

Indonesia: trade unions and the regeneration of radical politics

Saturday 22 February 2014, by [LANE Max](#) (Date first published: 1 February 2014).

Contents

- [Degeneration of the vanguard](#)
- [Trade unions and a new period](#)
- [Ideological regeneration](#)
- [The Sukarnoism heritage](#)
- [The 1990s heritage](#)

A major thesis of *Unfinished Nation* [1] (written between 2007 and 2008), was that the fall of Suharto was not the simple product of objective conditions, such as the 1997 Asian economic crisis, nor of some kind of automatic rot from within the regime due to corrupt “sultanisation”, contradictions within an oligarchy or similar phenomena. [2] The crucial factor in the process was the emergence of a political vanguard that set out to re-popularise mass action and succeeded in setting in motion a wide protest movement based on it. This movement rapidly undermined the legitimacy of the dictatorship while at the same time “mainstreaming” a new pro-democratic political agenda beyond that of “simply” ending the dictatorship: “End the dual function of the military” and “Repeal all repressive political laws.” This agenda added to the general sentiment against corruption: demanding an end to nepotism, corruption and collusion, referred to as NKK. The delegitimation of the regime achieved between 1989 and 1997 through the mass protests laid the basis for the acceleration of this delegitimation in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. By 1996, there had already been mass riots and demonstrations. The demonstrations had been mainly in defence of Megawati Sukarnoputri’s leadership of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), and by May 1997, hundreds of thousands of people across the country – more than a million in Jakarta – had protested, demanding an end to dictatorship and corruption under the banner Mega-Bintang Rakyat (a call for an anti-dictatorship coalition of Megawati’s supporters, the Muslim United Development Party and the people) in very combative electoral mobilisations, in defiance of threats of repression. It was only a matter of time before a confrontation with the regime would come to a head, and the financial crisis later in 1997 accelerated the confrontation, which ended in May 1998 when Suharto resigned. This was followed by a failed, brief – but huge – resurgence of protest in November 1998 calling for an immediate end to the role of the military and for a government headed by a presidium of opposition figures.

Degeneration of the vanguard from the anti-dictatorship period

The political agenda of ending the military’s role in politics and regime control over political life set a framework that demanded a transformation from dictatorship to liberal parliamentary democracy and thus ensured that Suharto’s fall would be part of a process demanding deepening reform. There was also a growing sense of the possibilities of a deeper radicalisation of the mass movement. This radicalisation was reflected in the demand for a government of a presidium of opposition figures to take power extra-constitutionally – or even for a government of “people’s councils” to be based on

consolidating the temporary action committees and other forms of ad hoc solidarity born out of the movement. The resistance to these agendas was reflected in elite figures' condemnations of demands for a people's councils government as communist-inspired and, most significantly, by the decision of the elite opposition leadership – Amien Rais, Abdurrachman Wahid and Megawati Sukarnoputri (along with Sultan Hamengkubuwono) – meeting at Ciganjur in November 1998 to reject the student leadership's call for these leaders to form a presidium and challenge the government for power. Rais, Wahid and Sukarnoputri opted to allow the incumbent regime under President Habibie to organise elections as the means for whatever transition might take place. This decision by the three main figures – to whom the majority of the student leadership looked – to surrender the political initiative to the Habibie government effectively ended the period of national mass mobilisations. Within a few hours, the hundreds of thousands mobilising in Jakarta demanding a deepening of the changes, and the tens of thousands already occupying the grounds of the parliament complex, spontaneously dispersed.

In one sense the Ciganjur decision was a betrayal of the protest movement, but it was more a betrayal of the sentiment for deeper change – reflected in the demand for “reformasi total” – than a betrayal of the specific demands at the centre of the movement. The doctrine of the dual role for the armed forces was rapidly abandoned, and the role of the army in systematic political repression soon ended, except in West Papua. Almost all the laws suppressing political party life were eventually repealed, the exception being decrees that prevent an open Communist Party re-forming, although the new laws soon were amended to greatly advantage established and moneyed parties and make it very difficult for small and un-moneyed parties to get a foothold. Perhaps the most important very early decision of the Habibie government, whose effect is very visible in 2014, was the ratification of various International Labour Organization rules allowing much greater freedom of union organisation. Although not organised in unions or a labour party, the hundreds of thousands who had mobilised between 1994 and 1998 had been drawn from the formal and informal proletariat of the big cities.

Defeat of the dictatorship, and its near totalitarian repression, was an extraordinary victory by an unarmed movement after only four to five years of intense struggle. [3] Much greater democratic space was opened up. The same social classes (capitalists, foreign and domestic, and their bureaucratic henchmen) formed the government, but the structure of the political relationship between rulers and the masses had been altered in a way that opened up much greater possibilities for the masses (formal and informal proletariat and peasants) to organise if they became conscious of this possibility and its advantages. The 33 years (out of 49 years of post-independence existence) of near totalitarian suppression of ideological life under the New Order, built upon the horrific, violent terrorisation of the organised working class and peasantry during 1965-68, and then the systematic elimination of historical memory of those classes, have caused ideological reawakening to be slow. The recovery of the method of struggle – mass action and street protest (*aksi*) – from Indonesian class struggle history between 1910 and 1965 was “easier” and quicker than would be the struggle to re-win the ideological awakening of the oppressed classes. Aksi gave a form to the still strong sentiment of *rakyat* (common people) as an interest counterposed to *elit* (elite). In the realm of ideas and an understanding and knowledge of history, everything substantial had been lost. All that was left was the vague but strong feeling that Sukarno somehow represented something radically more pro-people (*pro-rakyat*) than anything since his fall.

The forces that mobilised between June 1996 and November 1998 against the dictatorship and its post-May holdouts were very broad. Many individuals, groups and organisations, striking workers, student committees and momentarily organised kampong masses all contributed to the dictatorship's defeat. The role of none of these should be undervalued. At the same time, the analysis in Unfinished Nation argued that the Peoples Democratic Party (PRD) played a vanguard

role in pioneering the revival of aksi as a militant political method, in identifying key struggle tactics and in popularising key slogans such as *Cabut Dwifungsi ABRI* (End the dual function of the armed forces) and *Cabut Paket 5 Undang-undang politik yang repressif* (End the package of five repressive political laws). The central political agency in defeating the dictatorship portrayed in the book was basically forged out of a dialectical interaction between a small vanguard organisation and a revived mobilised rakyat (including university students – mahasiswa).

The question arises in 2014: what has become of this agency? Is it still operative in some way, even if at a lower level? Or is a new vanguard being formed and a new dialectic emerging? Or has the process just halted?

