

Indonesian regime to retain ban on socialist parties

Mike Head
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In one crucial decision not mentioned in the corporate-controlled mass media, the Indonesian regime now headed by B.J. Habibie has declared that it will retain its ban on socialist parties and any others that do not conform to the ruling ideology of the Suharto dictatorship.

In recent days both Interior Minister General Syarwan Hamid and Justice Minister Muladi have stated that, regardless of the final details of the “political reform” plans to be drafted by the regime, no socialist or communist parties will be legalised. Only parties that subscribe to the official doctrine of pancasila will be permitted.

The pancasila doctrine, first enunciated by Suharto’s predecessor Sukarno, in 1945, contains five vague concepts: belief in one Supreme God; justice and civility among people; the unity of Indonesia; democracy through deliberation and consensus among representatives; social justice for all.

Supposedly politically neutral and inclusive, pancasila’s insistence on “national unity” has always been associated with a definite political structure. Sukarno originally directed it against demands for an exclusively Islamic state, but it also forbids appeals to the independent class interests of the working people.

Habibie’s two ministers made their statements amid further signs of unrest among the millions of workers and urban poor who have been devastated by the collapse of the economy.

On a vast area of land cleared for development in north Jakarta, hundreds of slum dwellers staked claims last week, driving signs carrying their names into plots they sought to reclaim for Indonesia’s *orang kecil* (small people) from the Suharto family.

The land was earmarked for a government housing project to be constructed by one of the companies

controlled by Suharto’s eldest daughter and cabinet minister, Siti Hardianti “Tutut” Rukamana, who amassed a business empire worth at least \$US2 billion through such ventures.

“We came here because we were tipped off that this land belonged to the Suharto family,” one squatter told the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He said the construction workers had fled, and the squatters had established their own security patrol to protect their claims.

Meanwhile, according to one report, young street hawkers were last weekend selling, for about 30 cents, a photocopied list detailing the assets of the Suharto family and its wealthy cronies. Outside the offices of the Bimantara business group, owned by the wealthiest Suharto child, Bambang Trihatmodjo (worth at least \$3 billion), scores of protesters called for his trial. At the end of last week he hurriedly resigned from his position as chief executive of the media, petro-chemicals, infrastructure, transport and telecommunications empire.

By the end of the week, hundreds of thousands of depositors had withdrawn their money from the country’s largest private bank, the Bank Central Asia (BCA), owned by the Salim Group (headed by Liem Sioe Liong) and two of Suharto’s children. By some estimates, 40 percent of deposits in the domestic banking system were withdrawn before the central bank placed BCA under government supervision.

Demands for sweeping change were expressed in the east Javan capital of Surabaya, where hundreds of thousands of Muslims gathered for a prayer ceremony in front of the East Java military headquarters under the banner of the 30 million-member Nahdlatul Ulama organisation. Some carried posters saying “Reform must continue” and “Reform is not just changing the powerholders”.

The concerns felt in ruling circles both within Indonesian and internationally were reflected in the June 8 edition of the US financial magazine *BusinessWeek* which declared that Habibie's first hurdle was "how to feed Indonesia's 200 million people and stave off a replay of the food and fuel riots that forced the resignation of President Suharto on May 20."

It reported that across the country the mid-May riots destroyed some 1,600 public markets, 20 shopping malls, 2,480 small stores and thousands of trucks. Many food deliveries had stopped because "the truck drivers are afraid their trucks will be attacked ... [by] people who steal food," it quoted one economist as saying.

Similarly, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* of June 4 reported that one of the key concerns that led Suharto's cabinet to desert him on the night of May 20 was that anyone who remained in his government or joined his proposed reform council would be in physical danger. The magazine quoted one figure approached by Suharto saying: "Are you crazy? The people will burn down my house." Evidently, the national assembly speaker Harmoko had already had his home razed in the central Java city of Solo.

As the continuing ban on socialist parties demonstrates, the overriding concern of the regime, and the bourgeois opposition, is that this elemental hostility may become translated into conscious political movement against not just the Suharto family and its immediate associates but the entire economic order that has produced the vast gulf between the wealthy and the 90 million-strong working class and poor peasantry.

One of the key bourgeois opposition figures, Islamic leader Amien Rais, has suggested that a pardon be considered for Suharto, because of his "service to the nation", and that his children should only be punished if they were found guilty of illegally obtaining their fortunes. He suggested that the family return 95 percent of its wealth. Rais has also called for Habibie's government to be given time to stabilise the economy, allowing Habibie and ruling Golkar party figures in the parliament, led by Harmoko, to propose that the government remain in office at least until the end of 1999.

After meeting with visiting International Monetary Fund official Hubert Neiss, the co-ordinating

Economics and Finance Minister, Ginandjar Kartasasmita, who filled the same post under Suharto, restated his pledge to abide by Suharto's commitments to the IMF. The IMF may delay the lifting of some food and fuel price subsidies but its prescriptions for the wholesale restructuring and privatisation of the economy in the interests of transnational companies and banks will only intensify the social disaster now being experienced by Indonesia's masses.

Neiss, who also held talks with bourgeois opposition leaders, indicated that the IMF will seek to work through the Habibie government. However, splits have continued to emerge within ruling circles, with 18 retired generals calling for Habibie to stand aside by July so that the military and Golkar-dominated Peoples Consultative Assembly (MPR) can select a new president.



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