CHAPTER III

THE INDONESIAN COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE AGRARIAN ISSUE

Sharing with Communist parties in other parts of the world the conviction that the industrial working class should be regarded as the most progressive, revolutionary, and receptive element of society, the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) centered political activity exclusively on the workers in the immediate postwar years. Not until just before the abortive Madiun coup in 1948 did the Politburo admit its error and belatedly turn its attention to the peasantry. The Fifth National Party Congress, scheduled for later that year, was ordered to redirect the party’s work program. But the stunning defeat of the party at Madiun in September caused such heavy casualties among party cadres that the surviving leaders were forced to curtail their work and fell back again to a concentration on the proletariat.

The first sign of a revived interest in the peasantry came as D.N. Aidit took over the leadership of the PKI in 1951. The party announced a new agrarian program in November 1951 that for the first time stressed the need of a worker-peasant alliance for the revolution, and by 1953 Aidit was urging party cadres to redouble their efforts to win the support of the peasantry. As a result of the lack of experts on the sources of agrarian discontent or on the peasantry in general, the party had not only failed to develop an agrarian program acceptable to the peasants but had actually antagonized a peasantry starved for land with such slogans as “nationalization of all land” and “the right of the state over all land”. Aidit, aware of this, drew up a long list of new slogans based on the real grievances of the peasants, such as high land rents, high taxes, and compulsory village labor. Most applied more to Java than to other parts of Indonesia, but a few such as “land for the peasants”, “peasants’ personal ownership of the land”, and “raise the wages of agricultural laborers” struck an immediate response throughout Indonesia, except possibly in the thinly settled swidden regions where land was still abundant.

The Fifth National Party Congress in March 1954 endorsed
Aidit’s plan to shift the main focus of the party from the workers to the peasants, acknowledging that “the agrarian revolution is the essence of the People’s Democratic Revolution in Indonesia” — a concept to which the PKI adhered faithfully thereafter. But Aidit admitted that progress toward a united national front had been very disappointing for “we cannot possibly speak of a real, broad, and strong united national front until the peasants have been drawn into it... the peasants comprise more than 70 percent of the population... As yet, only about 7 percent of the peasants are organized”. Aidit set out to formulate a new approach whose immediate goals would be:

“to eliminate the survivals of feudalism, to develop the antifeudal agrarian revolution, to confiscate the land of the landlords, and to give it free of charge to the peasants, in particular to the landless and poor peasantry, as their own private property. The first step to be taken in our work among the peasants is to assist them in the struggle for their everyday needs... This is the foundation on which to create the alliance of workers and peasants as the basis of a powerful, united national front.”

Convinced that it was a mistake to view the peasantry as an amorphous mass, Aidit urged the cadres to take cognizance of the several classes of peasants in the villages and of the striking regional differentiation. His advice to the cadres, repeated on numerous occasions, was to study village conditions carefully in order to make the cadres’ work more effective. But the response was slow, as evidenced in this complaint included in a party report to the PKI First National Peasants’ Conference in 1959:

“The majority of Party cadres at the subsection and branch levels in the villages have not yet deeply studied the class divisions, the characteristics of each class and the class relations in the village. In general they are still unable to distinguish the landlord from the rich peasant, and still do not know the difference between the rich peasant and the medium peasant. This means that they do not yet thoroughly know who are the friends and who are the enemies of the revolution.”

Aidit himself at first distinguished four categories in the village population: landlords, rich peasants, middle and poor peasants, and finally agricultural laborers. In the course of time his landlord and rich-peasant categories were elaborated by the identifi-
cation of seven evil characters (setan-setan, or devils) who were exploiting the middle and poor peasants and the agricultural laborers. These seven village devils were: the wicked landlord, the usurer, the buyer of green paddy (tukang-ijon), the middleman, the bureaucratic capitalist (kaum kapitalis birokrat, or kabir), the manager, and the village bandit.

As "survivals of feudalism", the landlords constituted the natural enemy of the revolution, and party cadres had no trouble tracing to their feudal privileges all the village ills. The four major grievances of the peasants as perceived by Aidit were:

1. monopoly of land by the big landlords, which deprived the majority of peasants of an opportunity to own land of their own,
2. exhorbitant rents in the form of crop sharing, which impoverished large segments of the peasant population,
3. the right of landlords to requisition labor in lieu of rent, which reduced peasants to the position of serfs, and
4. the usurious interest rates, which enslaved the peasants in an accumulation of debts.

