Preface

THE formative years of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) are of interest both for scholars concerned with modern Indonesia and for students of international Communism. One of the first political groupings in Indonesia, the PKI reflected in its early period many characteristics of a movement bridging the gap from traditional to modern concepts of political organization and goals. As such, it exhibited openly many traits that today are muted but nonetheless strong in Indonesian politics, and a study of the nature of its early appeal contributes greatly to our ability to appreciate its position as the most popular Indonesian political party today. At the same time, the early PKI contributed by both its actions and its ideas to the evolving Indonesian independence movement, and neither the growth of that movement nor the colonial government's response to it can be fully comprehended without an understanding of the Communists' role. The importance of the PKI in the international Communist movement stems chiefly from the fact that it was one of the very few Asian Communist parties to develop something of a mass following in the early years of the Comintern. It therefore provides a point of comparison for the evolution of Comintern policy in China, the chief arena of the Third International's activity in underdeveloped Asia. This is particularly relevant in that the bloc-within strategy, the culmination of the Comintern's China policy in the period 1920-1927, was first evolved in Indonesia, and this prior Indonesian experience was then consciously applied in China; in Indonesia, however, as the author of the present book demonstrates, application of this strategy had a very different outcome.

Most studies of Communist parties tend to concentrate either on their role on the indigenous stage or on their participation in international Communist affairs. However, to provide a balanced view of the PKI's development, Miss MeVey has given her attention

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to both aspects of its early existence, and in doing so she has demonstrated the interplay of domestic and international factors in determining the party's growth. She is unusually well equipped to consider Indonesian Communism in both lights, having received her academic training first in Harvard University's Soviet Area Program, where her work was primarily concerned with the development of Comintern colonial policy, and then in the Department of Government and the Southeast Asia Program at Cornell University, where her doctoral work centered on Indonesian government and politics. Miss McVey has been studying Indonesian Communism since 1953, and in her present position as Research Associate in the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project is carrying this research forward. The present volume, conceived as the first part of a general history of the PKI, is the product of research in five countries and as many languages. It draws not only upon extensive interviews but also upon a mass of material hitherto largely unexplored. On the basis of these data, Miss McVey provides a solid documentation of events and presents an account and analysis of the party's internal workings that goes beyond, I believe, any other study of Communism in Asia.

GEORGE MCT. KAHIN

Ithaca

July 9, 1965