

# The Parties and the Masses in Indonesia

A historical survey at the occasion of the general elections in July 1971\*

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## Summary

Contrary to the expectations based on an opinion poll in 1970, the PNI as the party closely associated with former president Sukarno, did not get the expected 25% of the election results of July 1971. With the exception of the government-sponsored Golkar and the orthodox-islamic Nahdatul Ulama in Java, almost all the other political parties suddenly lost a considerable number of voters, a fact which according to Dr. Dahm cannot be wholly explained by the steady government harassment of the parties. As during the colonial era, the Indonesian masses turned to be basically indifferent towards the parties. To them the parties had been nothing but the messengers of a better tomorrow. For that reason, any party, which is able to make the most appealing promises can be sure to attract a large following, an assumption supported by the "unexpected" victory of Golkar and the "expected" losses of those political parties not associated with the present military regime.

## The Election-Surprise

When, in early July, I was looking for some news about the Indonesian election-returns, my eyes were caught by the headline of a provincial paper, stating something like: Election-surprise in Indonesia. **Functional groups** win overwhelming victory . . . Well, this was not much of a surprise for anybody, who had only superficially followed the course of Indonesian politics in the last few years and it was certainly no surprise at all for somebody who had only recently returned from a visit to Indonesia. In fact, any return other than the supreme showing of the functional groups, or, to use the Indonesian term, of the **golkar**-units<sup>1</sup>, would have been sensational. Too intense had been the campaign of the army-sponsored and army-directed body of group representatives without party-affiliation, too big was its advantage vis-a-vis the parties, as far as financial means, transport and communication were concerned, than that anybody could have seriously doubted the golkar-victory.

But, a week or so later, when I received some more detailed information about the

\* Speech delivered at the "Second Hull International Colloquium on South-East Asia: Indonesia after the 1971 – Elections", arranged by Southeast Asian Centre, Hull University, September 1971.

<sup>1</sup> Golkar, abbreviation of **golongan karya** or (army) service groups. In the wider sense the functional groups of civilians are also included. They have a Joint Secretariat under guidance of army officers. The functional groups, a provision of the 1945 constitution, came into being after the return to the Constitution of 1945 had been decreed by Sukarno in July 1959. The representatives of professional and regional groups were expected to supplement the party-system the importance of which was so gradually but systematically reduced.

outcome of the elections (see Annex) I realized, there was indeed an election-surprise. It was not the 63 per cent for the Golkar but the miserable showing of the **Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI)**, which I had expected to win at least some 25 per cent of the votes. I was not alone in this respect. From December 1970 through March 1971 an opinion poll had been conducted in Java and Madura as to which parties would be the winners in the forthcoming elections with the following results: Golkar 37.7 per cent, PNI 24.7 per cent, **Nahdatul Ulama (NU)**, the orthodox islamic party 7.9 per cent, **Partai Muslimin Indonesia (Parmusi)**, the reform-oriented islamic party and substitute for the banned Masjumi 4.5 per cent and the rest of the parties slightly above or below 1 per cent<sup>2</sup>.

Opinion polls might err, but there were several reasons why the PNI was expected to do much better than it actually did. First of all, President Suharto had given proof of his benevolent attitude towards the restructured nationalist party, be it only for the reason to balance the influence of the islamic parties in the future parliament. To punch the symbol of the PNI, the banteng or the fighting bull, thus did not seem to be too much of a risk for those who did not want to punch the waringin tree, the symbol of the Golkar units. Secondly, it could be expected that the PNI would receive the votes of many of the fifteen million sympathizers with Communism of the time of Guided Democracy under Sukarno. For what other party could they vote, after the **Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI)** had been banned. The PNI had never been a marxist party it is true, but it had committed itself to an Indonesian form of socialism, and **Murba**, the other party with socialist aims, had been an intimate enemy of the PKI for the last two decades. Many of the former members of the PKI were debarred from voting for their alleged involvement in the so-called Gestapu/PKI affair. However, the total number of those deprived from their right to vote was said to be 1.7 million people<sup>3</sup>, so there were many millions left.

A third reason to expect a better showing of the PNI was its last minute return to Sukarnoism. After the first Indonesian president had died (June 1970), the rigorous restrictions around the person and the teachings of Sukarno had been somewhat loosened. The PNI tried to profit from the still living fame of its renowned founder, particularly in the countryside, in the so-called **abangan-regions**, where traditional Javanese culture had delayed the progress of Islam, which was dominant in the so-called **santri-regions**. The PNI had therefore invited Sukarno's children, Rachmawati and Guntur, to take an active part in the campaign and the latter did it with the same oratorical style of his father. With his left hand clenched and raised he set the audience in the Senayan Sports Hall in Djakarta exploding with

