PART 1

Cultural traffic abroad

Bringing the world back home Cultural traffic in *Konfrontasi*, 1954-1960

Keith Foulcher

Much of the recorded cultural history of post-independence Indonesia is preserved in the array of literary and cultural journals that began to emerge as a forum for cultural debate and the publication of creative literature during the 1945-1949 revolution. After 1950, along with the rapid growth and diversification of the print media in general, these journals came to occupy a central position in the vibrant cultural life of the new Indonesian republic. The energy they gave expression to initially marked the period as a time of great promise, when the future seemed open and full of possibilities, and the idealistic dreams of the pre-war cultural nationalist debates seemed to have given way to the actual building of a new Indonesian culture. The content of the journals expressed a strong sense of common purpose and shared challenges, but for some, the assuredness and sense of purpose that they record was at the same time shadowed by a feeling that the creative spirit of the revolution had begun to wane, and that change, the active pursuit of the new, was now a pressing concern. As concern shifted towards widespread disillusionment in the climate of the mid-1950s, and the harsh realities of Indonesia's postcolonial condition began to impinge on the effective functioning of both nation and state, the political tensions emerging at the national level also came to be felt in the Indonesian cultural arena. The energetic exchange of ideas of the early independence period took on an increasingly defensive edge, as imported Cold War tensions began to shape internal lines of conflict, and limit the means through which an Indonesian culture and an Indonesian identity could be imagined and explored.

One particular version of this history can be read through the pages of *Konfrontasi*, a self-declared 'cultural political and literary journal' (*madjalah politik kebudayaan dan kesusasteraan*) that was published bi-monthly in Jakarta between 1954 and 1960. It was the voice

of those artists, writers and intellectuals who represented the cultural arm of Sutan Sjahrir's Partai Sosialis Indonesia (PSI, Indonesian Socialist Party) (Legge 1988; Mrázek 1994), and in that sense, it was a continuation of the art, literature and thinking about culture that had given birth to the original Angkatan '45, the internationally-oriented, modernist and nationalist literature of the Indonesian revolution (Foulcher 1993). The link to this revolutionary heritage was expressed in the journal's title, which was intended as a call for 'confrontation' with the meaning and significance of the national revolution, as a way of getting to the roots of Indonesia's current condition.¹

In all, *Konfrontasi* published a total of 37 issues, normally of 50-60 pages each, printed on poor quality paper in standard 'little magazine' format (14.5 cm × 21.5 cm). Apart from occasional black and white photographs, it was liberally illustrated with vignettes and full page pen and ink drawings in the modernist style of the period. Editorship remained remarkably consistent over its full seven years of publication, with the core group of Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, Beb Vuyk and Hazil Tanzil listed as editors for each of the journal's 37 issues.² Not unlike the conditions faced by similar 'little magazines' all over the world, at that time and since, circulation figures appear to have been small, and became of particular concern in the later years of the journal's life (*K* 27:1, 28:1). Apart from publishing the journal itself, the *Konfrontasi* group also sponsored a 'study club', which at least in the early years, appears to have functioned as a lively forum for discussion, debate and cultural exchange, sometimes involving multilingual meetings with visiting artists, writers and intellectuals.³

1 This explanation, as well as the designation 'cultural political and literary journal', was given in the opening article to the first issue of the journal, 'Mengapa *Konfrontasi*' (Why *Konfrontasi*?), by Soedjatmoko, the prominent PSI intellectual and diplomat who was a key member of the *Konfrontasi* group. (References to items published in the journal are hereafter given in the form (*K* 1:3-12). Quotations are given in English translation, with the original Indonesian added in parentheses whenever the translation departs from the strictly literal.)

2 Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (1908-1994) is mostly remembered for his role in the pre-war cultural nationalist movement, and his lifelong commitment to the cause of Western-style modernization; Beb Vuyk (1905-1991) was a Dutch Indies novelist with part Indonesian ancestry, who survived Japanese internment during the Second World War and adopted Indonesian citizenship after independence. She returned to the Netherlands in April 1958, but remained a member of the editorial board of *Konfrontasi*. Hazil Tanzil (1918-1990) was a nephew of Sutan Sjahrir and brother of Djohan Sjahroezah, who belonged to the Sjahrir circle of Dutch-educated nationalist youth in the pre-war period (see Legge 1988:70-81). The novelist Achdiat K. Mihadja (1911-2010) was briefly a part of the original editorial group, while the artist Baharudin (1908-?) served as a fourth member of the group from Issue No. 11 (March/April 1956). The final issue of the journal named as a new member of the group another long-time contributor, the writer M. Saribi Afri.

3 Meetings of the study club during these early years took place at Takdir Alisjahbana's mountain retreat at Tugu, in the Puncak Pass region of West Java (see Vuyk 1960).

Although its content and its editorial personnel clearly marked *Konfrontasi* as a PSI-oriented journal, the magazine's editors insisted right to the end that it was an 'open forum', and that publication of an article did not indicate editorial endorsement (K 35:1). Its contents ranged widely, and translation of essays and literature from international sources was a regular feature, with Indonesian translations often appearing not long after the publication of their foreign language originals. As a whole, *Konfrontasi* confirms the indications elsewhere in this volume that Indonesian national culture of this period was evolving through interaction with, and response to, international sources and developments. Though conscious of the journal's nationalist credentials and its postcolonial responsibilities, its editors clearly saw themselves participants in 'world culture', an international culture of modernity through which, they implicitly believed, Indonesian culture of the post-war period would acquire a distinctive national form.

STEPPING OUT, 1954-1956

Konfrontasi's first eighteen months of publication (July/August 1954-November/December 1956, Issues 1-15) were marked by a largely non-sectarian and wide-ranging concern with the shape and content of a post-colonial Indonesian national culture. Though its creative focus was literature, the journal also published articles on language, film, newspapers, the visual and performing arts, and painting. Translations, both of creative literature and essays on aspects of cultural politics and the history of ideas that had some relevance to Indonesia, drew on European, North American and Asian sources. Similarly, original articles and essays regularly attempted to introduce ideas from abroad into current Indonesian debates. In all, thinking about relations between Indonesia and the rest of the world was central to both editorial commentary and featured articles, confirming the journal's self-description as a 'cultural political', as well as 'literary' magazine. Much attention was given to the political problem of cultural engagement with the West, but the *Konfrontasi* group clearly retained the suspicion of cultural nationalism that had been a defining characteristic of the revolutionary Angkatan '45, and which continually reinforced the journal's 'internationalist' orientation.

This ambiguity towards both the West and the indigenous heritage meant that *Konfrontasi*'s thinking about culture was marked

by a tension, and an avant-gardist sense of going forward into the unknown. It encouraged an attitude of receptiveness towards the exploration of cultural options, and opened the journal to a constant, and at times noisy, flow of cultural traffic, as ideas and models were welcomed, made known and held up for examination. At the same time, a type of literature was appearing in the pages of the journal that illustrated how this cosmopolitan orientation might form the basis for creative expression in Indonesian, a cultural counterpart to the way the PSI and its followers envisaged the postcolonial Indonesian nation state. It was a literature that pursued the cultural idealism formulated in theory and practice during the revolution and later termed 'universal humanism', an aesthetic ideology founded on secularism, individualism and a commitment to the cause of political justice and equality that would enable the full realization of a common and universal humanity.⁴ The unwavering commitment to this aspect of the Angkatan '45 legacy ultimately pushed *Konfrontasi* in a partisan direction, but in the journal's first phase of publication, it remained an implicit, rather than overt, statement of ideological intent and allegiance.