By 2007, the PRD had suffered a series of splits, the majority shifting in a conservative electoralist direction. A smaller formation built out of the minority survived to rebuild. While this group, the Peoples Liberation Party (PPR), has made steady progress, despite its own split, and while other left groups have emerged, they remain quite small and have not yet been able to play the kind of strategic vanguard role the PRD achieved in the 1990s. The re-formation of a vanguard is still at an early stage, but it is definitely under way. This essay will focus on three features of this process:

- New ideological activity has just recently started that will most likely lead to the formation of a new vanguard;
- Indonesia's political economy has altered in a way that will create new, potentially more powerful class forces – the factory working class in particular – with which a vanguard can interact; and
- Economic, social and demographic conditions are becoming more propitious for activities aimed at reorganising and re-radicalising the oppressed classes.

The mobilisations of the 1990s, which sometimes reached more than 1 million people on the streets in one city on one day, were of a “special type”. Mobilised formal and informal workers, peasants and even students were mostly organised in very temporary and loose formations. Even the union formations that the PRD organised through the Indonesian Centre for Labour Struggle (Pusat Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia – PPBI) were mostly very temporary points of agitation, rather than consolidated organisations with staying power. Many of the largest urban poor mobilisations were stimulated into being with almost no semi-permanent let alone permanent organising. The PRD used a combination of tactics utilising openings in national-level politics to help electrify the political atmosphere, referred to as the “strategy from above” (*strategi atas*) and mass organising as well as leafleting for mobilisations by PRD cadre deployed in urban poor kampung – one aspect of what was referred to as the “strategy below” – (*strategi bawah*). There was an ongoing thread of discussion within the party searching for the methods and opportunities to turn this temporary, even momentary, form of organisation and mobilisation into something more permanent.

Trade unions and a new period of mobilisation

In a press statement on 3 October 2012, the newly formed Indonesian Workers and Labourers Assembly (MPBI) stated that 2 million workers mobilised for the national “strike” it had called for that date, with mobilisations in factory belt areas (kawasan industri) or outside government offices in 21 cities and towns. [4] Press and blog reports separately estimated that hundreds of thousands of workers mobilised in Jakarta's industrial estates. [5] Activists I talked to described the streets of the kawasan industri swarming with hundreds of thousands of workers. The media reported that tens of thousands of others gathered in Indonesia's larger cities and thousands in smaller towns. The mobilisations were scheduled to go for a few more days, but the MPBI leadership called them off

after one day, following meetings with the minister for labour. [6] The MPBI gave the government two weeks to come up with a satisfactory answer to its demands, or the strike would resume. The demands articulated by the MPBI, and supported by other unions, including the more overtly left, but much smaller, Workers Secretariat, [7] were for an increase in wages, an end to “outsourcing” and the full implementation of health insurance legislation to cover all workers, with employers paying the premiums.

The protests marked a clear alteration of the political terrain for popular struggle in Indonesia. Organised labour, even if still only a minuscule portion of the total workforce, appeared upon the national stage – and it was to do so again on almost a similar scale in November 2013. This appearance is based on the increased self-confidence and combativity of workers, especially in the *kawasan industri*. These areas, where factories are jammed in beside each other and tens of thousands of workers stream to work every morning, have been the centre of labour militancy since the 1990s, when still under the Suharto dictatorship. In the 1990s, garment, footwear and textile workers played a leading role. However, between 2002 and 2012 there was a crucial change in the balance between sectors of the proletariat.

Fuelled by a sustained growth in commodity exports (minerals, timber), the economy has grown steadily, facilitating a 10-year growth in the middle class (i.e. those with more-or-less international levels of disposable income). Demand for cars, motorbikes, white goods and plasma televisions expanded rapidly. While there has been no significant genuine industrialisation (i.e. a manufacturing expansion with a growing, integrated steel and capital goods production capacity), the rapid expansion of assembly manufacture has provided the base for a new, more consolidated and well-resourced unionism. Probably the most spectacular statistic that evidences this middle class growth is the increase in motor car assembly. In 1997 annual car sales were 400,000, in 2005 600,000 and in 2012 in excess of 1 million. Sales of motorbikes, although a much less expensive item, have grown exponentially. Now workers in the large plants manufacturing car components, assembling cars, motorbikes, white goods, mobile phones and some mass-produced food products are playing a leading role.

The workforce is now around 150 million, with perhaps 60 percent located in towns and cities. Official unemployment is around 7 percent, but severe underemployment means that probably 30-50 percent of the workforce might not be working full time. Bureau of Statistics figures divide the workforce into formal and informal sectors. These show around 44 million (40 percent) in the formal sector and 67 million in the informal sector. With a stricter definition, the formal sector would shrink considerably. All these workers are proletarians: they have no capital and survive only by selling their labour-power to a capitalist, whatever micro-production they may carry out with the “means of production” they occasionally own (street-side stove, bicycle pump, sewing machine or other small tool). Ministry of Labour figures register total union membership as 3.4 million out of 120 million workers. There are six registered union confederations, 91 federations and 437 enterprise unions. [8] Some have broken out of the hands and the habits of the old yellow unions from the Suharto era; others haven’t yet done so.

As parts of the formal sector “boom”, the improved bargaining position of the unions is providing a material base for their increased self-confidence. The unions, though a small section of the workforce, are concentrated in sectors that are most crucial to the economy’s current activity. Many of these companies service the local market and are tied to Indonesia as a location for manufacture. So despite the unions’ small size (relative to the class as a whole), it is clear they are in a stronger bargaining position.

However, such a boost in confidence and combativity is not a simple mechanistic product of the new political economy of manufacturing.

There has been an accumulating sense of confidence as a result of successful campaign activity. This has included the campaign by the Social Security Action Committee, a coalition spearheaded by unions from the sectors above as well as NGOs, to win health insurance legislation in 2011, and the May 2012 protests that forced the government to delay a petrol price increase. Union-led worker mobilisations were crucial to these campaigns. In addition there have been major strikes in some provinces, probably the most militant in the industrial estates of Batam Island, just next to Singapore, in 2011. The strike in Batam involved tens of thousands of workers – defying a huge police presence that fired shots to try to quell the demonstrations – and completely closed down the factories and transportation there. [9]

It is clear also that conscious propagandising for more militant and solidarity activities and careful tactical planning have been crucial. This education seems to have been initiated from within or near the Federation of Indonesian Metal Workers' Unions (FSPMI). An article by Danial Indrakusuma throws some light on these processes. [10] Indrakusuma has been active for the last two years as a teacher of economics and politics for members of the FSPMI and other unions and a campaigner for solidarity between striking enterprise units. He has become a popular figure among many workers who have been in his classes or read his ideas on union tactics. Since 2011 (at least) he has publicly advocated a new workers' party. He has organised these classes in an abandoned bridge in Bekasi, referred to as Rumah Buruh, as well as a house in another area, referred to as the Saung Buruh. The first classes were held in the worker-occupied factory, Kymko. Rumah Buruh educational activities are only semi-formally part of FSPMI activity. [11] However, as workers radicalised, the union leaders became hostile and forced Indrakusuma and others out of their venues.

