

Review: From Russia with Love?

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Review by: John T. Sidel

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FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE?

Larisa M. Efimova. *Stalin i Indonyeziya: Politika SSSR v otnoshenii Indonyezii v 1945–1953 godakh: Nyeizvvestniye Stranitsiy* (Stalin and Indonesia: Soviet Policy towards Indonesia, 1945–1953: Unknown Pages). Moscow: Moscow State Institute of International Relations, 2004. 183 pages.

John T. Sidel

Introduction: Indonesia in the Shadow of Global Menaces

Since the September 2001 attacks in the United States and the October 2002 bombings in Bali, the transnational linkages between Indonesia and the broader Muslim world have received considerable attention from journalists, policy-makers, scholars, and other researchers. Sidney Jones of the International Crisis Group, for example, has chronicled the experiences of many members of the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist network in training camps for mujahidin in Afghanistan, including those run by Osama bin Laden and Al-Qa'ida.¹ In his fine study of Laskar Jihad, moreover, Noorhaidi Hasan has documented the broader connections between salafi groups in Indonesia and Islamic institutions in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.²

At the same time, other scholars have shed much new light on the historical depth and sociological breadth of transnational Islam in the Indonesian archipelago. Historians and anthropologists like Ulrike Freitag and Engseng Ho have deepened our understanding of the Hadhrami diaspora and its role in the transmission of religious, political, and social currents between the Middle East and Indonesia over the past two hundred years.³ Following upon Azyumardi Azra's work on the seventeenth and

¹ See, for example, *Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia: The Case of the "Ngruki Network" in Indonesia* (Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, August 2002); and *Indonesia Backgrounder: How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates* (Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, December 2002).

² Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy, and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 2006).

³ See, for example, Ulrike Freitag, *Indian Ocean Migrants and State Formation in Hadhramaut: Reforming the Homeland* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); and Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

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eighteenth centuries,⁴ moreover, Michael Laffan has shown how networks of migrants, pilgrims, and scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries drew Indonesian Muslims within the orbit of important developments in the Hijaz and Cairo.⁵

Viewed in the light of this rich body of new scholarship, the trajectory of modern Indonesian history no longer seems to cohere in narrowly national—or nationalist—terms. As Laffan and others suggest, the struggle for Indonesian independence can now be recast in terms of broader trends in the Muslim world in the era of Rashid Rida, ibn Sa'ūd, the Khilafat movement, and the Muslim Brotherhood, with itinerant Hadhramis and Arabic-speaking Islamic activists like Haji Agus Salim assuming more prominent roles and the founding of an independent Indonesian nation-state no longer the teleological *terminus ad quem* of the narrative. Indeed, such a revisionist account of modern Indonesian history is amply suited to contemporary trends in the academe—a continuing preoccupation with Islam, enduring interest in “globalization,” a boom in diasporic studies, and a growing body of literature on the hitherto underappreciated region of “the Indian Ocean.” Even today, a handful of new scholarly volumes encompassing Indonesia, the Middle East, and South Asia are in various stages of preparation for publication. The future of Indonesian studies is not orange, but green.

In intellectual and political terms, this trend should be seen as a salutary one, simultaneously undermining the narrow parochialism and cultural essentialism of area-studies scholarship at its weakest, and attacking the alarmism and militarism of US and Indonesian government policy at its most objectionable. Yet this trend is also, aside from its self-evident “trendiness,” somewhat unfortunate in its partiality, both intellectual and political, and cries out for some kind of corrective. If, after all, we recall Soekarno’s formulation “NASAKOM”—Nasionalisme, Agama, Komunisme (Nationalism, Religion, Communism)—then we may find within our grasp a very different prism through which a properly “de-nationalized” history of modern Indonesia can be illuminated. Such a prism is one in which Moscow, Lenin, and Semaun figure more prominently than Mekkah, Rida, and Salim as points of reference. Today, in the post-Cold War context of the “Global War on Terror,” such a prism may seem hopelessly outdated, old-fashioned, and obscure, but it still may shed light on important facets of modern Indonesian history.