<sup>2</sup> For more details of the opinion poll see **Suluh Marhaen**, 21. 4. 71 (No. 252), p. 1 and 3; see also O. G. Roeder, "Die allgemeinen Wahlen in Indonesien 1971. Grundlagen, Technik, Probleme", **Internationales Asienforum**, Jahrgang 2 (1971), Heft 1, pp. 118–123. Roeder expected the PNI to get 30 per cent of the votes, the Nahdatul Ulama was second in his estimate with 25 per cent.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Roeder, **loc. cit.**, p. 119; the exact figure of those debarred from voting is 1,730,799, including those allegedly involved in the 30-September-Movement (Gerakan September Tigapuluh, or Gestapu for short), the movement of the plotters of 1965, as well as those involved in the PRRI-revolt (Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia), the coup-attempt of 1958 in Sumatra.

slogans like "Marhaen-Djaya", or "Once Marhaen, forever Marhaen"<sup>4</sup>. The authorities therefore did not dare to allow him to campaign in Central- or East Java. In Magelang even a written message of Guntur was intercepted which was being read to the masses which had come to see at close quarters the son of their first president<sup>5</sup>. And Hadisubeno, the chairman of the PNI, shortly before his sudden death in April had dared to declare openly: "Ten Nasutions, Ten Suhartos and a whole carriage full of generals would not be able to beat one Sukarno"<sup>6</sup>.

We now know better. They were able to beat Sukarno not only in the power play in 1965/66 but also at the opinion polls in 1971. Despite the favourable conditions, the PNI suffered a smashing defeat and with it most likely, the whole party-system in Indonesia for a long time to come. The masses had left the parties. Adam Malik the ambitious foreign minister of Indonesia commented at the close of the election-campaign at a Golkar-rally, that the parties had their merits but that they had failed to unite the people, and in crucial moments of history had left the masses to themselves. Therefore it was not the masses that left the parties, he cried, it was the parties that left the masses.

It is doubtful whether the cunning politician believed himself what he had said. Only minutes before his statement there was in the Senayan-Stadium, where he was speaking, an impressive demonstration concerning this matter. The correspondent of **Kompas** noted: "The number of the masses who had attended at first was approximately hundredthousand people. They came by public buses and trucks. But suddenly, when the (Golkar arranged) program of attractions had ended and the political talks were to begin, in a period of just ten minutes the stadium which had been full was empty. The foreign journalists who saw this appeared to be startled. They did not even believe what they saw . . ."<sup>7</sup> And yet, despite the obvious lack of interest in the program and aims of the Golkar-movement, the masses did vote for Golkar and I think it would mean to simplify things if we attribute the Golkar-victory to pressure and intimidation. Let us inquire therefore into the relationship between the parties and the masses in Indonesia in the course of this century.

### The parties and the masses in the colonial period

The first party in Indonesia was founded on May 20, 1908 and this event has since been celebrated as the day of national awakening. However, **Budi Utomo** (Noble Endeavour), as the party was called, did not attract any mass-following. Its founders, students of a medical training school in Batavia were interested in the fate of the common people, as was recently brought to light by the research of Akira Nagazumi<sup>8</sup>. But the leadership was soon wrested from their hands by members of the traditional elites, the higher **prijajis**, who put more emphasis on issues like cultural

<sup>4</sup> **Sinar Harapan**, 26-6-71 (No. 3,329), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> **Hari Minggu Abadi**, 13-6-71 (No. 45), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> **Suara Karya**, 24-4-71 (No. 38), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> **Kompas**, 25-6-71 (No. 294), pp. 1 and 7; I used the version as it is reproduced in Mrs. Molly Bondan's Indonesian Current Affairs Translation Service, June 1971 Bulletin, p. 382.

<sup>8</sup> Akira Nagazumi, *The origins and early years of Budi Utomo 1908-1918*, Ph. D. Dissertation, Cornell University 1967.

revival and were less concerned about the sorrows and complaints of the masses. They no longer had the respect of the people that the princes in former times could count on. The cooperation of the native nobility with the Dutch colonial power, their participation in exploiting the labour force of the people for their own ends had led to a gradual but steady decline of their authority.

Things were different with the **Sarakat Islam** (Islamic Association), which was founded in Central Java in 1912 as a means of resisting the Chinese domination in the batik-trade. In a course of less than two years it developed into a mass-movement, which, in early 1914, claimed to have at least 360,000 members. This would be an astounding achievement of a party in any part of the world, how much more so in an area, where illiteracy was still close to hundred percent, where party life or any other form of organization had no tradition whatsoever, and where all kinds of political activity was strictly forbidden. Sarekat Islam, however, was no party in the modern sense of the word. Satisfactory organization and party discipline were lacking, membership could be obtained by simply paying a modest admission fee. In some places people had to undergo certain initiation rites like the swearing of an oath, drinking of holy water, repeating formulas and so on. These and other reasons, like the charismatic leadership of Tjokroaminoto led me to describe the movement somewhere else as the greatest messianic movement that has ever occurred on Java<sup>9</sup>. I did not deny nor did I overlook that there were other important elements in the Sarekat Islam, which could claim the credit for its phenomenal rise in its early days. It had been founded by members of a rising middle class; there was, furthermore, a growing number of graduates, coming from various kinds of training schools, highly aware of the necessity of a strong organisation to put pressure behind their demands for reforms in the social and political field; there was the influence of the **kijais** (religious teachers) in the santri-regions in the countryside, who pressed their adherents to join the movement against the kafir-government; and there were more and more Indonesians, making the pilgrimage to Mekka for whom Islam was more than just an anti-Dutch identity. All these new and old elitegroups, which provided the leadership for the movement could not explain satisfactorily however, why, shortly thereafter, when the Dutch had recognized the movement as a political potential, the masses left it by the tens of thousands.