Having spearheaded the attack against the landlord class, Aidit, however, in his report to the Sixth National Party Congress in September 1959 proceeded for tactical reasons to exonerate "patriotic" landlords, at least for the time being, explaining that only "evil" landlords were the immediate target of the Communists. An "evil" landlord could be recognized by his sympathies with the Darul Islam, Tentara Islam Indonesia (TII), the PRRI-Permesta movement, and foreign imperialists and capitalists. The land of any such enemy of the nation should be confiscated and distributed free of charge to the peasants. The "patriotic" landlords, on the other hand, were to remain in the possession of their land. But, by 1964 the definition of an "evil" landlord had been expanded to include one who either openly opposed or deceitfully circumvented such progressive agrarian reform legislation as the Crop Sharing Law (No. 2/1960) or the Basic Agrarian Law (No. 5/1960).

Aidit was ready to make other distinctions too. In contrast to the landlord who lives by exploiting those who cultivate his land, the rich peasant leases only part of his land and cultivates the rest himself as a true member of the peasantry. Though there were some rich peasants who as usurious moneylenders and as brutal exploiters of their tenants and agricultural laborers came close to
The Indonesian Communist Party and the Agrarian Issue

being in the landlord class, in general the rich peasants could be counted on not to obstruct the revolutionary peasant movement and even to join it on such issues as abolishing feudal customs and obligations. Aidit argued that the rich peasant could be neutralized in the struggle against the landlord.\footnote{10}

A sympathetic role was seen for the middle peasants, whose economic independence did not as a rule bear the taint of usury or the exploitation of others and whose need to rent additional land from the landlords often put these peasants, like their poorer relatives, at the mercy of imperialists, evil landlords, and members of the bourgeoisie. Aidit expressed confidence that the middle peasants could not only become a part of the anti-imperialist revolution and the agrarian revolution but could also accept socialism. Consequently they were one of the important forces pushing the revolution forward and were a reliable ally of the proletariat. He saw their attitude toward the revolution as a decisive factor for victory or defeat because the middle peasants comprised the majority in the country-side after the agrarian revolution.

But Aidit saw what he called the village semiproletariat, the poor peasants and agricultural laborers, as the largest force pushing the revolution forward. It was natural for them, he said, to be the most reliable of the allies of the proletariat and a basic part of the forces of the Indonesian revolution. The poor and middle peasants that made up the majority of the inhabitants of the villages, he averred, could only win their emancipation under the leadership of the proletariat, and the proletariat could only give leadership to the revolution if it had made a firm alliance with the poor and middle peasants.

Cadres were urged to go down into the villages, in order to become more thoroughly familiar with the social and economic – especially agrarian – conditions in the rural areas, to practice the “three withs” (work with, eat with, and sleep with the peasants), and to ascertain and translate into political slogans the specific grievances in various villages. At the Sixth National Party Congress Aidit reported:

“The movement of ‘going down to the masses’, implementing the ‘three withs’, has clarified agrarian relations for us, it has clarified the degree to which feudal survivals still dominate in the countryside. The knowledge which we have obtained by these direct means is far more valuable and creates a far deeper impression than the knowledge we could get from reading many books on the same question.”\footnote{11}
Aidit’s practical advice to the cadres had later expanded beyond the “three withs” to include the “four don’ts” and the “four musts.” The “four don’ts” were: (1) don’t stay in the house of a village exploiter, (2) don’t lecture to the peasant, (3) don’t harm your peasant host, and (4) don’t take notes in front of the peasant. The “four musts” were: (1) apply the “three withs” fully, (2) be modest, respectful, and well-behaved and be willing to learn from the peasant, (3) know the language and acquaint yourself with the local adat, and (4) assist in solving the problems of your host, of the peasants, and of the local Party.¹²

Thus there was a gradual broadening of party goals in the rural areas after 1951. The Communists pressed for reform on a wide front, demanding the abrogation of exploitative colonial land laws, compulsory written tenancy agreements between landlords and tenants, security for the tenant, lower interest on loans, higher wages for agricultural laborers, nationalization of foreign-owned estates, non-renewal of expired agricultural concessions and long leases, permission to squatters to continue cultivation of land technically within boundaries of estates for forest reserves, proper compensation and adequate financial assistance to squatters who must be resettled, a ban on the use of tractors on squatter-occupied land, and cancellation of colonial laws regulating the relationship between sugar estates and peasants. Many of these demands had special appeal to peasants in the plantation regions.