* * *

In this vein, it is worth considering the timeliness of a recent book by Larisa M. Efimova, *Stalin and Indonesia: Soviet Policy towards Indonesia, 1945–1953: Unknown Pages*, which was published (in Russian) in Moscow in 2004.⁶ Efimova, professor and head of

⁴ Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

⁵ Michael Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma below the Winds* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2002).

⁶ Efimova has also translated portions of the book into English and published them as journal articles. See: “Towards the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the USSR and the Republic of Indonesia,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 26, 76 (November 1999): 184–194; “New Evidence on the Establishment of Soviet-Indonesian Diplomatic Relations (1949–53),” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 29, 85 (November 2001): 215–233; “Who Gave Instructions to the Indonesian Communist Leader Musso in 1948?,” *Indonesia and the*

the Oriental Department at the prestigious Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), has been studying Indonesia since the 1960s and, it should be noted, has researched and written extensively on the role of Islam in Indonesian society and politics. Yet with this new volume, she offers important new insights on the role of a very different set of transnational forces in Indonesian history through a carefully considered examination of previously inaccessible documentary materials in the Russian archives in Moscow.

The sources on which Efimova draws in this study are several. First of all, she has trawled through the Southeast Asia files of the foreign relations section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) for the early post-war period. Here she has made ample use of documents internal to the bureaucracy, that is, (1) notes and letters written by the Indonesian Communist leader Musso during his protracted stay in Moscow and following his ill-fated return to Indonesia in 1948, and (2) correspondence and records stemming from the Communistische Partij Nederland (CPN, the Dutch Communist Party), including discussions on Indonesia between CPN leader Paul de Groot and Mikhail Suslov, the famously dour long-time member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPSU (and later the party's chief ideologue and "second secretary" under Brezhnev). Second, Efimova also draws on directives to Soviet delegations dealing with Indonesia and correspondence from Soviet representatives traveling in Indonesia. Third and finally, Efimova makes use of previously unexamined materials from the archives of the former Soviet leader Stalin, including telegrams sent by Stalin under the pseudonym "Filippov" to the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, or PKI) leadership via Chinese Communist Party intermediaries in Beijing in the early 1950s.

To her credit, Efimova is not blinded by the new light shed on Indonesian history by this previously unopened trove of documentary materials. She is amply well versed in the English-language literature on the Cold War and on Soviet policy in Asia, and she offers her findings in the spirit of a belated contribution to debates in these fields of scholarship, often paying tribute to the pioneering work—and polemical victories—of Ruth McVey as against her less accomplished anti-communist adversaries.⁷ Efimova is also careful not to fall captive to the sources themselves or to lose sight of the broad contexts of both Soviet and Indonesian politics during the period in question. Indeed, Efimova begins her book with a rather disparaging quote from the memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev:

We knew little about Indonesia and didn't pay any particular attention to it. In many years of dealing with Stalin I don't recall a single conversation about, or even a mention of, Indonesia. He didn't show any interest in Indonesia, and I can't say that Stalin had any concrete knowledge of the country. Within the Soviet leadership, nothing was ever spoken about the Indonesian people. (p. 4)

Malay World 31, 90 (July 2003): 171–189; and "Stalin and the Revival of the Communist Party of Indonesia," *Cold War History* 5, 1 (February 2005): 107–120.

⁷ Ruth T. McVey, *The Soviet View of the Indonesian Revolution: A Study in the Russian Attitude towards Asian Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1957); Ruth T. McVey, *The Calcutta Conference and the Southeast Asian Uprisings* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1958).

With Khrushchev's less than encouraging comments in mind, Efimova pays careful attention to the authors and audiences for the various documents she finds in the archives. She notes:

Archival documents concerning Soviet-Indonesian relations attest to the significant influence of the Party and state bureaucracy on the process of decision-making by the Soviet leadership. Information was first received, then placed in prepared and standardized form on the desks of the top leaders. Bureaucrats of all ranks withheld information which would generate dissatisfaction and annoyance among the leadership or which would show them in an unfavorable light. "Inconvenient" information was omitted; those communicating it were removed from their jobs. As a result, the Soviet leaders did not have a real sense of what was going on in Indonesia, and this fact was sometimes reflected in the decisions they made. (pp. 43-44)