Why did the masses join the Sarekat Islam, and why did they leave it shortly thereafter? I think it was a test of its magical qualities whether it was able to bring about the promised paradise rather than a political commitment of any sort. Speculations about the imminent arrival of a messiah, or **ratu adil** (just ruler), as he was called in Java, had a long tradition and formed – in the absence of enlightened education – an important part in the imagination of the illiterate masses. In the santri-regions this belief could be intensified by Mahdi-expectations, prevailing in the Muslim-world at the end of the last century. Sartono Kartodirdjo has, in recent times, repeatedly drawn attention to various manifestations of religious unrest in Java in the 19th and the 20th centuries<sup>10</sup>. These movements of unrest did not come to

<sup>9</sup> B. Dahm, *Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence*, Ithaca N.Y. 1969, chapter 1, *The Javanese Messiah and the Indonesian Independence Movement*.

<sup>10</sup> Sartono Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants Rebellion of Banten in 1888*, The Hague, 1966; and,

an end after these parties had been created which tried to draw the masses to their organisations. In 1929, after fifteen years of party-activities, we hear of messianic movements from all parts of Java, month for month they are reported on the first pages of the *Politiek-Politieoneele Overzichten* of the Dutch colonial government<sup>11</sup>. We know that messianic expectations played an important part on Java shortly before and after the outbreak of the Pacific War, since, according to contemporary versions of the prophesies, it was the Japanese who would liberate the country<sup>12</sup>. There are also indications that the belief in a sudden change for the better did not die out after independence was achieved and the promised golden age was further away than ever before<sup>13</sup>.

Messianism, despite its inherent dynamics, turned out to be an obstacle rather than a support for the political parties. The masses showed much sympathy for radical slogans, however, they were not ready to fight for their realization. The Messiah, after all, would not need their assistance and they kept themselves aloof from the parties, watching them and their leaders with an attitude of reflective passivity. When a party like the **PKI** in 1925/26 or Sukarno's **PNI** in 1927 was directly or indirectly brought in connection with messianic expectations, their membership could suddenly rise. The air was thick with rumors and it was a typical would-be revolutionary atmosphere. But, as soon as the authorities acted, the revolution turned out to be chimerical, membership cards were returned by the thousands and the people left the parties en masse<sup>14</sup>. Movements of disciplined masses persisting in their rights, as we saw them at the same time in Vietnam, where, in the Nge-Anh region, the people fought for almost a year against the well equipped French colonial troops<sup>15</sup>, were virtually unknown in Indonesia. There was a group on Java, persisting in its rights by means of passive resistance, ignoring government regulations, refusing to pay taxes, but it was apolitical and its members held themselves even more aloof from the parties than did the adherents of messianism in both, abangan- and the santri-regions<sup>16</sup>. Among all organisations in Colonial Indonesia, the **PKI**, founded in 1920, was the only party which had ever systematically tried

in the form of a brochure, published by the Gadjah Mada University, Jogjakarta, 1970, *Religious Movements of Java in the 19th and 20th Centuries*.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g. File V 10-3-1930, Mailrapporten, in the Dutch Colonial Archives in the Hague.

<sup>12</sup> Dahm, Sukarno . . . , pp. 217-221.

<sup>13</sup> See for instance J. M. van der Kroef, "Javanese Messianic Expectations. Their Origins and Cultural Context", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1958/59, pp. 299-323.

<sup>14</sup> For the PKI see R. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism*, Ithaca N.Y. 1965, p. 304 f.; further data on membership figures for the PKI and the Sarekat Rakjats *ibidem.*, p. 428, note 85, and for membership requirements p. 459, note 51. For the PNI see Dahm, Sukarno . . . , pp. 110 ff.

<sup>15</sup> The writer has in a recent paper, prepared for the 18th International Congress of Orientalists in Canberra, January 1971, tried to compare developments in Java, Burma and Vietnam, see B. Dahm, "Leadership and Mass-response in the Emancipation of Java, Burma and Vietnam", *Solidarity* (Manila), March 1971.