In his article, he explains the factors he thinks led to workers' increased self-confidence. In addition to the points above, he emphasises the internal processes within the FSPMI and other unions. Among these was workers' involvement in seminar activities carried out in conjunction with research-oriented NGOs. This deepened some workers' understanding of the wages system and, more crucially, the extent of "outsourcing" and the gap between the current outsourcing situation and even existing legislation. According to Indrakusuma, almost 80 percent of workers carrying out central work in major plants are "outsourced", i.e. workers with a casual status hired through labour contractors. This means they can be paid only the local minimum wage, with no other benefits associated with permanent employment. Indonesian law provides that only work not part of the central production process can be "outsourced" (although the unions oppose all kinds of outsourcing). This situation, says Indrakusuma, has been the basis for the successful *gerunduk* ("sweeping") tactic, in which workers from one or more factories rally outside other factories calling on those inside also to stop work – a kind of solidarity-based peer pressure. The fact that almost all workers are casual and have an interest in opposing "outsourcing" provides the basis for practical solidarity. Solidarity actions between workers in different factories and between unions have forced some employers to transfer workers to a permanent basis, as provided by law. Others who, under the law, cannot yet claim permanency have won contracts for a set period.

Indrakusuma's article also depicts conscious attempts to improve the quality of mobilisations. Steps include: encouragement of workers to attend pickets and protests of other unions and factories; involvement in issues not directly related to the employer but to the government, such as the social insurance law; and stop-works that spread through a whole industrial enclave. The most significant of these was the January 2012 stop-work and rally by 200,000 workers that closed a very large industrial district in north Jakarta and blockaded a major highway. In fact, mobilisations have completely closed down kawasan industri (industrial belts) four times since 2011. The Jakarta Police Command recorded 957 workers' aksi during 2012, 725 of which it listed as being carried out by FSPMI-affiliated unions.

There has also been, says Indrakusuma, a policy of encouraging rapat akbar (mass meetings, though

the Indonesian term conjures up the great anti-colonial mass meetings). These discuss strategy and tactics as well as being a means of showing support for their demands. The holding of *vergadering* – large mass meetings to discuss politics openly – was a key goal discussed by the PRD before 2007. These open meetings began in 2010 at the Kymko factory with hundreds and then up to 3,000 participants. This was followed by a mass meeting of 10,000 at Pilar Sports Stadium in Bekasi and later of 30,000 in a field in the Jurong industrial area in Bekasi. On May Day 2012 the MPBI unions organised an event in the main Jakarta sports stadium, with at least 60,000 present – and this followed a rally of 100,000 earlier in the day. [12]

Indrakusuma also points to the confidence-building presence of the *Garda Metal* (Metal Guard), a disciplined formation of the more physically prepared workers that often leads mobilisations and provides a sense of security. There is always a strong police, and sometimes military, presence at demonstrations. The *Garda Metal* also appears to be better trained and reports directly to the union president, something which may turn out to have its own implications later on.

All these developments, including the emergence of *Rumah Buruh* and *Saung Buruh* as points of consolidation for the most combative elements as well as educational centres, means more and more of this section of the working class is better prepared for campaigning.

Watching any of the YouTube footage of the 3 October mobilisations (search for *mogok nasional* or *mogok MONAS*), one can only be incredibly inspired by these developments. The *rapat akbar* rallies, the mass stop-works, the mobilisations shutting down whole enclaves and the raising of the spectre of a political challenge to the government – the emergence of organised labour as a political actor – may very well be a turning point.

The political character of the new unions and the mass sentiment will also be crucial. Is there a developing challenge within all these processes to trade union consciousness, to create a new consciousness – a consciousness that will go beyond either an industrial or even a political struggle by labour for incremental improvement in conditions to one that can conceive of the working masses exercising full state power and reorganising the country's resources to the benefit of the majority? Indrakusuma addresses this question positively:

The most important political consciousness that has grown alongside all these struggles is that these affairs of labour cannot be resolved outside of politics, outside of the struggle for power. It is that consciousness which pushes us to control the state. The other important political consciousness that has grown is that workers (*buruh/labourers*) must be the vanguard in the struggle for the interest of the [whole] people, not just for the workers, especially as we need the votes of the people in elections as well as their political support (in the sense of mass support). [13]

There are many issues raised here relating to the nature of the state and whether it can be “controlled” or whether it has to be dismantled and rebuilt. However, no doubt, this issue will be elaborated further as time goes on, including by Indrakusuma, who has been part of the radical left since its emergence in the late 1980s. In the next paragraph, he points to a weakness of the process so far: the fact that unity with the left-wing unions – those with an overt radical left political perspective – has not yet been achieved; something which he says was a key to the success of the labour movement in Brazil in the 1970s and 1980s. Left wing unions, organised in the Workers Secretariat and other smaller federations, and in which several left political groups have some presence, also participated in the 3 October strike, but mobilised separately, “meeting in the field”.

The fact that the Yudhoyono government resumed negotiations with MPBI on the day of the strike indicates that it is sensitive to the threat an ongoing worker protest movement represents. Employer groups were squealing from one end of the country to the other in the lead-up to and on the day of

the strike. While editorials were often hostile, working journalists' reports were generally sympathetic. The government is hard-pressed to justify a situation in which bosses employ "outsourced" workers illegally. This is harder when the ruling party, and most of the state apparatus, is constantly embroiled in corruption cases. The minister for economic affairs, Hatta Rajasa, came out after the strike supporting the wage increase demanded by the unions (from about \$A200 per month to around \$A250). [14] By November 2012, increases in the official minimum wage of between 40 percent and over 100 percent had been approved in many districts. Bekasi, the centre of union combativeness, won an increase in the minimum wage of over 100 percent. [15]

The actions were well reported in the media but had minimal impact on the general political atmosphere because of the isolation of most of the mobilisations in the kawasan industri. The union demands - increases in the minimum wage and an end to outsourcing - also have weak immediate relevance to the 80 percent of the working masses who are informal proletarians. [16] However, the employers clearly felt the wave of strikes organised by the MBPI and other unions. The Indonesian Business Association and its head, Sofyan Wanandi, a prominent New Order figure, fought the wage rises and attacks on outsourcing all through 2011 and 2012, including threatening factory closures. In November 2012 the Gerindra party boss, General Prabowo, chimed in. [17]

From late October 2012, anti-strike instructions were issued by district administrators, although they had no authority to do so. This was followed by the emergence of an organisation called the Masyarakat Bekasi Bergerak. Under the banner of this organisation, large bands of preman (hoodlums) wander the kawasan industri bashing workers on picket lines. They also attacked and burned down the Saung Buruh.