These caveats and qualifications aside, Efimova proceeds to reveal the findings from her archival research, which shed new light on what she describes literally as "unknown pages" of Indonesian history. Indeed, the bulk of her book is organized to present in ten chapters these previously obscure or unknown pages for the historical record. These ten "pages" or chapters cover (1) Soviet interest in Indonesia at the end of World War II, (2) early Soviet-Indonesian contacts during this period, (3) reports by the first Soviet journalists in Indonesia in 1947; (4) efforts to establish diplomatic relations between the USSR and Indonesia in early 1948; (5) the Soviet-controlled World Federation of Democratic Youth conference in Calcutta in February 1948; (6) Musso's return to Indonesia and the Madiun affair; (7) the establishment of Soviet-Indonesian diplomatic relations in 1950; (8) the role of Stalin in the revival of the PKI, 1950-51; and (9) relations between Stalin and the newly elevated PKI leader D. N. Aidit in 1951-53.

Efimova's findings are too multifarious and complex to summarize for the non-Russian reader, and they cry out for a proper translation of her book into English. But three important points she makes merit some elaboration here in terms of the light they shed on the role of transnational revolutionary socialism in the key years of Indonesian history under study. First of all, Efimova's research offers a very illuminating counterpoint and corrective to the overly conspiratorial anti-communist literature, on the one hand, and the excessively self-congratulatory official Communist historiography, on the other, both of which tend to misrepresent the fluctuating levels of Soviet interest in Indonesia and the varying warmth, depth, and breadth of Soviet relations with the PKI during this period.

The Soviet Union and Republican *Diplomasi*

Overall, Efimova shows how Soviet policies towards Indonesia were clouded and complicated by ignorance and indifference, by the weakness of links and communications with the PKI, and by adverse political circumstances in Indonesia and elsewhere in the world. Soviet observers and officials repeatedly expressed skepticism with regard to PKI leaders' familiarity with Marxism-Leninism, their organizational skills, their political judgment, and their prospects for political success in Indonesia during this period. Preliminary Soviet diplomatic moves vis-à-vis successive

governments of the newly formed Republic of Indonesia were likewise characterized by diffidence, clumsiness, and disappointment. Efimova shows that the Soviet foreign policy apparatus moved quite slowly and hesitantly towards *de jure* recognition of the republic during the revolution, with protracted discussions in Moscow on the legal and political implications of such a move delaying Soviet movement on this front well into 1948. Efimova also shows conclusively that the initiative for the establishment of official Soviet–Indonesian relations came from the Indonesian side, with the Prague-based republican intermediary (and PKI member) Suripno taking the lead and turning the tentative Soviet gambit into a fiasco. Although Suripno had enjoyed a brief for his diplomatic efforts from the left-leaning government of Amir Sjarifuddin, he was promptly recalled and effectively disavowed by the more conservative successor government of Mohammad Hatta in May 1948 amidst a storm of Dutch protests following the Soviet announcement in the same month that consular relations were to be established between the USSR and the Republic of Indonesia.

As Efimova's research reveals, subsequent diplomatic maneuvers in 1949–1950 likewise showed signs of Soviet diffidence and then disappointment. In the face of renewed Indonesian interest in establishing diplomatic relations (and requests for support in gaining representation at the United Nations), Soviet officials repeatedly stalled. Following a series of protracted discussions between Stalin and Mao in early 1950s, however, the Soviets belatedly moved forward with formal recognition of Indonesia. Yet once diplomatic relations were established in the early 1950 and the newly independent Indonesian government had won a seat at the United Nations, the Soviets soon received cold-shoulder treatment, with plans for the establishment of embassies in Moscow and Jakarta delayed by the Indonesian side for some years to come. Thus, Efimova concludes, "the second attempt to establish Soviet–Indonesia diplomatic relations undertaken during the Stalin period at the beginning of the 1950s, as with the first, were not crowned with complete success, and did not lead beyond the legal process" (p. 137).