<sup>16</sup> The group in question was the Saminists, living in the district of Blora, northeast coast of Central Java. In recent times it was repeatedly discussed in scientific journals, by H. J. Benda and Lance Castles ("The Samin Movement") in *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde*, Vol. 125 (1969), pp. 207-239, by The Siauw Giap ("The Samin and Samat Movements in Java. Two Examples of Peasant Resistance") in *Revue du Sud-Est Asiatique* 1967, pp. 303-310; 1968, pp. 107-113; 1969, pp. 63-77.

to get organized mass-support. In the towns it tried to organize strikes among the workers and the state employees, in the villages it created the **Sarekat Rakjats** or peoples associations. But, even though it was claimed by 1925 that there were about a hundred thousand members in the Sarekat Rakjats, there was — to use the words of Ruth Mc Vey — “little evidence outside the cities of regular organisational structure or cohesion other than that provided by personal leadership”<sup>17</sup>. The coup attempt of 1926/27 did not find the mass-following which had been hoped for. It was only in the provinces of Westjava, Banten, and of Westsumatra, Minangkabau, where disturbances occurred, and, especially in Banten, I think the resistance was the result of religious agitation rather than that of loyalty or serious commitment to the PKI<sup>18</sup>. Thereafter the PKI was banned and the drastic punitive measures of the colonial government against members of and sympathizers with the PKI did not alter but strengthen the reflective passivity of the masses vis-a-vis the parties. Towards the end of the colonial era the number of politically organized Indonesians was estimated to be 80,700. The total population at the same time was more than sixty million people, that is to say slightly more than one tenth of one per cent of the population was organized. By far the strongest organization among them were the islamic associations. The **Muhammadiyah** or modernizing islamic reform-movement had some 20,000 followers, the old Sarekat Islam, meanwhile known as **Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia** (PSII) claimed to have 12,000 members and there were many other organizations<sup>19</sup>. One of them, a small party of about a thousand members, had been founded in opposition to the Muhammadiyah by the orthodox **kijais**, who feared that the cry for reform might eventually weaken their influence in the countryside. This was the **Nahdatul Ulama**, a curiosity in colonial days, when reforms were propagated in all fields. Its hour, however, was still to come. During the general elections in 1955 and 1971 it surprised the world by their control of the masses in the countryside.

### The parties an the masses in independent Indonesia up to 1958

In independent Indonesia the basically indifferent attitude of the masses towards the parties did not change. There were too many parties and there were too many criticizers of the party-system as such. Among the latter were the President and the army leadership. Sukarno had been critical of the parties since the beginning of his political career when he saw so much energy was being wasted by internal partyquarrels. He became even more criticized when he recognized that his ideal of a strong unity was threatened by the fostering of conflicting ideologies. He had created a common platform for nationalist, islamic and socialist organisation as far back as 1926, hoping to consolidate the first discernible antagonisms by the traditional **musjawarah** system of common deliberations until **mufakat** (consensus) is achieved. In 1945 he formulated the **Pantjasila** (the five principles) of the Indo-

<sup>17</sup> R. McVey, *loc. cit.*, p. 305.

<sup>18</sup> The writer is preparing a study “From Rebellion to Revolution in Colonial Southeast Asia” where this will be discussed in greater detail.

<sup>19</sup> For a summary of the Parties in the close of Dutch colonial rule see the writer’s **History of Indonesia in the Twentieth Century**, London and New York 1971, pp. 75–77.

nesian state for the same reason; the basic idea was again **gotong-rojong** (co-operation between the various groups)<sup>20</sup> and he fought for the introduction of a one-party-system, in which all orientations should be represented. When convinced adherents of liberalism, like Sjahrir, introduced the system of parliamentary democracy, Sukarno, during the time of revolution, bowed to it. But after sovereignty was achieved he never grew tired of attacking the multi-party system, which, in his eyes, could only divide the society.

The army leadership had somewhat more concrete objections against the parties. Having fought the Dutch colonial troops in the revolutionary period they watched the attempts of the party-run governments to substantially reduce the number of the armed forces for budgetary reasons with suspicion. They felt responsible for the secure future of their comrades in arms and were thus open for antiparliamentary agitation which lead to acts of open disdain for parliamentary democracy<sup>21</sup>. The rebellious attitude of the army, Sukarnos attacks on the system as such, the accusations of mismanagement, corruption, horse-trading for ministerial posts, opposition for opposition's sake and so on were not suited to make the parties popular among the people. Viewed from hindsight one wonders how the parliamentary system, despite all these objections, could survive as long as it did.

One of the reasons certainly was the long prepared for and eagerly awaited first general elections in Indonesia. The masses, who for long so far had waited in vain for the benefits of independence, which had been depicted as a golden bridge to a bright future, now hoped again that the hour would come for the decisive breakthrough for a better tomorrow. The greater parties hoped for a convincing showing in the elections and the achievement of sufficient seats in the future parliament so that they could build cabinetts of their own liking without regard to the claims of inconvenient coalition partners. Never before had the masses been so wooed. In colonial days elections for the so-called Volksraad and for the municipal or the regency councils had been the privilege of a small and wealthy group, now everybody had the right to vote who was over 18 years old. Of course, people not accustomed to this democratic procedure were subject to all kinds of gentle pressure, promises and occasionally even to intimidation. In the countryside the **lurahs** (village-heads) could, in most cases, certainly predict the outcome in advance.