The confident internationalism and underlying cultural/ideological commitment that characterized the initial phase of *Konfrontasi*'s publication is encapsulated in three successive issues of the journal published in the second half of 1955, each of them reports on the monthly meetings of the journal's 'study club'. The first instalment in this series, Issue No. 7, July/August 1955, contains the text of a talk given to the *Konfrontasi* study group in May 1955 by the African-American writer Richard Wright, entitled 'American Negro Writing'. The text was published in English, but it was followed by an Indonesian 'synopsis', which goes beyond mere summary to indicate the type of reception Wright and his ideas received from the *Konfrontasi* audience. Wright was in Indonesia at this time to attend the 1955 Bandung Conference, but his visit also included a series of well-reported meetings with Indonesian writers and cultural figures in and around Jakarta. Though his visit to Indonesia, as Brian Roberts notes, belongs in the framework of American cultural diplomacy and was funded through the CIA-sponsored Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), Wright was a former communist whose political allegiances at this time were far from unambigu-

4 The term 'universal humanism' was coined in a 1951 essay by H.B. Jassin, to describe the aesthetic philosophy of the literary Angkatan '45 (Jassin 1951; reprinted in Jassin 1967). It appeared subsequently in the debates surrounding the Manifest Kebudayaan affair of 1963, although it only came into general use in the New Order period.

ously pro-American.⁵ In the mid-1950s, he was living in Paris and writing under the influence of Sartrean existentialism, another politically ambiguous element in his relationship with the sponsors of his visit to Indonesia. His championing of the African-American cause, and that of oppressed peoples and nations everywhere, was expressed within a framework of left-leaning anti-communism, anti-imperialism and above all, a solidarity with the struggles of 'coloured people' against capitalist/Western/white exploitation. For the *Konfrontasi* group, this was a challenging mix of cultural and political viewpoints. On the one hand, Wright embodied the spirit of post-war cultural and literary regeneration that *Konfrontasi* wanted to encourage in independent Indonesia. At the same time, however, Wright's insistence on race relations as the fundamental and unbridgeable dividing line between 'coloured peoples' and the West was something that sat uncomfortably with the confident internationalism of the *Konfrontasi* outlook.

This difference in outlook between Wright and the *Konfrontasi* viewpoint took on a literary dimension when he moved, at the end of his lecture to the *Konfrontasi* study club, to an endorsement of the type of politically-engaged writing which, in the Indonesian context, was understood as 'socialist realism', the antithesis of 'universal humanist' aesthetics. Quoting one of his own poems, in which he speaks of the unity of 'black hands' and the 'white fists of white workers', and envisages a day when 'there shall be millions of them, on some red day in a burst of fists on a new horizon!', Wright acknowledges that many among his audience 'will be shaking heads and wondering what value there is in writing like that' (K 7:23-4). Nevertheless, he goes on to make an impassioned plea for relativity and contextualism in literary evaluation, arguing that 'we write only of what life gives us in the form of experience. And the[re] is a value in what we Negro writers say...'.⁶ The Indonesian 'synopsis'

5 See the contribution by Tony Day to this volume. I am grateful to Brian Russell Roberts, of Brigham Young University, for information about Wright's 1955 visit to Indonesia and his complicated relationship with the CCF. The CCF itself, sometimes described as a cultural counterpart to the Marshall Plan, was formed in 1950 in Berlin to develop an anti-communist cultural offensive in the face of the expansion of Soviet communist cultural diplomacy. With covert funding support from the CIA, it became a large and well-resourced international organization that was a key player in the 'Cultural Cold War' of the 1950s and early 1960s. For comprehensive studies of its formation and international operations, see Coleman 1989; Saunders 2000; and especially Scott-Smith 2002.

6 K 7:24. Brian Roberts (email communication, 11-2-09) explains that Wright's *Konfrontasi* talk was a later version of an original 1940s lecture first published in French translation in Sartre's journal *Les Temps Modernes*, which reflected his then pro-communist attitudes. In Jakarta, Wright dropped a number of pro-Soviet statements in the original lecture, but 'probably felt he was in a good position to throw in at least a bit of his communist history, since [most likely] the Indonesian intelligentsia knew very well that he was [now] an anti-communist'.

that accompanied the published text of Wright's lecture met this assertion head-on, suggesting that Wright's 'political-sociological' approach to African-American writing would raise questions in the minds of some readers about the literature's real 'value'. The problem is side-stepped, however, by the suggestion that the value of a literary creation is partly determined by the work's 'honesty', its faithful mirroring of human life (*hidup sang manusia*) (K 7:25), a quality which is undeniably present in the examples of literature that Wright presented. In this way, and also in the final suggestion that the struggle of the 'Negro' is the 'struggle of humanity' (*perdjongan kemanusiaan*) (K 7:28), Wright's defence of engaged literature is understood within *Konfrontasi*'s own cultural/ideological outlooks, and the call to action on behalf of the oppressed is recouped in terms of 'universal humanism'. This instance of cultural interaction is instructive: Wright brings the outside world to Jakarta, but Jakarta, here in the form of the *Konfrontasi* group, domesticates its concerns to locally generated outlooks, and local terms of engagement.⁷

Interestingly, the following edition of the journal was given over almost entirely to a completely different aspect of contemporary world culture, the problem of postcolonial development, through the example of contemporary India. Coming in the wake of both the Bandung conference and a recent official vice-presidential visit to India by Moh. Hatta, Issue No. 8 (September/October 1955) featured a report on another meeting of the *Konfrontasi* study club, whose speaker this time was the Indian ambassador to Indonesia, Mr Tyabji. The ambassador was accompanied by a Mr S.K. Dey, the chief of Indian Community Projects, who was in Indonesia under UN auspices to investigate the application of the Indian community development model to Indonesian conditions, and the talk took the form of a response by both men to a series of written questions on India's approach to problems of social and cultural development. It was followed by a discussion generated by spontaneous questions raised during the meeting, with the entire proceedings summarized by staff of the Indian embassy in Jakarta, and reproduced, in English, as the lead article in this issue of the journal (K 8:2).

⁷ The tensions between Wright and the *Konfrontasi* group over the issue of 'race', as well as a series of revealing portraits of the *Konfrontasi* circle and their lifestyle, can be found in Beb Vuyk's report (1960) on the group's encounter with Wright. I thank Brian Roberts for providing me with this reference, and for working with me on an English translation and commentary on Vuyk's essay that is forthcoming in *PMLA* (*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*).

The discussion ranged over problems associated with rural community development, urbanization, education and population control. But it came closest to *Konfrontasi*'s own concerns when it took up the question of India's ancient cultural heritage, and its relation to the demands of social and economic development. In a series of remarks that strike quite a new note in the way 'East' and 'West' were conventionally viewed by Indonesian nationalist intellectuals associated with the Sjahrir stream, Tyabji argued that 'it was essential to realize that the East had played a great part in laying the foundations of scientific development in the past; and that science was not alien to it in either spirit or form'. This was important, he said, because the 'political eclipse of the East in the last few centuries' had led to the erroneous belief that science 'was something totally alien to the East, and therefore required a fundamental reorientation of Eastern thought and way of life in order that the East may now receive it from the West'. Education in the newly developing states of Asia should make Asians aware of 'what their own people had contributed to the sum total of human experience and knowledge. They will then find that much of what is known as Western knowledge is as much Eastern as Religion is. This will give them a new confidence in themselves, and enable them to contribute to the creation of a world civilization – which was neither exclusively Eastern nor Western – on an equal footing with the rest of the world' (K 8:12).