Nor did the PKI stop with giving political utterance to peasant grievances. As pressure on the government yielded a new decree or a new law, party workers carefully watched its implementation, using any evidence of laxness or of deliberate sabotage by “reactionary” elements among landlords and government officials to press for stronger legislation.

Another shift in party strategy became discernible after 1955. Cadres began to concern themselves with purely agronomic problems or with research whose results were then publicized as widely as possible among the peasants — activities that encroached on some of the normal functions of the Department of Agriculture. A PKI pamphlet issued in 1955 recommended that cadres quickly undertake concrete activities in defense of the peasants’ interests, such as distribution of fertilizer, seedlings, and tools at a cheap price; repair of irrigation canals; repair of fish ponds and distribution of fish eggs; establishment of cooperatives; the sinking of wells; repair of village bridges and roads; establishment of burial associations; programming of
general education and the education of agrarian leaders; defense of peasants brought to court; and the organization of anti-illiteracy campaigns and of sports and cultural programs. Cadres working in the villages preached the five principles of land cultivation—"plough deeply, plant closely, (use) more fertilizer, better seeds and better irrigation"—together with such admonitions as "treat the rice fields with devotion and care, exterminate pests, improve agricultural implements". It was a sign of success, Aidit wrote in 1959, that the peasants "have full confidence in the good intentions of the Party and... therefore joyfully welcome the Party Volunteer Brigades which are helping them work their land.... We must form as many of these Volunteer Brigades as possible as proof that the Party is indeed genuine in its desire to unite with the peasants, and also as a means of encouraging the development of production co-operatives in the villages." In the years between 1957 and 1962 the Indonesian government passed a considerable number of laws, decrees, and regulations meeting many of the demands which the PKI and its mass organizations had been pressing with increasing intensity. The party claimed triumph in the seizure of all Dutch plantations and other enterprises in December 1957 and the first few months of 1958. Another triumph was claimed with the abolition of the so-called "private estates"—feudal enclaves dating from the days of the East India Company and the first years of the Netherlands East Indies government. Extensive areas had been sold at that time to European and Chinese entrepreneurs by the colonial governments as a means of bolstering their treasuries. To make the offer attractive, the colonial governments gave the buyers seigniorial rights over the inhabitants of their lands. These "lords" appointed village officials, set up markets, collected fees, levied taxes (as much as one-fifth of the crop or equivalent rent on land used for the raising of fruit trees or of fish in fish ponds), and requisitioned labor at will. Although the Netherlands East Indies government over the years had repurchased many of these, at the time of the transfer of sovereignty there were still close to 200 such private estates with a total area of about 32,000 hectares—which the Indonesian government, under the prodding of the Communists, decided to eliminate once and for all.

Two more far-reaching laws were passed in 1960. The first of these, the Crop Sharing Law (Law No. 2/1960), was designed to regulate the landlord-tenant relationship, to protect the weak tenant against the strong landlord, and to provide the tenant with
incentives for increasing production. Since this law went into
effect, all tenancy agreements have had to be made in writing and
be signed by the two parties, two witnesses (one chosen by the
landlord, the other by the tenant), and the district officer, or
camat. Such a contract may not cover more than three hectares
per tenant and must be valid for a minimum of three years for
irrigated land, five years for unirrigated land. Under this law it is
the responsibility of the bupati, as head of the kabupaten, to
determine the rates for the sharing of crops after deduction of
expenses for cost of seed, fertilizer, cattle, and labor employed
for planting and harvesting. The bupati is to take into considera-
tion the type of crops produced, the quality of the soil, the
density of population, and the obligation to pay alms (zakat).
Though the bupati has considerable freedom, the law sets as
guidelines a sharing of 1:1 for rice produced on sawah and 2:1 for
all crops produced on unirrigated land. The PKI had originally
demanded a ratio of 6:4 in favor of the tenants in the case of the
rice crop but acceded to the argument that, given this ratio,
landlords would dismiss their tenants and hire agricultural
laborers to till their land, thereby forcing many poor peasants to
become agricultural laborers.\textsuperscript{15}