There are several distinctions to be made between the general elections in 1955 and 1971. In 1955 no groups were debarred from voting for their political convictions; no favoured group was in controll of the decisive means of communication and persuasion; there were no regulations as to what might be said in the campaign and what was forbidden; and, above all, there was no law, providing that whatever the result of the elections, the group in power would stay in power for its right to

<sup>20</sup> The five principles were: Nationalism, Humanity, Mufakat-Democracy, Social Justice and Belief in God; a discussion of Sukarnos speech, in which these principles were extolled the Dahm, **Sukarno . . .**, pp. 336-350.

<sup>21</sup> Such acts were for instance the so-called October 17-affair in 1952, when the army leadership demanded from Sukarno the dissolution of the parliament, or, in 1955, the boycott of the installment of the governments candidate (Bambang Utojo) as army chief of staff, which caused the downfall of the Ali Sastroamidjojo government.

nominate a third of the delegates in the highest legislative assembly in the country.

Thus, there was no 63 per cent victory for one party in 1955, but an almost symmetrical division of the votes among the main competitors for political power: the Islamic parties on the one hand, the secular parties like the PNI and the PKI on the other. The clear cut majority that the respective parties hoped for thus did not materialize and the danger of a further stalemate was imminent.

It would be of little use in our discussion to analyze the outcome of the 1955 elections in great detail<sup>22</sup>. But let us briefly comment on the "big four", for whom the masses cast their votes in millions. The winner, receiving 8,434,653 votes or 22.3 per cent, was the **PNI**, founded by Sukarno in 1927. In colonial times it had something of the charisma of the early Sarekat Islam but it also had a good deal of its unsatisfactory organisational structure. The masses were sympathetic to its slogans like "freedom now", but did nothing to help to bring about their realization. They came by the thousands to listen to a daring speech and went home with a "bukan main" ("by God") on their lips, but they did not dare to join the party for fear of the colonial authorities. After the proclamation of independence, the party, which had been dissolved in the mid-thirties, was refounded. That it became significant in the course of years and could even win the elections was due to the fact that it became the party of the government officials and the lurahs, at least in the abangan regions. It had no convincing program but it did have an attractive ideology. Like Sukarno, the PNI wanted to be everything for everybody. The party had adopted Sukarno's **Marhaenism**<sup>23</sup> that is the denial of class-divisions in its own society, which is seen as a harmonious community which must be defended against division-creating parties from inside as well as against political oppression and economical exploitation from outside<sup>24</sup>. The emphasis was laid on the second task rather than

<sup>22</sup> For a general discussion of the election results, tables etc., see H. Feith, **The Indonesian Elections of 1955**, Cornell University, Modern Indonesia Project, Ithaca N.Y. 1957. For data for the following discussion of the Parties see the writers **History . . .**, pp. 150–160.

<sup>23</sup> In his well-known speech of July 3, 1957, Sukarno claimed that he used the name of a poor peasant in the Bandung region as the common name for the poor men in Indonesia. See for instance the English version of his speech, translated by Claire Holt and published by Cornell University, Modern Indonesia Project in 1960 under the title "Marhaen and Proletarian". As the writer found out meanwhile, this, as so many other stories, is a myth. The name Marhaen was used to describe the "little man" by the Sarekat Islam in the Preanger already before Sukarno had come to Bandung, see **Sora Merdika** No. 10 of 3 August 1920 ("Timbangan Tina Ajana Afdeeling B" — an article dealing with the Section B affair in the Sarekat Islam).

<sup>24</sup> Peter Worsley, in his **The Third World**, Second Edition, Chicago, 1970, pp. 118–174, has called this ideology "populism". He sees parallels in other states of the third world, particularly in Africa. I know too little of African developments to comment on this. I am not yet convinced however by his category of the so-called "populist leaders". For Sukarno, who is seemingly for Worsley a prototype of these populist leaders some of the mentioned characteristics do not fit. Sukarno was for instance never "an enthusiast for local government" (p. 166), he always favored centralized rule. Nor was he "suspicious of the State, of all large scale centralized and bureaucratized organisations" (ibidem); he favoured them vis-a-vis the partysystem, for he hoped that he could manipulate these organisations, something he could not do with the parties. And Sukarno was certainly not "hostile to bigness in general" (ibidem). The opposite is true, some said he was suffering from megalomania. All these characteristics fit much better for Hatta. But if Hatta and Sukarno,



on arguments with the division-creating parties, since they were ideologically much better equipped than the PNI, and after all, the PNI wanted harmony. This search for harmony is a characteristic feature of the Javanese *abangan* culture and it was in the *abangan* regions that the PNI received most of its votes. The key to the PNI victory however were the *lurahs*, who told the masses what to vote.