This type of thinking about 'Eastern' knowledge was quite alien to the tradition of Indonesian thought *Konfrontasi* represented, which tended to see the 'Eastern' heritage as a 'burden' that needed to be overcome in the building of a modern nation.⁸ It received added impetus elsewhere in this issue, because *Konfrontasi* No. 8 also contained the text of a long talk given to the 1955 Rangoon 'Congress for Cultural Freedom' by the Indian scholar, V.K. Gokak, translated into Indonesian by Hazil Tanzil and entitled *Pengaruh pikiran Barat atas bentuk seni dan estetika Timur* (The influence of Western thought on Eastern art forms and aesthetics).⁹

8 The editorial introduction to Tyabji's speech contains indications of this tendency, for example in the statement, 'The questions put to the speakers revolved around the problem of how a new country like India, with its burden of a centuries-old tradition (*jang mempunyai beban tradisi jang ber-puluh2 abad lamanya*), can adapt to life in this modern age' (K 8:2).

9 Note the prevalence of *Konfrontasi*'s CCF links, right from the early years of its operation. (Takdir Alisjahbana was himself a participant in the 1955 Rangoon conference.) The apparent absence of any overt pro-American political agenda operating through these links at this time, however, is consistent with the competing interests of those who founded the CCF in 1950 (Scott-Smith 2002:101-9), and the organization's early history. See also below, in the context of later developments.

Echoing something of Tyabji's call for Asians to recognize the universality of their own traditions, Gokak proceeds by example to show his audience both the Indian equivalents of aesthetic philosophies conventionally held to be 'Western', as well as the ways in which Western (English) literature can be understood according to the tenets of Indian aesthetics. This type of investigation was necessary, he said, to counter the Indian intellectual's alienation from his or her own traditions through the influence of Western education. He acknowledges the contributions of Marxism and humanism to the understanding of art, but he finds both wanting, 'unfinished' and 'totally unsatisfying', and reserves his ultimate acclaim for the aesthetic philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, the early twentieth-century Indian philosopher who introduced the notion of evolutionary consciousness into Hindu thought. In Sri Aurobindo, he finds the peak of modern Indian aesthetics, a form of expression that would not have been possible without Western influence, but equally unthinkable without the background of Eastern tradition (K 8:33).

For the *Konfrontasi* circle, members of the study group and readers of the magazine, this contact with modern Indian thinking about culture and aesthetics was potentially significant. It suggested that the proponents of modernity, in both social and cultural terms, might have taken a much greater degree of cognizance of indigenous knowledge than had ever been the case in Indonesian national, and nationalist, culture in general, and in the Sjahrir tradition of thinking about Indonesian culture in particular. But it was perhaps the multi-ethnic character of the Indonesian nation, the absence of any heritage that could be identified as a core cultural tradition, that meant that the Indian example was unable to find a fully 'Indonesian' equivalent in the eyes of these observers. For if the *Konfrontasi* viewpoint was able to 'domesticate' Richard Wright in terms of its own aesthetic ideology, it seemed to open itself to ideas from India only to find them ultimately unworkable. There are hints of this in the editorial introduction to this issue of the journal, where the editors state quite explicitly that while admiring the quality and expertise of the author, they are unable to escape the impression that Gokak's speech shows an 'excessive sense of self-satisfaction' with a culture that is essentially lacking in dynamism, a pride in an empty past that 'is symptomatic, not only in India, but also in Indonesia' (K 8:1). The sense of the urgency of change, of the will to begin anew, means that for *Konfrontasi*, the cultural model for a modern Indonesia cannot come from India. The lines of

cultural traffic must be kept open, to ideas and models coming from elsewhere.¹⁰

The final part of this remarkable glimpse into the cultural and intellectual life of Jakarta in the second half of 1955 comes in Issue No. 9, which is almost entirely devoted to another meeting of the *Konfrontasi* study group. Here we are on much more familiar ground, because the invited guest this time was the American anthropologist Claire Holt, who was visiting Indonesia for the first time in 17 years, for the research that led to her foundational study of the Indonesian arts (Holt 1967). Holt's address to the meeting is again reproduced in English, but the transcription of the following discussion between Holt and her audience includes statements by a number of participants, who variously use Indonesian, English and Dutch in their questions and comments.¹¹

The content of Holt's talk, and much of the ensuing discussion, centres on the just completed 'Conference on Yogyakarta Dance', held in Yogyakarta on 10-12 November 1955. Introducing the topic, however, Holt raises a number of questions relating to the broader issue of cultural exchange and cultural orientation in the Indonesian arts of the time. For example, she notes that in their search for a synthetic 'national Indonesian style', Indonesian artists are eschewing both an inclination towards abstraction, 'so fashionable nowadays in the Western world' as well as a 'dogmatic reversion to the "golden age" of Indonesian antiquity' (K 9:6). This leads to the question of whether 'the pure old classical forms will survive as a cultural treasure of a nation while new forms are evolving' (K 9:11), a far cry from the picture of the Indian developments canvassed in the previous edition of the journal and a question much closer to

10 It is important to be aware that this rejection of the indigenous heritage has a political basis in the type of thinking represented by *Konfrontasi* and should not be seen merely as an aspect of the 'xenophilia' accusations levelled at the PSI and its followers (Feith and Castles 1970:228). In an interesting extract of a planned novel about the impossibility of friendship across the colonial divide by *Konfrontasi* editor Beb Vuyk, written in Dutch and translated into Indonesian by Achdiat K. Mihadja for publication in the same issue of *Konfrontasi* that contains the discussion of India, a young Indonesian character explains to his Dutch interlocutor that along with other Indonesians of his generation, he does not have the luxury of the European's freedom to admire 'the classics'. In Java, he says, it is attachment to the way of life embodied in classical forms like wayang that have enabled the Dutch to perpetuate the unequal relations of colonialism. 'We have freed ourselves from it with the utmost effort (*dengan segala djerih-pajah*)', he says. 'But millions of our people still live in this kind of world, and as long as they fail to let go of it, the Dutch will remain first class citizens and we will be second class, in our own homeland.' (K 8:39).

11 It should be noted that the use of English (and Dutch) in these three issues of the journal is not typical; in fact it is almost unique. However the multilingualism of these issues serves as a mark of *Konfrontasi*'s unself-conscious internationalism at this time. The positioning of Indonesian alongside English and Dutch assumes the equal standing of all three languages, another indication of a confident sense of Indonesia's place in world culture.

the terms of the contemporary Indonesian debates about national cultural forms. It is a question that sets the tone for much of the following tri-lingual discussion, as speakers offer both hopeful and less optimistic visions of the future of the Indonesian arts.