The mobilisation that most reflected the increased combativity of the workers took place on 29 October. According to activists, 10,000 workers responded to social media announcements that the preman were going to attack the Rumah Buruh. Within a few hours, 10,000 workers arrived at the entrance on motorbikes armed with pieces of wood and cane. [18] This mobilisation did not need formal union instructions: workers mobilised spontaneously in defence of an institution - which has no official union status - they had come to value. In a clash on 19 November, workers tactically defeated the preman. [19]

The minister of labour, Muhaiman Iskandar, the head of the conservative Muslim National Awakening Party, also assisted business by instructing local governments to agree to delay the implementation of the minimum wage where small and medium enterprises profess hardship. The struggle over wages and outsourcing looks set to be a more or less permanent axis of conflict. In a second round of national protest action on 31 October and 1 November 2013, there were worse clashes between paid preman and combative workers demanding a 50 percent rise in the minimum wage as well as the end of outsourcing and the full application of the new health insurance law.

This time the protests were not organised by the MPBI but by a smaller coalition called the Labour Movement National Consolidation (KNGB). The KNGB comprised the Confederation of Indonesian Trade Unions (KSPI), the Workers Joint Secretariat (Sekber Buruh), National Trade Union Confederation (KSN) and several other union federations and regional alliances. The KSPI includes the FSPMI, which has been at the heart of major actions over the last three years. At least two of the big MPBI federations aligned themselves with the government, stating that they did not think significant rises in the minimum wage were justified.

On the first day of the strike, police noted actions in 50 towns and cities in 15 provinces. It is difficult to assess how many workers took part - probably several hundred thousand. Activists report that in the industrial belts around Jakarta, production stopped in about 40 percent of factories, despite the abstention of the two large confederations. There was also systematic harassment,

especially in the factory belt areas, by groups of uniformed gangs, mostly belonging to the paramilitary Pemuda Pancasila (PP) of the Suharto dictatorship. The PP and other groups mobilised to prevent workers leaving factory compounds or neighbourhoods to join mobilisations. In some cases there were physical attacks, resulting in workers being hospitalised with stab wounds. Later, there were clashes between organised workers and the PP and other similar groups. Police were often present but usually did nothing to stop the PP. In other areas such as Sumatra and Sulawesi, police attacked protesters. On the factory island of Batam, it is reported that the factory belts were brought to a total halt.

As preparations for the October-November mobilisation unfolded, some of the constraints operating among the unions became clearer. First was the fact that two major confederations aligned with the government. But there was also a struggle over consciousness among the workers. The primary issue was around the seriousness of having an actual strike. As discussions unfolded, including on Facebook groups, it was revealed that even in 2012, many “striking” workers were not really on strike. The huge mobilisations took place between shifts. While these were impressive shows of support and shocked employers, the fact that most protesting workers did not stop production was a weak point. In September-October, some militant workers, as well as activists such as Indrakusuma, campaigned to convince workers to strike and that the best way to ensure this – in the face of a lack of seriousness from union leaders – was the tactic of “sweeping”. Workers gather outside factories still operating and call on the workers to join them. They chant and bang on the factory gates. The practice developed during 2011 and 2012, when workers from one factory would mobilise to show support for workers involved in conflicts with management at other factories. This inter-factory solidarity has fostered an atmosphere that has made “sweeping” feasible. “Sweeping” constitutes a form of leadership from below by the most militant workers, going around and overtaking the official union leadership.

Many factors mean that there is a moderate or conservative leadership. Consciousness in these new unions, at all levels of leadership and among the factory base, is very uneven. There is constant struggle over the best tactics and levels of militancy. The 40 percent strike rate that activists estimated was a major gain, confirming the usefulness of leadership from below. It also strengthened the probability of a sharpening polarisation within the unions. Such a polarisation is already happening and has been pushed along by the reality that the 2013 round of protests failed to achieve significant wage increases. Both national and local governments, backed by employers, granted only small increases. This provoked a deeper discussion on tactics.

Eventually, the emergence of this labour factor is likely to impact electoral politics. While there are occasional whispers of a new party emerging – a socialist workers’ party – there are no visible moves in this direction yet, and it would require a quite huge convulsion for such a party to be able to participate in the 2014 elections, as registration of parties has already closed. [20] However, the changing context favours such a development.

These developments provide the basis for this union movement, or at least that part of it won to a project of a workers’ party, to spearhead a larger radical process. Any larger political process would, however, have to relate to an even more complicated combination of sectors of the population. Indrakusuma’s warning, cited above, about the need for workers to lead struggles in the interest of the whole people, is crucial. Forging something larger will require winning masses to a political project unified by a shared ideological outlook.

In *Unfinished Nation*, I argued that the 1990s movement had re-won the method of struggle (aksi massa) of the progressive and anti-colonial movements (which created Indonesia) but not their ideology. A relaunching of such a political project will require breakthrough ideological work: such work requires agency.

Ideological regeneration

In *Unfinished Nation*, I argued that there were no surviving elements of the aksi massa left ideology from 1900-1965, apart from a populist sentiment represented by two words: rakyat and Sukarno. Rakyat remains a powerful word in Indonesian political culture, despite the extent to which it is abused by the fake populists of the mainstream parties. Its resilience stems simply from the fact that the socio-economic and cultural gap between rakyat (the common people) and elit is so stark that the reality of a maltreated, impoverished common people constantly and deeply reproduces these differentiations in the consciousness of all classes. The word elit is relatively new, and its emergence as a word standing in counterposition to rakyat confirms the depth of this reality. Since 2010 and the increased union activity, another pre-1965 word is re-winning legitimacy: buruh, “worker” or, more accurately, “labourer”. The New Order invested enormous effort in eliminating the word buruh, associated with class struggle politics since the early twentieth century, replacing it with words like pekerja (he/she who works) or the even more neutral karyawan, (he/she who expends effort) which can include management as well as workers. But buruh is making a comeback.

In the period since 2010 also, elit has been supplemented by another term which is increasingly relevant in mapping class structure and class consciousness: kelas menengah (middle class). There has always been some kind of kelas menengah in Indonesia and even more of a better off middle layer since the mid-1970s oil price boom. However, the kelas menengah took on a new reality between 2002 and 2012. The almost 400 percent growth in government revenue and expenditure, strong income for commodity exporters and a stream of foreign investment have fuelled the growth of a middle class with disposable income, after housing costs are deducted, at least the equivalent of a better off salaried person in Australia. The growth in cash inflow has, however, been nowhere near enough to lift qualitatively the standard of living of the bottom 200 million Indonesians, who survive on a pittance. This money concentrated in the top 10 percent is producing a kelas menengah of a new type and on a new scale. In addition, at the very top of the pyramid are an increased number of US dollar millionaires and even billionaires. In 2012 there were 104,000 people with wealth over one million dollars. There were 111 million bank accounts with total savings of 3,000 trillion rupiah (approximately \$US250 billion), but 1.4 percent of the accounts contain 78 percent of all savings. The 30 million poorest Indonesians own in total \$US20 billion, which is the same as the total wealth of the 40 wealthiest people back in 2008.