Moscow, Musso, and Madiun

A second contribution made by Efimova concerns the Soviet role in the return of the leading PKI cadre Musso from long-time exile in the USSR to Indonesia in mid-1948 and his subsequent participation in events leading up to the so-called "Madiun Affair" of September of the same year. In contrast with earlier, largely speculative accounts, Efimova has a sheaf of relevant archival sources at hand that clearly qualify, complicate, and in some measure contradict the previous conventional wisdom concerning Moscow's "instructions" to Musso. In January 1948, it turns out, Musso had engaged in an ill-timed defense of his PKI comrades against criticism by Soviet officials in Moscow disappointed by the party's failure—or refusal—to "propagandize or popularize" the so-called Zhdanov Line dividing the world into "two camps," as articulated in September 1947 by Andrei Zhdanov in his address at the founding of the Cominform. The PKI leadership, Musso explained in a report submitted to the Central Committee, was trying to maintain a low profile in the Sjarifuddin government, disguising the extent of Communist strength in the cabinet, the armed forces, and the other organs of the republic by dispersing their cadres and forces among a variety of affiliated parties and organizations. "The Communists are outwardly downplaying

their real strengths and not revealing their leading role in the republican government," Musso asserted in his report to the Central Committee (p. 98). Alongside such deliberate downplaying of Communist strength, Musso argued, the low-key approach of the party with regard to the international arena was a matter of tactical necessity in the face of rising anti-communist and anti-Soviet propaganda and in light of American policy towards Indonesian independence. The reorganization of the Sjarifuddin government in November 1947, Musso concluded, signaled the growing strength of the PKI as it waited "in the shadows" and continued to gather armed strength and popular support.

With the fall of the Sjarifuddin government on January 23, 1948, the very same day as his report was delivered to the Central Committee, Musso clearly suffered considerable loss of credibility, as revealed by the tone and substance of subsequent documents submitted by officials of the foreign relations section of the Central Committee. Most noteworthy in this regard was a report to the Politburo in February 1948 by a certain Plishevsky, head of the Southeast Asian sector of the foreign relations section of the Central Committee. Plishevsky criticized the PKI for its tactics of dissimulation under the Sjarifuddin government, which, he argued, had led to "the diminution of the real role of the Communist Party and the narrowing of its capacities for direct ties with the popular masses, which did not facilitate the expansion of the Communist Party's influence among the people" (p. 103).

It was against this inauspicious backdrop that Musso departed from Moscow in early 1948 and relocated to Prague, where he was to remain until his return to Indonesia in August of the same year. During his stay in Prague, Efimova shows, Musso was in active dialogue with Chinese, Dutch, and Indonesian Communists on questions concerning a change of strategy for the PKI. Efimova cites, for example, a report Musso sent to Moscow regarding an article on Indonesia published in China, which he cited with considerable enthusiasm and with special emphasis on the promise of a Chinese-style "national front" strategy, one which had yet to win the official endorsement of the Soviet leadership (pp. 107–109).

In May 1948, moreover, Musso reported to Moscow on a meeting held in Prague with PKI member and Republican representative Suripno and Dutch Communist Party leader Paul de Groot. Along with this report he enclosed a document drawn up during the meeting, titled "Fundamental Tasks of the Communists in Indonesia." The document discusses the imperatives of fusing the Communist, Socialist, and Labor parties into a single "unified party of the Indonesian working masses" (p. 110) and creating a "National Front" based on the "widest possible mass organizations" and linked "with all existing national parties, groups, and elected leaders" (p. 110). Beyond these two imperatives, the document identifies a third set of tasks: an assertive stance vis-à-vis the newly established Hatta government so as to compel the formation of a "national unity government" in which the PKI would be represented, denunciation of the Renville Agreements, and negotiation with the Dutch for the "full acknowledgement and realization of the sovereign rights of the United States of Indonesia over the entire territory of Indonesia" (p. 111).