The picture that emerges from these three successive issues of *Konfrontasi* in the second half of 1955 illustrates the journal's role in the vibrant climate of cultural and intellectual exchange between Jakarta and the outside world at this time. The Indonesian artists, writers and intellectuals who made up the *Konfrontasi* group saw themselves at the heart of the cultural traffic of the post-war world, and spent time and energy in opening themselves to what it had to say to them.¹² Themselves multilingual and culturally diverse, the *Konfrontasi* group welcomed the presence of foreigners and foreign ideas in their midst. The modern Indonesian culture they saw themselves as building would to a large extent be the product of the interaction between 'what is really alive among us now' and all that they could discover in their cultural and intellectual engagement with the world at large.¹³

LITERARY TRANSLATION, AND THE INDONESIAN RESPONSE TO WORLD LITERATURE

Cultural and intellectual engagement with the world at large was actively pursued in the first phase of *Konfrontasi*'s existence through the business of literary translation.¹⁴ Beginning in 1955, with the translation of two essays from T.S. Eliot's *Selected prose* of 1953, translations from world literature appeared alongside original writing in Indonesian in almost every issue of the journal. No explicit endorsement of the value of translation appeared until the very end of this period, when, in a review of an end of year symposium held by the Faculty of Literature at the University of Indonesia in 1956,

12 Think, for example, of Hazil Tanzil's effort in translating into Indonesian the long, and philosophically-dense speech by V.K. Gokak, even though he was part of an editorial board which found Gokak's ideas ultimately inimical to the culture-building enterprise in which they were engaged.

13 One is reminded here of the opening words of the Surat Kepercayaan Gelanggang of 1950: 'We are the legitimate heirs to world culture, and we are furthering this culture in our own way'. As this connection suggests, the *Konfrontasi* circle was a post-war enactment of the Angkatan '45 ideals.

14 In her contribution to this volume, Maya H.T. Liem shows that translation of literature from both the socialist and capitalist worlds was a major channel for cultural traffic between Indonesia and the outside world at this time.

Hazil Tanzil remarked on the significant and welcome contribution made to Indonesian literature by recent translations from foreign sources.¹⁵ But it is clear that translators and editors found in the translated items included in *Konfrontasi* an echo of Indonesian concerns, or models that were of relevance to aspiring Indonesian writers and the issues that preoccupied them. Whether it was the question of how a writer's individual voice might shape expression in Indonesian, or the more specific challenge of how to write about social injustice, bureaucratic ineptitude, or the struggle of ordinary people to improve the condition of their lives, translations served to widen the options available to Indonesian writers and put them in touch with international developments in creative literature of the period.

A theme which surfaces in many of the translated works is writing about 'the lives of others', observations of life lived outside the realm of the narrator's own experience. This may take the form of a writer's attempt to express political commitment through an authentic re-creation of the struggle of oppressed peoples, as in the extract from Carson McCullers's 1940 novel, *The heart is a lonely hunter*, published in Issue No. 5, March-April 1955.¹⁶ At other times it may simply be the observation of a way of life that was once familiar but now seems to lie beyond the narrator's reach, as in the short story by Khuswant Singh, *Potret nenek* (A picture of grandmother), which was included in the special India Issue of September/October 1955.¹⁷ The specific concern with the underdog, and the problem of 'honesty' and 'authenticity' in the representation of suffering and social injustice, sees a full Issue, No. 14, September/October 1956, devoted to a translation of Lu Xun's 'The true story of Ah Q', translated by Go Gien Tjwan and S. Soekotjo.¹⁸ In this case, the translation is prefaced by a two-page editorial introduc-

15 The translations mentioned are George Orwell's *1984*, Igor Gouzenko's *Djatuhnya seorang dewa* (*The fall of a god*), Jean-Paul Sartre's *La putain respectueuse* (*The respectful prostitute*) (translated by Toto Sudarto Bachtiar), Albert Camus's *Caligula* (translated by Asrul Sani) and Maxim Gorky's *Ibunda* (*Mother*) (translated by Pramoedya Ananta Toer). In addition, Tanzil remarked, there had been 'dozens' (*ber-puluh2*) of translations of poetry into Indonesian in recent years (*K* 15:4).

16 The translator was Siti Nuraini, whose literary translations figured in a number of issues of *Konfrontasi* during this period. (In the 'Richard Wright' issue of 1955, for example, she published translations of two short stories by the Italian writer Joyce Lussu.) The extract which she translated from *The heart is a lonely hunter* is pp. 67-79 of the 1953 edition of the novel.

17 Unusually, the name of the translator of *Potret nenek* is not mentioned.

18 Like other literary translations of this period, the Indonesian text of 'The true story of Ah Q' ('*Riwayat kita: Ah Q*') appears to have been based on an existing translation into English or Dutch. Maya Liem (personal communication, 8-12-2009) notes that the translator Go Gien Tjwan did not know Mandarin.

tion, which makes quite explicit the relationship between the translation and its Indonesian context. First, Lu Xun is recruited into the *Konfrontasi* fold by his status as a modernizer, an opponent of an outmoded feudalism that perpetuates the suffering of the poor and oppressed; he is not a cultural nationalist, intent on making a statement of anti-Westernism. Lu Xun, the reader is informed, was deeply influenced by the West, and the examples of Western literature he translated into Chinese, but he was equally in touch with Chinese tradition. Furthermore, despite his contemporary status as a pioneer of modern Chinese literature, Lu Xun is in no way a writer in the tradition of the now officially sanctioned creed of Chinese socialist realism. Rather, he is 'a true artist, free and responsible, an upholder of the values of humanity' ('*seorang seniman tulen, bebas dan bertanggung djawab, jang mendjundjung tinggi nilai2 kemanusiaan*') (K 14:2). Here, literary translation can be seen as feeding directly into the ideological positionings underlying Indonesian cultural debates of the time: writing about the underdog is a common concern, but the *Konfrontasi* camp takes advantage of the example of Lu Xun to suggest that 'socialist realism' is not the only way this responsibility can be fulfilled.¹⁹

Examples of the original literature published by *Konfrontasi* at this time suggest that whether through translation or direct contact with original writing in foreign languages, Indonesian writers associated with the journal drew on a familiarity with world literature in their experiments with modernity, sometimes with impressively original results. Issue No. 5, March/April 1955, was given over almost entirely to the publication of two short stories and eight poems by Sitor Situmorang, a sample of the writing Sitor produced during his early-1950s appointment as Indonesian cultural attaché in Paris. Reading these poems and short stories in their original context highlights their significance, and forcefully confirms the editorial observation made in 1956 (K 13:1) that an Indonesian writer working abroad was no less 'Indonesian' for his physical location than any other writer whose work contributed to the indigenous literary heritage. They are the work of an Indonesian writer living and writing at the heart of European modernism, yet still wrestling with expression in the national language as a way of bringing Indonesian literature to the world, and showing what the adoption of an international literary aesthetic might mean for a distinctively modern, yet recognisably Indonesian, literary tradition

19 Interestingly, the editorial introduction to *Riwajat kita*; Ah Q describes Ah Q as 'the eternal underdog' (in English), a device which avoids the use of more ideologically explicit terminology for oppressed people (K 14:2).

at home.²⁰ The work published in *Konfrontasi* in early 1955 includes the first publication of Sitor's short story, *Ibu pergi ke sorga* (Mother goes to heaven),²¹ significant in the context of this discussion because it is the most complete realization in Indonesian literature of the period of the problem of writing that positions the author between so-called 'modernity' and its 'traditional' antithesis. It does not belong to the genre of engaged writing, and it lacks the gritty realism of quasi-journalistic observation. Rather, it is a poetic evocation of the modernist trope of separation, the loss of belonging as an integral part of the modern condition, articulated with a degree of poise, control and assuredness that creates the illusion of authenticity that is the mark of a mature literary imagination.²²