The second law, the Basic Agrarian Law (no. 5/1960), was
much wider in scope, being intended in fact as the cornerstone of
a whole new program of agrarian legislation. With this law the
government set out to bring the agrarian situation into harmony
with the philosophy of modern Indonesia, the principles of
Pancasila, and the so-called Manipol-USDEK policies announced
by President Sukarno in his Independence Day speech of 17
August 1959. The legislative objectives were to lay the basis for
the creation of a nationally applicable legal structure for agrarian
affairs, to eliminate impediments to unity and simplicity in the
law, and to establish guidelines for determining the rights on land
for the entire people. The new agrarian legislation was to be
grounded on adat, without the dualistic character of the old laws,
and to take cognizance of relevant religious law. Only in this
way, it was thought, could the new legislation meet the needs of
a modern society and utilize the natural resources for the benefit
of the whole nation.

In line with these purposes, the Basic Agrarian Law canceled
such landmarks of colonial legislation as the Agrarian Law of
1870 which had been incorporated as article 51 in the Indies
Regulation of Government of 1925, the Agrarian Decree of
1870, the various Domain declarations, and all articles of the
Second Book of the Indonesian Civil Code concerning soil, water, and the natural resources therein. It limited hereditary proprietary rights to land (*hak milik*) to Indonesian citizens only, with the proviso that, in the interest of public welfare, the amount of land that could be owned by one family would be regulated in accordance with subsequent legislation. Land not subject to *hak milik*, e.g. state land, could be leased by Indonesian citizens or by corporate bodies established under Indonesian law and domiciled in Indonesia. Such a lease bestowed a right to temporary use (*hak guna-usaha*) for a period of twenty-five years, or, in the case of estates engaged in the cultivation of perennial crops (which do not begin production immediately), for thirty-five years. Provision was also made for the conversion of agricultural concessions as well as leases into a right of exploitation (*hak guna-usaha*) for the remaining period of the concession or long lease with a maximum of twenty years. There was, furthermore, a time limit of one year in which application could be made to the Minister of Agrarian Affairs for conversion of the old concessions and leases into the new right of exploitation. The Dutch estates taken over by the Indonesian government and managed by the Government Estates Administration (Pusat Perkebunan Negara or PPN) were affected as well as the estates held by American, British, Belgian, and French companies, and all were forced to reorganize their companies in order to qualify under the new law.

As promised, later in 1960 a law was passed regulating the size of *hak milik* holdings. A minimum of two hectares of either irrigated or unirrigated land became uniform through Indonesia while in recognition of the sharp contrast in population density between Java and the Outer Islands, a scale of maxima based on population densities set the maximum limit for any locality (see Table 6).

**Table 6**
Maximum permissible size of farm holdings (in hectares)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population density per square kilometer</th>
<th>Land type</th>
<th>Sawah</th>
<th>Tegalan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very high density (over 400)</td>
<td>Sawah</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly high density (251-400)</td>
<td>Sawah</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly low density (51-250)</td>
<td>Sawah</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low density (50 or under)</td>
<td>Sawah</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Law No. 56 Prp/1960.
A review of PKI demands and the government’s legislative and executive action during the years 1958 to 1964 reveals the taut interplay between new government measures and new PKI pressures. Thus the seizure of the Dutch enterprises brought a PKI demand for nationalization. The resultant nationalization legislation was attacked for not ruling out indemnification of the former owners and for not covering other foreign estates as well. Taking full advantage of international political developments, Communist-dominated labor and youth organizations used the Congo rebellion as an excuse to take over the Belgian estates, the Malaysia issue for actions against British enterprises, and the American military presence in South Vietnam for actions against the Uniroyal and Goodyear Company rubber estates in East Sumatra and other American property. The pattern was always the same. After weeks and months of anti-Belgian, anti-British, or anti-American propaganda, labor unions and youth organizations openly violated the law to take over foreign companies. There was perfunctory condemnation of the illegality by cabinet ministers who were careful to express at the same time their full sympathy with the deep feelings of indignation on the part of laborers and youths over the Belgian actions in the Congo, the British support of Malaysia, or the American military support of South Vietnam. Shortly afterward there would be a new government order authorizing the Government Estates Administration to take over the respective plantations.