In addition, Efimova notes several important comments by Musso with regard to this document. Musso, for example, acknowledged that it "represents only basic identification of those tasks which I should resolve in Indonesia. Undoubtedly, this is a

major turning point. I hope that my Indonesian comrades will understand this and follow me" (p. 111). Thus Musso offered the document as his own suggestion for a shift in PKI strategy. He did so, however, with repeated efforts to stress the support of the Dutch Communist Party leader de Groot. "The organizational structure of illegal work in the Dutch-occupied areas of Indonesia and the methods of leading this work," Musso claimed, "are based on the work experience of comrade de Groot in the occupation period in the Netherlands and on my experience of illegal work in Indonesia in 1935–36" (p. 111). In the meeting in Prague, Musso claimed, de Groot had at first persisted in maintaining the CPN's line favoring a continuing union between the Netherlands and Indonesia, but eventually relented, agreeing to offer CPN support for Indonesian independence, so long as the Netherlands would enjoy privileged economic and cultural ties to its former colony (p. 112). Closing his letter with warm references to de Groot and suitable citations from Zhdanov's 1947 speech, Musso expressed hope that his plans would bear fruit upon his return to Indonesia (p. 113).

Thus, Efimova concludes, "the plans worked out by Musso in Prague were to a significant extent his own independent initiative and were not 'Moscow's instructions'" (p. 113). In support of this conclusion, she cites archival evidence of consternation in the foreign relations section of the Central Committee in Moscow upon receipt of Musso's report from Prague, as well as records of a later meeting held between CPN leader de Groot and Soviet Central Committee Secretary Mikhail Suslov in October 1948, confirming the Dutch Communist Party's change of policy towards Indonesia following the meeting in Prague in the spring of the same year. She also notes the critical tone and substance of memoranda on the CPN submitted to Suslov in advance of his meeting with de Groot (pp. 113–121).

Overall, Efimova's research thus effectively demolishes official Indonesian nationalist and anti-communist interpretations of the Madiun uprising in September 1948 as the product of a Soviet-orchestrated plot to mobilize the PKI against the republic. Fifty years after they were first articulated, Ruth McVey's arguments against these interpretations⁸ now stand as essentially vindicated by Efimova's findings, as do more recent reinterpretations of parallel events in neighboring Malaya.⁹ It is to be hoped not only that McVey will enjoy this belated testimony to her early perspicacity, but also that students of Indonesian history in Indonesia will do so in the years to come.

Stalin, Mao, and Aidit

A third and final contribution made by Efimova in this book concerns relations between Stalin and D. N. Aidit, who emerged in the early 1950s as the new leader of a revived PKI. Here Efimova notes the received wisdom that Moscow had lost interest in Indonesia and the PKI in the aftermath of the Madiun affair and the decimation of the Left in late 1948. Donald Hindley, for example, notes "the apparent lack of interest in PKI shown by Moscow for some years after the Madiun rebellion." Hindley speculates:

⁸ See footnote 6, above.

⁹ Phillip Deery, "Malaya, 1948: Britain's Asian Cold War?," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9, 1 (Winter 2002): 29–54.

It is probable that after the fiasco of Madiun, Moscow wrote off the Indonesian Communists as a lost cause. That is, Moscow considered the distant PKI no longer worthy of attention. Only after 1954, when the success of the Aidit leadership's form of the national united front had become amply apparent, did the interest of Moscow focus anew on PKI.¹⁰

Drawing on archival records from Moscow, Efimova, by contrast, offers quite a different picture of relations between Stalin and the new PKI leadership. Stalin, she reveals, showed considerable interest in Indonesia during the final years of his life and enjoyed warm relations with the new PKI leader, Aidit. In the formulation and communication of his views on Communist strategy in Indonesia, moreover, Stalin willingly relied on leaders of the Chinese Communist Party as advisors and intermediaries vis-à-vis the PKI.

In support of these conclusions, Efimova refers readers first to a secret telegram sent to Stalin in October 1950 from Liu Shaoqi, Central Committee Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, passing on a document from PKI leaders for Stalin's consideration and comments. The document appears in part to draw inspiration from the Chinese Revolution and to suggest a shift of PKI efforts into Chinese-style armed struggle in the countryside (pp. 140–145).

Stalin's response, Efimova shows, was prompt but less than fully positive, offering a thorough reading and a partial critique of the proposed shift of PKI strategy in a telegram to Beijing later the same month. In his response, Stalin offered a wide range of minor comments. Overall, he discouraged the adoption of the Chinese Revolution as a model for the PKI to emulate and deemphasized armed struggle, but, in line with the Chinese experience, he stressed the importance of agrarian issues. Indeed, in a separate request for information from Liu Shaoqi, Stalin asked for materials on patterns of landownership in Indonesia.