The models for the poetry and prose of Sitor's Paris period are primarily the work of mid-twentieth-century European modernists, writers of existential fiction like Sartre and Camus, and poets like Auden and Eliot. Elsewhere in the early issues of *Konfrontasi*, another more 'popular' tradition of European writing seems to have provided a different model for short fiction, the type of short story made famous in the inter-war and early post-war period by writers like Somerset Maugham and Graham Greene. In this type of writing, the narrator-as-observer speaks of meetings with quirky, out of the way characters often – as in the stories of Somerset Maugham – encountered in the bars and clubs of the late colonial world, the misfits and the heroes of now long-gone enactments of the 'human comedy' in non-European settings. No translations from this genre appear in *Konfrontasi*, but it seems to lie behind a type of writing that turns the model back on the West, reversing the observation of Westerners in the 'exotic East', for example, to tell stories of Eastern 'misfits' encountered by the narrators in the 'exotic West'. Stories played out in Western settings, like Nugroho's *Dibalik kabut menjingsing* (Behind the breaking

20 In an earlier article (Foulcher 2001) I suggested that a similar interaction between an international literary aesthetic and a nationalist consciousness lay behind the poetry written by Rivi Apin in Dutch-occupied Jakarta in 1949.

21 Kratz (1988:452) lists what appears to be an almost concurrent publication of the story in *Duta Suasana* (18.4:14-5).

22 The same judgement could be made of the selection of Sitor's 'Paris' poems published alongside the short stories. They are particularly startling in the contrast they present with the bulk of *Konfrontasi* poetry, which in general harks back to the pre-war Pujiangga Baru style, rather than the modernism of the Angkatan '45. It is not discussed in this essay, as very little of it seems to bear any relation to the internationalist outlooks that characterize the rest of the journal's content. *Konfrontasi* did serve as a publication outlet for some of the earliest poetry of Ajip Rosidi (Ajip Rossidhy) and Rendra; indeed, at the age of only 16, Ajip Rosidi contributed three poems to the journal's first issue. Later issues also included some significant prose work by Ajip, including his ruminations on the 'Djakarta-Djatiwangi' divide (*K* 17:27-32). But that is a topic for a different essay.

fog), published in Issue No. 2, September/October 1954, and Basuki Gunawan's *Cafe San Francisco* in Issue No. 4, January/February 1955, should not be seen merely as the literature of a deracinated cosmopolitanism, as they may appear to the casual observer. They are more usefully viewed as ironic reworkings of a Western genre, as Indonesian writers go out into the world with the same degree of confidence European writers of the mid-twentieth century brought to their own observations of the vagaries of experience in the non-European world. These stories indicate that the reciprocal nature of the cultural traffic between Indonesia and the rest of the world at this time was imaginative as well as physical, as young Indonesian writers both grappled with the problem of 'authenticity' at home and embraced the adventure of taking modern Indonesian literature to the world. Inevitably, though, a time was coming when experimentation, irony and ambiguity would come under challenge, and a more strident assertion of ideological commitment would replace the exploration and 'culture building' of *Konfrontasi's* early years. This later direction was implicit in *Konfrontasi's* editorial statements and international contacts from the beginning, but the sharpening of political tensions in Indonesia after 1956 brought it more towards the surface, and changed the way the journal functioned as a channel for cultural traffic in the late 1950s.

STORM CLOUDS, 1956-1957

The years 1956 and 1957 (Issues 16-21) mark something of a transition in *Konfrontasi's* style and content. Translations from world literature are still present, and there is still an echo of the cultural debates of the early independence period. However an increasing proportion of the content is given over to a range of original poetry and short stories that bear little relation to the international orientations present in much of the literature of the journal's early years. There is a sense of a gathering ideological storm, as a number of key articles take up the theme of anti-communism, implicitly acknowledging the growing challenge of socialist and communist thinking about the role of art and literature in social reconstruction, both in Indonesia and abroad at this time. Behind this change lies the influence of certain key developments in Indonesian politics and their impact on the pluralist character of cultural exchange and expression in the early post-independence period. *Konfrontasi's* position in relation to these developments is clear, from both editorial commentary and articles accepted for publication.

Konfrontasi heralded the beginning of 1956 with a restatement of the anxiety expressed in Soedjatmoko's 'Mengapa *Konfrontasi*' article of the first issue in 1954. A paragraph from Soedjatmoko's article opened the editorial introduction, arguing that there was a connection between the political and cultural dimensions of Indonesia's current crisis that had to be confronted if the political life of the capital was to be brought into line with the interests of the people (*kepentingan rakyat*). As the year progressed, *Konfrontasi*'s contents began to spell out that connection, highlighting the cultural dimensions of a crisis it saw taking hold of the political life of the nation.

A sense of cultural political crisis emerges directly in the lead article of Issue No. 16, which was a reflective essay by Beb Vuyk dedicated to Mochtar Lubis, a member of the *Konfrontasi* study group who was at the time under house arrest in Jakarta (Teeuw 1967:196-7). Titled *Mawar putih* (White rose), the essay was a review of a 1952 book by Inge Scholl, which told the story of the anti-fascist 'White Rose' movement at the University of Munich in 1942 and the group's exposure of Nazi war crimes that resulted in the execution of her two siblings, Hans and Sophie Scholl, before the end of the Second World War. Nowhere in the essay is there any specific mention of Mochtar Lubis, but the inference is clear: in a climate of totalitarian control, writing can be an act of political engagement, and its effect may result in a threat to the life of the writer involved. In this case, the invocation of a relationship between Indonesian experience and the wider world may appear exaggerated, particularly in the light of what was to happen in Indonesia less than 10 years later. But the detention of Mochtar Lubis in late 1956 was the first instance in independent Indonesia of the incarceration of a writer for his political orientations and his activities as a journalist, and the chill wind that it sent through the pages of *Konfrontasi* and, no doubt, the minds of its readers, must be understood in the context of its times. It had a direct impact on the type of cultural traffic the journal sponsored, because from this time, international sources were increasingly drawn on to bolster *Konfrontasi*'s position in local issues and struggles.²³

23 Hill (2010:50-1) notes that although Nasution later stated that it was he who initiated orders for Mochtar's arrest because of Lubis's support for the 1950s regional rebellions, Mochtar himself 'attributed his arrest to Communist influence on the President [...] He was emphatic that he was not arrested because of his relationship with military officers engaged in activities threatening the unity of the state but because of his long-standing opposition to the PKI and criticisms of the president'. It is this sense of the 'communist threat' that is reflected in developments in *Konfrontasi* following Lubis's detention. I thank Michael Bodden for drawing this issue to my attention.