The *santri*-population in rural Java, there is little doubt about this, voted for **Nahdatul Ulama**, the party of the orthodox *kijais*, whose influence in the *santri*-regions was stronger than that of the *lurahs*. They were, in fact, since the decline of the Javanese nobility, the only traditional elite which still commanded the respect of the peasant population. Their authority could not be challenged by briefcase-carrying party-politicians, coming from the towns and going back to the towns after having made a speech which was soon forgotten. The 6,955,141 votes or 18.4 per cent which the Nahdatul Ulama received were nevertheless the big surprise of the elections. It had been only three years since the Nahdatul Ulama had left **Masjumi**, the great Islamic federation, which was created, on orders of the Japanese, in 1943.

Masjumi itself<sup>25</sup>, now mainly consisting of the followers of the former Muhammadiyah and other Islamic reform schools, came out second in the election with 7,903,886 votes or 20.9 per cent. Had the Nahdatul Ulama not left the federation it would have had an overwhelming victory which might have changed the course of Indonesian history. But this, of course, is empty speculation. The stronghold of the Masjumi were the towns and townships in Java and the Muslim population in the outer islands. Its social strata consisted of traders, landowners, entrepreneurs and the educated groups as well. Masjumi was the only one among the major parties which unconditionally backed parliamentary democracy. It expected to be able to gradually create a modernized Islamic state even in the context of religious freedom which was guaranteed in the constitution. Together with Sjahrir's socialists (**PSI**), who suffered a depressing defeat at the polls for their elite-behaviour, the Masjumi had given proof of being able to run the government and it was outspokenly critical of those, driven by their ideological dreams, who wanted to change the structure of society.

Their main enemy therefore was the **PKI**. It had been refounded in 1945, but suffered a serious set-back in connection with the Madiun-Affair (1948), their second premature coup attempt after the one in 1926. This time however it was directed against the republic at a time, when the Indonesians were in a difficult situation vis-a-vis the Dutch. This was never forgotten by the army leadership which partly explains the strong suspicion of the latter, when, in the mid-fifties, the PKI re-emerged as a political force. Under a reorganized leadership the PKI had decided to compete for the control of power using parliamentary procedures. Up to 1955 it had mainly

the great antagonists in Indonesian politics, are pressed into the same category "populist leaders", this category is meaningless.

<sup>25</sup> Its full name was *Madjelis Sjuro Muslimin Indonesia*. The Japanese had tried, by forcing the various Islamic organisations into this "Council of Indonesian Muslims" to get the full support of the Muslims in their fight against the "unbelievers" of the West. Later the Indonesian Muslims had realized the advantages of an Islamic front and had refounded the League in 1945. But the tensions between the modernizers and the orthodox became too strong in the course of time, since every group wanted to dominate the League. So the Nahdatul Ulama finally walked out after the PSII had left Masjumi for reasons of political opportunism already in 1947.

agitated among the urban proletariat and in the outskirts of the cities. With their 6,176,914 votes or 16.4 per cent at the polls they had scored an unexpected success. Still more convincing, however, was their showing in the provincial elections of Java in 1957 when the PKI was ahead of all the other parties. Their victory was mainly at the expense of the PNI which lost, in comparison to 1955 more than 1.5 million votes<sup>26</sup>. The new strategy of the communists to win the lurahs over to their side had appeared to pay off. Had there been any more elections, the PKI would have won them easily. But, as it turned out in 1957, the alarming news of the Communist victory came just in time to strengthen the opposition in rebellious army circles. They were joined by members of Masjumi and of Sjahrir's socialists. These combined forces produced the PRRI-revolt in 1958<sup>27</sup> and, in its sequel, the end of parliamentary democracy in Indonesia.

### The parties and the masses under Guided Democracy

In the era of Guided Democracy, up to March 11, 1966 guided by Sukarno, and since by general Suharto, the influence of the parties, with the exception of the period from 1963 to 1965, was systematically reduced. The first years of Guided Democracy saw the banning of Masjumi and the PSI because of their involvement, as it was officially proclaimed, in the PRRI-affair. A stronger reason for Sukarno however was the critical attitude of his old political antagonists towards his conception of supplementing the party-system by the appointment of the representatives of the functional groups. Their opposition in the Constituent Assembly had forced him to decree the return to the constitution of 1945. Another group which forced him to make the move was the army which wanted, under the cover of martial law, to "clean the house".

