

## The Conflict Between the Soekarnoism Support Agency and the Indonesian Communist Party in 1964

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana dinamika pers orde lama, khususnya pertentangan antara Badan Pendukung Soekarnoisme dengan Partai Komunis Indonesia tahun 1964. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode sejarah dengan menerapkan langkah-langkah yang meliputi: (1) Heuristik, (2) Kritik, (3) Interpretasi, dan (4) Historiografi. Penggunaan sumber sejarah dalam penelitian ini baik berupa dokumen, arsip, surat kabar, buku, dan jurnal dapat dipertanggungjawabkan validitasnya. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah dominasi Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) dalam konstelasi politik nasional pada masa Demokrasi Terpimpin. Kedekatan Presiden Soekarno dengan PKI dikhawatirkan dapat mempengaruhi haluan politik Indonesia. Oleh karena itu, beberapa wartawan termasuk juga Sayuti Melik mendirikan organisasi kewartawanan yang diberi nama Badan Pendukung Soekarnoisme dengan tujuan untuk membendung PKI di kancah perpolitikan nasional. Melalui artikel bersambung yang ditulis Sayuti Melik berjudul *Beladjar Memahami Soekarnoisme*, BPS melakukan perlawanan ke PKI dengan menerbitkannya tulisan disemua kantor pers anggota BPS.

**Kata kunci:** Pers, Badan Pendukung Soekarnoisme, Partai Komunis Indonesia.

### Abstract

*This study aims to find out how the dynamics of the old order press, especially the conflict between the Soekarnoism Support Agency and the Indonesian Communist Party in 1964. The method used in this study is the historical method by applying the following steps: (1) Heuristics, (2) Criticism, (3) Interpretation, and (4) Historiography. The use of historical sources in this study in the form of documents, archives, newspapers, books and journals can be accounted for for their validity. The result of this research is the dominance of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in the national political constellation during the Guided Democracy period. It was feared that President Soekarno's closeness to the PKI could influence Indonesian politics. Therefore, several journalists, including Sayuti Melik, established a journalistic organization called the Soekarnoism Support Agency with the aim of stemming the PKI in the national political arena. Through a series of articles written by Sayuti Melik entitled *Learning to Understand Soekarnoism*, BPS fought back against the PKI by publishing articles in all press offices of BPS members.*

**Keywords:** Press, the Soekarnoism Support Agency, Indonesian Communist Party.

### INTRODUCTION

The press in the era of Liberal Democracy is a period in which the press in Indonesia experiences such great freedom. Anyone who has capital can set up a newspaper office. However, at the end of the 1950s the press began to receive attention from the ruling government.

On September 14, 1956, the Army Chief of Staff, as the Military Authority, issued regulation no. PKM/001/0/1956. Article 1 of this regulation affirms the prohibition on printing, publishing and distributing as well as possessing writings, pictures, cliches or paintings that contain or contain criticism or insults to the

president and vice president. The prohibition also applies to writings and images that are considered to contain statements of hostility, hatred or insults (Reny, 2010).

Until the early 1960s, the emphasis on press freedom was preceded by warnings of firm steps to be taken against press offices that did not comply with the regulations needed to publish a national press. Because on October 12, 1960 President Soekarno as the supreme ruler of the war issued a regulation requiring every publisher to register to obtain a Publication Permit (SIT). SIT can be obtained if the press meets the requirements, among others, loyal to Manipol-USdek, willing to obey the Supreme War Ruler Regulation No.10/1960.

It is at this point that the national press must again be faced with the efforts of the government in power in limiting the space for movement, reporting and the ideology of journalism in real terms. The restriction on journalists' space for reporting in newspapers was further exacerbated by the issuance of additional provisions concerning "Manipolization of the press" in 1963. Through Perperti No. 6/1963, press institutions are required to fully support the Manipol USDEK and Guided Democracy. Thus, any press institution that does not support Manipol and Guided Democracy will not obtain a publication permit. Not a few newspaper

offices were banned because they were too sharp in criticizing the government.

Despite being restricted through formal government regulations, the press during the old order was also very close to politics. In fact, most newspapers have affiliations to political parties. Small examples such as the newspaper *Soeloeh Indonesia* the press of the Indonesian National Party (PNI), the *Abadi* newspaper of Masyumi and the *Harian Rakjat* newspaper of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).

The Manipol press positioned the journalists' struggle against imperialism when Indonesia became the organizer of the Asian-African Journalists Conference (KWAA), on 23-30 April 1963 with Hartini Soekarno as chairman of the committee. The forum, which was attended by representatives of journalists from 40 countries, succeeded in sparking an agreement, namely the Djakarta Declaration. It reads, "*Asia Afrika journalists dedicate themselves to struggle against imperialim-colonialism*".