At the same time, and for the first time in its history, the 'political' dimension of the journal's self-styled 'cultural political' orientation came strongly to the fore. Issue No. 17, March/April 1957, contained the text of a long address by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana to an 'All-Sumatra Conference on Traditional Law and Custom' (Kongres Adat se-Sumatra), held in Bukittinggi in March 1957. The setting appears innocuous enough, but the speech, entitled '*Perjuangan untuk autonomi dan kedudukan adat didalamnja*' (The struggle for autonomy and the place of traditional law within it) (K 17:2-26), was a provocative anti-government statement that resulted in a period of city arrest for this prominent cultural figure and *Konfrontasi* editor. It traced the historical origins of centralism in Indonesia, from Hindu times through Dutch colonialism to the Japanese Occupation, arguing that even though the independence movement had no choice but to support the establishment of a unitary republic in place of the colonial state, the costs of centralized power were now becoming plain: Jakarta was exploiting the regions to an even greater extent than was the case under colonialism, and it was producing nothing in return, other than increasing corruption and luxury consumerism. In this climate, the current response of the regions was good, a healthy corrective to the failures of the centre. Disintegration of the state was a real danger in such a climate, and the speech affirms Takdir's commitment to the unitary ideal of 'one homeland, one nation and one language' (K 17:14). But he sees the struggle for regional autonomy as a just response to the demands of the times (*panggilan zaman*). The central government's blind pursuit of power, status and money had resulted in a perpetuation of the centralization policies of Dutch colonialism; in this climate there was no choice but to support the struggle for autonomy, not only at the provincial and district levels, but right down to the smallest units of Indonesian social life (K 17:24).

The sense of a threatening political climate at home probably increased the importance of international linkages for the *Konfrontasi* group. The editorial introduction to Issue No. 20 noted that one member of the editorial group was just back from the Philippines (no further details are mentioned), while two others, Beb Vuyk and Sutan Takdir, had recently attended the PEN International Conference, held in Tokyo in September 1957. Together with Anas Makruf, they had been part of a three-person delegation to the conference from the central directorate of PEN Indonesia. Subsequently, Issue No. 21, November/December 1957, contained Indonesian translations of a series of talks on the conference theme of the reciprocal influence between the literatures of East and West, given by K S Srivasa Iyengar, Dr Omar Malik, Stephen Spender, and

Joost A.M. Meerlo.²⁴ Each of these talks reflected the overall tendency of speakers at the conference to question the existence of the East-West dichotomy (*K* 21:1); the decision to publish them in Indonesian reflects both the long-standing Indonesian interest in 'East-West' debates, as well as *Konfrontasi*'s aversion to essentialized notions of 'Eastern' and 'Western' cultures. But whereas earlier, *Konfrontasi* had tended to see 'difference' more in terms of 'tradition' and 'modernity' than an essential 'East' and 'West', by the end of 1957 both these sets of binaries were in the process of disintegration, increasingly being replaced by the more urgent – for the times – dichotomy between pro- and anti-communist.

The role of China in this development was crucial, because from the mid-1950s, the example of Chinese modernity had given the lie to both the notion of a 'static East', as well as the assumption of a 'universal' modernity.²⁵ Less ambiguously than the existing example of the Soviet Union, it called into question the East-West/tradition-modernity dichotomies of the earlier Indonesian debates and asked instead, 'Whose modernity, that of socialism/communism or capitalism?' Henceforward, this was the question that dominated *Konfrontasi*'s concerns. It surfaced alongside the PEN speeches questioning the validity of the East-West dichotomy in Issue No. 21, in another report on experiences outside Indonesia, a long reflection on a recent visit to China by the novelist and poet Ramadhan KH. Ramadhan visited China in September-October 1957, as part of a small delegation of Indonesian writers invited to tour China and meet with members of the official Chinese writers' organization.²⁶ In his report for *Konfrontasi*, he reproduced a number of conversations he and his fellow compatriots held with Chinese artists and intellectuals during their travels, ranging over questions of the nature and evaluation of literature, the material condition and social responsibilities of Chinese writers, and the question of the necessary limits to the 'freedom' and 'individualism' of writers in a socialist society. Nowhere is there any retrospective com-

24 On Stephen Spender, see below. Joost A.M. Meerlo was a Colombia University psychiatrist. I have been unable to identify Srivasa Iyengar and Omar Malik.

25 While the occasional translation from Japanese literature appeared in *Konfrontasi*, and at one point Indonesia's unfamiliarity with the work of 'good Japanese writers' was the subject of editorial commentary (*K* 25:1), Japan itself never emerged as a model of non-Western modernity in Indonesian cultural politics at this time. It is likely that the experience of Japanese 'fascism' and 'militarism' was still too recent for Japan to be seen as a model of Asian modernity, the role it sometimes played in early Indonesian nationalist debates.

26 Trisno Sumardjo 1958. As Hong Liu (1995:136-9) notes, Ramadhan was one of a small group of Indonesian intellectuals who maintained a critical stance towards China, in the face of a growing tendency among Indonesian politicians and artists at this time to see in China a model for their own vision of a future Indonesia.

mentary on these exchanges, but for the author himself and, no doubt, *Konfrontasi*'s readers, the sophistry of his Chinese hosts and the alienating nature of the theory and practice of Chinese socialist realism emerge as the underlying themes of the report. Whereas other Indonesian visitors at the time were deeply and positively influenced by what they saw of the material sufficiency of Chinese writers and the sense of purpose they enjoyed in their society,²⁷ Ramadhan's report concludes on a note of profound unease. The final encounter he records is a conversation with a Chinese artist who has returned home after years of living in Paris, and who has given up painting to work as an art teacher. 'Everything here must serve the political aims of the state (*politik negara*)', the former painter tells him. 'Everything, including art.' Patting his shoulder as they view the flower gardens of Nanking from the back seat of a Mercedes Benz, Ramadhan remarks, 'You've made yourself very clear (*Saudara telah bitjara amat djelas*)' (K 21:72). No further commentary seems necessary.

If contact with China played an important part in shaping the terms of Indonesian debates in the lead up to Guided Democracy, so too was there a much more pronounced Cold War character starting to emerge in cultural traffic between Indonesia and the West at this time. This trend can be seen in another of Hazil Tanzil's translated essays from the period, *Putus dengan komunisme* (Breaking with communism) by Howard Fast, published in *Konfrontasi* No. 19, July/August 1957. Fast was a long-time committed communist and member of the American Communist Party, a novelist and journalist for the *Daily Worker*, who in 1953 was awarded the Stalin Peace Prize but who later broke with the Communist Party after the events of 1956 in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. He wrote this essay, a moving statement of the reasons that impelled him to take that decision, for the American journal of communist intellectuals, *Mainstream*, apparently not long before its Indonesian translation appeared in *Konfrontasi*.²⁸ In it, he looks back on the course of a life lived in the service of a considered belief in the inherent goodness and 'brotherhood' of humanity, and an understanding of 'the role of the working class in modern history'. He outlines the reasons for his decision to become part of the communist movement, reasons that grew from a conviction that it was the

27 Hong Liu (1996) shows that this was a factor in Pramoedya's positive response to China during his visits there in 1956 and 1958. However Liu's extended study (1995) makes it clear that Pramoedya was not alone in being favourably impressed by the contrast between the condition of writers in China and the circumstances faced by Indonesian writers at home.

28 No source or date for the original is given. Internal evidence suggests it was written in early 1957.

Communist Party that embodied the struggle for 'socialism, peace and democracy', and the most effective source of resistance against fascism. However all this was to come to naught in the face of the revelations contained in Krushchev's 'Secret Speech' of February 1956 detailing the crimes of Stalinism, as well as what other sources were suggesting about their perpetuation in the present-day Soviet Union and its satellites. For Fast, just as for many other left-wing intellectuals in the West at this time, these revelations were a source of great and continuing anguish. He concludes his essay with a statement of an underlying faith that no longer has a home, either in the Soviet Union or in present-day America, other than with those people of goodwill who strive to continue the legacy of the founders of American democracy, communists and non-communists who oppose injustice in all its forms.