The PKI similarly used the rapidly rising cost of living, notably the soaring textile and rice prices, to keep up their pressure on the government. President Sukarno was never mentioned in anti-government attacks, but cabinet ministers not fully sympathetic to the PKI, officials in the ministries and various government enterprises, and many army officers in managerial positions on the plantations and other nationalized enterprises came under attack regularly. The Communists considered the army their main opponent and held army officers responsible for the ban on strikes in all enterprises including the plantations, classified as vital sources of foreign exchange. Army officers and other officials in charge of estates were also accused of corruption and given the epithet, OKB (Orang Kaya Baru, Newly Rich) or sometimes OKM (Orang Kaya Mendadak, Suddenly Rich).

A subsidiary pressure was maintained by BTI, SOBSI (Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, All-Indonesian Central Labor Organization), and Sarbupri (Sarekat Buruh Perkebunan Republik Indonesia, Indonesian Estate Workers Trade Union)
who demanded that their representatives be included in the management of state-operated plantations in implementation of Manipol, Nasakom (acronym for nasionalis-agama-komunis; the cooperation between nationalist, religious and communist organizations), and other policy statements by President Sukarno. Every clash between the Government Estates Administration or local estates management and the Communist-led mass organizations served to intensify the clamor for such representation.

A recurrent PKI argument was that the nationalization of capitalistic enterprises had been a sham, with control vested not in the people as promised but in private property, these extracting private profits by abusing their authority in the absence of effective supervision. In a 1963 speech titled “Dare, Dare, and Dare Again” Aidit charged that the nationalized enterprises had become a burden for the state treasury because of their unproductive use of credits and continuous waste of funds. This arose from the corruption of the new management and the lack of proper supervision from above by competent authorities. Supervision from below, from the masses, i.e. “social control”, was precluded by the bureaucratic capitalists’ deliberate delay in creating enterprise councils or advisory councils where, as part of the demonstration of management, there would have been representatives of the laborers. Aidit approvingly cited Sukarno’s statement in his Independence Day speech of 1961 that “production . . . is the stomach of the state, and this is why the reactionaries always concentrate their sabotage on this stomach of the state”. In his campaign to rid the state enterprises of “bureaucratic capitalists” Aidit suggested the “retooling” of the officials in charge of administrative, economic, and fiscal policies and he lumped together as Old Established Forces (Oldefos) all reactionary bureaucratic capitalists, landlords, bourgeois reactionaries, compradors, and members of the right-wing middle class. The “Oldefos” pay lip-service to Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, Manipol, USDEK, Necolim, and other current political terms, Aidit noted, but really do not believe in the revolution and are not willing to apply the principle of Nasakom to the cabinet and to the management of state enterprises. By contrast, the PKI and affiliated mass organizations were easily identifiable with the Newly Emerging Forces. The struggle to transform the colonial economy into a truly national economy was seen as inextricably linked with the agrarian struggle, whose immediate goals must be implementation of the Crop Sharing Law and implementation of the Basic Agrarian Law.
But these two laws were not the whole answer and, in a comprehensive new attack on the problem of raising agricultural production, Aidit proposed a Movement of Six Goods: (1) lower rent on land, (2) lower interest on loans, (3) higher wages for agricultural workers, (4) higher agricultural production, (5) improvement of the cultural level among the peasants, and (6) greater political consciousness among the peasants.17

Rent reduction appealed directly to nearly all peasants, a factor “of great significance in the struggle for demanding the implementation of the Basic Agrarian Law, a law which, if fully implemented on the insistence of the peasants, will constitute the realization of limited land reform” (italics added). It was equally true that by rousing the peasant masses in the movement for rent reduction—or, as the cadres were instructed, helping the peasants “throw off the burden of oppression from their shoulders” according to the principle, “the peasants emancipate themselves” —peasant pressure could also be mobilized for the consistent implementation of the Crop Sharing Law.18

Aidit skillfully linked his program for higher agricultural production with the peasants’ attempt to use lands belonging to plantations and forest reserves, putting forward demands such as: “to carry out effective reafforestation, to use reserve plots and uncultivated estate lands, to raise (catch crops) on lands of the Forest Service and estates, to demand the immediate setting up of Committees of Irrigation and Councils of Agricultural Production by enlisting the participation of revolutionary mass organizations, etc.”19

The movement for higher wages, aside from its practical value in enlisting the support of agricultural workers, supplied one more issue with which to isolate and weaken the landlord.