This development has happened so rapidly that it is hard to estimate the number of people living at this level, but it is probably 20-25 million. While only 10 percent of the population, they constitute a kelas menengah of a new scale. They are able to create a world of their own based on first world infrastructure. This includes a few well-resourced universities, international class schools (often using English), first class cinemas, luxurious malls with every kind of entertainment option, condominium developments and hordes of private cars for personal transport. This class spends more and more time outside Indonesia shopping and holidaying. Its growth is put forward as the defining criterion of government economic success; it is a droning mantra repeated by ministers in their TV appearances. All the previous fake rhetoric of “rounded human development” has been abandoned in favour of a “definition” of development that comprises little more than growth of the kelas menengah.

In terms of the basic terminology of class consciousness in the last 10 years, rakyat has been supplemented by buruh and elit complemented by kelas menengah. [21] The class structure reality that always made rakyat a potentially powerful word has become a deeper reality, even if slightly more complex and operating in an economy of a newer scale – though a scale totally inadequate to meet the needs of the population to live under dignified material conditions.

The Sukarnoism heritage

The fate of the name Sukarno over the last 10 years has been different. Megawati Sukarnoputri's stewardship over the Sukarno heritage all but destroyed its authority and remnant charisma. Megawati assumed the presidency in 2001 as a result of parliamentary and media manoeuvres aimed at discrediting President Wahid by associating him with corruption. Wahid's liberal, populist politics included an end to the ban on Marxism-Leninism, reconciliation with that huge section of the population associated (if only by blood) with the left, and the demilitarisation of politics. Megawati allied herself with anti-communist Islamic forces as well as some of the most pro-repression elements in the military. [22] Her government was characterised by a combination of inertia, contempt for the people and neoliberal policies, including large privatisations and the dismantling of various price subsidies. Her popularity plunged and she easily lost the next presidential election to a lacklustre general.

One consequence has been the decline of the status of the word "Sukarno" as a symbol with political power, especially a radical one. Between 1996 and 2001, various initiatives reflected that the name had a currency as representing something radically more pro-rakyat. Megawati's own popularity between 1996 and 2001 was partly a result of her name. One of Sukarno's other daughters, Sukamwati, was among the leaders of the big June 1996 demonstration, a real aksi massa, against repression. Still another daughter, Rachmawati, who had boycotted participation in any New Order structures, launched her own party, the Partai Pelopor, using populist, anti-imperialist vocabulary from her father's speeches. Popular songwriter and anti-New Order dissident Eros Jarot launched his Bung Karno National Party. While it is hard to measure precisely by how much, it is clear that the power of the Sukarno heritage has greatly weakened since then.

Apart from disappointment in Megawati's performance, there have been contradictory developments in relation to the struggle to regain a national historical memory, or a class historical memory. Progressive activists and intellectuals continue to emphasise the necessity to re-win history and destroy the power of taboos. The need to study history is strongly emphasised in the Rumah Buruh and Saung Buruh curricula. A hard copy, popular history magazine, *Historia*, was launched in 2012 under the leadership of dissident history journalist Bonnie Triyana. History programs on TV have become popular. Numerous memoirs have been published, including of figures on the left. Oral histories and testimonies of the victims of arrest and torture after 1965 have come out. However, these publications have reached only a very small readership.

Historical memory at the mass level is still being formed by two processes. The first is framed by the propaganda of the elites that dominate public discussion of national affairs. Their discussion of history remains firmly fixed in the narrative developed during the New Order. This was dramatically underlined during 2012, when the co-ordinating minister for political, legal and security affairs, Djoko Suyanto, rejected the recommendations of the National Commission on Human Rights in its report on the repression of 1965-68. The report concluded that the state needed to be held responsible for murder, torture, illegal detention and violations of human rights. The minister stated that mass killings were necessary to achieve the Indonesia "we have today". [23] This justifying of mass killings was not repudiated by a single prominent person from any wing of the political elite.

The second process, set out in the chapter "Memory" in *Unfinished Nation*, takes place via the school system. After a brief period of openness during the Wahid presidency, the history curriculum has reverted back to that under the New Order. The Education Ministry bans the use of government money for any textbook that presents other than the official version of what happened in 1965. [24] Moreover, most textbooks provide almost no political history of the 33 years of the New Order, just short sections about economic growth and stability, with corruption developing in the latter period

only. The content of these textbooks can only reproduce ignorance and provides no basis at all for a revival of historical memory.

When this situation interacts with the damage done to the political heritage of Sukarnoism as a result of Megawati's conservative, pro-capitalist stewardship of that heritage, the prospects for successful initiatives to re-win the 1900-1965 radical ideology through a contemporary revival of left Sukarnoism seem now much slimmer than immediately after the fall of Suharto.

The 1990s heritage

The 1990s were a period rich in struggle culture and experience. The movement, and its victory in ending Suharto's dictatorship, left a heritage that can be a resource for ideological regeneration (in addition to what can be rescued from the damaged heritage of pre-1965 leftism). The 1990s heritage is present on two levels. First, a broad positive sentiment – but only a sentiment – has been generated around some strong, though vaguely formulated, political ideas. Second, there are politically educated and ideologically oriented activists who emerged during the 1990s and the immediate aftermath of the fall of Suharto and who have tried to build groups aimed at reviving a radical democratic and socialist ideological orientation.

While *reformasi* – which meant more than just reforms but less than revolution – was a key word during 1998-99, other less dynamic words assumed a more dominant role in defining sentiment after 1998: *demokrasi* (democracy), *hak azazi* (human rights) and *anti-korupsi* (anti-corruption). All these concepts, formulated at a very general level, very rapidly had policy manifestations. *Pemilihan umum* (general elections), *pemilihan langsung* (direct elections) for president, new political party laws, release of political prisoners (except in Papua), the establishment of a statutory Human Rights Commission, ratification of ILO agreements, a statutory Commission on Violence Against Women and the establishment of the Corruption Eradication Commission all reflect the democratic impulses of the immediate post-Suharto period. Legislation passed on a number of issues during the first 10 years often borrowed formulations on “good governance”, transparency and civil rights from international institutions. The more time passes, the more ambiguous many of these policies become, as reactionary and restrictive elements are introduced alongside progressive and liberal clauses and commitments. Many of Indonesia's best new laws remain only on paper.