The KWAA Forum affirmed the ideological position of the national press. However, the Indonesian Journalists Association (PWI) at that time was divided into two camps. Some of them rejected KWAA, because they sensed the PKI's political involvement. Meanwhile, the camp that supported the KWAA forum was allegedly infiltrated by PKI cadres. Those who did not support the KWAA thought

that the PKI was only using the KWAA to emphasize the closeness of the PKI to Soekarno.

After the KWAA, the conflict between newspapers was getting worse. Moreover, the relationship between the PKI and Soekarno was getting closer. In the midst of this mutual suspicion, Sayuti Melik, who is a PNI cadre as well as a senior journalist, disseminated the doctrines of Marhaenism through newspapers with the title of the article, *Pembinaan Djiwa Marhaenism*.

Melik's writings were first published in the *Suluh Indonesia* newspaper in 1963. The essence of Sayuti Melik's writings is to define the boundaries between Marhaenism and Marxism-Leninism. It turned out that Melik's writing received a good response from the public. No exception from publishing offices. Then in early 1964, the *Berita Indonesia* and *Merdeka* newspapers re-published Sayuti Melik's writings with a different title, namely *Beladjar Memahami Soekarnoism*. Apart from the newspapers *Berita Indonesia* and *Merdeka*, several newspapers in Jakarta also gave their support to the publication of Melik's articles.

Of the many newspapers operating in Jakarta, those who provide support are the Indonesian Observer, *Warta Berita*, *Garuda*, *Republik News*, *Revolutionary*, *Merdeka Weekly*, *Employees* and *Udajana Magazine*. In addition, the *Duta*

*Masyarakat* newspaper, which is the official newspaper of NU, the *Sinar Harapan* newspaper and journalists from the *Antara* news agency, RRI and TVRI also stated that they were willing to publish and disseminate Melik's articles (Nurmansyah, 2017).

The term Soekarnoism was immediately criticized by the PKI. Moreover, Sayuti Melik's articles indirectly cornered the PKI's ideology of struggle and political strategy (Numansyah, 2017).

The similar attitude of Sayuti Melik and the anti-PKI journalists paved the way for the formation of a press agency called the Soekarnoism Supporting Agency (BPS) on September 1, 1964, at the house of the former Minister of Defense and Education, Mr. Iwa Kusumasumantri, on Jalan Gresik, Jakarta.

The meeting for the establishment of BPS was attended by, among others; Adam Malik, B.M Diah, Soemantoro, Subagjo, and Sidjabad. Meanwhile, the temporary office of BPS was located on Jalan Batuceper, before being moved to Jalan H. Agus Salim with Koesnoen from Antara as the head of the BPS Office. According to B.M Diah, in assessing the current national political constellation, it is necessary to hold a concrete movement to distance Soekarno from the PKI as well as to design a new socio-political force capable of supporting Soekarno's Guided Democracy government. Meanwhile, the political conditions in Indonesia at that

time were not-and-or-not possible to form a new political party (Said, 1983). For this reason, the existence of BPS is indispensable in balancing the ideological political influence of the PKI through its news propaganda.

This study aims to determine how the formation BPS and influence on the political power of the PKI. Conflict between BPS and PKI in interpreting Soekarnoism was so intense. Through the *Harian Rakjat*, the PKI also tried to corner BPS with accusations of an organization formed by imperialism.

On the basis of this background, thorough historical research is urgently needed. Of course the author is required to be careful interpreting the historical sources that the author uses.

## METHOD

This study uses historical research methods. The historical method is a process of critically examining and analyzing record and relics of the past. The historical method is used as a way to achieve the completion of a research or reconstruction process of past event (Gottschalk, 2008).

In simple terms, the historical method is a systematic set of principles and rules intended to provide effective assistance in gathering historical sources and critically assessing history.

The method used in this study is the historical method by applying the

following steps: (1) Heuristics, (2) Criticism, (3) Interpretation, and (4) Historiography (Sjamsudin, 2007). The use of historical sources in this study in the form of documents, archives, newspapers, books and journals can be accounted for for their validity

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Sayuti Melik Article Polemic

The essence of Sayuti Melik's writing is to draw a line between Marhaenism and Marxism-Leninism. Indirectly Sayuti Melik's articles cornered the PKI's political strategy and the ideology of communism. Sayuti Melik considers that there are differences between Soekarnoism and Marxism in philosophical terms.