After receiving a response from Beijing to this request in November 1950 and studying these materials, Stalin sent a more detailed set of comments to the PKI in January 1951. Here his emphasis was on the dangers of attempting a Chinese-style "armed revolution, in other words the path of guerrilla war in the countryside" (p. 148). At great length, Stalin pointed to the difficulties of replicating the Chinese experience in Indonesia, given the archipelagic nature of the country, the paucity of armed PKI units, and the absence of an adjacent external refuge and support base, such as the "solid rear" the Chinese Communists enjoyed in Manchuria thanks to the neighboring USSR (pp. 148–149). In the light of these obstacles to successful armed guerrilla struggle, Stalin instead urged the PKI to complement its work in the countryside with a strong focus on organizing efforts among the working class in urban and industrial areas, combining mobilization of the peasantry with the promotion of large-scale strikes to "paralyze the government" (p. 149).

According to subsequent telegrams from Beijing, many months passed before Stalin's extended critique of the proposed new PKI strategy generated a response from the Indonesian Communist leadership. In April 1951, Mao wrote to Stalin noting that

¹⁰ Donald R. Hindley, *The Communist Party of Indonesia, 1951–1963* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966), p. 31.

the PKI was undergoing a major internal reorganization, commenting that "the new leadership has not yet expressed a desire to receive political assistance from us. For this reason a convenient occasion has not yet arisen for the transmission of your instructions to the PKI. It is necessary to wait until the situation becomes clear and the PKI leadership requests political assistance. Then we shall pass on your instructions in the appropriate form" (pp. 152–153). Efimova notes that Mao acknowledged that he himself "had little knowledge of the Indonesian question" (p. 153).

With the ascendancy of D. N. Aidit to the PKI leadership in 1951 and his consolidation of control of the party in subsequent years, however, communications between Stalin and the PKI improved dramatically. In stark contrast with the impressions imparted by Hindley and other scholars, Efimova notes that in fact "archival materials testify to the fact that Stalin personally assumed a most active and direct role in working out with Aidit new policy documents for the PKI. Stalin held meetings with Aidit and other representatives of the PKI, had long conversations with them, and exchanged long letters with them right up to the last weeks of his life" (p. 156). She concludes:

As a result, we can establish on firm grounds that not only Marxism-Leninism and the Chinese example, but, in the first instance, Stalin's ideas, had a serious influence on the programmatic documents of the PKI promulgated in the first years of the new young leadership of the Communist Party with Aidit as the party chief, and on the views and ideas of Aidit himself. (p. 156)

In support of this somewhat startling conclusion, Efimova cites documents emerging from the resumption of correspondence between the PKI leadership and Stalin in 1952. Here we read of Stalin advising the PKI to focus on "practical, molecular, 'dirty' work concerning the everyday needs of workers, peasants, and the labor intelligentsia" (p. 159), of minor disagreements over the use of terms like "feudal" and "semi-feudal" in the PKI's platform, and of PKI documents pockmarked with Stalin's handwritten comments and questions (pp. 156–165).

In early January 1953, moreover, Aidit and his fellow PKI Politburo member Njoto met with Stalin in Moscow. Efimova notes that she found no records of the conversations held between Stalin, Aidit, and Njoto, but a long letter dated January 13, 1953, from Aidit to Stalin, conveys the PKI leaders' consideration of Stalin's views on a variety of issues, ranging from the PKI's agrarian program to the formation of a "national front" and imperative of recruitment and infiltration in the armed forces leadership. Efimova notes references to the continuing role of the CCP in Aidit's letter as well as Stalin's handwritten marks of approval on these points (pp. 166–169).

Efimova then cites a final, lengthy letter from Stalin to Aidit dated February 16, 1953, less than three weeks before Stalin's death. Several paragraphs of the letter were devoted to the question of terminology with regard to agrarian problems in Indonesia, with Stalin urging reconsideration of the PKI's use of the term "feudalism" in Indonesia and suggesting the merits of "feudal residues" in its stead. Additional comments concerned the goals of the "national front" to be promoted by the PKI (pp. 169–172).