Reformasi's vocabulary of general political concepts has been generally (liberal and social) democratic and has helped define the atmosphere post-Suharto, if not the actual political terrain of realpolitik. As one might expect, there has been active resistance to this democratic atmosphere, especially from conservative religious groups and the most corrupt layers of professional politicians and bureaucrats. These atmospherics mean that there has been significantly more space than before 1998, even if at the margins so far, for radical, or at least critique-oriented, political, intellectual and cultural activity. There has been an expansion of what can be called non-party democratic, left initiatives. These include progressive publishing initiatives, research-oriented small think tanks dealing with equal rights, women's liberation and globalisation as well as those monitoring corruption, electoral malpractice and many other areas. In the cultural realm, low budget independent documentary films, theatre productions, art exhibitions, film festivals, short stories – all of which exhibit democratic or progressive sentiments – are strong. When well organised, such activities attract the maximum audiences for the venues that are chosen, whether it is the overtly political event commemorating the events around the student anti-corruption demonstration of January 1974, [25] or a play based on Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *This Earth of Mankind* novel [26] or about women demanding their rights, a forum about Tan Malaka, a guerrilla screening of Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing*, a commemorative evening for Pramoedya Ananta Toer [27] or

even the lesser known Joesoef Isak, his publisher, or for the Papermoon puppet show on the 1965 events. There is a never-ending list of examples of events like this in Jakarta and smaller towns and cities. But they do not yet constitute a movement.

On many campuses, student interest in critical speakers is very strong. [28] Radical writings and material violating taboos are gobbled up. The popularity of the Rumah Buruh economic and political classes in Bekasi and its associated Facebook postings of all kinds of articles, literature and commentaries are other reflections of this sentiment, but among factory workers. Progressive political groups – ranging from communist and socialist through to human rights, women’s liberation and workers’ groups – as well as known progressive activists, artists and intellectuals have thousands of followers on Facebook. The strength of this sentiment is manifested in creativity and persistence, however, not in influence over public debate or ability to mobilise. This activity represents the tip of an iceberg where the rest of the iceberg is constituted by sentiment, not a clear ideological perspective, program or platform, let alone organisation or mobilisations. It is a pervasive and resilient but ineffective sentiment.

The 1990s also produced a small but important legacy of ideologically literate activists – or cadre – that persisted in organised party-style work. Non-party activity is generally focused on a specific issue, although artistic activity often has a more holistic orientation. Party activity within the socialist tradition seeks a strategy for a total transformation of the existing system, and its priorities are determined by its analysis of what the best next things to do are, rather than any permanent fixed focus or hierarchy of issues. The most important question for our analysis here is their orientation to overall structural change to be carried out by the majority of ordinary people (proletarians under capitalism) as an activity of self-empowerment. This was the ideological framework in which the PRD started to develop in the early 1990s and which sustained it until the early 2000s, despite its short-term immersion in a more (though not totally) purely anti-dictatorship focus in 1997-98. So an immediate question is: what is the PRD’s direct legacy to the post-Suharto period in terms of organised political and ideological activity? I have already described the PRD’s degeneration, so it is not to the PRD of 2013 but to former members that we must look to answer this question. Here I am referring to those who have tried to continue building a party-style organisation, not to those who have become active in the non-party democratic left sphere.

The work of the Rumah Buruh is primarily educational, on economic and political theory, as well as on the tactics and strategy of mass political struggle. Most of the ideas, theories and knowledge mobilised for this educational activity have been accumulated over a long period of political involvement, in Danial Indrakusuma’s case since 1973. This material reflects the left trajectory of the original PRD. There is at least one other person with a PRD link involved. Rumah Buruh is primarily an educational, i.e. ideological, centre of ideas and understanding, not a so-called ormas (organisasi massa) or a union. The Rumah Buruh process is a manifestation of a dynamic responding to the objective need for ideological direction: for historical knowledge of struggle, for the ability to analyse a situation to determine a line of march and for clarity around a fundamental final goal. The intense use of Facebook, blogs and websites by Indrakusuma and his co-workers constitutes the most rounded literary intervention of any of the former PRD elements intent on building a political tendency in a radical democratic, egalitarian or socialist direction. In terms of a socialist tradition, this mix of internet-based written material constitutes the equivalent of a “combination newspaper” – although a hard copy regular newspaper would make this intervention more effective. There is no left press in Indonesia of any consequence at this point; the very vibrant political newspaper tradition of the 1920s Netherlands East Indies has not yet been re-won. Meanwhile, the Rumah Buruh team’s most immediate constraint is lack of personnel, as they represent the smallest grouping of any of the former PRD radical elements.

Earlier I referred to the establishment of the KPRM-PRD. In March 2011 the KPRM-PRD renamed

itself the Partai Pembebasan Rakyat (Peoples Liberation Party – PPR). [29] Between 2010 and 2012, it was attempting to rebuild a party formation using a model similar – at least in formal terms – to that of the PRD in the 1990s. The party has initiated union, student and women’s organisations that are either affiliated to it or in which PPR cadre play a leading role. It has built a small corps of cadre and cooperating activists in several cities on Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Timor. It appears that its primary work is leading these organisations. While the PPR formally has a regular publication and website, it does not carry a large amount of updated material nor operate as a “combination paper” or similar party publication. It must be assumed that the PPR’s primary ideological work is done inside its affiliated organisations. It remains an active, small force of dedicated cadre, most of whom are trying to build on the legacy of the left trajectory of the original PRD – but so far having minimal ideological impact outside its own affiliates. However, it would be very surprising if PPR members were not to play an important part in any future formation that campaigned to build support for socialist political activity.

In early 2013, this group split into the PPR and another group, Politik Rakyat (People’s Politics). Full documentation from both groups elaborating political differences is not available, so it is difficult to be precise on the nature of the division that developed. The PPR seems to be continuing with no rupture with its historical ideological and organisational legacy. Politik Rakyat appears to give more weight to ideas associated with eco-socialism and socialist feminism, although the lack of publications and open polemics has not made possible a complete comparison of perspectives.

Another group of similarly minded activists is to be found in the Komite Penyelamatan Organisasi-Perhimpunan Rakyat Pekerja (KPO-PRP). [30] KPO-PRP’s membership is mostly composed of expelled members of the Perhimpunan Rakyat Pekerja (PRP). The PRP was established in 2006, bringing together some former PRD members as well as members of the national democratic-oriented student group, the Front Mahasiswa Nasional but with a majority of new activists. [31] It openly declared itself socialist. Like the PRD in the 1990s and the PPR today, its formal approach has been to develop its own left-oriented unions and student group. KPO-PRP activists are among the leadership of the Federasi Progressif union, which has been affiliated to the Kongres Aliansi Serikat Buruh Indonesia (KASBI). [32] Before the KPO-PRP was formed after the expulsions from the PRP, PRP activists together played a similar role in KASBI. Now there are PRP, KPO-PRP and independents in leadership roles in KASBI. The prioritisation of establishing their own unions, as with the PPR, also meant that their ideological influence has primarily been within the constituencies they directly organise. The unions of both the PPR and the KPO-PRP do expand or affiliate new workplaces, reflecting an influence outwards, but this is not necessarily an ideological influence and can be more connected to workers’ struggles around immediate demands. However, in the aftermath of the October 2012 union mobilisations, the KPO-PRP printed and distributed 5,000 copies of its bulletin Kibar Juang arguing that workers need their own political party. The chairperson and secretary-general of the KPO-PRP up until 2013 were Ignatius Mahendra [33] and Asep Salmin, both former PRD members. Salmin played a central role in worker organising in the 1990s. Mahendra joined the PRD later. He was jailed for two and a half years under Megawati for “insulting the head of state” by burning pictures of Megawati at a demonstration.