Soekarnoism applies dialectical idealism and dialectical materialism simultaneously, while Marxism only uses dialectical materialism. In addition, Soekarno only put Marxism as a method of thinking. Meanwhile, in relation to the struggle movement, Soekarno rejected Materialism which is the root of Marxism.

The struggle in the sense of liberating the Indonesian people from the shackles of colonialism and imperialism based on the priority to turn suffering into prosperity in the form of Indonesian socialism is the main mission of Soekarnoism.

Soekarno was fully aware that the Indonesian people positioned God as the estuary of all things, including science and

struggle. This fact prompted Sayuti Melik to try hard in showing that there is a discrepancy between the Indonesian personality and Marxism. Especially regarding materialism which assumes that everything in the world is originated and controlled by matter.

*Harian Rakjat* tries to make a comparison or refutation of what Sayuti Melik conveys with his ideas related to the philosophical foundations of Soekarnoism and Marxism. The idea is outlined in an article entitled Falsification in Philosophy.

Yuti said: "Bung Karno uses historical materialism as a method of thinking. But his interpretation of the phenomena of the universe does not use the philosophy of materialism. "Compare Yuti's interpretation with what Bung Karno himself actually said before the VI PKI Congress: "I am a historical materialist. But I am not a materialist wijssgerig...Historical materialism is a science...If the socio-economics was like that at that time, the ideology was like that...This science is called historical materialism, and I am one of the followers of this science...But Yuti prefers a "creative mix": she marries "mechanism" with "vitalism", materialism with idealism, and Marxism with mysticism! (Harian Rakjat, 1964)."

Regarding the understanding of Sukaroneism as Marxism applied in Indonesia, Sayuti Melik stated that she did not agree with this statement.

He considered that the teachings of Marxism-Leninism can be implemented in a country if the elements in that country are in accordance with Marxism-Leninism. Meanwhile, Soekarnoism is a teaching of struggle that emphasizes national unity.

Sayuti Melik also writes about the differences between the three essences of Soekarnoism and Nasakom, which was initiated by Soekarno and used by the PKI as a tool of legitimacy in the Indonesian political constellation. Through an article entitled Between Nasoma and Nasakom, he explained about the three sciences of struggle that exist in Soekarnoism. He uses the core values of nationalism, socialism and religion as the embodiment of Soekarnoism teachings. He combines these three elements and gives the term Nasoma (Nurmansyah, 2017).

Of course Sayuti Melik's arguments in her article received a sharp blow from *Harian Rakjat*. *Harian Rakjat* alleges that Sayuti Melik's writings are mere rhetorical fabrications, even *Harian Rakjat* accuses Sayuti Melik of being both a communist-phobic and a Nasakom-phobic. In a reply to the *Harian Rakjat* article, he wrote;

"In Tavip Bung Karno emphasized: ,, End all phobias, stop djegal<sup>2</sup>an and srimpong<sup>2</sup>an, write on your banner 'Nasakom' and once again 'Nasakom'... The elements of progressiveness are found in all levels of Indonesian society (Harian Rakjat, 1964).

In the heated political atmosphere Sayuti Melik believed that the PKI should be stopped or at least reduce its influence in society. As is well known, the PKI is a big party that has strong electability in society.

To be able to achieve that goal, he explained how to become a Soekarnoism in accordance with the personality of Indonesia in general. At the end of each article there is always a separate paragraph containing satire sentences to the communist.

#### **B. PKI Offensive to BPS**

In the PKI campaign and its mass media to beat BPS, the theme is often used that BPS is organized and financed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), United States. The PKI accused BPS of getting \$500 million in funds from the CIA. The PKI also accused BPS of trying to distort Bung Karno's teachings with Soekarnoism or the term "kill Soekarno with Soekarnoism". And the PKI considered the activities carried out by BPS to divide national unity and integrity.

The accusations made by the PKI to BPS came often through its propaganda medium, namely *Harian Rakjat*. Especially the debate about Soekarnoism in Sayuti Melik's article. *Harian Rakjat* said,

"BPS has carried out a "holy alliance" with the counter-revolutionary forces. They carry out anti-communist and anti-Soekarno politics under the guise

of "Soekarnoism", everything that BPS has done up to now is under the command of the CIA, United States Intelligence"

Meanwhile, in order to "disassemble" the term Soekarnoism which BPS was promoting, *Harian Rakjat* repeatedly attacked Melik's writings, even Njoto said, "what they call Soekarnoism is actually a reactionary understanding of Yutiism" (Said, 1983).