The PKI benefited greatly from Sukarno’s use of party slogans. In his Berdikari speech of 17 August 1965, for instance, Sukarno reminded his listeners: “We have rich natural resources, our people are diligent, but, so far, the fruits of their labor have been devoured by the landlords, the usurers, the ijon brokers, the middlemen, the village devils, and others”. The audience needed no prompting to identify village devils whom the peasants would crush. Sukarno warned in the same speech: “I have been very patient, I have displayed the patience of a father. But there is a limit to my patience — still more, to the patience of the people! I have given sufficient opportunity to implement land reform — I even postponed the deadline — and, if necessary, I am willing to extend it another year.”
In late 1963 the Communists had begun accusing the landlords and their supporters in the ministries and in provincial and kabupaten offices of a failure to accept and implement the agrarian legislation of 1960. The Ministry of Agrarian Affairs in 1960 had estimated that a total of one million hectares might become available for redistribution among land-needy peasants from such sources as land in excess of the permissible maximum (Law No. 56 Prp 1960), land of absentee landlords, former proprietary lands, former plantation lands returned to the government in connection with the conversion of agricultural concessions and long leases into hak guna-usaha, and lands administered by the Forest Service. Referring to this estimate of the Ministry, Aidit noted in 1964: “Only one-fifth (of 1,000,000 hectares) of it has been registered. Of this one-fifth, a mere 9 percent has been distributed, while half of this 9 percent has fallen into the hands of those who are not entitled to it. Yet it has been stated that within the year 1963 the land reform based on the Basic Agrarian Law should be completed.”

Aidit’s demands for “land reform courts” and for a stepping up of the implementation of the agrarian legislation were met in November 1964 by Minister of Agrarian Affairs Hermanses, who decreed the establishment of a Command for the Completion of Land Reform (Komando Penyelesaian Landreform) with the task of breaking through the barriers standing in the way of land reform implementation. The central command, consisting of the Minister himself as central commander, two deputy commanders, a chief and a deputy chief of staff, and three members, was assisted at the regional level by regional subcommands. A month before, the Ministry of Justice had announced the forthcoming establishment of land reform courts, and by December there were twelve such courts in various areas. Charged with the disposition of all land reform disputes, these courts had a judge, an official of the Department of Agrarian Affairs, and three representatives of mass peasant organizations and the National Front, intended by Sukarno as an instrument for mass-mobilization.

About a year passed between the start of this particular campaign and the creation of new offices for the solution of the new agrarian complaints. It is quite possible that these new offices would not have been established had the Communists not shifted from the speaker’s platform to actual violent action in the villages in mid-1964, encouraged by “President Sukarno’s appeal that the masses must also carry out ‘revolutionary gymnastics’.” In late June 1964, clashes occurred between peasants...
and local officials and police in districts of Central and East Java, followed by protest meetings at which resolutions and petitions were passed and sent to local, provincial, and national officials, including President Sukarno and cabinet members. When Coordinating Minister for Agriculture and Agrarian Affairs Sadjarwo condemned the “arbitrary action” campaign initiated by Communist cadres, the PKI demanded his “retooling”.22

Clashes spread to West Java with the so-called Indramayu Affair of October 1964. On two occasions large numbers of demonstrators carrying BTI and Pemuda Rakyat (the P.K.I. youth-organization) posters attacked state forest guards, seriously wounding seven guards in the first incident and three in the second. The arrest of thirty-five demonstrators brought new demonstrations for their release. The governor of West Java found that land hunger among peasants was in conflict with Forestry Department efforts to develop the forest resources. Sidik Kertapati, vice-chairman of BTI, charged that the land involved in the Indramayu Affair really belonged to the villagers and accused the Forest Service of having caused the incident in order to “wrest the land from the peasant”. Forestry Minister Sudjarwo was more cautious in order to avoid the fury of the PKI and spoke of an acute demand for Lebensraum, at the same time promising that “the utmost wisdom” would be applied in the settlement of the issue. On 20 November 1964, the first deputy prime minister, Dr. Subandrio, met with Forestry Minister Sudjarwo and State Minister Mudjoko for a discussion of the dispute between the Forest Service and mass peasant organizations. While the ministers urged avoidance of “cracks in the unity of the progressive revolutionary forces” and called for carefully planned large-scale migrations from Java, the Central Secretariat of Peasant Organizations of the National Front criticized the government for delays in land reform, for the imprisonment of peasants and leaders of peasant organizations, and for lack of coordination between central and regional policies regarding the administration of forest reserves.