As Efimova notes, the style and substance of his advice to Aidit in this letter reemerged many months after Stalin's sudden death in early March 1953, with the publication of an important article by Aidit in July of the same year on "the future of the Indonesian peasant movement" (p. 173) and, more importantly, with the promulgation of a new party program at the PKI's Fifth Party Congress in March 1954. As Rex Mortimer wrote many years ago:

In the case of the PKI during the period of Guided Democracy, the fount of indigenous doctrinal authority was unquestionably the program and resolution drawn up and adopted at the party's fifth congress in March 1954. This was the first congress convened by the leadership group that had assumed control in January 1953 and provided the occasion for a fully elaborated outline of both the leadership's analysis of Indonesian conditions and its policies for transforming those conditions in accordance with Communist objectives. In a very real sense the congress marked the ratification of the new leadership and its line by the organization, and the great symbolic importance which the decisions of this congress had in the subsequent life of the party was due in no small measure to these circumstances.¹¹

Against this backdrop, Efimova's discovery of close—at times, verbatim—correspondence between Stalin's written comments and suggestions to Aidit, on the one hand, and the wording of PKI platforms adopted during the formative phase of its reemergence in the early to mid-1950s, on the other, represents a serious challenge to previous understandings of the PKI. As Efimova concludes:

The opinions, comments, and recommendations expressed by Stalin exerted a vital and decisive influence on the formulation of the programmatic documents of the PKI during the period of the D. N. Aidit leadership, and on the strategy and tactics of the Indonesian Communists in the 1950s and 1960s. Thus Aidit and his compatriots were genuine Stalinists, although not in the sense of the term defined by Western authors, as a synonym for rigidity, dogmatism, revolutionary extremism, and blind obedience to the "Moscow line." To the contrary, Stalin's instructions pointed towards a more flexible, pragmatic course, measured positions, and exceptional caution and gradualism in the resolution of questions regarding revolution and the construction of socialism.

It should be noted, however, that neither Aidit nor any of the other Indonesian Communist leaders offered a single word of acknowledgement with regard to the influence of Stalin's ideas on their world view. It is obvious that this is connected with the fact that after the death of J. V. Stalin the new Soviet and party leadership came forward with slogans condemning the former leader and declaring a struggle against Stalinism. The Indonesian Communists, interested in Soviet and CPSU assistance and support, did not want to go against the new line of Soviet policy and ideology and held fast to the spirit of the times. (pp. 175–176)

¹¹ Rex Mortimer, *Indonesian Communism Under Sukarno: Ideology and Politics, 1959–1965* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 43.

Conclusions: Transnational and National Forces in Indonesia

What, then, can we learn in 2007 from Efimova's publication of these previously "unknown pages" of Indonesian history? A full answer to the many new questions raised by her research awaits further archival work, oral testimonies, and expert evaluation of available evidence. Conditions in Indonesia since 1998 have facilitated the identification and publication of new materials on the PKI. Further work with Dutch sources might shed new light on the role of de Groot and the CPN during this period, and perhaps some day new sources on the CCP might be opened to scholarly scrutiny.

From the vantage point of 2007, however, at least two lessons can be drawn from Efimova's intervention in Indonesian history. First of all, the publication of her book comes as a timely reminder that the transnational forces of Islam so strongly emphasized in representations of Indonesia today were for many years fairly matched by those associated with a very different political and ideological tradition, namely revolutionary socialism, Marxism, and Leninism. If today observers are narrowly focused on the pattern of recurring cycle of mobilization and demobilization by forces identified with supposedly powerful transnational Islamic—and Islamist—trends in Indonesia, they would do well to broaden their analytical lens to incorporate the accompanying—and often opposing—forces of revolutionary socialism over the past century of the country's history, from the days of Sneevliet onwards.¹² Such, after all, was the reality of the Sarekat Islam in the late 1910s and 1920s, of the Revolusi in its varied local and national complexions in 1945 to 1949, and of early post-independence politics up through the anti-communist pogroms of 1965 and 1966. Lest it be forgotten, the PKI was the first Communist Party in Asia, its various affiliated organizations attracting thousands of members in the early 1920s, at a time when the CCP counted its members in the hundreds. At the height of its influence in the 1950s and early to mid-1960s, the PKI's umbrella encompassed millions of members, making it the single largest CP outside the Soviet bloc and China. Today modern Indonesian history may in some measure make sense in terms of the unfulfilled dream of a "Darul Islam" (Abode of Islam). But so does it cohere, in no small measure, in terms of the receding threat and promise of socialist revolution, and even more so in terms of the success of what Ben Anderson has called the "fossilizing" forces of Nasionalisme in Soekarno's NASAKOM formulation in encapsulating, appropriating, and extinguishing the diverse emancipatory aspirations and energies mobilized during the struggle for Indonesian independence.¹³