Members of the PPR and KPO-PRP as well as the Politik Rakyat are active in the Sekretariat Buruh (Workers Secretariat) along with other left-oriented unions. They have been involved in united front mobilisations over the last several years. Unions associated with the Persatuan Perjuangan Indonesia (PPI) are also involved. [34]

In fact, other groups such as the PPI as well as activists grouped around the national democratic Front Mahasiswa Nasional (FMN) and some farmer groups are no smaller (and may be slightly bigger) than either the PPR or KPO-PRP. The reason I am not saying much about the PPI, the PRP or the group around the FMN is that I have not had the chance to become familiar with their activities.

As none of the groups prioritise a press, it is not possible to gain an understanding of the Indonesian left from its press – the exceptions being material on Facebook and website publications of Rumah Buruh-associated people and the professionally maintained website of Militan Indonesi, a section of an international Trotskyist current based in the UK. [35] From their mobilisations, and those of the PPR and KPO-PRP, however, I think it is reasonable to say that all these groups are more or less equal in size. Both the PPR and KPO-PRP have union organising projects (PPBI and Federasi Progressip affiliated to KASBI) – while noting that KASBI has a longer, continuous history and probably a larger and livelier organised worker base.

The Rumah Buruh initiative (although now physically separated from its old locations) has even fewer core activists, but I think that its influence is probably the most strategically placed to have a wider impact, although this is still mostly located in the specific sector of the metal workers union and associated groups. It has also forged ties with militant factory and enterprise unions, as well as the union associated with the PPR. The future of its initiatives will be tied to the prospects for dynamic motion in the direction of a workers' party. Such an advance, if it is to happen, will inevitably involve a wider combination of forces. This will include, no doubt, many yet not defined elements as well as newly activated individuals. All the groups and trends formed as a part of the legacy of the 1990s will be challenged to respond.

However things develop precisely, it is clear that several of the ingredients necessary for the development of a new vanguard in the revival of a progressive mass aksi-based movement exist. These ingredients include:

- The socio-economic situation reproduces poverty and multiplies grievances among the masses in the midst of a widening gap between rich and poor, and between kelas menengah and the rakyat and buruh, and, politically and culturally, between a corrupt elit and rakyat.
- A basic class consciousness is reflected in the common usage of elit and rakyat and also kelas menengah and rakyat or buruh as groups with counterposed interests.
- A section of the working class is increasingly organised in unions, whose strength is underpinned by changes in the economy improving the bargaining position of workers in larger manufacturing plants. The improved bargaining position is the material base for increased combativity amongst these workers in the face of low pay and endemic and illegal outsourcing by a majority of employers.
- Advanced ideas are spreading among this organised sector as a result of the educational activities of the unions and, very significantly, the political education work of the 2010-2013 Rumah Buruh. A crucial advance is the growing sentiment for workers to have a more systematic political strategy, including even a party of their own (though there are different conceptions of what kind of workers' party). This has been articulated not only by activists such as Indrakusuma, but also by left groups, worker-oriented NGOs and some union leaders. At a seminar of more than 50 union organisers from around the country I attended in December 2012, it was clear that there was a strong sentiment for an initiative like the Brazilian Workers Party.
- In addition to an increasingly better organised and more (social democratically) politically aware section of the working class, the 1990s anti-dictatorship movement created the space and generated the energies for enough non-party democratic and left political, intellectual and cultural initiatives to sustain a large social constituency imbued with liberal democratic and/or social democratic and even more left-wing sentiments.

Out of the more organised vanguard politics of the 1990s of the PRD (and in 1998 via coalitions) and their organising in the immediate aftermath of Suharto's fall, there is also a legacy of a small but committed and experienced accumulation of activists and cadre in groups such as PPR, KPO-PRP,

PPI, FMN, Politik Rakyat as well as Rumah Buruh. There are no doubt other such groups with lower profiles, or which are less well known because they are active only in specific locations.

- *Unfinished Nation* explained that the mass aksi mobilisations drew in factory workers (the Great River strike, the Gajah Tunggal strike, the Sidoarjo 1996 strike, the Sritex strikes) and then later the kampong (informal) proletariat mobilised in short-term campaigns. In this essay I have not discussed the politics and consciousness of the informal proletariat. Since 1998, this section of the working class has not yet produced sustained initiatives impacting on the political terrain. However, we must assume that their potential for militant democratic mobilisation, exhibited at its height in the May 1997 elections, remains, at the very least, undiminished, given their ongoing submersion in the misery and backwardness of urban poverty.

These seven characteristics of the current situation make very feasible a revival of progressive mass aksi politics. How fast this occurs will depend on how effective the interaction is between those forces with a capability for ideological work and tactical analysis and the new increasingly well-organised formal sector factory working class. This interaction will require a starting point of critical integration with the developing mainstream unions, where it is possible, and not a counterposition by progressive activist groups. As such an interaction develops, one other challenge will be to reach out to unorganised workers – factory, construction, transport, shop and office workers and the informal proletariat. Another, simultaneous, challenge will be finding the most creative and revolutionary way to inspire people in the non-party left to expand their horizons and become part of any revival of mass aksi politics aimed at changing the system and establishing a new, radically democratic form of government.

Max Lane

References

Aspinall, Edward, 2005, *Opposing Suharto: compromise, resistance, and regime change in Indonesia*, Stanford University Press.

Davis, Mike, 2006, *Planet of Slums*, Verso.

Indrakusuma, Danial, 2012, "Rachmat, Tarikh (Sejarah), Hidayah dan Rekomendasi", *Jurnal Sedane*, October.

Lane, Max, 2008, *Unfinished Nation: Indonesia before and after Suharto*, Verso.

Winters, Jeffrey, 2011, *Oligarchy*, Cambridge University Press.

P.S.

* Marx Left Review, No.7 Summer 2014:

http://marxistleftreview.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=102:indonesia-trade-unions-and-the-regeneration-of-radical-politics&catid=44:number-7-summer-2014&Itemid=83

Footnotes

[1] Lane, 2008.