The prominence given to this translation of Fast's essay in *Konfrontasi* in mid 1957 indicates the extent to which ideological warfare was beginning to change the character of Indonesian cultural debate at this time. Just two years earlier, when Richard Wright made his appearance in *Konfrontasi*, there was a sense that American cultural diplomacy was not the issue; what was important was holding Wright up to independent evaluation, and seeing what he could offer writers of a newly emerging literary tradition. Now, times have changed, and Fast's position as a writer takes second place to his status as a disillusioned former communist. His importance for the *Konfrontasi* group is as an ally in the marshalling of the moral and ethical arguments against communism in the climate of the second half of the 1950s. For the journal and its readers, the struggle to build a modern Indonesian culture had now become a struggle against communist influence. In the last three years of *Konfrontasi*'s existence, this would be the journal's guiding mission, determining the nature and the effect of its interaction with the world at large.

COLD WAR WARRIOR, 1958-1960

Between 1958 and 1960 (Issues 22-36/7), *Konfrontasi* effectively becomes a mouthpiece for the anti-communist bastion in international Cold War cultural politics. Translated articles and essays from international sources import anti-communist cultural texts into Indonesia, while original articles continue to articulate the resistance to the radical nationalist and anti-imperialist emphasis in national culture and politics that first began to emerge in Takdir

Alisjahbana's published speeches of 1957. Much of the creative literature of the period acquires a more strongly ideological tone; in some cases it illustrates what its ideological opponents decried as the 'loose cosmopolitanism' and 'bourgeois individualism' in Indonesian culture of the period.²⁹

For the *Konfrontasi* circle, there was clearly a sense that the moral and ethical bases of public life in Indonesia at this time were approaching a state of collapse. The following Issue, No. 23 (March/April 1958), opened with the re-publication of an open letter to Jakarta's 'political leaders and the press' (*para pemimpin rakyat dan dunia persuratkabaran*) by Moh. Said, the father-figure of the Jakarta branch of Taman Siswa, the educational movement that was a revered part of the pre-war cultural nationalist movement. The letter spoke of the loss of moral values that was reflected in the current catchphrase *Siapa djudjur, hantjur dan siapa ihlas, amblas* ('Those who are honest are smashed and those who are truthful are wiped out'), and the absence of any outrage at the practice of 'anything goes' (*segala tjara boleh digunakan*) in taking on one's opponents in public life. 'For the sake of our young people, for the sake of our culture', the letter concludes, 'our public figures must revert to a way of life consistent with the moral foundations of the Indonesian nation' (K 23:4). Elsewhere in the same issue, international links come into play in bolstering *Konfrontasi's* identification of the sources of Indonesia's current crisis. In the first of a series of ideologically-focussed translations by Hanzil Tanzil at this time, this issue reproduces as 'food for thought' (*bahan renungan*) the text of a speech given by the Spanish writer and historian Salvador de Madariaga on the occasion of his 70th birthday.³⁰ In his speech,

29 This characteristic, and its contrast with more 'engaged' imaginative representations of non-Indonesian settings, is illustrated in two short stories of this period by Achdiat K. Mihadja. In *Si ayah menjusul* (The father is following) (K 18:1-13), a story set in Sydney's Bondi Beach, Achdiat includes a character who argues the case for 'Eastern' ways, apparently in order to show that this type of cultural nationalism is unhelpful in the face of the need for communication with the rest of the world about the 'human condition'. However in a later story, *Buih memutih di Niagara* (White water foam in Niagara) (K 28:2-11), the detached observations of the international traveller seem somewhat aimless, without any sense of a relationship to an evolving Indonesian aesthetic or involvement in Indonesian concerns.

30 An introductory editorial comment notes that although the speech was first published in 1956, it is 'so important' that the editors have no hesitation in reproducing it in Indonesian translation at this time. De Madariaga was himself a member of the CCF (Coleman 1989:128-9, 215). Another prominent CCF figure whose work appeared in *Konfrontasi* at this time was the Italian writer and former communist, Ignazio Silone (Scott-Smith 2002:88-9). Silone's political satire *Panitia penjabutan* (The welcoming committee), was translated by 'T.S.B.' (Toto Sudarto Bachtiar) and published in Issue No. 25, July/August 1958, only five months after its English publication in *Encounter* magazine (see below).

de Madariaga describes three famous cases of the miscarriage of justice which he has witnessed in his lifetime. He decries the negative influence of 'the religion of nationalism' and 'the religion of communism' on humanitarian values, and concludes that the 'real freedom' of the present has been sacrificed to the interests of an 'uncertain freedom' in the future (K 23:43).

The editorial note accompanying this translation indicates that the original text of de Madariaga's speech appeared – presumably in French – in the monthly magazine *Preuves* (Evidence) in October 1956. This detail is important, because *Preuves* (1951-1974) was a major publishing outlet and meeting point for the anti-communist French intelligentsia during the Cold War. Before its decline after 1966, following revelations of CIA funding, it drew together both anti-communist and ex-communist intellectuals, and functioned as an expression of anti-communist solidarity across different generations and party political affiliations.³¹ In the late 1950s, it was the source of a steady trickle of translated articles in *Konfrontasi*, including *Bertamu pada Pasternak* (A visit to Pasternak), Alberto Moravia's account of a visit to Pasternak following his receipt of a Nobel prize for literature that had been soundly criticized inside his own country (K 27:2-9). Significantly, this latter translation appeared in *Konfrontasi* within six months of its original publication in *Preuves*, suggesting that *Konfrontasi* was part of an international network – whether formal or informal – of anti-communist cultural intellectual journals at this time.³² Another link in this chain was *Encounter*, the Anglo-American cultural and intellectual journal founded in 1953 by the poet Stephen Spender and writer Irving Kristol. Spender resigned from the editorship in 1967, also in the wake of revelations of CIA funding, but in the immediate post-war years, *Encounter* drew contributions from some of the major European and American cultural intellectuals of the time. It became known for its 'leftish' liberal agenda, as much as for its ongoing expose of the curtailment of cultural and intellectual freedoms in the Soviet

31 Achab 2000. Coleman (1989:84) refers to the 'measured liberal anti-Communist perspective' which *Preuves* injected into French debates of the 1950s and 1960s.

32 This possibility also raises the intriguing question of whether *Konfrontasi*, like other journals in the network, was in receipt of CCF/CIA funding support. This is a question I cannot answer definitively, though the available information suggests that any direct funding link is unlikely. David T. Hill (2010:73) states that an 'interim committee' of the CCF was formed in Jakarta in 1956 (see also *Kronik Kebudajaan, Siasat* 14-4-56; I thank Tony Day for this reference). However Hill goes on to remark that '[n]o formal CCF structure was established in Indonesia'; there was only 'a loose circle of sympathisers'. It would appear most likely that the *Konfrontasi* group was a part of that 'loose circle', an impression shared by the historian John Legge, specifically in relation to Hazel Tanzil (email communication, 4-2-2009).

Union and Eastern Europe during the Cold War period.³³ One of its contributing journalists in the late 1950s was Anthony Rhodes, and it was Rhodes who provided the text for Hazil Tanzil's next translation, a 'letter from Bucharest' originally published in January 1958 in *Forum*, an Austrian literary magazine which was yet another CCF-supported cultural journal of the period (Coleman 1989:87-8).