And thus began the period of government by presidential decrees. The parties had to bow to the dissolution of the elected parliament and to the convoking of the so-called **Gotong-Rojong-Parliament**, in which the number of their seats was drastically reduced; they further had to yield to a decree which demanded their acceptance of the Pantjasila as the state-ideology, their loyalty to the constitution of 1945, which gave wide powers to the president, and to a limitation of their branches in the provinces. The army saw to it that all these provisions were followed to the letter and they often interpreted these letters in an arbitrary manner. Another creation of this time, the **National Front**, consisting of groups with nationalist, religious and marxist orientation which should have further undermined the party-system, did not accomplish anything. **Nasakom**, as it was called<sup>28</sup>, remained a slogan, to which the

<sup>26</sup> For more details on this elections see D. S. Lev, **The Transition to guided Democracy; Indonesian Politics 1957-1959**, Cornell University, Modern Indonesia Project, Ithaca N.Y. 1965, pp. 90-95.

<sup>27</sup> PRRI stands for Revolutionary Government of the Indonesian Republic. It was headed by Sjafruddin Prawiranegara, who was a prominent member of Masjumi and minister in various cabinetts. The PRRI was proclaimed on 15 February 1958, but collapsed only a few weeks later, when army units from Java landed in Westsumatra.

<sup>28</sup> Because of the first syllables in Nationalism, Agama (religion) and Communism.

parties payed lip-service, not without watching suspiciously, however, that their own ideologies were not sacrificed on the altar of national unity. Under this surface of amicable and peaceful cooperation, tensions mounted up, which finally exploded in October 1965.

Parties like the Nahdatul Ulama which were notorious for their chameleon-like behaviour or like the PNI, which had among its ranks speakers of every conceivable ideology, had soon made their peace with the Sukarno government. The PKI however, feeling itself deprived of its chance of making quick gain in power using parliamentary means, and without ministerial posts of any importance in Sukarno's cabinetts, had to rethink its strategy<sup>29</sup>. What else was left for it than to decide on new revolutionary activities outside the parliament? Accordingly they started a new membership-drive. In 1963 the PKI claimed to have 2 million members and its affiliated organisations like the SOBSI (trade unions) BTI (peasant organization), Pemuda Rakjat (Youth organization) or Gerwani (Womens organization), allegedly had eleven million members. In 1965 the respective figures were 3.5 million members of the PKI, 15 million members of their mass organisations. This mass-membership in political parties and affiliated organizations was no doubt a new phenomenon in Indonesian history, brought about the chance for unrestricted agitation in the 1950s and by the spread of basic education throughout the archipelago. Messianism, as I see it, had gradually faded away and with it the indifference towards the parties. However, in how far the membership of all these millions especially in Java meant a life or death commitment for the parties and their respective ideologies, was still open to serious doubts. Mesianism, as we have seen, had strengthened an attitude of reflective passivity among the Javanese masses, and there were other elements in the Javanese culture which did the same. Think only of the **wayang** (shadowplay performances) and its importance in the daily life of the Javanese. Their passion to watch the fight between the forces of good and evil, their secret identification of themselves with the heroes of their mythology, their pondering over the allegorical hints of the dalang (puppetplayer) all night long does not suggest that they are loaded with burstful activity, but rather indicates reflective passivity.

And if the mounting tension between the army and the PKI after 1963 and all their animosities in their competition for power in the provinces were seen in wayang terms, it was not altogether clear, which forces were the good and which the evil ones. If the poor landless peasants in the abangan regions of East or Central Java were promised land, and, after 1963, were given land by the Communists, who took it away from the landlords, these peasants could not but regard the Communists as their friends and support their fight against what the PKI had labeled the "devils of the desa (village)". In the santri regions it was entirely different. The **kijais** more often than not big landowners themselves, and afraid of the onesided action of the Communists, did not hesitate to depict the latter as the devils, as could be easily recognized by their contemptuous behaviour towards religion in general and towards Indonesian Islam in particular. And their authority was stronger than that of the new class of propagandists who promised social justice for the future, but

<sup>29</sup> On the PKI-development in this period see D. Hindley, **The Communist Party of Indonesia 1951-1963**, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964 and J. M. van der Kroef, **The Communist Party of Indonesia**, Vancouver B.C., 1965.

for the present increased only the hardships, repression from the landlords, suspicion on the part of the army and further troubles more.

It is a telling fact that in the crucial weeks after the coup attempt of 1 October 1965 it was the fanatical Muslim-organizations alone which took an active part in the killings. Three million members of the PKI — if the figure had not been raised for propaganda reasons — and more than twelve million so-called sympathizers let it happen, that the army and islamic fanatics slaughtered hundredthousands of their colleagues. Party-commitment? No! What did the masses know of communism, marxism, or ideologies in general? In 1966 I tried to find an answer to these questions in East and Central Java, on Bali and elsewhere. All that the simple people knew were slogans of Sukarnoist coinage like Resopim, Nekolim, Lom-pa-lom . . .<sup>30</sup> On the nipa-hut of a village-headman in Sumbawa I saw the signs of PNI, Partindo, Nahdatul Ulama, and an empty space, were most likely not too long ago the sign for the PKI had been. I was told by a villager, that the headman was the representative of all the parties. Even among highschool teachers the knowledge was extremely limited to say the least. And Sukarno himself? When I asked him in October 1966 "Why do you provoke the anger of the students by claiming to be a marxist, since you are none" he answered "Of course I am"! And when I pointed out to him that his whole way of thinking was idealistic rather than materialistic, he replied: "Well, you Germans are too fond of theories!"