Aidit also wrote instructions to all element of the PKI wing to "crush" BPS. "After studying it more thoroughly the PKI Comite streng thens the conclusions it has drawn about Soekarnoism - BPS. Soekarnoism taught by BPS is none other than Mnikebuism in politics, while BPS is a new style od Democracy League. CC PKI calls on all Indonesia Communist to together with other Manipolis forces suppress Soekarnoism-BPS".

The PKI also urged the President to immediately dissolve BPS, because it was deemed too opportunistic an "inconsequential". Mareover, the use of the name Soekarnoism itself was not born or not from Soekarno direct desire. *Harian Rakjat* more emphatically wrote in its editorial colomn, what Soekarno teachings called was Marhaenism, not Soekarnoism.

#### **C. BPS Disbandment**

The instructions from the head of the CC PKI to crush BPS were followed up by *Harian Rakjat* to be more aggressive in voicing the disbandment of BPS. In

addition, they demanded to stop the spread of Sayuti Melik's Soekarnoism in various media. The rejection of Soekarnoism and BPS received a lot of support from various elements of society, military officers and the government.

Parties against BPS such as the PKI, PNI, Partindo and their mass organizations continued to try to pressure President Soekarno to dissolve BPS. These parties are aware that the one who has the power and power to dissolve a body is the president. With the considerations that they conveyed that BPS would only hinder the revolution and be considered a reactionary body, then President Soekarno had to dissolve BPS.

On December 12, 1964, a meeting of 10 political party leaders was held in Bogor. The core of the meeting was the pledge or determination of party officials to support Soekarno's politics, as well as discussing several important issues. However, the meeting at the Bogor Palace was interpreted by the PKI as a decision to dissolve the BPS by President Soekarno.

Two days later, the publication of the article on the interpretation of the Bogor Pledge by *Harian Rakjat BPS* was officially dissolved by President Soekarno through Decree No. 72/KOTI/1964 on December 17, 1964. In that decision, President Soekarno stated that the BPS was an agency that carried the risk of disintegrating the Indonesian people so that it could interfere with the course of

the revolution (Nurmansyah, 2017).

Meanwhile, to accommodate any problems that might arise from the decision to dissolve BPS, President Soekarno assigned Kotrar to be in charge. The mandate was conveyed in decision no. 73/KOTI/1964 This second decree by the government was elaborated two days later in an announcement that affirmed: "Regarding the writings on the teachings of the PBR Bung Karno, to all sects and groups in society through communication tools it is only allowed to publish the original writings of the PBR Bung Karno without interpretation, starting from the first article of the book *Under the Revolutionary Flag* which must be published in article with the title (*Teachings of the Great Leader of the Revolution Bung Karno*). These provisions must be implemented by all mass communication tools. Against violations of this provision, the competent state agencies are required to take steps to control according to the applicable law" (Said, 1983).

On the day the president announced the decision to dissolve BPS, the leaders of the BPS organizations in Jakarta and in Medan prepared statements in support of the government and decided to dissolve themselves. Announcement of the "Dissolution of BPS" issued by the central BPS, signed by Soemantoro and Asnawi Idris in Jakarta.

#### D. Impact

It is known that in the press sector, one can find many newspapers that are willing to accept, support and be involved in the spread of Sayuti Melik's Soekarnoism. More broadly, the publication of Sayuti Melik's articles by many newspapers in Indonesia also had an impact on the popularity of Soekarnoism in society.

Meanwhile, the existence of BPS as the agency responsible for disseminating Sayuti Melik's Soekarnoism in the press sector has sharpened differences in people's ideas or ideals. In addition, it also further clarifies the community's alignment with the two polemics involved, namely the PKI and its supporters and BPS. Of course, people from various professions and statuses who have anti-PKI attitudes show their support for BPS.

In addition, PWI had to fire some of its members who were proven to be involved in BPS activities. The decision to dismiss him was taken by the PWI Jakarta management after holding a special meeting in Malang on December 18, 1964.

#### CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, author conclude that formation of BPS stems from similarity of anti-PKI political attitudes among national journalist. With the formation of the BPS, efforts to weaken PKI through press politics could be carried out intensely. However, in reality, PKI and *Harian Rakjat* newspaper were actualy

able to stem the political maneuvers being carried out by BPS. By using the pretext of "kill Soekarno with Soekarnoism", the PKI was actually able to pressure the Guided Democracy government to dissolve the BPS. The existence of BPS, to has influenced the movement of history at that time. Especially in the study of history of the press and politics, although BPS has only lasted three mounths since its establishment. At least the dynamicsof ideological politics around 1964 were colored by disputes between journalist organizations and parties that could be used as future kessonns for the Indonesian Nation.

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