Second, Efimova's book itself also offers a very illuminating example of the challenges facing scholars interested in reconstructing the modern history of Indonesia through a properly "global" analytical lens. For even as the *apparatchiki* scrutinize early

¹² On Sneevliet and his role in the formation of the Indonesian and Chinese Communist parties, see: Ruth T. McVey, *The Rise of Indonesian Communism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965); Fritjof Tichelman, *Henk Sneevliet: Een Politieke Biografie* (Amsterdam: Van Genneep, 1974); Max Perthus, *Henk Sneevliet: Revolutionair Socialist in Europa en Azie* (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij Nijmegen, 1976); and Michael Williams, "Sneevliet and the Birth of Asian Communism," *New Left Review* 123 (September–October 1980): 81–90.

¹³ Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "Bung Karno and the Fossilization of Soekarno's Thought," *Indonesia* 74 (October 2002): 1–20.

journalistic reports on events in Java in 1946, Zhdanov prepares his speech in 1947, the stolid Suslov reads the latest reports on Musso, Suripno, de Groot and Madiun in 1948, and Stalin awaits a response to his telegram from Beijing in 1951, the diverse strands of the *revolusi* are being played out on distant shores, in different time zones, and in diverse languages. On the docks of Australian ports, a boycott and “black ban” campaign by stevedores and seamen is preventing hundreds of Dutch ships from embarking with supplies for the restoration of colonial rule in the Netherlands East Indies.¹⁴ In Singapore, Republican agents are busily engaged in smuggling, gun-running, fund-raising, espionage, and all manner of intrigue.¹⁵ In Cairo, Aden, Mecca, Johore, and Penang other plots are likewise afoot.

Meanwhile, on Java, Sumatra, and elsewhere around the archipelago, the *revolusi* proceeds, in fits and starts, in various shades of green, red, and *merah putih*, and not always in sync with orders, directives, hopes, or fears from afar. Even as Mao waited for a PKI response to pass back to “Filippov” in Moscow in 1951, Tan Ling Djie, supposedly Beijing’s main man in the party leadership, was being outmaneuvered by the youthful Aidit on his return from Vietnam, and soon a humiliating campaign against “Tan Ling Djie-ism” was well under way in the ranks of the party.

Seen not from Moscow but from Madiun or, say, Malang, the maelstrom of the *revolusi* and its early aftermath appeared more like a Tolstoyan battlefield than what some would years later parsimoniously describe as “the structure of the conjuncture.”¹⁶ In this context, the impact of diverse and competing transnational forces washing up on Indonesian shores could not easily be determined then, nor can it be now. As the aging *pejuang* Soerjono wrote wistfully in 1979: “In my view, things might have developed differently in the archipelago if Musso had come earlier, in other words, if he had come before the Amir Sjarifuddin cabinet resigned.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Rupert Lockwood, *Black Armada* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1975).

¹⁵ See: Twang Peck Yang, *The Chinese Business Élite in Indonesia and the Transition to Independence 1940–1950* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 195–253; Suryono Darusman, *Singapore and the Indonesian Revolution 1945–1950: Recollections by Suryono Darusman* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1992); and Yong Mun Cheong, *The Indonesian Revolution and the Singapore Connection, 1945–1949* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2003).

¹⁶ See, for example, Ann Swift, *The Road to Madiun: The Indonesian Communist Uprising of 1948* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1989); and Tjamboek Berdoeri, *Indonesia Dalem Api dan Bara* (Malang: Elkasa, 2004).

¹⁷ Soerjono (translated by Ben Anderson), “On Musso’s Return,” *Indonesia* 29 (April 1980): 62.