Let us come back to the elections of 1971, and the new element in Indonesian politics, the **golkar-movement**. The joint secretariat of various functional groups was founded under army initiative in 1964 to oppose the influence of the Communists within the United Front. After the PKI and its affiliated organizations had been banned and the issue of the general elections came up, it found a new field of activity<sup>31</sup>. Meanwhile it has developed into something like a national front itself with the same functions as its predecessor had, namely to undermine the influence of the parties. If we would play the Indonesian game and look for sonorous word-creations its proper name would be "Nasamil" (Nationalism-Religion-Military). The decisive difference to the Nasakom-movement is, to quote the second paragraph of a golkar declaration, "to stop the conflicts of ideology and to replace them with a struggle to execute development programs that are based on Pantjasila". In the third paragraph we find a passage that it is forbidden henceforth to interpret Pantjasila, the five malleable principles of Sukarnos coinage, to conform with group-interests<sup>32</sup>. With the exception, we should add, of the group in power, or of golkar itself. With the strong emphasis on issues like development, effective government, pragmatism, Guided Democracy under Suharto is an anti-climax to that under Sukarno. There are no more promises that the paradise is just around the corner, the opposite is true. Suharto openly dared to declare at the end of the election

<sup>30</sup> Resopim stands for Revolution, Socialism and Leadership (pimpinan). It was the title of Sukarnos national day speech in 1961; Nekolim, an expression coined by general Yani, stood for Neocolonialism and Imperialism; lom-pa-lom was the bungled version of the often quoted phrase "L'exploitation de l'homme par l'homme".

<sup>31</sup> For a brief characteristic of golkar and a general survey of Indonesian politics after 1966 see H. Crouch, "The Army, The Parties and Elections" in **Indonesia, Modern Indonesia Project**, Cornell University, No. 11, pp. 177-191.

<sup>32</sup> **Suara Karya**, 1-5-71 (No. 44), p. 2.

campaign: "Our ideals cannot be materialized in a brief period or in one or two years, but will take a long enough time whilst the work must be done phase after phase."<sup>33</sup>

Suharto, of course, can speak from a position of strength, of unchallenged power which greatly differs from that of Sukarno's or of any other government, independent Indonesia has ever had. And this is realized not only by the parties, which had little choice but to bow to the further limitations of their influence by the electoral laws, passed in November 1969, but by the masses as well. To them the parties had been nothing but the messengers of a better tomorrow. There was no commitment to partyrule because of democratic convictions like for instance in Greece. Their basic attitude towards the parties was that of reflective passivity. If there was sympathy and interest in party programs, or still more in slogans, it was largely because of their wish to see an alternative to their present-day hardships.

And this alternative was in the 1971 elections promised by the Golkar-units which stepped into the foreground with new dynamism, without the burden of ideologies and with the obvious approval of the party in power. Thus the masses, which once had voted for the PNI and for the PKI now voted for Golkar, as they were told to do by their lurahs, or by the government officials or by the threat of pressure and intimidation. The defeat of the PNI at the polls therefore is not as big a surprise as it has been suggested in the introduction. The surprise is rather once again the showing of the Nahdatul Ulama, which did not lose votes in comparison to 1955, but could instead even slightly improve its position. There seems to be a beginning of party-commitment among the rural population in the santri-regions.

**The returns of the Indonesian elections in July 1971, compared with the results of the last — and first — general elections in Indonesia in September 1955**

Party/Group	General Elections 1972 Valid Votes in 1000s	percentage	General Elections 1955 Valid Votes in 1000s	percentage
Golkar	34.349	62.79	—	—
NU (Nahdatul Ulama)	10.214	18.68	6.955	18.4
PNI (Partai Nasional Indonesia)	3.797	6.93	8.435	22.3
Parmusi (Partai Muslimin Indonesia)	2.932	5.36	7.904	20.9
			(Musjumi)	
PSII (Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia)	1.303	2.39	1.091	2.9
Parkindo (Partai Kristen Indonesia, prot.)	733	1.34	1.003	2.6
Partai Katolik	604	1.10	771	2.0
Perti (Islamic Education Party)	381	0.70	483	1.3
IPKI (League for the Defense of Independence)	338	0.62	541	1.4
Murba (Proletarian Party)	48	0.09	199	0.5
PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia)	—	—	6.177	16.4
PSI (Partai Sosialis Indonesia)	—	—	753	2.0
Others (Smaller Parties or groups)	—	—	3.473	9.3
Total	54.699	100%	37.785	100%

<sup>33</sup> Berida Yudha, 28—6—71 (No. 1,156), pp. 1 and 2.