Rhodes's article, entitled in Indonesian translation *Tapi batubata-tunja tidak hanjut* (But the rocks are not swept away) (K 29:7-13), describes Romania as a country in which a corrupt regime has been replaced by a totalitarian socialist state, and an Orwellian arts bureaucracy has instituted a functionalist approach to creativity and the management of artists. The result, for the arts, has been the emergence of a puerile 'socialist realism', which has no basis in reality or the lived experience of Romania's people. Rhodes describes, as an example of 'political theatre', a performance dedicated to the heroism of the working class, which, once it had received 'official' approval, was then altered by the performers to take on the style of political satire, only then beginning to draw huge and approving crowds. Like Ramadhan's report on his experiences in China, this article feeds directly into Indonesian cultural political debates of the time. In the late 1950s, 'socialist realism' was indeed emerging as the subject of an Indonesian discourse, challenging the liberal humanist ideology of the Angkatan '45 and its successors. However, as I have argued elsewhere, the term was acquiring specific meanings and connotations in its Indonesian usage, meanings which, at least at this stage of their evolution, were not simply appropriations of Soviet or Chinese doctrines.³⁴ It might well be argued that texts like the Rhodes 'letter', along with other translations of the time, were part of a process that was imposing imported frameworks of understanding on what had up to this point been largely an indigenous Indonesian debate. In this sense, cultural traffic in *Konfrontasi* could be said to be functioning as a channel for the importation of international Cold War tensions into an already tense and confrontational climate in late 1950s Indonesia.

33 Frances Stonor Saunders (1999) remarks that 'Encounter is rightly remembered for its unflinching scrutiny of cultural curtailment in the communist bloc. But its mitigation of McCarthyism was less clear-sighted: where the journal could see the beam in its opponent's eye, it failed to detect the plank in its own'. On *Encounter* and *Preuves*, see Scott-Smith (2002:125-32). (Intriguingly, in relation to the previous footnote, in his 1963 survey of modern Indonesian literature, Anthony H. Johns translated 'Konfrontasi' as 'Encounter' (Johns 1963:434). I thank Brian Roberts for pointing this out to me.)

34 See Foulcher (1986:27-57, 202-3). This discussion of Indonesian 'socialist realism' awaits modification by more recent research into LEKRA sources.

Just how tense and confrontational the situation was becoming emerges in the publication of a highly-charged personal attack on a senior Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (LEKRA, Institute of People's Culture) figure, which appeared in Issue No. 30, May/June 1959. This article, dated 'Medan, 7 March 1959' and authored by H.A. Dharsono, is entitled, *Pidato Bakri Siregar jang amis di Solo* (Bakri Siregar's foul-smelling speech in Solo).³⁵ The title is arresting, and the content marks something of a departure in the journal's style, because up to this point *Konfrontasi's* engagement in cultural political issues, even its anti-government provocations of 1957, were always framed in terms of ideological, cultural or policy debate, rather than the abusive *ad hominem* attacks that were common in the wider world of Indonesian literature at this time.³⁶ Moreover – and from a distance – the issue at stake itself appears somewhat trivial: in his speech to LEKRA's February 1959 National Congress in Solo, reporting on LEKRA activities in North Sumatra, Bakri Siregar had remarked that 'no meaningful cultural activity could occur in North Sumatra, without the LEKRA factor being taken into account' (K 30:3). The claim does indeed sound like an act of grandstanding, as part of a national LEKRA show of strength, but the outrage in Dharsono's response, as he lists the various contributions of non-LEKRA cultural organizations in North Sumatra, seems out of proportion to Siregar's alleged crime. Clearly, however, the question of 'proportion' only emerges with the benefit of hindsight. In the climate of Indonesian cultural politics in 1959, grandstanding, and the response to it, were acts of the utmost seriousness, because they were part of a much bigger struggle over the nature and direction of the Indonesian state. It was *Konfrontasi's* role to help define that struggle along the lines of Cold War cultural politics.³⁷

As 1960 dawned, it was becoming clear that *Konfrontasi's* days were numbered. An editorial note in Issue No. 34 (January/February 1960) referred to 'technical difficulties with printing' and 'a lack

35 The author of this article, H.A. Dharsono, was a Medan author who published in national magazines and newspapers, also with the pen name Harun Arrasyhid. See further Plomp in this volume.

36 Hazil Tanzil's report on the 1956 *Symposium Sastra* at the University of Indonesia (K 15:2-7) contains an illustration of this atmosphere, in its description of the poisonous exchanges that took place between Balfas and Pramoedya at this symposium.

37 The extent of *Konfrontasi's* immersion in Cold War cultural politics is perhaps epitomized by the inclusion, in a late edition of the journal (No. 35, March-August 1960), of a translated article by A. Gaev, entitled *Kesusastraan sebagai suatu sendjata dalam Perang Dingin* (Literature as a weapon in the Cold War). The article lists a series of pernicious examples of Soviet propaganda through literature, and discusses the long history of the subordination of literature to the political interests of the Communist Party in the USSR, without any suggestion that literature may have been a 'weapon' that was also wielded by the ideological enemies of communism at the time.

of editorial resources' that had caused the journal to appear late in recent months, while the foreword to the following Issue (No. 35, March/April 1960) noted that the study group had not been functioning, 'for reasons which don't need explaining to insightful readers'. The final (double) Issue, No. 36/7, May/August 1960, appeared some time in 1961, after a twelve-month delay in securing printing permission and paper supplies. As Indonesia entered the height of the revolutionary nationalism and anti-imperialism of the late Soekarno years, *Konfrontasi*, like its political mentor the PSI and numerous other organizations, had become unsustainable. Whether the subject of an officially-declared ban, or the victim of ongoing harassment and obstructionism, publications, institutions and individuals out of step with the direction of national political life found it increasingly difficult to participate in public culture and the exchange of ideas. At this point, the vision of an Indonesian national culture which had fired *Konfrontasi*'s early years no longer had a public face; the cultural and ideological struggle which came to dominate its later years had – at least temporarily – been lost.

In the short period of *Konfrontasi*'s existence, political life and cultural politics in Indonesia underwent rapid change. As a barometer of its times, the journal could be said to record what Herbert Feith famously called 'the decline of constitutional democracy in Indonesia' (Feith 1962). In the course of that 'decline', *Konfrontasi* brought home to Indonesia a window on the wide world of cultural options available to the newly emerging nations of the post-Second World War era. It embodied the confidence with which Indonesian intellectuals, artists and writers moved in international cultural circles, both in person and in their imaginations, and it illustrated their determination to channel their international experience back into the development of a postcolonial, indigenous language-based, modern Indonesian culture. But as the options narrowed, and cultural debate and practice at home became increasingly embedded in political conflict, its view of the world took on an understanding of confrontation that cast the journal's title in quite a new light. From this point, *Konfrontasi*'s international orientation lost the ecumenism of its early years and the journal's contents acquired a partisan political character. No more was it a case of domesticating the external example to Indonesian conditions; rather, the journal's international links now came to be a channel for bringing into Indonesia ideas and outlooks that re-interpreted local realities according to international cultural political polarities and terms of engagement. In this climate cultural traffic continued to flow but in a way that perhaps contributed to *Konfrontasi*'s ultimate demise, rather than enhancing the culture-building mission of its founders, editors and contributors.

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