A delegation of peasants from North Lampung in South Sumatra protested in Jakarta in early November against decisions rendered by Sumatran authorities. Brigadier General Mudjoko, chairman of the Ministerial Committee on Agrarian Matters, failed to back the Sumatran officials, declaring that their decisions were “of a temporary nature and not binding”. He also urged the delegation upon their return to demand the forming of a “new-style” land reform committee based on Nasakom.23
With the establishment of the Komando Penyelesaian Land-reform and the creation of land reform courts, the PKI and the mass peasant organizations had achieved two important victories. A Presidential Instruction (No. 022/1964) addressed to the Ministerial Committee on Agrarian Matters charged the officials concerned to prevent new illegal occupation of state lands coming under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service and the Government Estates Administration. On the other hand, disputes with squatters who had been holding land illegally for a considerable time were to be settled through individual negotiations on the basis of policies worked out with the leaders of the local peasant organizations. The Ministers of Agrarian Affairs and of Interior jointly instructed the land reform authorities to ensure the continuation of all crop-sharing agreements whose time limits had expired but made exceptions in those cases where the land was to be genuinely worked by the owner, where the cultivator had violated his obligations, or where the cultivator voluntarily refused to renew the agreement.24

Despite the various actions of the ministers concerned with agrarian affairs and their warnings against unilateral actions (aksi sepihak), agrarian disturbances involving several thousand people and resulting in the burning of houses and crops occurred in nine desa in the Banyuwangi district of East Java. Representatives of Petani and Petanu (the peasant organizations affiliated with PNI and Nahdatul Ulama (NU) respectively) had called on the leaders of the local BTI to consult with them prior to any actions designed to “bring land reform to completion” (mensukseskan landreform). The followers of the BTI, however, preferred to “go it alone” and take full credit for their revolutionary fervor. Their competitors charged that the BTI had violated the pledge, contained in the Bogor Declaration of 13 December 1964, which called for a “system of consultation and musyawarah. Particularly with regard to land questions, officials and peasants are obliged to musyawarah without using insinuations, intimidation, and arms”. Minister Sadjarwo led a partially successful “Nasakom mission” (i.e. a mission composed of members representing PNI, NU, and PKI) to East Java for discussions and deliberations.

By mid-1965, with all foreign enterprises by then under government control, Aidit could no longer point to foreign capitalists as the chief enemies of the Indonesian people, in particular of the peasants, and so singled out the “bureaucratic capitalists” as the new target. On the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the Party, Aidit declared:
"The Indonesian Communist Party holds that to achieve self-reliance in economy it is necessary to emancipate the peasants, the basic productive force of the Indonesian people, from all feudalistic fetters. The peasant movement now developing throughout the country shows that the peasants are a decisive force in support of the government's progressive foreign policy, ... The emancipation of the productive forces in the rural areas makes it possible for us to put into force the principle of developing the economy with agriculture as the foundation and industry as the guiding factor. To achieve economic self-reliance it is also necessary to end the history of foreign monopoly capital in Indonesia, first of all to confiscate British and U.S. imperialist capital and to nationalize it. The other serious obstruction to economic self-reliance comes from the dominance of bureaucratic capitalist plutocracy. Since the bureaucratic capitalists had originally raked in their capital from the theft of state property and mismanagement of state-owned enterprises, the transformation of the colonialist organizations in the Indonesian economy is entirely to their disadvantage (italics added).\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{Mass Peasant Organizations and the Indonesian Communist Party}

The first Indonesian Peasant Congress was held in Jakarta in late November 1945 and was followed up by the founding of the \textit{Barisan Tani Indonesia}. Its stated objective was the economic and social improvement of the peasants' position by freeing the peasants of the double yoke of imperialism and feudalism.\textsuperscript{26} The BTI found especially fertile ground among the discontented peasants of the former principalities of Central Java and in the sugar districts of Central and East Java where prior to the war Dutch sugar and tobacco companies and during the war Japanese Estates Control Board, or \textit{Saibai Kigyou Kanri Koodan}, had put economic and political pressure on the villagers to sign lease agreements giving the companies control over a substantial part of the land.\textsuperscript{27}

