distribution through intimidations, insinuations, etc.' This instruction does not appear to have been very effective. Although it probably stopped unconcealed taking back of redistributed land (in West Java legal action was taken in Banten, Krawang and Tasikmalaja, in Central Java in Tegal, Pekalongan and Demak, in East Java in the former residency of Besuki), reversal of land redistribution probably continued surreptitiously and further redistribution virtually stopped during the years 1966 and 1967."¹⁴⁶

One reason why former owners tried to take back the land they had lost in the reform programme was that reimbursement had not taken place according to the legal regulations. During the years after 1965 a main activity of the

145. Herman Hatzfeldt, "Economic Development Planning in Indonesia" (The Ford Foundation, Bangkok, mimeo., June 1969), p. 69.

146. E. Utrecht, op.cit., p. 86.

Agrarian Office was to remunerate those owners who had given up surplus land.¹⁴⁷

One of the most important land reform measures, the fifty-fifty sharing of proceeds, was practically abandoned after 1965. Because the militant peasant organisations were virtually destroyed or dismantled, there was no longer any pressure to fulfil the legal stipulations. In most cases the share of the cultivator became again the traditional one-third. Land reform authorities, lacking a militant peasant organisation, had no way to enforce the 50:50 agreement.¹⁴⁸ Local informants indicated that peasants did not insist on their rights out of fear of being accused as a "communist" or participant in the Gestapu (coup of September 1965) and then being persecuted as such.

The land reform issue is prudently kept alive by a few peasant organisations such as the Petani, but others, such as the peasant organisation of the orthodox Islamic Nahdatul Ulama which has many landowners among its membership, are proposing to abandon the present law, denouncing it as "communistic", and to increase the limit of sawah land that landholders can own to at least 7.5 hectares, instead of the present five.¹⁴⁹ For the time being at least, prospects for agrarian reform in Indonesia appear rather gloomy.

147. Information supplied by the Directorate General of Agrarian Affairs of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

148. Ibid.

149. Interviews with Chairmen of various organisations in 1970 and 1971.