[2] Edward Aspinall argues the sultanisation line in Aspinall, 2005. Winters, 2011, also classifies Indonesia as a sultanistic oligarchic system in which the oligarchs become alienated from the “sultan”. Winters deprioritises popular forces as an agent of change and emphasises that “what did change dramatically was the degree of unity and coherence at the level of elites and oligarchs” (p177).

[3] A less intense but prolonged struggle started with the path-breaking student protests of 1973 and 1974, which paved the way for the 1990s movement.

[4] <http://fspmptbi.org/siaran-pers-majelis-pekerja-buruh-indonesia-mpbi-3-oktober-2012>.

[5] <http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2012/09/27/16171595/2.8.Juta.Buruh.Ancam.Mogok.Nasional.3.Oktober>, <http://www.antaranews.com/berita/336529/buruh-serentak-lakukan-aksi-mogok-nasional>, <http://us.nasional.news.viva.co.id/news/read/356263-30-ribu-buruh-jawa-timur-mogok-nasional>, <http://www.tribunnews.com/2012/10/01/buruh-mogok-nasional-3-oktober>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LsQYgTnP3M>.

[6] <http://www.aktual.co/ekonomibisnis/162835muhammad-hatta-raja-beda-angka-soal-penangguhan-upah-minimum->.

[7] For workforce statistics, see http://www.bps.go.id/tab_sub/view.php?kat=1&tabel=1&daftar=1&id_subyek=06¬ab=1.

[8] Figures taken from <http://spai-fspmi.or.id/kronik-gelombang-perjuangan-buruh-indonesia/>. For a general map of the unions see <http://indoprogress.blogspot.com.au/2007/08/serikat-buruhserikat-pekerja-di.html>.

[9] http://batamtoday.com/detail_berita.php?id=18692, <http://www.bisnis.com/articles/buruh-mogok-pabrik-elektronik-di-batam-berhenti-beroperasi>; <http://www.bisnis.com/articles/mogok-buruh-di-batam-rusuh-kaca-mobil-hancur>.

[10] Indrakusuma was a founding member of the PRD until 2006. He was later a member of the KPRM-PRD but left that in 2011 due to political differences. The KPRM-PRD was the predecessor to the Peoples Liberation Party (PPR). For most of the time while doing this trade union work, he was a party member.

[11] These educational activities were formalised only at a national working meeting of the Miscellaneous Industries Union, the non-metal union affiliated to the FSPMI (communication, Danial Indrakusuma, January 2013).

[12] Indrakusuma, 2012.

[13] Indrakusuma, 2012.

[14] <http://surabaya.tribunnews.com/m/index.php/2012/10/11/hatta-raja-upah-buruh-rp-15-juta-tidak-cukup>.

[15] <http://spai-fspmi.or.id/kronik-gelombang-perjuangan-buruh-indonesia/>.

[16] I use the term “informal proletarians” rather than “urban poor” or “informal sector”. The daily sociological experience of the informal proletarian can create different kinds of more eclectic thinking and psychology, and present problems for organising, among these masses compared to those working in the larger factories and other workplaces. Still, however complicated the mediating linkages may be, these masses survive (reproduce themselves within a capitalist framework) and, in one form or another, their survival depends on their being able to sell their labour power. They are proletarians in a system made up of primarily bourgeois and proletarians. Davis, 2006, documents the huge global growth of an urbanised proletariat mostly surviving in non- or under-industrialised economies.

[17] <http://finance.detik.com/read/2012/12/18/142130/2121436/4/prabowo-sentil-buruh-jangan-minta-gaji-naik-terlalu-tinggi>.

[18] There are very spectacular and inspiring photographs of this mobilisation. Some show the streams of workers on motorbikes arriving near the Rumah Buruh bridge. Others show the thousands of workers, many carrying pieces of wood, assembled in front of the bridge. Most of these photographs have been uploaded onto Facebook.

[19] <http://spai-fspmi.or.id/editorial-perjuangan-pembentukan-serikat-di-samsung/> and also <http://spai-fspmi.or.id/serikat-buruh-samsung-dipasung/>.

[20] Comments along these lines regularly pop up in workers’ Facebook comments in the various worker group lists.

[21] While there is no systematic research on Twitter communications in Indonesia yet, even a cursory familiarity with Twitter reveals also a deep hostility towards and alienation from the rakyat and buruh by the new kelas menengah, who are the main users of Twitter. This is especially evident at times of strikes.

[22] This includes General Sutiyoso, whom she supported for the governorship of Jakarta. Sutiyoso was the commander of the Jakarta region at the time of the 1996 July attack on the offices of Megawati’s party. She also appointed General Hendropriyono as head of state intelligence and gave the job ministerial status for the first time. Hendropriyono is accused by human rights groups of being responsible for a massacre of farmers in Sumatra in the 1980s.

[23] www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/10/01/1965-mass-killings-justified-minister.html.

[24] According to history lecturers in Indonesian universities, this order came from the department committee monitoring texts and curricula. A perusal of a text such as M. Habib Mustopo dkk, Sejarah 3, Yudhistira, 2002, used in senior high schools, reveals a total retreat from providing materials on alternative explanations of the events of 30 September 1965 that were available in the previous generation of textbooks that appeared during Wahid’s presidency. The events of 1965 are treated in a chapter dedicated to “threats of national disintegration”, where the PKI is depicted as an eternal such threat.

[25] Commemorations organised by Indemo, the activist group headed by Hariman Siregar, regularly attract more than 1,000 people at Taman Ismail Marzuki’s Graha Bhakti building

[26] The first performances of an adaptation of Pramoedya’s novel attracted packed-out

audiences of 1,000 plus at Taman Ismail Marzuki.

[27] "Young hail Pram on 81st birthday", Jakarta Post, 12 February 2006.

[28] I have direct experience of this situation, having spoken at forums attracting up to 500 students.

[29] <http://koranpembebasan.wordpress.com/partai-pembebasan-rakyat/>.

[30] Deklarasi Terbuka Komite Penyelamat Organisasi - Perhimpunan Rakyat Pekerja, Jakarta, 7 June 2011.

[31] <http://pp-frontmahasiswaasional.blogspot.com.au/>.

[32] <http://federasi-progresip.blogspot.com.au/> and <https://www.facebook.com/pusat.kasbi>.

[33] Mahendra did not stand for election in 2013. He is still a member of KPO-PRP but is now also the central figure in the publishing group BINTANG NUSANTARA, which also involves individuals from PPR and Peoples Politics. BINTANG NUSANTARA publishes a range of materials relating to socialist theory and practice.

[34] The Jakarta section of the Persatuan Perjuangan Indonesia maintains a website, <http://ppijkt.wordpress.com/>.

[35] <http://www.militanindonesia.org/>.