Soon other peasant organizations sprang up such as RTI, or \textit{Rukun Tani Indonesia} (Indonesian Peasant Union), and Sakti or \textit{Sarekat Tani Indonesia} (Indonesian Peasant Association). These organizations all supported the revolution while fending for the interests of the peasants. They repeatedly negotiated with the new revolutionary government agencies, which took over from the wartime Japanese agencies concerned with agriculture and the management of plantations, and with \textit{pamong praja}, the
administrative civil service. The peasant organizations of the early days were moderate in their demands. As time went on, however, they came gradually more and more under the influence if not the control of Communists.

In January 1951, the time when D.N. Aidit assumed the leadership of the PKI, the party had links with all three peasant organizations. RTI was openly controlled by the PKI, BTI was covertly controlled, while Sakti was infiltrated.\(^{28}\)

In July 1951 these three peasant organizations formed the FPT (*Front Persatuan Tani*, United Peasant Front), which became the mouthpiece of the three affiliated organizations. Early in 1953 the Communist leadership of RTI suggested a fusion of the three organizations. This suggestion, however, ran into opposition in Sakti, whose executive committee was not backed by a majority of the membership. The joint BTI and RTI congress, held in September 1953 in Bogor, approved the fusion and adopted the name BTI. A Sakti congress approved a fusion with BTI in June 1955.

Once the competition between these three peasant organizations had come to an end, BTI began to expand its membership rapidly. It claimed a membership of 800,000 in March 1954 and about 2,000,000 by April 1955. At the time of the elections at the end of 1955 the BTI secretariat reported a membership of some 3,300,000. This remarkable growth resulted from the strenuous membership drive which the Communists conducted prior to the elections. In the next ten years BTI greatly increased its membership and by 1965 claimed no less than 8,500,000. The bulk of the BTI membership, as one should expect, was found in Java, but there were secondary centers of concentration in both East and South Sumatra, two regions which have large Javanese communities thanks to a concentration of estate agriculture and, in the case of South Sumatra, immigration of landless Javanese who preferred a life as pioneers to one as plantation workers.

In 1965 BTI branches could be found in practically all *kabupaten* of Indonesia and in more than 80 percent of all *kecamatan*, but initially BTI concentrated its activities in parts of the country where squatters held extensive tracts of land belonging legally to estates or to forest reserves. Here the BTI cadres had an ideal field for their propaganda and with alacrity took the side of the squatter against the foreign planter as the representative of capitalism and imperialism and against an Indonesian bureaucracy which served foreign interests under the terms of the Round Table Conference Agreement.
The aggressiveness of the BTI varied from district to district and from kecamatan to kecamatan, reflecting differences in the political sophistication and militancy of the local leaders. The quality of the BTI was of constant concern to the PKI leadership, which over the years had spent a great deal of effort on the training of the BTI leadership. This bore fruit in the party's firm hold on the peasantry and in the size of the peasant organization. The competitors of BTI — Petani, affiliated with PNI; Petanu, affiliated with NU; STII, affiliated with the Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia (PSII) — could claim nowhere near the same strength. No other party laid as much stress on village investigations as did the PKI and its affiliated BTI. This permitted the party to make use of local social, economic, and physico-environmental conditions in its efforts to win the support of the peasantry and to give traditional village institutions a new political orientation. A high degree of flexibility characterized the work of the PKI and BTI in the rural areas, as comparison with the activities of the BTI in East Sumatra and Java showed.

Shortly after the miscarried coup of 30 September 1965, Minister of Agrarian Affairs Hermanses attempted to divest the Communist Party of its appeal among the peasants by emphasizing that land reform was not conceived by the Communist Party but was "an integrated part of our revolution, the basis of the country's over-all national development plans". He also announced the suspension of all members of the National Land Reform Committee who had been identified with the BTI. The Minister charged that the PKI had been waging a campaign to convince the peasants that only the Communist Party really promoted land reform, whereas actually his Ministry "will carry out land reform according to plan and within a set time limit". This statement failed to explain why the laws were being implemented at such slow pace and failed to give any information about the date set for the completion of the reforms.